



DANIEL KALUUYA WINS FIRST GOLDEN GLOBE, ACTOR'S SPEECH MARRED BY TECHNICAL GLITCH
pg 08

JOURNALISM: DIGITAL GIANTS PAYING FOR CONTENT IS GOOD NEWS, BUT WILL IT SUPPORT LOCAL PRESS?
pg 04

IRV CROSS, NFL PLAYER, PIONEER BLACK ANALYST, DIES AT 81
pg 08



SummitTIMES

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ON TOP OF THE NEWS

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No nominations in East, South and North on first day

GANGTOK, 01 MAR (IPR): The Municipal Election Returning Officer (MERO) East, Ragul K informed that no nominations have been filed at the office of Municipal Returning Officer, East on the first day of filing nomination for Municipal Election 2021.

All the arrangements for receiving nominations have been done at the office of Municipal Returning Officer East. As informed, the deployment of security personnel has been made for smooth functioning of the electoral process.

Public Notice of Election under Rule 22 of the Conduct of Election Rules in the form 17 has been issued on the first day of filing nomination.

As per Notification No 07/SEC/2021 dated 01 Mar, 2021 issued from the State Election Commission, Sikkim nominations will be accepted till 3.00pm of 08 Mar, 2021. The scrutiny of nomination will be on 09 March and withdrawal of candidature will be done till 11 Mar, 2021. The poll shall, if necessary be taken on 31 Mar, 2021.

With the issuance of the above Notification, the Model Code of Conduct in all the Municipal area has come into force from 01 Mar, 2021.

Further, the State Election Commission under Article 243ZA of the Constitution of India has appointed the following officers of the State Government as Election Observers to oversee the election process and for the smooth conduct of Elections. Secretary Social Justice and Welfare Department, Tshewang Gyachho has been appointed for all wards of Gangtok Municipal Corporation (East District).

Secretary Excise Department, Kuber Bhandari for all wards of Rangpo and Singtam Nagar Panchayat (East District).

No nominations were filed in South Sikkim as well, as per the Municipal Returning Officer (South), M Bharani Kumar.

In South District two Urban Local Bodies will be going for Municipal Election i.e. Namchi Municipal Council and Naya-Bazar Jorethang Nagar Panchayat. Under Namchi Municipal Council there are a total of 07 wards which are Gangyap, Dambudara, Upper Ghurpisey, Lower Ghurpisey, Upper Boomtar, Upper Singhithang and Pura-no Namchi. Similarly, under Naya-Bazar Jorethang Nagar Panchayat there are 05 wards namely Shantinagar, Trikaleshwar, Dargaon, Majhigaon and Nayabazar.

turn to pg02

CM begins 3-day West Sikkim tour from Yuksom Tashiding

PRITAM LAMA GYALSHING, 01 MAR: Chief Minister, Prem Singh Tamang began his three-day tour (01 to 03 Mar) of West Sikkim from Yuksom-Tashiding Constituency today.

The CM visited Kongri-Labdang, Dhupi-Norkhola and Karjee-Mangnam GPUs wherein he interacted with the Panchayats of the respective GPUs to learn about their problems. He then interacted with the public of these areas. People from 17 Panchayat wards met the CM on the first day.

Speaking to the media, the CM said, "As an opposition leader in the

year 2018 I visited this region and had promised to bring in development once we came to power. I want to keep my promise and as the Chief Minister of the State, I will do my best to fulfill people's aspirations."

This GPU was abandoned in terms of development and has been deprived of basic facilities for the past 25 years, he alleged.

The CM further said that he will keep a close watch on the villages in this area and visit every year to review the development and progress.

He also inaugurated a police picket post in Dhupidara under Kar-



jee-Mangnam GPU of Yuksam-Tashiding constituency during his visit today.

Area ML, Sangay Lepcha, who is also the Dep-

uty Speaker of Sikkim Legislative Assembly, said that the CM's visit has given hope to the people of the area.

This is for the first

time in the history of Sikkim that the Chief Minister himself is visiting such remote villages in our Constituency, said Mr Lepcha.

Zilla Panchayat of

Karjee-Mangnam, Nanda Kumar Manger said that this is a historical moment since it is the second time a Chief Minister has visited the state after

former CM, NB Bhandari's visit in 1988. He expressed his gratitude to the CM on behalf of the people of the area for the visit and for the developmental Initiatives.

As envisioned by the CM, the medical team under Garib Jan Kalyan Prakosta conducted a free medical camp at Dhupidara, Gram Prashasan Kendra, today. Medicines and wheel chairs were distributed free of cost along with free health insurance.

The Chief Minister distributed blankets, prestige pans & cookers, torchlights and sweets as a token of love to the people of the Constituency.

turn to pg02

Sikkim launches COVID vaccination for senior citizens

GANGTOK, 01 MAR (IPR): A press conference was called by the Health Department with regard to the launch of 2nd phase of vaccination drive in Sikkim. The press conference was chaired by Principal Secretary (Health), K. Sreenivasulu; PDHS cum MD NHM, Dr. T. Yamphel; Director-RCH cum State Immunization Officer, Dr. Phumzay Denzongpa and ADHS-Immunization, Dr. Tsering Doma.

Principal Secretary Health stated that the Health Department is thankful to the health care and frontline workers who have been dedicatedly serving their roles during the pandemic. He also thanked the Government of India for unhindered support during the whole operation of vaccination which has been going on in all the Indian states.

Mr Srinivasulu also informed the general public that major priority would now be given to the senior citizens residing in Sikkim which would be done via online registration as well as of-



fline registration by visiting the Covid Vaccination Centre with their relevant documents and Certificate of comorbidity available for download by the beneficiary which needs to be signed by a Medical Doctor for age of 45 to 59 years only category.

He informed that the age criteria for the Covid Vaccination in the second phase are all citizens that are aged, or will attain the age of 60 years or more on 01 Jan 2022 and all citizens that are aged, or will attain the age of 45 years to 59 years as on 01 Jan 2022 and have any of the specified comorbidities, which have been recommended by Na-

tional Expert Group on Vaccine Administration for COVID-19 (NEGVAC) who need to visit the Covid Vaccine Centres.

He also stated that the hesitation towards the vaccination must end and added that the Indian manufactured vaccination is safe and reliable as the Prime Minister of India, Narendra Modi also got himself vaccinated recently.

He also urged the public to support the vaccination process. He further informed that the Health Department is dedicatedly working towards planning the strategies and schedule of Vaccination Centre in Sikkim for which infor-

mation will be provided in due time.

The important information in relation to the vaccination are the relevant documents to be carried by the beneficiary while registering for the Covid Vaccine, which are Aadhaar card (Compulsory) and/or Voters Card/PAN Card/ Driving License. The above documents can be uploaded in the site and must be carried by the beneficiary during the process of availing the vaccination. The beneficiary can also avail the vaccination by visiting the Vaccination Booth and registering in the designated vaccination booth.

The designated COVID Vaccination centers are STNM, Socheygang, Urban PHC Gangtok, All District Hospitals, Community Health Centres (CHCs) and Primary Health Centres (PHCs). He also informed that the vaccination would be provided free of cost to all however those who desire to avail the vaccination at Manipal Hospital would be required to pay Rs. 250 per dose.

A Sunday of no new cases, again

SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 01 MAR: Sikkim registered no new Covid cases in the past 24 hours and recorded another Sunday of zero daily cases as per data shared by Health Department State IEC Officer, Sonam Gyaltsen Bhutia, today.

The state's tally of

the confirmed cases of COVID-19 hence remains frozen at 6,145 with all the 15 samples tested on Sunday returning negative for COVID-19.

Mr Bhutia informed that six samples were screened by TrueNat and nine through rapid antigen testing. No RT-PCR

tests are conducted on Sundays in Sikkim, a day when the VRD Lab remains closed.

On the other hand, the figure of recovered cases of COVID-19 in Sikkim registered a slight improve with the recovery of one more patient.

turn to pg02

Election Commission releases Municipal polls schedule

GANGTOK, 03 MAR (IPR): The State Election Commissioner, Sikkim stated that the programme for the General Election of Municipal Wards of Gangtok Municipal Corporation, Singtam Nagar Panchayat, Rangpo Nagar Panchayat, Namchi Municipal Council, Nayabazar Jorethang Nagar Panchayat, Gyalshing Nagar Panchayat and Mangan Nagar Panchayat has been issued on 01 Mar, 2021.

It is further stated that the

Electoral Rolls of the above wards have been published on 26 Feb, 2021 and hosted on the Commission's website www.secsikkim.org.in. Any person can check his name in the website of the State Election Commission, Sikkim. The timing of the poll will be from 8.00am to 5.00pm.

It is also further stated that the State Government vide Notification No. 16/LD/2020, dated: 07 Oct, 2020 has further inserted a new section "14 A" after the sec-

tion 14 of the said Act stating that "No person shall contest the election to any municipality with the support, direct or indirect of any political party".

It is also stated that the Model Code of Conduct in all the above Municipal area has come into force from 01 Mar, 2021. The State Government has been requested to hold transfer of officers/officials connected with the election works till the completion of election process.



Tejashwi Yadav meets Mamata Banerjee, says Congress ally only in Bihar

KOLKATA, 01 MAR [NDTV]: Mamata Banerjee's meeting with Tejashwi Yadav today over a possible tie-up for the West Bengal election signalled realignment in which the Congress's ally in Bihar is set to be its rival. Tejashwi Yadav called on the Bengal Chief Minister at her office at "Nabanna" in Kolkata and the two leaders reportedly discussed seat-sharing.

"Our alliance with the Left and Congress is only in Bihar. It is our duty to strengthen Mamata Didi's hands here and fight the BJP," the Bihar opposition leader told reporters after the meeting.

The 31-year-old said there were many Hindi-speaking voters in Bengal and his father Lalu Yadav had decided that his party would back Mamata Banerjee fully.

"We have always respected Didi, we have good relations. We will stand with Mamata Ji and stand against communal forces who want to break the nation. BJP is dreaming of coming to power here but it won't happen," said Tejashwi Yadav, praising the Chief Minister.

"I want to appeal to people from Bihar to choose wisely. Look at the BJP. Everyone (BJP leaders) has dropped their work and come to Bengal."

Mamata Banerjee returned the compliment, saying Lalu Yadav was not released from jail because "they knew if Laluji was out, they would lose" the Bihar election in November.

"They cheated and won in Bihar. Tejashwi is fighting, I am fighting. See how they have set the schedule," she said, once again lashing out at the election dates that have Bengal voting in eight rounds spread over 33 days.

The Congress and the Left have vowed to make the Bengal contest a triangular one, though the main battle is between Mamata Banerjee's Trinamool Congress and the BJP, which has invested its top leaders, resources and effort in trying to snatch the state from the two-time Chief Minister.

In neighbouring Bihar, the BJP and Nitish Kumar managed to retain power against a strong fight put up by the Tejashwi Yadav-led opposition. While Tejashwi's RJD emerged as the biggest party, the opposition's tally was dragged down by the Congress's abysmal performance.

Many feel the RJD gave too many seats to the Congress in Bihar.

In Bengal, the RJD's support is symbolic; Tejashwi Yadav is likely to campaign for the Trinamool Congress in seats where there is a significant Bihari population.

Congress leader Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury went into denial mode when asked about the Tejashwi-Mamata Banerjee meeting.

"I don't know him (Tejashwi) well. I used to know his father. There is no seat sharing in West Bengal, the meeting with Mamata-di is a separate thing," Mr Chowdhury said.

Junior Olympic Games held for Namthang

BIKASH CHETTRI

NAMCHI, 01 MAR:

Week-long Block Level 1st Inter School Junior Olympic Games was organized in Namthang, South Sikkim under the banner of 'Sports For Peace and Development' by South district Department of Sports and Youth Affairs, Government of Sikkim with the support of Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports, Government of India.

On the concluding day today, Asha Kharel was present as the chief guest accompanied by Namthang BDO, panchayat president, principals and students of participating schools.

The sportspersons selected from this Olympic Games will get to play at district level and then further shortlisted for the state level. The se-



lected players will then take part in national level sports tournament of 'Khelo India 2021-22'.

The Olympic Games for under 14 and under 17 boys and girls catego-

ries were played under the disciplines of athletic, archery, boxing, football, table tennis, taekwondo, badminton and karate.

