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Summit TIMES

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ON TOP OF THE NEWS

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SKM condemns SDF allegations of weakened panchayats
SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 07 OCT: Sikkim Krantikari Morcha has condemned allegation leveled by Sikkim Democratic Front senior vice-president [incharge] of panchayat cell, KN Rai, that SKM has stripped away the powers of panchayats.

An SKM press release issued by its secretary [press & publicity], Ranjana Pradhan, insists that the SKM government has provided full powers to panchayats.

The release claims that SKM has freed panchayats of party-politics by making elections non-partisan. It was SDF which stifled panchayats by making rural body elections party-based and thereby limiting the effective power of panchayats.

Responding to allegation that the powers of panchayats were given to BDOs, the release states that the SDF should look at its own track-record when party cadre controlled panchayats. The SKM release adds that BDOs were government employees and not the party cadre and that the main objective of the SKM Government was to ensure impartial work by panchayats.

The release also recalls the threats and warnings issued by the SDF president in the 201 panchayat elections when he was CM.

Central team assesses Covid surge in Mizoram amid alarming positivity rate

AIZAWL, 07 OCT [NDTV]: A four-member central team accessed the COVID-19 situation in Mizoram amid a worrying surge in infections in the northeastern state. Mizoram crossed one lakh Covid cases yesterday with 1,471 people testing positive for the virus. The positivity rate in Mizoram stands at 15.36 per cent and is a major cause of concern in the state with a total population of just over 11 lakh.

Headed by National Centre for Disease Control (NCDC) consultant-epidemiologist Dr Vinita Gupta, the central team arrived in the state capital Aizawl on Tuesday. Aizawl has reported 65 per cent of the total cases of the state so far. The central team virtually held a review meeting with chief medical officers of all 11 districts on Wednesday.

Livestock Show brings together farmers, agripreneurs, rural youth and policymakers

GANGTOK, 07 OCT [IPR]: The Department of Animal Husbandry & Veterinary Services, Agriculture and Horticulture, in collaboration with the State Bank of India, organised a district-level Livestock Show under "Implementation of Sub-Mission on Skill Development, Technical Transfer and Extension under NLM 2019-20" at Adampool in East Sikkim today.

Minister of State for Agriculture and Farmers Welfare, Kailash Choudhary, graced the occasion as chief guest in the presence of Minister of AH&VS, Agriculture and Horticulture, Lok Nath Sharma, MP Lok Sabha, Indra Hang Subba, MLA, Martam-Rumtek, Sonam Tshering Venchungpa, and MLA, Gangtok, Y.T. Lepcha, Panchayats, along with the HoDs and staff of the Agriculture, Horticulture and AH&VS departments.

Addressing the gathering, chief guest, Kailash Choudhary, commended the efforts of the State government in agriculture, horticulture and animal husbandry sectors defined for the welfare of farmers and agripreneurs.

He stressed on the need to improve the economic sta-



bility of farmers and assured that the Central government will extend its full support to the State to help optimise the potential of these sectors to support the economic growth of farmers and stakeholders.

He spoke about the various schemes and incentives being provided for farmers and encouraged all to tap into

integrated farming systems in order to increase farmer-incomes through sustainable agriculture activities.

Minister of AH&VS, Agriculture and Horticulture, Lok Nath Sharma, in his address, reiterated the State government's commitment towards prioritising and adopting unique farming policies and schemes to strengthen agri-

cultural support services for farmers and stakeholders in the State.

He congratulated the concerned departments for organising the livestock show that has successfully brought together all the stakeholders including farmers, agripreneurs, rural youth and policymakers on one platform, enabling them to share

and access innovative ideas available in the field of agriculture, horticulture, animal husbandry and other allied sectors.

He urged the farmers and the youth to avail full benefit of the various schemes, insurances and incentives being provided by the Central and State governments for improving agricultural produc-

tivity, profitability and sustainability.

Highlighting the significant role of farmers in achieving the goal of Atmanirbhar Bharat, he assured full support of the State government and further requested all to work in coordination with the allied departments and support the farming policies that brings about key reforms in agriculture and other related sectors.

Member of Parliament, Lok Sabha, Indra Hang Subba, extended gratitude to the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare, GoI and the State government for spearheading innovative ways to transform agriculture and allied sectors thus improving income of farmers through sustainable as well as inclusive growth.

The programme was also addressed by area MLA, Martam-Rumtek, Mr Venchungpa, who exhorted the concerned departments to take all the government schemes to the grassroots level.

During the event, farm loans through the lead bank SBI and tokens including agricultural machinery tools were distributed to the beneficiaries of East district.

Only 18 new cases, and none from South and North Sikkim

SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 07 OCT:

Sikkim administered 1,657 doses of Covishield on Wednesday, of which 1,582 were to people who completed their vaccination schedules with the second dose and 75 others received their first dose.

In the meantime, the state's daily test positivity rate came in reassuringly low at 4.2% this morning with 18 new cases detected from the testing of 419 samples yesterday.

As per the Daily Report of COVID-19 in Sikkim issued by the Integrated Disease Surveillance Programme of the Health Department,

12 of the new cases were registered in East District and 06 in West District. No new cases were reported from South and North districts in the past 24 hours.

Sikkim's tally of confirmed cases of COVID-19 now stands at 31,603.

On the other hand, active cases also dipped slightly to 367 with 34 new recoveries in the State. The figure of recovered cases has further improved to 30,532 and the state currently enjoys a recovery rate of 97.6%.

The Covid death toll also continues to hold at 388 with no new COVID deaths reported in the State in the past 24 hours.

Workshop on Sikkim's biodiversity and role of armed forces

SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 07 OCT:

A workshop on Biodiversity of Sikkim and the role of Military & Paramilitary Forces for its Conservation was held here at Forest Department conference hall on Thursday. The one-day workshop was organized as part of the National Wildlife Week 2021 celebration under the banner of the SECURE Himalaya project of the Forest & Environment Department in collaboration with WWF-India, informs a press release.

The workshop was chaired by Additional PCCE, Pradeep Kumar and was attended by CF [WL], Udai Gurung, AD [KNP], Rajni Bhandari and officials of Forest



Department and WWF-Sikkim team along with Lt Col Garvita from the Indian Army, Second in Command, Kuldeep K from the ITBP & Deputy Commandant, Vijay Kumar from the SSB and their teams participated from the Military and Paramilitary.

The release mentions that the workshop saw a detailed presentation on the significance of Sik-

kim's biodiversity by Dr Bharat Pradhan from the State Biodiversity Board and on critical areas of conservation collaboration by Priya Shreshta from WWF.

The presentations were followed by a panel discussion where the representatives from the military and paramilitary agencies assured their support in future

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Now, aggrieved consumers can lodge complaints online

E-DAAKHIL PORTAL LAUNCHED

GANGTOK, 07 OCT (IPR):

Minister for Urban Development and Food & Civil Supplies Departments, Arun Upreti, launched the E-Daakhil portal at NIC, Tashiling Secretariat, here today.

The E-Daakhil portal is a Consumer Grievance Redressal portal developed under the Consumer Protection Act of 2019 [which came into force in July 2020]. It has a provision for e-filing of consumer complaints at the Consumer Commissions and online payment of fees for filing these complaints.

This digital platform



for filing consumer complaints includes features like e-Notice, case document download link and virtual conference hearing link, filing of written responses by opposite party, filing rejoinders by

complainants and alerts via SMS/ email.

The E-Daakhil portal empowers the consumer and their advocates to file complaints along with payment of requisite fees online from anywhere

for the redressal of their complaints. It also facilitates the consumer commissions to scrutinize the complaints online and accept, reject or forward complaints to the concerned

turn to pg05

MoS Agriculture reiterates Centre's commitment to revolutionise farming in NE

SAGAR CHHETRI

GANGTOK, 07 OCT:

Union Minister of State for Agriculture and Farmers Welfare, Kailash Choudhary, today held forth that the Central government has been working tirelessly for the overall development of the North East on priority basis.

He stated that the Centre has launched many schemes specifically for the north-eastern region.

Addressing a press conference here at Adampool today, Mr Choudhary stated that under the leadership of the Prime Minister, many important schemes were launched for farmers in the NER.



In this regard, the focus to improve connectivity in the region will also benefit the agriculture sector here, he said.

The Minister said that many important farmer-welfare schemes have been launched by the Centre

under Kisan Samman Nidhi Yojana which was benefitting 11 crore farmers.

He added that the government has also been working towards forming around 10,000 FPOs following which farmers can leverage the collaboration and set up their own processing units to fetch better returns for their produce.

He is convinced that farmers can then also negotiate better prices in the market and assured that the government will provide all required support to make farmers self-reliant and increase their incomes.

The MoS mentioned that there was

turn to pg05

Resetting reforms for a resilient and inclusive New India

NIRMALA SITHARAMAN

Indian economy is seeing rapid changes, particularly in the last seven years, that are transformational. Time does not give us the luxury for gentle incremental changes which are less disruptive. Moving India away from debilitating socialism to a free market economy suffused with Indian ethos is an enormous task. Socialism, aggravated by a licence quota Raj, chained down Indias entrepreneurs, withered away her assets and resources and brought in hopelessness.

Although opening up of our economy commenced in 1991, several necessary follow-up actions were not taken up then. This led to a dilution of the impact the opening-up was to have had on the economy. A decade later some efforts began but soon, government changed hands. Unfortunately, what followed that brief period was a lost decade, which set us back so badly that we were classified one among the five fragile economies.

When government changed in 2014, PM Modi, with his three unbroken terms as CM, committed himself to build a New India. The demographic dividend provided a market even as the youth were revving to serve as entrepreneurs. Their innovations remained unrecognised even as they were contributing to economies far away from home. Technology and digitisation could bring in efficiencies. In the New India, every ones basic necessities such as water, sanitation, accommodation and health will be provided for. New Indias policies shall work on empowering people. Even after decades of trying, policies based on principles of entitlement have failed to break the vicious cycle of poverty, unemployment and deprivation.

Old India kept our traditional skills and craftsmen in a glorified cage that they couldnt access growing markets. In the name of protecting them they were kept in the reserved list thereby restricting access and competition. A disservice for those who conquered world markets before imperialism stifled them! Our farmers who were producing bountiful crops even as they weathered unpredictable climatic conditions, were bound by restrictions that curtailed their fair earnings. In a diverse country as ours, there were local products, almost one a district. They were left as the underlings. The skills, the artisans, the local products, the dairy and textile cooperatives, all needed revival and rejuvenation. Old India needed to come alive to infuse colour and flavour and to rivet New India to its roots.

Old India was left behind being protected or neglected. An exaggerated belief of socialist India was that government could do nearly everything and deliver too. Steel, cement, watches, telephones, tyres, clothing, pharmaceuticals, condoms, scooters, cars, ships, even bread were manufactured by government units. Government was also in Banking, Insurance, Refineries, mining, hotels, hospitality, tour operations, air service and telephone communication. Moving away from this to bring in efficiencies of the private sector was important. Recognising legitimate profit making, respecting Industry as job and wealth creators required policy support.

India is seeing a phase of make-over.

A clear moving towards an Indian-ethos-infused-market-economy. Not an unbridled mercantilism or a heartless capitalism. The guiding philosophy is a classic: Sab ka Saath, Sab ka Vikas, Sab ka Vishwas and Sab ka Prayaas.

In Modi 1.0 the flood gates of reforms, rejuvenation and revival started in full view. The Jan Dhan Yojana, the strengthening of Aadhar and the using of mobile (the JAM trinity) gave the first mover advantage to the poor. This was soon followed up with Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) in reaching pensions, ration, fuel, samman nidhi to those eligible. A big collateral benefit resulting from this exercise was the savings for the taxpayer. All ghost accounts were eliminated and vast sums of money were stopped from pilfer. Ujjwala helped achieve so many goals even as it nudged demerit users out of subsidy. The poor couldnt be denied safe and healthy fuel.

