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SummitTIMES

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ON TOP OF THE NEWS

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All 33 primary contacts at Deorali Girl School test negative; Only 3 of Sikkim's 41 active cases in hospital

SAGAR CHETTRI

GANGTOK, 15 MAR:

It was a Monday of good news for Sikkim today when, apart from no new cases of Covid being reported in the past 24 hours, samples of all the 33 primary contacts of the Deorali Girls School staff member who had recently tested positive for Novel Coronavirus have returned negative for the virus.

Health Department State IEC Officer, Sonam Gyaltzen Bhutia, informs that while test

results of 32 of the primary contacts had arrived yesterday itself, since official confirmation on the exposure of one more contact was still awaited, the announcement was withheld till today.

The school, its staff members, students and their parents must be heaving a sigh of relief as must schools across the State who would have been watching developments at Deorali Girls School closely. Since schools have reopened for in-person classes, there

must have been apprehensions in the management and parents about possible exposure to nCoV.

While just this one episode of the virus not transmitting in schools even among primary contacts cannot be taken as evidence that this will not happen, it does go a long way to establish that if adequate precautions are taken, transmission can be reasonably well checked.

In the State meanwhile, Sikkim's tally of confirmed

cases of COVID-19 held at 6,184 for the second straight day with no new cases of novel coronavirus reported in the last 24 hours.

All 18 samples tested through rapid antigen testing on Sunday returned negative for COVID-19.

Since the VRD Labs at STNM Hospital and Central Referral Hospital are closed on Sundays, no RT-PCR tests were carried out yesterday.

Reassuring news on the Covid front continued for Sikkim with the discharge of five more Covid-positive people from isolation facilities to further improve the number of recovered cases in Sikkim to 5,911.

The number of active cases of novel coronavirus in the State has accordingly further reduced to 41.

What is more, only three of these 41 cases are in hospital suggesting that 38 of the currently active cases do not have symptoms requiring medical attention.

Nationwide strike impacts banking services of PSU banks



NEW DELHI, MAR 15

(PTI): Banking operations including cheque clearance across the country got affected on Monday as bankers under the aegis of the United Forum of Bank Unions (UFBU) have gone on a nationwide strike to protest against the proposed privatisation of two state-owned lenders

UFBU, an umbrella body of nine unions, had given a strike call for March 15 and 16, and claimed that about 10 lakh bank employees and officers of the banks will participate in the strike

However, branches of private sector lenders like ICICI Bank, HDFC Bank and Axis Bank are open as they are not part of the strike

In the Union Budget presented last month, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman had announced the privatisation of two public sector banks (PSBs) as part of the government's disinvestment plan. The government has already privatised IDBI Bank by selling its majority stake in the lender to LIC in 2019, and has

merged 14 public sector banks in the last four years

According to All India Bank Employees Association (AIBEA) general secretary CH Venkatachalam, services at branch level; cheque clearance; and government transactions have been affected

Besides, money markets and stock markets are also going to face problems as payments would be impacted, he said

Members of UFBU include All India Bank Employees Association (AIBEA), All India Bank Officers' Confederation (AIBOC), National Confederation of Bank Employees (NCBE), All India Bank Officers' Association (AIBOA) and Bank Employees Confederation of India (BEFI)

Others are the Indian National Bank Employees Federation (INBEF), Indian National Bank Officers Congress (INBOC), National Organisation of Bank Workers (NOBW) and National Organisation of Bank Officers (NOBO).

District Level Junior Olympics concludes, 1349 students participate



SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 15 MAR:

The closing ceremony of the district-level 1st Inter School Junior Olympic Games 2020-21 under 'Sports for Peace and Development' Vertical of Khelo India for East District was held here at Paljor Stadium on Monday. The week-long event, which started on 09 March, was organized by the Department of Sports & Youth Affairs, Government of Sikkim and sponsored by the Ministry of Youth Affairs & Sports, government of India.

The closing ceremony had Chairperson Sikkim Khadi & Village Industries Board, Chung

Chung Bhutia as the chief guest, while Advisor to Sports & Youth Affairs Department, MN Subba was present as the guest of honour. The chief guest and guest of honour handed over medals and certificates to winners in different sports disciplines.

The closing function also witnessed the final match of U-17 boys football between Pakyong and Ranka. In a nail-biting final match, Pakyong edged past Ranka in a tie-breaker 3-2.

Sports & Youth Affairs Department Deputy Director [East], Lalita Chettri mentioned that 1349 athletes

from different schools of eleven Blocks of East District had participated in U-14 and U-17 boys & girls categories of the event. She informed that there were eight sports disciplines in U-17 boys & girls and six sports disciplines in U-14 boys and girls held at six different venues in and around the capital.

There are 628 medalists in the district level and shortlisted teams and athletes would represent the district in the upcoming state-level competition in their respective discipline, she informed.

"We have also prepared a list of talented and promising athletes

in different disciplines in this district-level competition, even those who have not been able to make it to the state-level competitions to provide them exposure and opportunities in the upcoming competitions," the Deputy Director said.

Likewise, SYA Department Deputy Director [coaching], Zigmee Yodzer Lepcha mentioned that 267 athletes in U-14 girls, 325 in U-14 boys, 365 in U-17 girls and 392 in U-17 boys had participated in the district-level competition. He mentioned that the district-level competition also witnessed One Mile Chief Minister's Run.

₹ 2,000 notes haven't been printed in last 2 years, Minister tells Parliament

NEW DELHI, 13 MAR

[NDTV]: ₹ 2,000 notes have not been printed in the last two years, the Finance Ministry said today in parliament to a question on why the currency notes introduced after demonetization in 2016 were hardly in circulation now.

2000-rupee notes were not sent to the printing press in 2019-20 and 2020-21, Minister of State for Finance Anurag Thakur said in the Lok Sabha.

In a question, MDMK MP A Ganeshamurthi had asked whether the government was aware of the

fact the circulation of ₹ 2,000 currency notes among the people was "very low" and it was not available in banks and ATMs even.

"The printing of banknotes of particular denomination is decided by the government in consultation with the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) to maintain desired denomination mix for facilitating transactional demand of public," Anurag Thakur replied, explaining that the printing of currency was demand based.

The decision was also taken based on whether it was convenient to use. There was a drop in the circulation of the 2,000-rupee note, the minister said.

Last year, a top official had said 2,000 rupee notes constituted 35 per cent of the total circulation.

The pink banknotes were introduced along with new ₹ 500 currency after Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced in November 2016 that old ₹ 500 and ₹ 1,000 notes would be scrapped.

Subsequently, new ₹ 500, 200, 100 and 50 notes flooded the market, and the highest currency - ₹ 2,000 - was used less and less.

Mamata's injured leg kicks off political spat in Bengal

KOLKATA, MAR 15 PTI): Mamata Banerjee's injured leg Monday kicked off a spat between her and Amit Shah, with the wheelchair-bound TMC boss asserting she will fight as long as her "heart beats and vocal cord functions" and the home minister reminding her of the "pain" of the mothers of BJP workers "slain by your goons".

The two leaders crossed swords as they went stumping in West Bengal.

Shah told an election rally that while the TMC cried conspiracy over the Nandigram incident, the Election Commission had concluded it was not "hamla" (attack) but "haadsa" (accident).

"Wait for a few days, my leg will get better. I will see whether your legs get to move freely on Bengal's soil," Banerjee told an election rally in Jhal-

da, ostensibly trying to get a leg up on the BJP.

"I will continue to fight against the BJP as long as my heart beats and vocal cord functions," the West Bengal leader, true to her persona of a street fighter politician, asserted.

She said "no conspiracy or injury" can deter her from taking forward her fight against the BJP, which is making a determined bid to dislodge her from power after two successive terms in office.

Shah made light of the injury Banerjee suffered during the alleged attack blamed on the BJP by the state's ruling party.

"Mamata ji has hurt her leg. But it's difficult to reach a conclusion about how it happened. Investigation is on.

The TMC claims it was a conspiracy but the Election Commission says it was not 'hamla' but a 'hadsa'.

Ajoy Edwards dispels rumors of competition for party ticket



SMRITA KHAWAS

DARJEELING, 15 MAR:

The Kurseong and Darjeeling branch committees of Gorkha National Liberation Front convened a joint organizational meeting of the party at Kurseong for its Sonada-Toong and Rangbul-Dhottaria-Rangbook units in the run-up to the approaching Assembly elections.

Ajoy Edwards, the GNLG Darjeeling Branch president, in his address, called on the supporters to remain wary of rumours seeking to sow divisions and confusion among GNLG supporters and stressed that the party was not looking at the upcoming elections as a play for power or posts, but as one which was crucial for the community.

In this regard, he also reassured that every leader will support the party's choice for candidate and that there was no competition among prospective candidates despite what the rumor-mill might be claiming.

"Our supremo, the late Subhash Ghisingh used to say that the community is always bigger than the party, and today I want to state that social media speculations claiming that the MLA seat is for Neeraj Zimba or Ajoy Edward are mistaken. I want to make one thing clear to all our party members that we will always accept the decision made by our President Maan Ghisingh. Everyone should understand that the GNLG party never goes for one person. The party is the first priority," he stressed.

He added that it is the people are weighing the options between Benoy and Bimal factions of GJMM, they should know that voting for either of the two meant voting for TMC and GTA, both of which have let the people of Darjeeling down.

He added that at meetings with BJP leaders, they received assurances that should BJP form the Government in West Bengal, it will scrap the Gorkhaland Territorial Administration with 48 hours. "So, we all have to decide whether we want something which will always be the Bengal government's puppet or will we look out for our Gorkha community's better future," he said.

The meeting was also attended by GNLG Central Committee spokesperson Mahendra Chhetri, Kurseong branch committee chairperson Nima Lama, HPWU Central chairperson DK Gurung, vice chairperson Kishor Karki, secretary Yudh Chhetri, and other leaders along with a large gathering of party supporters.

Assembly to reconvene on 26th

SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 15 MAR:

The Sikkim Legislative Assembly has been reconvened for 26 March.

This was announced by the Sikkim Legislative Assembly Secretariat in a Notification dated 10 March which was shared on the Govt of Sikkim's official Facebook page on Monday morning.

The Notification, issued by the Secretary, SLAS, informs that the Speaker, LB Das, in exercise of powers conferred on him under Rule 16 of Rules of procedure and Conduct of Business in Sikkim Legislative Assembly, he has reconvened a sitting of the House in the Assembly Hall, Gangtok, for 26 March at 11AM.

Summit Times
in Nepali

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Thank You!



Duga school observes World Consumer Rights Day



SUMMIT REPORT GANGTOK, 15 MAR:

Government Secondary School, Duga, East Sikkim celebrated World Consumer Rights Day 2021 today, a press release in-

forms.

Two students, Muskan Tamang and Suman Darjee highlighted the crisis of plastic pollution and shared measures that can be undertaken to tackle plastic

pollution.

After the assembly, students of Classes VIII, IX & X participated in a rally to spread awareness on consumer rights and the urgent need to tackle plastic pollution.

Child Empowerment Centre inaugurated at Temi



SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 15 MAR:

Child Empowerment Centre at VAC Temi was inaugurated by Zilla Panchayat Member of Temi-Tarku ZTC, Lalita Sirupali on 14 Mar,

a press release informs. The Child Empowerment Centre is being supported by State Institute of Rural Development and Panchayati Raj (SIRD&PR) under RGSA.

21st District Conference of Lions Club Int'l 322F



SUMMIT REPORT Gangtok, 15 Mar:

A 10-member team from Lions Club of Rangpo led by president Ramakant Rai participated in the 21st District Conference of Lions Club International

at 322F at Siliguri on 14 March, a press release informs.

Delegates from other branches of Sikkim namely Lions Club of Singtam, Ranipool and Gangtok Hills also participated in this conference.

CBI interrogates Trinamool MP Abhishek Banerjee's relatives in coal scam

KOLKATA, 15 MAR [PTI]: The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) on Monday questioned relatives of Trinamool Congress MP Abhishek Banerjee in connection with its investigation into the multi-crore coal pilferage case.

The central agency had on Friday issued a notice to Ankush Arora, husband of Menaka Gambhir who is the sister-in-law of Mr Banerjee, for questioning in the illegal coal mining case.