On the day, football match for under-17 girls

was played wherein Kabrey Secondary School defeated Bikmat Senior Secondary School with a score of 2-0. In under-17 boys, Kateng Secondary School beat Bikmat Senior Secondary

School with a score of 2-0.

All winning teams and athletes will be representing Namthang BAC in the District level Sports Competition to be held in Namchi.

Shiva Maha Puran begins at Upper Yangang



SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 01 MAR:

Eleven-day Shiva Maha Puran organised by Sapta Kanya Kalika Devi Mandir Committee, Upper Yangang commenced today, a press release informs.

The first day of the event had MLA, Bishnu Kumar Khatiwada as the chief guest who visited the CLC Party office of Rangang Yangang constituency located at Yangang Bazaar, South Sikkim, later in the day.

He also met SKM workers and interacted with them. He was ac-

companied by general secretary (SKM Press & Publicity cum Social Media HQ), Boom Tshering Yonzon, SKM CLC president, Tangayla Bhutia and others.

Also present on the day were SKM Area In-charge, Raj Kumar Basnet, Confidential Secretary to CM, Bikash Basnet, South District, President, Tenny Doma Bhutia, SDM Yangang, Sujata Subba, BDO Yangang, Bishnu Thapa, and devotees from the constituency. The Shiva Maha Puran is scheduled to be held for 11 Days.

6 states witnesses Covid surge; India's active caseload reaches 1,68,627

NEW DELHI, 01 MAR [PTI]: Maharashtra, Kerala, Punjab, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Gujarat have shown a surge in new COVID-19 cases contributing to 87.25 per cent of 15,510 fresh infections reported in a day, the Union Health Ministry said on Monday.

India's total number of active COVID-19 cases was recorded at 1,68,627, comprising 1.52 per cent of the total infections, the ministry said highlighting five states that account for 84 per cent of the total active cases in the country.

Maharashtra alone accounts for 46.39 per cent of India's total active cases, followed by Kerala with 29.49 per cent.

"A total of 15 states and union territories have registered more than 1,000 active cases. Kerala and Maharashtra are the two states with over 10,000 active cases, while the rest of the 13 states and UTs have between 1,000-10,000 active cases," the ministry said. The total number of cases with the UK, South Africa and Brazil variants of SARS-CoV-2 in the country as on date has reached 213, the ministry said.

A total 15,510 new cases were registered in

a span of 24 hours. Maharashtra continues to report the highest daily new cases at 8,293, followed by Kerala with 3,254 cases while Punjab has reported 579 new cases.

The Centre is continuously engaging with the states and union territories manifesting higher number of active cases and those reporting a rise in the daily new COVID-19 cases.

States and UTs have been advised to maintain a continued rigorous vigil for containing the spread of COVID-19. Need for effective testing, comprehensive tracking, prompt isolation of positive cases and quick quarantine of close contacts are strongly emphasised, the ministry said.

"Eight states are displaying an upward trajectory in the daily new cases," it underlined.

So far, a total of 1,43,01,266 vaccine doses have been administered to beneficiaries through 2,92,312 sessions. These include the first dose to 66,69,985 healthcare workers, second dose to 24,56,191 healthcare workers and 51,75,090 frontline workers who have taken the first dose.

Community outreach program at Dochum by SAATHI



SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 01 MAR:

SAATHI organized an awareness program on role of community in addressing substance abuse issues at Dochum, East Sikkim, on 28 Feb. The program, supported by Titan Company Ltd, was attended by 89 par-

ticipants, a press release informs.

Coordinator of Drug Users Forum, Prashant Sharma shared his experience with the participants and explained the ill effects of substance abuse. He mentioned that the role of families and communities is very

important especially for adolescents as it is a crucial time in the development of an individual.

He said that warmth and strong family bonding can protect children from substance abuse. The program ended with a positive feedback from the participants.

93 tiger deaths in 3 years, 25 due to poaching: Madhya Pradesh Minister

BHOPAL, 01 MAR [PTI]: Madhya Pradesh, popularly known as the "tiger state" of India, has lost 93 of the big cats due to poaching and other causes in the past three years, state forest minister Vijay Shah told the Assembly on Monday.

In a written reply to a query by Congress MLA Satish Sikarwar, the minister said the 93 deaths occurred from

January 1, 2018 to January 1, 2021, with 25

of them taking place due to poaching, for which 77 people had been held, and the rest due to natural causes, diseases, mutual conflict, old age etc.

As per the 2018 tiger population estimation, Madhya Pradesh has 526 tigers, the highest in the country, with Bandhavgarh with 104 big cats leading the state's tally.

According to the forest department, 88 tigers were found in Kanha Reserve, 61 in Pench

Reserve, 25 in Panna Reserve, 40 in Satpura Reserve and five each in Sanjay Reserve and Nauradehi sanctuary. Besides, 45 tigers are found in Ratapani, Singhori and Khivani sanctuaries, which are part of one landscape.

In the same reply, the minister said lions are not found naturally in the state and the Kuno National Park has been developed for the reintroduction of the Asiatic lion.

Virat Kohli Becomes First Indian To Cross 100 Million Followers On Instagram

NEW DELHI, 01 MAR [PTI]:

Virat Kohli on Monday became the first Indian to cross 100 million followers on Instagram. The International Cricket Council (ICC) took to Instagram to welcome Kohli's entry into an elite club that features football stars like Cristiano Ronaldo, Lionel Messi and Neymar.

The right-handed batsman is also the first cricketer in the world to achieve the landmark on Instagram, with actor Priyanka Chopra second Indian on the list with over 60 million followers.

Apart from Instagram, Kohli also has a massive fan-following on other social media platforms like Twitter and Facebook. He has 40.8 million followers on the micro-blogging site, while has over 36 million likes on Facebook.

Portugal and Juventus star Cristiano Ronaldo is



the most followed individual on Instagram with a staggering 266 million followers. He is followed by famous singer Ariana Grande with 224 million followers, while retired WWE superstar Dwayne Johnson is third on the list with 220 million followers.

Kohli is currently in Ahmedabad with the Indian cricket team as they gear up for the fourth and the final Test against England, beginning March 4. Kohli, who recently became the most successful Indian

skipper on home soil, has been training hard ahead of the series-deciding match. Earlier in the day, he shared a picture with Team India's strength and conditioning coaches Nick Webb and Soham Desai. Sharing the picture, Kohli wrote that the two of them make life hard for him in the gym but it helps him give his best on the field.

India lead the Test series 2-1 and need to at least win or draw the last Test against England to qualify for the World Test Championship final.

LPG price hiked again by Rs 25; ATF price up 6.5%

NEW DELHI, MAR 1 (PTI):

Cooking gas LPG price was on Monday hiked by Rs 25 per cylinder across all categories, including subsidised fuel and those availed by Ujjwala scheme beneficiaries - the fourth increase in rates in a month's time.

LPG prices have gone up by Rs 125 per 14.2-kg cylinder since the beginning of February, price data from state-owned oil marketing companies showed.

Also, jet fuel prices were hiked by a steep 6.5 per cent on the back of a rally in international oil prices.

A 14.2-kg cylinder in Delhi now costs Rs 819 as against Rs 794 at which they were supplied on Sunday.

The increase is applicable across all categories, including subsidised and non-subsidised users.

LPG is available only at one rate, market price, across the country. The government, however, gives a small subsidy to select customers.

However, this subsidy has been eliminated in metros and major cities through successive price increases over the past couple of years. So, in places like Delhi, there is no subsidy paid to customers since May 2020 and all LPG users pay the market price, which currently is Rs 819.

An oil company official said a small subsidy is paid to customers in remote and far-flung areas to make up for the higher price arising from freight charges. LPG prices were hiked first by Rs 25 per cylinder on February 4, followed by a Rs 50 per cylinder increase on February 15 and Rs 25 raise on February 25.

Prices have been on the rise since December and rates have cumulatively gone up by Rs 175 per cylinder.

Simultaneously, aviation turbine fuel or ATF price was hiked by Rs

3,663 per kilolitre, or 6.5 per cent, to Rs 59,400.91 per kl in the national capital, according to a price notification of state-owned fuel retailers.

This is the third increase in jet fuel prices since February. Rates were increased by 3.6 per cent on February 16, and by Rs 3,246.75 per kl on February 1.

The increase in rates will add to the margin woes of airlines who continue to operate flights at less than capacity, amid pandemic-driven travel restrictions.

Brent crude oil prices on Monday rose to USD 65.49 per barrel - the highest in more than a year - on optimism in the global economy and on hopes for improving oil demand as vaccines are being rolled out.

Meanwhile, petrol and diesel prices were unchanged for the second day in a row after hitting an all-time high.

Petrol is priced at Rs 91.17 per litre in Delhi and at Rs 97.57 in Mumbai. Diesel comes for Rs 81.47 a litre in the national capital and for Rs 88.60 in Mumbai.

The rates of regular petrol had last month crossed Rs 100-mark at a few places in Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh, which levy the highest VAT on the fuel in the country.

Price of branded/premium or additive mixed petrol in Mumbai crossed Rs 100 mark on Saturday. It comes for Rs 100.35 a litre now. Higher taxes are levied on branded or premium grade petrol and diesel. In Delhi, the same grade fuel costs Rs 94 a litre.

While petrol and diesel prices are revised on a daily basis, ATF and LPG rates are revised on the 1st and 16th of every month. Sometimes, LPG rates have seen mid-month revisions as well. Petrol price has gone up by Rs 4.87 per litre in the last two months. Diesel rates have increased by Rs 4.99 during the same period.

A Sunday of no...

There are currently only 45 active cases in the State.

Meanwhile, along with healthcare and frontline workers, COVID-19 vaccination for people with co-morbidities and aged between 45 to 59 and people above 60 also began in Sikkim on Monday.

On the first day of this phase, four persons of age-group of 45 to 59 years with comorbidities and 97 persons of age group of 60 years and above have been vaccinated for COVID-19.

Overall, a total of 1,217 people were vaccinated today including 691 healthcare workers and 425 frontline workers.

The detailed break-up is as follows: 111 healthcare workers and 120 frontline workers at Singtam District Hospital, 30 healthcare workers, 50 frontline workers, four 45-59 year olds with comorbidities and 96 above 60 at Urban PHC, Gangtok, 149 healthcare workers and one 60 year old at STNM hospital, 335 healthcare workers and 115 frontline workers at Namchi District Hospital, 06 healthcare workers and 41 frontline workers at Gyalshing District Hospital, 97 healthcare workers at Chungthang PHC and 60 healthcare workers and 02 frontline workers at Dikchu PHC were vaccinated for COVID-19.

CM begins 3-day...

IPR Minister, Loknath Sharma, Power & Energy Minister, MN Sherpa, Forest Minister, Karma Loday Bhutia, Transport Minister, Sanjit Kharel, PHE Minister, Bhim Hang Subba, Lok Sabha MP, Indra Hang Subba, Political Secretary to CM, Jacob Khaling Rai, District Collector-West, Karma R Bonpo, SBS Chairman, DB Gurung, Transport Chairman, Basant Tamang, Additional Political Secretary to CM, Madhu Sudan Sharma along with SDM, Heads of Departments, Line department officials were present.

No nominations...

It may be mentioned that the total number of voters in Namchi Municipal Council and Naya-Bazar Jorethang Nagar Panchayat are 6787 and 5630, respectively.

North Sikkim too saw no nominations being filed today, according to the Municipal Returning Officer.



National Science Day celebrated at Namchi College

**SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 01 MAR:**

National Science Day 2021 was celebrated on 01 March by Department of Mathematics and Physics, Namchi Government College, a press release informs. Principal, Deepak Tiwari, was the chief guest for the celebration.

The event also saw the active participation of faculty from various departments.

The welcome address was delivered by Sabat Rai [Assistant Professor, Department of Physics]. The chief guest Mr. Tiwari addressed the gathering by highlighting the essence of celebrating National Science Day in remembrance of Sir C.V. Raman for receiving the Nobel Prize for the discovery of Raman Effect.

Further the theme of this year's science day "Future of STI: Impacts of Edu-

cation, Skills and Work" was introduced by Dr. C.P. Khatriwada [Assistant Professor, Department of Physics]. The program also had various competitions viz. Extempore and Open Quiz for students wherein many students actively participated.

The program ended with distribution of prizes and certificates followed by vote of thanks.

HDFC Sec blocks trading in NSE cash for limited period; bourse says ops normal

MUMBAI, MAR 1 (PTI): Domestic brokerage HDFC Securities blocked trading in NSE's cash segment for its clients for a limited period due to a technical glitch.

