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Summit TIMES

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ON TOP OF THE NEWS

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In meeting with Amit Shah, CM explains historical grounds justifying tribal status for leftout communities; Also seeks Border Wing Home Guards battalions for Sikkim

SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 08 AUG:

Chief Minister Prem Singh Tamang called on Union Home Minister, Amit Shah, who also holds the Ministry of Cooperation portfolio, at his official residence in New Delhi today.

A press communiqué from the Chief Minister's Office informs that during the visit, the CM explained the unique-to-Sikkim arguments in favor of granting tribal status to the 12 left-out communities of Sikkim and detailed the historical background of why this demand needs to be addressed.

This issue formed part of the memorandum listing out the long-pending demands of the state which the CM submitted to the Home Minister.

The CM explained that before the merger with India, the three "major" ethnic communities—Bhutia, Lepcha and Nepali – enjoyed



equal rights as subjects of Sikkim. In 1978, three years after the merger the Bhutias and Lepchas were notified as Scheduled Tribes, and 25 years later, Limboos and Tamangs, part of the Nepali con-

stellation, were also included in the ST list leaving out 12 other communities which form part of the Sikkimese Nepali segment. This ended up serving unequal status even though the terms of the

merger assured equal treatment for all Sikkimese.

The memorandum mentions the historical background for this and the other demands included in the submission with reference

to the Tripartite Agreement and Article 371F of the Constitution of India, the release states.

The CM also added that the state government has been constantly pursuing these demands through various avenues, the release adds.

Apart from this demand, the memorandum also includes matters related to the state including Limboo-Tamang seat reservation in the Sikkim Legislative Assembly and the 17th Karmapa Gyen Trinley Dorje's visit to Sikkim.

In this regard, the CM pointed out that the present government at the Centre during its first term in office in 2018, had removed restrictions imposed on the Karmapa's movement within the country. "...as a representative and a devotee, he expressed his belief for a positive response regarding the long-awaited visit of His Holiness to Sikkim," the release states.

The Chief Minister also highlighted the need for a "disciplined and semi-civilian agency interface" between security agencies and the civilian population in the State's borders.

Citing the sanction of the Border Wing Home Guards (BWHG) along the Indo-Pakistan and Indo-Bangladesh borders in Punjab, Rajasthan, Gujarat, Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura and West Bengal with the assistance from Ministry of Home Affairs, the CM requested for the allotment of two battalions of BWHG in Sikkim with 100% assistance from the Ministry of Home Affairs in line with other North-eastern states.

The Chief Minister acknowledged the assistance provided by the Centre government to Sikkim in the past years and hoped for a favourable response on the aforementioned demands, the release concludes.

SU pays poetic homage to mount Tendong

GANGTOK, 08 AUG [PIB]: The Department of Lepcha, Sikkim University, organized an online poetry recitation programme today to mark Tendong Lho Rumfaat.

Vice-Chancellor Professor Avinash Khare joined the session as chief guest accompanied by Dr Kabita Lama, Dean, School of Languages and Literature, as special guest.

The session was presided over by Norbu Tshering Lepcha, Associate Professor, Department of Lepcha, Sikkim University and attended by Head of Department (in-charge) of Lepcha Rinchen Ongmu Lepcha along with all faculty members and students.

Students of the Department of Lepcha recited self-composed poems on the occasion.

Chamling reminds SKM Govt of still unmet election promises

SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 08 AUG:

Sikkim Democratic Front president, former Chief Minister Pawan Chamling, today went over the list of Sikkim Krantikari Morcha's election promises which continue to be awaited, three years since SKM was elected into office. In his weekly commentary posted on Facebook, Mr Chamling takes off from Bhairung Bhutia's now viral joke which took the SKM Government's disregard

for promises made on record as the punchline. Chief Minister PS Tamang has replaced the Rule of Law with Rule of Lies, Mr Chamling writes.

Mr Tamang's brand of politics, Mr Chamling contends, deploys exploitation of the people's desperation and gullibility as its chief tactic.

The promise of ending unemployment within 100 days, delivering Limboo-Tamang seats within ten days, ensuring the Karmapa's Sik-

kim visit, tribal status for left-out communities and announcing that there will be only one Golay in the Assembly [his son is also an MLA and the CM had announced that following his victory in the bypolls for Poklok-Kamrang, he would make his son resign], are listed out as some grand promises which have not moved forward still.

Mr Chamling also rues that when people question the government or the CM, "he silences

them with threats, victimisation and violence."

"Many joined the SKM party to prevent the transfer of their spouses and children," he claims in his FB post.

"In the end, let me warn them that their lies are working for them but the impacts of their lies on Sikkim will haunt Sikkim for centuries to come. Sikkim had borne the brunt of their lies somehow but Sikkim cannot afford to any longer," he adds.

No Covid deaths in 24 hours, and third day with more recoveries than new cases

SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 08 AUG:

It might be too early to suggest a downward trend, but for a State as devastated by the second wave as Sikkim, every hint of reassurance on the Covid front is welcome. As per the Daily Report of Covid-19 in Sikkim released by the Integrated Disease Surveillance Programme of the Health Department at 8AM this morning, there were no Covid deaths in the past 24 hours in Sikkim, and when it comes to statistics, Saturday was the third consecutive day that Sikkim saw handsomely more recoveries than new cases.

The number of active Covid cases in Sikkim has also slid below-3000 for the first time since 26 July and currently stands at

2,908. This after 296 people made full recoveries and returned to their daily lives after completing their mandated period of isolation.

Correspondingly, much fewer in comparison new cases were reported over the same 24 hours with 114 people testing positive for Covid from the screening of 921 samples yesterday giving Sikkim a daily test positivity rate of 12%.

While 65 samples returned positive in RT-PCR testing of 493 samples, 47 more cases were found in rapid antigen testing of 418 samples and two detected in TruNat testing of 10 samples.

Sikkim's tally of confirmed cases of Covid detected in the State since 28 Feb, 2020, now stands at 27,860. Meanwhile, the count of re-

covered cases is 24,319.

Of the 2,908 active cases in Sikkim, only 108 [including the 12 who were hospitalized today] are with symptoms severe enough to require hospitalization and the rest recovering under home or facility isolation. There are eight Covid patients in ICU in Sikkim.

Of the 114 new cases, 73 were registered in East District, 13 in West District and 28 in South District. There are 12 new admissions of COVID patients in hospitals in the State and 08 COVID patients were under treatment in ICU facilities of STNM hospital and Central Referral Hospital.

In the meantime, with no new Covid deaths in the state, the Covid toll holds at 355.

SSS reiterates demand for cancellation of privileges enjoyed on basis of fake COIs

ORGANIZATION CLAIMS IT POLITICAL PARTIES HAVE SHIED AWAY FROM SUPPORTING THEIR MISSION TO EXPOSE INTERLOPERS



SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 08 AUG:

Sikkim Suraksha Samiti [SSS] has once again urged the concerned authorities to cancel all documents and benefits acquired on the basis of fake Certificates of Identification. The organization reiterated that the cancellation of fake COIs was very important to save Sikkim and its people.

Addressing a press conference here this afternoon, SSS president Madan Tamang informed that as part of the or-

ganisation's continuing campaign against fake COIs, two more fake Certificates of Identification were cancelled by the administration on 27 July.

He informed that the COI of a retired Sikkim Armed Police personnel, and a person who served as an Officer on Special Duty in the earlier government were cancelled by the administration.

He also contended today that SSS has not received any support either from the ruling party or from the opposition in

its campaign against the fake COIs.

On the same, Mr Tamang stressed that it was also important for political parties to save Sikkim first and not prioritise vote-bank politics over the rights of the locals.

Responding to media queries, he mentioned that the SSS team has even faced direct and indirect threats in their campaign. He also asserted that digitization of COIs should be taken up at the earliest in the interest of the genuine people of Sikkim.

HAVE A STORY TO SHARE?
email us: news@summitimes.com

An exciting writing talent arrives, with The Eyes

TENZIN C. TASHI

Kolkata. Gangtok. Darjeeling. Ashim Basnet's 'The Eyes' straddles these three diverse urban landscapes as easily as he himself bestrides the genre leap from short stories to his first novel. A self-professed 'engineer by profession and a writer by passion', that this latest book, which he completed during the ongoing pandemic, impressed



BookREVIEW

skills as an exciting new writing talent from this side of the Himalayas.

This book is ostensibly a love story told through the voices of the two protagonists, Maya from Gangtok and Kaushik from Kolkata. Their love story unfolds like a slow but taut pirouette through their alternating narratives that are linked together by, yes, the eyes.

But 'The Eyes' is so much

more than just the love story it purports to be. It is a love story on a very intrinsic level, but it is as much a coming-of-age story as it is a campus caper and an ode to life itself. It has many subtle underlying layers that the reader has to consciously peel back to savour its quintessence in full.

The story is set against the backdrop of two campuses - an

turn to pg02

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CM calls on Union Tourism Minister, seeks release of funds for 51 stalled projects



NEW DELHI, 08 AUG [IPR]: Chief Minister Prem Singh Tamang called on Minister DoNER/ Tourism, Culture G Kishan Reddy at his official residence in New Delhi today.

During the call on, he informed the Minister regarding the current scenario of the tourism sector in the state with a large number of Sikkimese people depend-

ing on the sector directly or indirectly.

He expressed his optimism of the industry picking up pace post-COVID-19 as currently, hill stations have become a preferred destinations. He also informed that the state has maintained an excellent track record in filling up the tourism infrastructure gap at many destinations through Swadesh Dar-

shan Schemes earlier sanctioned by the Ministry and mentioned that Sikkim achieved 1st position in implementing it.

Speaking about the Swadesh Darshan Schemes, he informed that one of the priority projects of the state government under the Swadesh Darshan Scheme-III is pending with the Ministry of Tourism for the past two

years and requested for his intervention on this matter.

He also requested for the release of the balance funds for Product/ Infrastructure Development of Destination and Circuits (PIDDC) schemes which was one of the major tourism infrastructures development schemes of the Ministry of Tourism prior to the launch of Swadesh Dar-

shan Schemes 2014-15. The discontinuation of these projects has led to the stoppage of 51 projects that were sanctioned and are lying at different stages of progress.

As the state is at the threshold of reopening of the tourism sector in the state adhering to the SOPs, he stated that the delay would not only impede the pace and progress in the tourism development programme but will also have a long term impact on the state.

Considering the situation the Chief Minister requested for the intervention and consideration of the Minister for the financial assistance for the Swadesh Darshan Scheme-III and PIDDC scheme in the best interest to strengthen the tourism avenues and opportunities.

The Chief Minister was accompanied by Ministers BS Pant, Dr MK Sharma, MP (Lok Sabha) Indra Hang Subba, Secretary to CM, Secretary (Tourism) and Principal Chief Engineer (Tourism).

CM calls on Minister for Minority Affairs



NEW DELHI, 08 AUG [IPR]: Chief Minister Prem Singh Tamang called on Minister of Minority Affairs, G Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi, at his official residence in New Delhi today.

During the visit, they held discussions on two priority sectors of the state government, namely Health and Education.

The CM stated that the main impetus of the state government has been to establish a fully functional, community-owned, decentralised health delivery system with inter-sectoral convergence at all levels. He also informed that special attention is being given to the people belonging to the BPL category and tribal areas of Sikkim.

He stated that the

state government is continuously working to ensure simultaneous actions on a wide range of determinants of health like water, sanitation, education, nutrition, social and gender equality and institutional integration within the health sector.

The state government is leaving no stone unturned to ensure access to adequate health care and education for every citizen with special attention to the vulnerable, disadvantaged and underserved sections of the society.

Similarly in the education sector, the Chief Minister stated that the focus is on providing quality education in the state. He elaborated that the state government has accorded the highest

priority to the education sector and provided an outlay of almost 20% of the state's budget and submitted a proposal to meet up the committed standard in the education sector.

Further, he stated that the state government in order to realise its goals requires the assistance of the Central government and requested the Minister to kindly consider the projects which would enable the Sikkim government to achieve new heights.