The agency also asked Ms Gambhir's father-in-law Pawan Arora to join the investigation.

"Both have appeared before the anti-corruption branch officers at CBI's Nizam Palace office here for interrogation," a source in the agency said.

A CBI team had on February 23 visited the residence of Mr Banerjee and examined his wife Rujira in connection with the case. The agency also examined Rujira's sister on the previous day on the same matter.

Abhishek Banerjee is West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee's nephew.

"When Gambhir was interrogated by the CBI, she had told the sleuths

that her husband and father-in-law were in the knowledge of some bank transactions. She claimed that she was not aware of anything," the agency source said.

Earlier, searches were conducted at the residences and offices of people who are "considered close to Anup Majee alias Lala" -- the main accused in the coal scam.

Mr Majee is believed to be involved in the illegal coal mining in the Asansol-Raniganj belt of Eastern Coalfields Ltd and has been evading arrest. The CBI has also issued a look out notice against him.

The investigating agency on November 28 last year carried out a massive search operation in a number of locations in four states -- West Bengal, Bihar, Jharkhand and Uttar Pradesh - after registering a case against Majee.

The CBI is keeping a close watch on businessmen who have a close connection with Mr Majee, the agency source said.

The Enforcement Directorate, another central agency, is also probing the money laundering aspect of the case.

India-Bangladesh meet on river water sharing on Mar 16

NEW DELHI, MAR 15 (PTI): Top officials of the water resources ministries of India and Bangladesh will meet here on Tuesday to discuss issues related to river water-sharing and flood forecast, sources said on Monday.

The Indian delegation will be headed by Pankaj Kumar, secretary in the Jal Shakti Ministry. The Bangladesh side will be headed by senior secretary Kabir Bin Anwar, the sources added.

The meeting takes place ahead of Prime

Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Bangladesh later this month.

Sources said the two sides will discuss water sharing of Manu, Muhuri, Khawai, Gumti, Dudhkumar and Dharla rivers.

They added that discussions are also expected to take place on withdrawing water from Feni river for the Sabroom town in Tripura.

Further, talks are also expected on a possible Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for drawing water from the Surma river.

District Level Junior Olympic Games begin in Namchi



NAMCHI, 15 MAR (IPR):

The opening ceremony of District Level First Inter-School Junior Olympic Games under 'Sports for Peace and Development, Khelo India 2021' organised by the Department of Sports and Youth Affairs - South was held in Namchi Singithang Playground today.

DC (South), M Bharani Kumar graced the occasion as the chief guest. He was accompanied by Deputy Director (Sports), Tshering Ongmu, AD

(Sports) Basant Pradhan along with departmental officials, coaches and participants at large.

The opening ceremony began with official commencement declared by the chief guest. It was followed by Olympic torch relay and march past by the delegations of participating athletes.

It may be mentioned that the participating students are from 8 different Block Administrative Centres (BACs) of South Sikkim who will

compete against each other categorised under 14 and 17 age group (both boys and girls) in 6 and 8 sporting activities respectively. These sport disciplines are namely; Athletics, Archery, Boxing, Badminton, Football, Karate, Taekwondo and Table Tennis.

Namchi Indoor Stadium and Namchi Singithang playground will host all sporting activities for the said event. The event will conclude on 21 March.

Oli and Nepal groups meeting ends with both sides refusing to budge from their stance

KATHMANDU, 15 MAR [KATHMANDUPOST]: A meeting of senior CPN-UML leaders including party chair and prime minister KP Sharma Oli and senior leader Madhav Kumar Nepal on Monday ended with both sides proposing their ideas but refusing to budge from their stances.

Monday's meeting was the first between Oli and Nepal in about four months ever since they met on November 10.

The UML is currently divided along two factions led by Oli and Nepal.

The Oli faction on Monday asked the Nepal faction to cancel the national gathering of its leaders and cadres scheduled for March 17-18. The Nepal group demanded that Oli withdraw the decisions taken on Friday, including induction of 23 Maoist members into the Central Committee.

Leaders said both sides disagreed to each other's demands and the meeting ended with the promise to continue talks in the

future.

"Oli was not ready to withdraw the unilateral decisions made on March 12," said Bhim Rawal, a Standing Committee member. "We are ready to reconcile if Oli withdraws the March 12 decisions. Or else, we will go ahead with our decisions."

On March 12, through a Central Committee meeting, Oli had decided to amend the party statute to incorporate 23 leaders of CPN (Maoist Centre) and changed the responsibilities of party leaders, stripping leaders close to Nepal of their responsibilities.

The Oli faction has called another meeting of the Central Committee on March 20, which the Nepal faction has said it would not attend until the decisions taken on March 12 are not withdrawn.

"It's not only about (the decisions of) March 12, there are several issues including the national gathering and another Central Committee meeting scheduled for March 20," said General Secretary Ishwar

Pokhrel following the meeting. "We will gradually evaluate other activities as well including the 19-page document against Oli."

On November 13 last year, Pushpa Kamal Dahal, when he was the chair of then Nepal Communist Party (NCP) had pretend a 19-page document, levelling serious allegations against Oli, his fellow chair, which had led to souring of relations between them.

Monday's meeting was attended by Subash Nembang, Pradeep Gyawali, Bishnu Poudel and Ishwar Pokhrel from Oli's side while besides Ghanashyam Bhusal, Surendra Pande, Gokarna Bista, Bhim Rawal and Raghuj Pant had accompanied Nepal.

Though they have agreed to continue dialogue, the date for the next meeting has not been fixed yet.

Monday's meeting comes a day after 11 leaders of the Nepal group issued a press statement saying they should continue their struggle against Oli as he was leading the communist movement towards an end.

Bill to define role, powers of Delhi Lt Governor introduced in Lok Sabha



NEW DELHI, 15 MAR [PTI]: With the objective of giving a proper "interpretation" of a Supreme Court ruling, the government on Monday introduced a bill in Lok Sabha that seeks to define certain role and powers of the Lieutenant Governor of Delhi.

Union Minister of State for Home G Kishan Reddy introduced the Government of National Capital Territory of Delhi (Amendment) Bill, 2021.

According to proposed amendments, Section 21 of the Act -- dealing with restrictions on laws passed by legislative assembly with respect to certain matters -- is sought to be revised to clarify that the expression "government" referred to in any law to be made by the legislative assembly shall mean the "Lieutenant Governor". A sub-section shall be inserted to this effect in Section 21.

In section 24 of the principal Act -- which requires a Bill passed by the Delhi legislative assembly to be presented to the LG who may assent, withhold or reserve it for consideration of the President -- an additional clause will be inserted to cover any of the matters that fall outside the purview of the powers conferred on the legislative assembly.

In Section 33 of the principal Act, in sub-section (1) after the words "conduct of its business", the words "which shall not be inconsistent with the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business in House of People" shall be inserted.

Also, in the proviso, for the words "Provided that", the following shall be substituted, "Provided that the Legislative Assembly shall not make any rule to enable itself

or its Committees to consider the matters of day-to-day administration of the Capital or conduct inquiries in relation to the administrative decisions, and any of the rule made in contravention of this proviso, before the commencement of the Government of National Capital Territory of Delhi (Amendment) Act, 2021, shall be void".

In section 44 of the principal Act dealing with powers to makes rules for conduct of business, in sub-section (2) -- which states that as otherwise provided in this Act, all executive action of the Lieutenant Governor whether taken on the advice of his Ministers or otherwise shall be expressed to be taken in the name of the Lieutenant Governor -- the following proviso shall be inserted, namely "Provided that before taking any executive action in pursuance of the decision of the Council of Ministers or a Minister, to exercise powers of Government, State Government, Lieutenant Governor, Administrator or Chief Commissioner, as the case may be, under any law in force in the Capital, the opinion of Lieutenant Governor in term of proviso to clause (4) of article 239AA of the Constitution shall be obtained on all such matters as may be specified, by a general or special order, by Lieutenant Governor".

According to the statement of objects and reasons of the bill, the original bill was enacted to supplement the provisions of the Constitution relating to the legislative assembly and a Council of Ministers for Delhi and for matters connected therewith.

"The section 44 of the

act deals with conduct of business and there is no structural mechanism provided in the act for effective time bound implementation of said section. Further, there is no clarity as to what proposal or matters are required to be submitted to the LG before issuing order thereon," it said.

It said that to give effect to the interpretation made by the Supreme Court which had ruled that the city government need not obtain the Lieutenant Governor's "concurrence" of every issue of day-to-day governance, the bill has been brought.

The government said it wanted to clarify the expression "Government", which in the context of legislations to be passed by the Delhi assembly, shall mean the LG of Delhi, consistent with the status of Delhi as a Union Territory to address the ambiguities in the interpretation of the legislative provisions.

It further seeks to ensure that the LG is necessarily granted an opportunity to exercise the power entrusted to him under proviso to clause (4) of article 239AA of the Constitution, in select category of cases and also to make rules in matters which incidentally encroach upon matters falling outside the preview of the assembly.

"The said bill will promote harmonious relations between the legislature and the executive, and further define the responsibilities of the elected government and the LG, in line with the constitutional scheme of governance of National Capital Territory of Delhi, as interpreted by the Hon'ble Supreme Court," the statement of objects said.

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MEDICAL CLINIC & O P D

9.30 am

ORTHO AND GYNEA

CLINICS & O P D

3.00 pm

PAEDIATRIC CLINIC & O P D

8.00 am And 6.00 pm

VACCINATION CLINIC

Tulasa Devi Award for Barang’s Class V toppers

SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 15 MAR:

Tulasa Devi Memorial Foundation of Barang, Lower Tumin, organized the 15th edition of its annual Award Giving Ceremony here at the premises of Saraswati Vidhya Niketan, Aapgachi, Lower Tumin on 14 March.

As per a press release, the Foundation was established in the year 2006 in loving memory of Late Tulasa Devi Nepal, wife of Late Dharmananda Nepal of Barang.

In its inception year, it was announced that the Foundation would present an annual cash award of Rs. 5000 to the school topper (Class V) of Barang Primary School. The tradition has been kept alive to this day by the Foundation with active participation from each member of the family.

Later, after the establishment of Saraswati Vidhya Niketan School in Barang, the Annual Award is being presented to the school topper (Class V) of this school as well.

The programme was



attended by well-known educationist, O.P. Sapkota as the chief guest, and had the presence of panchayat members, school heads, noted personalities of the area, members of the Foundation, school students, parents and local gentry.

The students who received the cash award were Deepan Adhikari, Eshika Mukhiya, Bikram Rai and Poojan Nepal, from Barang Primary School, and Nabin Kumar Neopaney and Anirudh Adhikari from Saraswati Vidhya Niketan.

The Foundation also made a special felicitation to Tulasa Devi Nepal of Barang, Lower Tumin who achieved the rare feat of being the state topper in her subject in the Class X Board Examination. She was felicitated at the Constitution Day function by the Governor and Chief Minister at Chintan Bhawan in November, 2020.

Tulasa Devi Nepal, daughter of Yadav Chandra Nepal and Durga Devi Nepal, is an ex-student of Saraswati Vidhya Niketan, Barang Lower Tumin and is presently studying in Singtam Senior Secondary School in the XIIth standard.

In keeping with the present health scenario and the need to encourage health-seeking behaviour among the people of the area, a special three-day medical camp was organized by the Tulasa Devi Memorial Foundation from 13 to 15 March, 2021, coinciding with the Award function. The Camp was facilitated by acupuncture and homeopathy experts from Siliguri, Dr. Gopal Atreya and Dr. Bhushan Jain. They were accompanied by Ayurveda doctor from Barang Lower Tumin,

Dr. Gayatri Sharma. The doctors were assisted by naturopathy practitioner Shri Krishna Khatiwada. The doctors also provided hands on training on various techniques and demonstrated some useful yoga postures for particular ailments. Over 300 people from Tumin, Samdong, Raley and adjoining areas benefited from the camp.

Chief guest, O.P. Sapkota in his address congratulated the awardees and lauded the effort of the Foundation to keep the tradition of honouring knowledge alive. He also welcomed the initiative of the Foundation to organize a medical camp and urged everyone to benefit from it.

