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SummitTIMES

Vol 05 | Issue 329 | Gangtok | Friday | 18 December 2020

ON TOP OF THE NEWS

RNI No. SIKENG/2016/69420

Pages 8 | ₹ 5

Sikkim's Covid toll reaches 122; Active cases stand at 294

**SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 17 DEC:**

As per information confirmed today, a 62-year-old lady from Namchi passed away on 15 December and was posthumously confirmed as having been Covid-positive, taking the State's toll due to Novel Coronavirus to 122.

She succumbed while being taken to Namchi District Hospital on 15 December after developing health complications, it is informed.

In his daily health bulletin on Thursday, Health Department State IEC Officer, Sonam Gyaltsen Bhutia, informed that the 62-year-old was declared brought dead at Namchi District Hospital and her sample returned positive for COVID-19 in rapid antigen testing.

Her passing away is officially being recorded as a COVID-death with co-morbidities as she had the underlying condition of hypertension.

Meanwhile, Sikkim's tally of confirmed cases of COVID-19 reached 5,406 on Thursday with eight fresh cases being reported in the last 24 hours.

The number of Covid patients discharged from isolation facilities has further improved to 4,896. There are

currently 294 active cases the State, of whom three are currently in the ICU facility of the COVID-dedicated STNM Hospital.

The eight new cases of novel coronavirus, substantially lower than the daily numbers reported in recent days, were detected from the testing of 133 samples on Wednesday.

RT-PCR testing of 91 samples returned six positive cases, while two cases were reported in rapid antigen testing 33 samples. All nine samples tested by TruNat were found negative.

Of the eight new cases in the State, seven were reported from East District and one from South District.

Among the new cases reported from in and around the capital are one person from near Paljor Stadium in DPH area, one from SIB quarters in Baluwakhani, one from Ranka Road in Lower Sichey, one from Middle Tathangchen, one from Daragaon-Tadong and one patient admitted in the emergency ward of STNM Hospital who has now been referred to the COVID hospital.

Likewise, one person from Kyongsagyalshing and another from Chumbung in West District were also found positive for COVID-19.

CM tours Rabong, follows up on demands



**SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 17 DEC:**

Chief Minister PS Tamang spent his second day at Kewzing [under Barfung constituency] taking a tour of the area and of Rabongla, exploring the options available to address demands placed with him by people of the area and their representatives on Wednesday.

The CM, it may be recalled, is on a two-day visit to Kewzing and attended the Losoong/Namsoong celebrations at

Kewzing yesterday.

On Thursday morning, the CM visited the Devithan Mandir at Rabongla, where, apart from offering prayers, he also inspected the Lall Market area to evaluate the feasibility of shifting it below the Devithan Mandir.

In a Facebook post on his day's engagement, the CM also informs that he has directed the ADC [Development] to prepare an estimate for a diversion road from Rabongla to Tathagata Tsal via Cho Dzo



lake.

Further, the concerned officials have also been ordered to prepare a proposal for the construction of a traditional and a modern archery field for which the land has already been allocated.

"We also examined the proposed site for the construction of a multi-purpose playing field and directed the authorities to submit an estimate and plan by January 15, 2021," he adds.

The CM continued his

interactions with people of the area whom he met in large numbers at the Kewzing playground and heard out their grievances. It may be recalled that CM, in his address yesterday, had promised to meet the people today since his engagements yesterday would not leave him with enough time to sit down with the people.

The CM also visited Doling Monastery and offered prayers there, an experience he has shared as having been a "blissful moment."

Jesuits protest as 83-year-old Stan Swamy remains in jail for over 2 months

MUMBAI, 17 DEC [NDTV]: The Jesuits -- a Roman Catholic order whose members are known for running some of the best educational institutes in the country -- are protesting the continued jail custody of Father Stan Swamy under the anti-terror law, UAPA, in the Bhima-Koregaon case. Father Fraser Mascarenhas, the former principal of St. Xavier's College in Mumbai and one of the most well-known educationists in the city, said, while the trial can go on, the activist - also a Jesuit - must be released on bail.

The octogenarian Jesuit priest has been in jail since October. He is suffering from the Parkinson's Disease and needs help even with his daily chores. After being charged under the stringent anti-terror law, the Unlawful Activities Prevention Act (UAPA), Father Stan Swamy has been denied bail.

His fellow Jesuits are shocked at his arrest and are holding a silent protest with posters across Jesuit institutions, demanding his release.

"When an elder brother is treated in this manner and accused of such heinous crimes then obviously all of us have to protest and that is what we have done. I am told Father Stan Swamy was to give some evidence in the Jharkhand Court one of these months once the courts opened. So it does look like that the government is trying to avoid something that could come up in these cases," Father Mascarenhas told NDTV.

Initially several priests in Mumbai held up posters demanding Father Stan Swamy's release but when the police objected, they moved the poster inside their compound, just outside the church.

Father Mascarenhas says Jesuits across the world are raising their voice for Stan Swamy's release. The case can go on but all the arrested activists, like Sudha Bharadwaj, be released as they have been in jail without a trial, he said.

"All across India and even internationally -- I have seen a few pictures in Washington, in Rome, in different parts of Canada -- Jesuits and others have protested that one of our elder brothers, senior colleague, can be treated in this manner. We hope there will be a lot of support from people who know us well to say that this cannot be true about Father Stan Swamy," he adds.

The anti-terror agency NIA has been strongly opposing Father Stan Swamy's bail plea in the court; his next bail hearing is on December 21.

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"We have filed a bail petition for Father Stan Swamy before the NIA Special Court in Mumbai. The NIA has strongly objected to the bail petition. But we are hopeful of getting bail because the NIA has not provided any incriminating evidence against Stan Swamy in the entire charge sheet," Sharif Shaikh, his lawyer, told NDTV.

The Jesuits are a Roman Catholic order of priests and brothers founded half a millennium ago by the soldier-turned-mystic, Ignatius Loyola. With 16,000-plus priests, brothers, scholastics and novices worldwide, they are the largest male religious order in the Catholic Church. In India, the Jesuits run some of the best-known schools and colleges.

Ringa Ringa Roses in Darjeeling

JIWAN RAI

The late Subash Ghising was arguably the most persuasive, powerful and finest voice for Gorkhaland. However, this thunderous and much loved voice that gradually faded into complete silence after the 1988 DGHC Accord completely disfigured his legacy. What is more, this disfigured Ghising legacy has now been eternized by subsequent leadership in the Hills. In other words, the story of Ghising's rise and fall became the script for the succeeding Gorkha leadership to act out.

Bimal Gurung and Binay Tamang, like Subash Ghising, started their political career by villainizing the Kolkata establishment and describing it as the single most obstacle on the path to Gorkhaland. And all three committed the exact same political flip-flop by piping down their voice against Kolkata. Ghising remained eminently silent after he became the DGHC chairman. Binay Tamang and Bimal Gurung went so far as to publically compete in proving their loyalty to the West Bengal Chief Minister. In other words, Gurung and Tamang ended up circling the same chakra that Ghising had orbited, willy-nilly. A telescopic view of Darjeeling politics seems like a cat chasing its own tail.

The history of the Gorkhaland movement will forever grapple with how the allurements of power caused the miscarriage of a promising Subash Ghising legacy. So imposing has this (disfigured) Ghising legacy

been, that no future Gorkha leader from the hills can possible stand outside its shadow. At least not in the near future.

I call it a disfigured legacy because it couldn't live up to the expectation it promised. The initial beauty was marred beyond repair. The Ghising legacy basically consists of four phases -- namely, starting well, building up better, squandering in the end and bluffing mindlessly for the rest of his time.

Phase one, the late Ghising began remarkably well. He taught the Darjeeling hills to talk about Gorkhaland passionately. He taught the people to love Gorkhaland (mato) more than their own souls. Never were the Gorkhas in the hills so enamored with their lifeless land. Never were they more aware of their homelessness. Never were they more purpose-driven in their political life. Like Ghising, Bimal Gurung re-aroused the Gorkha sentiments for their dream of a separate state. The year 2008 reignited the 1986 flame of Gorkhaland. The Bimal leadership, perhaps, enjoyed greater unity and wider support. Gurung did not have the content and the quality of Ghising's oratory but his emotion-ridden speeches produced no less an impact on the public mind.

Phase two, Ghising became the first Gorkha leader to have taken the Gorkhaland matter to the attention of the Centre. The historic tripartite meetings among New Delhi (Centre), Calcutta (The state government) and Darjeeling (the GNLF) became

a significant milestone in the movement. This was a massive feat for a lone leader in the hills with no political clout at the national level. Bimal Gurung was able to take the 2008 agitation to the negotiation level as well.

Phase three, Ghising, a mighty Gorkha leader bungled it when it mattered most. He signed the controversial Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council Accord in 1988 which necessitated the dropping of the Gorkhaland demand on his part. He strangled the 2 year old Gorkhaland movement in its cradle. He ruled the DGHC for many years but his promising voice for Gorkhaland

VIEWPOINT

had been quelled, never to be heard again. Bimal Gurung did keep the movement alive for three years but he couldn't do any better than Ghising. His party, the GJM, reached an agreement with the West Bengal government to create the Gorkhaland Territorial Administration (GTA) in 2011. One can do hair-splitting, trying to discern why the GTA was better than the DGHC. But the fact remains that it was going to extinguish the voice for Gorkhaland. How far did Binay Tamang fall from the Ghising tree? Suffice is to say that Gorkhaland is not the most important matter in contemporary politics in the Hills anymore. Survival of leadership is.

Phase four, the saddest part of

the Gorkhaland movement is that the drama outlives the plot. Subash Ghising's post 2008 silence was not uneventful. He was not doing nothing behind the smoke coming from the extinguished Gorkhaland fire. He kept the hills curious by his nearly infinite supply of information about leasehold land, ceded land, etc. Finally, he came up with an epic statement of taking the Gorkhaland issue to the Hague International Court of Justice. The Hague has actually become synonymous with a funnylie in the Hills. Hapless Ghising, in a 2011 Mirik rally, even said that he had never asked for Gorkhaland. He only used the demand to push for Gorkha's citizenship.

Bimal and Binay trying to outshout each other is a part of their phase four drama. The significance of their leadership in the 2021 elections cannot be undermined. But in the context of the Gorkhaland movement, they are nothing more than a spent force. But hasn't Gorkhaland politics become a lame duck also?

It is predictable that the Binay faction will switch to the BJP for the 2021 election. The BJP, at least, is not guilty of violence in the Hills. Pictures of Gorkha ex-servicemen being physically assaulted in a rally in the past are now doing the rounds. These pictures are telling. However, the strategy shows how the Gorkhaland movement has fallen from intellectual debate to image posting on Facebook. It is time for a completely new and chaste leadership that can live outside the shadow of the Ghising legacy.