The Chief Minister was accompanied by Ministers BS Pant, Dr MK Sharma, MP (Lok Sabha) Indra Hang Subba, Secretary (Social Justice & Welfare Department), Secretary to CM and other officials.

Singshore Bridge reduced to pedestrians-only status

RUDRA KAUSHIK

GYALSHING, 08 AUG:

The famed Singshore Bridge connecting Uttarey to Gyalshing in West Sikkim is currently biding its time as a pedestrians-only structure. Damage to the cables of this suspension bridge [the highest in Sikkim and promoted as the second-highest in Asia] by a falling tree has rendered it unsafe for vehicular traffic. Since April, only pedestrians are allowed on it and traffic has since been diverted to the old road which is not a very convenient option.

Sikkim Police nabs suspected "drug" supplier from Siliguri

SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 08 AUG:

A Sikkim Police team from the Sadar Thana here arrested a suspected drug peddler from Siliguri yesterday in connection with a case registered here.

The Sadar Police Station team led by SI Naresh Chhetri included Head Constable Wangyal Bhutia, Lance Naik Karma Thinley Bhutia and Constable Kamal Kumar Sharma and effected the arrested of one Munna Sahani, alias Sanjay Terwal, from Siliguri on Saturday.

It is informed that during the course of investigation it was found that the prime accused in this particular case, Durga Gupta, alias Golu of Upper MG Marg, had contacted Munna Sahani on multiple occasions and "suspicious" monetary transactions had taken place between them.

The police are also alleging that this Munna Sahani dispatched a huge consignment of contraband substances which was intercepted on 26 July, 2021.

Convention on Digital Best Practices and North East Summit to empower persons with intellectual and developmental disabilities

NEW DELHI, 08 AUG [PIB]: The National Trust for the Welfare of Persons with Autism, Cerebral Palsy, Mental Retardation and Multiple Disabilities, Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities, Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment organized a National Convention on Digital Best Practices and North East Summit at Dr. Ambedkar International Center, New Delhi.

In the first of its kind, the summit was organized for the Seven States in North East Region of the Country.

Celebrating the 75th year of Independence of the country (Azaadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav), the aim of the summit was to empower persons with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities on Digital Technology and increase the footfall of the schemes and activities of the National Trust in the region.

The Conventions was graced by Dr. Virendra Kumar, Minister Social Justice and Empowerment as Chief Guest, Ministers of States Pratima Bhoumik and A. Narayanaswamy as Guest of Honour. Anjali Bhawra, Secretary, DEPwD and Chairperson, National Trust, Nikunja Kishore Sundaray, JS&CEO, National Trust and Kishore Baburao Surwade, DDG, DEPwD were also present in the Convention which was attended by more than 100 persons representing organizations, professionals and Divyangjan from the Region.

Union Minister Dr. Virendra Kumar, in a very humble manner, appreciated the Convention. He told the Department to spread this con-

vention to the entire country with more participation of Divyangjan as he truly believed that nothing could be discussed without the presence of the real stakeholders i.e. Divyangjan. He appealed all the public representatives to spread this message in the country. He appreciated the zeal and enthusiasm of Dr. Sapam Jasowanta Singh, a person with Visual Impairment and Board Member, National Trust in putting forth the need of Education for Divyangjan. He appreciated the Sign Language Interpreter work and said that with the help of this interpreter the message of this convention is reaching to all Divyangjan across the country.

In her address, Minister of State, Pratima Bhoumik highlighted the rich cultural and religious heritage of the North East and the vast diversity of Tribal population. She further said, we are fortunate to serve these people and we should work towards spreading awareness so that Divyangjan can be given better services. She emphasized all NGOs to come forward and enroll Divyangjan in Niramaya Health Insurance Scheme, which is free of cost for the North East Region.

A Narayanaswamy, Minister of State stated that the various schemes of the National Trust meant for all age groups need to be expanded to the entire country. More awareness generation is the need of the hour to reach the last Divyangjan to be served.

The representative of the Seven North Eastern States highlighted

that convergence of the schemes of the Government is extensively needed. The Anganwadis of Ministry of Women and Child Development need to be collaborated with the Disha Early Intervention Centers of the National trust to reach the rural population of the North East. They pledged to take forward the mission with more zeal.

The inaugural session was followed by the technical session. The highlight of the summit was the presentation by Prof. (Dr.) Madhusudan Rao, IIT Delhi who shared the Research and Innovation for Product Development for Divyangjan. Prof. Rao is a well-known name in development of assistive technologies for empowerment of visually challenged. He is a national award winning scientist working on improving accessibility for Divyangjan. Besides, Prof. Ravi Poovaiah and Dr Ajanta Sen from IIT Mumbai presented the Jellow-an AAC Communicator for Children with Speech Disability. Other panelists included Sh. Nipun Malhotra, co-founder and CEO of the Nipman Foundation that works in the area of health and advocacy for Persons with Disabilities, Dr. Jinamoni Saikia, Principal Scientist, Assam Agricultural University who shared the status of development of Children with Disabilities in the North East region and Dr Sapam Jasowanta Singh, Board Member National Trust who shared overall status of Divyangjan in North Eastern States.

An exciting writing...

engineering college and a medical college - in Kolkata, but it is the University of Life that holds centerstage. Maya is a quiet, pragmatic and simple girl from Gangtok who makes the inevitable journey to the educational Mecca of Kolkata to become a doctor. Kaushik from Ballygunge is touted to be a 'wastrel of a boy with a rich daddy' but in hindsight, this stereotype does him injustice. Kaushik is the flag bearer of so many doomed young adults in India who have to toe the line and become the engineers they do not want to be only because their fathers demand it and their obtuse decree is law. Somewhere on Kolkata's iconic Park Street, the two literally bump into each other, and they fall - on each other. Their eyes lock, and they fall - for each other.

Ashim's prose has a quiet assurance and almost lyrical grace as he takes the reader fluidly through the separate journeys of Maya and Kaushik as they embrace the challenges of life on their respective campuses while never quite losing sight of each other in their minds. He deftly weaves in elements of his own life experiences while growing up in and studying in Gangtok, Darjeeling and Kolkata and captures the souls of these places with an innate intimacy that can only come from easy familiarity. He

peoples his pages with some pretty entertaining other characters headlining the phalanx of which is the inimical, irreverent and irrepresible one and only Dubu - Dubu for Dubious - Gurung. Dubu is the roomie and best friend who introduces Kaushik to the wonders of Nirvana in a puff as well as the three P's - Proxy, Past and Parcha- needed to survive engineering college. Bella from Bolpur is Maya's roommate and best friend, a large girl with a heart to match and who speaks less English but eats more food. Both sets of parents- Damber and Manu, Maya's Nepalese parents, and Debasis and Murmer, Kaushik's Bengali parents- are foils for each other and reflect the quirks of their cultures. There is the most incongruously named aunt Shanti who is the antithesis of her name and always creates a ruckus whenever she makes an entry. Priyanka, Dubu's sister, is cool, confident and passionately clear about what and who she wants. Joydeep, Kaushik's brother, chooses to conform and mould himself and his life to please their father but encourages his younger brother to pursue his dream. And then there is the intrepid and generous hunter, Apo.

There are other minor characters all fleshed out with their own quirks, and the unnamed but

ubiquitous pavement dwellers and rickshaw pullers of Kolkata along with the gaily caparisoned yaks at Tsomgo add their own skeins to the tapestry of the engaging narrative.

There is so much wry humour in the book, from the source of the curiously abundant chicken in the messy rooms of the engineering college to the Kundali-reading Pandit who has a massive, sanctimonious struggle with overactive salivary glands reacting to forbidden food. But the piece de resistance of the book remains the little nuggets of wisdom and bits of philosophy that Ashim regularly slips into his story into quiet sangfroid. Sample some: 'A person was like a blank canvas when born. Gradually, family, friends, society, culture, splash their colours on our canvas.'

'We are all the same underneath, just human.' 'Seeing your parents happy with each other is a gift. It makes you feel safe and secure.'

'Yeah...the mountains always make you feel small and insignificant. I guess that is why people here are more humble.'

Their first meeting at Park Street was calamitous at best; Maya and Kaushik meet once again at 12,000 feet. The two, who have never quite forgotten each other, find themselves drawn towards each other like dazed automa-

tons on a snow-covered stage the Universe has conspired to put together against the meditative backdrop of the sacred Tsomgo lake. How can you fall in love with a person in only one-or two- chance encounters where you learn nothing more than each other's names but experience a pull as undeniable as gravity itself?

How does one attempt to review a book and not give away its ending? Especially a story by Ashim who has arguably established his credentials as a writer with shades of a brilliance evocative of O'Henry in his endings? This is a love story, but this is not your typical love story. It delves into the concept of soul love vs karmic partners. Your soulmate is someone you have known from several lifetimes over and instantly feel a connection with- you feel a love that is both so safe and familiar and yet so chaotic because it is something so compelling you have never felt before. But not all soulmates are your karmic partners, people you love and settle with, raise children with, and argue with. Are Maya and Kaushik soulmates or karmic partners or soulmates and karmic partners? I sign off here, sphinx-like.

'The Eyes' is available online at Amazon and will soon be here at Gangtok's very own Rachna Bookshop.



Manav Utthan Sewa Samiti undertakes plantation drive in Rangpo

RANGPO, 08 AUG: Manav Utthan Sewa Samiti carried out a plantation drive and environmental awareness campaign at Shri Suyash Satsanga Dham here at Rangpo. Various species of trees, fruit-bearing plants, and herbs were planted

as part of the drive. Saplings of Aloe Vera and Nimpatti were also planted in the backyard of Rangpo Primary Health Center which has been earmarked as a herbal garden. [from SANJAY AGARWAL]

5 suspects arrested in Thanjhora Tea Garden robbery case

SMRITA KHAWAS

DARJEELING, 08 AUG:

Five of the ten suspects in the dacoity of Rs 26 lakh at Thanjhora Tea Garden have been nabbed and the search is on for the remaining five and the stolen cash, SP-Darjeeling, Dr Santosh Nimbalkar informed a press conference today.

The ten are accused of having robbed the tea garden's manager on 22 July while he was returning from the bank with the wages of the tea garden workers.

The case was registered at Kharibari Police Station and investigation carried out under the supervision of the DySP Rural and Additional SP Kurseong.

Some of the stolen cash has also been recovered from the five, the police has claimed.

5 arrested Bangladeshis handed over to Bangladesh Guards as goodwill gesture

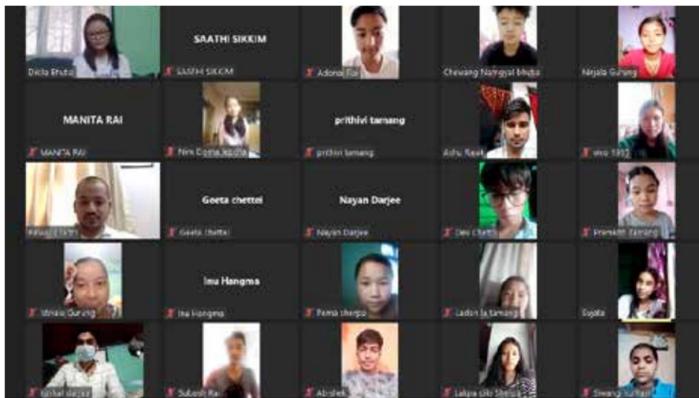
Dhubri, 08 Aug [PTI]: Five of the 10 Bangladeshi nationals, who were apprehended when they were attempting to illegally enter India through Coochbehar district of West Bengal, have been handed over to Border Guard Bangladesh as a goodwill gesture, the BSF officials said on Sunday.

The five Bangladeshis were handed over to the BGB after proper verification on Saturday evening, they said.

The 10 Bangladeshi nationals, including five children, four women and a man, were arrested by the BSF's 192nd Battalion under the Guwahati Frontier near Sabri border outpost in the district on Saturday.

The remaining five Bangladeshi nationals were handed over to the local police at Coochbehar for further legal action, the BSF officials added.