Earlier, President, Tulasa Devi Memorial Foundation, D.R. Nepal in his welcome address presented a brief background of the Award Function organized every year to encourage students to incline themselves towards academic excellence. He thanked the chief guest for his valuable presence and expressed his gratitude to the people of Barang Lower Tumin and surrounding areas for their consistent support to the Foundation over the years.

The programme was also addressed by visiting doctors Dr. Gopal Atreya and Dr. Bhushan Jain. The Award function was coordinated by General Secretary of the Foundation, D.C. Nepal, and conducted by Member, Indramani Adhikari. The programme concluded with vote of thanks proposed by Joint Secretary of the Foundation, Dadhi Ram Nepal.

Rotaract Club Gangtok hosts Zonal Meet ‘Prayag’



SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 15 MAR:

Rotaract Club of Gangtok Hills, youth wing of Rotary Club of Gangtok South, hosted Zonal Meet "Prayag - The Confluence Of Hearts" at The Fern Denzong on 14 March, a press release informs.

The zonal meet had participants from RAC of Siliguri, RAC of SRM University Sikkim and RAC of Gangtok Royale. This meet also witnessed the participation of Interact Club of TNSS, Interact Club of Bojoghari, Interact Club of PNG School, and Interact Club of Kyi-de-Khang school.

The chief guest for this event was DG, Subhasish Chatterji, along with DRR PHF, Tushar Jalan. The Chairperson for the event was Reena Subba.

The event had open mic session, games and one on one interaction with the guests and members.



SIKKIM STATE LEGAL SERVICES AUTHORITY
Development Area, Gangtok: Sikkim
Phone: 03592-207753, Fax : 03592-207753



“MESSAGE”.

Sikkim State Legal Services Authority is organizing National Lok Adalat on Saturday the 11th April, 2020 for the following types of pre-litigation and pending cases viz:

Pre-Litigation

- (i) N.I Act cases under Section 138;
- (ii) Money Recovery cases;
- (iii) Labour disputes cases;
- (iv) Electricity and Water Bills (excluding non-compoundable)
- (v) Maintenance Cases.
- (vi) Other (Criminal Compoundable and other Civil dispute).

Pending in the Courts / Tribunals:

- (i) Criminal Compoundable Offences;
- (ii) N.I. Act cases under Section 138;
- (iii) Money Recovery cases;
- (iv) MACT cases;
- (v) Labour disputes cases;
- (vi) Electricity and Water Bills (excluding non-compoundable)
- (vii) Matrimonial disputes (except divorce);
- (viii) Land Acquisition cases;
- (ix) Service matters relating to pay and allowances and retiral benefits;
- (x) Revenue cases (pending in District Courts and High Courts only);
- (xi) Other civil cases (rent, easmentary rights, injunction suits, specific performance suits) etc.

Any individual or any department having such matters either pending in Courts/Tribunals/Departments or in pre-litigation stage may approach directly before the Sikkim SLSA, District Lok Adalats or Taluk Lok Adalats for settlement on or before 03.04.2021 at the following address:

1. Sikkim State Legal Services Authority, Development Area, Gangtok, East Sikkim. E-mail: sikkim_slssa@live.com Phone No.03592-207753.

2. High Court Legal Services Committee, Development Area, Gangtok, East Sikkim. E-mail: sikkim_slssa@live.com Phone No. 03592-207753.

3. District Legal Services Authority (East) District Court’s Complex, Sichey Gangtok, East Sikkim. Phone No. 03592 284462.

4. Taluk Legal Services Committee (East), District Court’s Complex, Sichey, Gangtok, East Sikkim. Phone No. 03592 284131.

5. District Legal Services Authority (North) District Court Complex, Mangan, North Sikkim. Phone No . 03592 234502.

6. Taluk Legal Services Committee (North), Court of Civil Judge-cum-Judicial Magistrate, Pentok, Mangan, North Sikkim. Phone no.03592 234383/234514.

7. District Legal Services Authority (South) District Court Complex, Namchi, South Sikkim. Phone No . 03595 264356.

8. Taluk Legal Services Committee (South), Court of Civil Judge-cum-Judicial Magistrate, District Courts Complex, Namchi, South Sikkim. Phone no.03595 263145.

9. District Legal Services Authority (West) District Court Complex, Kyongsa, Gyalshing, West Sikkim. Phone No. 03595 250061.

10. Taluk Legal Services Committee (West), Court of Civil Judge-cum-Judicial Magistrate, Kyongsa, Gyalshing, West Sikkim. Phone no.03595 250061.

11. Taluk Legal Services Committee, Court of Civil Judge-cum-Judicial Magistrate, Chungthang, Sub-Division, North Sikkim. Phone No. 03592 234502.

12. Taluk Legal Services Committee (West), Court of Civil Judge-cum-Judicial Magistrate, Soreng, Sub-Division, West Sikkim. Phone n o: 03592-253200.

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EXTRAORDINARY

भाग II—खण्ड 3—उप-खण्ड (ii)

PART II—Section 3—Sub-section (ii)

प्राधिकार से प्रकाशित

PUBLISHED BY AUTHORITY

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नई दिल्ली, बुधवार, मार्च 10, 2021/फाल्गुन 19, 1942

No. 1033]

NEW DELHI, WEDNESDAY, MARCH 10, 2021/PHALGUNA 19, 1942

MINISTRY OF ROAD TRANSPORT AND HIGHWAYS

NOTIFICATION

New Delhi, the 10th March, 2021

S.O. 1121(E).—Whereas by the notification of the Government of India in the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways, published in the Gazette of India, Extraordinary, Part II, Section 3, Sub-section (ii) issued under sub-section (1) of section 3A of the National Highway Act, 1956 (48 of 1956) (hereinafter referred to as the said Act), the Central Government declared its intension to acquire the land specified in the Schedule annexed to the said notification for building (widening/four-laning, etc.), maintenance, management and operation of NH-510 on the stretch of land from Km. 75.000 to Km. 90.210 (District Collectorate , West Sikkim.) in the district of WEST DISTRICT in the state of SIKKIM ;

And whereas the substance of the said notification has been published in “*Summit Times*” and “*Hamro Prajashakti*” dated *18 January 2021 and 17 January 2021 respectively* ; under sub-section (3) of section 3A of the said Act;

And whereas objections have been received and the same have been considered and disallowed by the competent authority;

And whereas, in pursuance of sub-section (1) of section 3D of the said Act, the competent authority has submitted its report to the Central Government;

Now, therefore, upon receipt of the said report of the competent authority and in exercise of the powers conferred by the sub-section (1) of section 3D of the said Act, the Central Government hereby declares that the land specified in the said Schedule should be acquired for the aforesaid purpose;

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

SCHEDULE

Brief description of the land to be acquired, with or without structure, falling within the NH-510 in the stretch of land from Km. 75.000 to Km. 90.210 NH-510 (District Collectorate , West Sikkim.) in the district of WEST DISTRICT in the state of SIKKIM

State: SIKKIM		District: WEST DISTRICT			
Sr. No.	Survey Number	Type of Land	Nature of Land	Area in Hectare	Name of the Land Owner/Interested Person Part Survey No.
1	2	3	4	5	6
Taluk: Gyalshing					
Village: Sardung					
1	581	Private	Dry	0.0703	BIRKHA BDR RAI 581
2	581	Private	Dry	0.0322	BIRKHA BDR RAI 581
3	582	Private	Dry	0.0684	BIRKHA BDR RAI 582
4	588	Private	Dry	0.0519	GARJA MAN RAI 588
5	588	Private	Dry	0.3046	GARJA MAN RAI 588
6	589	Private	Dry	0.0583	DHAN BDR GURUNG 589
7	589	Private	Dry	0.3037	DHAN BDR GURUNG 589
8	590	Government	Dry	0.0019	FOREST KHASHMAL 590
TOTAL				0.8913	

[F. No. NHIDCL/PMU-Gyalshing/Legship-Gyalshing/PKGVI/2020-21/3D]

RAJESH GUPTA, Director

Pucca Research, Real Identity

No dodging scholarly research if shallow jingoism is to be discarded

Politics is increasingly becoming about identity, and while deeper enquiries into questions of identity and belonging are always welcome, when politics jumps the line on research or nuanced understanding, everything – from security to even ideas of identity – get compromised. Where politics and those who obsesses over it see everything in binary, there are some ideas like identity which are more layered and complex than the simplistic us and them or us and no one else version that suits politics. And that cannot serve any good, ever. We are learning this the hard way every day in our country as is the world with the rise of jingoistic nationalism and easy fear-mongering which are being peddled to sell everything from genocide to wars to rapes.

The region itself has been in the grips of identity assertion for some decades now, and while this has worked well to boost political careers and specific agendas, it has not succeeded in infusing confidence which any strong sense of identity should guarantee. It hence becomes important for the stakeholders to pause, step back and evaluate.

One of the problems with the current wave of claims of identity, belonging and rights is that these are sourced from selective reading and myopic interpretations. Any one unfettered by political blinkers will immediately denounce superficial pigeon-holing of people and communities. But this is essentially what colonial and/ or monarchical texts did with easy alacrity. When a dash of traditionally held prejudices are added to these inaccurate and misleading records, confusion and paranoia result. It is thus required for scholars and researchers to deliver new narratives from fresh perspectives, narratives that are more nuanced and subaltern and also more invested with academic discipline and do a better job of explaining interconnectedness rather than reinforcing prejudices or isolating.

The process of rewriting these texts is however not new. Taking Sikkim's example, history has been reinterpreted several times, sometimes by the powers that be and sometimes by individual organizations and even proclaimed by political parties. While some 'inventions' have become accepted notions because they have been around for a long time, others invite only ridicule except from those who have a stake in the new theories. Both trends are unhealthy because both are misleading and incomplete. Histories are always contested and thus always open to fresh interpretations, but what separates claim from fact is the erudition, research and evidence that supports the latter. It is obvious that it is this fastidious obsession with supporting evidence that brings credibility to a scholar and only notoriety to the conspiracy theorist. One hopes that the deconstruction of established 'myths' and accepted histories start surfacing soon following the scholarly path and not continue on the current rantings and claims of half-baked notions.

But why are histories required? To borrow a term from an academic who has spared some thought on this - histories are increasingly required to prove the "situatedness" of a people; to establish that they belong. Take for instance the Indian Nepali community which has been standing at the crossroads of this journey for a while now, stuck more in an extended debate over nomenclature rather than "situating" its identity and belonging. It is obvious that a name cannot be imposed on a people and it is also accepted that no introduction of identity will be taken seriously if it comes from a fractured splinter of the constellation. To squabble over a name prioritizes the nomenclature rather than the introduction, and a name in itself is no guarantee to recognition, security or identity. But this is only one aspect of the understanding of identities and histories, there is so much more that needs to be researched and recorded, and the sooner a more disciplined approach is initiated, the better it will be for all with a stake in anything anywhere. But this exercise is safest in the hands of trained researchers instead of inspired political groups.

How the Nazis Used Music to Celebrate and Facilitate Murder



EDWARD B. WESTERMANN
THECONVERSATION.COM

In December 1943, a 20-year-old named Ruth Elias arrived in a cattle car at the Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration camp. She was assigned to Block 6 in the family camp, a barracks that housed young women and the camp's male orchestra, an ensemble of incarcerated violinists, clarinet players, accordion players and percussionists who played their instruments not just when the prisoners marched out for daily labor details, but also during prisoner floggings.

Performances could be impromptu, ordered at the whims of the SS, the paramilitary guard of the Nazi Party. In a postwar interview, Elias discussed how drunken SS troops would often burst into the barracks late at night.

First, they'd tell the orchestra to play as they drank and sang. Then they would pull young girls from their bunks to rape them. Pressed against the back of her top-level bunk to avoid detection, Elias heard the terrified screams of her fellow prisoners.

Before her tormentors engaged in these acts, she recalled, "The music had to play."

Music is often thought of as inherently good, a view exemplified in the playwright Wilhelm Congreve's oft-cited aphorism "music hath charms to soothe a savage breast." It is also often seen as a form of art that ennobs those who play and listen to it. Its aesthetic qualities seem to transcend the mundane and horrific.