The Goods and Services Tax brought the multiplicity of indirect taxes across the country into one. The Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code was taken up as a major step towards a time-bound resolution of insolvencies. Reforming the financial sector commenced with the four R principle: Recognition, Resolution, Recapitalisation and Reform. The problem of legacy Non Performing Assets (NPA) was addressed steadily that today nearly all banks are out of Prompt Corrective Action. They were recapitalised periodically. Now, they are also raising funds in the market.

Momentum of economic make-over continues in Modi 2.0 despite the pandemic. In November 2020, PM Modi while addressing the Bloomberg New Economic Forum observed: The Covid-19 pandemic has posed enormous challenges. The biggest question before the entire world is how to restart? The restart will not be possible without a reset. A reset of mindset. A reset of processes. And a reset of practices.

Ensuring no one remains hungry was a priority during the pandemic resulting in free food grain distribution to nearly 80 crore people for eight full months, plus up to 3 cylinders of cooking gas and some little cash for exigencies that may arise. The Diyyang, construction workers and the poor senior citizens were provided some relief. Through the four Aatma Nirbhar Bharat announcements timely hand-holding support for small and medium enterprises, traders and small employees were also provided.

Equally noteworthy is the flurry of systemic reforms that were undertaken. The lowering of Corporate tax rate was a decision post the first budget of Modi 2.0. For new companies the rate was brought to 15% and for the existing it was brought to 22%. Minimum Alternate Tax (MAT) was also exempted for companies. For empowering farmers three Farm Reforms Acts were passed. Now the farmers can choose the buyer and the price at which they wish to sell their produce.

Even during the pandemic amalgamation of banks happened. Today we have only 12 public sector banks from 27 in 2017. A National Asset Reconstruction Company and an India Debt Reconstruction Company

are established. They shall carve out the NPAs from commercial banks and realise maximum values for the banks. To ensure the value realisation, government provides a back stop arrangement. Long term infrastructure funding with proper risk assessment and long term capital shall now be available through the National Bank for Funding Infrastructure Development. An enabling provision in the law also envisages

ViewPoint

private sector development funding institutions. A Pipeline of projects with total capital expenditure of over Rs112 lakh crores are announced and a portal gives the status of progress.

To attract further investments and make India a manufacturing hub a Production Linked Incentive Scheme (PLI) is introduced to benefit 13 champion sectors. In the light of a global supply chain reset, this scheme has attracted investments in mobile, medical devices, API/KSM manufacture in pharma, food processing, textiles etc.

Long awaited reforms to the Telecom and Power sectors critical to the economy are undertaken.

The Budget 2021 saw a policy on public sector enterprises which identified those strategic sectors where only a bare minimum presence of public enterprises will be allowed. Equally, all areas are now open for the private players. An enabling amendment to the General Insurance Act was done. In Insurance sector 74% FDI is allowed through automatic route. Life Insurance Corporation goes out for an Initial Public Offer (IPO).

A consent-based framework for Account Aggregation is introduced. Bank customers can avail different financial services from a portal where several service providers will be available. Customers can share their data with their chosen service provider. This is a major step in financial inclusion and for access to credit.

Amendments to Deposit Insurance Credit Guarantee Act will provide Rs 5 lakh insurance cover for small depositors. 98.3% all deposits gets covered through this on step in case of any restrictions on the banks.

Writing recently on the De Soto Effect, Niranjana Rajadhyaksha states: poor working in tiny informal enterprises are in effect shut out of the formal credit system, and hence condemned to live in poverty, because a lack of clear property rights makes it difficult for them to offer their land assets as collateral to banks. The SVAMITVA scheme envisages mapping of land parcels using drone technology and providing record of rights to village land/house owners. The vicious cycle of poverty due to lack of credit availability is broken through this scheme. Three other schemes the SVANidhi, Mudra and the Stand Up aim at collateral free lending for small enterprises which are changing the lives of the poor with their dignity intact.

This and more is possible because the leadership remains connected to its people and its philosophy Sab Ka Saath.

[The writer is Union Minister for Finance & Corporate Affairs]

PMVDY-ESDP Training for VDVK clusters inaugurated at CAEPHT

**SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 07 OCT:**

Pradhan Mantri Van Dhan Yojana-Entrepreneurship and Skill Development (PMVDY-ESDP) training programme for two Van Dhan Vikas Kendras viz. Samlik Marchak and Nandok Saramsa, East Sikkim was inaugurated today at New Auditorium, CAEPHT, Ranipool, a press release informs.

The programme was conducted by Multi Technology Testing Centre and Vocational Training Centre, College of Agricultural Engineering and Post Harvest Technology (Central Agricultural University, Imphal), Ranipool, Sikkim.

The PMVDY-ESDP programme is sponsored by Tribal Cooperative Marketing Development Federation (TRIFED), Government of India and Cooperation Department, Government of Sikkim is the state implementing agency.

The programme was conducted both through online and offline modes which was attended by fifty beneficiaries of Nandok Saramsa VDVK and Samlik Marchak VDVK along with faculties and staff of CAEPHT.

Chairman, Cooperation Department, Government of Sikkim, B. B. Chettri, attended the programme as chief guest.

Prof. Ph. Ranjit Sharma [Director of Extension Education, Central Agricultural University, Imphal], B. Pradhan [Secretary, Department of Science and Technology, Government of Sikkim], B. B. Subba [Secretary, Cooperation Department, Government of Sikkim] were the guests of honour in today's programme.

At the outset of the programme, Prof. P.P. Dabral welcomed the gathering and briefed

about the activities to be conducted under the PMVDY-ESDP programme. He also mentioned that 54 VDVKs would be given training under this programme by the institute for different commodities, creating an opportunity for enhancement of socio-economic conditions of the beneficiaries.

He further elaborated on training on the topic "Enhancement of livelihood through production of noodle, ginger processed items and disinfectant" for Nandok Saramsa and "Value addition of vegetables and production of disinfectant" for Samlik Marchak. He informed that there would be various activities under the programme which would be held for 6 weeks.

Chief guest of the inaugural programme, B.B. Chettri, complimented the organizing agency for starting the ESDP for VDVK members in the state. He also said that the training should support the vision of the government to guide educated youth towards skilled based entrepreneurship and enhanced livelihood in the state.

Prof. Ph. Ranjit Sharma, Director of Extension Education gave an overview about the ongoing activities of the PMVDY-ESDP programme under the umbrella of Central Agricultural University, Imphal. He highlighted the need to promote the products created by the tribal community especially from the North-East region of India. He encouraged the stakeholders under the programme to promote organic produce as Sikkim is already declared an organic state and has immense scope for its products.

Secretary, Department of Science and Technology, Govt. of

Sikkim, B. Pradhan, addressed the scope of PMVDY in the state and requested all the beneficiaries to take utmost advantage for such trainings. He hoped that the local organic produce will find a platform for value addition through this yojana.

B. B. Subba highlighted the importance of PMVDY and the ESDP component thereof. He stressed that in order to start successful business skill based trainings are required. He also requested for generous participation of all stake holders make the PMVDY-ESDP as success.

Deputy Director of Extension Education, CAU, Imphal, Dr. Dipak Nath, gave a brief outline of the mandate of the PMVDY-ESDP programme. Registrar, Cooperation Department, Govt. of Sikkim, J. Thapa, highlighted the activities conducted by the implementing agency. She also mentioned that 80 VDVKs were identified by the implementing agency.

A short video about the ongoing activities of PMVDY-ESDP programme conducted for Tanzi Bikmat VDVK, and Salghari VDVK by MTTC & VTC, CAEPHT, Sikkim was also screened during the programme.

Products like herbal soap and honey developed from the said programme were also displayed on the stage. Herbal soaps developed during the PMVDY-ESDP training programme by Tanzi Bikmat VDVK, South Sikkim were also presented to the dignitaries on the dais. Signboards of VDVK cluster were also distributed to the beneficiaries of Samlik Marchak VDVK and Nandok Saramsa VDVK by the State implementing Agency.

Orientation on types of disabilities held at Singtam Hospital

GANGTOK, 07 OCT (IPR): Social Justice and Welfare Department, Government of Sikkim, organized an "Orientation Programme on 21 types of Disabilities, Evaluation and Procedure for Certification of Various Disabilities" at District Hospital Singtam today.

Joint Secretary-cum-Nodal Officer for Persons with Disabilities, Abinash Rai, Social Welfare Division, Dr MB Chettri, Joint Commissioner for Persons with Disabilities (Technical), Office of the Commissioner for Persons with Disabilities and Unique Disability Identity (UDID) State Coordinator, Sameer Pradhan were the representatives for the programme from the Social Justice & Welfare Department.

The participants for the programme included the Chief Medical Officer (CMO), District Medical

Superintendent (DMS), ENT Specialist, Sr ENT Specialist, Medical Specialist (Ortho), Physiotherapist, Pediatrician, Gynecologist, Medical Officers from PHCs, Dental Surgeons, Dental Consultant and Assistant Nursing Superintendents.

Joint Secretary in his address briefed about "The Rights of Persons with Disabilities (RPwD) ACT", 2016. He spoke about the inclusion of 21 types of disabilities in the ACT and also highlighted the penalties one has to face if a person with disability is denied basic rights as mentioned in the RPwD ACT 2016. He stated that a person with Benchmark Disabilities is the one who has forty per cent of the specified disability as certified by the certifying authority and also highlighted that no person having a disability less than forty per cent

should be denied a disability certificate by the Medical Authority. He emphasized on the importance of being empathetic towards people with disabilities by the general population and priority should be given by the hospitals regarding treatment of Persons with Disabilities and senior citizens.

Joint Commissioner (Technical) for Persons with Disabilities, briefed about the 21 Disabilities in detail. He also spoke in detail about the Guidelines for assessment of all 21 types of disabilities and how the Medical Authority / Medical Board should give the percentage as per the guidelines specified in the RPwD ACT 2016.

The RPwD ACT 2016, Guidelines for Assessment of disabilities and Pamphlets on 21 types of disabilities were handed out to all the participants followed by a feedback session.

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ANTHEYESTI KRIYA

The Antheyesti Kriya of Late Dhanapati Kharel, who left for his heavenly abode on 30th September, 2021, falls on 12 October, 2021. We invite all friends, family and well-wishers to join us in prayers [13th day rites] for the departed soul at our residence in Rawtey Rumtek. We would like to take this opportunity to thank all those who stood by us in our time of bereavement.



**Dr M P Kharel, H P Kharel, Prakash Kharel (sons)
Kamala Devi Kharel, Tulashi Kharel, Indira Kharel, Sangita Kharel (daughters)
Bimala Kharel, Hima Kharel, Rajani Ratna Pandey (daughter in law)
Dr Hari Krishna Shiwakoti, D N Sharma, D R Thapa (son in law)
Vinod Kharel, Sunny Kharel (grandsons)
And entire Kharel Family.
Contact: 8918237123, 9434241044, 9434164765**

Sumasam Sengma

**"YOUR PRESENCE WE MISS,
YOUR MEMORIES WE TREASURE,
LOVING YOU ALWAYS &
KEEPING YOU IN OUR HEARTS."**

It is with a heavy heart and profound grief, we the family members of Rai Cottage inform you of the sudden demise of LAXMI SHOVA RAI, D/o of Late B.B. Rai & Late Bandhana Rai, resident of Rai Cottage, Upper Arithang, Gangtok, who was born on the 2nd of March 1933 and left for the heavenly abode on the 3rd of October 2021. The bereaved family members express gratitude to relatives, family, friends and well-wishers for keeping her in their prayers during the time of sorrow.

The Sumasam Sengma for the departed soul falls on the 8th of October 2021 and the family would request relatives, friends and well-wishers to join them in offering prayers while adhering to Covid-19 protocols.



**Rai Cottage family
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Lachen celebrates Wildlife Week with commitment to keep mountains clean

SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 07 OCT: Lachen Tourism Development Committee organised a massive cleanliness drive stretching from 02 to 05 October as part of Wildlife Week from Thangu, Lunala and till Muguthang located at an altitude of 14000ft.

LTDC members, supported by residents, collected the waste, which comprised primarily of chips wrappers, empty juice cans and liquor bottles, from the mountains and brought them down to Lachen for segregation from where the filth was despatched to the nearest landfill.

