



**A R RAHMAN THANKS FANS  
FOR SUPPORT DURING  
'DIFFICULT TIMES'**  
pg 08

**BRANDING IDENTITY**  
**Work on image, not on slights**  
pg 04

**BREAKING DOWN THE RUMORED  
LOVE TRIANGLE BETWEEN OLIVIA  
RODRIGO, JOSHUA BASSETT  
AND SABRINA CARPENTER**  
pg 08



# SummitTIMES

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ON TOP OF THE NEWS

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## COVID-19 infections continue to dip with only 5 new cases

**SUMMIT REPORT  
GANGTOK, 09 JAN:**

Since the beginning of this year, the daily detection of COVID cases have remained below 20 with 17 on 05 Jan being the highest number of cases recorded in a day this year. Except for the outbreak in Sikkim's two prisons, we were averaging above 20 throughout Dec last year before which the daily numbers were still higher in the high-30s and 40s. However, it would be too early to celebrate this dip in new cases as the expected festive season spike could still get registered in the coming days.

The figure of discharged COVID-19 patients in Sikkim has further improved to 5391 with the discharge of 29 more patients in the last 24 hours



ending 8 AM Saturday.

Meanwhile, Sikkim reported just five fresh cases of novel coronavirus in the last 24 hours taking the state tally of confirmed cases to 5984. Active cases of novel coronavirus in the State has also reduced to 369, of whom one is currently admitted in the ICU facility of COVID dedicated STNM hospital.

In the daily health bulletin

on Saturday, Health Department State IEC Officer, Sonam Gyaltsen Bhutia informed that of the five new cases in the State, four were reported in East District and one in South District. It has to be mentioned here that five new cases were reported in the testing of 181 samples, in which four were found in RT-PCR testing of 143 samples and one in the rapid antigen testing

of 32 samples.

While giving details of new cases, Mr Bhutia informed that one person from Lingding, one from near Greendale School, Daragaon in Tadong, two from Rangpo in East District and one from Sumbuk in South District were found positive for COVID-19.

Mr Bhutia also informed that two of the three untraceable COVID positive persons have been traced. The 26-year-old woman from Sichey and 45-year-old man from ITBP Lingdung have been found.

However, the third person, a 20-year-old Tadong resident is yet to be traced. Mr Bhutia released the name of this person, Sumitra Gurung, and asked her to immediately contact the department.

## OFOJ employees form association



**SUMMIT REPORT  
GANGTOK, 09 JAN:**

Employees hired under the One Family One Job scheme of the previous SDF government have formed an association in a meeting held at Gorkha Bhawan in Singtam, East Sikkim, today.

A press release informs that employees under various departments of all the four districts attended the meeting and passed several resolutions. The primary objective behind forming the association is to bring unity among the OFOJ

employees, it states.

As per the first resolution passed in the meeting, the association was formed with the name 'All Sikkim One Family One Job Govt. Employees Association (ASOFOJGEA)'. Ten executive mem-

bers were selected from employees belonging to all four districts, as per the second resolution. Consequently, the nominated executives of the association vowed to work relentlessly for the development of OFOJ employees.

## India to start COVID-19 vaccination drive from Jan 16, govt says

**NIDHI VERMA**

**NEW DELHI, 09 JAN (REUTERS):** India will start its COVID-19 vaccination drive from Jan. 16 with priority given to about 30 million healthcare and frontline workers, a government statement said on Saturday.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi reviewed the preparedness for COVID-19 vaccination programme on Saturday, it said. India hopes to inoculate 300 million of its 1.35 billion people free of charge in the first six to eight months of this year.

With the highest number of infections in the world after the United States, India is developing two indige-

nous COVID-19 vaccines. On Saturday it reported 18,222 new coronavirus cases, taking the total to 10.43 million.

India's drug regulator has approved two coronavirus vaccines for emergency use, Covishield, developed by AstraZeneca and Oxford University and Covaxin by local company Bharat Biotech and a state-run institute.

After healthcare and frontline workers, the vaccines will be given to "those above 50 years of age and the under-50 population groups with co-morbidities, numbering around 2.7 million," the statement said.

The statement did

not say whether the federal government had signed purchase deals with Bharat Biotech and the Serum Institute of India, the local manufacturer of the AstraZeneca vaccine.

Modi also reviewed India's Co-WIN Vaccine Delivery Management System - a digital platform that will provide real time information of vaccine stocks, storage temperature and tracking of beneficiaries, the statement said.

India is the world's biggest vaccine maker. Its pharmaceutical industry has been freeing up capacity and pushing ahead with investments to help support a global vaccination campaign.

## SDF mourns Reeya's passing away

**SUMMIT REPORT  
GANGTOK, 09 JAN:**

Sikkim Democratic Front and its president, Pawan Chamling, have conveyed heartfelt condolences on the passing away of 15-year-old footballer, Reeya Lepcha.

The party has mourned the death as an irreparable loss to sports in Sikkim and also the nation since Reeya was an emerging footballer with a lot of promise.

An SDF press release informs that Reeya was the daughter of Manjum and Sanchamit Lepcha of Sangu-Radukhandu under Maneybong-Dentam constituency in West District and she was a skillful and promising footballer who had represented Sikkim at the national level.

## COVID-19 vaccine race: Where they stand currently

**NEW DELHI, JAN 9 (PTI):** Almost a year into the COVID-19 pandemic, about 200 vaccine candidates are in the works and 10 have been either approved by several countries or are under limited emergency use. As India prepares to launch its vaccine drive on January 16, here is a look at the options:

**COVAXIN**

Developed by Bharat Biotech in collaboration with the Indian Council of Medical Research and the National Institute of Virology, the indigenous vaccine was granted emergency use authorisation in clinical trial mode' by the Indian government this week.

It is an inactivated vaccine developed by chemically treating novel coronavirus samples to make them incapable of reproduction. This process leaves the viral proteins, including the spike protein of the coronavirus which it uses to enter the human cells, intact.

Given as two doses, three weeks apart, the viral proteins in the vaccine activate the immune system and prepare people for future infections with the actual infectious virus. According to Bharat Biotech, the therapeutic can be stored at room temperature for at least a week.

A study on the Phase 1/2 trial published in the preprint

server medRxiv in December showed the therapeutic doesn't cause any serious side effects. However, there has been no further data released in the public domain which could demonstrate that the vaccine is safe and effective.

"ICMR-Bharat Biotech vaccine is a killed whole-virus vaccine and there are absolutely no data available so far on its protective efficacy. I am critical of its getting approval by the authorities," immunologist Vineeta Bal, affiliated with the National Institute of Immunology in New Delhi, told PTI.

**COVISHIELD**

Co-developed by the University of Oxford and British-Swedish company AstraZeneca and known as Covishield in India, the vaccine was the first on which a scientific study was published based on Phase 3 clinical trials.

It has so far been given emergency use authorization in the UK, Argentina, Mexico and India. Scientists have engineered a version of adenoviruses that infect chimpanzees to carry the gene responsible for the spike protein of the novel coronavirus. It requires two doses, provided four weeks apart, to produce the desired effects.

Manufactured by the Serum Institute of India, Covishield will be sold at Rs 1,000 per dose in

the private market but cost the Indian government only Rs 200, said SII CEO Adar Poonawalla.

"Oxford-AstraZeneca-Serum Institute vaccine has shown protective efficacy in global trials to the tune of 60-70 per cent. While clear data from bridging trials in India are not available, the vaccine is certainly proven safe," Bal said.

According to virologist Upasana Ray from the CSIR-Indian Institute of Chemical Biology, Kolkata, the AstraZeneca-Oxford vaccine is less restricted in terms of cold storage as it can be stored, transported and handled at normal refrigerator temperatures (2-8 degrees Celsius) for at least six months.

**MODERNA**

The mRNA vaccine by US-based company Moderna has so far been approved for use in Israel, the EU, Canada and the US.

A study of the efficacy of Moderna vaccine revealed it has 94.1 per cent efficacy in preventing the disease. In this type of vaccine, the messenger RNA -- or mRNA -- acts as a blueprint for the production of the coronavirus spike protein and is encapsulated by lipid molecules and delivered into human cells.

The cells of the vaccine recipient then use this mRNA genetic code to produce the viral protein to train the immune sys-

tem for a future encounter with the infectious coronavirus.

Administered as two doses, four weeks apart, the Moderna vaccine can reportedly be stored in the refrigerator at 2-8 degrees Celsius for up to 30 days. At -20 degrees Celsius it can be stored for up to six months. This is still a challenge for many developing countries in the tropical regions that experience very high temperatures in the summer months.

In November last year, Moderna Chief Executive Stephane Bancel told a German weekly that the company would charge governments between USD 25 and 37 per dose of its COVID-19 vaccine candidate, depending on the amount ordered.

**PFIZER-BIONTECH**

The US-backed Pfizer-Biontech's COVID-19 preventive, like the Moderna vaccine, is based on the segments of the genetic material of the novel coronavirus. Preliminary data from the clinical trials showed that two doses of the vaccine, given three weeks apart, provided an efficacy of over 90 per cent.

Following the results, the UK, Canada, the EU and Saudi Arabia have approved the Pfizer vaccine for use. Several countries, including the US, Singapore, Argentina and Mexico, have given emergency use authorisation. **turn to pg02**

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# Awareness and counseling at Bikmat School



## SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 09 JAN:

One-day awareness and counseling programme on solid liquid waste management, gambling, alcohol addiction and early marriage was held at Bikmat Senior Secondary School, South Sikkim, today, a press release informs.

The programme was organized by Tangzi Bik-

mat GPU wherein Vice Principal of Bikmat Senior Secondary School, Anurag Rai was the chief guest. Panchayat President, Arjun Kumar Rai and other Panchayats of Tangzi Bikmat GPU were present as special guests along with teachers of Bikmat Senior Secondary School.

The resource persons were State general secre-

tary of Voluntary Blood Donors Association of Sikkim (VBDAS), Som Bahadur Rai and MPHWS of Kabrey PHSC, Karma Tshultim Bhutia.

Students from the school actively participated in the programme which was conducted by Panchayat Vice President, Laxuman Tiwari.

MPHW Karma Tshultim Bhutia talked about

negative impact of early marriage, alcohol addiction and COVID-19. Som Bahadur Rai talked about solid liquid waste management, negative impact of gambling and its effects in the society.

The programme was also addressed by Anurag Rai and the vote of thanks was presented by Panchayat Account Assistant, Indra Bahadur Rai.

## Football coaching camp concludes at Perbing

### AARON RAI

GANGTOK, 09 JAN:

A month-long football coaching camp concluded today at Perbing, South Sikkim under Namthang Rateypani constituency which was organised by Perbing Football Federation.

A farewell programme for football coach Namchi Football Association, Richard Paul Lepcha, was also organized on the day.

The programme was attended by Panchayat president, Pema Sherpa.

Coach Richard Paul Lepcha was offered gifts from students and an appreciation letter from Perbing Football Federation which was handed over by Panchayat president, Ms Sherpa.

The coaching camp was attended by around 40-45 students, both girls and boys.

PFA president, Zidar

Sherpa said that this is the very first time that such coaching camp was organized here and for that he expressed his gratitude to area MLA cum Transport Minister, Sanjit Kharel.

He informed that within 15 days of deciding to organize the camp, Minister Kharel supported them with cash and football kits. Without him this coaching would not have been possible, he said.

While talking with SummitTimes, Coach Mr Lepcha said that more girls should take up football because Sikkim is a small state compared to others and students can have better access to coaches and government support.

Panchayat president, Ms Sherpa also thanked the Minister and expressed hope for similar coaching camps to be held in other disciplines as well.

## BJP leaders see Trump's Twitter account suspension as dangerous precedent

NEW DELHI, JAN 9 (PTI):

BJP leaders expressed concern on Saturday over the permanent suspension of US President Donald Trump's Twitter account by the social media giant, saying it sets a dangerous precedent and is a wake-up call for democracies about the threat from unregulated big tech companies.

Days after Trump's supporters stormed the US Capitol and caused the deaths of four civilians and a police officer, Twitter suspended his account permanently on its platform due to the "risk of further incitement of violence".

"If they can do this to the President of the

US (POTUS), they can do this to anyone. Sooner India reviews intermediaries' regulations, better for our democracy," BJP's youth wing president Tejaswi Surya said in a tweet.

He said the suspension of Trump's account is a wake-up call for those who do not yet understand the threat to democracies from unregulated big tech companies.

Echoing similar sentiments, BJP's IT cell head Amit Malviya said "deplatforming Donald Trump, a sitting US president, sets a dangerous precedent. It has less to do with his views and more to

do with intolerance for a differing point." He said those who claim to champion free speech are celebrating and dubbed big tech firms as "new oligarchs".

Pitching for regulating such firms, Surya said dissent is fundamental to democracy and the government welcomes it, but only constitutional authorities can decide on its reasonability. Lately, big tech companies have themselves assumed this role, he said, adding, "Time for us to regulate big tech companies."

Surya, who is also a member of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Information

Technology, said Facebook and Twitter serve as platforms for expression and they should not curtail people's will.

In a statement on Friday, Twitter said after a close review of recent tweets from the @realDonaldTrump account and the context around those -- specifically how those are being received and interpreted on and off the social media platform -- the account has been permanently suspended due to the risk of further incitement of violence.

At the time of the permanent suspension, Trump had 88.7 million followers and followed 51 people.

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar's recent remarks.