Yet it's also been used to facilitate torture and punishment, a topic I think is worth exploring.

When I was researching my book "Drunk on Genocide: Alcohol and

Mass Murder in Nazi Germany," I was struck by the ways in which music accompanied deaths in the camps, the ghettos and the killing fields.

Beautiful music accompanying murder and rape is a bizarre and disturbing juxtaposition. But its use by the perpetrators to torture their victims and to celebrate their acts reveals not only the darker side of its use but also offers insights into the festive mindset of the killers as they participated in genocide.

THE 'JOY' OF KILLING

Stories of the integration of music and song into acts of torture and killing can be found throughout the interviews and memoirs of survivors. As in Auschwitz, the SS detail at the Belzec killing center organized a prisoner orchestra for its entertainment. Every Sunday evening, members of the SS forced the ensemble to play for their enjoyment as they held a drunken party.

One of the SS troops amused himself by having the orchestra repeatedly play a melody while the other prisoners were forced to sing and dance, without respite.

Another Jewish survivor remembered listening to that same orchestra as it accompanied the cries of those being murdered in the camp's gas chamber.

In the absence of an orchestra, troops could nonetheless spontaneously break into song.

Genia Demianova, a Russian schoolteacher, was interrogated, tortured and gang raped in August 1941. After the initial assault, she wrote of hearing the clinking of glasses as her rapist toasted, "The wildcat is tamed!" Other German soldiers then took their turns with Genia, who lost count of the number of assailants. As she lay battered and

bleeding on the floor, she heard the voices of her attackers crooning to "the sound of a sentimental [Robert] Schumann song."

And SS Col. Walter Blume, a commander in the Einsatzgruppen, the notorious SS death squad, was known to gather his men after a day of murder for evening singalongs around a campfire.

CARNIVALS OF CARNAGE

The single largest massacre of prisoners in a concentration camp occurred on Nov. 3, 1943, at Majdanek.

Planned under the celebratory code name "Operation Harvest Festival," German soldiers shot some 18,000 Jewish men, women and children. During the executions, Viennese waltzes, tangos and military marches blared from the camp's loudspeakers.

During a postwar interrogation, one policeman recalled hearing a colleague at the time exclaim, "It's really nice to shoot to military march music."

Afterward, the troops returned to their quarters for a "wild party," during which they swilled vodka and celebrated in uniforms covered in the victims' blood.

In September 1941, a group of German policemen prepared to execute 400 Jewish men, women and children near the Ukrainian town of Cutnow. In postwar testimony, one of the policemen described the presence of a band as the Jews were marched to the grave site.

"It was loud," he testified, "just like a carnival."

I came across this often during my research – mass killings described as carnivals or evoking a "wedding atmosphere." The rec-

ollections of these heinous acts as part of some sort of macabre celebration have appeared during other genocides, too.

After the Rwanda genocide, one Hutu perpetrator remarked that "the genocide was like a festival," and he remembered celebrating a day of murder with beer and a barbecue with his fellow killers. A female Tutsi survivor described intoxicated perpetrators singing as they hunted for their victims and engaged in mass rapes.

WINE, MURDER AND SONG

The fusion of alcohol, music and song with mass murder shows how violence was normalized – even celebrated – by the Nazis.

Under the Nazi regime, music and song forged community, camaraderie and shared purpose. In unit bars, around campfires and at the killing sites, the addition of music was more than just a form of entertainment. It was also an instrument for promoting a common purpose and bringing people together. Through rituals of song, drink and dance, the Nazis' actions could be collectivized and normalized – and their larger project of violence that much easier to pull off.

Ultimately, genocide is a societal endeavor; music and song – like political philosophies – are part of a society's cultural artifacts.

So when mass murder becomes a central tenet of a society, perhaps it shouldn't be a surprise that these atrocities are carried out against a backdrop of stirring song, a rousing military march or a sentimental Schumann melody.

[the writer is Regents Professor of History, Texas A&M-San Antonio]

Six Tips for Coping When the News is Getting to You

DAWN BRANLEY-BELL
THECONVERSATION.COM

It can often feel difficult to escape a bad news story. For many, the murder of Sarah Everard has been one of these stories. People are sharing their own experiences of harassment on social media, organising vigils and discussing how close to home the case feels.

The news plays a prominent role in our lives, something that has been emphasised even further during the past year. The pandemic has brought with it daily news briefings and a seemingly never-ending influx of COVID related headlines.

Staying informed and educated is important. However, constant exposure to negative reporting may be bad for your wellbeing. The World Health Organization has found news coverage can increase distress and anxiety, and a recent study suggests news reports shared through social media lead to increased panic.

Some people may be particularly vulnerable to negative impacts of specific stories. For example, people with eating disorders have reported being triggered by an emphasis in the media on exercise and weight loss during the pandemic.

Whatever it is that triggers you, the goal is to find the balance between using the news to stay informed and not becoming overwhelmed.

BEING TRIGGERED

A trigger is something that causes negative feelings or behaviours for someone. They can be driven by many internal processes, for example a reminder of past trauma, or intense emotions such as stress, anxiety, entrapment or a lack of control.

When someone is "triggered" they experience negative consequences such as a panic attack, flashbacks or an increase in mental health symptoms – for example, disordered eating, self-harm, anxiety or depression.

You may be able to spot that you're at risk of being triggered by listening to your psychological and physiological responses. For example, you may notice an increase in negative or brooding thoughts, increased heart rate, rapid breathing or feeling like you're in a state of high alert.

You may also have started to notice other phys-

ical symptoms related to stress, such as fatigue or changes to your sleeping pattern. Tuning into your mind and body responses can provide the earliest signs that the news may be having a negative impact on your wellbeing.

If you find yourself beginning to feel negative impacts from the news, now is the time to start putting protective steps into place.

1. REGULATE CONSUMPTION

Regulating consumption of news includes making the conscious decision to take "time out" from the media for a period of time. Alternatively, you may have noticed a pattern around the negative impacts you are experiencing – for example, do you tend to feel more negative impacts if you read the news when you're tired or just before bed, or during periods of increased general stress? If so, you may wish to limit exposure at certain times of day, in particular contexts or both.

You may notice that certain news sources use communication styles or content that you find particularly distressing or triggering. Perhaps they are particularly confrontational, biased or controversial. If so, try to find more positive sources that work for you.

For example, during the pandemic, the World Health Organization suggests limiting access to health authority websites which aim to provide just the facts on the current situation.

2. TAKE OWNERSHIP OVER YOUR EMOTIONS

Never blame yourself for experiencing negative emotions. It is important to acknowledge that it is your right to feel how you do. In doing so, acknowledge that you also have control over your reactions. This can help you to feel more in control and more empowered to work towards more positive coping mechanisms.

3. TAKE CARE OF YOUR HEALTH

Investing time in your physical care can help provide you with the best chance to react positively to stressful situations. Healthy body, healthy mind.

Try to eat healthy meals, get regular – but

not excessive – exercise and maintain a good sleeping pattern. Remember the emphasis is on health, not weight loss or other potentially negative drivers. Similarly, take care of your mental health by striving for positive work life balance, practising mindfulness or staying in contact with supportive friends and family.

4. FOCUS ON THE POSITIVE

If you're being triggered by negative news coverage, try to find some positive resources to focus on. For instance, during the current pandemic, the World Health Organization suggests focusing on recovery stories.

5. REPLACE UNHEALTHY COPING SKILLS WITH POSITIVE ALTERNATIVES

There are resources available to help individuals identify positive behaviours which they can use to replace unhealthy coping mechanisms such as eating disorders and self-harm. Similar resources are available for a wide range of behaviours.

6. SEEK SUPPORT

Contact support groups or healthcare professionals. It's important to recognise the value of positive social support and to recognise that seeking help is a positive and strong step. These contacts can also help you find other helpful resources. You are not alone, reach out for support.

It can be difficult to find the right balance between being informed by the news media and not becoming overwhelmed – especially during a global crisis. This has been a very difficult year for many.

It's natural to feel concerned, apprehensive and stressed at times. However, it's also important to invest time in self-care and to seek help if you are experiencing negative impacts on your health.

It is important to recognise that everyone is an individual, and what works for one person may not be the best approach for another. Be prepared to take some time to find the techniques that work for you, and do not be apprehensive about seeking professional help to guide you through this process.

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Fears of Nepal's rhinos migrating to India add to challenges in their conservation

CHANDAN KR MANDAL

KATHMANDU, 15 MAR [KATHMANDUPOST]: Nepal's one-horned rhino conservation faces yet another challenge.

The latest is that many of the vulnerable species from Chitwan National Park, which shelters the country's largest rhino population, could possibly migrate across the border to India and authorities fear that they may be stranded there.

"With the rhino population highly congregated in the western part of the park, we have realised that those rhinos could go to the Indian side," Ananath Baral, the chief conservation officer in Chitwan, told the Post. "Once they go to the Indian side, that will lead to other problems in bringing them back."

Officials estimate that roughly 70 percent of the park's rhinos, which is more than over 400 of the 600 rhinos in Nepal's oldest national park, live in the western part of the protected area, which is adjacent to Valmiki Tiger Reserve of India.

"Why such a large number of rhinos have been staying in that particular area needs to be studied," said Baral.

The western part of the park is determined by taking Kasara, the park's headquarters, as the centre.

Park officials fear that rhinos going to the Indian side will result in complications in rescuing and repatriating them. The park had faced such obstacles in the past while bringing rhinos back to Nepal from Valmiki Tiger Reserve.

The devastating flood of 2017 in the Tarai region, which not only affected settlements in the southern plains but also wildlife living in those parks, killed and displaced rhinos from Chitwan. At least four rhinos had died due to the flood and as many as 11 rhinos were swept down to India.

Nepali officials worked hard to bring the rhinos back from the Indian side as the authorities there kept on refusing to return them.

Last monsoon too at least two rhinos were swept down to India, according to Baral. But they have not returned to Chitwan as of now.

"Some rhinos also died in the floods and at least two are already in Valmiki Tiger Reserve. But the Indian side does not share the details about rhinos stranded on their side," said Baral. "It seems more rhinos could end up on the other side. Losing even one rhino is a big loss for us."

In May last year, a lone female rhino was killed in Valmiki Tiger Reserve in West Champaran district of Bihar. The rhino had been inhabiting in the reserve after being swept downstream from the adjoining Chitwan National Park in Nepal during the 2017 floods.

In another incident nearly ten years ago, an adult female rhino was found dead in the Indian reserve in 2011. The rhino had also reached the Indian territory from Chitwan Park.

Valmiki Tiger Reserve is not home to one-horned rhinos. But rhinos from Chitwan Park stray into the Indian protected area. The trend worries Nepali officials.

"Two rhinos are already in India. There could be more. We don't know the exact number. Valmiki

does not have a rhino population of its own and our rhinos are kept there. They do not allow them to return," said Baral.

"We had planned to bring rhinos whenever they are seen in the Susta area. But it needs a lot of preparation to get them back on our side. Even though it is confirmed that those are our rhinos, as they have no rhinos, it has been challenging to bring them home."

Besides the chances of rhinos shifting to the Indian side, the congregation of rhinos in the western part of the park is another challenge.

An unprecedented rise in rhino deaths was also attributed to the concentration of rhinos in the western part of the park. Higher concentration in one place means these rhinos share the habitat and water resources and fight for them, which often leads to territorial deaths.

Overcrowding of rhinos in the western part of the 952 sq km sanctuary could be one of

the reasons for their migration.

"We found a majority of rhinos had crowded in that western sector," said Baburam Lamichhane, chief of the Biodiversity Conservation Centre, Sauraha, under the National Trust for Nature Conservation. "A study conducted in 2012 had estimated that a male rhino requires nearly 14 sq km as its home range, and a female rhino needs 9 sq km. However, there can be overlapping as well. If the habitat is good and abounds with resources, then a small area would be adequate. Otherwise a relatively larger area will be required."

A team of wildlife experts—part of the team formed to investigate the increasing deaths of one-horned rhinos in Chitwan National Park in December—suggested an internal relocation of the protected animal, among other conservation measures.

Lamichhane, who was also part of the team, examining the cause of deaths, feels that recommendations of the study, although meant for bringing down

the number of rhino deaths, can also be useful for averting their migration to India.