Largest bourse NSE, which had suffered a nearly four-hour trading halt last week, due to telecom connectivity issues, said all the operations across its platforms are functioning smooth and normal.

At 1001 hrs, HDFC Securities tweeted from its official handle, saying, We have blocked trading in NSE cash due to a technical glitch. We request our customers to place cash orders on BSE. All other segments are working fine.

Within 15 minutes,

which saw a quick clarification from the NSE about its operations being normal, the domestic brokerage put out another tweet asking customers to place orders through NSE cash segment.

NSE's smaller rival BSE said there are no issues on fresh orders or square-offs at Asia's oldest stock bourse.

BSE's chief executive Ashishkumar Chauhan clarified that the statement was in response to brokers and investors reporting problems on Twitter on a competing exchange in the morning.

He added that no one has reported any problems in trading at BSE either on Monday or any day last week.

Mobile retailers call for Amazon probe, cap on online Smartphone sales

NEW DELHI, 01 MAR [REUTERS]: A trade group representing 1,50,000 mobile phone stores on Monday urged Prime Minister Narendra Modi to investigate Amazon's business practices in the country and impose a daily cap on a single seller's online smartphone sales.

In a letter sent to PM Modi, the group cited a Reuters special report published last month that revealed Amazon has for years given preferential treatment to a small group of sellers on its Indian platform, using them to circumvent the country's strict foreign investment regulations.

The report was based on internal Amazon documents dated between 2012 and 2019.

"We were already aware of Amazon's thought process and strategy," the All India Mobile Retailers Association (AIMRA) wrote in the letter. The documents, the letter said, "have revealed that Amazon is doing business in India with the strategy of deftly dodging the regulators and politicians".

AIMRA urged the government to "suspend all Amazon activities in

India" until there is an investigation into the company's practices.

Amazon says it doesn't give preferential treatment to any seller on its marketplace and has always complied with Indian law.

Amazon and PM Modi's office did not immediately respond to a request for comment on Monday.

Retailers, a crucial part of PM Modi's support base, have long alleged that Amazon and Walmart's Flipkart flout federal regulations and that their business practices hurt small traders. The companies, which run the two biggest e-commerce platforms in India, deny the allegations.

The Amazon documents reviewed by Reuters showed the company helped a small number of sellers prosper on its website, discounted their fees and helped one cut special deals with big tech manufacturers such as Apple Inc.

Some 35 of Amazon's more than 400,000 sellers in India in early 2019 accounted for around two-thirds of its online sales, the documents also showed.

105th Pratibha Milan held in Gangtok

**SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 01 MAR:**

The 105th edition of the monthly event, Pratibha Milan of Nepali Sahitya Parishad Bhawan was held on Sunday. The programme, which was chaired by a senior litterateur, Bhim Thatal, started with the welcome address by NSP general secretary, Neelam Neopaney.

During the programme, NSP president, Rudra Poudyal talked about the activities of the parishad and also highlighted the objective of Pratibha Milan.

A press release informs that Gayatri Gau-



tam, Punya Koirala, Prem Neopaney, Onesimus Sundas, Kuber Bista, Pratiksha Sharma and Rajesh Adhikari recited their poems, while Ajumi Rai, Smrita Rai, Kritika Pradhan and Upendra

Neopaney gave their cultural presentation.

The function also witnessed the release of a collection of poems, Paniko Parkhal of poet, Nirkamal Dahal and another book, Bedhna by poet Abhishek Koirala.

Kuber Bhandari elected executive member of TTFI

**SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 01 MAR:**

Kuber Bhandari from Sikkim has been elected as one of the executive members of Table Tennis Federation of India [TTFI]. He was elected during the 84th annual general body meeting of Table Tennis Federation of India held on 24 Feb at Panchkula, Haryana.

Kuber Bhandari and UK Pradhan attended the meeting on behalf of the Sikkim Table Tennis Association, informs an STTA press release.

The election of the executive committee of



TTFI was held during the meeting under the supervision of Returning Officer, retired Justice Ranjit Singh of the Haryana and Punjab High Courts, who declared Dushyant Chautala elected as the president of the Federation.

Likewise, Arun Banerjee and Gurpreet

Singh were elected as secretary general and treasurer respectively of the TTFI along with other members of the executive committee. In the AGM, Dhanraj Chaudhary was nominated as the CEO and MP Singh as the Advisor of the Federation, it is informed.

Delhi govt suspends subsidy on Tata Nexon EV

NEW DELHI, MAR 1 (PTI): The Delhi government has delisted the electric version of the Tata Nexon car from its subsidy scheme for electric vehicles following complaints that the model failed to meet the specified range on a single charge, officials said on Monday.

Delhi Transport minister Kailash Gahlot on Monday said several users had complained of "sub-standard" driving range offered by the Nexon electric vehicle (EV).

"The Delhi government has decided to suspend subsidy on a EV car model, pending final report of a Committee, due to complaints by multi-



ple users of sub-standard range performance," Gahlot tweeted.

"We are committed to support EVs, but not at the cost of trust & confidence of citizens in claims by manufacturers," he said.

Last month, a show

cause notice was issued to Tata Motors by the transport department about a complaint from a user of the Nexon EV claiming it did not meet the promised range of 312 km on single charge of its battery, officials said.

SOA officials call on IOA president

**SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 01 MAR:**

Sikkim Olympic Association [SOA] president, Kuber Bhandari and general secretary, Jaslal Pradhan called on the president of Indian Olympic Association [IOA], Dr Narendra Dhruv Batra on 25 February.

A press release informs that the SOA delegation apprised the IOA president about various new initiatives taken in sports under the guidance of Chief Minister in Sikkim. The IOA president appreciated the initiative of Rural Sports, Inter School competitions, talent hunt and CM One Mile Run taken up by the State government in Sikkim.

He was also apprised of State Khelo India Cen-



tre of Excellence in respect of Archery, Boxing and Athletics in Sikkim, the release adds.

SOA also sought co-operation, guidance

and support from the Indian Olympic Association in its endeavour to promote and achieve excellence in games and sports in the state.

National Science Day at Majhitar school



**SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 01 MAR:**

Majhitar Secondary School in collaboration with Agastya International Foundation and Cipla Ltd organised a Science Fair at the school premises on the occasion of National Science Day today, a press release informs.

The program had Joint Director, AD Chettri, Education Department as the chief guest and Director, S Chattopadhyay, Human Resources, Cipla Ltd as the special guest.

The Science fair had a total of 60 participants from Majhitar SS, Rangpo Senior Secondary School and Rangpo Secondary School.

Memorial Service

The memorial service of late Chandra Mati Rai [Caroline], ret'd Accountant of Building & Housing Department, Namchi, South Sikkim, who left for her heavenly abode on the 16th of February 2021, falls on the 04th of March 2021 [Thursday].

All relatives, friends and well-wishers are requested to join us in offering prayers for the departed soul at our residence at Tharpu, below Hotel Hangkhim, Melli Road, Namchi, South Sikkim.

We also would like to express our gratitude to all those who stood by us during the time of our bereavement.

S K Paul Rai [Husband]

Goodwin Rai [Daughter]

Silvanus Sherpa [Son-in-law]

Treza Rai [Daughter]

Lorato Rai [Daughter]

Contact No. 8768870693, 8553226165, 9775863431, 9593673056



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VACCINATION CLINIC

For a Better Public Transport System

At least 1,14,293 households would welcome a reliable Public Transport option

Waiting in the rain for a share-cab is not the most relaxing ways to begin a work-day, especially now that the weather has taken a turn and should a tourist season set in, frustrations will run even higher. Not only are the jams enormous and tiring, even taxis become scarce as they chase after the more remunerative sightseeing fares or decide not to waste precious fuel idling away in traffic jams. This development, when taken up along with the resurgent gusto with which banks are jumping at vehicle loan applications, leads to a situation where one can safely assume that the number of new cars on Sikkim roads will grow, if not at a faster clip than at least the same frequency as they did in the decade between 2001-2011. A host of factors came together in that decade to inject an explosion of vehicles into Sikkim, and while this might be fine if one were looking at vehicle ownership as a sign of prosperity, the traffic jams here lead to a mistaken notion that there were enough private vehicles in Sikkim to justify the absence of a decent public transport system.

Let's hold that thought and begin with vehicle ownership statistics in Sikkim as revealed in the data for households released by the Census of India for 2011. Sikkim had around 1.04 lakh households in 2001 which grew to 1,28,131 households in 2011. While the population grew at its slowest rate in recent times at 12.6% between 2001- 2011 [against 33.6% growth in the previous decade, 1991-2001], four wheel vehicle ownership grew nearly four-times. Where 2.3% of the families in Sikkim owned a car/jeep in 2001, the 2011 head-count revealed that this has now grown to 8.3%. It is now seven years since that census was undertaken, so chances are that the number of families owning a car of their own has grown some more or possibly the same families are now owning more vehicles. Comparing Sikkim's [per capita vehicle spread against the national average for such ownership throws up some interesting statistics as well. While back in 2001, car ownership in Sikkim at 2.3% was slightly lower than the national average of 2.5%, in 2011, it was nearly double the national average of 4.7%. For those who would prefer real numbers, here it is - while 2,618 of the 1.04 lakh households in Sikkim owned a car in 2001, in 2011, this number had grown to 10,635 families out of the around 1.28 lakh households here. The increase, as mentioned, has been mind-boggling and the endless line of vehicles on the highways and town roads here also projects the mistaken notion that there are already too many vehicles on the roads.

And some might even use this density to argue against adding the burden of a wider public transport system here. But that would be a wrong inference, because while many more families in Sikkim now own cars, the number of Sikkim households without any mode of conveyance is also staggering at 89.2% of the households here. Interestingly, at the national level, while much fewer families on average own a car, only 44.1% of the households own no mode of transportation. Again, for those who would prefer actual numbers – the Census of 2011 found that 1,14,293 households in Sikkim do not own any form of conveyance, neither a car, nor a scooter nor even a bicycle. This number was 1,00,548 in 2001. The point being made here is that nearly 90% of the households are in need of a cheap and reliable mode of transportation.

The road network in Sikkim is already expansive and there are jeeps available to and from every corner of the State. People have recourse to only an occasional SNT bus in most places and private jeep services are expectedly more expensive than what a state operated bus would charge for the same journey. What is also sorely missed in Sikkim is a public transport option for shorter distances. Even the City Runner which has a well advised route connecting Gangtok to the suburbs and nearby towns has too few buses on the road compared the number of commuters who would use it if they were more frequent and better scheduled (at least to the level that the jams on Gangtok's only road will allow). The same applies to the districts.

Fact remains that close to 90% of the population remains denied the option of using a state supported public transport, which, even if it were slower, would also be more reliable [against the tourist season vagaries of private operators], safer and cheaper. The policy makers should perhaps factor the interests of this sector in their future projections.

Journalism: Digital Giants Paying for Content is Good News, but Will it Support Local Press?

AMY BINNS
theconversation.com

That the internet has all but destroyed the business model that has always supported journalism is not news. But what has made the news around the world recently is that the Australian government has attempted to do something about it.

It has passed a new law forcing organisations such as Facebook and Google, which make a great deal of money out of carrying news material on their platforms, to share their advertising revenue with media organisations.

Facebook incurred a worldwide backlash by temporarily blocking all news sites for users in Australia. Google, meanwhile, took the opposite tack by signing early agreements with the country's key media players. Facebook has now also pledged to strike deals with Australia's leading news companies in return for allowing its users to post their content on its pages.

But if the purpose of the new law is to serve democracy by supporting public interest journalism, how well will it work?

The wholesale movement of revenue from media outlets employing professional journalists to content platforms which produce no original stories is a major international problem. Social media doesn't just reduce funding for professional journalism, it also enables the spread of fake news that rapidly fills the gap left behind. It's a problem that has been obscured by social media's many other issues: bullying, use by criminal groups, and disturbing, exploitative, violent and pornographic content. But in fact, how advertising income breaks down has much deeper implications.

Digital advertising spend is continuously increasing, but about 40% goes to Google, with Facebook in second place at about 22% and closing the gap. Meanwhile, local newspapers have watched as their property advertising has disappeared to Rightmove and their classified ads to Ebay and Facebook. As for job ads, which were such good moneyspinners for local and national newspapers, they have migrated mainly to CV upload sites, such as LinkedIn.