Let's Support our Veterans and Martyrs
Contribute to the Armed Forces Flag Day Fund (AFFDF)
RAJYA SAINIK BOARD, SIKKIM

AFFDF Fund is dedicated to the welfare of War Widows, Children of Martyrs, War-Disabled soldiers & Ex-Servicemen

Contribute via credit/debit card, Netbanking, UPI, Wallets

Contribute generously to the Armed Forces Flag Day Fund which is dedicated to the welfare of War Widows, Veterans, Children of Martyrs, War Disabled & Ex-servicemen. The Armed Forces Flag Day is a day dedicated towards the collection of funds from people of India for the welfare of the Indian Armed Forces personnel. It is the collective duty of every citizen of our country to ensure rehabilitation and welfare of the dependents of our brave martyrs and disabled personnel. Visit the official website of Rajya Sainik Board for contribution:- www.deswsikkim.nic.in

Shri Prem Singh Tamang
Hon'ble Chief Minister

"I support our Veterans and Martyrs and contribute to the Armed Forces Flag Day Fund (AFFDF). Do You?"

Fund for Armed Forces Flag Day

Scan using your device scanner to pay
Please do not scan with PhonePe, iPay, etc.

OR

Visit the website: www.deswsikkim.nic.in to

Pay online

All Sikkim Scheduled Caste Adhoc Committee meets in Daramdin

**SUMMIT REPORT
RANGPO, 17 DEC:**

All Sikkim Scheduled Caste Adhoc Committee convened a constituency-level meeting for Daramdin today, a press release informs.

The meeting was attended by Sikkim Krantikari Morcha's state-level SC wing president, Jagdish Cintury as chief guest accompanied by State Bank of Sikkim chairperson, DB Gurung, adhoc committee

president, Divas Portal, national awardee Shanti Sundas, RK Sundas and more than 500 delegates and members.

The SKM SC Wing president informed the meeting that the State Government was fully committed to uplift SC families.

Mr Cinturi also expressed heartfelt gratitude towards Chief Minister PS Tamang for honouring the SC representative in the Legislative Assembly by elevating him to the post of Speaker.



North East Region has Enormous Potential in helping the Country to become Self Reliant: Dr RK Ranjan, MP

GANGTOK, 17 DEC (PIB):

North East Region has Enormous Potential in helping the Country to become Self Reliant, said Member of Parliament, Dr RK Ranjan in a Webinar organized by Press Information Bureau, Guwahati on the topic "IISF 2020: Science and Atmanirbhar Bharat" here today. The webinar was in the run up towards India International Science Festival (IISF). IISF is celebrated every year to promote Science and Technology and this year the festival will be held in virtual mode. In today's webinar experts from different field and organizations deliberated and discussed about science in relation with Atmanirbhar Bharat.

Talking about Prime Minister, Narendra Modi's initiative for making India a bigger and more important part of the global economy through Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan, Dr. Ranjan said that North East region has enormous potential in utilizing its natural resources and help the

country to be self-reliant. Giving emphasis on the need of the improvement of Information and Communication Technology in the region, he said that this will give a good spirit of scientific temperament to the people of the North Eastern India.

Gracing the webinar as the Guest of honor, Director, Dr G Narahari Sastry, NEIST, Jorhat said that science and technology has come up in a very big way to address whenever there is a problem. Within lesser a decade India is able to produce so many things including many electronic items and is also able to come up with ways where it can be seen that achieving many specialized things in terms of science and technology, he added.

Dr Sastry said how in this time of pandemic also India has been able to develop the capabilities to produce the PPE kits, ventilators, developing hospitals, oxygen supplies etc. He also claimed that the nation is much better



prepared to tackle this pandemic compared to many other countries. Dr Sastry said that under the current leadership India is being able to tackle the situation much better and once the pandemic is over India will emerge as a much stronger country. Talking about the opportunities in North East, he said that North east is bestowed with bio diversity, geo diversity and mineral diversity and also with oil, tea, bamboo industries which bring in a lots of opportunities for the region to be self-reliant.

ADG, SN Pradhan, NEZ, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting welcomed the experts and said in his welcome address

that the webinar was hold keeping in mind the occasion of India International science Festival (IISF), 2020. He informed the participants that the festival this year will be in virtual mode and many events are planned during this science festival keeping in mind the large scale participation. The main aim of the webinar is to create a pre-event buzz and to generate interest and enthusiasm for the IISF 2020.

Talking about science in relation with Atmanirbhar Bharat, Dr pranabjyoti Chetia, Curator, Jorhat Science Centre and Planetarium, Jorhat said that Science and Technology can give sustainable growth to

the huge potential of natural resources of the Northeast Region.

Head, Dr Jaideep Baruah, Environment Division, Assam Science Technology and Environment Council deliberated on the topic "Self-reliance through green skills". Dr Baruah in his presentation deliberated on the Green skill programme and its importance.

The Webinar was summed up by Media and Communication Officer, Gopajit Das, Press Information Bureau. Shri Das in his address said that information on various activities related to the Science Festival and registration of partners is available on the IISF website www.scienceindiafest.org and can be participated virtually.

Media and Communication Officer, Smita Saikia, Guwahati moderated today's webinar.

The Webinar had participation from Press Information Bureau and Regional Outreach Bureau officials and also journalists.

BJP-Sikkim sees anti-nationals dominating Farmer Protest, condemns movement

**SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 17 DEC:**

The Sikkim unit of the Bharatiya Janata Party today echoed the sentiments of party units across the country and some of its senior leaders by claiming that the Farmers Protest underway on the borders of Delhi was "dominated by market owners, middlemen, unionists, various political parties, separatists and anti-national elements who are always trying to destabilize the country as well as slow down the pace of progress."

In a statement issued today, the BJP-Sikkim president, DB Chauhan, conveyed the Sikkim unit's condemnation of what it sees as "pseudo, anti-farmer and anti-reform movement in the



country."

The party argues that farmers from Punjab form only one percent of the 15 crore farmers in country and that since the protest has majority presence of farmers from Punjab, 99 per cent of the country's farmers "have happily accepted and supported."

The statement goes on to claim that

"the participation of the real and hard working farmers in this movement is very low which has been misled by some Farmers Unions and Opposition Parties."

As for BJP, the release claims that the party was "in favour of new reforms in the country and gives a new direction to the progress and prosperity of the country."

Nawin Kiran wants SDF to join OFOJ defence in Court as intervention petitioner

**SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 17 DEC:**

Sikkim Subject Committee vice-convenor, Nawin Kiran Pradhan, today stated that it was important for employees appointed under the One Family-One Job [OFOJ] scheme come forward and stand first for their rights.

His comments were in reference to the Public Interest Litigation filed in the High Court of Sikkim challenging the legality of the OFOJ scheme and appointments made under it.

While expressing solidarity with the OFOJ employees, Mr Pradhan

said that he will always stand for the interest and welfare of OFOJ employees.

Addressing a press conference here this afternoon, he stated that the state government should fulfill its pre-election promise to OFOJ employees who were promised regularization of their services if Sikkim Krantikari Morcha formed the government in Sikkim.

He also stressed that sine the OFOJ appointments were made in the tenure of the SDF government, the SDF party should also become an intervention-

petitioner in the case.

He also addressed a rumour, which he said was being circulated, that he was one of the petitioners challenging the OFOJ appointments. He refuted such rumours and went on to reiterate that his current stand was against the 1600 appointments made by the present government without following due process.

He announced that after his scheduled dharna outside the East DAC on 20 January, he will be filing a petition on the matter in the High Court as well.

Rohit Bhargava predicts 10 megatrends in new book

NEW DELHI, DEC 17

(PTI): A new book features 10 new megatrend predictions that can shape the world in the coming decade by transforming how people work, play and live.

For the past 10 years, innovation and marketing expert Rohit Bhargava has come out with annual Non-Obvious Trend Report for readers to discover more than 100 trends changing our culture.

Now for the first time, he and his team of Non-Obvious trend curators reveal these 10 new megatrends in a completely revised 10th anniversary edition of "Non-Obvious Megatrends", published by Ideapress Publishing and distributed by Penguin India.

How might the evolution of gender fluid toys change our culture? What can the popularity of handmade umbrellas and board games teach us about the future of business? Why do robot therapists and holographic celebrities actually demonstrate the importance of humanity?

"The answers to these questions may not be all that obvious, and that's exactly the point," a statement by Penguin

India said.

The new book also offers an unprecedented look behind the scenes at the author's signature Haystack Method for identifying trends, and how one can learn to curate and predict trends for themselves.

Curating trends, according to the author, is certainly about seeing what others miss.

"But it's also about developing a mindset of curiosity and thoughtfulness. It's about moving from being a speed reader to being a 'speed understander', as Isaac Asimov wrote," he says.

"The future will belong to these non-obvious thinkers who use their powers of observation to see connections between industries, ideas, and behaviours and curate them into a deeper understanding of the accelerating present.

"Can non-obvious thinking save us from an asteroid 867 years from now? I hope so. But more immediately, embracing this way of thinking can change the way we approach our lives and our businesses today. Preparing for the future starts with filtering out the noise and getting

better at understanding the present - as it always has," he writes.

One of the goals of this book, Bhargava says, is to challenge lazy or obvious ways of thinking that are, sadly, no more useful than these hyperbolic futuristic predictions.

"In fact, seeing the world in a narrow or one-dimensional way is even more damaging than a doomsday prophecy, because it often leads to people make flawed decisions today - not just spread empty dread for our distant future," the book says.

"This book intentionally doesn't offer geopolitical arguments for why Denmark is going to become the world's next superpower by 2050 thanks to wind energy production, or sexy guesses about how self-driving, flying cars might enable virtual-reality tourism during daily commutes.

"These kinds of predictions are fun to write and read. Some might even come true. But most are cloaked in uncertainty. Predicting our future should involve far less guesswork," it says.

"The benefits of learning to be a non-obvious thinker go far beyond just being able

to identify trends. Seeing the non-obvious makes you more open minded to change and can help you disrupt instead of getting disrupted," he says.

"Non-obvious thinking can make you the most creative person in any room, no matter what your business card says and help solve your biggest problems. Most importantly, non-obvious thinking can help you anticipate, predict and win the future," he writes.

"Ultimately the biggest lesson may be that you don't need to be a speed reader to win the future. Being a speed understander is a far worthier aspiration," he suggests.

Antarctica rocked by 30,000 tremors in three months, Chilean scientists say

SANTIAGO, 17 DEC

(REUTERS): More than 30,000 tremors have rocked Antarctica since the end of August, according to the University of Chile, a spike in seismic activity that has intrigued researchers who study the remote, snowbound continent.

Scientists with the university's National Seismological Center said the small quakes - including one stronger shake of magnitude 6 - were detected in the Bransfield Strait, a 60-mile wide (96-km) ocean channel

between the South Shetland Islands and the Antarctic Peninsula.

Several tectonic plates and microplates meet near the strait, leading to frequent rumbling, but the past three months have been unusual, according to the center.

"Most of the seismicity is concentrated at the beginning of the sequence, mainly during the month of September, with more than a thousand earthquakes a day," the center said.

KUTSE SHERGU



We would like to inform all our friends, family and wellwishers that the 49th day Kutse Shergu of our beloved Mother, Mother in law, Grandmother, Great Grandmother, Lt Chedem Bhutia W/o Lt Pem Dorjee Bhutia R/o Rabong, South Sikkim who left for heavenly abode on 06/11/2020 falls on 24th December 2020.

We would also like to take this opportunity to thank for your kind help and support in our time of grief and bereavement.