Lachen also has a resource recovery unit supported by Rural Development Department, where waste is segregated.

The cleanliness program was undertaken to generate wider awareness on the issue.

Lachen Tourism De-



velopment Committee is an organisation of lachen youth who has come together to conserve the biodiversity, culture and tradition and has been working effortlessly for more than a decade.

Banning of packaged drinking water has been an important success story for LTDC which was also supported by the

Dzumsa in the year 2012. This has made Lachen the only village in the entire nation to take such an initiative and taking inspiration from the same, villages like Lachung also followed in the footsteps and now the Sikkim Government has announced a ban on plastic water bottles, a press release highlights.

Online inauguration of PSA Oxygen plants by PM

GANGTOK, 07 OCT (IPR): PSA oxygen plants under PM CARES (Prime Minister's Citizen Assistance and Relief in Emergency Situation Fund) was dedicated by Prime Minister to the nation through an online function hosted from AIIMS Rishikesh premises today and which was attended by the representatives of the State online.

Sikkim also witnessed the inauguration of 1000 LPM PSA plant installed at STNM Hospital online in the presence of Health Minister, Dr MK Sharma and Addl Chief Secretary Health and Family Welfare Department K Sreenivasulu, others present were Officers from the Head Office and Doctors, Officers and Staff from the STNM.

PM virtually dedicate one PSA plant in each State/UTs (35 in all).

Spanish volcano eruption shuts airport, area still 'tense'

MADRID (AP): The airport on the Spanish island of La Palma shut down again Thursday due to ashfall from a volcano that has been erupting for almost three weeks.

Scientists said the course of the eruption was unpredictable. It settled down in recent days, but the volcano in the Canary Islands continues to spew lava, and 16 earthquakes of up to magnitude 3.5 shook the area over the previous 24 hours, the National Geographic Institute said.

The lava has forced the evacuation of more than 6,000 people and destroyed more than 600 houses. The ash cloud temporarily closed La Palma Airport last month.

Officials said the molten rock from the crater is now flowing down a so-called lava tube beneath earlier, hardened lava, straight into the sea. That has eased fears it could spread wider and cause more destruction.

Cleanliness drive at Namchi Indoor Stadium



NAMCHI, 07 OCT [IPR]: To celebrate Azadi ka Amrit Mahotsava and as part of the Clean India program, a cleanliness drive was carried by the Department of Sports and Youth Affairs in co-

ordination with Sports Association at the Indoor Stadium, Namchi, today. This program aims at creating awareness among people and ensuring their involvement in Clean India Camping.

Azadi ka Amrit cleanliness drive at Namthang



NAMCHI, 07 OCT [IPR]: To celebrate "Azadi ka Amrit Mahotsava" and as a part of Clean India program, a cleanliness drive was conducted by BAC, Namthang in coordination with NYK, Namchi and Tek Youth Club, at

Kirtipur, under Turling Mamring GPU, today.

The main motive of this program is to create awareness among people about the single use plastic and ensuring their involvement in Clean India Camping.

BJP-Sikkim reviews SKM alliance, resolves to get more involved

SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 07 OCT:

The Sikkim unit of the Bharatiya Janata Party today reviewed its alliance with Sikkim Krantikari Morcha in the State Government and resolved that BJP will now get more involved to ensure better distribution of benefits and developmental works under Central and state government schemes.

The BJP-Sikkim executive meeting held at the party head office at Singtam also decided that a co-ordination meeting will be convened with SKM soon to discuss this issue.

A BJP press release informs that the Singtam meeting was chaired by the party's state president, DB Chauhan, and was attended by senior vice-presidents and work-

ers of the party.

The meeting discussed different organisational and political issues and steps required to strengthen party organisation in Sikkim, a press release issued by the by BJP-Sikkim spokesperson, Dr Raju Giri, informs.

The meeting also decided to hold district-level meetings followed by constituency-level meetings.

In his address, Mr Chauhan stressed that BJP workers should work consistently for the society, the state and the country.

Also today, state executive member, Arjun Rai, was appointed vice-president and senior party-worker, Indra Kumar Rasaily, appointed in-charge of the Information Technology cell of the party.

GaTC to perform at UrRock, booked for shows in Belgium and Germany

SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 07 OCT:

Girish And The Chronicles [GATC], the rock band born in Gangtok and now counted among the leading touring bands of country, is all set to perform at UrRock Festival, Switzerland, next month. A GATC press communiqué shares that the band is looking forward to unleashing its brand of rock n roll energy in Europe and is also excited about gigs it has been booked for in Belgium and Germany after the UrRock Festival date.

GATC will be rubbing shoulders with rock legends in Switzerland, the line-up for which includes Nazareth.

The band celebrates its 12th anniversary this month, and will be keeping a hectic schedule



come November. GATC has already been invited and booked for the HRH festival to be held in Manchester, UK in 2022, it is informed.

The pandemic has been brutal for everyone, and performers are only now emerging from nearly two years of cancelled shows and lost opportunities. To their credit, GATC

has used the hiatus rather well and recently finished album production of their third album and are working on the music videos for the same. The album will be released by record label giant, Frontiers Music if Italy, which is home to some of the biggest names in the Rock and Metal world such as Whitesnake, Mr

Big, Deff Leppard, Toto, Journey, Extreme, Uriah Heep, Sebastian Bach, Warrant etc.

GATC also recently released a music video for, "She's Heavy Metal," from their second album, a heavy metal treat.

GATC frontman, Girish Pradhan, has also been keeping busy with his project, Firstborne,

which is a supergroup with Chris Adler (Lamb of God, Megadeth fame) on drums, James LoMenzo (Whitelion, Megadeth fame) on bass, and soft shred pioneer Myrone on guitars. They recently released a single "The Bidding" recently following up on the self-titled EP consisting of 5 songs a few months earlier.



GOVERNMENT OF SIKKIM
OFFICE OF THE DISTRICT COLLECTOR
RABDENTSE, WEST SIKKIM

Memo No. 406 / DCW

Date: 01/10/2021.

PUBLIC NOTICE Under Section 3G of National Highway Act, 1956

Whereas the Central Government, in the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways, declared its intention to acquire the land specified in the Schedule annexed to the notification bearing **No.4389(E) dated 04.12.2020** published in the Gazette of India, Extraordinary, Part II, Section 3, issued under sub-section (1) of Section 3A of the National Highways Act, 1956 (48 of 1956) (hereinafter referred to as the said Act) for building (Widening/ four-laning, etc), maintenance management and operation of **NH No. 510** On the stretch of land from **Km 75+000 to Km 90.210 (Legship to Gyalshing)** in the district of **West** in the state of **Sikkim**.

And whereas, the substance of the said notification was published in **Sikkim Express & Dainik Mirmirey, dated: 21/08/2021** under sub-section (3) of section 3A of the said Act.

And whereas the Competent Authority has received objections filed under Section 3-C, considered and disallowed the same appropriately.

And whereas, in pursuance of sub-section (1) of section 3D of the said Act, the Competent Authority has submitted its report to the central Government.

And whereas, upon receipt of the said report of the competent authority and in exercise of the powers conferred by sub-section (1) of section 3D of the said Act, the Central Government has declared that he land specified in the said Scheduled should be acquired for the aforesaid purpose.

And whereas, the said declaration has been published in the Gazette of India, Extraordinary, Part II, bearing **No 3961(E), dated 24/09/2021** as required under Section 3D of the said Act.

And further, in pursuance to sub-section (2) of section 3D of the said Act, the Central Government hereby declares that on publication of this notification in the Officials Gazette, the land specified in the said **Schedule** shall vest absolutely in the Central Government, free from all encumbrances.

Now, therefore, in compliance of sub-section (3) of Section 3G, the Competent Authority hereby invites all the landowners or persons interested in the land being acquired under these proceedings to submit their claims in respect of the land mentioned in the **Schedule** given here-in-below within a period of 15 days from the date of publication of this Public Notice in the office of the Competent Authority i.e. Office of District Collector, Gyalshing West Sikkim, by 16/10/2021.

All the persons interested [owner of the lands and other interested person(s)] in the lands specified in the **Schedule** given below are hereby called upon to **submit their claims in the said land** (their share, area of land, any assets attached there to e.g. structures/tress etc. and state the nature of the respective interest in such lands along with relevant records. The said landowners or persons interested therein shall **also furnish**

the particulars of their Bank Accounts to which they would like their compensation amount to be credited. The claims may be submitted in the following indicative format:

Name of village/ Town	Name of the Landowner/interested person	Field Survey No.	Area of Land in his share	Any structures/trees/ tube well attached to the land	Name of the Bank & Branch in which he/she holds the Account	Particulars of the Bank Account No. IFSC Code of the Bank Branch
1						
2						
3						
4						

SCHEDULE

Schedule is attached herewith to this notice.

Sd/-
District Collector/CALA
Gyalshing West Sikkim

Media Should Invite More Criticism

There can, after all, be no improvement without analysis

The news media is introduced as the fourth estate, the fourth pillar holding up the shelter of democracy.

Interestingly, while the other “estates” of democracy – the judiciary, the executive and the legislative – have a screening process to get where they do and are also occasionally held accountable for their actions in a formal way in the public domain, the news media is an equal opportunity sector where anyone can get in and appears to work unfettered and is technically answerable to no one. In a perfect world, this is how things should be with “open access” graduating to meritocracy and excellence in this estate. The watchdog in a true democratic system should not be subservient to anyone or anything if it is to deliver on its responsibilities properly. It is, however, not a perfect world that we live in, so checks and balances are required at every level. One could argue that the readers are the best agency to rein in the media when the power of the pen goes to their head. And, in a way they are. No matter how sensational its content, a newspaper, news channel or any other vehicle of information loses credibility in the reader’s mind if it keeps reporting rumours for facts and highlighting trivialities as issues. Readers might turn to them for entertainment, but will take the information with a pinch of salt. And, with so many other modes of entertainment available nowadays, even that USP becomes a liability very fast. So, yes, readership/viewership (or followers if you are more SocialMedia inclined) is the one factor that fixes accountability on newspapers.

Obviously, sometimes, just this much is not enough. Readership is not respected to the extent it should be – neither in Sikkim nor in India as a whole. While simple numbers are enough to decide readership in Sikkim, at a national level it becomes slightly more complicated. The numbers game that media houses indulge in to inflate circulation is no secret and it is perhaps for this reason that an editorial post common in West is now being toyed by some newspapers in India too. The Hindu had started the ball rolling with the offer to appoint a Reader’s Editor, an Ombudsman of sorts. This was a brave decision as the Reader’s Editor, the in-house critic, is expected to be scathing in her/his analysis of the newspaper. That experiment has played out to mixed results, but is worth exploring on wider scale. A Reader’s/ Public Editor does not only question and challenge the veracity of news-reports, but also pulls up the intents and vested interests behind the highlighting, prominence and display of certain stories. That is not all, s/he is also allowed to question journalistic ethics of the newspaper and also air opinion when some stories are downplayed or dropped. S/he does all this not in internal memos, but in a space allotted in the newspaper. In the public domain. Reader’s Editors in the West have been known to be extremely sharp in their criticism. Their performance in India leaves a lot to be desired but is a necessary undertaking. It is also unlikely to happen with any significance because media criticism/ analysis is still a rare animal in media circles. Some online platforms are trying to correct this, but their reach is still limited.

The reason this is being shared here is to highlight the fact that there can be no improvement without criticism. And, there is no such thing as “positive criticism.” Criticism is criticism, its positivity or negativity depends on the target of the criticism and how it is used. Newspaper reports are not the final word. Everyone knows that, and since there is still a lot of room for improvement as far as our conduct is concerned, we, in the media, should invite more responses. To begin with, there will be crude and poorly informed outbursts, but if we give it time, discussions on newspapers in the public domain will soon become more coherent and, yes, “constructive”.

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



Is Social Distancing Unraveling the Bonds that Keep Society Together?

ILANA HORWITZ
theconversation.com

With birthday celebrations being downsized, religious services moving back online and indoor playdates getting canceled, millions of Americans are having fewer social interactions because of persistently high case numbers and high rates of transmission.