To maintain visibility in the new digital world, news organisations have to be present on social media platforms – which simply means more eyeballs for the likes of Facebook and Twitter. Deprived of advertising revenue, traditional news organisations are in seemingly unstoppable decline – not just in the UK, but around the world. In the UK, 265 titles have closed since 2005 – with COVID-19 proving the final nail in the coffin for some.

The Australian initiative attempts to mitigate against tech giants siphoning off all digital revenue – but a major and valid criticism is that the deal appears to be skewed in favour of large media organisations. Funds also need to be made available to support independent local news organisations. The imbalance is already visible.



Google preempted the new law by reaching agreements to pay seven Australian media organisations, including Rupert Murdoch's considerable newspaper and TV empire. But there's concern that the grassroots organisations that provide most public service news are unlikely to benefit without the massive influence of the nationals.

Google has also agreed to pay for use of news snippets in Google News search results from some publishers in France – but so far only to a handful of major national organisations as well as the international news agency Reuters. Again, the agreement looks set to benefit the biggest players the most, since one of the criteria is monthly traffic. Reuters' French rival AFP has already complained.

BLACKOUT ON LOCAL NEWS

Why does this matter? Research has shown clear links between a loss of journalism – particularly at local level – and a loss of public participation and trust in democracy. The watchdog role of the local press drives up standards in many other unexpected ways.

In the US, congressmen in areas not covered by a local newspaper do less to represent their communities in the absence of local watchdogs – they are more likely to toe the party to line than rebel, and do less constituency work, while their areas get less federal funding. Where local newsrooms have had severe staff cuts, there's also less competition in mayoral elections.

There's evidence from Norway and Japan that

councils in areas with high local paper circulations are more efficient. The decline of local newspapers and reduced coverage of local politics has even been blamed for political polarisation, particularly in poorer areas.

And it's not just about politics. The Index on Censorship has reported on the problems of reduced local newsrooms trying to report accurately while public bodies, including health and education trusts, employ highly paid marketing teams to protect their image; and local social media groups share information that often turns out to be false.

Fewer local journalists means less coverage of court cases and inquests. In my own research into coverage of coroners' courts, we found evidence of "news deserts": areas where inquests were never reported due to staff cuts and patchy information from courts. Editors told me it was increasingly difficult to contact the police directly, as contacts were funnelled through police "newsrooms" – previously press offices – which now aim to prioritise good news stories about police successes.

This has serious consequences. The importance of the reporting of public inquests has been highlighted by the work of George Julian, who live-tweets inquests of people with learning difficulties and autism. They typically die two decades earlier than people without these special needs, often because of poorly managed care which is only highlighted during the inquest process. But if there is no-one there to cover the inquest, there is little public pressure for change.

LOCAL JOURNALISM COSTS MONEY TOO

The moves by the Australian government are a step in the right direction but there is a risk that the negotiating system will let the big players grab the newly released revenue, leaving high-quality, professional local journalism high and dry again.

This is actually in nobody's interests. National news organisations have long relied on the local press to act as a grassroots army of reporters. Many national stories began as a local paper's front page, and many great reporters started out on the local press. Self-interest actually should dictate that they use their power to help their smaller colleagues, but it seems likely that, without a keen oversight by the reviewing body a year from now, short-termism will ensure they continue to carve out the biggest slice of the pie.

[the writer is Senior Lecturer, Journalism and Digital Communication, University of Central Lancashire]

As Death Approaches, Our Dreams Offer Comfort, Reconciliation

CARINE MARDOROSSIAN
theconversation.com

One of the most devastating elements of the coronavirus pandemic has been the inability to personally care for loved ones who have fallen ill.

Again and again, grieving relatives have testified to how much more devastating their loved one's death was because they were unable to hold their family member's hand – to provide a familiar and comforting presence in their final days and hours.

Some had to say their final good-byes through smartphone screens held by a medical provider. Others resorted to using walkie-talkies or waving through windows.

How does one come to terms with the overwhelming grief and guilt over the thought of a loved one dying alone?

I don't have an answer to this question. But the work of a hospice doctor named Christopher Kerr – with whom I co-authored the book "Death Is But a Dream: Finding Hope and Meaning at Life's End" – might offer some consolation.

UNEXPECTED VISITORS

At the start of his career, Dr. Kerr was tasked – like any and all physicians – with attending to the physical care of his patients. But he soon noticed a phenomenon that seasoned nurses were already accustomed to. As patients approached death, many had dreams and visions of deceased loved ones who came back to comfort them in their final days.

Doctors are typically trained to interpret these occurrences as drug-induced or delusional hallucinations that might warrant more medication or downright sedation.

But after seeing the peace and comfort these end-of-life experiences seemed to bring his patients, Dr. Kerr decided to pause and listen. One day, in 2005, a dying patient named Mary had one such vision: She began moving her arms as if rocking a baby,

cooing at her child who had died in infancy decades prior.

To Dr. Kerr, this didn't seem like cognitive decline. What if, he wondered, patients' own perceptions at life's end mattered to their well-being in ways that should not concern just nurses, chaplains and social workers?

What would medical care look like if all physicians stopped and listened, too?

THE PROJECT BEGINS

So at the sight of dying patients reaching and calling out to their loved ones – many of whom they had not seen, touched or heard for decades – he began collecting and recording testimonies given directly by those who were dying. Over the course of 10 years, he and his research team recorded the end-of-life experiences of 1,400 patients and families.

What he discovered astounded him. Over 80% of his patients – no matter what walk of life, background or age group they came from – had end-of-life experiences that seemed to entail more than just strange dreams. These were vivid, meaningful and transformative. And they always increased in frequency near death.

They included visions of long-lost mothers, fathers and relatives, as well as dead pets come back to comfort their former owners. They were about relationships resurrected, love revived and forgiveness achieved. They often brought reassurance and support, peace and acceptance.

BECOMING A DREAM WEAVER

I first heard of Dr. Kerr's research in a barn.

I was busy mucking my horse's stall. The stables were on Dr. Kerr's property, so we often discussed his work on the dreams and visions of his dying patients. He told me about his TEDx Talk on the topic, as well as the book project he was working on.

I couldn't help but be moved by the work of this doctor and scientist. When he disclosed that he was not getting far with the writing, I offered

to help. He hesitated at first. I was an English professor who was an expert in taking apart the stories others wrote, not in writing them myself. His agent was concerned that I wouldn't be able to write in ways that were accessible to the public – something academics are not exactly known for. I persisted, and the rest is history.

It was this collaboration that turned me into a writer.

I was tasked with instilling more humanity into the remarkable medical intervention this scientific research represented, to put a human face on the statistical data that had already been published in medical journals.

The moving stories of Dr. Kerr's encounters with his patients and their families confirmed how, in the words of the French Renaissance writer Michel de Montaigne, "he who should teach men to die would at the same time teach them to live."

I learned about Robert, who was losing Barbara, his wife of 60 years, and was assailed by conflicting feelings of guilt, despair and faith. One day, he inexplicably saw her reaching for the baby son they had lost decades ago, in a brief span of lucid dreaming that echoed Mary's experience years earlier. Robert was struck by his wife's calm demeanor and blissful smile. It was a moment of pure wholeness, one that transformed their experience of the dying process. Barbara was living her passing as a time of love regained, and seeing her comforted brought Robert some peace in the midst of his irredeemable loss.

For the elderly couples Dr. Kerr cared for, being separated by death after decades of togetherness was simply unfathomable. Joan's recurring dreams and visions helped mend the deep wound left by her husband's passing months earlier. She would call out to him at night and point to his presence during the day, including in moments of full and articulate lucidity. For her daughter Lisa, these

occurrences grounded her in the knowledge that her parents' bond was unbreakable. Her mother's pre-death dreams and visions assisted Lisa in her own journey toward acceptance – a key element of processing loss.

When children are dying, it is often their beloved, deceased pets that make appearances. Thirteen-year-old Jessica, dying of a malignant form of bone-based cancer, started having visions of her former dog, Shadow. His presence reassured her. "I will be fine," she told Dr. Kerr on one of his last visits.

For Jessica's mom, Kristen, these visions – and Jessica's resulting tranquility – helped initiate the process she had been resisting: that of letting go.

ISOLATED BUT NOT ALONE

The health care system is difficult to change. Nevertheless, Dr. Kerr still hopes to help patients and their loved ones reclaim the dying process from a clinical approach to one that is appreciated as a rich and unique human experience.

Pre-death dreams and visions help fill the void that may otherwise be created by the doubt and fear that death evokes. They help the dying reunite with those they have loved and lost, those who secured them, affirmed them and brought them peace. They heal old wounds, restore dignity, and reclaim love. Knowing about this paradoxical reality helps the bereaved cope with grief as well.

As hospitals and nursing homes continue to remain closed to visitors because of the coronavirus pandemic, it may help to know that the dying rarely speak of being alone. They speak of being loved and put back together.

There is no substitute for being able to hold our loved ones in their last moments, but there may be solace in knowing that they were being held.

[the writer is Professor of English, University at Buffalo]

Bengal polls: TMC likely to drop several sitting MLAs

KOLKATA, MAR 1 (PTI): The Trinamool Congress is likely to axe several sitting MLAs from its candidate list for the upcoming West Bengal elections, sources said on Monday.

The party is planning to nominate more youths, women, and leaders with clean image and acceptability in their area, they said.

Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee met the party's 12-member election committee in the afternoon at her residence in Kalighat and brainstormed over the nominations.

"Today, the election committee authorised Mamata Banerjee to take the final call regarding selecting candidates," a senior TMC leader said.

Nearly 30 per cent of the 294 constituencies, including those of the 19 MLAs who have switched over to BJP, are likely to have new candidates, the sources said.

"Reports by Prashant Kishor's I-PAC on every



MLA and their constituencies are likely to play a key role in the candidate selection," another TMC leader, who was present at the meeting, said.

"How the MLAs have performed in the last five years, their image in the area and acceptability will be the main parameters. This time we won't be taking any chances,"

he added. Another party leader said that elderly MLAs with age above 75 are likely to be dropped.

"Stress will be given on nominating more woman leaders. Last time our candidate list had around 33 per cent woman candidates. This time it will go up further," he said.

In 2016, the TMC had won

211 seats in the 294-member House. The Left-Congress alliance had bagged 77 seats, and the BJP three.

The elections this time, which are seeing a stiff contest between the TMC and the BJP, will be held in eight phases, beginning with polling for 30 seats on March 27. Votes will be counted on May 2. After having a

marginal presence in the politically polarised state for decades, the BJP has emerged as the ruling Trinamool Congress's main rival over the last couple of years, managing to win 18 out of 42 seats in the Lok Sabha polls of 2019 and following it with inducting popular TMC MLAs, MP and ministers into the party.

Olive Ridley mass nesting likely on Odisha's Gahirmatha Beach within fortnight: Official

KENDRAPARA (ODISHA), MAR 1 (PTI): Despite the erosion of Gahirmatha Beach in Odisha's Kendrapara district, wildlife officials are optimistic about the convergence of lakhs of Olive Ridley turtles on the nesting ground for mass nesting any time within a fortnight.

Notwithstanding the eroded physical profile of the nesting beach at the Nasi-II Island, a large turnout of female turtles for laying eggs is expected. The mass nesting is likely to take place by the second week of March, Divisional Forest Officer, Rajnagar Man-

grove (Wildlife) Forest Division, Bikash Chandra Dash said on Monday.

"The 2.6-km-long nesting beach has got bifurcated due to inundation by seawaters. Still, the shape of the beach is perfect for turtles to dig pits and lay eggs. The edge of the beach facing the sea is not steep and turtles will find it favourable to emerge from the seawaters to crawl on to the beach," he said.

Strong southerly winds and temperatures ranging between 32 and 38 degrees Celsius are conducive for mass nesting of turtles, the DFO said, adding that a large

congregation of turtles is waiting in the deep sea.

Every year, the marauding sea is eating up portions of the geographical boundary of Gahirmatha Beach in uninhabited Nasi-II Island, he said.

Only female turtles invade the nesting beaches usually at the dead of the night for laying eggs. This phenomenon is called 'arribada', he said.

After laying eggs, the mother turtles return to the sea. The hatchlings emerge from these eggs after 45-60 days.

It is a rare natural phenomenon where ba-

bies grow without their mothers, the official said.

Olive Ridley turtles turn up in millions for mass nesting along the Odisha coast every year. Gahirmatha is acclaimed as the world's largest nesting ground of the reptiles.

