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# SummitTIMES

Vol 06 | Issue 64 | Gangtok | Sunday 07 March 2021

ON TOP OF THE NEWS

RNI No. SIKENG/2016/69420

Pages 8 | ₹ 5

## CM visits Rangpo, assures development

**AARON RAI  
GANGTOK, 06 MAR:**

After his West Sikkim tour, Chief Minister, PS Tamang (Golay) today visited Rangpo in West Pendum constituency of East Sikkim. He visited Rangpo Bazaar, Goli Ground, IBM, Chanatar, Majhi Gaon and other places in the area to take stock of problems and grievances.

Talking to reporters, the Chief Minister said that the former government had only laid the foundation stone of various projects but the locals are facing problems due to non-completion of these projects.

He said that water, sewerage and drainage are the main problems in the area and these problems will be resolved very soon. He also informed that during his visit he discussed various upcoming projects in the area.

The CM refuted allegations



made by former CM, Pawan Chamling, that the SKM government has only given reservation to the Sangha community and ignored other religious communities. All these allegations are

baseless, he said.

The CM then left for Majhiatar to inaugurate an SKM party office. He was accompanied by Agriculture Minister, Loknath Sharma, Tourism Minister, San-

jit Kharel, Assembly Speaker, LB Das, Urban Development Minister, Arun Upreti, Political Secretary to CM, Jacob Khaling, Secretaries of various departments and other party workers.

## TNA alumni assoc organizes grand carnival, brings together Tencians from 1972 to 2021



**SAGAR CHHETRI**

**GANGTOK, 06 MAR:**

Tashi Namgyal Academy Alumni Carnival 2021 has brought together ex-students of the school from 1972 to the 2021 batch in celebration here at the TNA playground.

The two-day event got underway on Saturday with a series of activities being organised by Tashi Namgyal Academy Alumni Association [TNAAA]. The inaugural function has retired teachers and patrons of the school as special guests.

The main highlight of the event is the VN Langer Cup, an Intra Alumni Futsal Tournament, which has 19 teams in the open category and eight in the veterans' category.

Another attraction of the carnival is the TNA Cricket Mela which is being held in collaboration with Sikkim Cricket Association [SICA]. The Cricket Mela features activities for cricket enthusiasts in the 08 to 19 years age-group.

The venue has also make space for a Tenacian Entrepreneur Alumni Mela which has stalls for start-ups launched by TNA alumni. The two-day event also includes live performances by alumni members and a street magic show by Tencian Sam, the illusionist,

among other events.

On the occasion, founder CEO of Avaan India, Meera Singh, who is also an alumni of TNA and daughter of Madhu Sudan Singh, the third Principal of TNA, handed a trophy to the school to present to ISC girl toppers every year in the memory of her father.

TNA Alumni Association was founded in 1986 and the present executive body took office in 2019.

Speaking to media persons, TNAAA president, Jigme Namgyal, who is also the chairperson of the carnival, stated that the uniqueness of the carnival is that it has brought alumni of the school from the 1972 batch to 2021 together.

He especially thanked one of the alumni achievers, Meera Singh, for taking the mantle of the Title sponsor of this carnival and also thanked SICA and other organisations and individuals for their support towards ensuring success of the carnival.

He mentioned that TNAAA has been organising an event on such a grand scale for the first time and was delighted by the "tremendous response" received from all sides which has motivated the association to organise it on an even grander scale in the years to come.

## MP inaugurates SBI Mutual Fund's first branch office in Sikkim



**SUMMIT REPORT  
GANGTOK, 06 MAR:**

State Bank of India Mutual Fund office, the first in Sikkim, was inaugurated by Lok Sabha MP, Indra Hang Subba, here at Deorali on Saturday.

Thus far, SBI's mutual fund services were being provided through SBI branch offices and did not have a dedicated office in Sikkim.

In his address, the MP welcomed the move since this office will provide better service to the people of Sikkim and thanked SBI for choosing

to invest in the State.

He assured to extend all possible support to the bank if required in the future.

He also urged the bank officials to create wider awareness on mutual fund investments here.

Chief Manager, Sili-guri module, SBI Mutual Fund, Nibir Karmakar, shared plans to open 50 new branches across the country to provide financial education and said that the organisation wants the people of Sikkim to know how and where to invest safely

and to ensure their participation in the growth of the economy.

State Bank of Sikkim Managing Director, Phurba Wangdi Bhutia, in turn highlighted the need to educate local people about investment and make them aware to take the economy ahead.

He further expressed hope that this new office will also provide indirect employment in the State.

The inaugural function was also attended by SISCO Bank Managing Director, Pema Chenzom, and SBI Lead District Manager, Gopal Lama.