It’s not just interactions with friends and families that are getting cut. Routine yet beneficial interactions with people at fitness and child care centers and volunteer organizations are also being eliminated.

Social distancing is vital to combating COVID-19. But is it unraveling the social bonds that keep society together?

SOCIAL CAPITAL ADDS UP

As a sociologist of religion and education, I study how Americans develop social ties, and how these social ties influence people’s lives. Scholars refer to relationships that exist between and among people as “social capital.” When people interact, even briefly, they start to trust one another and feel comfortable asking each other for help. But for that trust to develop, people need to physically interact with one another.

Social capital is highly valuable during times of crisis. During Hurricane Ida, for example, people waded through rising water to save neighbors. A similar thing happened during Chicago’s 1995 heat wave when hundreds of people who lived alone without air conditioning were rescued by neighbors and acquaintances.

Having trusting relationships with people ahead of crises is key – and building those relationships requires people to spend time together.

While isolating at home in spring 2020, I started to wonder: Does the need to social distance affect how social capital gets activated during a pandemic?

From August to October 2020, I interviewed 36 middle- and low-income Jewish parents in the greater Philadelphia area who had school-aged children. There was a range among parents in how

involved they were in Jewish communities and organizations. Some were regular synagogue-goers. Others rarely went to services but actively volunteered for Jewish organizations. And some rarely participated in any religious or social dimensions of Jewish life.

How does a study of Jews help us understand the flow of social capital during a pandemic?

Both Jews and non-Jews can develop social capital by participating in religious organizations. It’s not religious rituals that cultivate social capital – it’s all those social interactions that occur outside of religious rituals.

RELATIONSHIPS PAY OFF

When COVID-19 hit, millions of Americans needed to avoid social contact and couldn’t participate in religious services.

That also meant they couldn’t participate in the social dimensions of religious life – they couldn’t help people mourn their dead, volunteer in soup kitchens or gather with people for meals during holidays and the Sabbath.

For Jews, limiting social interaction was especially difficult because many rituals require a minyan – a quorum – of 10 people.

My interviews revealed two key phenomena. First, social capital gets activated differently during a pandemic than it does during weather-related disasters.

During hurricanes and heat waves, social capital manifests itself in people physically helping their acquaintances get out of dangerous situations.

But during a pandemic, the physical help itself is what’s dangerous. Working parents couldn’t turn to their neighbors or friends for child care help without putting their acquaintances, as well as their own children, at risk of contracting COVID-19.

Since physical interaction was off limits, the role of social capital transformed. Jewish parents were able to use their social connections in Jewish organizations to get supermarket gift cards, groceries and even lump sums of cash to offset lost income. For these economically fragile families, the immediate resources helped them feel secure and

cared for in a time of profound uncertainty.

Parents were more likely to get these resources if they had been actively engaged in the social life of the Jewish community before COVID-19. Parents who weren’t embedded in Jewish communities didn’t even know that they could ask for help.

At the same time, rabbis who had received funds through larger Jewish organizations to help their congregants and community members knew whom to distribute funds to only if they had relationships with them ahead of the pandemic – relationships that were developed through social interactions outside of formal religious rituals like prayer.

RECIPROCITY REQUIRED

The second major finding is that extended periods of social distancing threaten the flow of social capital.

Parents who received material resources from Jewish organizations or rabbis were often those who contributed in some capacity to the system prior to COVID-19. Some served as greeters or as security guards during synagogue events; others organized meal trains; and some volunteered for their local chevra kadisha, or Jewish burial society.

The key point is that social capital requires reciprocity – people need to give in order to receive. Physical and reciprocal acts of generosity are crucial for maintaining the social bonds of society.

But what happens to our social bonds when social distancing limits our ability to physically help each other? While individuals can still contribute money, there is little opportunity for people to give their time and join in physical communal efforts.

If human interactions are hindered for long periods of time, social capital could break down. This could profoundly unravel the social ties that bind Americans together and motivate them to transcend their self-interests to help others. Americans may survive the pandemic, but will they have anyone left to turn to the next time they need support?

[the writer is Assistant Professor, Fields-Rayant Chair in Contemporary Jewish Life, Tulane University]

Standing on one leg is a sign of good health – and practising is good for you too

DAWN SKELTON
theconversation.com

Research shows that people’s ability to stand on one leg is an indicator of health and that getting better at standing on one leg can add to fitness and potentially lifespan.

Being able to stand on one leg is linked to increased levels of physical activity and decreased risk of falls and is associated with both quality and length of life. Around 37.3 million falls per year worldwide are severe enough to require medical attention.

The inability to balance on one leg for 20 seconds or longer is linked in otherwise healthy people to an increased risk of small blood vessel damage in the brain and reduced ability to understand ideas. You are less likely to be able to stand on one leg without a wobble if you have a multitude of medical conditions such as Parkinson’s disease, stroke or Alzheimer’s disease).

Pregnancy, menopause, the diagnosis of disease and retirement can also alter our strength and balance and ability to stay upright, mostly because of the way these affect our ability and motivation to engage in regular physical activity.

Sitting or reclining while awake

is associated with lower muscle strength, risk of falls and physical function, sometimes irrespective of the amount of moderate or vigorous intensity physical activity you do. People who sit for prolonged periods are more likely to develop type 2 diabetes, higher waist circumference and obesity.

WHY STANDING ON ONE LEG MATTERS

Data shows that the time people can stand on one leg changes for men and women at different ages – and an inability to hit those target times for your age group can highlight health problems.

The human body, when standing upright, is inherently unstable. We have a very small base of support relative to our height and width. When in good health we rely on our central and peripheral nervous system to integrate all the information coming in from our balance senses (eyes, inner ears and feedback from muscles and joints). We then engage the right muscles (feet, ankle, leg and core muscles, sometimes even the arm muscles) at the right time to make the necessary adjustments to our posture to stay upright.

The more physically active we are, the more likely we are to have good balance and of course the wider

physical, psychological and social benefits of being regularly active are well known.

Other health problems can also affect our physical activity and are characterised by stooped posture and worsened balance, such as depression and osteoporosis, leading to an increased risk of falls and fracture. A stooped posture makes standing on one leg more difficult.

SHOULD I START STANDING ON ONE LEG?

You can improve your ability to stand on one leg at any age, and improve your balance. It’s more challenging if you have a neurological condition, but studies have shown improvements in balance following exercise in many conditions and it is known to reduce falls in many others. In the UK around one in three adults over 65 and half of people over 80 will have at least one fall a year. A recent Public Health England report suggests that lack of activity in older adults because of the social restrictions during the pandemic could lead to 110,000 more older people falling this year.

You can test your own balance here and have a try at some simple balance exercises. You are more likely to have improved confidence in performing physical activity, and getting

more active can help lengthen and improve quality of life.

Standing on one leg can be made much more challenging if you close your eyes while doing it. This is worth practising as it helps with our long-term balance and reduces the risk of falling over. With our eyes open the body becomes lazy and relies on our vision to help keep us balanced. If you take out vision, it gets the other senses working better. Most people can only do this for a short time compared to when they keep their eyes open. Have something close by to hold on to. You will improve over time.

For the over 70s, there’s also evidence to show standing on each leg for one minute three times a day can help improve hip bone mineral density. Stronger hip bone mineral density means if you do fall you are less likely to fracture.

And on that note, do I stand on one leg? Yes, when I am cleaning my teeth morning and evening, alternating from one leg to another at least twice. If I am feeling bold I try one round of the teeth with my eyes closed. That, I might add, I am starting to find more difficult – I must practice more.

[the writer is Professor in Ageing and Health, Glasgow Caledonian University]



Mamata Banerjee, two other TMC MLAs take oath

KOLKATA, OCT 7 (PTI): West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee was on Thursday administered the oath as a member of the state assembly by Governor Jagdeep Dhankhar.

Banerjee, who won the Bhabanipur by-poll by a margin of 58,835 votes, a record for the seat, took the oath in Bengali.

She needed to win the election to retain the chief minister's chair after her defeat at the hands of protege-turned-rival BJP's Suvenudhikari in the March-April assembly elections.

Two other newly elected TMC legislators JakirHossain and Amirul Islam also took oath soon afterwards. JakirHossain

was declared victorious by a huge margin of 92,480 votes from Jangipur,Amirul Islam won from Samserganj by 26,379 votes.

Dhankhar had on Tuesday said he will administer the oath to Banerjee and others, in a departure from the practice of the governor authorising the speaker of the assembly to conduct the exercise.

Active COVID-19 cases in country lowest in 204 days

NEW DELHI, OCT 7 (PTI): With 22,431 people testing positive for coronavirus infection in a day, India's total tally of COVID-19 cases rose to 3,38,94,312, while the active cases declined to 2,44,198, the lowest in 204 days, according to the Union Health Ministry data updated on Thursday.

The death toll climbed to 4,49,856 with 318 fresh fatalities, according to the data updated at 8 am.

The daily rise in new coronavirus infections has been below 30,000 for 13 straight days.

The active cases comprise 0.72 per cent of the total infections, the lowest since March 2020, while the national COVID-19 recovery rate was recorded at 97.95 per cent, the highest since March 2020, the ministry said.

A decrease of 2,489 cases has been recorded in the active COVID-19 caseload in a span of 24 hours.

As many as 14,09,825 tests were conducted on Wednesday taking the total cumulative tests con-

ducted so far for detection of COVID-19 in the country to 57,68,03,867.

The daily positivity rate was recorded at 1.57 per cent. It has been less than three per cent for last 38 days. The weekly positivity rate was recorded at 1.68 per cent. It has been below three per cent for the last 104 days, according to the ministry.

The number of people who have recuperated from the disease surged to 3,32,00,258, while the case fatality rate was recorded at 1.33 per cent.

The cumulative doses administered in the country so far under the nationwide COVID-19 vaccination drive has exceeded 92.63 crore.

India's COVID-19 tally had crossed the 20-lakh mark on August 7, 2020, 30 lakh on August 23, 40 lakh on September 5 and 50 lakh on September 16. It went past 60 lakh on September 28, 70 lakh on October 11, crossed 80 lakh on October 29, 90 lakh on November 20 and surpassed the one-crore mark on December 19.

MoS Agriculture...

a provision of Rs 1 lakh crore of Agriculture Infrastructure Fund to ensure that farmers can set up their own processing units and other related infrastructure and avail credit of up to Rs 2 crore without mortgage.

He further added that the Centre has also been working consistently to promote and develop the north eastern region in organic farming.

He added that the Centre has taken up Oil Palm cultivation on mission-mode especially in the north-eastern region. He mentioned that the country was importing Rs 70,000 crores worth of palm oil so there was hope from the NER under this Oil Palm mission and the Centre has been working to double the income of farmers by 2022.

Workshop on Sikkim's...

activities and addressed potential areas of convergence of enhanced waste management, joint monitoring of biodiversity and mitigating transboundary wildlife crime, it is informed.

In his keynote address, the Additional PCCF mentioned that both the Forest Department and the security agencies have similar mandates of guarding the natural wealth and sovereignty of the country and such sensitization programs will go a long way towards sensitizing the forces for enhanced cooperation and coordination.

It was also mentioned that the SECURE Himalaya Project and WWF-India also plan to immediately start working towards a longer and formal collaboration with the military and paramilitary forces. At the end, all the participants took a conservation pledge and also signed on the same.

ICAR training to help enhance farm productivity through soil health input management

GANGTOK, 07 OCT [PIB]: To support organic agriculture production through farmers' participatory mode, ICAR Sikkim Centre organized training cum input distribution programme, "Enhancing the productivity of rural tribal farmers through soil health input management and training for doubling livelihood empowerment" on 05 Oct, More than 30 farmers at Pakyong Chlamthang, East Sikkim took the training.

The main aim behind such training cum input distribution was the popularization and demonstration of technology developed by ICAR-Sikkim Centre.