Diki Bhutia (Daughter)

**Hon'ble Advisor, Commerce & Industries, GoS
Chumzey Bhutia (Daughter)
Kado Tshering Namka, Yap Tshering Namka
Fuchung Tshering Namka, Sonam Namka (Son)
Dechen Phigu Bhutia (Son-in-law)
Honble Advisor SMPB, GoS
Karma Rinchen Bhutia (Daughter-in-law)
Lhaki Bhutia (Daughter-in-law)
Sonam Topgay Bhutia (Son-in-law)
Pem Kicho Bhutia (Daughter-in-law)
Doma Tshering Bhutia (Daughter-in-law)
Susangla Diki Bhutia (Grand Daughter)
Kesangla D Lhasungpa (Grandson)**

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AFFIDAVIT

This is to state that Mr. B. Pradhan and Smt S. Mukhia were legally bound in marriage in the year 2011. This is also to state that Mr. B. Pradhan has been living separately from Smt. S. Mukhia since march 2020 i.e. 9 months.

This is also to state that Mr. B. Pradhan & Smt S. Mukhia are not finally and martially obligated to each other

Sd/-
B. Pradhan

~ SummitTIMES ~ CLASSIFIEDS

LAND FOR SALE

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

Price negotiable
Contact : 6296366498,
9641878315, 9593262407

LAND FOR SALE

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

LAND FOR SALE

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

FOR RENT

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

GENERAL LAND FOR SALE

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

BUILDING FOR SALE

A two storey building constructed on plot area 50x40 ft. at Upper Phong near Phong SS, Namthang South Sikkim is on sale. Cost Rs 60 Lakhs (Negotiable). Interested may contact : 8145829309, 7864937800, 9749897695.

Karla valley Rotarians celebrate Charter Day with donation to Karimul Haque's hospital

SUMMIT REPORT
RANGPO, 17 DEC:

Rotary Club of Karla Valley in Jalpaiguri celebrated its 5th Charter Day today. During the special function, a wheel chair was donated to the hospital run by Padmashri Karimul Haque. The handing over was attended by the club's district governor, Subhasish Chatterjee, assistant governor,

Sandeep Ghosal and club president, Bhaskar Bhardhan.

The District Governor pointed out that Karimul Haque was a tea garden worker, locally known as "Bike-Ambulance-Dada," who has been feted with a Padma Shri award for his work supporting villagers in and around Dhalabari by driving sick people to hospital on his motorcycle ambulance.



Lossong archery at Pewthang

SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 17 DEC:

Lossong Open Archery Tournament is underway at Pewthang, Pemayangtse near Pelling in West Sikkim today.

The tournament, organised by Khangchendzonga Motorcycle Club in association with West District Archery Association, had Transport Chairperson, Basant Tamang, as chief guest today.

KMC president, Diwash Gurung, shares that the club has been formed with the aim to serve the people and help the deprived section of society, a commitment they signed up to after noticing the suffering that follows in the wake of natural calamities.

"When the Covid pandemic hit the world, we initiated a charity drive and undertook a mission to extend required. Several villages



in West Sikkim were cut off from the main markets and ration supplies because of the nationwide lockdown and we delivered essential commodities to far-flung villages after obtaining the required official permissions from the District authorities," he detailed.

Khangchendzonga Motorcycle Club

frequently organises "Ride for a Cause" initiative.

The archery tournament is being planned as an annual charity fund raising event. The tournament got underway on 04 December and will conclude on 20 December.

The archery field at Pewthang, where the

tournament is being played, carries historical significance being a venue where event erstwhile Chogyals tested their archery skills, it is informed.

Today, the first semifinal was played between Green Tara from Gangtok and TAC-Namchi, which the archers from Gangtok won.

Lee Aal Old Age Home felicitates Pintso Bhutia



SUMMIT REPORT
RANGPO, 17 DEC:

At a special program hosted today, Lee Aal Old Age Home, Upper Rangdong, honoured young social worker, Pintso Bhutia of Tumin Lingee constituency in recognition of his spirit

of social service.

Lee Aal Sangh president, Pasangkit Lepcha, informed the gathering that that Mr Bhutia has constructed five toilets for underprivileged families of Tumin Lingee and arranged free coaching

for students from classes 1 to 10 every winter since 2017.

He has also provided free exercise books to students [from Classes 1 to XII] of Makha Senior Secondary School, along with providing foodgrains to 100 families affected

by Covid-19 pandemic and even extended financial assistance to many workers, including support to old age homes, temples, monastery and places of worship by providing them tin sheets earlier in the year.

"Blockade happens only in war": Centre to top court on farmers' protest

NEW DELHI, 17 DEC [NDTV]:

Farmers protesting against the three farm laws passed in September are adamant that they be repealed and have come prepared to stay on the borders of Delhi for six months if need be, the Centre told the Supreme Court today. "Blockade happens only in war," Attorney General KK Venugopal, who was representing the Centre, told the court.

Arguing that the farmers' blockade at the Delhi border will have to go, the Centre

said "it affects the right to movement and the damage is enormous".

"The worst of all is that there is no use of mask no social distancing. COVID will be spreading and they go back to village and spreading the virus throughout the state," Mr Venugopal said, citing the tens of thousands of farmers who have gathered at the border.

Chief Justice of India SA Bobde, who was leading the bench hearing a clutch of petitions on the protest,

questioned if the farmers have blocked the roads of the whole city. On hearing it was a highway where they have been camping, he said, "Tikri and Singhu are already blocked. It is not as if Delhi is been choked".

The Centre's repeated attempts to push for clause-by-clause negotiations were also brushed off by the court, which had recommended the formation of a panel yesterday.

"We observed yesterday that the Centre is not successful

in negotiations. We do not think that the farmers will accept your conclusions. Let the committee decide," Justice Bobde said.

Maintaining that the farmers have the fundamental right to protest, the court suggested that the government not take any executive action to implement the law till a final decision is taken on the matter. Mr Venugopal said he would get back after discussion with the government.

Books emerging as farmers' best friends at Singhu border

MANIK GUPTA

NEW DELHI, DEC 17 (PTI): Protesting farmers, who have been holding their fort at the Singhu border for over 20 days, are keeping monotony and boredom at bay by adding new books to their reading list -- day after day.

For many, it is a new found love.

Thirty-two-year-old Harbans Singh, for instance, who has been camping for past one week, said he can't recall the last time he picked a book for reading.

His reasons for doing it now: "to keep tempers down" and "to get inspired by the greats".

"There are many like me who have started reading books during the protest only. Currently, I am reading 'Punjab Tera ki Banu' by novelist Jaswant Singh Kanwal. I look forward to finish this one and read another soon," said Singh, who hails from Barnala district in Punjab and has come with his friends to protest.

"Someone suggested me to read one on Fidel Castro. Kehnde hai bahut bada krantikari si woh (They say he was a great revolutionary)," he said.

Several books are seen at the protest site, including biographies of revolutionaries like Bhagat Singh, Che Guevara and Vladimir Lenin in English, Hindi and Punjabi as well.

There are also books on farmers distress, Punjab's rich history and on the teachings of Sikh Gurus who stood for national integration, peace, brotherhood and communal harmony.

Encashing on these new tribe of readers, some small time book stalls have also sprung up at the protest site.

Gargi, a Delhi-based publication house, is happily surprised to find some business for its books in a strange venue like this.

"They all are curious and have too many questions in their mind. Some of these books try

to give them answers, others provide food for thought for more questions," said Kamal Joshi, a volunteer working at Gargi Publications.

"The fact they are at throwaway prices, and available in Hindi and Punjabi languages as well are also some of the reasons why protestors are keen on buying these books," he added.

Their books include a Hindi quarterly magazine "Kisaan", Hindi translation of Russian writer Maxim Gorky novel "The Mother" -- which is a story about revolutionary factory workers -- and a 24-page booklet on the contentious three agri laws costing only Rs 5.

Gurmeet Sandhu, 55, who is a farmer from Karnal district of Haryana, said he has read the booklet on farm laws and plans to send "50 copies" of the booklet to his village and spread the word.

"This book explains

the laws in detail. I am now 100 per cent sure that these law are not at all in favour of farmers. I want more people to read it and will distribute it to more and more people," said Sandhu, who has been part of the protest since November 28.

A make-shift library at the border, run by Phd students from Punjab, welcomes visitors with a telling banner reading: "Udhta Nahi, Padhta Punjab".

With over 900 books already issued from their total stock of 1,300, the organisers are overwhelmed by the response and plan to replenish the stocks soon.

"Our purpose to have this library here is to educate farmers about the issues. They can come here, get the book and form an opinion about what is right and what is wrong themselves. This way they would protest peacefully and not fall for any wrong information,"

said Kiran Preet Singh from Jangi Library.

Books finding major tractions in the library are: "Pehla Adhyapak", the Hindi translation of Russian author Chingiz Atimotov story about a teacher who took on the responsibility to educate the children from poor families in his community, "Sikh Rajneeti" and "Shaheed Jaswant Singh Khalra: Soch, Sangharsh Te Shahadat" by author Ajmer Singh.

Just adjacent to the library is an ongoing poster exhibition by student organisation Bhagat Singh Chatra Ekta Manch.

The exhibition, which also provide stationery required to make posters, is becoming another go-to place for protesting farmers to try their hand at poster making.

Farmers favourite and in-demand selfie poster: a drawing showing wooden plough uprooting parliament.

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What is Novel Coronavirus - nCoV?

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

Symptoms of nCoV

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

Treatment

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



Precautions to Prevent nCoV

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

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Noninvolvement Feeds Arrogance

...a prescription which poisons democracy

The dictionary defines “noninvolvement” as a lack or emotional engagement and failure or refusal to become involved.

In most contexts, this term takes a more policy/ political term in that it applies to nations in the line of “nonalignment”. When so practiced, it is mostly a good thing so long as it is about distancing from “politics” and not humanitarian situations because had it been followed, USA would not have been fighting so many wars instigating the creation of monsters like ISIS and then so overtly undermining the significance of the UN... or even ignoring the science of climate change for that matter.

The same principle, however, does not apply to the citizenry with the same merits. In fact, noninvolvement among a people has the opposite effect of what it does on nations. When a people refuse to engage, democracy gets reduced to election cycles, accountability is replaced by bombast and the sense of service among representatives is subsumed by the arrogance of “leaders”. When things come to such a pass, policy decisions become diktats, the noxious fringe crawls out from under the rocks and dances madness in the public domain. And no, the social media activity of trolls does not qualify as involvement; if anything, it is a false equivalent for public participation because what it seeks to do is abuse/ shout discourse into meek acceptance. And as this army wins more and more battles, it helps create a mob of bots programmed not to analyse but applaud the demagoguery of flag-waving chauvinists and subvert democracy so much that the idea of supreme and all-powerful leaders does not offend anymore and no one even blinks when the term in office of an elected government is referred to as rule.

A people self-assured in their ignorance make for easy pickings when it comes to seeding fears because when one refuse to get involved and hence get informed, they cannot handle complexities anymore and gravitate towards the black & whites of the alt-Right. We know we are in trouble when hate can be peddled as righteousness and not even get called out. You know democracy is being compromised when dictation replaces consultation and no one has a problem with it.