During his Sri Lanka visit, Mr Jaishankar had said on Wednesday that "it is in Sri Lanka's own interests that expectations of Tamil people for equality, justice, peace and dignity within a united Sri Lanka are fulfilled."

Tagging Mr Jaishankar in a tweet, Mr Ramadoss urged New Delhi to take up the matter with Colombo and ensure Tamils' "right to life."

MDMK founder Vaiko and Tamizhaga Vazhuvimai Katchi leader T Velmurugan announced a protest outside the Sri Lankan Deputy High Commission in Chennai on Monday.

## Tamil Nadu leaders slam demolition of Mullivaikkal Memorial in Sri Lanka

CHENNAI, 09 JAN (PTI):

Tamil Nadu Chief Minister Edappadi K Palaniswami, his deputy O Panneerselvam and DMK President MK Stalin among others on Saturday slammed the reported demolition of a memorial monument for Tamils killed in Mullivaikkal in Sri Lanka during peak hostilities in 2009.

The monument was established in 2019 in the University of Jaffna in memory of the civilian Tamils killed in one of the bloody episodes of the island nation's last leg of the three-decade old conflict in 2009.

Mr Palaniswami said the demolition has pushed Tamils across the world into "grief" and

blamed the Sri Lankan government for bringing it down.

"It comes as a big shock that the memorial pillar, set up in memory of university students and people killed mercilessly in Mullivaikkal in the final stages of the war in Sri Lanka has been demolished overnight," the chief minister said in a tweet.

Mr Panneerselvam also took to Twitter to strongly condemn the demolition and said it came at a time when efforts were on to ensure justice for the "hordes" of Tamil civilians killed in the "Eelam war."

DMK President MK Stalin, while slamming the incident, wanted In-

dia to condemn the demolition.

In a tweet, he tagged the twitter handle of the Office of the Prime Minister of India and said the PMO should "condemn this shocking incident."

"This is the expectation of the Tamils globally," he added.

PMK founder Dr S Ramadoss, in a tweet, called for India's intervention in ensuring the livelihood of Sri Lankan Tamils, saying it should not "wash its hands" off their well-being.

India should "ponder over" how Tamils can live with equality and honour when even such a structure was not allowed to exist, he said, in an apparent reference to

## 60 join SKM at Namthang-Rateypani

SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 09 JAN:

60 individuals, including senior citizens and retired government employees from Namthang-Rateypani, joined the Sikkim Krantikari Morcha on Saturday at a meeting chaired by Transport Minister Sanjit Kharel at his residence at Mamring near Rangpo, a press release informs.

Also at the meeting today, the Minister, who also happens to be the area MLA for Namthang-Rateypani, announced that he will donate Rs 1 lakh from his salary for the orga-



nization fronted by the retired officers.

Addressing the meeting, the Minister also shared that with the panchayat elections now to be held on non-party lines, people will have the opportunity to choose panchayats based on the

individual's appeal and not be influenced by party politics.

"The government has shown a positive attitude and by April itself, everyone will be surprised to see the scale of developmental activity especially in Namthang Ratepani

constituency," he said.

The joining program was also addressed by Sikkim Poultry Board chairperson, Krishna Gurung, CLC president, RS Tamang, SKM's students' wing state general secretary, Kavita Sapkota, and others.

## COVID-19 vaccine race: ....

One limitation for the Pfizer vaccine has been its requirement for ultracold storage -- up to -70 degrees Celsius. Each dose is reportedly priced at USD 37.

SPUTNIK V

Sputnik V from Russia's Gamaleya Research Institute has been approved for emergency use by several countries but awaits more results from Phase 3 trials.

An adenovirus vectored vaccine, Sputnik V is produced using a combination of two adenoviruses called Ad5 and Ad26. Preliminary evidence from Phase 3 trials indicates it is 90 per cent effective when given as two doses, three weeks apart.

In November, the Russian Direct Investment Fund said the cost of the vaccine would be less than USD 10 per dose starting from February 2021. It said the dry form of the vaccine can be stored at 2-8 degrees Celsius, and does not need freeze storage.

CONVIDECIA

The adenovirus vectored vaccine developed by the Chinese company CanSino Biologics is also under Phase 3 trials and has already been approved for limited use by the Chinese military.

Since August, the vaccine has been part of Phase 3 trials in several countries, including Russia, Mexico and Pakistan.

CORONAVAC

Another Chinese company, Sinopharm, has also made progress with its inactivated vaccine dubbed CoronaVac. It has been given emergency approval for limited use in the country. The vaccine is reportedly provided as two doses, administered two weeks apart. Scientists are yet to publish a study on the trial conducted so far.

VECTOR INSTITUTE

Russia's Vector Institute has developed a protein vaccine. It is currently under Phase 3 clinical trials. It uses modified versions of the coronavirus spike protein to induce immunity. The vaccine reportedly can be stored at 2-8 degrees Celsius for up to two years. Data on the efficacy of the therapeutic is yet to be released.

NOVAVAX

After showing promising results in Phase 1-2 trials, and in animal experiments, the vaccine developed by US company Novavax is currently under Phase 3 clinical trials. It uses modified versions of the coronavirus spike protein to induce immunity, and can reportedly be stored at 2-8 degrees Celsius. After some setbacks in manufacturing the doses required for the Phase 3 study in the US, the trial was finally launched on December 28.

JOHNSON&JOHNSON

The adenovirus vectored vaccine by the American company has shown protection against the coronavirus in experiments in monkeys and is currently part of Phase 3 clinical trials. Unlike other vaccines, this vaccine is reportedly provided as a single dose, but trials are currently underway to test its efficacy as two doses. The company had noted that the therapeutic can be stored for up to three months when refrigerated at 2-8 degrees Celsius, and up to two years when frozen at -20 degrees Celsius.

## CBI charges Hyderabad-based company in over ₹ 4,736 Cr bank fraud

NEW DELHI, 09 JAN (PTI):

The CBI has charged Hyderabad-based Coastal Projects Ltd and its directors in connection with over ₹ 4,736 crore bank fraud in a consortium of banks led by the State Bank of India, officials said on Saturday.

The complaint from the SBI, now a part of the FIR, has alleged that the accused construction company, during the five year period between 2013 and 2018, falsified account books and financial statements to show unrealisable bank guarantee amounts as realisable investments, Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) spokesperson R C Joshi said.

The company also allegedly gave wrong information on promoters' contribution, converted receivables from related parties to investments to siphon off bank funds, he said.

The loan account of

the company became a Non-Performing Asset with retrospective effect from October 28, 2013 and subsequently declared fraud on February 20 last year.

Besides the company and its Chairman and Managing Director Sabbineni Surendra, the agency has also named Managing Director Garapati Harihara Rao, Directors Sridhar Chandrasekharan Nivarthi, Sharad Kumar, Guarantor K Ramuli, K Anjamma, another company Ravi Kailas Builders Pvt Ltd, its directors Ramesh Pasupuletu and Govind Kumar Irani.

"Searches were conducted at the residential and official premises of the accused at Hyderabad and Vijayawada, which led to the recovery of several incriminating documents and other material evidence," Mr Joshi said.

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## Dzukou forest fire in Nagaland under control, says officials

KOHIMA, 09 JAN (PTI):

The fire on the Dzukou range is under total control but all operations will continue, a Nagaland forest official said on Friday.

No active fire was noticed after over 10 days of operations. Smoke seen arising at three locations were quickly doused during the day, Kohima Divisional Forest Officer (DFO) Rajkumar M said.

Fire on the range has been raging since December 29. "The situation is totally under control but operations will continue," he said.

Around 300 personnel

of the NDRE, SDRF, Home Guards, police and volunteers of the Southern Angami Youth Organisation (SAYO) and four Indian Air Force (IAF) helicopters are engaged in the firefight, Rajkumar said. "Both ground and air teams are constantly monitoring the situation as we don't want to take any chance," he said.

The IAF choppers will continue dropping essential supplies for the ground teams at the base camp, conducting aerial surveys and undertaking Bambi bucket operations, the DFO said.

## ANTHYESTI KRIYA

The Anthyesti Kriya of late Mrs. Karna Kumari Baraily who left her heavenly abode on 30th of December, 2020 falls on 11 January, 2021 (Monday). All relatives, friends and well wishers are requested to join us in offering prayers for the departed soul at DEORALI, HOTEL CHOWTARA BESIDES BUTTERFLY FLY OVER.



We would also like to take this opportunity to express our gratitude to all those who stood by us during our time of bereavement and to thank you all for your kind support and concern.

**Ujjal Baraily (Son)**  
**Pradeep Baraily (Son)**  
**Mamta Thapa (Daughter)**  
**Parina Baraily (Daughter)**  
**Marena Baraily (Daughter)**  
**Susil Thapa (Son-in-law)**  
**Kalpa Baraily (Daughter-in-law)**  
**Sumitra Baraily (Daughter-in-law)**  
**And all other Baraily Family members.**

Contact: 9775996049 Ujjal Baraily (Son)  
9563068906 Marena Baraily (Daughter)  
9749683189 Susil Thapa (Son-in-law)



# CM One Mile Run held in Gangtok

**SAGAR CHETTRI**

**GANGTOK, 09 JAN:**

Chief Minister One Mile Run, 'Run for Fun', was held on Saturday morning with sportspersons, members of various sports associations, clubs and sports enthusiasts taking part in the run. The run is an initiative of the sports wing of Sikkim Krantikari Morcha party.

The run started from

Titanic Park and followed the route to Hospital Dara, Zero Point, turned to Secretariat Road, TNA School Road and finally ended at Ridge Park Road.

Interestingly, runners especially young children participated in the run and collected garbage along the route. At the end of the run, former Deputy Director and

coach, Sports Department, Thupden Rapgyal also conducted a short aerobic session.

Speaking to Summit Times, Thupden Rapgyal mentioned that the vision of the CM behind this initiative is to encourage people to run at least one mile in a week and around four times in a month to stay fit and healthy.

He informed that there are plans to organize the run at different corners of the capital from now onwards.

"We are also trying to inculcate a habit that joggers' clubs in other countries practice which is to collect garbage along their jogging route. So, in this initiative, we have been encouraging participants to collect garbage

along their route to sensitize people to dispose their garbage in the right place," he said.

Likewise, SKM sports wing president, Rinzing Wangyal Chopel mentioned that the Chief Minister One Mile Run will be conducted every Saturday to encourage the people in Gangtok to stay fit.

## Mamata to hold rally in Nandigram on Jan 18 after BJP's show of strength

**KOLKATA, 09 JAN [PTI]:**

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee will travel to Nandigram on January 18 to address a rally. The decision was announced after a key meeting of the Trinamool Congress at Mamata Banerjee's residence in Kolkata which was attended by all the top leaders of the party. The Trinamool Congress also announced replacements for the posts left vacant after the exits in the last few days.

When asked if Mamata Banerjee's rally was an answer to the BJP's event on Friday, Trinamool Congress leader and MP Saugata Roy told reporters, "Don't ask me about the BJP. Mamata Banerjee is going to Nandigram on January 18 to hold a rally and the next day she is going to be in Purulia."

The announcement came on a day when the BJP held a massive rally in Nandigram on Friday with its own leaders and imports from the Trinamool Congress including



the latest one, Suwendu Adhikari.

The rally was attended by the BJP's Bengal in-charge Kailash Vijayvargiya, State President Dilip Ghosh and former Trinamool-turned-BJP politicians like Mukul Roy. Kailash Vijayvargiya attacked the Trinamool and promised that the BJP would "free the people from the dictatorship of the Trinamool".

State BJP President Dilip Ghosh alleged, "They tried to disrupt this massive rally with a small incident. I want

to thank you for upsetting their plans." What perhaps was the most interesting moment of the rally was Dilip Ghosh embracing Suwendu Adhikari with a hug. Mr Ghosh said "I am just a visitor here. The real hero of this film is Suwendu Adhikari." The comment is significant as many observers expect a turf war between Suwendu Adhikari and Dilip Ghosh. Mr Adhikari has also announced a counter rally to Mamata Banerjee's rally on January 18.

The crowds at the BJP rally are bound to worry the Trinamool leadership. Suwendu Adhikari had promised a massive gathering in Nandigram in December last year and the turnout shows that he remains a political heavyweight in this area. Trinamool sources say Suwendu Adhikari has betrayed the party and the fact that he was in touch with the BJP earlier meant that he could have caused more damage to the party's prospects in the area from the inside rather than the

## T20 quarterfinals at Supthang



**SUMMIT REPORT**

**GANGTOK, 09 JAN:**

Cherry Zone Youth Club, Chongrong, took on The Empowered Nine in the first quarter-final match of the T20 Cricket Tournament being held

at Supthang Ground under Namcheybong constituency on Saturday. The Empowered Nine won the match by 57 runs.

The tournament is being organised by Supthang Youth Club.

Today, Sikkim Krantikari Morcha's East district sports wing convenor, Pema Dorjee Bhutia, was present as the chief guest accompanied by a retired teacher HH Subba as guest of honour.

## Chinese soldier captured in eastern Ladakh

**NEW DELHI, JAN 9 (PTI):**

A Chinese soldier was apprehended by Indian troops from an area south of the Pangong lake in eastern Ladakh in the early hours of January 8, official sources said on Saturday.

The People's Liberation Army (PLA) soldier had transgressed into the Indian side of the Line of

Actual Control and was taken into custody by Indian troops deployed in the area, they said.