Apart from Gahirmatha, these threatened reptiles also lay eggs at Rushikulya River mouth in Ganjam district and Devi River mouth in Puri district.

Around 7.30 lakh Olive Ridley turtles had laid eggs along the Odisha coast in 2019-20, with Gahirmatha hosting 4.5 lakh of them.

Gareth Bale hits two as Tottenham's revamped attack blows Burnley away

NICK AMES TOTTENHAM, 01 MAR [THE GUARDIAN]: This was exactly the kind of afternoon Tottenham had hoped for when Gareth Bale jetted back in five months ago. Two goals and an assist offered compelling evidence that he has a use beyond Europa League cameos and heightened the impression that, at long last, he is ready to be both the game-changer and team player José Mourinho wants.

Perhaps even more encouraging than the individual flourishes was his harmony with the rest of Spurs' front four, each of whom were outstanding. Everyone was on the same page and that was evident in the sumptuous 60-yard ball Bale played to Harry Kane for the strike that effectively put this game beyond Burnley.

Lucas Moura deservedly scored too and that is to say nothing of the ingenuity with which Son Heung-min created at least one of Bale's goals. Given their woeful prior run of domestic form Spurs' performance was an apposite reminder that, when harnessed properly, they have attacking power capable of blowing opponents away.

This was only Bale's third top-flight start of the season. The doubts and disagreements over elements of his fitness have been well documented but here he built on his improvement of recent games and was ready to meet the occasion. "It would be very nice for

me now to say that I handled the situation amazingly well but I'm not that kind of guy," Mourinho said, managing to keep a straight face. But all that uncertainty may yet prove worthwhile if Bale continues in this vein.

The caveat is that Burnley, whose gameplan was reduced to smithereens when Bale tapped in after 68 seconds, were woe-ful. If Tottenham could have used a Thursday-night assignment against Wolfsburg as an excuse for any sluggishness it was a mystery that, with eight days' rest in the runup, Sean Dyche's players seemed to be wading through treacle. They are within five points of the relegation zone and their only blessing was that Spurs did not score several more.

Harry Kane celebrates after scoring Spurs' second.

Harry Kane celebrates after scoring Spurs' second. Photograph: Tom Jenkins/The Guardian

The opener owed much to the work of Son, even there will be debate about the forward's intentions. When he cut inside to cross from beyond the left corner of the Burnley area there were few who predicted a low, scuffed-looking ball that evaded James Tarkowski's lunge and surprised the cluster of players primed for a delivery to the far post. Bale had read it though and, with Nick Pope and his defence flat-footed, stole in to trickle a simple finish over the line. Had Son meant to find Bale that

way? It would have been an exceptional feat of vision, although that is hardly beyond him. Burnley had never conceded a Premier League goal this quickly and showed no ability to recover. "If you give a soft goal away so early, part of your gameplan goes immediately and that calms them down," Dyche said.

Any hastily formulated plan B became rubble too as Spurs kept coming in waves. Kane and Moura both could have scored, while Bale rolled back the years when he tore past Charlie Taylor. On the quarter-hour Bale received possession from Pierre-Emile Højbjerg deep inside his own half, looked up and found Kane with a raking pass. It was left for Kane to work the shooting angle and beat Pope at his near post via a deflection off Tarkowski; such a potent combination between provider and scorer was

exactly what might have been trailed in September.

When Moura made it three, finishing emphatically after an inadvertent flick-on from the luckless Tarkowski, it became a question of how many Spurs might score in the second half. They settled for one after Son found Bale in acres of space on the right with an outside-of-the-boot pass whose purpose nobody could doubt. Bale's left foot did the job stylishly, just as it had against Wolfsburg, sending the ball sweetly into the net via Pope's far post.

CBI takes over ITBP fake appointment letters case

NEW DELHI, MAR 1 (PTI): The CBI has taken over investigation in ITBP recruitment scam in which 24 unsuccessful candidates from across the country were conned with fake appointment letters to join the force, officials said.

These candidates had appeared in the examination for the post of Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) constables in 2014-15 and 2016 but could not clear the selection process, they said.

However, they reached the force's offices with fake recruitment letters to join duties, leaving ITBP officials surprised.

The candidates were from across the country carrying "recruitment letter in spite of being unsuccessful in their tests, they said.

The ITBP officials



spotted a mobile number on their letters with instructions to make contact on it, they said.

The candidates were also asked to deposit some money as "training charges" in bank accounts prior to joining their duties, they said.

Some of these candidates were lured by the letter and scrupulously deposited the money in those accounts, they said.

It was clear that the candidates from Assam, Punjab, Andaman,

Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh, Kerala, Jammu and Kashmir and Himachal Pradesh were issued fake recruitment letters even as genuine candidates were cleared after the due process and recruitment process was completed already, they said.

The agency has registered a case of criminal conspiracy, cheating and forgery, they said.

Kolkata drug seizure case: BJP leader's aide arrested

Kolkata, Mar 1 (PTI): An aide of BJP leader Rakesh Singh has been arrested here in connection with the New Alipore drug seizure case, a senior police officer said on Monday.

With the fresh arrest, six persons, including two BJP leaders have been held so far in connection with the case.

The accused was nabbed from a shed beside Adi Ganga canal near Orphange market

in Watgunge police station area late on Sunday night, the officer said.

"He was instructed by Rakesh Singh to wait near Kidderpore Post Office with a scooter. Amrit Singh, who is wanted in the case, escaped from the post office on that scooter," the IPS officer said, adding the vehicle has been seized.

The arrested person will be produced before the Alipore Court during the day. Police had ar-

rested BJP youth wing leader Pamela Goswami and two of her associates after seizing 90 gm cocaine from the car the trio was travelling in.

Following her accusation that she was "framed" by party colleague and BJP state committee member Rakesh Singh, Kolkata Police nabbed him and another person in Galsi in Purba Bardhaman district while they were trying to escape.

Lalrinenga Sailo new Aizawl mayor

AIZAWL, MAR 1 (PTI): The 19 newly-elected councillors of the Aizawl Municipal Corporation (AMC) were sworn in on Monday.

Aizawl district magistrate R Lalramnghaka administered the oath to the newly elected councillors at a function held at the municipal office.

Lalrinenga Sailo, a Mizo National Front (MNF) nominee from ward-I, was elected the mayor, while ward XII councillor R Thanglura of MNF was elected the deputy mayor. Four coun-

cillors -- Lalringliana, Laltanzova Khianget, B Lalawmpuii and H Zonunsanga, all from MNF, were nominated as executive councillors by the mayor.

In the AMC polls held on February 16, the ruling MNF won a simple majority by bagging 11 out of the 19 seats, while main opposition Zoram People's Movement (ZPM) bagged six seats and Congress won two.

The BJP contested in nine seats and drew a blank.

Of the 19 seats, six (33 per cent) are reserved for women and the ZPM won

five of these seats, while the MNF bagged one.

With two woman candidates winning general seats, the total number of woman councillors in the 19-member civic body is eight. The AMC was established in 2010 under the Mizoram Municipalities Act, 2007.

The swearing-in ceremony was attended by Deputy Chief Minister Tawnluia, who also holds the Urban Development and Poverty Alleviation portfolio, and other ministers, including Health Minister R Lalthangliana.

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Bengali film actress Srabanti Chatterjee joins BJP

KOLKATA, MAR 1 (PTI): Popular Bengali film actress Srabanti Chatterjee on Monday joined the BJP.

She was welcomed to the saffron camp by BJP national general secretary Kailash Vijayvargiya and the party's state president, Dilip Ghosh.

"We welcome Srabanti Chatterjee to our party. People from various walks joined the BJP today," Ghosh said.

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Branden Grace closes eagle-birdie to win Puerto Rico Open

RIO GRANDE (PUERTO RICO), MAR 1 (AP): Branden Grace closed eagle-birdie to win the Puerto Rico Open, an emotional triumph following his father's January death after a month-long fight with the coronavirus. Grace holed out from a greenside bunker for eagle on the par-4 17th and birdied the par-5 18th for a one-stroke victory over Jhonattan Vegas at windy Grand Reserve.

"This morning I had a tear in the car when I was talking to my wife," Grace said about father Peter.

"It was an emotional day. I thought about him a hell of a lot out there, especially the last tee shot. I was really struggling the last hole, because I knew he was watching over me. I knew he was guiding me."

The 32-year-old South African player won for the second time on the PGA Tour and 13th worldwide, closing with a 6-under 66 to finish at 19-under 269.

"It's been a very tough couple of years and a tough couple of months and it's just nice to obviously, with all the support back home with my wife and my son and my family and everybody back home," Grace said.

"And all that we have been through, there's some light at the end of the tunnel."

Vegas, from Venezuela, birdied the 18th in a 65. Puerto Rican player Rafael Campos and Grayson Murray, tied for the third-round lead, each shot 70 to tie for third at 16 under.

Grace drove into the right bunker on the 17th, the hole playing 300 yards to the front of the green with the tees moved well forward.

"That was a tough bunker shot," Grace said.

"And to play it perfectly, just get it with just enough check and managed to get it to roll out and 5 or 6 feet to go, I knew it was in. So, that was obviously fortunate."

He also hit into a greenside bunker on 18, flopped out to 6 feet and made the winning putt.

"The only thing you can't do on 18 is hit it left," Grace said.

"I managed to hit a great drive, and I wasn't going to go left. I pulled my second. And I knew if I could get it maybe front edge or in the bunker, then I'm going to give myself opportunity. And fortunately I was in the second bunker, so I could really just get it up on the slope and just get it to run out a little bit and manage to play perfectly."

The tournament was played opposite the World Golf Championship event in Florida. Grace earned a two-year PGA Tour exemption and a spot in the PGA Championship in May, but not the Masters in April.

Campos had his third top-10 finish in his home event. He tied for eighth in 2016 and tied for 10th in 2017. He parred the final three after rebounding from bogeys on 10 and 11 with birdies on 12, 13 and 15. "I can seal the deal. I know I can," Campos said.

Lukaku scores in 32 seconds as Inter beats Genoa 3-0

MILAN, MAR 1 (AP): Romelu Lukaku scored after just 32 seconds and helped to set up two goals as league leader Inter Milan beat Genoa 3-0 in Serie A.

Inter dominated but took until the 69th minute to double its lead, through Matteo Darmian. Substitute Alexis Sanchez sealed the win to ensure Antonio Conte's side remained four points above second-place AC Milan, which won 2-1 at Roma.

It was Genoa's first league defeat since early January and left it 13th, eight points above the drop zone.

Inter was bidding for a fifth straight league win and it got off to the perfect start when Nicol Barella sent a ball through to Lukaku, who played a quick one-two with Lautaro Martinez before drilling into the bottom left corner.

The Nerazzurri wasted a number of chances and Barella also hit a long-range stunner off the crossbar in the 17th. Inter finally doubled its lead when Lukaku drew defenders toward him before setting up an unmarked Darmian.

Sanchez was brought on in the 76th and the Inter forward immediately scored as he turned in the rebound after Genoa goalkeeper Mattia Perin parried Lukaku's effort.



The goal was originally ruled out for offside but was awarded on video review.

MILAN WINS

Milan kept up the pressure on city rival Inter despite having goals ruled out and hitting the woodwork.

Fikayo Tomori and Zlatan Ibrahimovic both had goals ruled out for offside for Milan

and Simon Kjær hit the crossbar before the visitors broke the deadlock three minutes from halftime when Franck Kessi converted a penalty after Federico Fazio had fouled Davide Calabria.

Henrikh Mkhitaryan had a goal ruled out for Roma, which leveled five minutes after the break thanks to Jordan

Veretout's curled effort.

But Ante Rebic restored Milan's lead in the 58th with an impressive swiveling effort into the far bottom corner.

RACE FOR FOURTH

Atalanta struggled before breaking down Sampdoria 2-0 to move fourth in Serie A.

Atalanta risked a lot in the early stages and also needed

a goal-line clearance before Ruslan Malinovskyi gave it the lead five minutes before halftime.

Atalanta had another goal disallowed for offside but Robin Gosens all but sealed the match in the 70th.

Atalanta is below third-place Juventus on goal difference and two points above

Roma, in fifth. Napoli was a point further back after beating Benevento 2-0.

Dries Mertens made his first start for more than two months and scored the opening goal when he turned Matteo Politano's deflected attempt into the back of the net in the 34th minute.