SAATHI organises online workshop to help students become entrepreneurs



SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 08 AUG: SAATHI [Sikkim Against Addiction Towards Healthy India] organised an online workshop today themed, "How to become an Entrepreneur (Basics)," for school and college students and also opened it

for youth who have completed their studies. A SAATHI press release explains that the objective was to engage students and help them achieve their dreams. Rewaj Chettri of North East Taxi addressed the workshop as resource person and shared his experience of becoming an entrepreneur. He encouraged students to start small and grow from there to achieve their dreams. 54 students attended the workshop, it is informed.

Art of Living holds special prayers for Sikkim



SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 08 AUG: A Sikkim-specific prayer - Dhanwantari Homa - was organized by the Art of Living Sikkim Chapter today through virtual mode, a press release informs.

The ritual was held to pray for the good health and well being of the people of Sikkim especially to help it deal with the Covid pandemic. Dhanwantari is the Hindu God of Medicine and the Dhanwantari Mantra is chanted for health and healing.

BUILDING SOLIDARITY FOR A REUSE REVOLUTION IN THE MOUNTAINS

Eradicating Single Use Plastics in the IHR

AUGUST 7
2.30 PM

ON THE AGENDA

- Making Single Use Plastic Bans Possible - Lessons from Kerala for the Mountain States
- Dr. Vasuki, Former Director, Suchitwa Mission, Kerala
- Waste and Brand Audits - Informing waste management strategies
- Mr. Anoop Nautiyal, SDC Foundation
- EPR in the mountains: Challenges and Experiences
Mr. Arun Grover, Waste Warriors

● The Himalayan Cleanup Findings

● Sharing from the mountain states and key action points

● Launch of the Plastic Freedom Challenge

JOIN IN <https://bit.ly/3JrzrCv>
Meeting ID: 840 4340 0630
Passcode: 362867

ITBP inducts its first women officers in combat

MUSSOORIE, AUG 8 (PTI): The India-China LAC guarding the Indo-Tibetan Border Police force on Sunday commissioned its first two women officers in combat after they completed their training here. A total of 53 officers passed out from the ITBP officers' training academy located in Mussoorie after a passing out parade was held, with Uttarakhand Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami officiating as the chief guest.

A first-ever 'History of ITBP' book with

680-pages containing many unknown facts and photographs of the border guarding force was also released by Dhami along with ITBP director general S S Deswal.

Dhami and Deswal put the ranks of Assistant Commandant, the entry-level officer rank in the paramilitary, on the shoulders of the two women officers--Prakriti and Diksha--after the passing out parade and attestation ceremony where they took oath to serve the country. While

Prakriti's father has retired from the Indian Air Force (IAF), Deeksha's father Kamlesh Kumar is an Inspector in the ITBP.

Kumar, in his Khaki uniform, saluted his daughter after the parade and got a crisp salute in return following which they hugged each other. "My father is my role model. He never considered me lesser than anyone," Deeksha said.

Prakriti, who holds a bachelors degree in electrical engineering, said the life in the force is "very

tough but it is also challenging and exciting". The ITBP started recruiting women combat officers in its cadre from 2016 through an all-India examination conducted by the Union Public Service Commission (UPSC).

Before this, it only had combat women in the constabulary ranks.

Out of the total 53 officers, 42 officers are in the general duty combat cadre, while 11 are in the engineering cadre of the about 90,000 personnel strong mountain warfare trained force.

GOVERNMENT OF SIKKIM RURAL DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

Tashiling, Gangtok- 737103, Sikkim.

E-Procurement Notice

Tender Reference No:- SKPMGSY(LSB)/BATCH1Retender(2).

Memo No: 94/RDD/PMGSY

Dated:05/08/2021

RE-TENDER

The Principal Chief Engineer, RDD on behalf of Governor of Sikkim invites percentages rates bids through e-procurement for "Construction of Long Span Steel (Composite & Bailey) Bridges in the State of Sikkim under Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana". The bid should be submitted online in web site www.pmgstendersskm.gov.in for construction of respective work by contractors of appropriate class with the state government vide notification No. 515/R&B/PWD/Secy Dated 12/06/2018 as detailed in the above website.

Procurement Officer	Bid Identification No.	Availability of tender online for bidding		Last date of time for seeking tender clarification	Date & Time of Opening of tender
		From	To		
Pr. Chief Engineer, RDD	SKPMGSY(LSB)/BATCH1Retender(2) 2021_CESDA_112374 2021_CESDA_112344_1	06/08/2021 from 5.00 PM	16/08/2021 upto 10.00 AM	12/08/2021 upto 1.00 PM	16/08/2021 from 10.30 AM onwards.

The bank receipt in original form from State Bank of Sikkim as tender fee deposited to the head 0515-Other Rural Development Programme 800-Other receipts is to be submitted to the Finance Controller SRRDA Sikkim on 13/08/2021 from 12.00 to 3.00 PM. Those bids even if submitted online but whose hard copy is not received by Finance Controller during the time given, will not be considered for bidding.

Sd/
Chief Engineer
Rural Development Department
Government of Sikkim.

PKGI/RT2

Sl.No.	Dis-trict	Block	Constitu-ency	Pkg No.	Road Name	LSB Name	Tender Value in Lakhs	Contr Eligibility Class	EMD in Lakhs	Tender Form cost in Rs.
BAILEY BRIDGE										
1	East	Gangtok	Namcheybong		L047-Nimtar to Mangthang	20mtr Span Bailey Bridge over Nimtar Mangthang	168.63			
2	East	Gangtok	Khamdong Singtam		L069-Dochung to Beng	30 mtr span Bailey Bridge over Ghattey	253.48			
3	East	Rongli	Chujachen		L028-Chunbati bimbirey to Dokchin Talkhara	15 mtr span Bailey Bridge over Sisney Jhora	106.13			
4	North	Mangan	Lachen Mangan		L037-Mangan Sankalan to Kazor	20 mtr span Bailey Bridge over Paki-Kyong- II	168.91			
5	North	Mangan	Lachen Mangan		L037-Mangan Sankalan to Kazor	20 mtr span Bailey Bridge over PakiKyong- Iii	169.16			
6	North	Mangan	Lachen Mangan		L069-DAC App Rd to ringhim Gumpa	15 mtr span Bailey Bridge over Rimit Khola	129.90			
7	South	Namchi	Poklok Kamrang	PKG I/ RT2	Sikip- Pakzer	15 mtr span Bailey Bridge over Mangda Jhora	129.05	1-AA	60.07	2,00,000.00
8	South	Namchi	Poklok Kamrang		Sikip- Pakzer	15 mtr span Bailey Bridge over Salam Jhora	168.32			
9	West Sikkim	Gyalshing	Yangthang		L063 Kabirhang to Rato Matey School	20 mtr span Bailey Bridge over Andheri Khola	169.12			
10	West Sikkim	Gyalshing	Yangthang		L063 Kabirhang to Rato Matey School	30 mtr span Bailey Bridge over Dantey Bari Khola	221.13			
11	West Sikkim	Soreng	Rinchengpong		L-039 Mangabaria to Aroobotay	20 mtr span Bailey Bridge over Gumpa Khola	169.27			
COMPOSITE BRIDGE										
12	North Sikkim	Mangan	Dzongu		L050-DSM To Katamantyam	30 mtr span Steel Bridge over MuoThung Khola	274.62			
13	West Sikkim	Gyalshing	Maneybong Dentam		L073-Dentam Peling SPWD Road to legship via Majgaon Martam	30 mtr span steel bridge over Hee Khola	275.04			
							2,402.76			

R.O. No. 137/IPR/Pub/Classi./21-22
Date: 6.8.2021

Sd/
Chief Engineer
Rural Development Department
Government of Sikkim.

Keeping Children Safe

The rash of PCSO Act cases should have attracted wider social engagement

Readers would have noticed the unnerving frequency with which reports have been arriving about sexual offences being perpetrated on minors.

That said, it also needs to be recognized that it is not as if sexual predators who prey on the young have suddenly been unleashed on Sikkim. It is more likely that now that there is a specific law – Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act – to charge such offenders with, the statistic is standing out more prominently now. What have also helped expose such violations are the awareness and sensitization sessions held at the school level where children are informed about the laws in place to help them and what kind of behavior is now considered a criminal offence. These sessions are necessary because in most instances, the victims don't even understand that they are being abused or that there is an escape available for them. Speak to the cops who address such sensitization programmes and most of them will confirm that reporting of such crimes invariably goes up once the children learn that there is protection available to them from sexual offences.

It is also possible that more of such cases are getting reported to the police than earlier, when they would either not be noticed at all or would be ignored or, worse still, settled. Readers would have also noticed that in several instances, it has been the teachers who have noticed the crime, rescued the child and reported the offence, and the society needs to collectively thank such teachers for looking out so earnestly for the young and for getting involved in their care beyond the confines of the classrooms. One needs to look at options of strengthening the hands of teachers more in handling such episodes and offering them more awareness sessions and training on how to handle such traumatic situations. It is also necessary now to establish a more robust counselor role/ post in schools across the state so that stronger defenses by way of proper awareness and counseling are provided to the young. With the right training, inspiration and support, these counselors can also become the first responders to best care for victims and their families.

Yes, Sikkim has child protection officers now, but a teacher at the school, because s/he has been with the children and their families for longer, enjoys more trust which is essential in situations like these.

It is also important for all those responsible for the care and protection of children to realize that most often – in up to 90% of the cases – sexual predators are people known to the kids; very often they are family members or people who have weaseled themselves close to the family to a level that others do not think twice before leaving children unattended around them. Uneasy and disturbing though it may be, accept that all children, including yours, are at risk primarily because society has preferred to look the other way when victims have been minors and the perpetrators someone with influence (within the family or in the society at large). This needs to change, and can happen only if a child's safety is put first – above everything else.

One should not be required to spell it out, but given that too many prefer to ignore this responsibility, here we underline it again – the safety and self-esteem of a child are more important than anyone's embarrassment, inconvenience, or offense. Every time a child molester is allowed to get away without a police case, those who "arranged" the compromise become complicit to the molestation or worse of the next victim. That is how this crime and culpability need to be projected for children to be kept safer. There is a lot more that we can do as families and a society to look out better for our children, but that can be easily Googled. What is important is for everyone to realize that too many children are falling in harms' way for this to be left as a law & order situation. Societal involvement needs to be brought in, wider awareness generated and with that, stronger protections erected to keep the children safe.

WRITE US:

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

The War in Tigray: The Makings of a Man-Made Famine, and What Can Be Done

DANIEL GEBREGIORGIS
theconversation.com

"There's famine now in Tigray." That 10 June 2021 declaration by the UN's most senior humanitarian official was the clearest indication yet that embattled Tigray faced a severe food emergency. Close to five million Tigrayans were subsequently placed under watch for what constitutes emergency level conditions.

The affected population now falls under emergency (phase four) and famine (phase five) of the Famine Early Warning System Network classification. A famine is declared when households have an extreme lack of food even after they've used all available coping strategies. It's when starvation, death, destitution, and extremely critical acute malnutrition levels are evident.

The purposes of this article are threefold. First, I provide a brief insight into the food security situation in Tigray. For this I rely on recent reports from the World Peace Foundation and the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. Given that the Ethiopian government has imposed complete communication blackout in Tigray, these reports serve as benchmarks for evaluating the true magnitude of the humanitarian crisis.

Second, I reflect on gains made on mostly public led land rehabilitation and restoration efforts to place the current scale of destruction into perspective. And address the long-term consequences of the looming famine on land use and ecosystems in Tigray.

Lastly, I look at recommendations from the World Peace Foundation to help avert the impending humanitarian crisis.

MAN-MADE FAMINES

Research into the global history of famines highlights dual causality. Famines occur as a consequence of natural disasters, such as droughts. They can also be man-made, such as through armed conflict.

Man-made famine accounts for nearly all documented cases of famine since the late 1960s. Research shows famines triggered by natural disasters have seen a sharp decline in recent times. The few exceptions in which natural and man-made causes were both to blame include the famine that devastated Tigray and environs during the early 1980s.

More often than not, man-made famines involve human agents wreaking havoc on the processes of food production. This includes intentional destruction of crops and seeds, agricultural equipment and supplies, such as fertilisers. Human agency can also induce market collapse and restrict exchange of produce between farmers and consumers. How-

ever, such acts are not isolated but usually occur within the context of a deeper strategy of the political-military organs to use starvation as a means of war. This has been the case in Tigray.