"Internal relocation was a short-term measure, among those we recommended," said Lamichhane. "Habitat improvement was also suggested. Once the habitat is managed, these rhinos will automatically disperse. Otherwise, in the western part, they are likely to keep fighting among themselves and be swept down to India during flooding."

Wildlife experts are looking up to a rhino census which is scheduled to begin on March 22. As the census will give information not only on the rhino population but also their distribution within the park, it is expected to help authorities give valuable insights for future conservation efforts.

According to the rhino census of 2015, there are 645 one-horned rhinos in Nepal. "The upcoming rhino census will help in determining more ways to deal with the problem [of the rhinos migrating to India]," said Baral.

Nepal Govt to allow private companies to import Covid-19 vaccines

ARJUN POUDEL

KATHMANDU, 15 MAR [KATHMANDUPOST]: The Ministry of Health on Sunday decided to allow private companies to import Covid-19 vaccines.

A meeting of senior officials at the ministry took the decision to that effect, according to an official at the ministry.

"We have decided to let private companies import Covid-19 vaccines," the official told the Post asking not to be named. "Those who wish to get the jabs now can get inoculated by paying on their own from private health facilities."

The ongoing vaccination drive, which is in its second phase, is being run with the vaccines that the government has procured, and these jabs are being given for free.

In the second phase, the government is inoculating people over 65 years of age.

Officials say once pri-

ivate companies start importing vaccines, whoever willing to pay can take the vaccine by paying the amount set by the government.

Meanwhile, the Department of Drug Administration on Sunday issued a notice, asking interested manufacturing companies and their authorised importers or sellers to apply to import the vaccines, within seven days with all required documents.

"Companies have to import only those vaccines to which we have given emergency use approval or those that have got emergency use listing from the World Health Organisation," Santosh KC, spokesperson for the department, told the Post. "Interested companies can include up to 10 percent profit in the vaccine."

The department has also asked the companies to include estimated



projections of the time and doses of vaccine they could import in each lot.

Earlier, the Health Ministry had said that it will not allow private companies to import vaccines until it inoculates 20 percent of the population on its own.

As of Sunday, only around five percent of the population has received their first dose of the vaccine.

Nepal launched its Covid-19 vaccination drive on January 27 with the one million doses of vaccine it received from India under a grant assistance.

In the first phase, front-line workers including health workers, sanitation workers, female community health volunteers, security personnel deployed for management of bodies of the people infected

with coronavirus, prisoners, and those residing in old age homes were inoculated.

Journalists, staff serving at diplomatic missions, lawmakers, staff members of the federal parliament, staff and elected representatives of local levels and provincial governments were also vaccinated.

The government last month signed a deal with the Serum Institute of In-

dia for two million doses of vaccine—of which one million doses have arrived.

Under the COVAX facility, Nepal so far has received 348,000 doses of vaccine.

Nepal has to inoculate 72 percent of its 30 million population over 14 years of age.

Vaccines received under COVAX facility would cover around 20 percent of the population.

The Health Ministry has estimated that Rs 48 billion will be needed to inoculate over 21 million population.

Public health experts say allowing the private sector to import the vaccine is a good move but they expressed concerns that those who cannot pay for the vaccine could be left out. The government must ensure a mechanism to ensure that everyone gets the vaccine, according to them.

"No Conspiracy": Amit Shah's Dig As Rally Cancelled Due To Chopper Snag

KOLKATA, 15 MAR [NDTV]: Campaigning in Bengal today, Home Minister Amit Shah canceled his first stop and delivered his speech virtually instead, blaming it on a technical snag in his helicopter. Mamata Banerjee's Trinamool Congress claimed the "snag" was really a case of poor turnout.

"I was going to come here for campaigning. Unfortunately, my helicopter was damaged and I couldn't come to see you," Amit Shah said, addressing the rally in Jhargram via video from Kharagpur.

"My helicopter developed a snag but I won't call it a conspiracy," he added in an apparent dig at Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, who alleged last week that her leg was crushed by the door of her SUV when a crowd pressed into it in Nandigram, and called it an "attack".

Soon after, came the

rebuttal. Addressing a rally in west Midnapur, Mamata Banerjee's nephew Abhishek Banerjee said Jhargram was "easily" reachable by road. "Those who attend rallies in the afternoon in this heat, they don't come to hear speeches. The home minister had a rally in Jhargram, he could not reach his meeting due to a technical snag. But the images I have seen from the rally where BJP national leaders are coming ... local tea stalls in villages have more crowds than their rallies," said the Trinamool MP, who has been targeted repeatedly by the BJP over nepotism.

The Trinamool Congress posted images of what it called thin crowds and empty chairs at the Jhargram rally site, which it said prompted the last-minute change of plans.

The party also sent photos from Mamata Banerjee's rally in Purulia

with the caption: "Crowd that doesn't suffer 'Technical Snag'. Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee welcomed by a sea of crowd in Purulia's Baghmundi."

Later, Amit Shah posted another tweet with an image of a crowd and wrote: "I apologise to the people of Jhargram for not being able to address the rally in person due to technical snag in my chopper. But I thank you all from the bottom of my heart for turning out in such large numbers. Let Jhargram be the harbinger of change and usher Ashol Poriborton."

Amit Shah was to visit Jhargram, an important rural Bengal constituency, to launch a yatra to honour the role of Birsu Munda and other freedom fighters in the fight against British colonial rule. The BJP had spoken of a massive rally at Jhargram.

"Sheer Grit": BRO team battles avalanche, cold, snow to open crucial pass

NEW DELHI, 15 MAR [NDTV]: A team of Border Roads Organisation braved difficult terrain, avalanches, sub-zero temperatures, lack of oxygen and shelter as they attempted to clear a strategically crucial mountain pass of snow ahead of schedule. The organisation that builds and maintains roads in border areas has praised the team for the "sheer grit and dogged determination" it showed in the line of duty without concern for personal safety.

Baralachala - a mountain pass that links Himachal Pradesh's Lahaul district to Ladakh's Leh district - had to be opened much ahead of schedule to gain strategic advantage over "the adversaries". It was the first time the armed forces had decided to open the pass ahead of time, BRO said in a statement.

It was planned that the snow clearance team would be air-inducted at two points - Patsio and

Sarchu - so that the pass could be cleared in an early time frame. Since air induction could not take place because of bad weather, it was decided that the team would walk 20 kilometres in deep snow towards Sarchu Dett, where equipment were stocked in "moth-balled" state.

Stocked with ration, spare parts and communication equipment, the team began its march on the morning of March 11, but it had to return to base because of heavy snowfall. On March 12, they attempted to cross the pass - which is at the height of 16,000 feet. Low visibility and snowfall sent it back again.

"Slight window was available on March 13. The team again attempted crossing Baralachala. This time they succeeded in crossing Baralachala, crossing a number of avalanches enroute," BRO said.

The team had to halt just 7 kilometres from its destination as it was getting dark. They spent a night

amid snow blizzards and bone-chilling temperature. On March 14, they reached the spot, after walking nearly 20 kilometres in 15-20 feet of snow.

JNU sedition case: Court directs Delhi Police to give chargesheet copies to Kanhaiya Kumar, others

NEW DELHI, 15 MAR [PTI]: A court on Monday directed the Delhi Police to give copies of charge sheet to former Jawaharlal Nehru University Students' Union (JNU-SU) president Kanhaiya Kumar and 9 others in a 2016 sedition case.

Chief Metropolitan Magistrate (CMM) Pan-kaj Sharma put up the matter for April 7 to scrutinise documents in the case and also granted bail to seven accused who were not arrested in the case earlier.

The seven accused include Aquib, Mujeeb, Umar Gul, Rayees Rasool, Basharat Ali, Khalid Basheer who were not arrested before filing of charge sheet.

They moved bail applications after which the court granted them bail on a personal bond of ₹ 25,000 and a surety of a like amount.

Kanhaiya Kumar, Umar Khalid (who is already in custody in Delhi riots case), Anirban Bhattacharya and seven others were present in court in pursuance to summons issued by the court after taking cognisance of the charge sheet.

Kanhaiya Kumar and others, including former JNU students Umar Kha-

lid and Anirban Bhattacharya, were accused of raising anti-India slogans.

The other seven accused charge sheeted in the case are Kashmiri students Aquib Hussain, Mujeeb Hussain, Muneeb Hussain, Umar Gul, Ray-eea Rassol, Bashir Bhat and Basharat, some of them were then studying in JNU, Aligarh Muslim University and Jamia Millia Islamia.

The accused have been charged with offences under sections 124A (sedition), 323 (punishment for voluntarily causing hurt), 471 (using as genuine a forged document or electronic record), 143 (punishment for being a member of an unlawful assembly), 149 (being a member of an unlawful assembly), 147 (punishment for rioting) and 120B (criminal conspiracy) of the Indian Penal Code (IPC).

A case was registered on February 11, 2016 under sections 124A and 120B of the IPC against unidentified people at the Vasant Kunj (north) Police Station, following complaints from Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) MP Maheish Girri and the Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP).

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West Indies beat Sri Lanka by 5 wickets, win ODI series 3-0



NORTH POINT (ANTIGUA), MAR 15 (AP): Darren Bravo's fourth one-day international century steered the West Indies to a five-wicket win over Sri Lanka and a sweep of the three-match ODI series.

Bravo was out for 102 in the 47th over when the West Indies needed only 26 runs to overhaul Sri Lanka's total of 274-6. He shared an 80-run partnership with captain Kieron Pollard, who finished 53 not out as the home side won with nine balls to spare.

Bravo earlier joined with Shai Hope in a 109-run partnership for the third wicket which put the West Indies on target to victory after the hosts had been 39-2 in the 10th over.

Captain Jason Holder ended the run chase with a six from the third ball of the 49th over as West Indies ended on 276-5.

Bravo's century was his first in an ODI since June, 2016 when he scored 102 against South Africa at Bridgetown, Barbados.

I think today was an important day for me, Bravo said.

Yesterday my sister celebrated her 30th birthday. I wasn't there for her celebration so I knew I had to do something special for her. I just want dedicate this one-day hundred to her.

Bravo had been hinting at the onset of his best form with scores of 58, 19 and 47 in the three-match Twenty20 series, which the West Indies won 2-1. He also

scored 37 not out and 10 in the first two matches of the ODI series.

He emulated the performances of Hope, who made 110 to help West Indies win the first match of the series by eight wickets, and Evin Lewis, who scored 103 to help the home team win the second match by five wickets.

Bravo said he took inspiration from the innings by Hope and Lewis which have led a strong West Indies batting performance in the series, saying it gave us the motivation to go out and do well.

Once again, Sri Lanka lost the toss and was asked to bat first. Danushka Gunathilaka (36) and captain Dimush Karunaratne (31) got the tourists off to a solid start with a 68-run opening stand.

But the middle order couldn't capitalize on the start, and Sri Lanka slipped to 151-6 in the 32 over. Ashen Bandara and Winandu Hasaranga revived the innings with an unbroken 123-run partnership for the seventh wicket.

Bandara finished 55 not out, a watchful innings from 74 balls, while Hasaranga smashed an unbeaten 80 from 60 balls with seven fours and three sixes.

Hasaranga's maiden ODI 50 came from 48 balls and he struck the next 30 runs from only 12 deliveries.

The teams meet in a two-match test series starting at the same venue next weekend.

Medvedev wins Open 13 for 10th title on eve of move to No. 2



MARSEILLE, MAR 15 (AP): Top-seeded Daniil Medvedev was pushed to three sets by doubles specialist Pierre-Hugues Herbert in the Open 13 final, winning 6-4, 6-7 (4), 6-4 for his 10th career title on the eve of his move up to second in the rankings.

Medvedev will overtake Rafael Nadal on Monday and push the 20-time Grand Slam champion down to No. 3.

It is always better when you step up the rankings when you do something great," Medvedev said.

"It is great for the self-esteem that, just before becoming No. 2, I win a tournament.

Victory also made his childhood dream come true.

I am really happy about the number 10. It gets me to two digits, something which I dreamt of when I was a kid, said Medvedev. It is already a great number, but I am going to try to

work more and get some more. I really like to play on hard courts, I feel like that is where my game suits me the best. I feel like I know the solutions I have to find.