Piotr Zielinski thought he had doubled Napoli's lead moments later but his effort was ruled out for an offside in the buildup. Napoli did get its second midway through the second period when the ball went into the back of the net off Politano, following a series of deflections.

The only negative note for Napoli was the sending off of defender Kalidou Koulibaly for a second bookable offense, nine minutes from time.

CAGLIARI WINS

New Cagliari coach Leonardo Semplici ended his side's 16-match winless streak in all competitions as he steered the Sardinian team to a 2-0 win at bottom club Crotone.

Cagliari had to see out the final 15 minutes with 10 men after Charalampos Lykogiannis was sent off.

Cagliari inched to within two points of safety while Crotone remained eight points below 17th-place Torino.

Also, Udinese beat Fiorentina 1-0.

Boycott questions over Beijing Winter Olympics raise eerie echoes of 1936

SEAN INGLE

LONDON, 01 MAR [THEGUARDIAN]: History doesn't repeat itself, but it often rhymes. I am staring at two bundles of newspaper clippings – one present day, one past – and feeling a deepening chill. The first pile details China's treatment of the Uighur Muslim population in Xinjiang, where more than a million people have been "re-educated" in camps, as well as the calls for the 2022 Winter Olympics to be stripped from Beijing. The second is from the Manchester Guardian in 1935, recording the abuse of Jews in Germany and demanding a boycott of the Berlin Games. The echoes are eerie. The looming question, then as now, is what the world should do.

The similarities don't end there. In 1931, when Germany was awarded the Olympics, it was a republic. But when the Nazis seized power and began internment of Jews two years later, the International Olympic Committee refused to shout too loudly for fear of irritating its hosts. A similar playbook has been employed since the China Cables detailed the horrific mistreatment of the Uighurs in November 2019. The IOC told me recently that it "must remain neutral on all global issues" but insisted that "we received assurances that the principles of the Olympic charter will be respected in the context of the Games".

But amid reports of large numbers of women being subject to forced sterilisation – and 13 tonnes of human hair suspected to have been shaved from women and sold as extensions abroad – others are not so sedate. Last week the Canadian parliament voted 266-0 to declare it as genocide – with lawmakers also calling on the IOC to move the 2022 Games from Beijing "if the Chinese government continues this genocide".

So how should we react? In the build-up to the Berlin Olympics, the Manchester Guardian had no doubts. In a powerful editorial it called on Britain to boycott the Games since "the Nazis have injected the political poison of antisemitism into the principle of human equality upon which the Games have been based and without



which they are spiritually dead". That editorial followed a series of missives from the paper's athletics correspondent, who reminded readers that those Jews "who have not escaped into exile have lived a life of anxiety, poverty and persecution". It must not be forgotten, he added, "that the Nazi philosophy is essentially hostile to the Olympic ideal".

When threats of a US and British boycott began to increase, the IOC sent one of its members, Charles Hitchcock Sherrill, to Germany to investigate. He was hardly an impartial choice: two years earlier he had praised Hitler as the strongest man in Europe. Unsurprisingly Sherrill gave the Berlin regime a clean bill of health, saying the treatment of Jews in Germany was as "little his business as the lynching of negroes in the American south".

He did, though, eke one concession: the Jewish fencer Helen Mayer, who had been in exile in the US for four years, was allowed to compete for Germany. It was enough to blunt the calls for a boycott.

But the Guardian's man on the ground was clear that the IOC had largely fallen in line. While crediting the IOC president Count Henri de Baillet-Latour for getting two Jewish members of the organising committee reinstated in the early days of the Nazi regime, he added: "Since then the IOC has done nothing; it takes cover behind the undertakings given to it by Germany ... and ignores the plain fact they have been broken."

Yet I remain unconvinced that boycotts work. Remember Moscow 1980? And, indeed, Los Angeles. It also seems painfully unfair that athletes should suffer

– and sport become a proxy battleground – while western countries are hailing billions of pounds in bilateral trade with China and the rest of us are enjoying our iPhones.

One solution would be to avoid awarding Olympic Games to countries with terrible human rights records. And China is also ranked 177th in the world press freedom index – below only Eritrea, Turkmenistan and North Korea. Then again, the IOC has form – and not just with Sochi in 2014. In 1974, the Americans were awarded the Winter Games in Lake Placid while the smell of its napalm and cluster bombs in Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia was still fresh.

Incidentally, while rummaging through the archives I also found two letters from Philip Noel-Baker, the only person to win both an Olympic medal and a Nobel prize. The first, written in 1935, supported a boycott of the Berlin Games, warning that while it would be a grave matter to abandon them at this late stage, "it would be a far graver matter" to take part.

However 45 years on, Baker had changed his mind. "Some have argued that Hitler's presence in the stadium greatly increased his power over the German people and his prestige in the world," he wrote. "But his power was absolute already."

"The message of the Games was that the chosen competitors of all the nations were one great happy family, inspired by the same bounds of sportsmanship, bound by common ties of common interest and friendship. The message made Nazi doctrine and Nazi practice abhorrent to anyone with eyes to see."

Canelo Álvarez subdues Avni Yildirim then announces Billy Joe Saunders fight

LONDON, 01 MAR [THEGUARDIAN]: Saul 'Canelo' Álvarez outclassed Avni Yildirim and retained his world super middleweight titles with a technical knockout after Yildirim failed to answer the bell for the fourth round Saturday night, setting the stage for a highly anticipated unification fight with Britain's Billy Joe Saunders in May that was announced in the immediate aftermath.

Álvarez, arguably boxing's biggest star, dropped the Turkish challenger with a left-right combination to the head midway through the third round. Álvarez followed with additional combinations, pinning Yildirim on the ropes. Yildirim survived the round but absorbed sufficient punishment that forced his trainer Joel Díaz to stop the fight.

With the victory, Álvarez (55-1-2, 37 KOs) successfully defended his World Boxing Council and World Boxing Association belts.

"I needed the knockout and that's what I did," Álvarez says in Spanish through a translator. "It doesn't matter if they're taller or if they have more reach, if they have a good trainer or no good trainer. It doesn't matter. I come here to do my job. I come to win. I come to make history."

Eddie Hearn, who promotes Álvarez, stepped in during the in-ring interview to reveal the worst-kept secret in boxing: Álvarez has signed for a 8 May fight with Saunders, the undefeated Briton who holds the World Boxing Organization's version of the super middleweight title. Hearn said venue for the fight will be announced shortly.

That fight represents an opportunity for Álvarez to move one step closer to his goal of unifying the four major sanctioning body belts at 168lbs. Caleb Plant, an unbeaten American, holds the other. "It's because it hasn't been done," Álvarez said. "In Latin America, no one has done it. And in the world, only very few, only the best. And I want to make history, I want to be one of the best in the world."

He added: "I want to make my own history. I don't want to be equal to anyone. I want to make my own history and when they talk about boxing that they always remember: Canelo. I respect everyone in history, but I want to make my own history and I respect everyone."

Saturday's fight, where a crowd of about 15,000 spectators were permitted to attend, headlined the first boxing event at 34-year-old Hard Rock Stadium, home of the NFL's Miami Dolphins. A pre-fight performance by South

American reggaeton superstar J Balvin, who accompanied Álvarez on his journey to the ring, was arguably more entertaining than the fight that followed.

In a methodical first round, Álvarez set the pace early with lead left jabs to the head and lefts and rights to the body. Álvarez landed uppercuts and continued to score with combinations to the body in the second. Yildirim (21-3) rarely threw punches and the few he did, Álvarez blocked or slipped his shots. Álvarez stayed within punching range and increased his output but also was effective from distance and connected with a flush counter right to the head.

Saturday's bout was the first of what Álvarez hopes will be a busy year seeking unification fights.

Inactive since February 2019, Yildirim landed the match against Álvarez after the WBC designated him mandatory challenger.

Álvarez and Yildirim both weighed 167lbs, a pound under the super middleweight limit.

With Saturday's stay-busy formality out of the way, the focus turns to Saunders, who described the opportunity as a "golden ticket". "You have to dare to be great and you aren't going to be a great if you don't beat the greats," Saunders said in a statement. "I believe I am the only one with the footwork, knowhow, skillset, mindset and brain to unlock that door in Canelo."

"He's the main man in the sport and the face of boxing. You have to give him respect, he hasn't ducked anyone, he's beaten good names, but nobody is unbeatable, and I believe I have got the tools to beat him if I use them properly and if the game plan comes off that I believe works."

"I am looking at the golden ticket to cement my legacy, and that's how you have to go in there to beat him. I've won everything from Southern Area to W\ world titles, I could say 'I've won it all, been to the Olympics, I'm unbeaten – I'll see you later'. But I've only just turned 31, I've got no miles on the clock, haven't taken any punishment – I believe he's been in harder fights than me and has more miles, so I want to cement my legacy and beat him."

Earlier, Puerto Rico's McWilliams Arroyo won a second-tier world flyweight title with a fifth-round technical knockout over late replacement Abraham Rodriguez. Arroyo originally was scheduled to challenge WBC flyweight champion Julio Cesar Martinez but Martinez withdrew from the bout Thursday because of a hand injury.

France's Sarkozy faces jail sentence, denies corruption pact

PARIS (AP): The verdict is expected on Monday in a landmark corruption and influence-peddling trial that has put French former President Nicolas Sarkozy at risk of a prison sentence if he is convicted.

Sarkozy, who was president from 2007 to 2012, firmly denied all the allegations against him during the 10-day trial that took place at the end of last year.

The 66-year-old politician is suspected of having tried to illegally obtain information from a senior magistrate in 2014 about a legal action in which he was involved.

This is the first time in France's modern history that a former president has gone on trial for corruption. Sarkozy's predecessor, Jacques Chirac, was found guilty in 2011 of misuse of public money and given a two-year suspended prison sentence for actions during his time as Paris mayor.

Sarkozy's co-defendants — his lawyer and longtime friend Thierry Herzog, 65, and now-retired magistrate Gilbert Azibert, 74 — also deny wrongdoing.

Prosecutors have requested two years of prison and a two-year suspended sentence for all three defendants over what they said was a "corruption pact."

"No pact has ever existed," Sarkozy told the court. "Neither in my head, nor in reality."

"I want to be cleared of that infamy," he added.



The trial focused on phone conversations that took place in February 2014.

At the time, investigative judges had launched an inquiry into the financing of the 2007 presidential campaign. During the investigation they incidentally discovered that Sarkozy and Herzog were communicating via secret mobile phones registered to the alias "Paul Bismuth."

Conversations wiretapped on these phones led prosecutors to suspect Sarkozy and Herzog of promising Azibert a job in Monaco in exchange for leaking information about another legal case, known by the name of France's richest woman, L'Oréal heiress Liliane Bettencourt.

In one of these phone calls with Herzog, Sarkozy said of Azibert: "I'll make him move up ... I'll

help him."

In another, Herzog reminded Sarkozy to "say a word" for Azibert during a trip to Monaco.

Legal proceedings against Sarkozy have been dropped in the Bettencourt case. Azibert never got the Monaco job.

Prosecutors have concluded, however, that the "clearly stated promise" constitutes in itself a corruption offense under French law, even if the promise wasn't fulfilled.

Sarkozy vigorously denies any malicious intention.

He told the court that his political life was all about "giving (people) a little help. That all it is, a little help."

"I was 100 billion miles away from thinking we were doing something we did not have the right to do," he said.

Sarkozy said he did

not get confidential information from Azibert.

Prosecutors believe Sarkozy was at some point informed that the secret phones were being wiretapped and that it is the reason why he did not ultimately help Azibert get the job.

The confidentiality of communications between a lawyer and his client has been a major point of contention in the trial.

"You have in front of you a man of whom more than 3,700 private conversations have been wiretapped... What did I do to deserve that?" Sarkozy said.

Sarkozy's defense lawyer, Jacqueline Lafont, argued the whole case was based on "small talk" between a lawyer and his client.

"You don't have the beginning of a piece of evidence, not the slight-

ness witness account, the slightness declaration," she told the court.

Sarkozy withdrew from active politics after failing to be chosen as his conservative party's presidential candidate for France's 2017 election, won by Emmanuel Macron.

He remains very popular amid right-wing voters, however, and plays a major role behind the scenes, including through maintaining a relationship with Macron, whom he is said to advise on certain topics. His memoirs published this summer, "The Time of Storms," was a best-seller for weeks.