Democracy is supposed to ease people’s minds, allowing them their disagreements and differences and still providing the space where they can be themselves without having to constantly look over their shoulders. Fail to remain involved, and every expression of democracy becomes conditional and violence punctuates the lives of lay people more often than should ever be allowed. We have seen this trend gather pace in the recent past when suspicions, bans, deregulation, demonization (okay, also demonetization), forced nationalism, increased supervision bordering on surveillance and pulpit-mongering have come to define governance and gain meek acceptance. Arrogance is an undesirable quality in anyone, but when it comes to leaders, it is dangerous. And we continue feeding it with our noninvolvement.

Why Being Stuck at Home – and Unable to Hang Out in Cafes and Bars – Drains Our Creativity



KORYDON SMITH
THECONVERSATION.COM

While the pandemic has caused thousands of small businesses to temporarily close or shutter for good, the disappearance of the corner coffee shop means more than lost wages.

It also represents a collective loss of creativity.

Researchers have shown how creative thinking can be cultivated by simple habits like exercise, sleep and reading. But another catalyst is unplanned interactions with close friends, casual acquaintances and complete strangers. With the closure of coffee shops – not to mention places like bars, libraries, gyms and museums – these opportunities vanish.

Of course, not all chance meetings result in brilliant ideas. Yet as we bounce from place to place, each brief social encounter plants a small seed that can gel into a new idea or inspiration. By missing out on chance meetings and observations that nudge our curiosity and jolt “a-ha!” moments, new ideas, big and small, go undiscovered.

IT’S NOT THE CAFFEINE, IT’S THE PEOPLE

Famous artists, novelists and scientists are often seen as if their ideas and work come from a singular mind. But this is misleading. The ideas of even the most reclusive of poets, mathematicians or theologians are part of larger conversations among

peers, or are reactions and responses to the world.

As author Steven Johnson wrote in “Where Good Ideas Come From,” the “trick to having good ideas is not to sit around in glorious isolation and try to think big thoughts.” Instead, he recommends that we “go for a walk,” “embrace serendipity” and “frequent coffeehouses and other liquid networks.”

Just as today’s freelance writers might use coffee shops as a second office, it was the tea- and coffeehouses of London in the 18th century that spurred the Age of Enlightenment. Then, as now, people intuitively knew they were “more productive or more creative when working from coffee shops,” according to David Burkus, author of “The Myths of Creativity.” As research shows, it’s not the caffeine; it’s the people. Simply being around other people who are working can motivate us to do the same.

IN OTHER WORDS, CREATIVITY IS SOCIAL.

It’s also contextual. The built environment plays a hidden but crucial role. Architectural researchers in the U.K., for instance, found that classroom design impacts the speed at which students learn. They found that classroom features, such as furniture and lighting, have as much impact on learning as teachers. Similar aspects of cafe design can enhance creativity.

DESIGNING FOR CREATIVITY
Buildings influence a wide range

of human functions. Temperature and humidity, for example, affect our ability to concentrate. Daylighting is positively linked to productivity, stress management and immune functions. And air quality, determined by HVAC systems as well as the chemical composition of furnishings and interior materials like carpet, affects both respiratory and mental health. Architectural design has even been connected to happiness.

Likewise, a well-designed coffee shop can facilitate creativity – where the unplanned friction between people can ignite sparks of innovation.

Two newly completed coffee shops, the Kilogram Coffee Shop in Indonesia and Buckminster’s Cat Cafe in Buffalo, New York, were designed with this kind of interactivity in mind.

Each has open, horizontal layouts that actually encourage congestion, which fosters chance encounters. Lightweight and geometric furniture enables occupants to rearrange seating and accommodate groups of various size, such as when a friend unexpectedly arrives. There are views outside, which promote calmness and offer more opportunities to daydream. And there is a moderate level of ambient noise – not too high or low – which induces cognitive disfluency, a state of deep, reflective thinking.

RESTORING THE SOUL OF THE COFFEE SHOP

Of course, not all coffee shops have closed. Many shops have reduced

indoor seating capacity, limited patrons to exterior seating or have restricted services to takeout only as a means to stay open. All of them have faced the difficult task of implementing safeguards while retaining the atmosphere of their establishments. Some design elements, like lighting, can easily be retained amidst social distancing and other safety measures. Others, like movable seating for collaboration, are harder to achieve safely.

While these tweaks allow businesses to stay open and ensure the safety of customers, they sap spaces of their souls.

Philosopher Michel de Certeau said that the spaces we occupy are a backdrop on which the “ensemble of possibilities” and “improvisation” of everyday life occur. When social life fully transitions into the digital realm, these opportunities become limited. Conversations become prearranged, while the side chats that take place before or after a meeting or event have been quashed. In video meetings, participants speak to either the whole room or no one.

For cafe owners, employees and customers, the post-pandemic era can’t come soon enough. After all, while customers ostensibly stop by their local coffee shop for a jolt of caffeine, the true draw of the place is in its haptic and hectic spirit.

[the writer is Professor of Architecture and Associate Director of Global Health Equity, University at Buffalo]

Plastic Pipes Are Polluting Drinking Water Systems After Wildfires – it’s a risk in urban fires, too

KRISTOFER P. ISAACSON
THECONVERSATION.COM

When wildfires swept through the hills near Santa Cruz, California, in 2020, they released toxic chemicals into the water supplies of at least two communities. One sample found benzene, a carcinogen, at 40 times the state’s drinking water standard.

Our testing has now confirmed a source of these chemicals, and it’s clear that wildfires aren’t the only blazes that put drinking water systems at risk.

In a new study, we heated plastic water pipes commonly used in buildings and water systems to test how they would respond to nearby fires.

The results, released Dec. 14, show how easily wildfires could trigger widespread drinking water contamination. They also show the risks when only part of a building catches fire and the rest remains in use. In some of our tests, heat exposure caused more than 100 chemicals to leach from the damaged plastics.

As environmental engineers, we advise communities on drinking water safety and disaster recovery. The western U.S.’s extreme wildfire seasons are putting more communities at risk in ways they might not realize. Just this year, more than 52,000 fires destroyed more than 17,000 structures – many of them homes connected to water systems. Heat-damaged plastic pipes can continue to leach chemicals into water over time, and ridding a water system of the contamination can take months and millions of dollars.

A BAFFLING SOURCE OF CONTAMINATION

The cause of drinking water contamination after wildfires has baffled authorities since it was discovered in 2017.

After the 2017 Tubbs Fire and 2018 Camp Fire, chemicals were found in buried water distribution networks, some at levels comparable to hazardous waste. Contamination was not in the water treatment plants or drinking water sources. Some homeowners found drinking water contamination in their plumbing.

Tests revealed volatile organic compounds had reached levels that posed immediate health risks in some areas, including benzene levels that exceeded the EPA hazardous waste threshold of 500 parts per



billion. Benzene was found at a level 8,000 times the federal drinking water limit and 200 times the level that causes immediate health effects. Those effects can include dizziness, headaches, skin and throat irritation and even unconsciousness, among other risks.

This year, wildfires triggered drinking water contamination in at least two more California drinking water systems, and testing is still underway in other communities.

THE PROBLEM WITH PLASTICS

Plastics are ubiquitous in drinking water systems. They are often less expensive to install than metal alternatives, which hold up against high heat but are vulnerable to corrosion.

Today, water pipes under the street and those that deliver water to customers’ water meters are increasingly made of plastic. Pipes that transport the drinking water from the meter to the building are often plastic. Water meters also sometimes contain plastics. Private wells can have plastic well casings as well as buried plastic pipes that deliver well water to plastic storage tanks and buildings.

Pipes inside buildings that carry hot and cold water to faucets can also be plastic, as can faucet

connectors, water heater dip tubes, refrigerator and ice maker tubing.

To determine if plastic pipes could be responsible for drinking water contamination after wildfires, we exposed commonly available plastic pipes to heat. The temperatures were similar to the heat from a wildfire that radiates toward buildings but isn’t enough to cause the pipes to catch fire.

We tested several popular plastic drinking water pipes, including high-density polyethylene (HDPE), crosslinked polyethylene (PEX), polyvinyl chloride (PVC) and chlorinated polyvinylchloride (CPVC).

Benzene and other chemicals were generated inside the plastic pipes just by heating. After the plastics cooled, these chemicals then leached into the water. It happened at temperatures as low as 392 degrees Fahrenheit. Fires can exceed 1,400 degrees.

While researchers previously discovered that plastics could release benzene and other chemicals into the air during heating, this new study shows heat-damaged plastics can directly leach dozens of toxic chemicals into water.

WHAT TO DO ABOUT CONTAMINATION

A community can stop water contamination from spreading if damaged pipes can be quickly

isolated. Without isolation, the contaminated water may move to other parts of the water system, across town or within a building, causing further contamination.

During the CZU Lightning Complex Fire near Santa Cruz, one water utility had water distribution system valves that seemed to have contained the benzene-contaminated water.

Rinsing heat-damaged pipes won’t always remove the contamination. While helping Paradise, California, recover from the 2018 Camp Fire disaster, we and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency estimated that some plastic pipes would have required more than 100 days of nonstop water rinsing to be safe for use. Instead, officials decided to replace the pipes.

Even if a home is undamaged, we recommend testing the water in private wells and service lines if fire was on the property. If contamination is found, we recommend finding and removing the heat-damaged plastic contamination sources. Some plastics can slowly leach chemicals like benzene over time, and this could go on for months to years, depending on the scale of contamination and water use. Boiling the water doesn’t help and can release benzene into the air.

AVOIDING WIDESPREAD CONTAMINATION

Communities can take steps to avoid contaminated drinking water in the event of a fire. Water companies can install network isolation valves and backflow prevention devices, to prevent contaminated water moving from a damaged building into the utility pipe network.

Insurance companies can use pricing to encourage property owners and cities to install fire-resistant metal pipes instead of plastic. Rules for keeping vegetation away from meter boxes and buildings can also lessen the chance heat reaches plastic water system components.

Homeowners and communities rebuilding after fires now have more information about the risks as they consider whether to use plastic pipes. Some, like the town of Paradise, have chosen to rebuild with plastic and accept the risks. In 2020, the city had another wildfire scare and residents were forced to evacuate again.

[the writer is Ph.D. Student, Purdue University]

Lakadong turmeric goes international

SHILLONG, DEC 16 [SHILLONGTIMES]: On Wednesday evening a webinar hosted by the Agriculture Department saw the inauguration of a joint venture between the turmeric farmer groups from Meghalaya under a local entrepreneur with the brand name BRAVES and Mt. Meru a company from San Diego for marketing Lakadong Turmeric in Nutraceutical form for the US market.

Chief Minister Conrad Sangma attended the webinar although he was not well having tested COVID positive and with saline drip in his right hand.

"The reason I have joined this webinar despite my ill health is because I am excited about this venture. Meghalaya has a very diverse agro-climatic condition which also means crop diversity. It is the gene pool of Citrus indica, the pitcher plant, and recently the glowing mushroom. Meghalaya has immense treasures



to share with the world and what Mt Meru and BRAVES have done today by way of turning turmeric into FDA approved nutraceutical tablet will bring huge benefits to the world and will even help build immunity against Covid," the chief minister said adding that this new venture will also benefit the farmers.