The population of Tigray, nearly 80% of which depends on subsistence farming, is intentionally being made to starve for the second time in 40 years as a means to win a war.

By early August it was estimated that 4.5 million people in Tigray were in need of emergency food aid. Multiple pieces of evidence suggest that Ethiopian and Eritrean soldiers and forces from the neighbouring Amhara region have engaged in the collective destruction of farming equipment and assets. They have also stolen crops and livestock, and engaged in activities to stop farmers from harvesting or ploughing farm lands.



These actions will have long lasting consequences.

LAND REHABILITATION AND RESTORATION

Archaeological records show intensive agricultural activities in the Tigray region since at least 3,000 years ago. Centuries of continuous exploitation of land to meet food production needs, coupled with a clear drying trend in the region over the past 2,500 years, are thought to have led to large-scale land degradation in Tigray.

Earlier estimates put the size of degraded land in Tigray at 50%. Land degradation refers to the consistent loss of productive capacity of the soils. In Tigray, land degradation along with frequently failing rains has led to recurrent food insecurity. In many cases this has led to famine or near-famine conditions.

During the last three decades, following the end of the civil war of the 1970s and 1980s, largely public-led land restoration programmes were given due policy attention and implemented at a scale to tackle land degradation. These were supported by well-planned and well-executed safety net programmes.

Research shows that these interventions have met a great deal of success in restoring large

swaths of rural land in Tigray. Soil fertility has been significantly improved, and by extension food production capacity.

But there is one important caveat. The kinds of interventions put into place in Tigray should be continuous and sustained. They also require farming activities to be carefully planned ahead of time to make use of the fluctuating rainy season, to allow land preparation just before the start of the rainy season, and sowing at the beginning of the rainy season.

Interruption of these activities – as has happened this year due to the war – will have got in the way of farmers producing food.

And over the long term, interruption of the public-led land rehabilitation activities will lead to further loss of the productive capacity of the region.

The details of the destruction on the environmental front are still murky. But there are some indications that the scale of destruction may pose a threat to rural livelihoods long after the end of the war.

For example, interruption of farming activities on the land that was tilled regularly is certain to reduce water and nutrient mobility and conservation capacity of the soil. If this is allowed to continue it would turn fertile ground into "abandoned land". Agricultural land abandonment is becoming a common problem globally, with serious implications for the environment including biodiversity loss and the reduction of landscape diversity.

AVERTING A HUMANITARIAN CRISIS

The World Peace Foundation has issued a series of recommendations to avert the looming famine in Tigray. These include a cessation of hostilities, unimpeded humanitarian access and freedom of movement, and freedom of communication.

But major emphasis is placed on ending active hostilities and targeting activities critical for the survival of the civilian population.

The government of Ethiopia is, therefore, obliged to provide humanitarian assistance. It should facilitate access to areas under the control of the Tigray government in accordance with international humanitarian law. This obligation also extends to the government of Eritrea, which is also a major player in the war on Tigray.

First and foremost, averting the looming famine requires a ceasefire arrangement and unconditional withdrawal of Eritrean and Amhara forces from Tigray.

And to avoid a full recurrence of one of the worst humanitarian crises of recent times at the very least an all-inclusive national dialogue with all relevant political actors needs to be initiated without further delay.

[the writer is Climate scientist, Georgia State University]

Why Andrew Cuomo's job is more vulnerable to scandal than Donald Trump's was

MONIKA L. MCDERMOTT
theconversation.com

Riding high in politics frequently means you simply have further to fall – just ask sitting New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo.

Cuomo went from being talked about as a potential presidential candidate in the spring of 2020 – thanks in large part to his handling of the COVID-19 pandemic in New York state – to media ridicule and possible state senate impeachment now, due to allegations of repeated sexual harassment occurring over several years.

According to the Quinnipiac University Poll, Cuomo's job approval rating among registered voters in New York fell 44 percentage points between May 2020 and August 2021 – to just 28% in a newly released poll, his lowest recorded rating since taking office in 2011.

New York Attorney General Letitia James issued a report on August 3, 2021 finding that Cuomo's behavior runs afoul of state and federal definitions of sexual harassment. That likely bodes further erosion of his support and may provide the final blow.

Despite the loss of public approval, the pillorying by the press, and abandonment by most of his political allies, Cuomo is behaving as though he can hold onto his office, rejecting the charges and excusing his behavior by claiming he's just a warm kind of guy. He seems to be betting that he is personally stronger than this scandal, a ploy he may have learned from former President Donald Trump.

The nation watched in awe as Trump survived scandal after scandal, including those of a sexual nature, throughout his presidency and yet remained in office, seemingly untouchable.

With roughly 17 months left in office, the question is: Can Andrew Cuomo do the same?

TROUBLE AT HOME

Cuomo has been, and still is, following the over-arching Trump playbook for dealing with scandal: if you simply deny having done anything wrong, eventually it will blow over.

As a scholar of public opinion and polling, I believe that Cuomo faces three big obstacles, however, that Trump did not face:

1. He is not Donald Trump, who had a cult of personality behind him that was virtually unshakable;
2. The real force of the #MeToo movement – the wave of allegations regarding sexual harassment and other forms of misconduct that brought down some powerful figures in fields like entertainment, news and politics – only began in late 2017, after much of Trump's, but before most of Cuomo's, dirty laundry had aired; and
3. Cuomo is a Democratic officeholder, in a Democratic state, and as such is held to a higher standard by his constituency than Trump was when it comes to sexual harassment.

In other words, Cuomo is in a more vulnerable position, he is facing a public much more attuned to women's harassment claims, and, most importantly, his constituency is naturally predisposed to judge him harshly on this issue.

FALLOUT ON BOTH SIDES

Being a Democrat, and therefore relying on Democrats as a base for support, is the most difficult obstacle for Cuomo to overcome.

According to a national December 2019 CBS News Poll, 89% of Democrats say sexual harassment and misconduct is a serious problem, including 49% who say the problem is very serious.

Compare this to the lower 64% of Republicans who say it is serious, including only 17% who view the problem as very serious (32 percentage points lower than Democrats).

This means that Cuomo's problems are not just typical partisan problems. He is facing fallout not just from the opposing party, but on both sides of the aisle. And for this particular behavior he is especially facing it on his own side.

This special feature of his Democratic constituency accounts for the dilemma Cuomo is currently facing trying to hold onto office amid public and political outcry over his actions.

Cuomo has never been an angel in the eyes of New Yorkers. In April 2020, Politico ran the follow-

ing headline for a story about Cuomo's fame during the pandemic: "I Just Hope This Thing Ends Soon So I Can Go Back to Hating Andrew Cuomo Again."

But, Democrats are not forgiving him for the sexual harassment scandal, especially after years of learning how pervasive and destructive that kind of behavior is. According to a Marist Poll conducted on the evening following Letitia James' report release, a 52% majority of registered New York Democrats say Cuomo should resign from office. Only 41% of New York Democrats think he should serve out his term. Even non-white New York voters, a key Democratic constituency, favor Cuomo resigning by a six-percentage-point margin. While sometimes initial reactions can be tempered by time, if this drags out, which it appears likely to do, Cuomo is unlikely to recover his base.

WISHFUL THINKING vs. REALITY

How does Cuomo think he can soldier on in the face of losing his base of support? After all, it appears if he does not resign, the state assembly and Senate, along with the members of New York's highest court, the Court of Appeals, who preside with the Senate as a High Court of Impeachment, will take matters into their own hands and impeach and convict him, thereby removing him from office.

With the Republican U.S. Senate, this was never a real threat for Trump – Republican constituents never lost their faith in Trump. But if Cuomo is counting on the New York state legislature not to impeach and convict, he is not reading the poll numbers.

Having lost his public constituency, Cuomo has also lost support in the legislature. It is a law of politics that few sitting members would be willing to buck their own home constituents to defend a publicly unpopular executive.

Cuomo may, as many think Trump did, believe in his own mind that his behavior did not cross lines of unethical or illegal conduct, but the majority of New York voters and his former political allies now disagree with that.

[the writer is Professor of Political Science, Fordham University]

Trucks, escorted by police, move into Mizoram from Assam border

GUWAHATI, 08 AUG [NDTV]: The trucks carrying essential supplies to Mizoram, stranded in Assam after the July 26 border gunfight between the two states, finally got a move on late Saturday night after appeals to the locals by Assam ministers and with police escorting the vehicles.

Two Assam ministers - Ashok Singhal and Parimal Suklabaidya - had rushed to Lailapur, which lies along the interstate border in Assam's Cachar district, and assured the local people that a fair investigation into July 26 border incident, when six Assam police personnel were killed in an unprecedented gunfight with Mizoram police, will take place.

"We reached by 5:30 pm here. There were thousands of people... we spoke to the locals. We conveyed to the local people that the Chief Minister desires that we establish peace. We



also spoke over phone to Mizoram Home Minister.

"We once again assured people that a proper investigation into July 26 incident will take place and justice will be delivered. The Mizoram government has also assured about a fair investigation on their part. With this we have been able to open the truck move-

ment though with police escort," said Ashok Singhal, guardian minister of Cachar district.

The trucks were unable to move even after Assam withdrew its travel advisory, asking people not to travel to Mizoram, said Dr R Lalthangliana, Health Minister, Mizoram.

Earlier, Assam Chief

Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma also made an appeal to allow the movement of goods.

On Friday night, four trucks - carrying eggs - were allegedly vandalised at Bhaga Bazar in Cachar district of Assam.

Some vehicles that attempted to move before the deadlock was resolved were vandalised

by a group of locals at Lailapur.

On Thursday, both the states had agreed to find a "lasting solution" to the decades-old boundary dispute and take measures, including resumption of interstate vehicular movement, to de-escalate tension between the two sides.

Drug dealer killed in police encounter in Assam

GUWAHATI, AUG 8 (PTI): A suspected drug dealer was killed and a police officer injured in an encounter in Assam's Nagaon district early on Sunday, a senior officer said.

With the fresh death, at least 16 accused people have been killed in police encounters in Assam since the second BJP government under Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma assumed charge on May 10.

Acting on a tip-off, personnel of Khatowal police station led by officer-in-charge Alok Datta Gupta undertook a search operation at a house in Geruamukh area around 1 am.

"As soon as the team reached the spot, the drug dealer attacked the OC with a 'khukuri' (machete) targeting his neck. Datta Gupta sustained grievous injuries, particularly on his hands, while trying to save himself," Superintendent of Police Anand Kumar Mishra told PTI.

"The gang members, who were packing drugs into small sachets, also attacked other policemen," the SP said, adding that a contractual driver was also injured.

Datta Gupta had to open fire in self-defence but it is not yet clear whether the drug dealers



had also used firearms in their attack, he said.

The drug dealer, the OC and the driver were admitted to Nagaon Civil Hospital, where the doctors declared the accused brought dead, while the remaining gang members managed to escape, the officer said.

The OC and the driver are being treated at the hospital, he said.

Praising Datta Gupta for his bravery, the SP said, "The OC has just around one-and-a-half years of service left but the moment he received the information about the drug dealers, he went ahead with the raid with just four constables with him. The officer has impressed everyone with his sincerity towards duty."

With the latest encounter, a total of 16 suspects have been killed and 31 injured while trying to flee from or evade police custody in Assam in the last three months.

The unabated police encounters have led the opposition and a section of the civil society to accuse the police under the second BJP government in the state of indulging in "open killings".

The chief minister had earlier said that the police have been given "full operational liberty" under the ambit of the law to fight criminals.

The Assam Human Rights Commission (AHRC) has taken suo moto cognisance of the encounters and asked the state government on July 7 to institute an inquiry into the circumstances that led to the casualties in police encounters in the last two months.

Earlier, a New Delhi-based lawyer from Assam, Arif Jwadder, had filed a complaint with the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) against the Assam Police for the series of encounters that have taken place under Sarma's rule.

Andaman & Nicobar reports 3 new COVID-19 cases

PORT BLAIR, AUG 8 (PTI): Three new COVID-19 cases in the last 24-hours pushed the tally in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands to 7,544, a health official said on Sunday.