Given that six of his 10 titles have been on indoor hard courts, he was heavy favorite here. Furthermore, the two-time Grand Slam runner-up faced a player with all four majors in doubles, but without

any titles in singles and ranked 93rd.

But the serve-and-volley specialist Herbert did made it awkward for the imposing Russian at times by upsetting his rhythm, breaking his serve once and forcing him to save four break points.

Pierre-Hugues can play unbelievable tennis. I know what he is capable of, Medvedev said. Especially when I

lost in the Roland Garros first round. Today was a tricky, tough match and I am really happy that I managed to be on top.

Medvedev edged the Frenchman in aces 13-10 and first-serve points won 83% compared to 72% while converting three of his six break points.

The Australian Open runner-up improved to 14-2 this year and has won 23 of his last 25

matches.

Boosted by his wins over second-seeded Stefanos Tsitsipas and former No.4-ranked Kei Nishikori this week, Herbert's confidence showed as he tried to shorten the points by rushing to the net.

But ultimately he fell short, dropping to 0-4 in singles finals compared to 19-7 in doubles.

It has been an incredible week. I played five really high-level matches. This is what I am proud of, Herbert said.

I lost to someone who was just better (over) the full match. I managed to hold on and have a chance, but he was too good.

When he climbs to No. 2 on Monday, Medvedev will be the first player outside the Big Four of Roger Federer, Nadal, Novak Djokovic and Andy Murray to do so since Nadal in July 2005.

Now he just needs to win a major.

Ronaldo responds to critics with fast hat trick for Juventus



MILAN, MAR 15 (AP): A fast hat trick for Cristiano Ronaldo still wasn't enough for third-place Juventus to close in on Inter Milan, which managed to extend its lead at the top of Serie A.

Inter snatched a 2-1 win at relegation-threatened Torino and moved nine points clear of second-place AC Milan after the Rossoneri lost 1-0 at home to Napoli.

Nine-time defending champion Juventus beat Cagliari 3-1 but remained 10 points behind Inter, although it has played a match less.

Ronaldo's first-half hat trick set it on the way at Cagliari. It was the perfect response to criticism the Juventus forward and his teammates had come in for after the Bianconeri were knocked out of the Champions League by Porto in the round of 16 earlier in the week.

The criticism didn't bother me what bothered me was being knocked out of the Champions League, having not played well, Juventus goalkeeper Wojciech Szczesny said.

Then, you have to respond on the field. Cristiano did exactly that, with a perfect hat trick.

However, Ronaldo was somewhat fortunate not to get sent off a few minutes after heading in a corner for his first goal in the ninth minute.

The Juventus forward went in high to meet Federico Chiesa's cross and caught Alessio Cragno in the face, leaving the Cagliari goalkeeper with a cut to the chin. But Ronaldo was shown just a yellow card.

The two clashed again in the 25th minute when Cragno tripped Ronaldo, who doubled his tally with a powerful penalty.

And Ronaldo completed his hat trick seven minutes later, controlling Chiesa's cross and doing

a little shimmy before curling into the far side of the net.

It was a so-called perfect hat trick, as the Portugal forward scored with his head, right foot and left.

It took Ronaldo's tally to 770 career goals, surpassing Brazilian great Pelé's official total. Both wrote messages marking the occasion on social media.

Giovanni Simeone netted a consolation for Cagliari in the second half.

LAST-GASP WIN Lautaro Mart nez headed in a late winner to help Inter take a potentially crucial step towards a first league title

since 2010.

Mart nez netted five minutes from time after Antonio Sanabria had canceled out Romelu Lukaku's opener from the penalty spot.

The penalty was awarded in the 62nd minute when Torino defender Armando Izzo clattered into Mart nez.

Inter had dominated possession before then but struggled to carve out opportunities and didn't have a shot on target in the first half.

It was Torino that came closest to scoring first when Lyanco headed a free kick onto the right post and Lukaku had to clear off

the line.

Torino remained two points from safety, although it has played fewer matches than the teams around it.

WINLESS STREAK ENDED

Relegation-threatened Parma ended its 17-match winless streak with a surprise 2-0 win over high-flying Roma.

Valentin Mihaila scored in the ninth minute and Hernani converted a second-half penalty to secure Parma's first win since November.

American teenager Bryan Reynolds made his debut for Roma when he was introduced on the hour mark.

Roma remained two points below fourth-place Atalanta in the race for the Champions League qualifying spots. Napoli is above Roma on goal difference after Matteo Politano scored the only goal at San Siro early in the second half.

Milan forward Ante Rebic was sent off in stoppage time for dissent, compounding the Rossoneri's misery.

Parma moved to within three points of safety.

Also, Bologna beat Sampdoria 3-1.

Clijsters withdraws from Miami and Charleston tournaments

MIAMI, MAR 15 (AP): Four-time Grand Slam champion Kim Clijsters withdrew from upcoming tournaments in Miami and Charleston, a setback in her comeback following right knee surgery and a bout with COVID-19.

Clijsters' return to the WTA Tour in 2020 after a seven-year hiatus was interrupted by the pandemic. She underwent knee surgery in October and came down with a mild case of the virus in January.

I've had an intensive few weeks of training, Clijsters, 37, said on Twitter.

Unfortunately I am not where I need to be, especially if I want to compete with the best. I'm not ready to quit. I'm going to keep pushing and see what's possible.

Clijsters said she plans to undergo three to six weeks of pain management treatment and then make decisions regarding her schedule.

The Miami Open begins March 23, and the Charleston tournament starts on April 5.

Flights cancelled during China's worst sandstorm in decades

BEIJING, MAR 15 (AP): China's capital and a wide swath of the country's north were enveloped Monday in the worst sandstorm in a decade, leading to the cancelation of hundreds of flights.

Skyscrapers in the center of Beijing appeared to drop from sight amid the dust and sand. Traffic was snarled and more than 400 flights out of the capital's two main airports were canceled before noon.

Such storms used to occur regularly in the springtime as sand from western deserts blew eastwards, affecting areas as far as northern Japan.

Massive planting of trees and bushes in fragile areas has reduced the storms' intensity, but the expansion of cities and industries has put constant pressure on the environment throughout China.

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Thomas lives on edge and rallies to win Players Championship

PONTE VEDRA BEACH, FLA. (AP): The resilience it takes to get through a nerve-jangling Sunday at Sawgrass was nothing compared with what Justin Thomas had been through already this year.

An otherwise impeccable start to his career on and off the course came under scrutiny in January with a slip of the tongue when he muttered an anti-gay slur under his breath that cost him one sponsor and led another to publicly reprimand him. Tougher still was the death last month of his grandfather, Paul, part of the legacy of golf pros in the Thomas family.

He found the right time to deliver a gem.

Thomas took on every shot in The Players Championship, right down to the 5-wood that rode the edge of the lake down the left side of the 18th fairway, and closed with a 4-under 68 for a one-shot victory over Lee Westwood.

He won for the seventh straight year, his 14th career title, and became only the fourth player to win a major, The Players

Championship, the FedEx Cup and a World Golf Championship.

"It's been a crappy couple months. I've had stuff happen in my life I never thought I'd have happen," Thomas said. "Losing grandpa was terrible, and having to play a round of golf dealing with that, and then on top of that not playing well, it just was a lot, and it took a lot on me mentally.

"This week was huge to win a big championship like this in front of fans again, which is incredible. It tested me mentally, physically, emotionally, and I'm very proud of myself for getting it done."

Like most Sundays at this championship, it was wild as ever.

Thomas was four shots behind when he walked off the green on the par-3 eighth with a three-putt bogey. Four holes later, he walked off the 12th green with a two-shot lead.

He hit a 5-iron to 20 feet to set up a two-putt birdie on the par-5 ninth. He took on a tough pin at No. 10 for a 6-foot birdie.

He drilled a 4-iron to 20 feet for an eagle at No. 11 for his first lead of the week, and he capped off the run with a nifty pitch from behind the green on the reachable par-4 12th for birdie.

Westwood was a hard-luck runner-up for the second straight week — to Bryson DeChambeau at Bay Hill, to Thomas at The Players, two major champions who were born in 1993, the year the 47-year-old Westwood turned pro.

He was tied for the lead until he couldn't match Thomas, playing in the group ahead, on the par-5 16th.

Thomas teed it low and slung a hard, low draw that ran out some 40 yards and set up a 5-wood into 50 feet, which he lagged down for a two-putt birdie. Westwood's 3-iron clipped a tree and dropped into the sand, and that quirky 65-yard shot went into another bunker and forced him to scramble for par.

"When you're in contention, you'd like to win every tournament you're playing in,"

Westwood said after a 72. "But I didn't quite have my game today."

He made birdie on the 18th to finish alone in second. DeChambeau (71) and Brian Harman (69) were another shot behind.

Thomas finished at 14-under 274. He was outside the cut line after nine holes Friday, made it with two shots to spare and then tied The Players Championship record with a 12-under 132 weekend.

Thomas still had one more shot before he was in the clear. He took on the water framing the left side of the 18th fairway, the ball moving right-to-left and bouncing straight off the crown of the first cut, safely in the fairway. Only when he saw it on land did Thomas twirl his club, pulling his cap over his face and wiping his brow.

"I've seen some crazy stuff happen on TV in the past, and I'm glad to be on this side of it," he said.

All the crazy stuff came early.

DeChambeau topped a hybrid on the par-4 fourth hole that went only about 140

yards until it plunked into the water.

"Dude! I don't know what happened!" he said to his caddie. "I've never done that before."

From 237 yards on a forward tee to a green protected by water, he hit a slice with a 4-iron that landed some 40 yards right of the green.

"Oh my gosh! What is going on?" DeChambeau said.

He made double bogey and was scratching the rest of the way to stay in the game. He still had a chance with an eagle on the 16th hole to get within two, but when Thomas made par on the 17th, his chances were about over.

Westwood hit his tee shot into the water on the fourth hole and had to make an 8-footer to save bogey. He hit his approach out of the pine straw that clipped two branches and found water on the par-5 second hole to make bogey. But he was never far away from the lead, and Westwood regained a share of the lead with an 8-foot birdie putt on the 14th.

Australians rally at Parliament to demand justice for women

CANBERRA, MAR 15 (AP): Australians rallied in the capital and other cities Monday demanding justice for women and calling out misogyny and dangerous workplace cultures as the government reels from two rape allegations.

Outside Parliament House in Canberra, the crowd of hundreds was mostly female and most wore black. They carried placards including Justice for Women and Men, Own Your Guilt.

Prime Minister Scott Morrison refused organizers' demand that he address the crowd. He agreed to meet a delegation of protesters in his office, but a meeting didn't take place.

We have already come to the front door, now it's up to the government to cross the threshold and come to us, organizer Janine Hendry said.

We will not be meeting behind closed doors, she added.

Morrison is standing by his Attorney-General Christian Porter over an allegation that he raped a 16-year-old girl when



he was aged 17 in 1988. Porter denied the allegation. His accuser took her own life last year after withdrawing a complaint to police.

Separately, Defense Minister Linda Reynolds has been criticized for failing to adequately support a young staffer who alleged she was raped by a more senior colleague in the minister's office in Parliament House in 2019.

Brittany Higgins said she felt she had to make a choice between reporting her allegations to police or

continuing her career. She quit her government job in January and reported her allegation to police.

I was raped inside Parliament House by a colleague, and for so long it felt like the people around me only cared because of where it happened or what it might mean for them, a tearful Higgins told the Canberra crowd.

It was so confusing because these people were my idols. I had dedicated my life to them. They were my social network, my colleagues, and

my family. And suddenly they treated me differently. I wasn't a person who had gone through a life-changing, traumatic event. I was a political problem, she added.

The Associated Press does not usually identify alleged victims of sexual assault, but Higgins has chosen to identify herself in the media.

The protests, which also took place in Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane and Hobart, coincide with the first sitting of Parliament since the allegation against Porter became public in early March.

Reynolds has since apologized for describing Higgins to her staff as a lying cow and said she was referring to Higgins' allegation of inadequate support, not the rape allegation. The minister also agreed to pay Higgins an undisclosed sum as compensation.