The ICAR Sikkim Centre also organized Field day on onion and garlic on the same day at Chlamthang, Pakyong of East Sikkim under the All India Network Project Research on Onion and Garlic (AINPROG) project. The main aim behind Field day on onion and garlic was to provide the scientific package of onion and garlic produc-

tion technology and to distribute high-quality onion seed and garlic bulb. During the training programme, Scientist SS (Horticulture), Dr Sudip Kumar Dutta highlighted the main aim behind the training cum input distribution programme. Scientist SS (Soil Science), Dr Shaon Kumar Das also highlighted soil health input management can increase soil health, crop productivity, and a sustainable source of income for the farmers. He added that mixed farming combining agriculture and livestock plays an important role in strengthening the overall rural economy of Sikkim. Joint Director of ICAR Research Complex Sikkim Centre, Dr Ramgopal Laha, Tadong briefed the farmers about the importance of soil health nutrient management and organic onion and garlic production technology for the increasing production and productivity in the State which would help in doubling the farmer income. He also emphasized the

importance of the livestock sector for the livelihood security of farmers as well as sustainable organic agriculture in Sikkim. The training was coordinated by Scientist Horticulture, Dr Sudip Kumar Dutta in the presence of Joint Director, Dr Ram Gopal Laha, ICAR Sikkim Centre and Scientist Soil Science from ICAR Sikkim Centre, Dr Shaon Kumar Das and farmers from Pakyong, Chlamthang, East districts of Sikkim. An improved Onion and garlic variety, Jalkund, biofertilizers, Vermibed, Knapsack Sprayer, Dolomite Nalpak, and organic nutrients were distributed amongst the progressive farmers during the programme. More than 30 farmers attended and received the packages of scientific production technology of onion and garlic seed. The farmers also demonstrated nursery production of onion and spacing of garlic bulbs in the field to increase the productivity and source of income for the farmers.

CHO induction training for mid-level health providers

GANGTOK, 07 OCT (IPR): A 15-day residential CHO Induction Training for Mid-Level Health Providers of Health & Family Welfare Department from East and South districts concluded at SICUN on 06 Oct.

The closing day function was chaired by PDHS cum MD NHM, Dr T Yamphel Bhutia as Chief Guest along with DHS cum SLO, Dr T Doma, DHS cum SNO NHM, Dr Raj Prabha Moktan and senior doctors and officials from Quality Assurance, Food and Drugs, NPCDCS, Human Resource, IT, IEC and Programme Management unit of the department.

As part of Ayushman Bharat, Community Health Officers are a new cadre of non-physician health workers. They are appointed with a vision to improve access

to healthcare in the rural and remote areas for the marginalized and vulnerable families, reduce out of pocket expenditure, increase utilization of public health services at the primary care level and reduce work load at the secondary and tertiary care facilities. CHOs will play a critical role in provision of expanded range of essential package of services as part of Comprehensive Primary Health Care. They are expected to lead the primary care team at the Sub Centre - Health and Wellness Centre, provide clinical management and ambulatory care to the community and serve as an important coordination link to ensure the continuum of care. The CHOs in Sikkim are all from the nursing background with most of them with BSc Nursing degree

.They had to undergo six months training and pass in the Certificate Course in Community Health before being posted as Mid-Level Health Providers. All the sub-centres in Sikkim are provided with an MLHP.

CHO Induction training was scheduled from 22 Sept to 06 Oct, 2021 and was inaugurated by DG cum Secretary, Dr Pempa Bhutia and PDHS cum MD NHM, Dr T Yamphel. There were trained and certified resource persons for the Induction Training from the department. Seven service packages out of the twelve under Comprehensive Primary Health Care were covered during this fifteen days training along with the roles and responsibilities of CHO. Certificates were distributed to MLHPs for successfully completing the Induction training.

SFA calls on NDFA members in Mangan, briefs them on new football management regulations

SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 07 OCT:

A team of Sikkim Football Association office-bearers, led by their president Menla Ethenpa, called on the District Collector [North], Tenzing T Kaleon, and members of the North District Football Association [NDFA] on Wednesday to deliberate on the functioning of the district football association vis-à-vis development of Sikkim football at large.

The SFA team included vice-presidents Shyam Pradhan and Che-wang Paul Sangdarpa and chief coordinator, Phurba Sherpa.

An SFA press release informs that the SFA president spoke about new regulations which require clubs to register their players through the Central Registration System on the official portal of All India Football Federation.

He also apprised in



the meeting that referees were also required to register themselves through Referees Administration System of India.

He informed that the district association was also required to have an annual calendar which should include other activities like organisation of Baby Leagues, Futsal and minimum of "B" division local league matches in the district.

SFA has assured help to the district units with regard to educating incumbents in the field of refereeing as well as

to develop grassroots coaches in the days to come, the release informs.

It is informed that the DC-North advised NDFA to make the association inclusive by taking members from other subdivisions of the district as well. He further stressed that since SFA was the apex body of football in the state, NDFA should take note of suggestions put forward by SFA. He also suggested that NDFA rope in some sponsors to carry forward their programmes.

Free eye check-up for elderly at Yangang

SURAJ LIMBOO
GANGTOK, 07 OCT: Yangang-Rangang GPU organised a Free Eye Check-up camp at Yangang GPU today. The camp was especially targeted at the elderly who are unable to visit health care centres due to financial problems, informed Panchayat President, DK Rai.

The programme was attended by MLA, Raj Kumari Thapa as chief guest

accompanied by BDO Bishnu Thapa, SKM area in-charge, RK Basnett, and other departmental officials.

An eight-member team of doctors and nurses with eye specialist Dr.Tshering Wangchuk Bhutia from Namchi hospital, conducted the camp. Spectacles were also provided to patients free of cost.

Covid warriors in-

cluding ASHA workers of Yangang-Rangang GPU, Yangang Police station, social workers, milk truck drivers, and NGOs were also felicitated on the day.

Tokens of love were provided to 15 elderly villagers and progressive youth of the GPU.

MLA Raj Kumari Thapa also handed over two computers and printers to Satam Jr. High School.

Now, aggrieved...

commission for further processing.

The launch programme was also attended by advisor IT Department, TN Lamtha, Secretary, Food & Civil Supplies Department, Deepa Rani Thapa, DDG NIC New Delhi, DC Misra via Video Conference, Member State Commission, DP Sharma, officials of NIC HQ Delhi, NIC Gangtok and Food & Civil Supplies Department.

Addressing the function, Minister Upreti said that India was at par with the rest of the world when it comes to use of technology in governance.

Many National Digital Missions have been rolled out by the Prime Minister, of which E-Daakhil is setting an exemplary footprint and is counted among one of the successful missions.

The Minister further said that E-Daakhil is a one of a kind portal. Earlier, a complainant had to visit the District Commission and/ or State Commission to file complaints. They had to manually go to the bank to make a bank-draft to be submitted as court fees and the paperwork was cumbersome.

With the enactment of Consumer Protection Act, 2019, which has stated specific provisions for filing of complaints online, E-Daakhil portal will prove a boon to aggrieved consumers. Now, the court will reach the houses of the complainant in India, where the complainants can avail the portal to pay their fees online through UPI, Internet Banking, Debit Card, etc.

The benevolent nature of the Consumer Protection Act, 2019 shall be appreciated by all in the coming future.

The Minister stated that it will also be the duty of the Department to organise outreach programs so that every consumer in Sikkim is aware about the E-Daakhil portal. With Online Case Monitoring System under CONFONET project already in place, E-Daakhil is an additional boon for the customers.

Sikkim is the 23rd Commission amongst all the States and Union Territories to launch the E-Daakhil portal.

It proves that we are not lagging behind in the implementation of projects and missions introduced by the Central Government and will try and be amongst the first ones in the future.

He congratulated the Department, State Commission and District Commission for achieving this milestone and expressed hope that they will in coordination with NIC make this mission a successful one.

DDG, NIC, New Delhi, DC Misra, in his address, mentioned that NIC was established in Sikkim in 1991 with a signing of MoU by the State Heads and officials of NIC HQ. At present, all the districts of Sikkim have established NIC offices, and with diligent effort and work of NIC officers, facility of e-governance is successfully implemented in the State.

The NIC employees have been facilitating software according to the needs of the State Government. Standard softwares developed by the Central Government have also been successfully implemented in Sikkim due to the vision and support of the State Government.

Sikkim is the second state in the North East Region to launch the E-Daakhil portal. The main aspect of this portal is that even minute grievances of consumers, regardless of the amount, can be registered and processed within an efficient frame of time.

He congratulated and thanked the State Government for the successful launch of the portal and mentioned that the support and guidance of the State Government will be a huge encouragement for future implementation of various e-governance portals for ease and efficiency of the Government.

Earlier, the welcome address was delivered by Deputy Secretary, Food & Civil Supplies Department, Tripti Hangma Subba.

Presentation of E-Daakhil portal was delivered by Sr. Technical Director and Additional SIO NIC Sikkim, Dr LP Sharma and Vote of Thanks was proposed by State Informatics Officer, NIC Sikkim, Birendra Chettri.

UEFA sets date for Euro 2024 qualifying draw in Frankfurt

NYON, SWITZERLAND (AP): The 2024 European Championship qualifying groups will be drawn in Frankfurt in one year, UEFA said Thursday.

The qualifying format was not announced, though the 54 teams involved will likely be drawn into 10 qualifying groups, each with five or six teams playing from March to November in 2023.

That would let the top two in each group advance directly to the 24-team finals tournament joining host Germany.

The Euro 2024 lineup will likely be completed in March 2024 by three playoff brackets involving teams based on their standings in the Nations League groups played next year.

The Nations League groups are played next June and September, ahead of the Oct. 9 draw for the Euro 2024 qualifying groups.

UEFA is scheduled to draw those Nations League groups on Dec. 16 in Montreux, Switzerland.

The top three Nations League tiers each have 16 teams leaving just seven countries in the lowest-ranked League D, which is unlikely to get a protected playoff path to the Euro 2024 finals tournament. For Euro 2020, the fourth-tier playoffs let North Macedonia qualify.

Top-tier teams which advance to the Nations League Final Four in June 2023 will need to be drawn into the lighter-schedule five-team qualifying groups for Euro 2024.

Rogers, Stephens win opening matches at Indian Wells

INDIAN WELLS, CALIF. (AP): Shelby Rogers beat AnhelinaKalinina 7-6 (2), 6-2, and Sloane Stephens outlasted Heather Watson 6-7 (5), 7-5, 6-1 on Wednesday in opening matches at the BNP Paribas Open. Rogers and Stephens were joined by fellow American Madison Keys in advancing. Keys beat KaiaKanepi, 6-0, 7-5.

Stephens won seven of 18 break points She raced to a 5-0 lead in the third set before Watson held, then served out the win. Watson had seven aces and seven double faults on the hard courts at the Indian Wells Tennis Garden.

Rogers upset top-ranked Ash Barty in the third round of the U.S. Open. American Madison Brengle lost to Hsieh Su-wei, 6-1, 7-6 (4), and U.S. qualifier Alycia Parks was routed 6-0, 6-1 by Arantxa Rus.

Men's main draw play begins Thursday.

Three-time major champion Andy Murray and four-time major champion Kim Clijsters received wild cards into the event. U.S. Open champion Emma Raducanu and runner-up Leylah Fernandez are entered. Electronic Hawkeye cameras, previously in use at the tournament, will handle line calls for every match.

McKennie to start vs short-handed Jamaica in WCup qualifier

AUSTIN, TEXAS (AP): Christian Pulisic and Gio Reyna are missing from the U.S. lineup because of injuries but Weston McKennie will start following his disciplinary flap last month. Jamaica is without top forward Michail Antonio for reasons that remain unclear.

The Americans host Jamaica on Thursday night after getting five points in their first three matches of CONCACAF's brutal, 14-game, seven-month final round of World Cup qualifying. The Reggae Boyzhave one point as they seek to return to soccer's showcase for the first time since 1998.

"After three games I don't think it's panic mode for anyone in the table," U.S. coach Gregg Berhalter said Wednesday. "This is about just hanging in there and every round chipping away at it until you get to that number where you're qualified."

Reyna hasn't played since a hamstring injury in the Sept. 2 opener at El Salvador, and Pulisic hasn't recovered from a sprained ankle sustained six days later at Honduras.