The capture of the Chinese soldier comes in the midst of an eight-month-long bitter border standoff between the two armies in eastern Ladakh.

Troops from both sides are deployed along

the LAC since the friction erupted last year due to unprecedented mobilisation and forward concentration by Chinese troops.

The sources said the PLA soldier is being dealt with as per laid down procedures and circumstances under which he had crossed the LAC are being investigated.

## No one can interfere in peaceful life of two adults living together: Allahabad High Court

**ALLAHABAD, 09 JAN**

**[PTI]:** The Allahabad High Court has held that nobody can interfere in the peaceful life of two adults residing together of their own will.

Hearing a writ petition filed by Shaista Parveen, also called Sangeeta, and her Muslim husband alleging harassment by their family members, Justice Saral Srivastava observed, "The court has repeatedly held that where two individuals having attained the age of majority, are living together, nobody is entitled to interfere in their peaceful life."

According to the petition, Sangeeta decided to follow Islam and after

conversion, married a Muslim man.

In the petition, both claimed that they were adults and alleged that there is threat to their lives from their family members.

They sought a direction to the opposite parties for not interfering in their married life and also for protection of their lives and liberty. The petitioners claim that they are living together of their own will.

The High Court made the observation referring to an Supreme Court order, in which the top court had held that "once a person becomes a major he or she can marry whosoever he/she likes".

"If parents of the boy or girl do not approve of such inter-caste or inter-religious marriage, the maximum they can do is that they can cut off social relations with the son or the daughter, but they cannot give threats or commit or instigate acts of violence and cannot harass the person, who undergoes such inter-caste or inter-religious marriage," the SC had held.

The Allahabad HC has fixed February 8 as the next date of hearing into the matter and directed the petitioner's husband to be present before it with a fixed deposit receipt of ₹ 3 lakh in favour of his wife.

## All-women cockpit crew to fly inaugural San Francisco-Bengaluru flight

**NEW DELHI, 09 JAN**

**[PTI]:** An all-women cockpit crew will operate the inaugural San Francisco-Bengaluru flight on Saturday, Civil Aviation Minister Hardeep Singh Puri said.

The Air India flight will fly on Saturday over the North Pole, taking the Atlantic route to reach Bengaluru, a senior official of the airline said.

"All women cockpit crew consisting of Capt Zoya Aggarwal, Capt Papagari Thanmai, Capt Akansha Sonaware & Capt Shivani Manhas will



operate the historic inaugural flight between Bengaluru & San Francisco," Mr Puri said on Twitter.

The aerial distance between San Francisco and Bengaluru is one of the longest in the world.

"Air India's woman power flies high around

the world," Mr Puri said.

The inaugural flight AI176 will depart from San Francisco in the USA at 8.30 pm (local time) on Saturday and it will land at the Kempegowda International Airport at 3.45 am (local time) on Monday.

## Mediterranean Diet voted Best Diet Of 2021, followed by DASH and Flexitarian Diet

**NEW DELHI, 09 JAN**

**[NDTV]:** Looking for a healthy diet regime for your overall fitness and nourishment? We say you may just go for the Mediterranean diet. Loaded with the goodness of fruits and vegetables, the Mediterranean diet has recently been named the best diet of the year 2021.

This is the 4th consecutive year that this popular diet made it to the top (in the overall healthy diet category) of the U.S. News & World Report's annual ranking. Following this, the second position on the list saw a tie between DASH diet (which is praised for its nutritional completeness and managing hypertension) and Flexitarian diet (a

flexible diet that emphasises on fruits, vegetables and grains, and also allows you to enjoy your favourite meat at times).

What Makes Mediterranean Diet The Best Diet Of The Year:

Mediterranean diet - a plant-based diet loaded with fruits, vegetables, legumes, whole grain, olive oil et al - has time and again established a strong link with decreased health risks. Several studies across the world backed it to be good for weight loss, gut health, diabetes and more. Alongside being the best overall healthy diet, it has also grabbed the first stop in the list for the best diet for diabetes, the best diet for healthy heart, best plant-based

diet and the best diet for healthy eating. Let's find out its benefits.

Here Are 5 Benefits Of Mediterranean Diet:

1. Promotes Heart Health

According to the American Heart Association (AHA), the Mediterranean diet can help you achieve a healthy dietary pattern that may help you fight cardiovascular diseases and reduce the risk.

2. Manage Diabetes

A study, published in the journal Diabetes Care, claimed that following a Mediterranean diet may help improve cognition in type 2 diabetics. "The Mediterranean diet's abundant antioxidants, vitamins, and unsaturated fatty acids may improve neurovascular health and reduce

oxidative stress, metabolites, and chronic inflammation," stated Josiemer Mattei, Department of Nutrition, Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health, Boston, MA and the lead author of the study.

3. Improve Gut-Health

Several studies have also proved this diet to be beneficial for overall gut health. According to an earlier study, presented at the UEG Week Barcelona 2019, Mediterranean foods offer anti-inflammatory properties that help healthy gut bacteria flourish.

4. Promote Brain Health

Did you know that a diet loaded with fruits, veggies and nuts can be healthy for your brain too? A study, published in the journal Neurolo-

gy, finds that the Mediterranean diet can help you achieve a younger brain by slowing down the cognitive decline process.

5. Prevent Breast Cancer

One of the major concerns among women worldwide, breast cancer risks can be reduced with the Mediterranean diet, stated a study published in the journal JAMA Internal Medicine. As per the study, "The results of the trial suggest a beneficial effect of a Med-Diet (Mediterranean diet) supplemented with extra virgin olive oil in the primary prevention of breast cancer."

Which diet do you follow? Let us know about your diet in the comment section below.

## Indian sailors stuck in Chinese waters for eight months to return next week

**NEW DELHI, 09 JAN**

**[PTI]:** Thirty-nine sailors, who have been stuck in China for several months amid the novel coronavirus pandemic, will return to India next week, Minister of State for Ports Shipping and Waterways Mansukh Mandaviya tweeted this afternoon. In the last few weeks, India has been repeatedly urging Beijing to provide "urgent" assistance to the Indian sailors on board two ships stuck in Chinese waters.

"Our Seafarers stuck in China are coming back to India! Ship MV Jag Anand, having 23 Indian crews, stuck in China, is

set to sail toward Chiba, Japan to carry out crew change, will reach India on 14th January. This could only happen due to strong leadership of @NarendraModi ji," Minister of State for Ports, Shipping & Waterways Mansukh Mandaviya said in a tweet, giving the credit to the Prime Minister.

"I deeply appreciate the humanitarian approach of the Great Eastern Shipping Company towards the seafarers and standing by them in this crucial time! @GE\_Shipping," he shared in another post.

Two ships with 39

sailors aboard - MV Jag Anand and MV Anastasia - were reportedly not allowed by the Chinese authorities to either dock or go for a crew change over coronavirus restrictions.

Indian bulk cargo vessel MV Jag Anand has been on anchorage near Jingtang port in Hebei province of China since June 13 and it has 23 Indian sailors, Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) Spokesperson Anurag Srivastava said earlier, news agency PTI reported.

With 16 Indians, MV Anastasia is on anchorage near Caoifeidian port in China since September

20.

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Yesterday, Mr Srivastava had underlined yet again that Indian Embassy in Beijing was constantly raising the issue with the officials concerned. "Our Ambassador (Vikram Misri) has again personally taken up this issue with the Chinese Vice Foreign Minister and requested early approval for crew change for Indian crew members aboard two ships MV Jag Anand and MV Anastasia. The ministry is also in regular contact on this issue with the

Chinese Embassy in New Delhi," he was quoted as saying by news agency PTI.

Last month, Beijing had denied blocking the movement of ships. "Chinese authorities have been in close communication with Indian side & provided timely assistance & necessary supplies to Indian sailors. China has never denied any vessel departure. Real cause of situation is freight forwarder doesn't want to adjust plans due to commercial interests," spokesperson of Chinese Embassy in India Counselor Ji Rong said in a tweet.

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## Branding Identity

*Work on image, not on slights*

Identity, as in the perception others hold of us, has always been a touchy issue among communities inhabiting the margins. The margins in this case, as much geographic as social and class/caste defined. People of the Northeast, those from South India and the Kashmiris, as also the Dalits all over the country and the tribals of Central India who find themselves surrounded by the “civilized”, all have many experiences to share of how stereotyped prejudices hound them whenever they are away from home.

The ill-informed clichés, the pedantic, and thus offensive, generalizations remain sore points for the offended communities and we live in a region that has lived with such broad-brush impoliteness for ever since we started interacting with the mainstream. While it is easy to take affront and tempting to draft fresh introductions to correct the perceptions, it is definitely not okay to allow the ignorance of others to become chips on our shoulders... that becomes a burden heavier than is healthy. But too many of us lug it around. The more perceived slights are allowed to fester, the more they divert energy from pursuits that take us forward. One refers to a “perceived slight” here because the clichés that hurt are a product of ignorance [theirs, not ours] and one should not really allow ignorance in others to convince us to withdraw into cocoons. And defensive shells are not the best habitations to plan forward from because they keep thoughts and ideas rooted in a past that has lost its relevance for everyone except those who obsess in its fermented confusion. Also, while so enclosed, one fails to recognize changes elsewhere. The more a community jumps at every instance of prejudice, the more it tires itself from other, more consequential pursuits. The angrier it gets, the more it allows its leaders to grow lazy and mouth platitudes to identity and pride while burning bridges to ensure their own relevance by feeding off the paranoia of a people kept fearful because they have been shut in.

When we mistake ignorance for conscious offensiveness, we end up being so much on guard that we see only slights and boorishness and not the changes in perception which are evolving slowly and rendering issues which offered umbrage earlier, obsolete. The lazy radio jockey who many years of-fended all hill people with a joke that was too many decades stale is actually a rarity, the mainstream sees the hill folk in a new avatar. To get a grip on this metamorphosis, a visit to the metros can be very illuminating. Hill kids, who would be heckled with calls of “kancha or bahadur” [nothing demeaning in the words themselves, but obnoxiously offensive in how they are used elsewhere], are now called out as “Aye Bhaichung!” The branding is already changing, and with it the nuances of how the people, that’s us, are seen. Sure, an anecdote enjoyed in passing is hardly the yardstick by which one can measure changes in attitude, but they are still reasonably reliably representations of how the majority responds and pigeonholes identities. For those to whom such branding, and thus enhancements to it, are important, the lesson here is that exporting achievers who stun all with their brilliance is more important than claiming and announcing introductions in their own backyards. We need to groom stronger contenders for universal glory, because apart from inspiring the young among us, they also burnish the image we project.

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# Trump-Inspired Mob at U.S. Capitol Follows a Familiar Path of Election Violence

GABRIELLE BARDALL & ROBERT HUISH

THECONVERSATION.COM

The siege of the U.S. Capitol by Donald Trump’s supporters follows identifiable paths and patterns of election violence seen around the world.

Election violence is rarely spontaneous. It is intentionally organized in order to influence the process and outcome of elections. It is not a coup, but it is a close cousin. Coups are about change in power, often with a military backing.

Election violence begins in three clear stages, all of which have unfolded during the recent events in Washington.

First, the perpetrators convince their followers that their political grievances cannot be resolved through institutional channels of democracy. This explains why Trump has relentlessly insisted the presidential election was a fraud. Individuals may lash out spontaneously, but legitimizing violent acts is a strategy usually groomed over time until it’s whipped into a frenzy.

A TRACEABLE TIMING

The second stage happens when violent currents are pushed past the breaking point during expected political events, which gives election violence a traceable timing.

The attack on the Capitol was a textbook example of such timing. It happened as Congress was certifying the electoral college votes — a normally dull and largely ceremonial chore. As well, the mayhem immediately followed elections in Georgia which cost Republicans control of the Senate.

Flash points in electoral processes become triggers for election violence.

The Washington violence takes a page from Kenya in 2017, when opposition leader Railia Odinga alleged election results had been tampered with. Odinga refused to accept the loss. Deadly riots broke out around the timing of vote counting and the swearing-in of President Uhuru Kenyatta.

The 2014 coup in Thailand followed a series of protests that mir-



rored the counting of votes and the dissolution of parliament.

SYMBOLIC TARGETS

The third stage of election violence involves a symbolic target. Most peaceful protests take to the streets against a policy, event or an individual. Creative banners, powerful speakers and disruption of traffic tend to be part of the package. Rioters, not protesters, attack the symbolic landscapes of power.

Although countless protests are held in the U.S. capital every year, the events of Jan. 6 were different. It was not a protest. It was a rejection of the institution of Congress itself.

This is a disturbing break in American politics. The last attempted occupation of the Capitol was in the summer of 1932, when President Herbert Hoover refused to pay pensions to First World War veterans. Two veterans lost their lives when Hoover ordered the protesters cleared out.

The veterans sought pay from government, but they did not attempt to destroy government. Trump’s supporters were the first armed, domestic anti-democratic forces to ever occupy the building.

WHAT’S NEXT?

What’s even more disturbing about the electoral violence script is what may yet happen should Trump supporters shift their anger from buildings towards human beings. Looking at the history of global election violence, this threat can remain well beyond election day.

Election violence is the most extreme expression of discontent with-

in the outer bounds of democratic processes.

When the target of the attack turns from the objects of partisan politics to the symbol of democracy itself, it is an overture to civil war. The mobs at the Capitol waved Trump flags — an attack on behalf of the executive branch of government against the legislative branch.

JUSTICE AND THE RULE OF LAW

How does election violence get resolved? The best-case scenario is through human rights and the rule of law.