Union Agriculture Minister, Narendra Singh

Tomar who gave the inaugural speech lauded the chief minister for his commitment towards rural development.

"In a state with over 80% farmers it is important that their needs are indentified and met through schemes targeted towards upscaling their production," Tomar said, adding that it is a matter of pride that haldi (turmeric) from India

has reached the seven seas. He assured the chief minister that the Centre would provide all assistance in this and other farmer related ventures.

Earlier the founder of Mt Meru, the San Diego-based Radhika Ponda said she had visited Mukhyam in West Jaintia Hills because she had heard of the high curcumin content of the turmeric there.

After meeting several farmers she met Anumahasa Sna who agreed to grow turmeric the way she wanted it grown — in a natural environment with no artificial fertilisers or pesticides. Radhika says her company believes in responsible agriculture where soil, water, nature are combined for sustainability.

Radhika believes in combining the power

of Mother Nature, the ancient Indian wisdom of Ayurveda and the wisdom of modern science to make the very best herbal medicines/supplements for immune system and health. What is of interest to the turmeric farmers is that Mt Meru will pay the farmers seven times the amount they would otherwise have got by selling their turmeric in the market.

Radhika Ponda pointed to the logistical challenges in Meghalaya such as the non-availability of an accredited lab but this was being worked out and the state government will soon set up the necessary infrastructure.

The webinar started at 8.30 pm to suit the US participants. The programme was hosted by Dr Shakil Ahammed, Principal Secy, Agriculture Department.

In attendance was also the Consul General of India in San Francisco, Ambassador Dr TV Nagendra Prasad.

Odisha logs 351 new COVID-19 cases, 5 more fatalities



BHUBANESWAR, DEC 17 (PTI): Odisha on Thursday added 351 new cases to its COVID-19 caseload, raising the state's tally to 3,25,147, while five fresh fatalities pushed the toll to 1,825, a health department official said.

Of the 351 cases, 203 were reported from various quarantine centres, and 148 detected during contact tracing.

Three districts -- Gajapati, Rayagada and Kandhamal -- did not report any case since Wednesday.

Khurda, of which the state capital Bhubaneswar is a part, recorded the maximum number of new cases at 52, followed by

Sundergarh at 47 and Angul at 41.

Taking to Twitter, the Health and Family Welfare Department said, "Regret to inform about the demise of five Covid positive patients while under treatment in hospitals."

Two fatalities were registered in Sundergarh and one each in Balasore, Jagatsinghpur and Puri.

Odisha currently has 3,061 active cases, while 3,20,208 patients have so far recovered.

The state's positivity rate stands at five per cent.

Over 65.02 lakh samples have been examined in the state, including 33,494 on Wednesday.

21 new cases push Arunachal's COVID-19 tally to 16,574



ITANAGAR, DEC 17 (PTI): At least 21 more people tested positive for COVID-19 in Arunachal Pradesh, pushing the tally in the northeastern state to 16,574, a health department official said on Thursday.

Of the fresh cases, five were reported from the Capital Complex region, four from Anjaw district and three each from East Siang and Lower Dibang Valley, State Surveillance Officer (SSO) Dr Lobsang Jampa said.

Two new cases were also recorded in Longding and one each in West Kameng, Lohit, Tawang and West Siang, he said.

Eighteen fresh infections were detected through rapid antigen tests, while two were found through TrueNAT method and one through RT-PCR, the SSO said.

Barring two, all the new patients were asymptomatic, he said.

Fourteen people were

cured of the disease on Wednesday, taking the total number of recoveries in the state to 16,278.

The recovery rate among coronavirus patients in the state currently stands at 98.21 per cent.

Arunachal Pradesh now has 241 active cases, and 55 patients have succumbed to the infection so far, the official said.

The fatality ratio currently stands at 0.33 per cent.

The Capital Complex region, comprising Itanagar, Naharlagun, Nirjuli and Banderdewa areas, has the highest number of active cases at 95, followed by Changlang (26), East Siang (25) and West Kameng (23).

The state has so far tested 3,70,756 samples for COVID-19, including 628 on Wednesday, and the positivity rate is at 1.79 per cent, he said.

Assam Police muscled in on Ri Bhoi construction work

NONGPOH, DEC 16 [SHILLONGTIMES]:

In another incident of alleged intrusion into developmental works at the interstate border areas, a platoon of Assam Police reportedly interrupted the construction work of an ICDS building at Madan Umwang in Ri Bhoi on Tuesday. The police personnel conducted an inspection at the ongoing construction site and forcefully stopped the ongoing work, sources said.

When contacted, headman of Madan Umwang, Spilling Marboh, lamented that such incidents have been happening in border villages from time to time due to the uncalled-



for interference from the Assam Government. "The Assam Police threatened to arrive with heavy machineries and vandalise the ICDS building if we continued the construction work," the headman informed, while adding that he had informed the

Ri Bhoi Superintendent of Police as well as the BDO of Umsning, who is also the Border Magistrate of Ri Bhoi.

Marboh further informed that police from Mawlasnai Outpost had visited the village and conducted an

inquiry into the alleged interference from Assam Police.

Meanwhile, reacting to this incident, president of the Synjuk ki Rangbah Shnong Border Area (SRSBA), B Sohtun, echoed Marboh, stating that such incidents have

been happening from time to time.

Most of the developmental works initiated by the Meghalaya Government have faced many hurdles in the border areas due to the intrusion of Assam Government, Sohtun

Farmer dies near Tikri border

CHANDIGARH, DEC 17 (PTI): A 38-year-old farmer from Punjab was found dead at a protest site near the Tikri border on Thursday morning, police said.

Jai Singh, a resident of Tungwali village in Bathinda district, and his brother had been part of the farmers' protest at the Haryana-Delhi border against the Centre's three farm laws for the last several days, according to Bharatiya Kisan Union (Ekta Ugrahan) leader Shingara Singh.

Jai Singh was found

dead in the morning. The exact cause of the death could be ascertained after a post mortem, an official of the Bahadurgarh police in Haryana said.

Singh's brother suspected that he might have died of heart attack. The body was sent to the Bahadurgarh civil hospital in Jhajjar district, the official said.

Shingara Singh demanded a compensation of Rs 10 lakh and a government job for the kin of the deceased.

Around 20 farmers, many of them are from Punjab, have so far died either of natural causes or in road accidents, the BKU (Ekta Ugrahan) leader said.

The farmers have been camping at several border points into Delhi for three weeks, demanding that the new farm laws be repealed as they claim it would benefit the corporates and end the traditional wholesale markets and the minimum support price regime.

EC starts preparations for assembly polls due mid 2021

NEW DELHI, DEC 17 (PTI):

The Election Commission (EC) has started preparing for the five assembly polls due some time in April-May next year with two if its senior officials set to visit West Bengal and Tamil Nadu in the next few days.

While EC Secretary General Umesh Sinha would be visiting Tamil Nadu next week, Deputy Election Commissioner Sudip Jain would be in West Bengal in the coming days, sources said.

The terms of the legislative assemblies of West Bengal, Tamil Nadu, Assam, Kerala and Puducherry is coming to an end between May and

June next year.

A high stake political battle is expected in most of the states. Political temperature has been running high in West Bengal where the BJP is making a determined bid to end the ruling Trinamool Congress' rule of 10 years after emerging as its main rival in the last few years and winning 18 of its 42 Lok Sabha seats in the 2019 polls.

The ruling BJP is in direct contest with the Congress in Assam, while the political scene in Tamil Nadu, which has been traditionally dominated by the two Dravidian parties, has become a lot more interesting after

Mizoram records five new COVID-19 cases, tally 4,085

AIZAWL, DEC 17 (PTI): Five more people, including three women, tested positive for COVID-19 in Mizoram, pushing the state's tally to 4,085, an official said on Thursday.

Three cases were reported from Lawngtlai, and one each from Aizawl and Lunglei.

All five cases were

detected through Rapid Antigen Test, the official said.

Two of them were found to have developed symptoms of the viral disease.

Mizoram currently has 171 active cases, while 3,907 people have recovered from the infection.

Shillong-Kolkata flight in limbo



SHILLONG, DEC 16 [SHILLONGTIMES]: IndiGo, the largest private airline company in the country, is all set to begin the Shillong-Delhi flight from December 21 but there is no word from the company on resumption of the Shillong-Kolkata flight which was suspended in March this year in view of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Chief Secretary, MS

Rao today made it clear that the state government cannot dictate terms to the company but can only request them to restart the Shillong-Kolkata service.

Expressing satisfaction that the Shillong-Delhi flight would start from December 21, Rao said that the air service is being started through the process of tendering in which there is an

element of state support.

The flight will operate once or twice a week to begin with, keeping in view the constraints emerging out of the COVID situation.

The Shillong-Delhi flight is being launched on a day when the state is opening its doors to tourists, nine months after the pandemic put the brakes on the burgeoning industry.

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Next few games could define Manchester United's season, says SolSKjaer

London, 17 Dec (Reuters): Manchester United's title hopes could rest on how they cope with an upcoming schedule of five Premier League games in 16 days, manager Ole Gunnar SolSKjaer has said.

United travel to Sheffield United later on Thursday before playing Leeds United, Leicester City, Wolverhampton Wanderers and Aston Villa in quick succession. A League Cup quarter-final against Everton is also squeezed into their schedule on Dec. 23.

"This is a big run of games for us," Norwegian SolSKjaer said when asked if the next few matches would define the season.

"This period is going to be vital and it'll be easier for me to answer around that time. I'd be disappointed if the players didn't think we can put a challenge up."

Only eight points separate league leaders Liverpool from ninth-placed United, who have played two games fewer than the defending champions.

"At the moment, anything goes in the league," SolSKjaer added. "This season is going to be very up and down.

"Whoever finds the consistency and the energy will have a better chance than in the last few seasons, because there's been a few runaway teams."

Tszyu targets world boxing title shot after Morgan demolition

SYDNEY, 17 DEC (REUTERS): Australia's Tim Tszyu has targeted a world title shot on home soil after retaining his WBO Global and IBF Australasian super-welterweight belts with a first-round knockout of Bowyn Morgan in front of 11,820 fans at Western Sydney Stadium.

Tszyu's brutal demolition of New Zealander Morgan inside two minutes late on Wednesday took his record to 17-0 with 13 knockouts and the fighter a step closer to matching his Russian-born father Kostya as a world champion.

Complications caused by the COVID-19 pandemic mean Tszyu could be fighting for the WBO world title early next year against Argentinian Brian Castano and the Sydneysider was clear in his ambitions.

"I'm done with Australia. I want the Mexicans, the Americans, the top-level boys," Tszyu told reporters.

"I'm getting more mature. I just turned 26, I haven't even reached my peak. I've got another three or four years before I reach my peak.

"That's why I want the best experience, to fight the best fighters right now."

Bayern sink Wolfsburg with Lewandowski double, Leverkusen stay top

MUNICH, 17 DEC (REUTERS): Bayern Munich's Robert Lewandowski scored twice to steer the champions to a 2-1 comeback win over VfL Wolfsburg on Wednesday, keeping them a point behind Bundesliga leaders Bayer Leverkusen who crushed Cologne 4-0.