Jamaica learned Tuesday that Antonio, the Premier League's August player of the month for West Ham, failed to travel. Reggae Boyzcoach Theodore Whitmore wouldn't confirm or refute a report Antonio was angry he couldn't bring along a physiotherapist.

"I can't comment whether it's commitment," Whitmore said. "It's a sticky situation. There's not much I can say. ... I don't want to point any fingers. I don't know who is at



fault, All I can say is the player was selected."

Jamaica will have only 20 players dress — including three goalkeepers — from the 23 selected, three shy of the total allowed to suit up. Whitmore said it was too late to ask clubs for releases.

"Personally, I wanted to take more than 23 players," he said.

Berhalter has 26 in camp. Midfielder YunusMusah trained on his own Wednesday after an inconclusive COVID test, then received a negative PCR test and was cleared in the evening to rejoin team

activities. "It was a precaution we needed to take," Berhalter said.

McKennie played 90 minutes in the 0-0 draw at El Salvador but was held out of the 1-1 tie against Canada after violating team COVID protocols, then was sent home before the 4-1 victory at Honduras. McKennie has not discussed the situation with media.

"We're dealing with young players here, and I think there's moments where there's going to be mistakes made, and I think it's just about being accountable for your mistakes and then learn-

ing and moving from there," Berhalter said. "Weston is going to start the game tomorrow. He's been focused coming into this week, and we're not holding anything against him. Is he going to have to rebuild trust by a time period of showing that he's the leader that we expect him to be? Of course. But there's nothing held against him."

This set of games also includes three matches in seven days, with a Sunday game at Panama and a meeting with Costa Rica next Wednesday at Columbus, Ohio.

Panama requires visitors

not fully vaccinated to quarantine for 72 hours, and Britain mandates those who have been to Panama to quarantine upon entry to the UK, which impacts goalkeeper Zack Steffen and left back Antonee Robinson.

"Right now, we have everyone except one player that's fully vaccinated. Another player has one of his two shots, and we're going to have to be working through that," Berhalter. "The English situation is changing daily and we're figuring that out, as well. We don't think it makes sense to travel Zack or An-

tonee if they have to quarantine for 10 days at the back end."

Berhalter used 22 players in the first three matches, including 21 starters. Only goalkeeper Matt Turner, defender Miles Robinson and midfielder Tyler Adams played every minute.

He added Kellyn Acosta, Paul Arriola, Musah, Tim Weah, GysasiZardes after they recovered from injuries, and GianlucaBusio, Matthew Hoppe, Chris Richards, Shaq Moore and Luca de la Torre a month later into their European seasons.

Berhalter dropped Jordan Pefok, James Sands and Josh Sargent along with No. 3 goalkeeper Ethan Horvath, while defender Johns Brooks (injury) and and Tim Ream (family reasons) withdrew.

In the first World Cup qualifier in Texas, Berhalter is looking for speed — as he calls it, "verticality."

"There's moments in the El Salvador game, we get the ball, there's a ton of space behind the back line, and we want to pass it to an open player so he can dribble instead of playing behind the line," he said. "Look at the Canada game, where it's a compact block, why not try to get behind that with the urgency more often."

Jamaica lost 2-1 at Mexico and 3-0 at home against Panama, then drew 1-1 at Costa Rica.

"We understand the intensity and the grit that it's going to take to get a result that we want," Miles Robinson said.

Suns beat Lakers again in playoff rematch matinee in Phoenix

PHOENIX (AP): Postseason or preseason, the Phoenix Suns keep getting the best of the Los Angeles Lakers.

The Western Conference champions got their first exhibition victory with a 117-105 victory Wednesday in a rare weekday matinee start.

The start time for the game in Phoenix was moved up so the Mercury could host their WNBA semifinal game on their home court late that night. The court was decorated with the Mercury's logos.

Deandre Ayton had 14 points and 11 rebounds to help the Suns even their exhibition record at 1-1. Mikal Bridges scored 15 points and Jae Crowder had 13 points and nine rebounds.

Devin Booker rested for Phoenix. Chris Paul had eight points and 11 assists in his preseason debut and the Suns got a strong effort from their bench. Cam Johnson scored 13 points and newcomer JaVale McGee provided 12 points in 14 minutes. Cameron Payne had 11 points and five assists.

The Suns beat the Lakers in the first round of last season's playoffs, winning three straight games after falling into a 2-1 deficit. LeBron James and Anthony Davis were battling injuries in that series and Los Angeles still wasn't at full strength Wednesday.

James and Russell Westbrook sat out their second straight game, though Carmelo Anthony made his Lakers debut and scored eight points in 17 minutes. Davis had 14 points and eight rebounds in 25 minutes.

Malik Monk scored 18 points off the bench for the Lakers (0-2). Talen Horton-Tucker and Kendrick Nunn each added 11.

Trevor Ariza also sat out again and the Lakers announced after the game the veteran forward had an arthroscopic procedure on his right ankle and will be evaluated in about eight weeks.

MAVERICKS 111, JAZZ 101

DALLAS (AP): Luka Doncic had 19 points, six rebounds and five assists in just 19 minutes of his preseason debut and Dallas won its opener under new coach Jason Kidd.

BobanMarjanovic added 14 points, hitting a pair of 3-pointers later in the third quarter, and Jalen Brunson had 10 points

and eight assists for the Mavericks.

Rookie Jared Butler scored 22 points for the Jazz, who rested Donovan Mitchell, Rudy Gobert and most of their regulars while falling to 0-2.

WARRIORS 118, NUGGETS 116

SAN FRANCISCO (AP):Stephen Curry hit four 3-pointers and scored 14 points in 15 first-half minutes and Golden State made 21 3-pointers.

Curry made a 3-pointer to spark a 13-0 run over the final 2 minutes of the second quarter that was capped when Curry pump-faked as Denver's PJ Dozier flew by, took a dribble and hit another 3 to give Golden State (2-0) a 63-62 halftime lead.

Jordan Poole led the Warriors with 17 points, Otto Porter Jr. scored 15 points and NemanjaBieliczja added 13.

Nikola Jokic made 3 of 4 from 3-point range and finished 17 points, 10 rebounds and two blocks — all in the first half for Denver (0-2). Aaron Gordon scored 16 points and Nah'Shon Hyland — the No. 26 pick in the 2021 NBA draft out of VCU — had 11 points, six assists, two steals and no turnovers.

Michael Porter Jr. (knee) did not play for the Nuggets.

PELICANS 104, MAGIC 86

NEW ORLEANS (AP): Rookie Trey Murphy III made six more 3-pointers and scored 20 points for New Orleans.

Murphy, the No. 17 pick in the draft, has made six 3s in both games for the Pelicans (1-1). Nickeil Alexander-Walker added five and finished with 19 points, while Jonas Valanciunas had 13 points and nine rebounds.

The Pelicans were 18 for 35 (51%) behind the arc.

Wendell Carter Jr. had 13 points and 11 rebounds for the Magic (0-2). Rookie Jalen Suggs, the No. 5 pick, shot 1 for 7 and had two points and six rebounds.

PISTONS 115, SPURS 105

DETROIT (AP): Jerami Grant, a gold medalist with U.S. men's basketball team at the Tokyo Olympics, scored 18 points and Josh Jackson added 16.

Kelly Olynyk and Cory Joseph each had

14 points and six assists, while SaddiqBey scored 13 points for the Pistons.

Trey Lyles hit two of his three 3-pointers in a 14-2 run in the third quarter that gave Detroit (1-0) the lead for good. Lyles, who finished with nine points, played the past two seasons with San Antonio (1-1).

Bryn Forbes, who made 6 of 8 from the 3-point line and 7 of 11 from the field, led the Spurs with 20 points. Keldon Johnson added 18 points and Lonnie Walker IV scored 13.

Detroit's top selections in the past two drafts, Cade Cunningham — the No. 1 overall pick in 2021 — and Killian Hayes did not play due to ankle injuries.

CAVALIERS 99, HAWKS 96

ATLANTA (AP):Collin Sexton scored 19 points and Darius Garland had 15 points and seven assists to lead Cleveland.

Jarrett Allen added 12 points and three blocks, Isaac Okoro had 12 points and three steals and LauriMarkkanen scored 11 points for the Cavaliers (1-1). Evan Mobley, the No. 3 overall pick in July's draft, finished with eight points, 12 rebounds, two assists and two blocks.

Cam Reddish had 20 points and five steals for Atlanta (0-2) and John Collins added eight rebounds, two steals and two blocks. Kevin Huerter scored 15 points and GorguiDieng had 13 points, 11 rebounds and six assists.

Trae Young (quad), DaniloGallinari (rest) and BogdanBogdanovic (rest) did not play for the Hawks.

KINGS 113, CLIPPERS 98

LOS ANGELES (AP): De'Aaron Fox scored 23 points on 7-of-11 shooting and Terence Davis scored all his 15 points in the second half for Sacramento.

The teams were tied at 51-all at halftime, but Buddy Hield, who finished with 11 points, hit two 3-pointers in a 13-0 run in the third quarter that blew it open.

Davion Mitchell — the No. 9 overall pick — was 3 of 3 from behind the arc, scored 13 points and had four assists for Sacramento (2-0).

Second-round pick Brandon Boston Jr. led Los Angeles (0-2) with 20 points on 6-of-19 shooting.

Greek lawmakers to vote on major defense pact with France

ATHENS, GREECE (AP): Greece's lawmakers were debating and voting Thursday on a broad five-year defense pact signed last week with France which includes a clause of mutual assistance in case of attack by a third party.

Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis signed the deal with French President Emmanuel Macron during a Sept. 28 visit to Paris, during which Greece also announced it would be buying three French frigates for the Greek navy.

The purchase and defense deal come at a time of generally increased tension between Greece and its fellow NATO member and neighbor Turkey over energy exploration rights in the eastern Mediterranean.

Thursday's parliamentary debate and vote are for the defense pact only, not the purchase of the warships. The deal is expected to be ratified as the governing conservatives have a comfortable majority in parliament.

Describing the pact as "historic," Mitsotakis said the deal meant the bolstering of Greece "in the troubled Mediterranean, and at the same time the first bold step in the strategic autonomy of Europe."

The benefits of the deal, he said, were clear.

"For the first time, an explicit and unequivocal military assistance clause is provided in the case of a third party attack on one of the two states," Mitsotakis said. "We all know ... who is threatening whom with a casus belli in the eastern Mediterranean."

Turkey has said it would be a casus belli — a cause for war — if Greece extends its territorial waters from the current



six to 12 nautical miles in the Aegean Sea between the two countries.

Turkey argues such a move would turn the Aegean into essentially a Greek sea. Athens maintains it has the right to extend to 12 nautical miles in accordance with the U.N. Convention on the Law of the Sea, and recently extended its western territorial waters, in the Ionian Sea facing Italy, to 12 nautical miles.

Regional rivals Greece and Turkey have been at loggerheads for decades over a series of disputes, including the delineation of the continental shelf, territorial rights in the Aegean Sea, aviation and maritime boundaries and the demarcation of Exclusive Economic Zones — areas where each country has exclusive

rights to the exploitation of resources — in the Mediterranean.

Greece's government announced last year it would be overhauling its military, including the hiring of personnel and a major military procurement program that has already seen the country buying 18 French Rafale fighter jets.

The defense deal with France includes a mutual assistance clause, which states that the two sides will come to each other's aid "with all appropriate means at their disposal, and if necessary with the use of armed force, if they jointly ascertain that an armed attack is taking place against the territory of one of the two."

The deal also includes a provision for Greek participation in French-led military

operations such as those it has conducted in the Sahel region of Africa.

Mitsotakis said last week that the mutual assistance clause "essentially says that if any of the countries is attacked, if its territory is challenged, its sovereignty is challenged, then there is an obligation by the other party to assist it."

The idea of collective defense is a principal tenet of NATO, of which both Greece and France are members, as is Turkey. Article 5 of the alliance's treaty stipulates that an attack on one member nation is considered an attack on all.

"Does Article 5 apply in the case of an attack by a NATO member? I'm not sure NATO has ever been very clear on that issue," Mitsotakis had said when asked during the con-

ference why Greece needed an extra alliance agreement. "My obligation is to defend my country and to form the necessary alliances over and above the security arrangements that we already have."