The union territory now has only six active COVID-19 cases and all six patients are in the South Andaman district. The other two districts - North and Middle Andaman and Nicobar - are now COVID-19 free, the official said.

The COVID-19 death toll in the archipelago remained at 129 as no fresh fatality due to the disease was reported in the last

24 hours. One more person recuperated from the disease, taking the total number of recoveries to 7,409, he said.

The union territory administration has so far tested a total of 4,50,208 samples for COVID-19 and the cumulative test positivity rate is 1.69 per cent.

A total of 3,02,731 beneficiaries have been inoculated in the union territory so far, of which 2,07,268 people have received the first dose of COVID-19 vaccine and 95,463 have received both doses of the vaccine, he said.

Arunachal Pradesh reports 248 new COVID-19 cases, 3 more deaths

ITANAGAR, AUG 8 (PTI): Arunachal Pradesh's COVID-19 tally rose to 49,916 as 248 more people tested positive for the virus, while three new fatalities pushed the death toll to 240, a senior health department official said here on Sunday.

The three new fatalities were reported from Capital Complex Region, Lower Subansiri and Lohit district, State Surveillance Officer (SSO) Dr Lobsang Jampa said. The Capital Complex Region recorded the highest number of new cases at 68, followed by Lower Subansiri (42), West Kameng and Lohit at 13 cases each, Upper Subansiri, Lower Siang, Lower Dibang Valley and East Siang at 11 cases each and Upper Siang (10).

Fresh cases each were also reported from Papumpare, Tawang, West Siang, Changlang, East Kameng, Anjaw, Kamle, Shi-Yomi, Leparada, Dibang Valley, Kra Daadi, Namsai, Siang, Tirap and Pakke Kesang districts, the SSO said.

Of the 248 fresh cases, 226 were detected through rapid antigen test, 17 through RT-PCR and five by TrueNat

method, the official said, adding, 103 people have symptoms of COVID-19.

Arunachal Pradesh currently has 2,873 active COVID-19 cases, while 46,803 patients have recovered from the disease, including 404 people on Saturday, Jampa said.

The COVID-19 recovery rate in the state now is 93.76 per cent while the active percentage stands at 5.75 and the positivity rate at 5.54 per cent, the official said.

The Capital Complex Region - comprising Itanagar, Naharlagun, Nirjuli and Banderdewa areas - has the highest number of active cases at 785, followed by Lower Subansiri (359), Papumpare (235), West Kameng (162) and Lohit (145).

Altogether, 9,72,655 samples have been tested for COVID-19 in the state so far, including 4,469 on Saturday, Jampa said.

Meanwhile, State Immunisation Officer (SSO) Dr Dimong Padung said that a total of 8,78,856 people have been administered COVID-19 vaccine doses so far in the state since the inoculation drive began in January this year.

Covid patient on lung support machine for second month in Kolkata. It costs 1.5 lakh a day



KOLKATA, 08 AUG [NDTV]: Covid has not just taken lives, it has devastated thousands of families financially as they struggled to pay for medical help for relatives hit by the virus. In Kolkata, 30-year-old Jitpal Singha has been in a hospital on ECMO -- a life support machine that costs one

and a half lakh rupees a day -- for more than a month. Doctors have just told his family he needs to stay on that machine for another 30 days. Savings exhausted, the family is struggling to pay for the treatment.

Alpana Singha, his mother, is not even thinking about what could lie ahead. She is only thinking of his goodbye when she was leaving the hospital after meeting him briefly at the ICU.

"He can't speak as he has all these pipes in his throat. But as I was leaving, he indicated I should take a photo of him. And he made a victory sign," Ms Singha said.

"He asks me every time I see him, how are you Maa? I say I am well, but you have to get well soon," she said. "And every day he asks, when am I coming home Ma?"

The mother struggles to control her tears. Her

husband is off to an ashram for a few days to deal with it all. Their only child is in a hospital for two months now. At one and a half lakh rupees daily, that means at least 40 lakh rupees -- money that they need now -- for another 30 days on the ECMO machine.

Jitpal's cousin Debanjan Burman is fighting the battle for him from Delhi. For the last two months, he and Jitpal's friends have been fundraising for his treatment. Jitpal went to school in Dehradun, Kolkata, UK and the US and has a wide circle of friends who have chipped in generously.

They raised about ₹ 40 lakh, but they are nearly out.

"Right now, with the current funds, considering everything -- the medical insurance, the funds the family has accumulated, the money from fundraisers -- we will be dry in around 10 days," says Debanjan.

Debanjan's mother Debjani Burman, with whom Jitpal's parents are staying in Kolkata, is in despair. The family lives in Midnapore, three hours from Kolkata where Jitpal is admitted.

"His father's finan-

cial condition is not that good. He has a small business. He has some property, but he is finding it difficult to sell it at this time. The doctors said we should have about ₹ 40 lakh more in hand. We have already spent around ₹ 40 lakh. What can we do now?" she says.

The family's plight is not unique. Covid has put thousands more into the same boat -- insurance gone, savings gone, friends, relatives done their bit, even strangers, on crowdfunding platforms like Milaap.

Nitish Vyas, Jitpal's childhood friend, steering the Milaap crowdfunding effort, is at his wits end. Nitish is also Jitpal's neighbour in Bangalore where he works in a start-up.

"No family is prepared for this. It's a difficult scenario, an impossible scenario we are in, but we are not giving up," he said.

What is keeping him going is Jitpal's spirit. The last time he visited him in hospital, his friend signalled he would be home soon.

"Jitpal is fighting his battle. How can his family and friends let him down," Nitish said.

Ladakh reports 7 fresh COVID-19 cases

LEH, AUG 8 (PTI): Seven people tested positive for COVID-19 in Ladakh, while an equal number of patients were cured, taking the overall infection tally in the Union territory to 20,385 and 65 active cases, officials said on Sunday.

The UT has registered 207 Covid-related deaths -- 149 in Leh and 58 in Kargil -- since the outbreak of the pandemic last year. As many as 20,113 patients have recovered till date.

The officials said over 4,000 people

were tested for COVID-19 in the twin districts on Saturday, and six of them tested positive for the infection in Leh and one in Kargil.

After the detection of the new cases, Leh accounted for a total of 16,820 infections, while the tally in Kargil has gone up to 3,565.

Six patients were discharged in Leh and one in Kargil, they said, adding that there are now 53 active cases in Leh and 12 in Kargil.

Journalist, his relatives attacked in UP

MATHURA (UP), AUG 7 (PTI): A journalist of a national daily and his relatives were allegedly attacked by a group of people in the Sonkh road here, police said on Saturday.

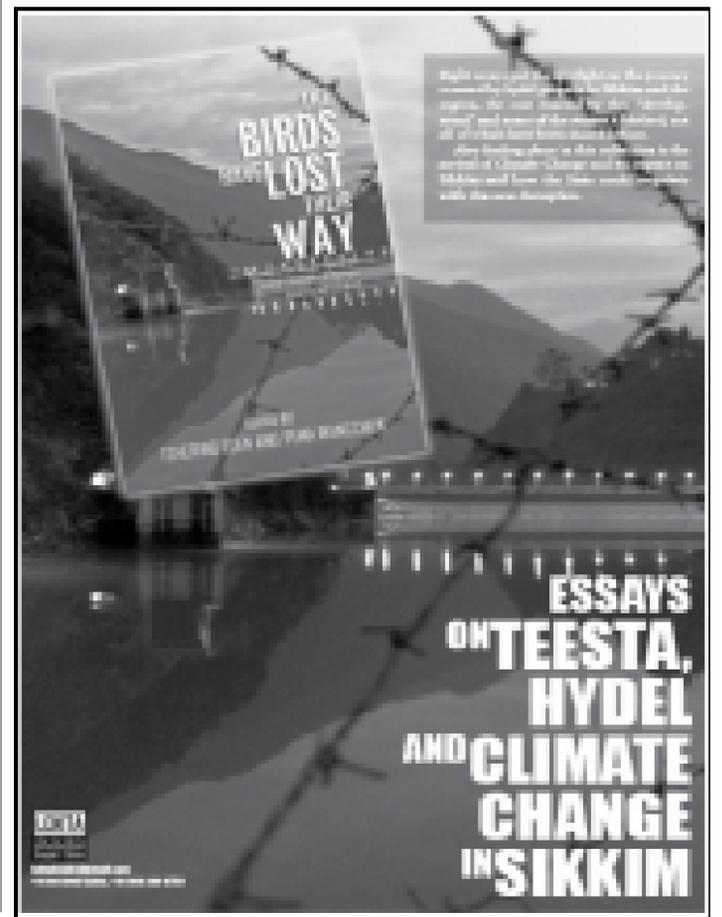
"Four persons, including journalist Anil Agrawal, sustained internal injuries," they said.

All the injured have been provided medical assistance, Deputy Superintendent of Police Abhishek Tewari said.

He said after receiving information, police reached the spot in the Sonkh road-based colony falling under highway police station and nabbed four assailants.

An FIR was registered in connection with the incident on Saturday and the four accused have been sent to judicial custody, Tewari said, adding that the matter is being investigated.

If more people are found guilty, they will be nabbed, police said.



Got my rhythm back playing ODI series against Sri Lanka: Root

NOTTINGHAM, AUG 8 (PTI): Skipper Joe Root said the ODI series against Sri Lanka helped him to regain his batting rhythm as he smashed a counter-attacking hundred to revive England's hopes in the opening Test against India here.

Root, who failed to reach a half-century in his last five Tests, scored 64 in the first innings and then came up with a masterful 109 to help England put up a much-improved batting show in their second innings.

His 21st Test century helped England score 303 in 85.5 overs and secure a lead of 208 runs after being skittled out for 183 in the first innings.

"It felt pretty good to get a big score and get us into position to give us a chance of winning this Test," Root said in a virtual press-conference after the penultimate day's proceedings here.

"I've actually felt a real benefit from playing some white-ball cricket (in Sri Lanka)," he said referring to the series against Sri Lanka in June-July where he returned with unbeaten knocks of 68 and 79.

"It would be nice to have some red-ball cricket coming into this game but, from my point of view, playing 50-over cricket gave me some rhythm back in my batting."

Root said he is reaping dividends from a few technical changes that he brought in to play ODI cricket.

"More than anything, up from New Zealand (Lord's Test) I've changed a few things. I felt I got forward and back better," he said.

"I was standing a lot taller a lot earlier, picking my bat up a lot earlier, I feel like I've got rhythm back in my hands. I find 50-over cricket can be a massive help to my red-ball game."

Before the recent lean patch, Root had scored two double centuries in three matches, including the 218 in the Chennai Test as he became the first to surpass the 1,000-mark this calendar year. He now has 1,064 Test runs in 2021.

"I was probably a little bit too excited," Root said about his pumped-up celebration after scoring the century here.

"The five, 10 minutes leading into getting the hundred was a bit hairy as well, so there was probably a bit of relief," he said referring to surviving a couple of LBW calls while in the 90s.

"As always you'd want more runs to play with, there's no doubt about that, but you've seen throughout this whole game there's been times when clusters of wickets have fallen and the game's really flipped on its head."

In the middle, there were some exchanges between India pacer Mohammed Siraj and England batters, especially that of Sam Curran and Jonny Bairstow.

The once-great US men's track team failed to win a solo gold in Tokyo. Why?

JOAN NIESEN

TOKYO, 08 AUG [THEGUARDIAN]: When Noah Lyles finished third in the 200m final this week, he called his hardware "boring". When Grant Holloway took silver in the 110m hurdles, he repeatedly used the word "sucks" with reporters after the race.

Both men seemed glum, disappointed. They'd lost. They'd failed. Never mind that Lyles's time was the fastest he's run all season, that only 16 men have ever finished the race faster than he did this week. And we should totally disregard the fact that Holloway's finish was all of 50 milliseconds slower than the gold medal time.

Or... should we? Lyles's and Holloway's near-misses loom large – larger than they should, perhaps – because the US men's track team will return from Tokyo without a single individual gold medal for the first time in modern Olympic history. (That's with the exception of 1980, when the US didn't attend and consequently didn't medal at all.) And while it's possible to wonder how that happened, it's also important to remember: This is a far cry from failure.