Perpetrators should be brought to justice and tried for their crimes (especially the instigators). Failing that, police repression and dispersion of violent mobs can put a stop to immediate destruction. (There are ongoing investigations into why the violent pro-Trump supporters were treated more favourably by police than the peaceful Black Lives Matter protesters who gathered in Washington last year.)

Finding resolution will mean dealing with Trump’s toxic hyper-masculine ego. Like Trump, sore election losers worldwide often publicly flex their muscles and stroke their bruised egos by fuelling chaos and violence in the streets.

How have other instigators of election violence been demobilized?

Often, self-centred rulers like Trump are wooed out of power by appeals to their egos. FIFA, the world soccer body, was asked by Swiss authorities in 2015 to offer a position to Burundi President Pierre Nkurunziza (a soccer aficionado) to help ease

Burundi’s political crisis.

Sometimes glamorous parachutes are offered up, such as when Yahya Jammeh, the president of The Gambia, went into exile in Equatorial Guinea after an election crisis in 2016.

Backdoor, “big man” diplomacy is a bloodless way to get rid of fragile male egotists like Trump. But it comes at a terrible cost.

ROOT CAUSES OF VIOLENCE CAN REMAIN

Granting legitimacy or exile to dangerous narcissists allows for the underlying cause of the violence to remain. It is how violence replicates itself and amplifies over time. Democracy is weakened over the long term. It’s not the right solution, nor the morally desirable one.

The attack on the U.S. Capitol follows historic patterns of election violence that need to be stopped in their tracks. Any solution that shields Trump’s limitless ego and retains the legitimacy of his actions is reprehensible. Trump’s after-the-fact commitment to a “smooth” transition must not absolve him of his seditious actions.

If the United States is, as it claims, the global cradle of democracy, then Trump must face the rule of law within that democracy and be prosecuted for sedition.

*[Gabrielle Bardall is Research Fellow, CIPS, L’Université d’Ottawa/University of Ottawa; Robert Huish is Associate Professor in International Development Studies, Dalhousie University]*

## A scholar of American anti-Semitism explains the hate symbols present at the US Capitol

JONATHAN D. SARNA

THECONVERSATION.COM

One of the many horrifying images from the Jan. 6 rampage on the U.S. Capitol shows a long-haired, long-bearded man wearing a black “Camp Auschwitz” T-shirt emblazoned with a skull and crossbones, and under it the phrase “work brings freedom” – an English translation of the Auschwitz concentration camp motto: “Arbeit macht frei.”

Another image, more subtle but no less incendiary, is of a different man whose T-shirt was emblazoned with the inscription “6MWE” above yellow symbols of Italian Fascism. “6MWE” is an acronym common among the far right standing for “6 Million Wasn’t Enough.” It refers to the Jews exterminated during the Nazi Holocaust and hints at the desire of the wearer to increase that number still further.

These and related images, captured on television and retweeted on social media, demonstrate that some of those who traveled to Washington to support President Donald Trump were engaged in much more than just a doomed effort to maintain their hero in power.

As their writings make clear to me as a scholar of American anti-Semitism, some among them also hoped to trigger what is known as the “Great Revolution,” based on a fictionalized account of a government takeover and race war, that, in its most extreme form, would exterminate Jews.

EXTREME ANTI-SEMITISM

Calls to exterminate Jews are common in far-right and white nationalist circles. For example, the conspiracy theorists of QAnon, who hold “that the world is run by a cabal of Satan-worshiping pedophiles who are plotting against Mr. Trump,” traffic in it regularly.

The anonymous “Q” – the group’s purported head who communicates in riddles and leaves clues on message boards – once approvingly retweeted the anti-Semitic image of a knife-wielding Jew wearing a Star of David necklace who stands knee-deep in the blood of Russians, Poles, Hungarians and Ukrainians and asks with feigned innocence, “Why do they persecute me so?”

Images of long-nosed Jews dripping with the blood of non-Jews whom they are falsely accused of murdering have a long and tragic history. Re-

peatedly, they have served as triggers for anti-Semitic violence.

More commonly, including in recent days, QAnon has targeted Jewish billionaire philanthropist and investor George Soros, whom it portrays as the primary figure shaping and controlling world events. A century ago, the Rothschilds, a family of Jewish bankers, was depicted in much the same way.

QAnon members also mark Jews with triple parentheses, a covert means of outing those whom they consider usurpers and outsiders, not true members of the white race.

‘WHITE GENOCIDE’

Another website popular in white nationalist circles displayed photographs of Jewish women and men, downloaded from university websites, so as to help readers distinguish Jews from the “Aryan Master Race.” “Europeans are the children of God,” it proclaims. “(((They)))” – denominating Jews as other without even mentioning them – “are the children of Satan.”

The website justifies rabid anti-Semitism by linking Jews to the forces supposedly seeking to undermine racial hierarchies. “White genocide is (((their))) plan,” it declares, again marking Jews with triple parentheses, “counter-(((extermination))) is our response.”

Members of the Proud Boys, another group that sent members to Washington, likewise traffic in anti-Semitism. One of the group’s leaders, Kyle Chapman, recently promised to “confront the Zionist criminals who wish to destroy our civilization.” The West, he explained “was built by the White Race alone and we owe nothing to any other race.”

Chapman, like many of his peers, uses the term “white genocide” as a shorthand way of expressing the fear that the members of the white population of the United States, like themselves, will soon be overwhelmed by people of color. The popular 14-word white supremacist slogan, visible on signs outside the Capitol on Wednesday, reads “We must secure the existence of our people and a future for white children.”

Composed by David Lane, one of the conspirators behind the 1984 assassination of Jewish radio host Alan Berg, this slogan originally formed part of a larger document entitled “The White Genocide

Manifesto.” Its 14 planks insist that Jews are not white and actually endanger white civilization. “All Western nations are ruled by a Zionist conspiracy to mix, overrun and exterminate the White race,” the manifesto’s seventh plank reads.

While influenced by the infamous anti-Semitic forgery known as The Protocols of the Elders of Zion, the document goes further, blaming members of what it euphemistically calls the “Zionist occupation governments of America” for homosexuality and abortion as well.

QAnon followers, the Proud Boys and the other far-right and alt-right groups that converged on Washington imagined that they were living out the great fantasy that underlies what many consider to be the bible of the white nationalism movement, a 1978 dystopian novel, “The Turner Diaries,” by William Luther Pierce.

The novel depicts the violent overthrow of the government of the United States, nuclear conflagration, race war and the ultimate extermination of nonwhites and “undesirable racial elements among the remaining White population.”

SYMBOLISM OUTSIDE THE CAPITOL

As opinion writer Seyward Darby pointed out in The New York Times, the gallows erected in front of the Capitol recalls the novel’s depiction of “the day of the rope,” when so-called betrayers of their race were lynched. Unmentioned in The New York Times article is that the novel subsequently depicts “a war to the death with the Jew.”

The book warns Jews that their “day is coming.” When it does, at the novel’s conclusion, mass lynchings and a takeover of Washington set off a worldwide conflagration, and, within a few days “the throat of the last Jewish survivor in the last kibbutz and in the last, smoking ruin in Tel Aviv had been cut.”

“The Turner Diaries” denouement coupled with the anti-Semitic images from the Capitol on Wednesday serve as timely reminders of the precarious place Jews occupy in different corners of the United States. Even as some celebrate how Jews have become white and privileged, others dream of Jews’ ultimate extermination.

*[The writer is University Professor and Joseph H. & Belle R. Braun Professor of American Jewish History, Brandeis University]*



## In Nepal, women hit by pandemic, domestic violence at high risk of trafficking



**MADHU SHAHI**  
**KATHMANDU, 09 JAN [KATHMANDUPOST]:** A woman from Sindhupalchok district was rescued by the officials of Maiti Nepal, an social organisation working in the field of anti-human trafficking, in Nepalgunj, Banke on January 1.

The woman in her early forties was on her way to the Gulf country, as assured by her agent, through India. She learned that she was being sent abroad illegally only after she was rescued from Jamunaha border point.

"My husband has been rendered jobless by the Covid-19 pandemic. Now he has taken to alcohol. He idles away at the village drunk and comes home and beats me," she said. "I have to live in poverty and violence. That's why I decided to go for foreign employment."

According to her, she came to Nepalgunj with an acquaintance expect-

ing to go to India and fly to the Gulf country thereon.

But she did not have the necessary documents required to travel to a foreign country for employment. So was stopped at the border unit on suspicions of being a victim to human trafficking.

According to Maiti Nepal, she was rescued along with five other women while they were being smuggled into India.

Keshav Koirala, Nepalgunj coordinator of the organisation, said that human traffickers have been luring women hit hardest by the pandemic and gender-related violence.

A 35-year-old woman from Makwanpur district was also rescued on the same day. She was also running away from poverty after she separated with her husband. "My husband and I have separated. I could see no way I could make a living in the village so I decided

to go abroad," said the woman.

According to the Nepalgunj branch of Maiti Nepal, as many as 14 women who were heading to the Gulf country through India have been rescued from Jamunaha border point in the past two weeks. Eight women were rescued in January while six were rescued in the last week of December.

Most of the rescued women are from Sindhupalchok, Kavre, Makwanpur, Dhading, Bhojpur, Kapilvastu, Tanahun, Lamjung, Chitwan among other districts.

"The women who attempted to cross the border did not have any documents required for foreign employment. The women did not know where they were going," said Koirala.

According to him, the rescued women, aged between 22 to 45 years, will be sent back to their families.

"The women and girls

who are hugely affected due to the pandemic are at high risk of trafficking. Women who find themselves in a financial crisis are found taking risks to go abroad even illegally. But they don't know the risks involved. Going to India to fly to a Gulf country without necessary documents is risky and they can become victims to human trafficking," said Koirala.

Human traffickers have been using the Jamunaha border to take the foreign job aspirants to India illegally. According to the data available at the Nepalgunj branch of the Maiti Nepal, a total of 267 India-bound women and girls were rescued in 2020 in suspicion of possible human trafficking.

"It is difficult to conduct a successful rescue operation once the victims have crossed the border. So we try our best to stop such incidents at the border" said Koirala.

## Union AMC aims to double AUM to Rs 10,000 Cr

**SUMMIT REPORT**  
**GANGTOK, 09 JAN:**

Union AMC announced its growth strategy aimed at doubling its AUM (Assets under management) to 10,000 crores with growth coming in from B30 cities, a press release informs. Union AMC in the past few years has undergone significant changes in various facets of its operations as well as in ownership is ready to take off on a high growth trajectory and appear in its new avatar or version 2.0.

The firm is co-sponsored by Union Bank, a leading Indian PSU bank and a Dai-ichi Life Holdings, Inc a prominent Japanese foreign financial behemoth.

Chief Executive Officer (CEO), G Pradeepkumar, Union Asset Management Company Private Limited, said "The AMC has implemented a more robust investment process resulting in improved performance



of various schemes of Union AMC. The company also manages a portfolio for Daichithrough FPI route. The year 2020 has also witnessed amalgamation of Andhra Bank and Corporation Bank with Union Bank of India. The amalgamated entity now has more resources in terms of branches to help enable the growth strategy.

He further added "The contribution in the AAUM of Union Mutual Fund from Retail investors and from B30 cities has been good. Our Average AUM in November 2020, had a share of about 39% from B30 cities. We have close to 1% market share of the unique investors in the industry. Armed with a

committed and resourceful set of sponsors, a new CIO at the helm and a robust investment process that aims to deliver consistent returns, combined with an aggressive sales and marketing strategy we aim to double our AUM from current levels in a year's time."

Recently, more emphasis has been given to driving the business through mutual fund distributors other than Union Bank. A dedicated sales force at Union AMC has been created to look after this segment of the market. The results have been good. From around 3% of monthly AAUM in Nov 2018 coming through

Non-Associate Distributors, it has risen to about 11% in Nov 2020. In fact, it nearly doubled from 6% in March 2020 to 11% in November 2020.

Chief Investment Officer (CIO), Vinay Paharia, Union Asset Management Company Private Limited opined "All our investment decisions are guided by our investment process. In the current market situation, we recommend asset allocation based mutual fund products. We prefer sectors such as IT and Telecom and are underweight Utility and Consumer Discretionary sectors. As for fixed income, we believe softer interest rate regime could continue in the near term till economic growth completely revives. According to us, the key risk to both - equity and fixed income markets - would be any unanticipated spike in inflation leading to increase in interest rates."

## BJP's concern for Bengal farmers a sham: TMC

**KOLKATA, JAN 9 (PTI):** The Trinamool Congress on Saturday said that BJP's concern for farmers of the state is a sham as its leaders do not bother about those protesting within the striking distance of Delhi.

Speaking to reporters, senior TMC leader and state minister Chandrima Bhattacharya said BJP leaders have time to

travel across the country and "shed crocodile tears" for farmers but not pay any heed to those protesting against the farm laws.

"BJP leaders are coming to Bengal and going to other places. But they don't listen to the farmers who are protesting outside Delhi. The BJP's concern for the farmers is a pure sham," she added.

BJP president JP Nadda, who is on a day-long visit to the state, attacked the Trinamool Congress government over the PM-Kisan scheme, saying it agreed to implement the welfare programme only after realising that the party was fast losing ground among the farmers in the state.

Nadda also launched the 'Krishok Surokha

Abhijan' to woo farmers in the state ahead of the assembly elections.