On Tuesday, NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg appeared to be critical of European defense initiatives that aren't within NATO.

"What I don't believe in is efforts to try to do something outside the NATO framework or compete with or duplicate NATO, because NATO remains the cornerstone, the bedrock for European security, and also actually for North American security," Stoltenberg said in a speech without directly mentioning the defense deal between Greece and France.

Russia's infections reach the highest level so far this year

MOSCOW (AP): Russia's daily coronavirus infections soared Thursday to their highest level so far this year as authorities have struggled to control a surge in new cases amid a slow pace in vaccinations and few restrictions in place.

The daily coronavirus death toll topped 900 for a second straight day, with 924 new deaths reported Thursday — a day after reaching a record 929.

Russia already has Europe's highest death toll in the pandemic — topping 213,000 — and a conservative way of calculating the number suggests the actual number could be even higher.

On Thursday, the government's coronavirus task force reported 27,550 new confirmed cases, a nearly 10% rise from the previous day. New infections in Moscow soared by nearly 50% to 5,404 cases.

A quick rise in infections and deaths began in late September, with authorities blaming it on the low vaccination rate. As of Tuesday, almost 33% of Russia's 146 million people had received at least one shot of a coronavirus vaccine, and 29% were fully vaccinated.

Despite surging infections, the Kremlin has shrugged off the idea of

imposing a new nationwide lockdown, delegating the power to tighten restrictions to regional authorities.

Some regions have limited attendance at large public events and restricted access to theaters, restaurants and other places to people who have been vaccinated, recently recovered from COVID-19 or tested negative in the previous 72 hours.

In some areas, Russia's vast yet severely underfunded health care system has started to show signs of being overwhelmed by the outbreak.

Russian media have reported long lines of ambulances once again forming in front of hospitals in St. Petersburg. And on Tuesday, the presidential envoy in the Ural Mountains district — a part of central Russia that encompasses six regions — said 95% of the hospital beds for COVID-19 patients there have been filled.

Overall, Russia's coronavirus task force has registered nearly 7.7 million confirmed cases and 213,549 deaths. However, reports by Russia's state statistical service Rosstat that tally coronavirus-linked deaths retroactively reveal significantly higher mortality numbers.

Moroccan police thwart migrants targeting Spanish enclave

MADRID (AP): Moroccan police thwarted an attempt by several hundred migrants to force their way into the Spanish enclave of Ceuta on the northern African coast, officials said Thursday.

The large group of men gathered on the Moroccan side of the border after nightfall Wednesday and threw stones at police who moved to intercept them, Spanish media reported.

Moroccan police chased them through the streets and foiled their efforts to scale a

high fence that separates Morocco from European soil, video posted by the newspaper El Faro de Ceuta showed.

On the Spanish side, the Guardia Civil deployed riot police, a helicopter and boats in case the migrants made it through. Ceuta and nearby Melilla, Spain's other autonomous city on the northern African coast, are seen as springboards into Europe for many Africans fleeing poverty or violence and attempts to scale the fence are frequent.

Hong Kong police make largest smuggling bust worth \$26.9M

HONG KONG (AP): Hong Kong authorities on Thursday said they have made their largest smuggling bust, seizing goods including endangered species worth an estimated \$26.9 million.

The government said the smuggling ring operated using speedboats and that four trucks were also impounded in the raid.

It said a 34-year-old man was arrested in the operation that began in June and more details were set to be released. A statement said the customs department and the marine police small boat division descended on the smugglers who were operating in the city's New Territories close to mainland China on Sept. 23.

"This is the largest smuggling case among all forms of smuggling by air, sea and land detected by Customs on record in terms of the seizure value," the government said.

Seized items displayed at a news conference included endangered plants, luxury handbags, cigars and shark's fin, which is prized as a delicacy in southern Chinese cuisine. The semi-autonomous southern Chinese city has a high demand for luxury items along with abundant air and sea links to world markets.

Austrian leader vows to stay on amid bribery allegations

BERLIN (AP): Austrian Chancellor Sebastian Kurz is denying wrongdoing and vowing to remain the country's leader after anti-corruption prosecutors said he is under investigation in a probe of suspected bribery. However, his coalition partner said Thursday that the allegations left a "disastrous" impression and raised questions over the chancellor's "ability to act."

Prosecutors said Wednesday they are conducting an investigation into Kurz and nine other people, as well as three organizations they didn't identify, on suspicion of breach of trust and bribery. They conducted searches at the chancellery, the finance ministry and the offices of Kurz's conservative Austrian People's Party.

The case centers on allegations that finance ministry money was used between 2016 and at least 2018 to pay for manipulated polls that were published in a newspaper without being declared as advertising. Kurz became his party's leader and then chancellor in 2017 after previously serving as Austria's foreign minister.

In a separate case, the 35-year-old chancellor was put under investigation in May by anti-corruption authorities on suspicion of making false statements to a parliamentary commission, an allegation he has also rejected.

Kurz rejected responsibility in the latest case in an interview Wednesday night with ORF public television.

"There is absolutely no indication that I directed what adverts or polls were commissioned at the finance ministry," he said. He said that text messages from him contain no instructions or requests, "and at the same time prosecutors put the theory out there that everything is directed by Kurz."

The chancellor said he was "very calm" about the accusations.

"What I can't understand is why I am always supposed to be to blame for all wrongdoing," he added. "Let's examine whether these accusations against finance ministry employees are true. With the best will in the world, I can't imagine it."

Asked whether he will remain chancellor in view of the

investigations against him, Kurz replied: "Yes, of course."

The Greens, Kurz's junior coalition partners since he returned to power for a second term in early 2020, were far less relaxed. Vice Chancellor Werner Kogler, who also leads the Greens, tweeted that "the impression is disastrous" and the allegations must be cleared up thoroughly.

"The chancellor's ability to act is in question against this background," Kogler added. "We must ensure stability and order."

He said the Greens are proposing talks with all other parties in Austria's parliament to discuss how to proceed, and also plan a meeting with President Alexander Van der Bellen.

100-year-old former Nazi camp guard goes on trial in Germany

BERLIN (AP): A 100-year-old man went on trial in Germany Thursday, accused of being an accessory to murder for serving as a Nazi SS guard at the Sachsenhausen concentration camp near Berlin during World War II.

The trial of the defendant, who is charged with 3,518 counts of accessory to murder, was held at the Neuruppin state court, which moved the proceedings to a prison sport hall in Brandenburg for organizational reasons.

The suspect, who was identified only

as Josef S. in keeping with German privacy rules, is alleged to have worked at Sachsenhausen between 1942 and 1945 as an enlisted member of the Nazi Party's paramilitary wing.

The suspect's lawyer, Stefan Waterkamp, told the court that his client did not want to comment on the allegations, German news agency dpa reported. There are no formal pleas in the German legal system.

Authorities say that the defendant is considered fit enough to stand trial despite his

advanced age, though the number of hours per day the court is in session will be limited.

More than 200,000 people were held at Sachsenhausen between 1936 and 1945. Tens of thousands of inmates died of starvation, disease, forced labor and other causes, as well as through medical experiments and systematic SS extermination operations including shootings, hangings and gassing.

Exact numbers on those killed vary, with upper estimates of some 100,000, though scholars suggest fig-

ures of 40,000 to 50,000 are likely more accurate.

"The defendant knowingly and willingly aided and abetted this at least by conscientiously performing guard duty, which was seamlessly integrated into the killing system," prosecutor Cyrill Kliment told the court.

A survivor of Sachsenhausen, 100-year-old Leon Schwarzbach, attended the trial as a visitor.

"This is the last trial for my friends, acquaintances and my loved ones, who were murdered, in which the

last guilty person can still be sentenced — hopefully," Schwarzbach, who also survived the Auschwitz death camp and Buchenwald concentration camp, told dpa.

The opening of the trial comes a week after another the opening of another elderly concentration camp suspect's trial was disrupted.

A 96-year-old former secretary for the Stutthof camp's SS commander skipped the opening of her trial at the Itzehoe state court in northern Germany. She was tracked down within hours and proceedings are to resume on Oct. 19.



K' wave sweeps India with dramas, music and more

NEW DELHI, OCT 7 (PTI): We love their soppy soaps and gentle romances, their thrillers and intense cinema, their music and increasingly even their food. The K' way of life has middle and upper class India in thrall, a we love everything about South Korea' movement led primarily by its small screen entertainment industry that has found the unlikely loyalists here.

There is even a word for this South Korean cultural phenomenon hallyu.

In February 2020, "Parasite" director Bong Joon-ho urged viewers to overcome the "one-inch-tall barrier of subtitles" in his Oscar acceptance speech. Less than two years later, almost as if India was listening to him, the hallyu wave has swept through the country with shows such as "Crash Landing on You" and "Vincenzo", the music of boyband BTS and also films.

The pandemic-led OTT boom brought with it hallyu 2.0 when many Indian watchers moved past their staple diet of American, Nordic and Indian shows to discover K-dramas, a world removed from the K' Hindi dramas of not so long ago.

The viewing for K-dramas on Netflix in India increased more than 370 per cent in 2020 over 2019, a spokesperson for

the OTT platform said. From the cerebral lawyer looking for quality entertainment to the elderly partaker of TV soaps, the shows have found fans aplenty.

A glance at Netflix's top-10 category

featuring on the list. "Squid Game", a "Hunger Games" like survival show inspired by Korean children's games, is on its way to becoming the biggest show in Netflix history, Ted Sarandos, co-CEO of Netflix, said

around the world and subs the K-content in 30 languages, the spokesperson said.

"Kingdom Season 2", "It's Okay to Not Be Okay" and "Crash Landing..." are among the series to have regularly featured in the Top 10 on Netflix in India. And over 22 million households tuned in for the horror TV series "Sweet Home".

This is why Hyun Bin and Son Ye-jin of the super popular "Crash Landing on You", a soft romance without any rough edges between a North Korean officer and a South Korean heiress, and actors Song Joong-ki, Park Bo-gum have become huge stars in India alongside others such as Song Hye-kyo and Bae Suzy.

K-drama lovers are also hooked on to RakutenViki, a streaming service that has over 15 million users globally,

and has on its platform popular shows like "True Beauty" and "Yumi's Cells".

"It's been an exciting time for us, especially as RakutenViki houses the largest K-drama collection across any stream-

ing platform," Sarah Kim, SVP of Content Business & Regional GM (Asia), told PTI in a statement. "We're finding that people are hungry for Asian content, particularly K-dramas, for its unique storytelling and plot twists, and because it offers a different production quality compared to American and Western content..." she said.

Such is the love for all things South Korean that many fans have overcome the "subtitle barrier" and included Korean words such as "noona and oppa" (elder sister and brother), "namja-chingoo" (boyfriend), "yoja-chingoo" (girlfriend) and "sarang-hae" (I love you) and many other words and phrases in their daily vocabulary.

Globally, too, the language is making waves with the Oxford English Dictionary recently adding 26 Korean words, including K-drama, hallyu and kimbap to the dictionary. We are all riding the crest of the Korean wave," BBC quoted OED as saying in a statement.

Closer home, the Korean Cultural Centre India has started three-month online Korean language classes and the 1,200 slots get full within two to three minutes of opening for registration, said KCCI director Hwang Il-yong.



shows the inroads Korean shows have made in India with Lee Jung-jae and Park Hae-soo's "Squid Game" and ?Kim Seon-ho and ?Shin Min-a-starrer romantic drama "Hometown Cha-Cha-Cha" consistently

this week.

Since it began working with Korean filmmakers and talents in 2016, the streamer has introduced over 80 original Korean shows and films to its members

Fisk Jubilee Singers celebrate 150 years since first tour



NASHVILLE, TENN. (AP): The Fisk Jubilee Singers' first tour wasn't an immediate success, but their perseverance through financial hardship to find an audience took them around the world and kept their school afloat.