These Olympics have been a hotbed of self-flagellation across many sports. Shoichiro Mukai, a member of Japan's judo team, apologized after winning a silver medal. Kenichiro Fumita, a Japanese wrestler, sobbed after a loss in the gold medal bout – a loss that yielded him a silver. And British boxer Ben Whittaker also shed tears



upon coming in second, calling himself a failure.

The US men haven't gone that far in their public disappointment, and here's hoping they won't. They won individual medals in the 100m, the 200m (silver and bronze!), the 5000m, the 110m hurdles and the 400m hurdles (where Rai Benjamin topped the previous world record). And they ended their meet with a relay gold in the 4x400m. The US track and field team as a whole won the most golds of any squad at these games, with seven. Overall, they won 26 total medals, 17 more than Jamaica, Kenya and Poland, who are tied for the second-most although six of the US's

seven golds were won by the women's team.

They've been dominant – just not quite as dominant as usual, as expected.

Last Olympics, in 2016 in Rio de Janeiro, the US brought home 32 track and field medals, 13 of them gold. Even with Usain Bolt maintaining his dominance in the sprints, the American men took gold in the 1500m, the 400m hurdles and the 4x400m relay. The prior Olympics, in London, the men won only one gold on the track, when Aries Merritt won the 110m hurdles, but there was a good explanation: Bolt was at his peak, and Team USA also had to contend with Great Britain's Mo Farah

and Kenya's David Rudisha in middle-distance events.

This time around, though, the gold-medal drought feels different, in large part because the US men were favored in most sprints and middle distance races coming into Tokyo; Team USA's roster featured the fastest men in the world in the 100m, 200m and 400m. And at the most recent world championships, they won the 100m, 200m, 800m and 110m hurdles, giving no indication their talent would be tailing off anytime soon.

And maybe it didn't. Maybe other countries just edged a step closer, and in sport governed by milliseconds, the country with the most collec-

tive track talent was edged by a few stellar performances. After all, the US still won the most medals overall in the men's sprints, and the men's track golds went not to one or two powerhouse countries, but to a smattering: Italy, Canada, the Bahamas, Jamaica, Norway.

After this week's slate of less-than-perfect results, a few US athletes have expressed displeasure at the lack of an Olympic training camp and the tight turnaround between trials and the Games, byproducts of the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic. Officials barred athletes from moving into the Olympic Village more than five days before they competed, and the

US elected not to set up its own camp for track and field athletes, which some other nations did. It was a decision made with athletes' health and safety in mind, but it may also have bungled training and athletes' acclimation to a foreign country.

And there are other explanations for the gold-medal drought, too. Christian Coleman, the fastest man on the US team, was banned from the Games after he missed a drug test in late 2019. He'd have been heavily favored in the 100m and might've given the men's 4x100m relay, which failed to medal after a botched handoff, a boost.

The US team is also relatively inexperienced, and in a sport where stars often compete in two, three, four or even (in Allyson Felix's case) five Games, youth can at times be a disadvantage. In 2016, more than half the gold medalists in men's track events had prior Olympic experience.

Much of the US team should be back for 2024, due to their age and shorter turnaround time between the Games. They'll be out to prove this summer was only an aberration, and before overreacting, perhaps they – and we – should listen to Michael Cherry, the sprinter who finished fourth in the 400m – and then won gold in the 4x400m relay.

"An Olympic medal is an Olympic medal," he told reporters after the race. "You want gold, but if you can come out with anything that's great."

The stars of India's best ever Olympic performance

NEW DELHI, AUG 8 (PTI): India capped off its best-ever performance in the Olympics with a haul of seven medals, including a gold.

As the Tokyo Olympics come to a close, PTI takes a look at the medalists and those who came within touching distance of glory but couldn't quite make it to the podium.

NEERAJ CHOPRA: Gold

They say save the best for last and for India it came true at the Tokyo Games.

Javelin thrower Neeraj Chopra became only the second Indian to win an individual gold in the Olympics.

After romanticising stories about "nearly there" for years, India finally had its first track-and-field medal winner, thanks to Chopra's throw of 87.58m.

Interestingly, Chopra, the son of a farmer from Khandra village near Panipat in Haryana, took to athletics to lose weight.

One day, his uncle took him to Shivaji Stadium in Panipat for some running. But Chopra wasn't interested in it and almost instantly fell in love with javelin throw when he saw a few seniors practising at the stadium.

The 23-year-old, a Subedar with 4 Rajputana Rifles in the Indian Army, has been a consistent performer since bursting into the scene with a historic gold in the junior world championships in 2016 with an Under-20 world record of 86.48m which still stands.

His other achievements include gold medals in the 2018 Commonwealth Games and the Asian Games, besides the top finish in the 2017 Asian Championships.

MIRABAI CHANU: Silver

The pint-sized weightlifter from Manipuri lifted the spirits of the entire nation as she ended a 21-year wait for a medal in weightlifting, clinching a silver medal in the 49kg category to open India's account on the very first day of competitions on July 24.

Wearing gold earrings shaped like the Olympic rings, which were a gift from her mother who sold her

own jewellery for them five years ago, the 26-year-old lifted a total of 202kg (87kg+115kg), finally exorcising the ghosts of her disastrous outing in the 2016 Rio Games where she had failed to log a single legitimate lift.

Born to a poor family in Nongpok Kakching village about 20 kilometres from Imphal, Chanu's childhood was spent cutting and collecting wood from the nearby hills, hauling them up by herself, and fetching water from nearby ponds in milk powder cans.

The 2017 world champion had initially wanted to be an archer but fate had different plans, and reading about fellow Manipuri the legendary N.Kunjarani Devi's exploits in the weightlifting arena all over the world, inspired Chanu to take up the sport.

RAVI DAHIYA: Silver

The 23-year-old grappler born in the Nahri village of the Sonapat district in Haryana stormed to the final of the men's 57kg freestyle event without any fuss. Although, he fetched a silver, his immense strength and stamina along with technical prowess impressed one and all.

Born to a farming family, Dahiya is a product of the national capital's Chhatrasal Stadium, which has already given India two Olympic medalists -- Sushil Kumar and Yogeshwar Dutt.

He rose to prominence only when he qualified for the Tokyo Games with a bronze medal-winning effort at the 2019 world championship. He has steadily grown in stature ever since, winning the Asian Championship in 2020 and then defending the title this year.

His father, Rakesh Kumar, would himself carry milk and butter to Chhatrasal Stadium, about 60km away from his home, every single day without fail to ensure that his son got the best diet.

PV SINDHU: Bronze

One of the strongest medal contenders heading to the Tokyo Olympics, PV Sindhu delivered once again. This time snatching a bronze.

The 26-year-old etched her name among the all-time greats after win-

ning women's singles bronze medal to add to the silver she won at Rio de Janeiro five years back. She became the first Indian woman and second overall from the country to achieve the feat.

Such was her dominance at the Tokyo Games that she dropped only two games, both in the semifinal loss to Tai Tzu Ying, in six matches.

The Hyderabad shuttler rose to fame at the international level in 2014 when she won bronze medals in the world championship, Asian Games, Commonwealth Games and Asian Championships.

One of the most consistent performers, Sindhu has returned with medals from each one of the big-ticket events she has participated in.

Four decades of pain and disappointment was washed away as the Indian men's hockey team clinched the bronze, the country's 12th Olympic medal in the sport that came after a gap of 41 years.

It wasn't gold but it was enough to spearhead the revival of the sport in a country that attaches so much sentimental value to it.

After the initial hiccup which saw the team being steam-rolled 1-7 by Australia in their second game, Manpreet Singh and his men made a strong comeback only losing to eventual champions Belgium.

While Manpreet inspired the team with his leadership, goalkeeper PR Sreejesh had a phenomenal tournament, standing like a wall when the opposition mounted an attack.

It seemed the team was destined to win. How else could one explain the addition of Simranjeet Singh, who scored a brace in the crucial bronze playoff, when he wasn't even a part of the original squad and had been added following the International Olympic Committee's decision to allow "alternate athletes" in team events because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

LOVLINA BORGHAIN: Bronze

Competing in her maiden Olympics, Borgohain carved a niche for herself in the history of Indian women's boxing by clinching a bronze -- India's lone boxing medal at the Tokyo Games.

The 23-year-old, who was brought up in Baro Mukhia village of Assam's Golaghat district, used to be a kick-boxer, like her two elder sisters, before she turned to boxing.

A day before she was to leave with the Olympic-bound boxers group for a training camp to Europe, Borgohain had contracted COVID-19. But the missed opportunity couldn't stop her from having a remarkable campaign in which she upstaged former world champion Nien-Chin Chen of Chinese Taipei in the 69kg category.

With the feat, she became only the third Indian boxer ever, after Vijender Singh and MC Mary Kom, to finish on the podium at the quadrennial showpiece.

BAJRANG PUNIA: Bronze

A favourite heading into the Games, Bajrang didn't quite live up to the sky-high expectations of becoming the first Indian wrestler to win the gold, but the 27-year-old did return from Tokyo with a bronze medal, an impressive feat in a nation starved for success at the grandest sporting spectacle.

Bajrang has been passionate about wrestling since childhood, and why not, the sport runs in his blood. His father and elder brother, too, were ardent practitioners of the sport.

As a kid all he wanted was to wrestle. Once at a Dangal, when he was about 34kg, Bajrang insisted that he be allowed to wrestle but the competition was meant for those who weighed about 60kg and to the amazement of everyone, he pinned his opponent, giving a glimpse of his determination.

Those who were so close yet so far: **WOMEN'S HOCKEY TEAM:**

From a bottom-place finish at Rio 2016, the Indian women's team capped a remarkable journey at Tokyo Olympics, finishing a creditable fourth.

Although the team's dream of securing its maiden Olympic medal remained unfulfilled as it lost 3-4 to Great Britain in the closely contested bronze medal play-off, the side recorded its best ever finish at the Games.

After three losses on the trot, everyone had written them off. But a moment of brilliance by skipper Rani Rampal that led to a late strike

by Navneet Kaur in the game against Ireland kept the team's quarterfinal hopes alive.

A win against South Africa, that saw Vandana Kataria strike a hat-trick, and a favourable result helped ensure India's passage to the quarterfinal, where drag flick specialist Gurjit Kaur rose to the occasion when it mattered the most, converting a PC against the mighty Australians.

With the odds stacked firmly against them a brave and determined women's team etched its name in the history books by entering its maiden Olympic semifinals.

DEEPAK PUNIA:

After an impressive campaign that saw him race to the semifinals, Deepak Punia was only 10 seconds away from a medal, but the 22-year-old debutant ended up conceding a take-down in the 86kg freestyle bronze medal play-off.

Wrestling was just a route that Deepak hoped would find him a good job to help sustain his family. He was offered the post of a sepoy in the Indian Army back in 2016 but was told to dream big and not settle for little things.

He took the advice of two-time Olympic medalist Sushil Kumar seriously and has gradually made his mark. He became a World Cadet champion in 2016 and in 2019 won the junior World title, only the fourth Indian ever to do so.

ADITI ASHOK

Aditi Ashok captured the imagination of the entire country as sports lovers turned on their tv sets in the wee hours to watch golf, trying their hardest to understand the concepts of the game.

Ranked 200 in the world, the 23-year-old from Bengaluru competed toe-to-toe against the best golfers in the world. But, alas it wasn't meant to be as after coming agonisingly close, Aditi finished fourth.

Aditi started playing golf at the age of five. At the Rio Olympics, where she finished 41st, Aditi was the youngest player.

She had her father as caddy in Rio while it was her mother joining her in Tokyo.

Why sexism is still a problem at the most 'gender-equal' Olympics

ZAHEENA RASHEED

TOKYO, 08 AUG [ALJAZEERA]: Tokyo 2020 is being billed as the "first gender-equal Olympic Games ever".

With nearly the same number of male and female athletes, and a sporting schedule that gives equal visibility for men and women's events during primetime hours, the International Olympic Committee (IOC) says it took deliberate action to make sure this year's Games constitute a "landmark in gender equality", both on and off the field of play.