Bhattacharya said the Trinamool Congress has a genuine commitment towards the small and marginal farmers.

She said 92 per cent of the farmers in West Bengal are covered under Kisan Credit Card (KCC) scheme, besides getting Rs 5,000 per hectare.

## One new COVID-19 case in Andamans; tally at 4,959

**PORT BLAIR, JAN 9 (PTI):** The COVID-19 caseload in Andaman and Nicobar Islands rose to 4,959 as one more person has tested positive for the disease in the Union Territory, a health department official said on Saturday.

The fresh case was detected during contact

tracing, he said.

The death toll remained at 62 as no new fatality due to the infection was reported in the last 24 hours.

Two persons were cured of the disease on Friday, taking the total number of recoveries in the archipelago to 4,866, the official said.

The Union Territory

now has 31 active cases.

After witnessing a steady rise in coronavirus cases for several months, Andaman and Nicobar Islands did not report any fresh case on Monday and Wednesday.

The overall COVID situation is under control in the archipelago as the local administration has

been strict to ensure that health safety protocols are followed to contain the spread of the disease, the official said.

The Andaman and Nicobar administration has conducted 1,91,206 sample tests for COVID-19 so far, and the positivity rate stands at 2.59 per cent, he added.

## Nadda in Bengal to launch BJP programme to woo farmers

**KATWA(WB), JAN 9 (PTI):** BJP president J P Nadda arrived in West Bengal on Saturday to launch his party's door-to-door rice collection programme aimed at wooing farmers, amid the ongoing protest in Delhi over the contentious agriculture laws.

He will reach out to the farmers of a village here during his day-long visit to the state.

This is Nadda's first visit to West Bengal after the attack on his convoy during his journey to Diamond Harbour from Kolkata on December 10.

Nadda arrived at Andal airport at around 11.45 am and took a helicopter ride from there to reach Jagdanandpur village in Purba Bardhaman district, where he will first offer puja at a temple and then meet the farmers.

An elaborate security arrangement has been



put in place across the district to prevent untoward incidents.

Nadda, in a bid to blunt opposition camp's "anti-farmer" allegations against the BJP-led central government, will float 'Ek Muthi Chawal' (a fistful of rice), a programme under which he would collect rice from farmers' homes and brief them about the benefits of three new farm laws.

Thousands of farmers, mainly from Punjab, Haryana and western Uttar Pradesh, are protesting at Delhi borders for over a month against the three laws.

The BJP chief will hold a roadshow from Clock Tower to Lord Curzon Gate in Burdwan and address a press conference too.

His address at "Krishok Surokha Gram Sabha" (farmers' security meeting at village) in Jagadanandpur will mark the beginning of 40,000 such meetings to be held by the BJP across West Bengal before the assembly elections.

"After the launch of the campaign by our party president, our cadres will reach out to 48,000 villages of the state, where they will be vis-

iting farmer households to collect rice and brief them about the new agriculture laws," a senior state BJP leader said.

Nadda will have lunch at a farmer's residence and hold a gram sabha meeting during the day.

There are 71.23 lakh farmers' families in West Bengal, 96 per cent of them small and marginal.

The saffron party has launched an aggressive campaign in West Bengal in its bid to end Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee's 10-year-old reign in the state.

With Banerjee, also the head of the Trinamool Congress, backing the farmers who are protesting against the three agriculture laws, the BJP has gone all out to convince them about the "benefits" of these Acts.

Elections to the 294-member West Bengal Assembly are due in April-May.

## Nepal has one of 10 weakest passports in world, ranked 104th of 110 countries

**KATHMANDU, JAN 9 [MYREPUBLICA]:** Nepal's passport has been ranked as one of the weakest travel documents in the world, according to a report recently released by Henley Passport Index.

Nepal has been ranked 104th among the 110 countries, losing three positions as compared to 101st in 2019. Nepal has ranked one par below North Korea with only 38 visa-free scores

compared to 191 scores of Japan which has led the tally followed by Singapore, Germany and South Korea.

The Henley Passport Index ranks the passports issued by the countries across the world according to the number of destinations their holders can travel without obtaining a prior visa. The ranking is based on data compiled from the International Air Trans-

port Association (IATA), which maintains the world's largest database of travel information, and by ongoing research conducted by the Henley and Partners Research Department.

According to the report, Nepali passport holders have 38 destinations free-visa access while Afghanistan passport, which is at the bottom of the tally, allows its holders to travel to 26 destinations

worldwide on free-visa status. Nepali passport owners need to obtain a visa before flying to 188 destinations worldwide while Japanese passport bearers shall get visa to 35 destinations. Japanese passport holders have 191-destination visa-free access.

Nepal's passport was record strongest in 2006 as it secured 76th position while the worst status was reported (105th) in 2015.

## Two-day session of Bengal Assembly against farm laws

**KOLKATA, JAN 9 (PTI):** A two-day special session of the West Bengal Assembly will begin on January 27 when the state government will table a resolution against the Centre's new farm laws and discuss the issue of agitating farmers.

State Parliamentary Affairs Minister Partha Chatterjee told reporters on Friday evening that a letter has been sent to Speaker Biman Bandyopadhyay, urging him for convening the special session.

Issues related to GST will also be taken up during the session, he said.

Chatterjee said a draft of the resolution will also be sent to the Left and Congress for a united fight against the Centre's farm laws.

The Left parties and the Congress had on January 1 urged Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee for a session of the assembly over the farm laws.



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## Australia take charge with lead of 197 in Sydney

**SYDNEY, 09 JAN (REUTERS):** Australia lost both openers in the final session but were in control on 103 for two with a lead of 197 runs at the close of play on the third day of the third test against India on Saturday.

Pat Cummins had taken 4-29 as Australia rolled through the Indian batting order on a sunny afternoon at Sydney Cricket Ground to dismiss the tourists for 244, the last six wickets tumbling for the addition of just 49 runs.

“It was a good day, woke up this morning hoping we wouldn’t still be bowling by the close of play and to have a lead of 200, yeah, great day,” said Cummins.

The most significant intervention from the pace attack, however, might be the deliveries from Cummins and Mitchell Starc that resulted in Rishabh Pant and Ravindra Jadeja leaving the ground for scans on their left elbow and thumb respectively.

Wriddhiman Saha replaced Pant behind the stumps and was soon in action to help India remove Australia’s new opening partnership inside 10 overs at a cost of 35 runs.

The reserve snaffled up an easy catch off a pearl of a delivery from Mohammed Siraj that debutant Will Pucovski could only edge behind for 10.

David Warner followed for 13 soon afterwards, trapped in front by Ravichandran Ashwin while attempting a sweep slog to leave Australia’s hopes of a good score again in the hands of first-innings centurion Smith and Labuschagne.

The pair had put on a partnership of 68 by the close of play with Smith on 29 not out and Labuschagne, who scored 91 in the first innings, unbeaten on 47.

It was the breaking of the partnership between Cheteshwar Pujara and Pant that triggered the collapse that ended India’s hopes of batting deep into the day and getting close to Australia’s first-innings tally of 338.

They resumed on 96-2 but Ajinkya Rahane and Hanuma Vihari departed relatively cheaply in the opening session to leave Pujara and Pant chipping away at Australia’s lead in the face of some fine bowling.

Josh Hazlewood forced the breakthrough when he had the injured Pant caught in the slips for 36, and in the next over Cummins finally winkled out Pujara after the batsman had scored a half century from 176 balls.

Notwithstanding some fine fielding, Indian fans will be aggrieved that three of their batsmen were run out on a day when they needed to occupy the crease for as long as possible.

All-rounder Jadeja scored 28 not out despite his injury, as the tail-end wickets tumbled around him. India will be desperately hoping he has not made his final contribution to the match.

# Brazilian football has a racism problem – from grassroots to the elite

**TOM SANDERSON LONDON, 09 JAN [THEGUARDIAN]:** Black people in Brazil are beaten to death in supermarkets on Black Consciousness Day, routinely harassed and brutalised by the police, and even cropped out of marketing photos for private schools so only their white peers are shown. The football field is usually one of the few places where black Brazilians are not subjected to prejudice and racism, a stage that provides a form of escapism from the harsh realities of everyday life. Yet two incidents over Christmas showed that the game is far from immune to racism, either at the grassroots level or the professional ranks.

First, a clip of an 11-year-old boy Luiz Eduardo went viral. At the conclusion of a match in Caldas Novas, in the rural state of Goiás, the youngster was left distraught and in tears after the opposition’s coach repeatedly told his players to “close down the preto”, which is a slur to offensive racial slang in Portuguese. Corinthians wore Luiz Eduardo’s name on their shirts in solidarity in their game against Goiás a few days later and he received videos of support from players such as Gabriel Jesus and Neymar. Santos, the club that nurtured Neymar, have even offered him trials.

In a land home to one of the world’s most racially unequal societies, where public education is poor, access to private schooling is expensive and the minimum wage is miserly, football stereotypically offers one of the few avenues to a better life for young black kids and their families, making professional employment in the industry the dream of millions. Yet, as shown during a fiery clash between Flamengo and Bahia in December,



escaping poverty does not mean players are free from discrimination.

During a tussle in a keenly contested league game, the Flamengo midfielder Gerson says he was told to “shut your mouth, negro” by the Bahia player Juan Pablo Ramírez. Speaking after the game, Gerson said: “I have played many games as a professional and I’ve never said anything because I had never suffered prejudice. But after conceding one of the goals, Ramírez started arguing with Bruno Henrique and I went to talk to him and he told me: ‘Shut your mouth, black.’ He has to learn to respect people.”

Various high profile players commented on the incident, with Everton striker Richarlison, who played alongside Gerson for various Brazil youth teams, telling his former teammate on Twitter: “They won’t shut us up. We will scream louder and louder! We are together brother! Burn the racists!”

After the game, the Bahia manager Mano Menezes argued with Gerson on the side of the pitch and accused him of “malandragem”, a form of rogue trickery that could be translated as shithousing. Menezes – who had a stint as the Brazil manager a decade ago in which he led his country to the Olympic final at London 2012 –

was effectively suggesting that Gerson had only accused Ramírez of racism to gain an advantage in a tight game.

The furore has been hugely embarrassing for Bahia, who have proudly cultivated a reputation as one of Brazil’s most progressive clubs on issues such as racism and homophobia. Amid the fallout after the final whistle, the club announced that they had suspended Ramírez and dismissed Menezes. The club said they had sacked their manager because of the team’s poor form – their 4-3 defeat to Flamengo left them 16th in the Brasileirão table – but his remarks seem to have played their part.

“His attitude certainly weighed heavily on Bahia to take the decision to fire him on the same day,” says Brazilian football journalist Breiller Pires. However, Pires points out that not every club would have acted so quickly or decisively in punishing their staff. “Were it another club, we would have probably seen different conduct. Bahia have been a pioneer in creating a core of affirmative actions and carrying out major social actions, which has contributed to the club adopting a zero tolerance attitude towards the case in removing the player and avoiding blaming the victim.”

“Despite this, they still need to improve on



their progressive fronts. Replacing Roger Machado, a black and socially engaged coach, with Mano was a mistake. The club left social responsibility in the background and looked only at the sporting side of things. And, due to the sully-ing of their image due to this case, they have paid dearly for it. Bahia must make their players and employees more aware of their stance, by showing them the importance of demonstrating anti-racist attitudes and that racism will never be tolerated by the club and its fans.”

Gerson has made his complaints to the police official and Ramírez has subsequently offered an apology in a video posted by the club on its social media channels. Although he maintains that he did not tell Gerson to shut his mouth, did not say anything racist and might have been misunderstood.

Bahia hired a language specialist, who concluded that there had been no wrongdoing on the part of their player. He has since been reinstated to the team. The club say they will take steps to prevent further incidents, including writing “anti-racist, xenophobic and homophobic” clauses in their players’ contracts and putting players through structural racism immersion courses in pre-season.

They have also proposed an anti-discriminatory protocol for matches and supported the idea for a national anti-racism in football day in Brazil.

Dani Alves, who started his career at Bahia, played for Menezes in the Brazil team and is now back in Brasileiro at São Paulo FC, has been critical of the punishments given to Menezes and Ramírez. “It seems a shame to me that we have evolved in so many banal things, but in the things that we really should have evolved, we have been getting more stupid,” he wrote on Instagram. “As long as there is no severe punishment, it will never end.”

Pires agrees, saying: “Dismissal is little for what Mano did. The coach’s conduct was reprehensible. A football professional cannot behave like him in the face of a report of racism, in blaming and discrediting the victim. It was the most shameful episode of his career.”

Pires says the cases of both Luiz Eduardo and Gerson “are reflections of the structural racism of society, which still marginalises black people, as happened with João Alberto at the Carrefour supermarket on Black Consciousness Day. In football, there is an even greater tolerance for racism. Racist offences are seen as part of the ‘sporting culture’ – something evident when Mano Menezes treats an accusation of racism as a footballing provocation. The absence of black people in commanding positions – such as coaches, directors and club presidents – is normalised, even though football is full of black idols and great athletes. The lack of representation in the sport’s most powerful roles is one of the reasons why racist offences generally go unpunished, and why victims are blamed.”

## Cool down the outrage and give football's Covidiot a little empathy

**BARNEY RONAY LONDON, 09 JAN [THEGUARDIAN]:** What did you do in the culture wars, Daddy? Cue the haunted stare across the parlour room, the weak-chinned stammer, the single bead of sweat above the starched collar.