Bayern, who travel to Leverkusen on Saturday, fell behind for the sixth consecutive league game when Maximilian Philipp volleyed home in the fifth minute, but Lewandowski struck either side of the break to give his side their first win in the last three games.

The Poland striker, whose goals this year have helped win five



major trophies for Bayern, levelled in first-half stoppage time for his 250th league goal - only the third player after Gerd Mueller and Klaus Fischer to reach that mark in the Bundesliga.

He added another five minutes after the restart

following a strong run.

"As a striker, you always have to be selfish," Lewandowski, in the running to be named FIFA's best footballer on Thursday, said.

"I have no pressure (regarding the award). I was focused on today's

game. I am just happy to have the chance to win a big honour."

It was the first loss of the season for Wolfsburg, who had late chances to score, only to be denied by two outstanding Manuel Neuer saves. They dropped to fifth on

From bubble 'prisons' to BLM, cricket confronted reality

NEW DELHI, 17 Dec (Reuters): Cricket lost a chunk of the year's fixtures, including a World Cup which had to be postponed, and players were banished to a life in "luxury prisons" when the game staggered back onto its feet still bearing the scars of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The sweet sound of bat meeting ball fell silent in March when New Zealand were renewing their trans-Tasman rivalry in Australia and the Pakistan Super League Twenty20 competition was nearing its business end.

The novel coronavirus outbreak forced players indoors, leaving several cricket boards, including some of the more affluent ones, in the red.

Half a dozen test series could not be played, creating a calendar logjam and forcing a change to how the finalists for next year's World Test Championship (WTC) would be determined.

The women's Twenty20 World Cup,

which Meg Lanning's Australia clinched on March 8 before a record 86,000-plus crowd at the Melbourne Cricket Ground, had a narrow escape but the men's tournament was not so lucky.

Even as the pandemic raged on, the governing International Cricket Council (ICC) waited until July before postponing the Australia edition of the tournament to 2022.

While the game endured a rare four-month lull, boards introduced cost-cutting measures to deal with the pandemic's financial aftermath.

Several boards, including Cricket Australia, furloughed the lion's share of their workforce, while the England and Wales Cricket Board narrowly escaped what its chief executive Tom Harrison later described as "financial oblivion".

The ECB postponed the inaugural edition of The Hundred competition, while their players, men and



women, accepted pay cuts.

International cricket finally resumed after a 117-day hiatus when England hosted West Indies in a three-test series in bio-secure venues at Southampton and Manchester in July.

This "new normal" of living in isolation and playing behind closed doors provided the game with a template to continue in extraordinary circumstances.

While the immediate reaction of the action-starved players was that of relief, the strain of bubble-life soon manifested itself.

BUBBLE FATIGUE England all-rounder Tom Curran pulled out of the Big Bash League (BBL) in Australia citing bubble fatigue, days after compatriot Tom Banton withdrew from that Twenty20 tournament for the same reason.

"It can be quite tough," South Africa speedster Kagiso Rabada said after experiencing bubble life in the Indian Premier League (IPL) in the United Arab Emirates.

"You can't interact. You've basically lost your freedom. It's almost like luxury prisons," the

21 points, with Bayern in second place on 27, level on points with RB Leipzig.

Bayern have now made sure they will finish 2020 without a single home loss in any competition, the first time they have achieved a calendar year with no home defeat since 1981.

Leverkusen lead the title race on 28 points after thrashing Cologne, early goals from Mitchell Weiser and Moussa Diaby setting them on their way before Patrik Schick and teenager Florian Wirtz struck in the second half to complete the rout.

RB Leipzig are level on 27 points with Bayern after edging past Hoffenheim 1-0 thanks to Yussuf Poulsen's second-half winner.

Liverpool's Curtis Jones enjoys the midfield battle and comes of age

BARNEY RONAY LONDON, 17 DEC [THEGUARDIAN]: And: breathe again. We really must do a few more of these injury-ravaged, muscle-fatigued, migraine-football nightmares. On a wild night, Liverpool and Tottenham produced a mind-bogglingly tense, tight, pummelling game of football.

There has been some rather prim displeasure expressed in some quarters at the level of high-end quality dished up of late in the Premier League. Has it conceivably dipped a little? (Probably not.) Is there a sense some of these matches might have been more fevered in front of a full house? In reality, there has been a startling intensity to much of the football played. But nothing quite like this.

There wasn't just a contrast of styles. It felt at times like a fight for control of how, where and in what kind of shape this game should be played. Spurs sat deep and broke with brutal clarity. Liverpool went all-in, fearless in their all-out team attack and were rewarded at the end with a brilliant winning goal.

These have been barren times for Roberto Firmino, who has defined, as much as anyone, the style of this team. The game had already moved into injury time with the score 1-1 as Andy Robertson took a corner on the Tottenham right. Eric Dier was blocked off. Firmino jumped, hung off the sweet spot of his forehead back across into the top-right corner.

Liverpool deserved it. They might also have lost it and might equally have won it earlier and by a few more. It was that kind of game, when both teams executed their gameplan and found deep reserves of energy and execution.

It is always foolish to make grand predictions on the back of one tight result and all the more so right now. But there was a clear sense this might prove to be something of a staging point for Liverpool's title defence.

Mainly there was the exciting spectacle of two Liverpool teenagers playing 90 minutes as Jürgen Klopp drew deeply on his playing resources. Rhys Williams, a Premier League debutant against the Premier League leaders, was playing for Kidderminster in the National League North this time last year. He was mobile, smart and unflustered against a full-bore Harry Kane.

Best of all was Curtis Jones, who has played well at times in his increasingly regular starts, without yet showing the full, sustained extent of his talent.

Spurs had their own moments in between, most noticeably their first-half goal. For 20 minutes they had sat deep, wearing increasingly the bleary, trapped expression of a late-night drinker

pummelled by too many refills, head spinning, resigned now to the inevitable.

For a while it seemed Spurs were trapped in a nightmare cycle, pinned back of their own volition, but subject to a constant high-tempo jab of shifting angles, long and short passes, opponents who just don't stop.

All part of the plan. From nowhere they stretched, slapped themselves around the chops, ran down the other end and scored. The goal was made by a dreamy pass from Giovanni Lo Celso, brilliantly conceived and perfectly executed with a nudge from the outside of a foot.

The ball curved though a gap in the red line and into the open green space behind Trent Alexander-Arnold. Son Heung-min was already sprinting on to the line of the ball. Is there a more lethal footballer in that left channel right now? He surged away from the cover, looked up, steadied himself, feinted to go for his favourite, picture-book corner, then smashed the ball into the near one with a cruel precision.

Liverpool had taken the lead seven minutes earlier, Mohamed Salah's shot taking a loopy deflection. After which the game settled into an almost cartoonish contrast of styles. This was the most extreme example of the José Mourinho way. Not just sit deep and counter. Sit impossibly deep, dig holes in the turf and hide, pull the roof in on the Anderson shelter; then attack with a preternatural precision.

In the middle of which there was a wonderful battle between two style-defining central midfielders in Pierre-Emile Højbjerg and Jones – the latter playing the most intense game of his career, against a team of grizzled old hands and producing a wonderfully measured performance.

There was a moment to sum up the intensity of this duel with 75 minutes gone as Sadio Mané took the ball and nudged it inside to Jones. In an instant Højbjerg was there, back, taking a tumble, craning his neck and finally nudging the ball with his forehead out of Jones's feet.

It was easy to imagine the confusion in the statisticians' seats. Did that count as a tackle or a header? Højbjerg was immense throughout. He is a warrior in this team, a player of great defensive intelligence who has, in Mourinho, found his spirit animal, his sponsor, his Gandalf.

But opposite him Jones came of age, playing with wonderful control, swift feet and calmness too. Jones had taken 129 touches, completed 94% of his passes, taken three shots at goal, won four headers, made four interceptions and glided about with a rare sense of grace. It had been tempting to wonder exactly what kind of midfielder-in-the-making he is. Here was the answer: a complete one.

Bank of England holds fire as it awaits Brexit developments

LONDON (AP): The Bank of England opted against injecting another dose of stimulus into the British economy as it waits to hear whether a post-Brexit trade deal between the U.K. and the European Union is agreed in time for the new year.

In a statement released Thursday, it said the nine rate-setters on the Monetary Policy Committee voted unanimously to keep the bank's main interest rate at the record low of 0.1% as well as maintaining the monetary stimulus already in place.

It said the main news since it boosted its bond-buying program by a further 150 billion pounds (\$200 billion) in November has been the successful trialling of coronavirus vaccines and the rollout in the U.K. of the one developed by America's Pfizer and German biotechnology firm BioNTech.



"This is likely to reduce the downside risks to the economic outlook from COVID," the committee said.

However, the committee warned that recent global activity has been affected by the resurgence of the virus and the associated re-imposition of restrictions. U.K. growth is set to be weaker than anticipated in November.

The British economy is expected to end this year around 12% smaller than it started as a result of the pandemic and the restrictions on business activity and public life. That would be its deepest recession in three centuries.

The committee said the outlook remains "unusually uncertain" and "depends on the evolution of the

pandemic and measures taken to protect public health, as well as the nature of, and transition to, the new trading arrangements between the European Union and the United Kingdom."

The bank's forecasts are based on the assumption of a smooth adjustment to a new tariff-free trading relationship between the EU and the U.K. However,

concerns remain that they won't strike a deal and discussions are ongoing. Were a deal not to emerge, tariffs and quotas would be imposed on many goods traded between the two sides, a development that most economists think would hurt the British economy relatively more.

Bank of England Governor Andrew Bailey recently warned that failing to reach a new trade deal would have a greater long-term impact on the British economy than the long-term impact of the coronavirus pandemic, which in the short term has led to the country's sharpest recession in more than three centuries.

Without specifying, the bank also said Thursday that it stands ready to do more if inflation remains way below target. Currently, the U.K.'s annual inflation rate stands at just 0.3%, way below the bank's target of 2%.

European Space Agency appoints Austrian scientist new chief



BERLIN (AP): The European Space Agency said Thursday that Josef Aschbacher, an Austrian scientist who leads its Earth observation program, has been appointed as the organization's next head. The agency's 22 member states elected Aschbacher to be

ESA's director general succeeding Jan Woerner, whose term ends on June 30.

Aschbacher currently oversees the ESA's center for Earth Observation, near Rome, and has been deeply involved in some of the agency's most high-profile missions including the Copernicus

fleet of satellites collecting environmental data about the planet from space.

The European Space Agency has lately begun discussing involvement in crewed missions beyond Earth's orbit, such as a possible return-to-the-Moon mission with NASA.

Palestinians left waiting as Israel is set to deploy vaccine

RAMALLAH, WEST BANK (AP): Israel will begin rolling out a major coronavirus vaccination campaign next week after the prime minister reached out personally to the head of a major drug company. Millions of Palestinians living under Israeli control will have to wait much longer.

Worldwide, rich nations are snatching up scarce supplies of new vaccines as poor countries largely rely on a World Health Organization program that has yet to get off the ground. There are few places where the competition is playing out in closer proximity than in Israel and the territories it has occupied for more than half a century.