But analysts say the rhetoric and the reality are "miles apart".

From the sexualisation of uniforms and sexist portrayals in the media to women having to fight to bring their breastfed children to the pandemic-restricted Games, analysts say discrimination remains rife.

"This idea of equal numbers can actually conceal the fact that there's still so much more to be done," says Michelle O'Shea, senior lecturer at the School of Business at Western Sydney University in Australia. "Yes, we've got women on the pitch and in the arena. But their experiences are still very concerning."

Much of this has to do with a history of women's exclusion in sport.

When the first modern Olympics was held in 1896 in Athens, Greece, women were deliberately barred from taking part.

At the time, the founder of the IOC, Baron Pierre de Coubertin, argued an Olympics with women would be "impractical, uninteresting, unaesthetic and indecent". The Games, he said, were created for "the solemn and periodic exaltation of male athleticism" with "female applause as a reward".

"Straight away, you can see the kind of exclusion that women were up against as part of the Olympic movement," says Jordan Matthews, senior lecturer in Sport Development at the University of Chichester, United Kingdom. "If they were allowed in at all, it was to applaud the male athletes who were actually taking part."

STEREOTYPES

But women fought back, he says.

Under pressure from athletes such as French rower Alice Milliat who even launched a separate Olympics for women, the IOC began including more and more female events. Still, for years, women were "confined to more aesthetic events" or "even play and dance routines" such as swimming, figure skating and fencing.

"The idea around this was that it was



more suitable to female biology and less threatening to dominant images of femininity around the time," says Matthews. "Women weren't expected to run too far because they might sweat and we don't want them sweating. They might not throw things as far because we don't want them to damage their internal organs."

Over time, the IOC did cede ground to women athletes – albeit reluctantly.

It was only in 2012 that the global sporting body allowed women to compete in all sports on the Olympic programme and it was only in 2014 that it committed to gender parity at the Games.

This year, women make up 48.8 percent of the 11,000 Olympians, up from 45.6 percent in 2016 and 44.2 percent in 2012.

Altogether, they are competing in more than 300 events, including in some that were previously only open to males, such as the 1,500m freestyle. They are also taking part in all of the new sports added to the Games, including skateboarding and surfing, and are also competing alongside men in several mixed-gender races, including in athletics, swimming and triathlon.

Still, events such as the Olympic decathlon – where the world's greatest athlete is crowned – continue to exclude women. The 50km race walk also bars women, with the IOC and World Athletics saying the women's event currently lacks the depth and quality to justify Olympic status.

Meanwhile, in Gymnastics, male and female events continue to differ, notes Josie Jones, the diversity and inclusion manager at Women in Sport, with men competing in events that "show strength" like pommel horse and rings and women competing in events "where balance and artistic skill are on show" like beam and floor.

"The women's floor events are also set to music a bit more like a dance, again a big focus on the aesthetics," she says. "I find this perplexing. Yes, men are on average substantially bigger and stronger than women, but I find it hard to believe that women couldn't 'pommel' well and men couldn't keep a rhythm."

"Surely we are stereotyping here?" she adds.

'QUESTIONABLE SCIENCE'

Such sexist ideals also plague rules around eligibility.

A prime example is the IOC regulations on testosterone.

Set by World Athletics, the rules say female athletes who are intersex or have differences in sex development need to artificially reduce their testosterone levels to below 5 nanomoles per litre if they want to take part in the middle-distance running events of 400m to 1,500m.

This has resulted in the disqualification of several women, primarily from the global South.

Two Namibian runners – Christine Mboma and Beatrice Masilingi – were pulled from the 400m race, despite being considered medal contenders. South Af-

rica's Caster Semenya, Burundi's Francine Niyonsaba and Kenya's Margaret Wambui were also barred from competing in the 800m race – the three had swept the event in the 2016 Summer Games in Rio de Janeiro, with Semenya winning the gold, and Niyonsaba and Wambui taking the silver and bronze, respectively.

Cara Ocobock, assistant professor of anthropology at the University of Notre Dame in the United States, says the testosterone rules are "problematic", "sexist" and "based on questionable science".

They imply testosterone, a primarily male hormone, is "the all-powerful secret source of athletic performance", she says. "And that's just not true. There are so many other variables – including genetics, hormones, training and nutrition, and even just how the athlete feels on the morning of an event."

She notes that only three of the 11 running events analysed by World Athletics showed a significant relationship between performances and testosterone, and says that other events that did show a significant relationship – like the hammer throw and pole vault – are not even covered by the regulations.

"We are just not at a point of having good solid data to understand what might be going on," she says. "And I fall on the side of inclusion until we actually have the science to really inform decision making."

'TRAILBLAZING'

The hurdles for women do not end

with qualification.

This year, some women had to fight to bring their breastfed children with them as the IOC had barred families from the Olympic Village. It only relented when stars such as Canadian basketballer Kim Gaucher took to social media to complain that she was being forced to choose between "being a breastfeeding mum or an Olympic athlete".

Then, there is also the issue of sexualisation.

The Representation Project, a US-based gender justice group, says its analysis of prime-time media coverage of the first week of Tokyo 2020 found female athletes are about 10 times more likely to be visually objectified with a camera angle than male athletes.

It also found that two-thirds of female athletes wore revealing outfits compared with half of male athletes.

"Imagine being that female athlete and trying to perform, knowing that hundreds of millions of people are watching you and feeling uncomfortable in what you're wearing," says Lucy Piggott, a postdoctoral fellow at the Norwegian University of Science and Technology. "It's something that male athletes rarely have to think about."

That's why, she says, "it is so trailblazing" that the German women's gymnastics team decided to wear full body suits instead of bikini-cut leotards at the Olympics and that the Norwegian beach handball team braved a fine and decided to wear shorts instead of the required bikini bottoms at the recent European Beach Handball Championships.

None of this is surprising, Piggott says, given the low numbers of women in top sports jobs.

Only a third of the IOC's executive board is women, while the number is even lower for other Olympic and Paralympic sports bodies.

Research Piggott conducted with Matthews of the University of Chichester found that women make up just 22 percent of executive boards in international sporting organisations and only seven percent of president or chair roles.

Meanwhile, only 10 percent of accredited coaches at the Summer and Winter Olympics over the past decade have been women.

"In terms of equal gender representation for athletes at the Olympics, there's been huge progress made," she says. "But we still have a long way to go."

Taliban captures Kunduz, third provincial capital in three days

Kabul, 08 Aug [Aljazeera]: The Taliban has captured the city of Kunduz, the armed group said, the third provincial capital it has taken over in the last three days.

A Taliban statement on Sunday said it has captured the police headquarters, the governor's compound and the prison in the city.

Local sources and journalists in Kunduz confirmed to Al Jazeera that Taliban fighters are present in the capital.

"Heavy clashes started yesterday afternoon, all government headquarters are in control of the Taliban, only the army base and the airport is with ANDSF [Afghan security forces] from where they are resisting the Taliban," Amriddin Wali, a member of Kunduz provincial assembly, said. "Health officials in Kunduz said 14 women, including those of women and children, and more than 30 injured people have been taken to hospital."

"We don't know what's going on outside because all our efforts and attention is on the patients coming in," a doctor told Al Jazeera from a Kunduz hospital.

Sunday's takeover comes after the group seized the provinces of Nimruz and Jawzjan in the last two days.

Kunduz had previously fallen to the group in 2015 and 2016.

On Saturday, the Taliban captured Jawzjan capital Sheberghan, the city's deputy governor said, a day after Zaranj,



capital of Nimruz, fell "without a fight", according to its deputy governor.

The defence ministry said that on Saturday evening, US B-52 bombers struck several Taliban targets in Sheberghan.

People in Kunduz tried to flee ahead of the Taliban's arrival, a resident told Al Jazeera, and are still afraid of going outside their houses.

"Though the fighting has calmed, it still feels like a military city," the resident said, referring to the presence of Taliban forces in key parts of the city and the Afghan National Defense and Security Forces carrying out operations in the city.

Afghanistan's defence ministry released a video of an Afghan commando saying the ANDSF have been conducting coordinated operations in the province over the last 24 hours.

The commando said in

the video the Taliban suffered heavy casualties in these operations as "they were trying to take key points" in the province, adding that the armed group's "dream" would not be fulfilled.

"You should be certain that the Afghan forces are with you," the commando tells the people of Kunduz.

Al Jazeera's Charlotte Bellis, reporting from the capital, Kabul, said: "A journalist in the centre of Kunduz told us the Taliban has taken over the police chief's office, the election commission's office and that the Taliban flag is flying at the central roundabout."

"The government is denying Kunduz has fallen but, by all accounts, it has," she added.

Though the Taliban has taken two provincial capitals since Friday, Kunduz – in the far north – would be the most significant to fall since the armed group launched an of-

fensive in May as foreign forces began the final stages of their withdrawal from the country.

The Taliban has gained vast parts of rural Afghanistan since launching a series of offensives in May to coincide with the start of the withdrawal.

Intense fighting continued in the capitals of the southern Kandahar and Helmand provinces, which the Taliban has been trying to take over for several weeks now.

A Helmand provincial council member said on Sunday that government air attacks damaged a health clinic and high school in Lashkar Gah, the capital.

The defence ministry statement also confirmed that air attacks were carried out in parts of the city that killed 54 Taliban fighters and wounded 23 others.

It made no mention of a clinic or school being bombed.

On Saturday, the US em-

bassy issued a statement condemning the Taliban's inroads into provincial centres in the south and north.

"We condemn the Taliban's violent new offensive against Afghan cities. This includes the unlawful seizure of Zaranj, the capital of Afghanistan's Nimroz province, the attack on Sheberghan, capital of Jowzjan province yesterday and today, and continuing efforts to take over Lashkar Gah in Helmand and provincial capitals elsewhere," the statement read.

Sheberghan is home to notorious strongman Abdul Rashid Dostum, who returned to Afghanistan only this week after medical treatment in Turkey.

Dostum has overseen one of the largest militias in the north, which garnered a fearsome reputation in its fight against the Taliban in the 1990s – along with accusations that his forces massacred thousands of prisoners of war.

On Saturday, Dostum held a meeting with Afghan President Ashraf Ghani at the presidential palace. A palace statement quoted Dostum as saying that "it is time to stand alongside" the security forces and to "stand against the enemy".

Any retreat of Dostum's fighters would dent the government's recent hopes that militia groups could help bolster the country's overstretched military. In Zaranj, social media posts suggested the Taliban was welcomed by some residents.

CORONAVIRUS

PRECAUTIONS & SAFETY TIPS

DON'T LOWER THE GUARD

LOCKDOWN HAS BEEN LIFTED. BUT UNFORTUNATELY, THE THREAT OF COVID-19 HAS NOT YET SUBSIDED.

As we adopt to the new normal, here is a reminder of the precautions you must take-

WEAR A MASK

Always wear a mask to prevent droplets from going outside

GET A FLU VACCINATION

Get your flu shot to develop an immune response before flu season begins, particularly if you have comorbidities

WASH YOUR HANDS

Wash your hands often, for about 20 seconds each with soap & carry a sanitizer

MAINTAIN SOCIAL DISTANCING

Stay at least 6 feet (about 2 arms length) from other people

GET TESTED

Get tested if you have symptoms of COVID-19. Stay at home until you get the result.

COVER YOUR MOUTH & NOSE WHILE SNEEZING, OR COUGHING

Before stepping outside, make sure to carry a handkerchief or a packet of tissues.

FOLLOW PRECAUTIONS BEFORE STEPPING OUT

Carry your sanitizer, water bottle and, most importantly, avoid crowded areas.

CHECK YOUR TEMPERATURE

Monitor your temperature on regular basis

Dominic Fike, Minka Kelly added to season 2 of 'Euphoria'

Actors Dominic Fike, Minka Kelly and musical artiste Demetrius 'Lil Meech' Flenory Jr are set to star in the second season of the acclaimed HBO series "Euphoria".

Revolving around a group of teenagers, an official synopsis of "Euphoria" says the show "follows a group of high school students as they navigate drugs, sex, identity, trauma, social media, love and friendship". It is based on a 2012 Israeli miniseries of the same name created by Ron Leshem and Daphna Levin.