Well, I ... That is ... I struggled to come up with relentlessly partisan opinions. I was unable to be convincingly enraged on a daily basis. And that, children, is why I sit around all day in an Edwardian armchair rather than hosting an urgent new current affairs show or arguing profitably on social media with celebrity chefs.

These are inflamed and inflammatory times. This is one of the few non-inflammatory opinions it’s possible to hold right now. We’re all having a massive argument: we can at least agree on that.

Even in the attic room of sport there has been a notable shift in the past few years. Blame must be doled out. Somebody must always be wrong. Polarising polemic: this is what humans find engagingly moreish, like dogs being tickled with a sharp stick.

So it has proved to be this week with the rise of the Covidiot in English football. Players in the men’s teams of Tottenham, Fulham, Crystal Palace, West Ham and Manchester City have, it is alleged, broken the coronavirus regulations over the festive period. More dramatically a group of players in the Manchester City and Arsenal women’s teams travelled to Dubai and have seen their WSL games this weekend cancelled as a result, a source of huge frustration for all involved.

What is the correct response to this? It was inevitable the citadel would begin to crumble at some point. The new strain of the virus is clearly hyper-con-

tagious. Humans are flawed and easily distracted. And footballers are only humans, often away from home, often larrikin types by nature. The real surprise is how long it took.

At which point, back to the here and now, and that urge to winch the great creaking finger of blame into place, to see not only stupidity or weariness, but moral depravity, some kind of profound identity fault.

The Football Association has duly been trashed for failing to step in and punish those involved. This is standard practice for those of us in the football-centred universe, a place where the English FA is still deemed all-powerful in human affairs. Meanwhile, the women’s players in particular have been the object of visceral personal criticism, accused of trashing the basic integrity and professionalism of their league.

There are two things worth saying about this. The first is to clarify the role of the FA. It has been a reflex response all week: how is it the FA can be a player for unwittingly using a racist word, but not for seeming to endanger lives?

This sounds logical. It isn’t. Agreeable as it may be to have Someone To Blame, there is nothing the FA can sensibly do about potential Covid law-breaches by third-party employees that have nothing to do with actual football.

In practice the FA can only sensibly take action when a player has been convicted of something concrete, or appears to have done a specific thing – use of racist language; gambling stuff – that goes against its own specific rules. The punishments doled out may be inconsistent. But there is at least some process here, a locus standi to act.

# Bryony Frost: 'Some people will always frown. Opinions are not facts'

**DONALD MCRAE LONDON, 09 JAN [THEGUARDIAN]:** The jockey delivered the finest ever victory by a female rider, but hints her success has caused resentment behind the scenes

“I don’t get on with any character in my world as well as I do with him,” Bryony Frost says of Frodon, the horse she rode to a stunning victory in the King George VI Chase on Boxing Day. It was the most significant win for a female jockey in the history of British racing and Frost’s love of Frodon seems boundless as she considers if she will find a better partner than him on or off the track. “That’s 100%. I wonder if I ever will. He is a once-in-a-lifetime partner.”

Frost is the most charismatic jockey in jump racing and yet, while also becoming the most successful female National Hunt rider in British history after she recorded her 175th win, there is a tangled undertow to this story. We will soon skirt the unspoken jealousy and resentment that appears to stalk the 25-year-old Frost within racing. It might be because she is so ebullient, or simply because she is a young woman achieving so much in a sport that once belonged to hard men in the saddle, but Frost feels some hurt and disquiet amid the euphoria.

Her love of the sport has always been heard in the vivid way she talks about her most cherished horses. When she and Frodon won their first Grade One race together at the Cheltenham Festival in 2019, she plunged into a remarkable interview while still

on his back and only minutes after their memorable victory in the Ryanair Chase.

“He is Pegasus, he has got wings,” Frost said of Frodon after a draining battle to win such an important race. “That minute where he got overtaken two out, most horses would quit,” she continued. “But no, he grabbed me by the hands and said: ‘Don’t you dare give up. I want this more than you, now come on! Where are you?’”

Frost patted Frodon on the neck in undisguised awe: “He’s unbelievable. I love you, mate!”

Twenty-two months later she laughs at the memory. “I got the mickery taken out of me for it,” she says of her gushing tribute before explaining her natural expressiveness. “It’s the way I’ve been brought up. The freedom I had as a kid, and my imagination, means I’m never scared to express my emotions. I wear them on my sleeve and no matter who has an opinion, I will battle very hard to make sure I stay that way because it’s me. I say it how I feel it.”

So how did winning the King George compare with those giddy moments at Cheltenham? “Good question,” Frost says. “You don’t think life can get much higher once you’ve won a Grade One at the Cheltenham Festival, but the King George is one of the three biggest races in racing: the Grand National, the Gold Cup and the King George. We ticked one of them off our list so it’s massive. I was astonished because I didn’t think I’d reach a highlight like the Ryanair [Chase], and

then I was given an opportunity to go even higher.

“The world went mad afterwards. Even my uncle in Spain said we were on telly on their news that night. You’re mind-blown because you’re in your own little bubble. And then you take two steps back and see the rippling effect. It was pretty damn cool and it’s a good job I can go round in a circle a couple of times because I’m pretty hopeless at anything else.”

Frodon had been a 20-1 outsider but AP McCoy, the 20-times champion jockey, said afterwards it would not have mattered who rode him in the King George. Was Frost hurt by the comments of a racing giant? “Well, Ruby Walsh is a jockey I’ve followed since I was a little kid. Ruby is an inspiration and his balance upon a horse was incredible. He has that connection with [the trainer] Paul Nicholls’s yard and I’ve always watched Ruby and been lucky enough to have had a few conversations. To hear his comment about me getting the race tactically right was a massive feather in my cap because Ruby doesn’t miss a beat. So that was mega. I’ll take that instead of the other [McCoy comment].”

Frost is more troubled by the atmosphere within a small corner of racing. She alludes to the problems, with the implication that there is resentment towards her and young riders, while also saying it is not a subject she can discuss openly. “It’s a difficult topic at the minute, because there are ongoing things that need to be sorted out

and there is protection that needs to be given to others. So at the moment I can’t go too much into it. But it’s something I’m going to be trying extremely hard to make better and move forward in a positive way. But at the minute my hands are tied as to how much I can go into such things.”

Is she wounded by such problems? “It’s OK,” she says with a small shrug. “There are always going to be a few people that frown. Opinions are opinions, not facts, and I think for our younger generation there are things that must be improved. It’s finding the support to become who you need to be. I will do my best to help everyone and give them all the time in the world I can. Other people give me time and I believe that should always be passed on.”

Despite our cryptic conversation is she confident such trouble will soon be resolved? “Yes. I’ll make sure that it does.”

When she is asked if the atmosphere in the weighing room, among her fellow jockeys, is difficult, Frost hesitates. “Yes. I struggle and I’ve got to make sure I don’t say anything too much. Sorry. I’m a bit stuck with this one.”

Does she try and block out the negativity and focus on improving as a jockey? “Yes. You just – it’s a growing curve, isn’t it? You have to keep working out how to get things right. I’m still in the process of that and always will be.”

Frost is not circumspect for long.

Even though we talk on a day when she is stuck at home rather than racing at Ludlow, where the meeting had been abandoned, Frost insists the elation of winning the King George has hardly subsided. “I’m undeterred by most things,” she says. “It’s my blissful ignorance probably. I did joke the other day that I got the map up to cloud nine when we won the King George and I refused to use it again. I lost myself up there and the longer I stay up there, the better. It’s probably always going to be sinking in for the rest of my life to realise such an achievement. It’s very hard to put into words.

“A lot of people say: ‘Being the first girl to win the King George is huge’ but, at the time, none of that goes through your head. There is a lot of disbelief and pride in your horse. What he’s done for my career, and where he’s taken me, is unbelievable. Doing it with Paul, [Nicholls] and being able to say your name is among those jockeys that have won the King George for the 12th time for him, is huge.”

Rather than just going round the track “in a circle a couple of times”, Frost shares a real empathy with her horses and an obvious aptitude for racing. She is also lit up by the joy she feels as a jockey. “Blissfulness is definitely a word I would use, being out there galloping, because in a frantic world it is the one place that allows me to slow my mind down and think nothing else than me and my partner. It’s bliss, it’s smooth, it’s effortless, especially with him. He is a timeless joy.



## Beijing on alert after COVID-19 spike in neighbouring province; 9 mn vaccinated in China

**BEIJING, JAN 9 (PTI):** Beijing has gone on an alert mode following a sudden spike in COVID-19 cases in the neighbouring Hebei province while China has administered nine million coronavirus vaccines so far in a stepped-up nationwide drive to contain the virus.

The National Health Commission (NHC) on Saturday reported 33 newly confirmed COVID-19 cases, of whom 17 were locally transmitted and the rest arrived from outside the mainland.

Fourteen locally transmitted cases were reported in north China's Hebei province, the NHC said.

The rise of cases in Hebei sent Beijing on alert as the capital, besides housing the country's top leaders, is getting ready for the annual Parliament session from March 5 during which over 5,000 legislators and advisers would converge.

Beijing is already dealing with a spurt in cases in some of the communities in the suburbs.

Both the legislatures, the National People's Congress (NPC) and the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC), are set to hold their two week-long meetings beginning March 5.

Beijing has already announced 21-day quarantine for people coming from abroad.

Alert levels in Beijing



have gone up as Hebei reported 14 new locally-transmitted cases and 16 asymptomatic ones on Friday, the provincial health commission said on Saturday.

By Friday, there were 137 locally-transmitted confirmed cases and two imported ones in hospitals in Hebei. In total, the province has recorded 476 locally-transmitted confirmed cases and 36 imported cases.

In view of the increase, Chinese Vice Premier Sun Chunlan rushed to the province on an inspection tour on the instructions of President Xi Jinping. Several local health officials have already been suspended.

Sun made the inspection tour from Wednesday to Friday, paying visits to a village in the province's capital city of Shijiazhuang, a quarantine site, a local community, an epidemic control centre, and hospitals to learn about local conditions, state-run Xinhua news agency reported.

Shijiazhuang, meanwhile, has suspended all subway services to curb the spread of COVID-19.

To further contain the spread of COVID-19, the city requires all local residents to undertake 7-day home quarantine after citywide nucleic acid tests, official media reports said.

As of Friday, the total number of COVID-19 cases in China has gone up to 87,364. According to the NHC, as many as 4,634 people have died as a result of the virus.

As the cases increased, China stepped up vaccination. Over nine million doses of COVID-19 vaccines have been inoculated in China, Zeng Yixin, deputy head of the NHC, said.

Those administered vaccines included workers in the cold-chain logistics sector, custom inspectors, health professionals, employees at government agencies and in public service sectors, community workers, as well as people who are to go abroad.

China has granted conditional approval to the first homegrown vaccine developed by state-owned pharmaceutical firm Sinopharm.

Pang Xinghuo, deputy director of the Beijing centre for disease control and prevention, told a news briefing on Saturday that groups like

pregnant women, lactating women and patients with some diseases are not suitable for vaccines.

Those patients in acute stage of fever and infection, suffering from immune deficiency or immune disorder, having severe liver or kidney diseases, having uncontrolled hypertension, diabetic complications or malignant tumours not suitable for vaccines at this stage, he said.

Currently, people between 18 and 59 years are arranged to receive the vaccination, and those not in the age group should wait for further data of clinical trials to know whether they could be vaccinated, Pang added.

## French vaccine rollout slowed by focus on elderly, red tape

**PARIS (AP):** The few hours it took to give the first coronavirus vaccine shots to 14 residents of the John XXIII nursing home — named after a pope and not far from the birthplace in eastern France of vaccine pioneer Louis Pasteur — took weeks of preparation.

The home's director, Samuel Robbe, first had to chew his way through a dense 61-page vaccination protocol, one of several hefty guides from the French government that exhaustively detail how to proceed, down to the number of times (10) that each flask of vaccine should be turned upside down to mix its contents.

"Delicately," the booklet stipulates. "Do not shake."

As France tries to figure out why its vaccination campaign launched so slowly, the answer

lies partly in forests of red tape and the decision to prioritize vulnerable older people in nursing homes. They are perhaps the toughest group to start with, because of the need for informed consent and difficulties explaining the complex science of fast-tracked vaccines.

Claude Fouet, still full of vim and good humor at age 89 but with memory problems, was among the first in his Paris care home to agree to a vaccination. But in conversation, it quickly becomes apparent that his understanding of the pandemic is spotty. Eve Guillaume, the home's director, had to remind Fouet that in April he survived his own brush with the virus that has killed more than 66,000 people in France.

"I was in hospital," Fouet slowly recalled, "with a dead person next to me."

Guillaume says that getting consent from her

64 residents — or their guardians and families when they are not fit enough to agree themselves — is proving to be the most labor-intensive part of her preparations to start inoculations later this month. Some families have said no, and some want to wait a few months to see how vaccinations unfold before deciding.

"You can't count on medicalized care homes to go quickly," she says. "It means, each time, starting a conversation with families, talking with guardians, taking collegial steps to reach the right decision. And that takes time."

At the John XXIII home, between the fortified town of Besancon and Pasteur's birthplace in Dole, Robbe has had a similar experience.

After the European Union green-lighted use of the BioNTech-Pfizer vaccine in December, Robbe says it took two weeks to put together all the pieces to this week vaccinate 14 residents, just a fraction of his total of more than 100.