Porter's lawyers announced on Monday that he is suing Australian Broadcasting Corp. for defamation over a news article that he said made false allegations against him.

Although he was not named, the article made allegations against a senior Cabinet minister and the attorney-general was easily identifiable to many of Australians as the subject of the allegations, the lawyers said in a statement.

Porters has been on mental health leave since March 3 when he held a news conference denying that he had raped the girl, who has not been named.

Reynolds has also been on sick leave with a heart condition since Higgins made her allegations.

Pandemic sets back Italian women's long fight for jobs

ROME (AP): One of hundreds of thousands of women in Italy who lost jobs in the pandemic, Laura Taddeo has a master's degree in tourism, speaks fluent English and Spanish and some Arabic, too.

Her contract as a tour operator with a high-end Italian hotel company expired in May, just as COVID-19 travel restrictions were crippling tourism, and it wasn't renewed. But whenever tourism does rebound, Taddeo, who cuts a confident figure, will brace for the job interview questions.

"It's not, 'What have you studied? What languages do you speak?' but 'Do you have a family? Do you intend to have children?' Taddeo, who is 33, said every man who has interviewed her asked her that right off the bat.

Worldwide, working women have paid a painfully high price during the pandemic as many quit jobs to care for children when schools closed or saw employment evaporate in hard-hit retail and hospitality businesses. But Italian women went into the COVID-19 crisis already struggling for decades to expand their presence in the workforce.

Among the 27 European Union nations, Italy ranks next to last, just above Greece, in terms of women's participation in the workforce. In 2020, while Europe's economy was reeling from pandemic restrictions, 49.4% of women aged 15 through 64 worked in Italy, compared with an EU average of 67.3%. By comparison, 67.3% of men had jobs, against an EU rate of 79%. Deeply rooted Italian societal attitudes that hold a woman's main vocation is in the home help to explain the lag.

"It's not so much that women shouldn't work, but they shouldn't neglect the household. That's the responsibility of women," said sociologist Chiara Saraceno of the widespread attitudes. Affordable day-care is chronically scarce, both

public and private.

Of 456,000 jobs lost in 2020 in Italy, where the pandemic first erupted in the West, 249,000 were held by women, many of whom had been working as waitresses, store clerks, nannies and caretakers for the elderly. According to the national statistics bureau, ISTAT, between November and December, when Italy was grappling with a devastating resurgence of infections, a staggering 99,000 of the 101,000 jobs that disappeared were women's, mostly among the self-employed.

Even before the pandemic, Italy's economy had never fully recovered from the economic crisis of more than a decade ago. The Bank of Italy has estimated that GDP would improve by some 7 percentage points if the proportion of women in the workforce climbs to 60%.

"We're talking about women who are more educated than men, but that our country doesn't succeed in employing," ISTAT's central director Linda Laura Sabbadini said in an interview last month with the weekly *Lo Donna*, (I, Woman). "The point is that, as long as women are underutilized in respect to their potential, Italy won't grow."

If anyone is acutely aware of that issue that would be Mario Draghi, who headed both the Bank of Italy and the European Central Bank and last month became the nation's premier.

A hefty chunk of the 209 billion euros (\$250 billion) in EU pandemic aid for Italy is to be earmarked for digital innovation and shifting the economy to environmentally friendly technologies. In laying out his priorities to Parliament last month, Draghi said Italy must invest "economically, but above all, culturally," so that young women can train for careers in sectors that will get the new investment.

Some 37% of Italian men have degrees in science, technology, engineering and mathematics

(STEM), compared with 16% for women.

That has some worried that EU funding could widen the gender gap.

"There is a big risk it will end up increasing jobs for men," said sociologist Saraceno, who is based in Turin. "I have been saying for some time that you have to prepare both sexes for this kind of work."

Daniela Magnanti, 42, says the push for tech and engineering jobs for women comes too late for her. She wrote computer code for years until her employer went bust. In a phone interview from her home in a Rome suburb, Magnanti recounted how, when she tried to get back to work after the birth of her second daughter, parenthood hurt her prospects.

For recruiters, asking if she had a child "was a routine question. (And) it was always a male (recruiter) who called."

Magnanti now works part-time at the check-in desk of a hotel in a nearby beach town and does administrative work for her brother's plumbing business.

"At first, in the 1960s and 1970s, (lack of women working) was justified by saying they weren't prepared, they didn't have the competence," said Liliana Ocmin, who coordinates the CISL labor union group's efforts for women. But even after Italian women armed themselves with college degrees and skills they remained behind in the workforce.

ISTAT's Sabbadini noted last year that day-care availability nationwide was a scarce 25%. In southern Calabria, it was a mere 9%.

Draghi seems to be getting the message. In remarks to the nation on Monday, International Women's Day, he said Italy needed "profound reforms" to narrow the gender gap, including more equitable access to day-care.

Meanwhile, Italian cultural attitudes toward working women seem stuck in a time warp for Carmen Basso, 63.

Iran warns election delays could slow nuclear deal moves

BRUSSELS (AP): Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif on Monday urged the United States to quickly rejoin the international agreement limiting Iran's nuclear ambitions, warning that the Islamic Republic's upcoming elections could stymie progress in any talks.

The Trump administration in 2018 unilaterally withdrew the U.S. from the Iranian nuclear accord, in which Tehran had agreed to limit its uranium enrichment in exchange for the lifting of economic sanctions.

When the U.S. then reimposed some sanctions and added others, Iran gradually and publicly abandoned the deal's limits on its nuclear development.

White House officials

have said the new U.S. administration is prepared to return to the deal as soon as Tehran shows "strict compliance" with its terms.

Zarif said that as Iran's June elections approach, the United States will find itself dealing with a government unable to make progress in the nuclear talks.

"A lame duck government will not be able to do anything serious. And then we will have a waiting period of almost six months. We will not have a government before September," Zarif said at an online conference with the European Policy Centre think-tank in Brussels.

"A lot of things can happen between now and September. So, it is advisable for the United

States to move fast," Zarif said.

Going into the presidential election, the Iranian public is disenchanted with President Hassan Rouhani and his allies who struck the nuclear accord. Rouhani, a cleric who is a relative moderate in Iran's theocratic government, is term limited from running again.

In December, Iran's parliament passed a bill requiring the government to limit its cooperation with U.N. inspectors and push the nuclear program beyond the agreement's limits. Tehran then began enriching uranium up to 20% purity and other work barred by the deal.

But Iran believes that the U.S., as the country which first reneged on

the 2015 agreement, must make the first move, and should not set any preconditions.

"We are ready to go back immediately, after the United States goes back to implementation of the deal. That's as simple as that," Zarif said. He rejected renegotiating any parts of the deal, or adjusting the "time-frame" under which Tehran should take certain steps.

"We don't see any reason for talks; we can go immediately to implementation and then have talks," Zarif said, adding that he has seen no new proposals from the U.S. yet. "Up until now, this administration has done nothing different from the Trump administration."

The sanctions im-

posed on Tehran lock it out of international financial markets and bar the country from selling its crude oil abroad. Iran's economy has cratered in the meantime as inflation remains unchecked and its currency, the rial, suffers. The coronavirus pandemic has only worsened those woes.

Zarif said that a significant amount of Iranian money is now being held in Iraq.

"We are selling Iraq gas and electricity ... but the U.S. doesn't permit Iraq to give us the money, as if they give us permission to donate to Iraq gas and electricity. And we need that money very badly for corona, for the vaccine, for food and medicine for our people."

Myanmar junta orders martial law in 6 Yangon townships

YANGON, MYANMAR (AP): Myanmar's ruling junta has declared martial law in six townships in the country's largest city, as security forces killed dozens of protesters over the weekend in an increasingly lethal crackdown on resistance to last month's military coup.

State broadcaster MRTV said Monday that the Yangon townships of North Dagon, South Dagon, Dagon Seikkan and North Okkalapa have been put under martial law. An initial announcement was made late Sunday saying two other townships — Hlaing Thar Yar and neighboring Shwepyitha — were being placed under martial law.

At least 38 people were killed Sunday and dozens were injured in one of the deadliest days of the crackdown on anti-coup protesters,

according to the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners, or AAPP, an independent group tracking the toll of the violence. Several estimates from other sources gave higher figures.

Complicating efforts to organize new protests as well as media coverage of the crisis, mobile internet service has been cut, though access is still available through fixed broadband connections.

Mobile data service has been used to stream live video coverage of protests, often showing security forces attacking demonstrators. It had been turned off only from 1 a.m. to 9 a.m. for several weeks, with no official explanation.

The blockage of internet service forced postponement of a court hearing in the capital, Natogyi, for Myanmar's detained leader, Aung San Suu Kyi, who

was supposed to take part via a video conference, said her lawyer Khin Maung Zaw. Suu Kyi and President Win Myint were detained during the Feb. 1 military takeover, and have been charged with several criminal offenses that their supporters believe are politically motivated to keep them locked up.

Since the takeover six weeks ago, Myanmar has been under a nationwide state of emergency, with its civilian leaders ousted and detained, and military leaders in charge of all government. But Sunday's announcement was the first use of martial law since the coup and suggested more direct military control of security, instead of local police.

The announcement said that the State Administrative Council acted to enhance security and restore law and order, and that the Yangon

regional commander has been entrusted with administrative, judicial and military powers in the area under his command. The orders cover six of Yangon's 33 townships, all of which suffered major violence in recent days.

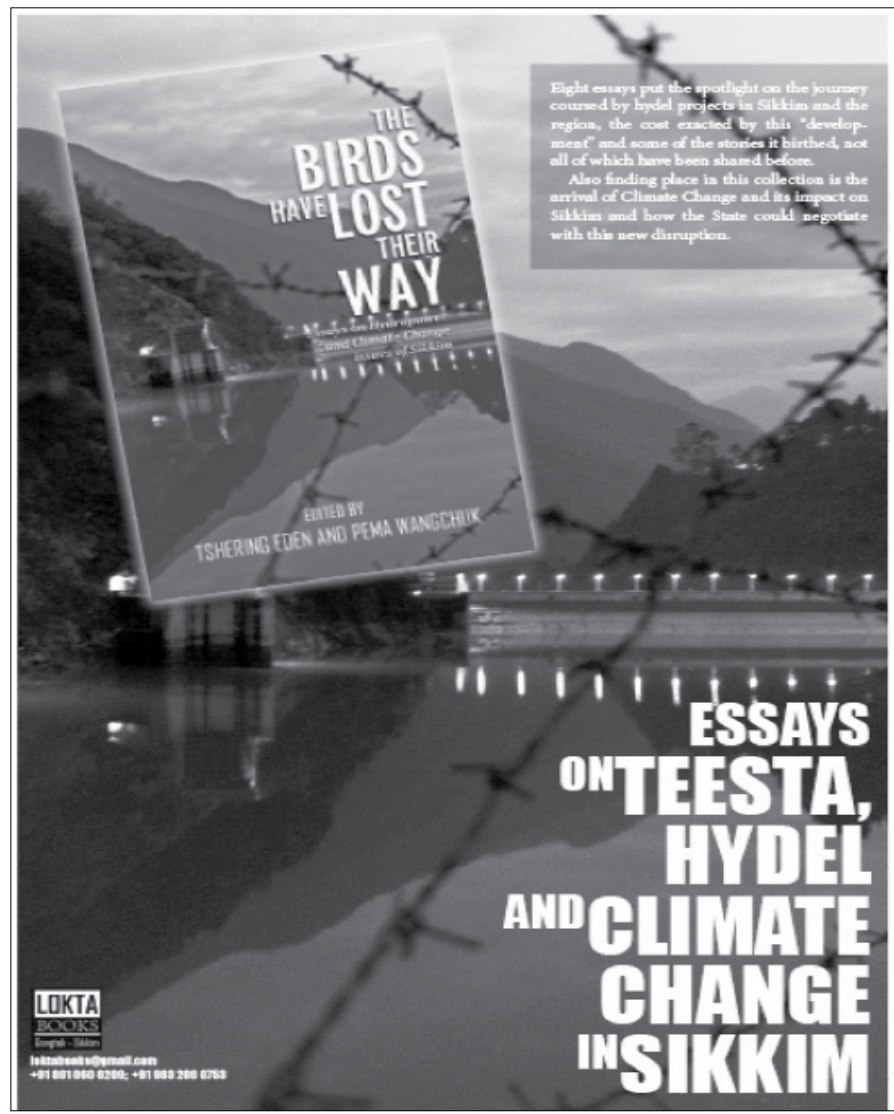
Thirty-four of the deaths were in Yangon. Video from Hlaing Thar Yar township showed people running away after gunfire was heard at nighttime. Those fleeing carried one injured person and tried to revive two others, one who seemed to be dead or dying, the footage from independent Democratic Voice of Burma showed.