Sarkozy will face another trial later this month along with 13 other people on charges of illegal financing of his 2012 presidential campaign.

His conservative party is suspected of having spent 42.8 million euros (\$50.7 million), almost twice the maximum authorized, to finance the campaign, which ended in victory for Socialist rival Francois Hollande.

In another investigation opened in 2013, Sarkozy is accused of having taken millions from then-Libyan dictator Moammar Gadhafi to illegally finance his 2007 campaign.

He was handed preliminary charges of passive corruption, illegal campaign financing, concealment of stolen assets from Libya and criminal association. He has denied wrongdoing.

Netanyahu accuses Iran of attacking Israeli-owned cargo ship



JERUSALEM (AP): Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Monday accused Iran of attacking an Israeli-owned ship in the Gulf of Oman last week, a mysterious explosion that further spiked security concerns in the region.

Without offering any evidence to his claim, Netanyahu told Israeli public broadcaster Kan that "it was indeed an act by Iran, that's clear."

"Iran is the greatest enemy of Israel, I am determined to halt it. We are hitting it in the entire region," Netanyahu said. Iran promptly dismissed the charges.

The blast struck the Israeli-owned MV Helios Ray, a Bahamian-flagged roll-on, roll-off vehicle cargo ship, as it was sailing out of the Middle East on its way to Singapore on Friday. The crew was unharmed, but the vessel sustained two holes on its port side and two on its starboard side just above the waterline, according to American defense officials.

The ship came to Dubai's port for repairs on Sunday, days after the blast that revived security concerns in Mideast waterways amid heightened tensions with Iran.

Iran has sought to pressure the U.S. to lift sanctions on Tehran as President Joe Biden's administration considers option for returning to negotiations with Iran over its nuclear program. Biden has said repeatedly the U.S. would return to the nuclear deal between Tehran and world powers that his predecessor, Donald Trump, withdrew from in 2018 only after Iran restores

its full compliance with the accord.

The explosion on the Israeli-owned ship last week recalled the tense summer of 2019, when the U.S. military accused Iran of attacking several oil tankers in the Gulf of Oman with limpet mines, designed to be attached magnetically to a ship's hull. The Gulf of Oman leads through the narrow Strait of Hormuz, a vital passage for the world's oil supplies. Tehran has denied the accusations said Israel will not accept a permanent Iranian military presence there. Iran and its Lebanese proxy Hezbollah have provided military support to Syrian President Bashar Assad in the more than decade-long Syrian civil war.

It remains unclear what caused Friday's blast on the Helios Ray. The vessel had discharged cars at various ports in the Persian Gulf before the explosion forced it to reverse course. Over the weekend, Israel's defense minister and army chief had both indicated they held Iran responsible for what they said was an attack on the vessel.

Iran responded to Netanyahu's statement saying it "strongly rejected" the claim that it was behind the attack. In a press briefing, Foreign Ministry spokesman Saeed Khatibzadeh said Netanyahu was "suffering from an obsession with Iran" and described his charges as "fear-mongering."

Khatibzadeh also accused Israel of taking "suspicious actions in the region" against Iran in recent months to undermine the 2015 nuclear deal, without elaborating, and vowed Iran would respond.

"Israel knows very well that our response in the field of national security has always been

fierce and accurate," he said. Overnight, Syrian state media reported a series of alleged Israeli airstrikes near Damascus, saying air defense systems had intercepted most of the missiles. Israeli media reports said the alleged airstrikes were on Iranian targets in response to the ship attack.

Israel has struck hundreds of Iranian targets in neighboring Syria in recent years, and Netanyahu has repeatedly said Israel will not accept a permanent Iranian military presence there. Iran and its Lebanese proxy Hezbollah have provided military support to Syrian President Bashar Assad in the more than decade-long Syrian civil war.

The Israeli military declined comment.

Iran also has blamed Israel for a recent series of attacks, including another mysterious explosion last summer that destroyed an advanced centrifuge assembly plant at its Natanz nuclear facility and the killing of Mohsen Fakhrazadeh, a top Iranian scientist who founded the Islamic Republic's military nuclear program two decades ago. Iran has repeatedly vowed to avenge Fakhrazadeh's killing.

"It is most important that Iran doesn't have nuclear weapons, with or without an agreement, this I also told to my friend Biden," Netanyahu said Monday.

Iranian threats of retaliation have raised alarms in Israel since the signing of normalization deals with the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain in September.

Moon: South Korea, Japan must look to future to improve ties

SEOUL, MAR 1 (AP): South Korean President Moon Jae-in said Monday that his government is eager for talks with Japan to improve relations following years of bitter feuding over historical grievances, adding that those unresolved issues should not stand in the way of developing future-oriented ties.

There have been times where issues of the past weren't separated from those of the future and became intermingled with each other. This has impeded forward-looking development, Moon said in a nationally televised speech commemorating the anniversary of a 1919 Korean uprising against Japanese colonial rule.

The Korean government is always ready to sit down and have talks with the Japanese government, he said.

South Korea and Japan have been struggling to repair relations that sank to their lowest point in decades in 2019 following South Korean court rulings that ordered Japanese companies to pay reparations to Koreans who were forced to work in their factories during World War II. Those rulings led to further tensions over trade when Japan put export controls on chemicals vital to South Korea's semiconductor industry.

Another sticking point in relations is the issue of Korean women

who were sexually enslaved by Japan's wartime military, with survivors denouncing the Japanese government for refusing to accept legal responsibility for their slavery.

Japan has insisted that all wartime compensation issues were settled under a 1965 treaty normalizing relations with South Korea and it has reacted angrily to South Korean court rulings saying otherwise. There is a risk for further deterioration of the relationship if South Korean courts eventually order the liquidation of local assets of Japanese companies that have refused to compensate forced laborers.

While Moon said Seoul will continue to support Korean victims of Japanese wartime atrocities, he stressed that the countries must not let the past hold us back. Moon said improved relations would also benefit the three-way cooperation between South Korea, Japan and the United States, which Washington sees as crucial to dealing with regional issues such as North Korea's nuclear arsenal and China's increasing economic and military might.

Moon expressed hope that this year's Olympics in Tokyo could provide a stage to renew international efforts to resolve the nuclear standoff with North Korea.

Israeli-owned vessel docked in Dubai after mysterious explosion



DUBAI, 28 FEB [AL-JAZEERA]: An Israeli-owned cargo ship that suffered a mysterious explosion in the Gulf of Oman has arrived at Dubai's port for repairs, days after the blast revived security concerns about the Middle East's waterways amid heightened tensions with Iran.

The hulking Israeli-owned MV Helios Ray sat at dry dock facilities at Dubai's Port Rashid on Sunday. Although the crew was unharmed in the blast, the vessel sustained two holes on its port side and two on its starboard side just above the waterline, according to American defence officials.

It remains unclear what caused the explosion, but the incident comes amid sharply rising tension between the United States and Iran over its unravelling 2015 nuclear deal with world powers. Iran has sought to pressure President Joe Biden's administration to give it the sanctions relief it had received under the accord, which former President Donald Trump abandoned.

Emirati officials did

not immediately acknowledge or respond to requests for comment on the vessel docking in the country.

The blast on the ship, a Bahamian-flagged roll-on, roll-off vehicle cargo vessel, recalled a string of attacks on foreign oil tankers in 2019 that the US Navy blamed on Iran. Tehran denied any role in the suspected assaults, which happened near the Strait of Hormuz, a key oil chokepoint.

On Saturday, Israel's defence minister Benny Gantz said an initial assessment found Iran was responsible for the explosion.

Gilad Erdan, Israeli ambassador to the US and United Nations, told Israel's Army Radio on Sunday "it was no secret that the Iranians are trying to harm Israeli targets", adding the explosion on the ship bore the hallmarks of other Iranian attacks.

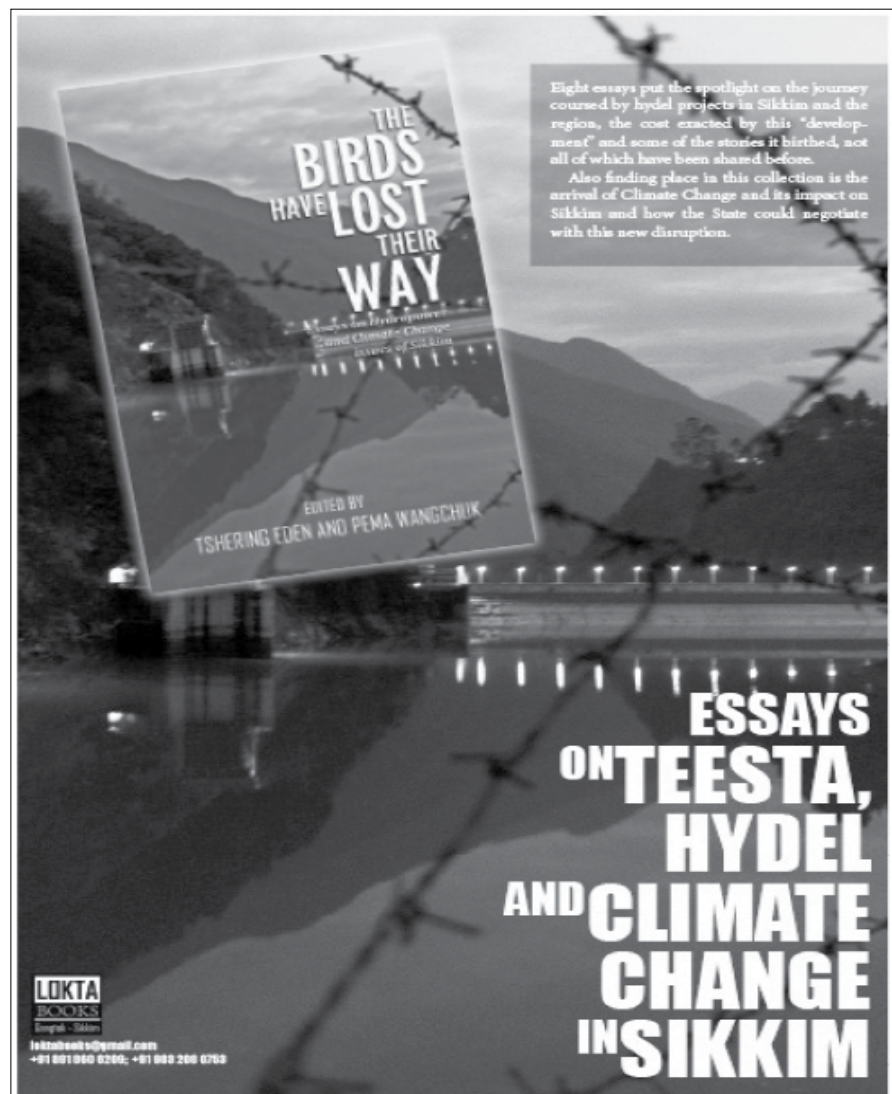
Haaretz newspaper reported that Israeli defence officials flew to Dubai on Saturday to investigate the incident.

The Helios Ray discharged cars at various ports in the Gulf before

making its way out of the Middle East towards Singapore. The blast hit as the ship was sailing from the Saudi port Dammam out of the Gulf of Oman, forcing it to turn to Dubai, in the United Arab Emirates, for inspection.

Iranian authorities have not publicly commented on the ship. The country's hardline Kayhan daily, whose editor-in-chief was appointed by Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, alleged the Helios Ray was "possibly" on an "espionage" mission in the region, without offering any evidence to support the claim. The Sunday report speculated the ship may have been "trapped in an ambush by a branch of resistance axis", referring to Iranian proxies in the region.

Iran also has blamed Israel for a recent series of attacks, including a mysterious explosion last summer that destroyed an advanced centrifuge assembly plant at its Natanz nuclear facility and the killing of Mohsen Fakhrazadeh, a top Iranian scientist who founded Iran's military nuclear programme two decades ago.



Daniel Kaluuya wins first Golden Globe, actor's speech marred by technical glitch

LOS ANGELES, MAR 1 (PTI): Actor Daniel Kaluuya has bagged his maiden Golden Globe award for his impassioned performance as the Black Panther Party chairman Fred Hampton in "Judas and the Black Messiah". The British actor earned the trophy in the best performance by an actor in a supporting role in any motion picture category for the film, helmed by Shaka King in his studio feature directorial debut.