Getting consent was the biggest hurdle for a doctor and a psychologist who went from room to room to discuss vaccinations, he says. The families of residents were given a week over the December holidays to approve or refuse, a decision that had to be unanimous from immediate family members.

When one woman's daughter said yes but her son said no, a shot wasn't given because "they can turn against us and say, 'I never agreed to that,'" Robbe explained. "No consensus, we don't vaccinate."

Only by cutting corners and perfunctorily getting residents to

agree could the process go quicker, he says.

"My friends are saying, 'What is this circus? The Germans have already vaccinated 80,000 people and we've vaccinated no one,'" he says. "But we don't share the same histories. When you propose a vaccine to Germans, they all want to get inoculated. In France, there is a lot of reticence about the history of vaccinations. People are more skeptical. They need to understand. They need explications and to be reassured."

France prioritized nursing homes because they have seen nearly one-third of its deaths. But its first vaccination on Dec. 27, of a 78-year-old woman in a long-term care facility, quickly proved to have been only the symbolic launch of a rollout that the government never intended to get properly underway before this week.

Only on Monday, as scheduled, did authorities launch an online platform where health workers must log all vaccinations and show that those inoculated got an obligatory consultation with a doctor, adding to the red tape.

In some countries that are moving faster than France, the bureaucracy is leaner. In Britain, where nearly 1.5 million have been inoculated and plans are to offer jabs to all nursing home residents by the end of January, those capable of consenting need only sign a one-page form that gives basic information about the benefits and possible side effects.

No doctor interviews are needed in Spain. It started vaccinating the same day as France but administered 82,000 doses in the first nine

days, whereas France managed just a couple of thousand.

Germany, like France, also mandates a meeting with a doctor and is prioritizing shots for care home residents, but it is getting to them quicker, using mobile teams. At its current rate of nearly 30,000 vaccinations per day, Germany would need at least six years to inoculate its 69 million adults. But while the German government is facing criticism for the perceived slow rollout, France made an even more leisurely start, at least in numerical terms, but has pledged to reach 1 million people by the end of January.

Other countries have racked up bigger numbers by offering shots to broader cross-sections of people who are easier to reach and can get themselves to appointments. The large majority of the more than 400,000 doses administered in Italy have gone to health-care workers.

Lucile Grillon, who manages three nursing homes in eastern France, says the many hours invested to prepare vaccinations for 50 residents and staff who got jabs on Friday was time well spent. She worked through the holidays to get ready.

"We can't wait until we have the doses in our fridge to realize that we're not ready to vaccinate and then have to throw doses away and say, 'Rats! I didn't think of that,'" she adds. "The doses are too precious."

"It takes us two months to prepare for flu shots. Here, we have been asked to set records, to vaccinate against COVID in under 15 days," she says. "I don't see how we could have gone any quicker."

## Death of 9 nuns highlights toll of coronavirus in convents

**LATHAM, N.Y. (AP):** Through the month of December, mixed in with joyful Christmas messages, death announcements filled the Facebook page of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet as a coronavirus outbreak took its toll in a residence for retired and infirm nuns.

"We have lost nine beloved sisters — wonderful, dedicated members of our religious community," said Sister Joan Mary Hartigan, director of St. Joseph's Provincial House in the Albany suburb of Latham.

The women were 84 to 98 years old when they died at the private residence for Roman Catholic nuns in the order of St. Joseph of Carondelet, which traces its roots to 1650 in Le Puy, France.

"They had dedicated their lives to bringing Jesus' word of love and unity to the world in various ministries, including teaching, parish work and religious education," Hartigan said by email.

The county health department didn't learn the extent of the deadly toll of the outbreak at Provincial House until a story came out in the Times Union, County Executive Dan McCoy said. That's because unlike regulated nursing homes, retirement homes aren't required to notify state or county officials of deaths.

"It opened my eyes to all the other facilities in the area that are group settings for seniors living in apartment complexes with no real oversight," McCoy said. He's looking into possible state



legislation establishing guidelines for reporting outbreaks at retirement homes. "If we knew, we could get in quicker to address it," he said.

The wave of deaths at Provincial House mirrors the toll among retired or infirm nuns at several other convents around the United States. The pattern aligns with deaths at nursing homes, which have also been hit hard by the coronavirus with 110,000 deaths nationwide.

At the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary convent in Livonia, Michigan, 13 Felician sisters ages 69 to 99 died of COVID-19 between April and June.

Seven died at a center for Maryknoll sisters in Ossining, New York.

In Wisconsin, eight nuns who lived at the Notre Dame of Elm Grove convent died in one week in December.

Retired priests have also succumbed. In April, six retired Jesuits died at

the Manresa Hall health care center in Philadelphia.

"We realize that our communal lifestyle makes us, along with other religious communities, a target for this virus," Sister Mary Christopher Moore, a leader of the Felician Sisters of North America, said in May.

Provincial House had no positive COVID-19 cases during the first wave of the virus last spring. But as New York's Capital Region experienced a sharp increase in infections this fall, the home, with 140 residents, wasn't spared; 47 sisters tested positive for the virus, Hartigan said.

All were quarantined, she said. They were cared for by their personal physicians in private rooms on a dedicated wing of the Provincial House, which is not a nursing home. None participated in communal activities, Hartigan said.

Only one sister is

still being treated for the virus, she said. Five staff members with mild symptoms are quarantined at home and 21 employees who tested positive have recovered, she said.

Hartigan said the Provincial House follows guidelines set by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the New York State Department of Health to limit spread of the virus, including appropriate personal protective equipment, quarantining sisters who test positive and prohibiting all public access.

"We pray the increasing number of cases across our country is temporary, and we mourn the loss not only of our sisters, but also all loss of all life and all suffering during this pandemic," Hartigan said. "We look forward to the vaccine and the end of this worldwide health crisis."

## Mexican farmers find rare female statue in citrus grove

**MEXICO CITY (AP):** Farmers digging in a citrus grove near Mexico's Gulf coast have found a striking, six-foot-tall statue of a female figure who may represent an elite woman rather than a goddess, or some mixture of the two, experts said Friday.

The National Institute of Anthropology and History said it was the first such statue found in a region known as the Huasteca.

The carved woman has an elaborate hairpiece and marks of status, and may date to around 1450 to 1521, the institute said. While the site where it was found is nearer to the pre-Hispanic ruin site of El Tajín, the statue shows some influences of the Aztecs. Farmers digging in the grove found it on New Year's Day and quickly reported it to authorities. The area where it was found was not previously known to be an archeological site, and the stone statue may have been moved from some unknown original site.

Just who the open-mouthed, wide-eyed statue depicts remains something of a mystery.

Institute archaeologist María Eugenia Maldonado Vite wrote that "this could be a ruler, based on her posture and attire, more than a goddess."

Maldonado added it could be "a late fusion

between the Teem goddesses and women of high political or social status in the Huasteca." Those goddesses were part of a fertility cult.

Susan Gillespie, an anthropology professor at the University of Florida, said there "there are quite a few pre-Hispanic depictions of elite women and female rulers elsewhere, best known among the Classic Maya but also in Classic Zapotec bas-reliefs and Post-

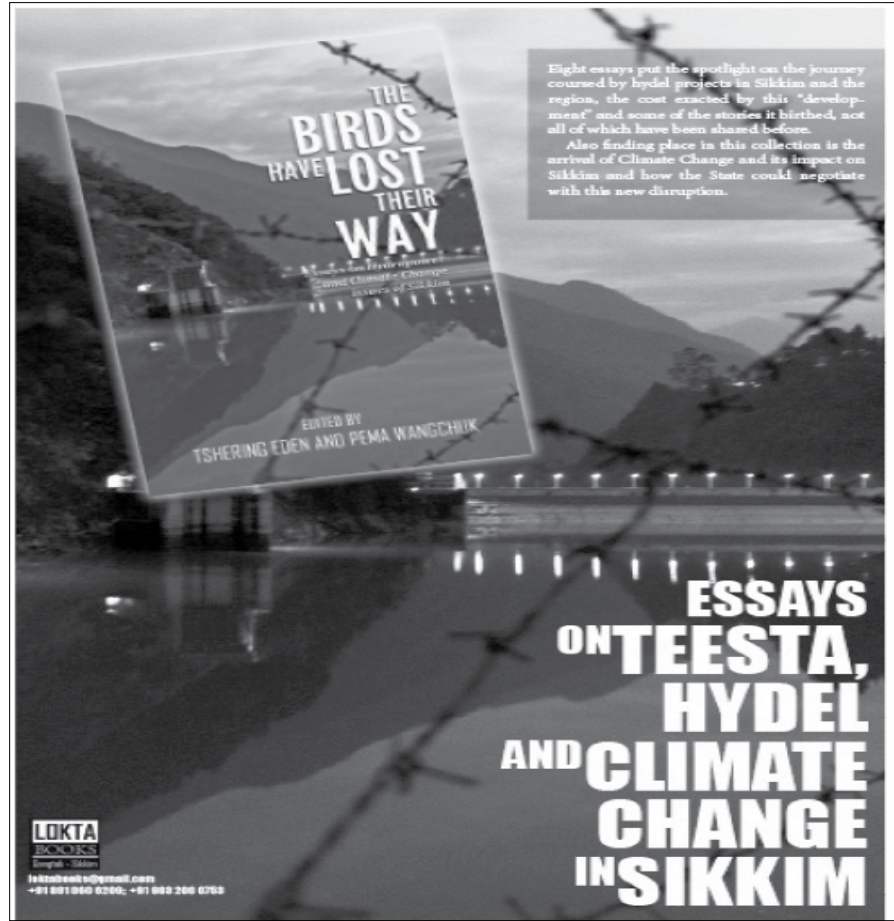
classic Mixtec codices."

"Colonial era Aztec documents mentioned women 'rulers' or at least holders of the crown to pass on to their successors ... so that is not a surprise," Gillespie added. "Women were highly valued in the pre-Hispanic era, drastically losing their status only after the conquest."

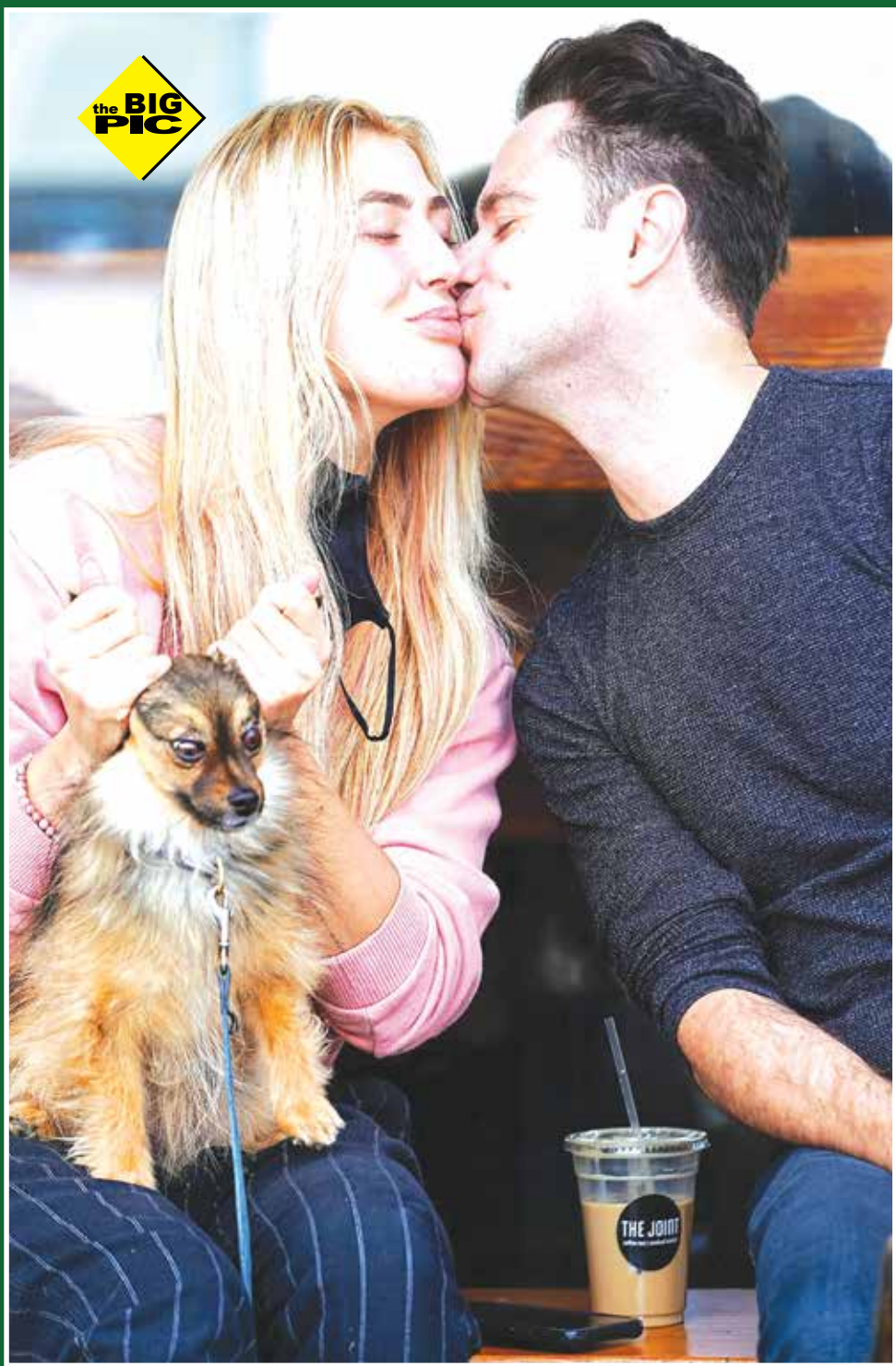
However, she noted that "if there is only one such find, it's hard to say whether it is significant, or

even correctly identified. Archaeology works best with repeated occurrences, to show a pattern."