Next year could bring a sharp divergence in the trajectory of the pandemic, which until now has blithely ignored the national boundaries and political enmities of the Middle East. Israelis could soon return to normal life and an economic revival, even as the virus continues to menace Palestinian towns and villages just a few miles (kilometers) away.

Israel reached an agreement with the Pfizer

pharmaceutical company to supply 8 million doses of its newly approved vaccine — enough to cover nearly half of Israel's population of 9 million since each person requires two doses. That came after Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu personally reached out multiple times to Pfizer Chief Executive Albert Bourla, boasting that at one point he was able to reach the CEO at 2 a.m.

Israel has mobile vaccination units with refrigerators that can keep the Pfizer shots at the required minus 70 degrees Celsius (minus 94 Fahrenheit). It plans to begin vaccinations as soon as next week, with a capacity of more than 60,000 shots a day. Israel reached a separate agreement with Moderna earlier this month to purchase 6 million doses of its vaccine — enough for another 3 million Israelis.

Israel's vaccination campaign will include Jewish settlers living deep inside the West Bank, who are Israeli citizens, but not the territory's 2.5 million Palestinians.

They will have to wait for the cash-strapped

Palestinian Authority, which administers parts of the occupied West Bank in accordance with interim peace agreements reached in the 1990s. Israel captured the West Bank, the Gaza Strip and east Jerusalem, territories the Palestinian seek for their future state, in the 1967 Mideast war.

The PA hopes to get vaccines through a WHO-led partnership with humanitarian organizations known as COVAX, which aims to provide free vaccines for up to 20% of the population of poor countries, many of which have been hit especially hard by the pandemic.

But the program has secured only a fraction of the 2 billion doses it hopes to buy over the next year, has yet to confirm any actual deals and is short on cash. Rich countries have already reserved about 9 billion of the estimated 12 billion doses the pharmaceutical industry is expected to produce next year.

Complicating matters is the fact that the Palestinians have only one refrigeration unit — in the oasis town of Jericho — capable of storing the

Pfizer vaccine. They are among nearly 3 billion people worldwide for whom lack of adequate refrigeration capacity could pose a major obstacle.

Dr. Ali Abed Rabbo, a senior Palestinian health official, said the PA is in talks with Pfizer and Moderna — whose vaccines require extra-cold storage — as well as AstraZeneca and the makers of a largely untested Russian vaccine, but has yet to sign any agreements beyond COVAX.

The PA hopes to vaccinate 20% of the population through COVAX, beginning with health workers, he said. "The remainder will depend on Palestine purchasing from the global supply, and we are working with several companies," he said.

Both Israel and the Palestinian Authority have struggled to contain their outbreaks, which have fed off one another as people travel back and forth — mainly tens of thousands of Palestinian laborers employed in Israel. Israel has reported more than 350,000 cases, including more than 3,000 deaths.

The Palestinian Authority has reported more than 85,000 cases in the West Bank, including more than 800 deaths, and the outbreak has intensified in recent weeks. The situation is even more dire in Gaza, home to 2 million Palestinians, which has been under an Israeli and Egyptian blockade since the Hamas militant group seized power in 2007. Authorities there have reported over 30,000 cases, including 220 deaths.

With Gaza's Hamas rulers shunned by the international community, the territory will also rely on the Palestinian Authority. That means it could be several months before any large-scale vaccinations are carried out in the impoverished coastal strip.

Dr. Gerald Rockenschaub, the head of the WHO office for the Palestinian territories, said the PA will provide vaccines to Gaza, but they will arrive in batches and it will take time to reach the first 20%. "We hope that sometime during the next year that the first vaccines will start arriving," he said.

Russia awaits ruling on Olympic ban for flag, anthem

GENEVA (AP): Russia will find out Thursday if its name, flag and anthem will be banned from the next two Olympics and all world championships for up to four years because of state-backed doping. The Court of Arbitration for Sport is preparing to publish a ruling which could also block Russia from bidding to host major sporting events over the next four years.

Although Russian athletes and teams will continue to compete at the Olympics and world championships as long as they are not implicated in doping, the verdict could still be the nation's most severe punishment in sports.

The court in Lausanne, Switzerland, has said it will publish a statement at 4 p.m. to



announce the verdict of its three judges. Either side will be able to appeal to the Swiss supreme court.

The latest case centers on allegations that Russian state authorities tampered with a database from the Moscow testing laboratory before finally handing it over to the World Anti-Doping Agency as evidence to prosecute long-standing doping violations.

The CAS process is formally between WADA and the Russian anti-doping agency. The Russian agency, known as Rusada, was ruled non-compliant one year ago.

Rusada did not accept a wide-ranging slate of punishments proposed by the WADA executive committee and forced the dispute to be decided by CAS.

When a four-day hearing was held in

Lausanne last month, Russian athletes and their lawyers took part as third parties arguing they should not be punished for misconduct by state officials not working in sports.

Giving WADA the lab database by a December 2018 deadline was a key condition for Rusada being reinstated three months earlier when a previous expulsion from the anti-doping community was lifted.

WADA investigators in Moscow eventually got the data one month late. Evidence of doping tests and emails appeared to have been deleted or changed, and whistleblowers were implicated.

The International Olympic Committee called it a "flagrant manipulation" and described it as "an insult to the sporting movement."

The IOC and other WADA signatories, including Olympic sports bodies like FIFA, are required to abide by Thursday's ruling.

The International Ice Hockey Federation, which was a party to the hearing in Lausanne, could be forced to move the 2023 men's world championships from St. Petersburg.

PARIS (AP): French President Emmanuel Macron has tested positive for COVID-19, the presidential Elysee Palace announced on Thursday. It said the president took a test "as soon as the first symptoms appeared." The brief statement did not say what symptoms Macron experienced.

It said he would isolate himself for seven days. "He will continue to work and take care of his activities at a distance," it added.

It was not immediately clear what contact tracing efforts were in progress. Macron attended a European Union summit at

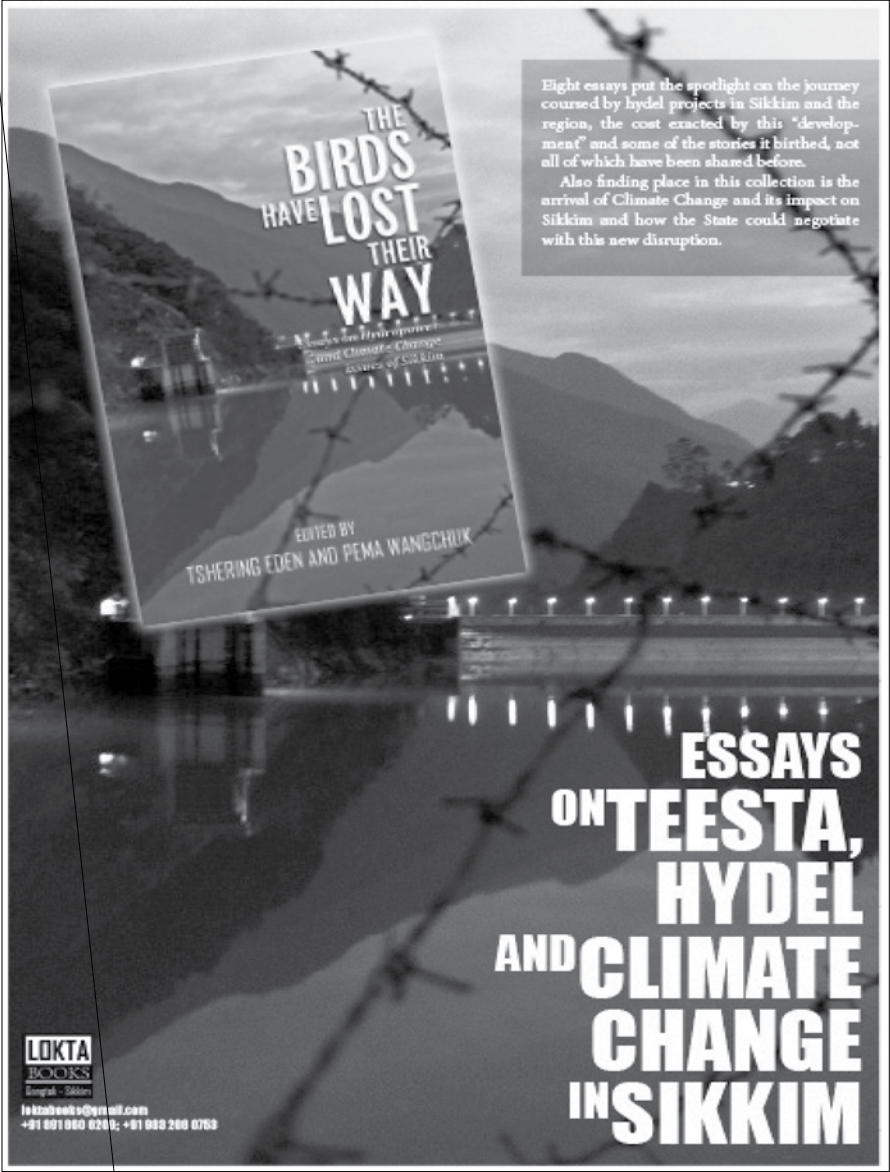
the end of last week, where he notably had a bilateral meeting with German Chancellor Angela Merkel. He met Wednesday with the prime minister of Portugal. There was no immediate comment from Portuguese officials.

Macron on Wednesday also held the government's weekly Cabinet meeting in the presence of Prime Minister Jean Castex and other ministers. Castex's office said that the prime minister is also self-isolating for seven days.

The French presidency confirmed that Macron's trip to Lebanon scheduled for next week is being canceled.

Macron and other government officials repeatedly say that they are sticking to strict sanitary protocols during the pandemic, including not shaking hands, wearing a mask and keeping distance from other people.

Macron is following French health authorities' recommendations that since September have reduced the self-isolation time from 14 days to seven. Authorities said at the time that this is the period when there is the greatest risk of contagion and that reducing it allows better enforcement of the measure.



Kristin Cavallari Praises BFF Justin Anderson's "Pure Light and Love" After Adoption Revelation

Very Cavallari's Justin Anderson reflected on the response to his adoption story on Dec. 16, and pal Kristin Cavallari replied with a beautiful message of support.

Kristin Cavallari is offering her support to pal Justin Anderson after he shared his adoption story.

Justin took to Instagram on Wednesday, Dec. 16 to reflect on his podcast appearance from the day before when he discussed reconnecting with his teenage son who he had placed for adoption. Kristin was quick to comment on the post and praise her bestie and former Very Cavallari co-star.

"You are nothing but pure light and love Justin," she wrote. "We all are lucky to have a little piece of you."

While guesting on the Scissoring Isn't a Thing podcast on Dec. 15, Justin shared that he and high school girlfriend Debbie had sex in his dorm room during his freshman year of college. He explained that because both of them had been raised in Mormon households, an abortion wasn't an option, so they placed the child for adoption.

A few years back, Justin met his son Tyler, who was around 17 years old at the time and is now 19. Justin called meeting Tyler "the most beautiful experience ever," and they still

keep in touch.