The first season of the show stars Zendaya, Hunter Schafer, Jacob Elordi, and Maude Apatow.

Fike told Variety exclusively that his character is a "homie" who hangs out with Rue and Jules, played by Zendaya and Schafer.

Lil Meech, who is set to make his acting debut with the series, also described his character as a "degenerate" who reminds him of his younger self.

"Euphoria" began filming again earlier this year for its long-anticipated season two. It also stars Alexa Demie, Barbie Ferreira, Sydney Sweeney, Eric Dane,

Algee Smith, and Austin Abrams.

The series is directed by Augustine Frizzell and written by Sam Levinson.

Late last year, the show put out two

time Emmy Award for outstanding lead actress in a drama series.

Zendaya, Levinson, Kevin Turen, Ravi Nandan, rapper Drake, Future the



bonus episodes -- "Trouble Don't Last Always" and "F**k Anyone Who's Not A Sea Blob", which earned "Euphoria" three Emmy nominations.

For her performance as Rue, a recovering teenage drug addict struggling to find her place in the world, Zendaya became the youngest winner of the Prime-

Prince, Hadas Mozes Lichtenstein, Leshem, Levin, Tmira Yardeni, Mirit Toovi, Yoram Mokady and Gary Lennon executive produce the series, with Will Greenfield serving as a co-executive producer.

The second season of the show is expected to premiere in late 2021 or early 2022.

Nimrat Kaur wraps shoot of 'Dasvi'

Actor Nimrat Kaur has finished shooting for her upcoming social-comedy "Dasvi" and says the journey which began 10 months ago has finally come to its "joyous culmination".

Directed by newcomer Tushar Jalota, "Dasvi" is written by Ritesh Shah, known for films like "Pink" and "Batla House".

Kaur took to Instagram Saturday evening and posted pictures from the film's set.

Without divulging details, the actor -- known for acclaimed dramas "The Lunchbox" and "Airlift" -- called her character Bimla Devi Choudhary as one of her most cherished roles.

"There are unforgettable roles in an actor's life and there are unexplored places you visit that come with it. Rarely do the twain meet.

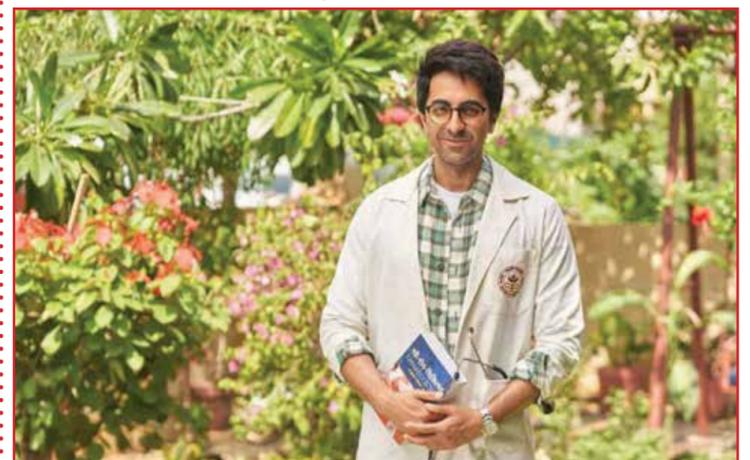
"Bimla Devi Choudhary (aka Bimmo) is one such gift who'll forever be etched in my heart as the happiest, most thrilling and fun place I got to explore through a part entrusted so encouragingly and lovingly to me. I already miss her..." Kaur captioned the picture.

The 39-year-old actor began shooting for the film in March.

"Dasvi" also stars Abhishek Bachchan and Yami Gautam.

"And can't believe a journey that began 10 months ago for me finally came to its joyous culmination through some of the most surreal times of all our lives. "Nothing but the utmost gratitude to all the stolid pillars of #TeamDasvi!! See you at the movies," Kaur added. The film is produced by Dinesh Vijan, Sandeep Leyzell and Shobhana Yadav.

Shooting for Doctor G! in Prayagraj will bring back deluge of emotions: Ayushmann Khurrana



Ayushmann Khurrana says filming the next schedule of his upcoming movie "Doctor G!" in Uttar Pradesh's Prayagraj will take him on the trip down memory lane.

The campus comedy-drama, directed by Anubhuti Kashyap, will see the 36-year-old Chandigarh-born actor play Dr Uday Gupta.

Khurrana, who earlier visited Prayagraj during his time on reality show "Roadies", said he was amazed by the "history, heritage and architecture" of the city.

I still remember getting mesmerised by its history, heritage and architecture. Prayagraj sees the confluence of three rivers - Ganga, Yamuna and Saraswati. I will be shooting again in this beautiful city and I can't wait to go back, Khurrana

said in a statement.

The actor said he would like to revisit the places where he had shot for "Roadies".

It will bring back a deluge of emotions and nostalgia for me. I will try and find some time to visit the places that I had shot for Roadies just to relive my days of struggle and self-belief. It will be amazing to shoot in the city that carved my fortune at the start of my career, he added.

"Doctor G!" is written by Sumit Saxena, Vishal Wagh, Saurabh Bharat along with Kashyap.

Backed by Junglee Pictures, the film also stars Rakul Preet Singh and Shefali Shah. Prior to Prayagraj, the team had travelled to Bhopal for a month long schedule.

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SOCCER STAR! Singer Justin Bieber is spotted playing a league game with his Churchome team in Los Angeles..

Kim Kardashian goes incognito to ex Kanye West's Donda event

Kim Kardashian supported ex Kanye West at his Donda album listening party while barely showing her face.

The Keeping Up With the Kardashians star brought their kids to the event at Mercedes-Benz stadium in Atlanta on Thursday, Aug. 5. For the special occasion, the SKIMS founder covered up entirely in an all-black, head-to-toe, skintight Balenciaga outfit that included a bodysuit with a ski mask-like attachment, mimicking the rapper's own eclectic concert style. Kim shared photos of herself and the children backstage in her outfit on her Instagram page early Saturday, Aug. 7, while singer Monica shared a pic of herself with Kim without her mask.

In her Instagram post, Kim also shared a photo of herself carrying her and Kanye's daughter Chicago West, 2, who rocked a black T-shirt and matching pants, while walking in front of their eldest daughter North West, 7, as she walked hand-in-hand with two friends, all of whom were wearing full black outfits. Another image showed Kanye, sporting a bulletproof vest with "Donda" written on it over a tight black top, with son Saint West, 5, as the boy watched his big sister do a handstand.

Despite their split, Kim has supported Kanye and his career. In July, she, her and Kanye's four children and her sister Khloe Kardashian attended his first listening party for Donda, also held in the Georgia capital. "Kanye invited the

family to come out to Atlanta again and they wanted to go and show their support," a source close to Kim recently told E! News, adding that the former couple have reached a pinnacle of "true friendship" over the past few months and "have been communicating more and more."

Kim, who filed for divorce from the Yeezy fashion designer in February after six years of



marriage, "wants the kids to stay connected to Kanye and will make that happen." The source added, "It's very important to her that she has a healthy co-parenting relationship with Kanye and that the kids have strong relationships with both of their parents."

Aries:
How much is "too" much, Aries? Must you say yes to everything that comes your way? Chances are, you're overextending yourself at the moment, which in turn is taking a toll on your mental and physical health. So, step back for just a moment. Reassess the beliefs that have convinced you your worthiness is tied to how much you 'give'. Your lesson at the moment: learning to ask for support and perfecting the art of receiving in the process.
Tip: You don't have to say yes to everything, beautiful.

Taurus:
What you're celebrating today is a landmark moment, beautiful, one that will put you on the map for all the right reasons. So, take a moment. Take a moment to lovingly gaze at your creations. Give yourself the pat on the back that you deserve. Given that change has been set into motion, a geographical move may be on the cards too. Remember, you will never truly feel prepared for this transition. Trust your gut and move forward and onwards nonetheless.
Tip: You are celebrating a landmark moment today.

Gemini:
At any point of time, you have two options: to prolong the war or to give peace a chance. Something tells us you're in the mood to put your arms down today. So, practice active listening, Gemini. Hold space for an open and hon-

est conversation. That doesn't mean rejecting how "you" feel in the grand schemes of things. It simply means finding a way to convey your truth bombs in a manner that's firm yet gentle.

Tip: Put your arms down, beautiful.

Cancer:
Cancer, you have been exercising your manifesting muscles and your life is living, breathing proof of your powers. What the cards are urging you to do today is hit the pause button. Assess the things that have come to fruition and the things that are still in the nascent stages. The new moon tomorrow is providing all of us with the grand opportunity to plant new seeds with love and with intention, and nurture the seeds that have already been planted. PS: Spirit has got your back and is supporting you to create the best life that you can.
Tip: Plant new seeds with love and with intention.

Leo:
Cancer, you have been exercising your manifesting muscles and your life is living, breathing proof of your powers. What the cards are urging you to do today is hit the pause button. Assess the things that have come to fruition and the things that are still in the nascent stages. The new moon tomorrow is providing all of us with the grand opportunity to plant new seeds with love and with intention, and nurture the seeds that have already been

planted. PS: Spirit has got your back and is supporting you to create the best life that you can.

Tip: Plant new seeds with love and with intention.

Virgo:
An opportunity that didn't quite work out for you in the past is coming back into your life in a brand new form. Your hesitation is understandable, Virgo. But, your hesitation is also a sign that the given opportunity is challenging enough to make you stop and think. Word for the wise: don't forgo the chance to grow and evolve in a different direction. What the cards want you to remember is that you are prepared for this and that you have been preparing for a challenge of this magnitude for many lifetimes now.
Tip: Go forth and conquer, beautiful!

Libra:
Adulthood is overrated, Libra. Sometimes, you just have to take a break from the big, bad world outside and escape to the little world that exists inside your head. So, board the flight of fantasy, beautiful. Dream a little dream and engage in activities that nourish your imagination. Remember, creativity doesn't always have to have an end goal. Becoming one with the rhythm and flow of the Universe is your ultimate prayer to Universal forces.
Tip: Board the flight of fantasy, beautiful.

Scorpio:

Given your No-BS radar, it's hard to take you for a ride, Scorpio. Yet, every now and then, you allow others to take advantage of your inherent goodness. To repeat that tale of victimhood, so you show up for them at the cost of your own well-being. Pay attention to who these people are and the manner in which they are secretly manipulating your energy. 'No' is a complete sentence, beautiful, one that will liberate you from the vicious cycle you've been caught in for some time now.
Tip: Your instinct never lies.

Sagittarius:
What if we said that you are an open channel for love, healing, and abundance, and that everything you ever need will always be provided to you? You are beginning to see yourself as the co-creator of your reality, and it's oh-so-beautiful, Sagittarius! Today, the cards are also bringing your attention to the quote, "The more you give..."
Tip: You are an open channel for love, healing, and abundance.

Capricorn:
A daily affirmation that will serve you well: "I trust myself to create the abundance I deserve." Repeat these words out loud to yourself with unyielding faith in the Universe. Even better, write it down in your journal a few times or pin it up on your work desk as a reminder. It's time to

transmute the lack mentality, Capricorn. It's time to call in the blessings you truly deserve. What Spirit wants you to know: both your wants and your needs will be taken care of.

Tip: It's time to call in the abundance you deserve.

Aquarius:
What do you do when everything looks topsy-turvy? What do you do when things refuse to go your way despite your best efforts to get a handle on the situation? Do you descend into a downward spiral of negative emotions or grab the opportunity to turn lemons into lemonade? It's time to drop the tortured artist act, Aquarius. It's time to change the script around and title this chapter 'The Greatest Transformation of my Life'.
Tip: What will you make of your circumstances, beautiful?

Pisces:
The 'on-again, off-again' narrative is beginning to lose it's allure. You're no longer chasing emotionally unavailable lovers. You're no longer interested in the idea of an impossible romance. You've got your feet on the ground, Pisces, and you want to make things work in the here and now. That's what makes your relationship oh-so-beautiful!
Tip: After a period of turbulence, you are experiencing stability in matters related to love and romance.