In 1994 in the Mayan ruin site of Palenque, archaeologists found the tomb of a woman dubbed The Red Queen because of the red pigment covering her tomb. But it has never been firmly established that the woman, whose tomb dates from between 600 and 700 A.D., was a ruler of Palenque.







**CAFFEINE FIX!** Sasha Farber gave Emma Slater a kiss on the cheek during a coffee date with their dogs in Studio City, California.

## Jessica White Accuses Nick Cannon of Hiding Brittany Bell's Pregnancy in Tell-All Interview

In the midst of her own pregnancy loss, supermodel Jessica White claimed she found out then-boyfriend Nick Cannon was expecting a baby with another woman.

Jessica White says there's much, much more to the story behind her relationship with Nick Cannon.

The supermodel was in an on-again, off-again relationship with The Masked Singer host when a woman from his past unexpectedly announced she was pregnant with his child last June. At the time, some speculated Jessica was the other woman in this apparent love triangle, but new claims by the 36-year-old paint an entirely different story.

Jessica broke her silence on Friday, Jan. 8's installment of FOX Soul's Hollywood Unlocked with Jason Lee, where she accused Nick of hiding former beauty queen Brittany Bell's pregnancy from her.

"I found out on Instagram along with the rest of the world," Jessica revealed.

In fact, Jessica said that not long before Brittany an-

nounced her own pregnancy, she had suffered a miscarriage and was preparing to start In Vitro with Nick.

"She was aware that I just had a miscarriage two weeks prior to her news coming out, because he told me that he told her," Jessica claimed. "I was living at his house, and she knew that as well."

To add insult to injury, Jessica said she was accused of being a "home-wrecker" by Brittany's fans, explaining, "I was bullied for months with that whole situation."

Despite the public humiliation Brittany said she endured, she remained committed to making things work with Nick. After all, the baby was conceived while Nick and Jessica were broken up and the state of their relationship at the time—at least from Jessica's perspective—felt stronger than ever.

"We just had unconditional love for each other and we were friends," Jessica recalled. "When you have a really close friendship with a person, you just know

each other... He understood me and my craziness and I understood his and we just meshed. We got along well. We were actually in a really good space before it ended."

Nick's ultimate betrayal, according to Jessica, was his refusal to publicly defend her from critics following the baby news. After answering some "heavy duty questions" about her future with Nick, Jessica realized their relationship could never progress.

"He said he was going to right his wrongs and say something," she remarked. "He has yet to do that. I think he's a man of his word and he eventually will in his own time."

Jessica went on, "Stuff happens and I'm a very reasonable woman. For me it was, you know how private I am, and you know how sensitive I am and you know how emotional I am. You need to say something."

On Christmas Day, Nick and Brittany announced the birth of their baby girl, Powerful Queen Cannon.

## Breaking Down the Rumored Love Triangle Between Olivia Rodrigo, Joshua Bassett and Sabrina Carpenter

Disney+ star Olivia Rodrigo released the song "drivers license," and now it's all going down. Here's what's going on between her, Joshua Bassett and Sabrina Carpenter.

Welcome to High School Musical: The Musical: The Series: The Love Triangle.

Buckle up, folks, because we're in for a wild ride at East High. It seems that drama class is in session—and by that we mean tensions could be mounting between two young stars of the Disney+ High School Musical spinoff show.

Olivia Rodrigo and Joshua Bassett, who play on-screen lovers Nini and Ricky, have sparked real-life dating rumors in the past, though fans speculated they split last year because Rodrigo mentioned a "failed relationship" on TikTok in August.

Now, the co-stars appear to be in a love triangle with singer Sabrina Carpenter. Here's what happened.

It all kicked off when Rodrigo, 17, released her new song "drivers license" on Friday, Jan. 8. The lyrics clearly refer to a breakup, as she sings, "'Cause you said forever, now I drive alone past your street." When Rodrigo says, "Guess you didn't mean what you wrote in that song about me," fans assumed she



was talking about Bassett.

That's because he released multiple songs about lost love in 2020. In April, Bassett dropped "Common Sense," about wanting a second chance after a split. According to the lyrics, "Common sense says the girl's not worth my time/ But common sense ain't common when you come to mind."

His track "Anyone Else," which came out in July, hints that an ex-girlfriend has moved on with another guy. The 20-year-old star sings, "Is he the guy you want to hold ya/ I'll be here when you need me to," and later croons, "I am done pretending I want anyone else."

Okay, so if one of his songs is about Rodrigo, then her new song could be about Bassett. Check.

So how does Carpenter come into this?

Well, she and Bassett re-

cently shared videos of each other on their TikTok accounts. The Nov. 1 clips show them in costumes while creating a spoof "audition tape" for Sharkboy and Lavagirl, which proved they've been hanging out during quarantine together. Check.

Cut back to "drivers license," in which Rodrigo throws shade at a blonde girl that has entered the picture. "And you're probably with that blonde girl/ Who always made me doubt/ She's so much older than me/ She's everything I'm insecure about," Rodrigo sings in her debut single.

We know what you're thinking: Yes, Carpenter is blonde and she's also 21 years old, making her four years older than the HSMTMTS actress. Check.

Fans on Twitter noted that older lyrics referred to a "brunette girl" but claimed

the singer made a "power move" and changed it to "blonde."

So that's why E! News reached out to their reps for comment on the rumors. We haven't heard back.

However, the plot thickens. Right after Rodrigo announced her first single was coming, Bassett said he's releasing new music on Jan. 14. The real twist is that it's called "Lie Lie Lie," which means it has to be juicy, right?

It also appears the cast of HSMTMTS subtly weighed in on the relationship drama this week. As Vulture points out, castmates Julia Lester, Joe Serafini, Sofia Wylie, Larry Saperstein and Dara Reneé commented on Rodrigo's Instagram announcement to support her, but only Serafini replied to Bassett's post.

Although, that could be because "drivers license" is Rodrigo's first song, whereas Bassett has already put out some music.

In fact, on Dec. 22, he dropped the live version of his new song "Heaven is You," which totally implies the speaker is fully in love. The lyrics reveal, "Oh, I always heard there was a heaven/ I never knew if it was true/ But darlin', ever since I met you/ I know that heaven is you." The million-dollar question: Is he talking about Carpenter?

## A R Rahman thanks fans for support during 'difficult times'



**MUMBAI, JAN 8 (PTI):** Music-maestro A R Rahman on Friday thanked fans and well-wishers for their prayers following his mother Kareema Begum's demise last month. The Oscar-winning composer, who turned 54 on Wednesday, said he was grateful for the support he received during these "difficult times".

Thank you for your prayers and condolence messages during this difficult time; I will forever remember your kindness and concern.

"May the Almighty bless you and let this be an amazing New Year, Rahman posted on Twitter.

On the work front, the music director will be creating the soundtrack for Aanand L Rai's Atrangi Re .

## Ian McKellan is 'happy' Elliot Page came out as transgender

**LOS ANGELES, JAN 9 (PTI):** Veteran actor Ian McKellan has praised his "X-Men" series co-star Elliot Page for coming out as a transgender, saying that he is happy for him.

Page, the Oscar-nominated star of films such as "Juno" and "Inception", had in December 2020 came out as a transgender in a statement posted on Twitter.

Reflecting on his own experience as a gay man in Hollywood, McKellan told Attitude Magazine that Page's decision to come out will be a huge personal boost for the actor.

"Everything gets better when you come out because you get self-confidence. So you get better in terms of relationships, friends of all sorts, family, if you're lucky. And in my case, I think in every case, your acting is bound to change and improve," the 81-year-old actor said.

McKellan, however, also admitted that he was "disappointed" with himself for not recognising Page's struggle with



his identity on the sets of their 2006 movie "X-Men: The Last Stand".

"I remember Elliot Page, in one of the X-Men,' sat as close as we are now. And I had to speak when they'd finished, and I couldn't hear what they were saying. Nobody could hear what they were saying. So, I said, Look, if you can't speak up, would you mind when you're finished speaking, just dropping your hand so I know when you've finished speaking?"

"And then they came out (as gay) years later and suddenly you couldn't stop them talking. You heard everything.

And now they're Elliot. And I'm so happy for Elliot. And so disappointed in myself that I didn't detect what their difficulty was with communicating," he added.

In his post on December 1, Page had announced that he has changed his name from Ellen to Elliot and thanked his

well-wishers for their support.

"I can't begin to express how remarkable it feels to finally love who I am enough to pursue my authentic self. I've been endlessly inspired by so many in the trans community.

"Thank you for your courage, your generosity and ceaselessly working to make this world a more inclusive and compassionate place. I will offer whatever support I can and continue to strive for a more loving and equal society," Page had written in the post.

### ARIES:

Today, your higher self is asking you a pertinent question with regards to the act of giving: In what manner do you feel called to extend your support to others? You are blessed in so many ways, Aries, and are experiencing abundance in so many forms. So, don't hesitate to share from your surplus. Know that when you give from that space of purity in your heart, you will always be taken care of.

### TAURUS:

When we hit a roadblock, we tend to lose all sense of control. As a result, we go about blaming our circumstances for where we are, and cursing others for getting ahead of us. Here's the thing, Taurus: there is no other. The only person you are in competition with is your past self. So, let go of the negative thoughts, one by one, as you replace the fear with faith. You are where you need to be and you will get to the desired destination in due course of time. Keep doing your bit as you surrender the outcome to the Universe.

### GEMINI:

Gemini, you've always been a bit of a misfit at heart. The golden sheep who refused to follow the crowd. Maybe you weren't the crazy one.

Maybe you're the only one who got it right all along. Today, you're being asked to embrace your so-called rebellious streak. To embrace what makes you \*you\*. The more you accept yourself, the more you will be able to attract experiences that are in alignment with your truth. PS: The Universe is supporting this big change, so what are you waiting for?

### CANCER:

Cancer, the cards are urging you to put your boss lady/man pants on, and focus on managing the show from the top. Yes, it will be easy to get caught up in the drama, or to get obsessed with the need to micromanage every detail of what's being worked out. Remembering that this is a colossal waste of your energy will help you focus on the big stuff. PS: All eyes are on you, so do what it takes to make this unveiling a grand one.

### LEO:

This is going to be an action-packed weekend in the Leo HQ. Things that have been on hold, both personally and professionally, will get that much-needed push. But, just because there is a multitude of offers on the table after a period of lull, does not mean you have to say yes to everything that comes your way. Be selective about

what you choose to direct your time and energy towards. PS: This includes social gatherings too.

### VIRGO:

It's time to revisit that Gratitude Journal, Virgo. It's true that things have been rather topsy-turvy in your world. At the same time, you cannot deny that there is much to be grateful for. Redirecting your gaze to the blessings will help you bring about a shift, both inner and outer. Taking charge of your sexuality is also going to be a big theme for you. You are who you are, and there is no need to be apologetic about that. The only thing you want to be mindful of is conveying your truth to your partner(s).

### LIBRA:

You can read all the self-books in the world, and yet they will never make as much of an impact on you as your escapades. The cards are pointing towards the importance of direct experiences—the experiences that awakened you and brought you closer to yourself. Word for the wise: It's time to turn your knowledge into wisdom. The wolf spirit is coming through as a reminder of your instinct and your connection to the Divine. So, trust what that inner voice is revealing to you even if it does not make sense logically.

### SCORPIO:

The Universe is marvelling at all the ways you have grown over the past few months. Now that you're consciously choosing to put the old story behind you, why hang on to objects from a time long gone? Today, you're being encouraged to clear out the clutter, organise your belongings, and harmonise the energy of the space. A distraction-free workplace will help you direct your attention to what truly matters. Remember, there is more than enough to go around. So, don't let the lower vibration of fear become the reason you hold on.

### SAGITTARIUS:

Sometimes, the perfect opportunity knocks at our door. At other times, we have to put on a sexy suit and seduce it into our experience. Do what you have to make this work, Sagittarius. Be an opportunist even if tooting your own doesn't come naturally to you. You have so much to offer to the world. It's time to stop doubting your own power and potential.

### CAPRICORN:

Bruises don't make for badges of honour, Capricorn. It's true that you've been let down by those you trust, but that is not a good enough reason to hate on humanity in general, or iso-

late yourself from others. It's time to place your trust in the Great Spirit and awaken to what these experiences are teaching you. When you let go of the pain and the hurt, you make space for love, kindness and generosity to make their way to you.

### AQUARIUS:

Don't you love it when you're dropping words of wisdom and the doorbell rings at that precise moment, reaffirming your thoughts? Or when the song on the radio mysteriously answers a question you've had in your mind for a while now? The Great Spirit is communicating with you in more ways than one. So, open yourself to the magic that surrounds you as you let go of the need to rationalise your experience.

### PISCES:

Things are looking good for you this weekend, especially on the professional and creative front. You and your team are vibing off each other in a way you never have before, and are working dedicatedly towards bringing magical ideas to life. The secret to maintaining the vibe is not taking anything for granted. So, make it a point to discuss everything, no matter how trivial certain things may seem on paper.