In his Dec. 16 post, the celebrity hair colorist included an adorable childhood pic of himself and wrote that he "wasn't prepared for yesterday's emotions" that his story brought out in people.

"to the people showing love and support—thank you," he posted. "to the people sharing their own stories of adoption—i appreciate and respect you. to the people from private accounts saying negative things—go kick rocks on the freeway, you're not welcome here. we all have a story and as much as i believe our past doesn't necessarily define who we are as adults, it definitely plays a role in who we get to be today."

He continued, "i am strong because i have struggled, i am wise because i have made mistakes, i am accepting and full of love because i have experienced otherwise. my sister and @caitlinrounds sent me this kid pic of me last night and it just reminded me that i'll always be the sweet little justin that always wanted everyone to smile and laugh and get along."

Justin, who came out to his family as gay before his junior year of college and is currently engaged to Austin Rhodes, ended the post with "xoxoDad," adding a winking emoji.



OMG, SHOES! The Modern Family star, Sofia Vergara displays her strong shoe game while out in Los Angeles.

Bad Bunny Lands Major Movie Role Opposite Brad Pitt in Bullet Train

Bad Bunny's acting push is set to continue as he has nabbed a role in the upcoming ensemble film Bullet Train that stars Brad Pitt.

Bad Bunny has punched his ticket and is heading to the big screen.

E! News has learned that the music star, whose real name is Benito Martínez Ocasio, is set to join the cast of the upcoming action film Bullet Train that counts Brad Pitt as the lead.

Brian Tyree Henry, Zazie Beetz, Michael Shannon, Logan Lerman, Masi Oka, Joey King, Aaron Taylor Johnson and Andrew Koji round out the ensemble cast for the movie that does not yet have a release date.

Plot details are scarce, but the Sony Pictures film is based on author Kotaro Isaka's best-selling Japanese novel Maria Beetle.

The director is David Leitch, who helmed the box-office hits Deadpool 2 and Hobbs & Shaw. Antoine Fuqua, who directed the Oscar-winning Training Day, is on board as a producer.

Deadline was first to report the Bad Bunny casting news.

The 26-year-old Grammy nominee is



not yet known as a thespian, but that appears likely to change. He is poised to make his acting debut in the drama film American Sole that stars Pete Davidson, O'Shea Jackson Jr., Camila Mendes and Offset. Kevin Hart is a producer on this project.

Bad Bunny is also set to appear on the upcoming third season of Netflix's drug drama Narcos: Mexico. He is part of a current Corona beer ad campaign with Snoop Dogg.

Earlier this year, Bad Bunny spoke to E! News about the pride he has felt in helping to break down stereotypes associated with machismo within the Latinx community.

"It honestly feels good because I'm using my impact for something positive," the Puerto Rican performer said. "Any time you can make someone feel good, it's the best thing. It's infectious, and that's how you end up feeling good yourself."

On a mission: Tom Cruise insists on social distancing on set

LONDON (AP): Tom Cruise has launched an expletive-laden rant at colleagues on the set of his latest "Mission: Impossible" movie, after he reportedly spotted two workers failing to respect social distancing rules.

In audio released by the Sun tabloid, the 58-year-old Hollywood star can be heard warning that anyone caught not following the rules to stay at least 2 meters (more than 6.5 feet) away from others will be fired.

"If I see you doing it again, you're f—ing gone and if anyone on this crew does it, that's it," he is heard saying on the audio recorded during filming in Britain. "That's it. No apologies."

During his outburst at Warner Bros. Studios in Leavesden, which is around 30 miles (around 50 kilometers)



north of London, Cruise catalogued the difficulties he and everyone in the

film industry are facing during the coronavirus pandemic. The timing of the outburst was not clear, though the Sun said production of the movie returned to Britain two weeks ago.

Many movies have either been delayed until after the pandemic is over or because of COVID-related delays on set, including the seventh instalment of the "Mission: Impossible" franchise.

During his outburst, Cruise notes the higher costs for insuring a movie in these times. He also voices his concerns about the direct impact on families and their ability to pay bills if the movie shuts down.

"That's what I sleep with every night," he said. "Do you understand the responsibility that you have?"

Cruise's publicist didn't immediately respond to a request for comment.

Tina Fey Reveals She Saved a Man's Life After Kayak Accident During Pandemic Getaway

While staying in a home outside of New York City during the pandemic, Tina Fey helped save a man's life after he was floating in the Hudson River.

Tina Fey is a good person to have around if you ever decide to explore the Hudson River.

The 50-year-old 30 Rock star appeared on The Tonight Show on Wednesday, Dec. 16, where she told host Jimmy Fallon that she recently helped to save the life of a stranger who had been kayaking in the Hudson and ended up floating in the water following some kind of mishap. Scroll down to see the clip.

The incident occurred a couple of months into the coronavirus pandemic, when Tina and her family had rented a house just outside of New York City. On the first morning that they were there, Tina went outside and heard what appeared to be the faint sound of a person calling for help.

The Baby Mama star said she



couldn't tell if the noise was just a bird, but she ultimately called the police. An officer loudly shouted in the direction of the sound and then left to investigate the surrounding area.

"The cops take off, and then we found out a couple of hours later that it was a guy who flipped a kayak in the Hudson and was floating, no oar," Tina revealed. "They found him a mile north in the river."

At that, Jimmy congratulated his fellow Saturday Night Live alum for helping to facilitate the miracle.

"I saved a man's life!" she exclaimed. "He doesn't know it was us."

Tina then joked that no one should ever decide to try kayaking, at least not in that particular body of water.

"In the Hudson?" she questioned. "That's not like a stream. It's like a rat toilet!"

Clearly, she does not want to go to there.



GRACE INTER REHAB FUTSAL TOURNAMENT

DATE : 19th DEC TO 20th DEC 2020
VENUE : PALJOR STADIUM

TOWARDS TOGETHERNESS

RECOVERING FELLOW BROTHERS JAGRITI FC SERENITY HOME GRACE DETOXIFICATION CENTRE BLESSED FOUNDATION (JAGDOAN) RUN-11 JEEWAN MARG SOCIETY SAINJEEVINI FC FREEDOM FACILITY	MUKTI FOUNDATION (SILIGURI) ANUGRAH REHAB GRACE FOUNDATION (SILIGURI) ANONYMOUS GROUP GOODWILL UNITED (SILIGURI) NEW LIFE REHAB (SILIGURI) SANKIN REHAB (SRDS) RUN-1 UNITED FELLOWSHIP (SILIGURI)
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Play a Part Together






ARIES:

Don't you love it when things just come together as if by divine intervention? Don't you love when the road blocks clear, providing you with clarity on the path ahead? It's a day full of synchronicity and serendipitous encounters, Aries. You'll find that circumstances are aligning in a way to propel forward movement. The right resources are being made available to you along with the guidance required to put the given plan into action. If this doesn't reaffirm your faith in your co-creating abilities, what will?

TAURUS:

Given the state of affairs, you may be feeling anxious about your finances. It's not that you're in a bad place now. It's just that you're uncertain about what the future might hold, which is but natural. The cards are urging you to take a deep breath, centre yourself, and release the worries that are weighing you down at this moment. Your job is to merely show up for what you believe in. The 'how' and the 'why' will be taken care of by the mysterious forces. PS: You are so loved and so protected.

GEMINI:

You've done your best and that is enough. It's time to surrender, Gemini. It's time to let go with love. The less attached you are to the outcome,

the better things will turn out for you. The energy of the eclipse may have brought about a sudden shift in your interpersonal relationships too. You're looking at your past through the lens of wisdom and understanding why certain things didn't work out the way you hoped for them to. PS: Acting with awareness now will prevent the repetition of old mistakes.

CANCER:

Duality is a way of life in the earthly realm. So, the dark night is always followed by the light of day. This is something you're about to witness first hand, Cancer. Trust that the trials and tribulations you've been going through will end soon, making for creative solutions to come through in unexpected ways. The opportunities you require to level up will show up as well. All you have to do is follow the signs and believe in the magic.

LEO:

There are times in our lives when we feel like we are being stripped away of all things familiar. Some call this period 'the dark of the soul'. Others refer to it as the death of the ego. Either way, know that Spirit is coming through for you and holding space for your transition into the new. Think of where you are now as a space of Shunya—a space of infinite possibilities where you can create something you have never created before. Adopting a beginner's mindset is what is

being asked of you at this moment.

VIRGO:

This is a time of great uncertainty in your life. The old cycles have ended, making way for new ones. But, you don't have clarity on where you are being led to now. The cards are urging you to lay your trust in the Great Mystery anyway, knowing that the divine plan is better than anything you and I could ever come up with. So, continue to follow your heart as you become present to the signs and symbols being revealed to you in each moment. Where there is a will, there is a way, Virgo.

LIBRA:

While you do your best to make those around you feel celebrated, they may not always reciprocate your kindness and compassion. In fact, there may be some who are gaslighting you into believing the 'not good enough' narrative. So, take a good look at your friends list, Libra, as you make a note of who your real people are. A huge part of reclaiming your power is remembering who you are and what you are worth. When you believe in yourself so fully, you deprive other people of the chance to undermine your potential.

SCORPIO:

No, everything isn't as you would like it to be. Chaos and commotion have been a constant ever

since the eclipse. But you're far too wise to repeat the 'terrible things happen to me' narrative. Today, you're in the mood to embrace the chameleon spirit and 'act as if'. You're in the mood to reaffirm the good in your life even if it makes you sound a wee bit delusional. PS: Reminding yourself that the glass is half full is a practice that will serve you well.

SAGITTARIUS:

Sagittarius, you're at a major turning point and are feeling inspired to take your life in a whole new direction. The butterflies in your stomach are reaffirming that you are on the right track. So, keep going! It is but natural to be anxious about your security at this point; to worry about whether or not you will have enough to sustain your needs. The Universe wants you to know that you will be taken care of no matter what, and that you will have enough for your wants too. Your task is to merely keep facing your true north.

CAPRICORN:

Letting go is not a one time thing. It is a gradual process that unfolds over a period of time. 'Death and rebirth' is showing up as a big theme for you—death in the metaphorical sense, of course! So, when you sit down to observe silence or commune with the mysterious forces,

ask yourself the question, "What do I need to let go of in order to step into my magic?" Your spirit team is working with you, now and in every moment. Trust that the guidance you seek will come through when you raise your awareness.

AQUARIUS:

What do you do when you no longer resonate with the old, and the new hasn't revealed itself yet? The in-between period can be confusing, especially after you have experienced an ego death. Word for the wise: don't be so hung up on your identity. Don't be so hung up on the idea of who you should, and who you shouldn't be. Allow this transformation to take place completely. The real you is waiting to embrace you on the other side of this storm.

PISCES:

The future is bright, Pisces, and you're ready to start a new chapter in your life. Take a moment to offer a prayer of gratitude for all the opportunities on the horizon that are supporting this intention. Acting when the time is right will change the game for you permanently. Your romantic life is also getting a boost from the energy of the new moon. So, call in your soulmate, and do so from a space of fullness in your heart. What the Universe wants you to remember now and for the rest of your life is that you will never run out of miracles.