Hlaing Thar Yar was the location of 22 civilian deaths Sunday, according to the AAPP, which said more than a dozen civilians were wounded and described a large number of junta forces engaged in the township.

Four other deaths were reported in the cities of Bago, Mandalay, and Hpakant, according to the AAPP and local media.

In a new tactic, anti-coup demonstrators used the cover of darkness to hold mass candlelight vigils in various parts of Yangon over the weekend, including some that took place after 8 p.m., when a curfew imposed by authorities starts.

The protest movement has been grounded in nonviolent civil disobedience from the start, with marches and general strikes among its main features. But some protesters have advocated stronger, more agile methods of self-defense — such as holding small rallies that are quick to disband and reunite, and devising cover from fire extinguishers, billowing laundry and burning tires.





GRAMMYS READY! The reality star, Paris Hilton is seen posing for photos while selecting her outfit for the award show in Los Angeles.

Billie Eilish makes history after winning Grammy for theme song of unreleased 'No Time To Die'

LOS ANGELES, MAR 15 (PTI): Singer Billie Eilish and her brother Finneas won the best song written for visual media Grammy award for their James Bond theme from unreleased "No Time to Die" movie.

It was for the first time in the Grammys history that a track from an unreleased film won the award.

In the past, the song, titled "No Time to Die", would have been disqualified, but the Grammy soundtrack committee tweaked its rules amid the coronavirus pandemic, which had a huge impact on movie release calendar.

"No Time to Die", the 25th film in the James Bond franchise, was initially supposed to arrive in theatres in April 2020, but was pushed several times amid the pandemic.

The film is now slated to hit the theatres on October 8, 2021.

Eilish, the youngest musician to write a James Bond theme song, released "No Time to Die" track last year on February 13.

The singer-songwriter, who also performed during the 63rd annual show, accepted the award during the pre-show.

Other winners in the visual media category were filmmaker Taika Waititi for best compilation soundtrack for 2019's black comedy "Jojo Rabbit" and Icelandic composer Hildur Gu nadottir for the "Joker" score.

Eilish was also nominated for song of the year, record of the year, and best pop solo performance for her track Everything I Wanted.

She and Finneas won their second consecutive record of the year Grammy beating out tracks by Doja Cat (Say So), Dua Lipa (Don't Start Now), Post Malone (Circles), DaBaby and Roddy Ricch (ROCKSTAR), Black Pumas (Colors), Beyonce (Black Parade), and Megan Thee Stallion's Savage remix, also featuring Beyonce.

In her acceptance speech, Eilish said Megan deserved the award and praised the rapper for her work.

"This is really embarrassing for me. Megan, girl... I was gonna write a speech about how you deserve this but then I was like, There's no way they're going to choose me! I was like, It's hers! You deserve this. You had a year that I think is un-stoppable.

Amitabh Bachchan undergoes second eye surgery

MUMBAI, MAR 15 (PTI): Megastar Amitabh Bachchan has revealed that his second eye surgery was successful and he is currently "recovering well".

Earlier this month, the 78-year-old actor had opened up about his first eye surgery and shared with fans that the recovery is "slow and difficult." He had also hinted at getting a surgery in the other eye.

Taking to Twitter late Sunday night, Bachchan thanked his doctor Himanshu Mehta and called the surgeries a "life changing experience."

"And the second one has gone well. Recovering now. All good. The marvels of modern medical technology and the dexterity of Dr HM's hands. Life changing experience. You see now what you were not seeing before, surely a wonderful world," he tweeted.

The screen icon had previously written about the difficulty in his sight because of the surgery, which made him spend his days doing nothing.

In a blog post, Bachchan said now that his second eye was recovering, he could properly see colours, shapes and sizes.

"Saviour Dr Himanshu Mehta and his dexterity with the very latest medical machinery to remove the cataracts despite the age related soft tissues of mine. Any delay in these corrections can lead to blindness. So an advice .. get it done before it gets too late.

"And the recovery for the second one continues. If I am writing this it's obviously working .. ain't it," he added.

The actor also thanked his fans for their continued wishes and said he was touched to know that there are people praying for his recovery and well being.



Taylor Swift wins album of the year Grammy, becomes first woman to receive top honour thrice

LOS ANGELES, MAR 15 (PTI): Singer Taylor Swift's album of the year win for 'Folklore' at the 63rd Annual Grammy Awards has made her the first female artiste to win the top honour three times in her career.

She also won it in 2010 for her album 'Fearless' and again in 2015 for '1989'.

Prior to the pop singer, celebrated musicians Stevie Wonder, Frank Sinatra and Paul Simon have won the top prize thrice.

Swift's 'Folklore' defeated nominated albums by Jhene Aiko, Black Pumas, Coldplay, Jacob Collier, HAIM, Dua Lipa and Post Malone to win the highest prize of the ceremony.

In her acceptance speech, the 31-year-old singer thanked her collaborators, Laura Sisk, Jack Antonoff and Aaron Dessner, and her boyfriend, actor Joe Alwyn, for helping her write the songs during the coronavirus pandemic.

"I had the best time writing songs with you during quarantine," Swift said.

Alwyn is credited on 'Folklore' under the pseudonym William Bowery.

The album, Swift's eighth, released in July last year.

In addition to album of the year, Swift was nominated at the ceremony for pop solo performance (Cardigan), pop duo/group performance (Exile), song written for visual media (Beautiful Ghosts), pop vocal album (Folklore) and song of the year (Cardigan)

The singer also performed at the Grammys for the first time in five years, singing a medley of songs from her albums 'Evermore' and 'Folklore'.

The audience-free performance scene was set up on a stage inside the Los Angeles Convention Center, where most of the performances were pre-recorded because of pandemic precautions.



Grammys' in memoriam especially long, grim in pandemic year

LOS ANGELES (AP): Brandi Carlile paid tribute to John Prine, Bruno Mars celebrated Little Richard and Lionel Richie honored Kenny Rogers during an in memoriam segment on Sunday night's Grammy Awards that featured an especially long list of names after a year of the coronavirus pandemic.

In one of four performances interspersed between the names and faces in the montage of the past year's dead, Carlile sang "I Remember Everything" for Prine, one of the musical artists lost to the coronavirus, along with country singers Charley Pride and K.T. Oslin, musician and composer Adam Schlesinger, folk singer Trini Lopez and many others.

Earlier Sunday, Prine won two posthumous Grammys for best American roots song and best American roots performance, a year after receiving a lifetime achievement award at the Grammys.

Carlile told The Associated Press that it didn't bother her to be performing without an audience at the pandemic-restricted Grammys because "this time I'm just performing for John Prine.



It's just for John, and I know he's there."

Mars, joined by Anderson .Paak blazed through Little Richard's "Good Golly Miss Molly" and Richie sang "Lady," the ballad he wrote and Rogers made a hit, adding, "I miss you Kenny" as he ended.

Former Alabama Shakes singer Brittany Howard, backed up by Coldplay's Chris Martin on piano, ended the tribute with a stirring version of the Broadway standard "You'll Never Walk Alone."

Among those named in the montage

was jazz pianist Chick Corea, who won two Grammys on Sunday only about a month after his death.

Corea, who died of a rare form of cancer at age 79, won the trophy for best improvised jazz solo and best jazz instrumental album.

Host Trevor Noah introduced the segment by telling viewers that they can see the names of nearly 1,000 people in the music industry who died in the past year at Grammys.com.

ARIES:

It's all about work, work, work this week in the Aries HQ and you're feeling motivated to take your career to the next level. So, play your cards right and align yourself with opportunities that will prove to be beneficial in the long run. Remember, having the right team by your side is an asset when you're actively looking to expand. What you want to be mindful of at this point: reckless decisions. What you want to do instead is take calculated risks.

TAURUS:

Letting go of something you're this invested in is seldom easy. But you've got to do what you've got to do, Taurus. Remembering that there is nothing else that you can contribute here will help you make the right decision. So, redirect your energy towards what's coming up next as you express your gratitude for the learning you have had in this phase. Trust that your guides are holding space for you to move in the right direction.

GEMINI:

Beginning a project is the easy part. It is synonymous with that intoxicating adrenaline rush that comes from stepping into the unknown. What happens when you enter the second stage of a project, though? Does the same optimism continue to fuel your actions or do you find yourself stuck in a rut? Word for the wise: pursue your goals with single-minded focus. Remembering why you embarked upon this journey will help you make decisions that serve your highest good.

CANCER:

Doing things the way that you have been doing them is comfortable, but comfort seldom leads to growth. Today, the cards are urging you to shake things up a little. To adopt the spirit of play and approach the most mundane tasks in a manner that's different from what you're used to. Bringing your own unique touch to your creations will help you captivate your audience and leave a lasting impression.

LEO:

Letting go of something you're attached to is seldom easy. But, you've got to do what you've got to do, especially since the opportunity that awaits you on the other side is a bright and beautiful one. If you're confused about which way to go, check in with yourself. Your inner compass will always point in the right direction. As such, this is a time of stepping into your power and owning your unique gifts. You have carved a niche for yourself, Leo, and that is your biggest strength.

VIRGO:

Comparing yourself to others is a colossal waste of your time. You are where you are for a reason. You've worked your way to the top and you plan to keep things that way. Success and recognition are major themes for you this week. Get ready to take a bow, Virgo. The good news, your finances are taking a turn for the better. If you've put in the work, expect magnificent returns in the days to come.

LIBRA:

Adulting is for plebeians (and earth signs!). You're in the mood to cancel your subscription, stay in your PJs all day, and tap into that space of childlike playfulness within. You want to make art, watch your favourite cartoons, sing at the top of your voice, dance under the stars and read bedtime stories about unicorns, faeries and goblins. The good thing is, you're not engaging in these shenanigans by yourself. You've got your closest crew making magic with you.

SCORPIO:

The cards are bringing your attention to conflicting beliefs that are standing in the way of your own evolution. For instance, being passionate about starting your own venture, and yet terrified of the risks it may entail. Reflect on your self-sabotaging ways, Scorpio, and remember that you always have more than one option. The real question is: Will you live a life that screams "mediocrity", or find the courage to follow your passion? The cards want you to know that you are loved and supported and that it's time to make a big change.

SAGITTARIUS:

Sagittarius, you've been to hell and back, but you wouldn't have it any other way. You understand that you have attracted certain experiences in order to grow on a soul level. This is inner alchemy, baby, and it's helping you come home to yourself. The revelations you're likely to have at this point will be major. The kind you really need to sit down with. So, don't be in a rush to move forward. Allow yourself to remain

in yin mode for a bit and integrate the learnings.

CAPRICORN:

There's a fire burning inside of you and it's making you want to achieve the impossible. Being "this" motivated is always a good thing. However, at this point, you may or may not have the facts required in place. Word for the wise: take each step mindfully. Try to gather as much information as you possibly can. Most importantly, don't believe everything you hear, and check in with your intuition from time to time.

AQUARIUS:

This is a time of unexpected twists and turns. A time of becoming a witness to all that is false and watching the weak foundations come crumbling down. It's not going to be easy, Aquarius. You may feel like you haven't made any progress at all and that you are back to where you started from. But, that is far from the truth. You have evolved greatly since you embarked upon this journey. So rise above the fluctuations and honour the soul lessons.

PISCES:

This is a big, big day for you, Pisces! You are celebrating a personal breakthrough: the ability to do the things that you were intimidated by in the past. Acknowledge both the highs and the lows that you've had along the way as they've both helped you get to this point in your existence. As such, the cards are indicating victory on the work front too. A senior, somebody you admire, could finally take notice of you.