Fisk University in Nashville, Tennessee, celebrated the singing group's 150th anniversary on Wednesday and reflected on a legacy that was built with their performances of slave spirituals, which kept alive not only the university but also a musical tradition. Poet, author and educator Nikki Giovanni, who is a Fisk alumna, talked about that first tour during her keynote speech during Jubilee Day, their annual event.

"We're here today celebrating," Giovanni said. "But when we look at how we carried those songs, and we carry those songs now, and we still lean on the everlasting arms."

Opened as a liberal arts school for freed Black slaves in 1866, Fisk University was financially struggling just a few years later: Giovanni explained that one of the students, Ella Sheppard, who was born a slave, offered to help. She was a piano player.

Nine students, some of those former slaves or descendants of slaves, set off on a tour on Oct. 6, 1871, singing mostly European songs, such as those by Gilbert and Sullivan, to white audiences, Giovanni said. They got little re-

sponse and barely made enough money to feed themselves, but still managed to donate money to victims of the deadly Chicago fire of 1871. The turning point was when they started singing the songs their ancestors had brought with them to America: spirituals.

"Everybody was shocked," Giovanni said. "They'd never heard anything like that."

The songs they performed, such as "Steal Away," were a musical bond to their ancestors who were brought over from African nations.

"We were put on a block and we were bought and we were sold and we were bought and we were sold," Giovanni said. "And the only language we still had was the music that had been passed down from Jesus to Mary Magdalene."

Soon the word spread of their performances and they were invited to sing at the White House by President Ulysses S. Grant. Then they toured internationally, singing for Queen Victoria and others. Their work helped Fisk build Jubilee Hall, the oldest building on campus and one of the oldest academic buildings continuously dedicated to educating Black students.

In addition to their anniversary, they earned their first Grammy Award for best roots gospel album this year and started a new endowment.

Tanzanian Abdulrazak Gurnah awarded Nobel literature prize

STOCKHOLM (AP): Tanzanian writer Abdulrazak Gurnah was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature on Thursday for works that explore the legacies of imperialism on uprooted individuals.

The Swedish Academy said the award was in recognition of his "uncompromising and compassionate penetration of the effects of colonialism and the fate of the refugee in the gulf between cultures and continents"

Born in Zanzibar in 1948 and based in England, Gurnah is a professor at the University of Kent. He is the author of 10 novels, including "Paradise," which was shortlisted for the Booker Prize in 1994.

Anders Olsson, chairman of the Nobel Committee for literature, called him "one of the world's most prominent post-colonial writers."

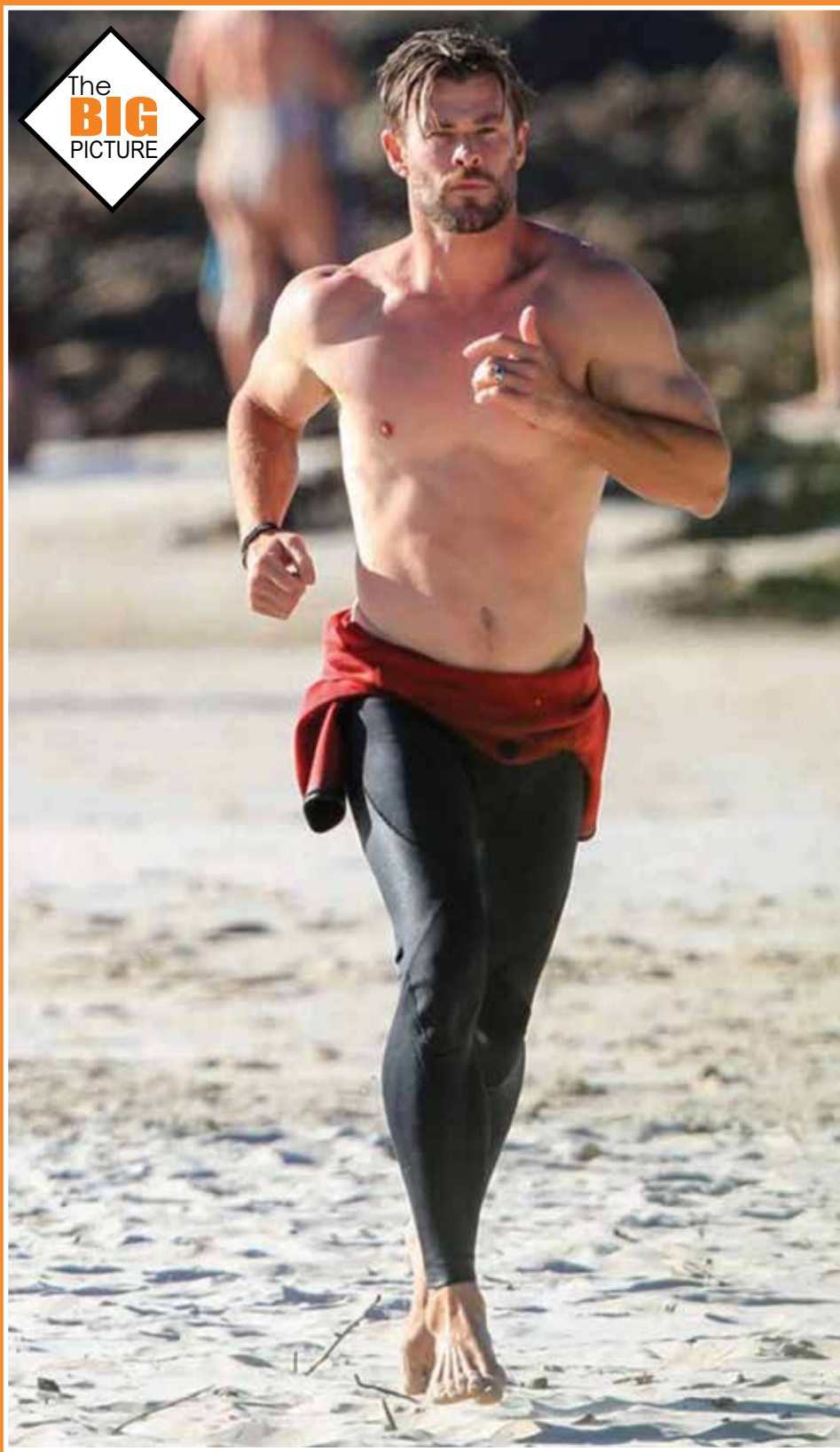
The prestigious award comes with a gold medal and 10 million Swedish kronor (over \$1.14 million). The prize money comes from a bequest left by the prize's creator, Swedish inventor Alfred Nobel, who died in 1895.

Last year's prize went to American poet Louise Glück for what the judges described as her "unmistakable poetic voice that with austere beauty makes individual existence universal."

Glück was a popular choice after several years of controversy. In 2018 the award was postponed after sex abuse allegations rocked the Swedish Academy, the secretive body that chooses the winners. The awarding of the 2019 prize to Austrian writer Peter Handke caused protests because of his strong support for the Serbs during the 1990s Balkan wars.

On Monday, the Nobel Committee awarded the prize in physiology or medicine to Americans David Julius and Ardem Patapoutian for their discoveries into how the human body perceives temperature and touch.

The Nobel Prize in physics was awarded Tuesday to three scientists whose work found order in seeming disorder, helping to explain and predict complex forces of nature, including expanding our understanding of climate change.



BEACH BOD! The actor, Chris Hemsworth shows off his abs while running on the beach following a surf session in Byron Bay.

Aries:

The signs and the synchronicities are getting eerie, Aries, and there is no escaping them. Keep your skeptic side aside for a minute. Trust what's coming through from the unseen realms. The Universe has a way of setting things right for us when we least expect it. This is also a time of cultivating a spiritual practice. A practice to facilitate that inward journey and helps you recognise that all the answers you seek are within yourself.

Tip: You are the one you've been looking for, Aries.

Taurus:

Change is upon us, Taurus, and in your case it's bringing the truth to the forefront. The real question is: are you willing to fully embrace who you are? Do you feel ready to share your light with the world, minus the fear that has been holding you back for so long? Stand in your power, beautiful, and stand tall. It's not your job to make others feel comfortable. It never was.

Tip: It's time to stand in your truth.

Gemini:

Here a sign, there a sign, everywhere a sign-sign! The synchronicities are getting eerie by the minute, Gemini, and your spirit guides are coming through strongly from the unseen realms. The real question is: how awake will you choose to be? Remember, there are no such things as coincidences. Everything in your life

is playing out in the way it is meant to for a reason.

Tip: Everywhere a sign-sign!

Cancer:

It's never about the other person. It's about what their behaviour is awakening within us. So, pay attention to the triggers, Cancer. The unhealed wounds that are calling for your attention at this point. As you do, welcome the discomfort as an opportunity to do the shadow work and evolve on a soul level. You are in the midst of a great awakening, beautiful. Trust that the slow-burning fire of transformation is helping you clear away the blockages and become who you are truly meant to be.

Tip: It's all happening for a reason.

Leo:

The Universe works in mysterious ways, and it's always bringing forth information from other dimensions. Signs and symbols that will help you awaken to your sacred purpose. It is by silencing the mind that you will be able to access what's coming through from the mysterious realms. So, go into your sacred space, Leo. Call upon the guides who have been working with you in order to orchestrate this great change. What the cards want you to know: this is a powerful time to heal, to transform, and to upgrade to a whole new level of consciousness.

Tip: Retreat into your sacred space, beautiful.

Virgo:

The trouble is, you tend to look at the glass as half-empty. You tend to give your troubles more power than they deserve. How about changing the approach a little? We're proposing a count-your-blessings kind of day, beautiful. So, without further ado, bring out your journal and make a list of all the things you are grateful for today. While you're at it, schedule a catch up call with that friend who never fails to bring a smile to your face.

Tip: It's a count-your-blessings kind of day in the Virgo HQ.

Libra:

Here's the thing, Libra. Our soul knows. Our soul always knows who feels like home. So, honour the call to nurture the "soulful" bonds in your life. Show up for the wildflowers who consistently bring a smile to your face. As such, you're being reminded that taking things too seriously is lethal to your health. Consider a strong dosage of inside jokes coupled with full belly laughs that will remind you of what it's like to be a child again.

Tip: The cards strongly recommend a dosage of full belly laughs, beautiful.

Scorpio:

This is a bittersweet time in the Scorpio HQ. You are simultaneously healing from the trauma of your past and sharing your light with the world. "Wounds to wisdom" is the mantra on which you are rebuilding your life, beautiful. Some of you may be inspired to transition into the field of holistic healing. Trust the messages that are coming through from your guides at this time.

Tip: It's time to be a light unto the world, beautiful.

Sagittarius:

Here's the thing, Sagittarius: you've been looking back a lot more than you've been looking forward. As a result, you're feeling a sense of stagnation in your life. What the cards are urging you to do today is honour and acknowledge the soul lessons. The time to release what's gone has come, beautiful. Trust yourself to let go with grace and poise.

Tip: It's time to release the past.

Capricorn:

Change has been stirred up, Capricorn, and something tells us that nothing in your life will ever be the same. So, don't waste too much time thinking and rethinking that big move. Trust where your inner compass is pointing towards. Trust the Universe to help you figure it all out as you go along. PS: Yes, this could signify the opportunity to move to a new home or city for some of you.

Tip: Trust where your inner compass is pointing towards. Aquarius:

It is usually the people closest to us on a soul level that end up causing us the most amount of pain. Just for today, detach yourself from the many stories you have been repeating in your head. The narrative which confirms that you are indeed the victim in this case. Looking at your situation from a higher perspective will help you realise that they were meant to trigger discomfort so you would work through the darkness that's been holding you back from standing in your light.

Tip: They're simply the catalyst in your story, Aquarius.

Pisces:

What if the worst that happened to you is the best thing that could happen for you? Be grateful for both the good and the bad, for they're helping you clear the pending karma that's been holding you back. Looking at your circumstances from a higher perspective will assist you in doing so, Pisces. But, that doesn't mean the pain won't threaten to tear you apart. Allow what needs to resurface to resurface without judging it or putting a label on it. Remember, you don't have to do this alone. Your soul crew would be glad to offer their support in the best way they possibly can.

Tip: Reach out for the help and support you need at this moment.