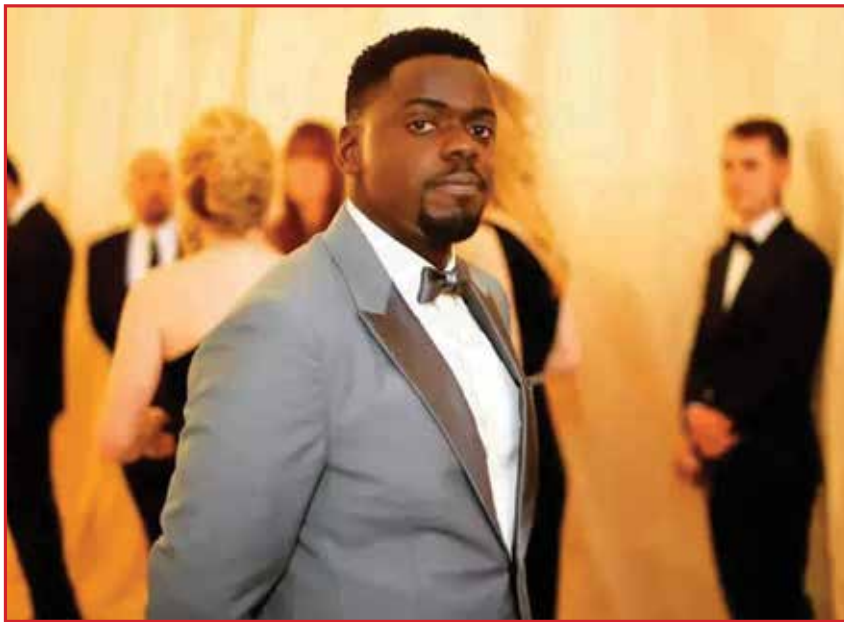
Kaluuya, who won the first honour of the scaled down virtual ceremony which is being held bi-coastally from New York and California in the wake of the coronavirus pandemic, faced a technical problem as he started his acceptance speech.

"You're doing me dirty, you're doing me dirty," the 32-year-old actor quipped as his video feed went silent.

Kaluuya's audio feed didn't connect, leaving viewers with only his muted video feed. "Big Little Lies" star Laura Dern, who was presenting the award to Kaluuya, apologised for the "bad connection" on stage as the feed cut away.

"We apologise for that technical problem and send all of our congratulations to Daniel and his Golden

Globe win," she said. As it has happened over many a Zoom calls this past year, it turns out Kaluuya's feed was muted, but quickly rectified, a source told Variety.



When Kaluuya came back into view, he asked "Is this on? Can you hear me now?"

Once the audio issue was resolved, the actor thanked his family and the Hollywood Foreign Press Association

(HFPA), the body that conducts the Golden Globes currently facing fire over its lack of Black representation among its ranks.

Kaluuya further said he gave "ev-

couldn't give it to a more noble man -- that's chairman Fred Hampton -- and I hope generations after this can see how brilliantly he fought, how brilliantly he spoke and how brilliantly he loved.

"He taught me about myself, made me grow as a man and I appreciate it with all my heart. And I hope people -- there's a lot of information about how he died, but I hope you people out there will grow and learn about how incredibly he lived. Thank you so much for this honour," he said. "Judas and the Black Messiah" is a Chicago-set film which follows petty criminal William O'Neal (played by LaKeith Stanfield) who agrees to work as an informant for the FBI in order to infiltrate the Black Panther Party and take down the chairman of its Illinois chapter Fred Hampton (Kaluuya).

Kaluuya bested Sachan Baron Cohen, who was one of the frontrunners in the category for his turn as social activist Abbie Hoffman in the legal drama "The Trial of the Chicago 7".

Later, director-writer Aaron Sorokin won the best screenplay for a motion picture for the "Chicago 7".

Irv Cross, NFL player, pioneer Black analyst, dies at 81



PHILADELPHIA (AP): Irv Cross, the former NFL defensive back who became the first Black man to work full-time as a sports analyst on national television, died Sunday. He was 81.

The Philadelphia Eagles, the team Cross spent his six of his nine NFL seasons with, said Cross' son, Matthew, confirmed his father died near his home in Roseville, Minnesota. The cause of death was not provided.

"All of us at CBS Sports are saddened by the news of Irv Cross' passing," CBS Sports Chairman Sean McManus said in a statement. "Irv was a pioneer who made significant contributions to the storied history and tradition of CBS Sports and, along with Phyllis George and Brent Musburger, set the standard for NFL pregame shows with 'The NFL Today.' He was a true gentleman and a trail blazer in the sports television industry and will be remembered for his accomplishments and the paths he paved for those who followed."

From Hammond, Indiana, Cross starred in football and track and field at Northwestern. He was drafted in the seventh round by Philadelphia in 1961, was traded to the Los Angeles Rams in 1966 and returned to the Ea-

gles in 1969 as a player coach for his final season.

The two-time Pro Bowl cornerback had 22 interceptions, 14 fumble recoveries, eight forced fumbles and a pair of defensive touchdowns. He also averaged 27.9 yards on kickoff returns and returned punts.

Cross joined CBS in 1971, becoming the first Black network sports show anchor. He left the network in 1994, and later served as athletic director at Idaho State and Macalester College in Minnesota. In 2009, he received the Pro Football Hall of Fame's Pete Rozelle Radio-Television Award.

"Irv was one of the finest gentlemen I've been with," Musburger tweeted. "We met at Northwestern where Irv played both ways for Coach (Ara) Parseghian, He later became my go-to mainstay on the NFL TODAY. No one ever had a bad thing to say about Irv. He led the way for African Americans to host NFL and other sports shows. Rest in peace my friend."

The eighth of 15 children, Cross is survived by wife Liz; children, Susan, Lisa, Matthew and Sarah; grandson Aiden; brothers Raymond, Teal and Sam; sisters Joan, Jackie, Julia, Pat, and Gwen.

Stories can change people: Jane Fonda calls for representation in Cecil B DeMille Award speech

LOS ANGELES, MAR 1 (PTI):

Art has not just walked in step with history but has led the way, said Hollywood veteran Jane Fonda, who emphasised the need for more diversity in the entertainment industry during her acceptance speech for the Cecil B DeMille Award at the 2021 Golden Globes.

Citing the power of storytelling, the 83-year-old actor-activist urged for colleagues to show leadership, representation and denounce favouritism in Hollywood.

"Stories, they really can change people. But there's a story we've been afraid to see and hear about ourselves in this industry, a story about which voices we respect and elevate and which we tune out, a story about who is offered a seat at the table and who is kept out of the rooms where decisions are made," Fonda said.

"So let's all of us, including all the groups that decide who gets hired and what gets made and who wins awards, let's all of us make an effort to expand that tent so that everyone rises and everyone's story has a chance to be seen and heard," she added.

The seven-time Golden Globe winner said it is time leaders acknowledged and recognised diversity.

"Doing this simply means acknowledging what's true, being in step with the emerging diversity that's happening because of all those who marched and fought in the past and those who have

picked up the baton today. After all, art has always been not just in step with history, but has led the way. So let's be leaders; okay?" Fonda further said.

The actor, who was feted for her "lasting impact on the world of entertainment", also listed many of the works that inspired her in the past year, including "Nomadland", "Minari", "Judas and the Black Messiah", "Small Axe", "US vs Billie Holiday", "Ma Rainey's Black Bottom", "One Night in Miami" and "I May Destroy You".

Many of these pieces of art, she said, "have deepened my empathy for what being Black has meant".

Fonda, who already has two Academy Awards, an Emmy, and an AFI Life Achievement to her name, became the 67th - and 16th female - to receive the coveted award.

In a career spanning six decades, the actor has starred in films like "Julia", "Coming Home", "Kluge", and "9 to 5".

Her most recent feature film outing was the 2018 film "Book Club", whose sequel is currently under development. She also stars in Netflix comedy series "Grace and Frankie", which was renewed for a seventh and final season in 2019.

In 2019, Fonda made headlines for her participation in the climate change protests in Washington DC, wherein she was arrested on multiple occasions.



BOARDWALK STRUT! The Bling Empire star, Christine Chiu looks fierce in a black and brown outfit after enjoying lunch in Malibu.

Aries:

Aren't you tired of the mental gymnastics? Aren't you tired of overthinking to the point that is triggering anxiety and stress. The cards are urging you to go easy on yourself. To breathe out the fears and the inhibitions and to bring love and trust into the equation. Your guides are working closely with you at this moment. You will get through this.

Tip: Breathe out the fears and breathe in the trust.

Taurus:

Secrets don't serve anybody, Taurus. We repeat: secrets don't serve anybody. It's time to come clean. It's time to have an open and honest conversation with those concerned. Remember to listen as much as you speak. Approaching the subject from a space of openness will make all the difference here.

Tip: Choose the virtue of honesty over everything else.

Gemini:

The trouble is, we're constantly oscillating between the past and the future. We're always worrying about where our decisions will lead us towards. Here's the thing, Gemini: there are no right *or* wrong answers. So, trust your instinct and act upon what you're being guided to. Remember, staying in

the present will make all the difference here.

Tip: Come back to the present.

Cancer:

It's easy to feel like you're on the right track when everything is picture-perfect in your world. However, when things fail to meet our expectations we go into a space of fear and panic. What the cards want you to remember is that you are where you need to be despite what your physical reality is reflecting at the moment. So, keep the faith and move in the direction of your dreams. You'll soon understand why things had to unfold in a certain way.

Tip: Keep the faith and move in the direction of your dreams.

Leo:

It's easy to have an opinion on the lives of others. It's easy to feel like you know it all. But, that is far from the truth, Leo. What you can see is merely a glimpse of their reality. You know little about the battles they are facing internally. So, take the judgements down a notch. Work on bringing love and compassion into the equation. Trust that a shift in your vibration will transform the most challenging relationships.

Tip: Take the judgements down a notch.

Virgo:

Virgo, the cards are urging you to examine your relationships closely. What are the connections that make you feel nourished on a soul-level? Who are the people that honour your light and inspire you to be a better version of yourself? Your life experiences have already taught you the relationships that are and aren't good for you. So, stop settling for less than what you deserve. Stop making excuses for people who dishonour the divinity within.

Tip: It's to make space for healthy relationships.

Libra:

Learning to be your most authentic self is not a day's work, Libra. You have to stay committed to the cause. You have to vow to show up for yourself each and every day. The cards are urging you to examine the manner in which you could be shrinking yourself in order to please somebody else. Word for the wise: nothing will free you like speaking your truth will.

Tip: Speak your truth in every situation.

Scorpio:

The trouble is, we spend too much time fixating on the past or worrying about what the future might bring. But neither of these are in your control, Scorpio. The present is the only thing you have dominion over. So, redirect your gaze on what's on your

plate—the many blessings that you have been granted—as you realise the Universe is benevolent in every way. If your finances are a cause of concern right now, be patient. The help you need is around the corner. It's a good idea to work through your blocks and adopt abundance as a mindset.

Tip: The help you need is around the corner.

Sagittarius:

There was a time you played the victim game and blamed the Universe for everything that was going wrong. But, the new you understands that things were happening for and not to you. That each of these experiences helped you evolve into the person you are today. So, take a moment to look back at the trajectory of your life as you send out prayer. Things are about to take a turn for the better in the coming days—this you know with every fibre of your being, Sagittarius!

Tip: You're grateful for all of your past experiences.

Capricorn:

What if we said there are no wrong answers? What if we said that you will be taken care of no matter what you choose? Trust your instinct in a way you never have and know that you are being guided in the right direction. Your power word at this moment: teamwork. The Universe is sending the

right crew your way, Capricorn. We're talking about dreamweavers who can help take your vision to the next level. Honour these connections.

Tip: Trust your instinct in a way you never have.

Aquarius:

You could go over the story innumerable times, and each time you do, you'll find something else to be displeased about. Here's the thing, though: things were happening for—and not to—you. So make peace with the past and cut the cords that are keeping you stuck in a loop. Remember, your happiness is in your hands alone. Reclaim what has always been yours, Aquarius.

Tip: Your happiness is in your hands alone.

Pisces:

The only person who is standing between you and your dreams is "you". Read that again, Pisces. Become aware of all the ways in which you are undermining your own potential. It's time to reclaim your power, wild one. The cards are also bringing your attention to your intuition and clairvoyant abilities. Trust what you're being shown by the forces (instead of constantly second guessing yourself). It's time to act upon what you are being guided to without delay.

Tip: Reclaim your power.