## Sikkim reports minor spike with 10 new Covid cases

**SUMMIT REPORT**

**GANGTOK, 06 MAR:**

After reporting daily cases in single-digits for nearly two months, the number of new cases of novel coronavirus spiked to ten in the last 24 hours taking the state's tally of confirmed cases to 6,167.

Meanwhile, only one new recovery was reported in the same 24 hours. There are now 44 active cases of novel coronavirus in the State. The total number of recovered Covid cases stands at 5,891.

In his daily health bulletin on Saturday, Health Department State IEC Officer, Sonam Gyaltsen Bhutia informed that the ten cases were detected in the testing of 172 samples on Friday.

All ten were picked up in RT-PCR testing of 142 samples. Of the 10 new cases, one was reported from East District and nine from South Sikkim.

Four persons from Namthang, two from Ravangla, one from Namchi, one from Naya Bazaar and one from Dambudara in South District tested positive in the last 24 hours.

He added that one person from West Pendum in East District also tested positive.

Meanwhile, 27-year-old Tapkana Tamang from Gangtok, who was reported positive for COVID-19 in yesterday health bulletin, has still not contacted the concerned authorities and Mr Bhutia further urged her to contact the authorities at the earliest.

On the vaccination front, Mr Bhutia informed that 1,709 more were vaccinated for COVID-19 at 22 places across the State down till the PHSC level in some places on Saturday.

Among those inoculated are 356 healthcare workers, 153 frontline workers, 102 persons in the 45 to 59 years age-group with co-morbidities and 1,091 above-60 year olds.

## India records 18,327 new COVID-19 infections, active cases rise again



**NEW DELHI, MAR 6 (PTI):**

India's COVID-19 tally rose to 1,11,92,088 with over 18,000 fresh cases being reported in a span of 24 hours in the country after 36 days, while active cases registered an increase for the fourth consecutive day on Saturday and were recorded at 1,80,304, according to the Union Health Ministry.

The death toll reached 1,57,656 with 108 more fatalities, while a total of 18,327 new cases were registered in a day, the ministry's data showed.

On January 29, 18,855 new infections were recorded in a span of 24 hours after which the daily rise in fresh cases remained below 18,000.

The number of people who have recuperated from the disease surged

to 1,08,54,128 which translates to a national COVID-19 recovery rate of 96.98 per cent, while the case fatality rate stands at 1.41 per cent.

The COVID-19 active caseload has increased to 1,80,304 which now comprises 1.61 per cent of the total infections.

India's COVID-19 tally had crossed the 20 lakh-mark on August 7, 30 lakh on August 23, 40 lakh on September 5 and 50 lakh on September 16. It went past 60 lakh on September 28, 70 lakh on October 11, crossed 80 lakh on October 29, 90 lakh on November 20 and surpassed the one crore-mark on December 19.

According to the ICMR, 22,06,92,677 samples have been tested up to March 5 with 7,51,935 samples being tested on Friday.

The 108 new fatalities include 53 from Maharashtra, 16 from Kerala and 11 from Punjab.

A total of 1,57,656 deaths have been reported so far in the country, including 52,393 from Maharashtra followed by 12,513 from Tamil Nadu, 12,354 from Karnataka, 10,918 from Delhi, 10,275 from West Bengal, 8,729 from Uttar Pradesh and 7,172 from Andhra Pradesh.

The health ministry stressed that more than 70 per cent of the deaths occurred due to comorbidities.

"Our figures are being reconciled with the Indian Council of Medical Research," the ministry said on its website, adding that state-wise distribution of figures is subject to further verification and reconciliation.

## Frontier Gandhi's autobiography released in English

**NEW DELHI, MAR 6 (PTI):**

First published in Pashto in 1983, the autobiography of freedom fighter Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan, fondly known as Bacha Khan or Badshah Khan, is now out in English, announced publishing house Roli Books. The book, titled "The Frontier Gandhi: My Life and Struggle", is translated by former Pakistani civil servant and author Imitiaz Ahmad Sahibzada. This is the "first time" that Khan's autobiography is available in English. An earlier account of his life, published in English in 1969, and with the same title, was based on the interviews conducted with him and was not "his written autobiography".

".. Bacha Khan felt



that the 1969 account of his life and struggle was not complete and began to write his own autobiography thereafter, with the help of numerous associates. Bacha Khan's autobiography was thus first published in Pukhto in 1983, in Kabul. This book is a translation of Bacha Khan's only written, Pukhto autobiography," writes Sahibzada in the book.

Khan (1890-1988), popularly called the 'Frontier Gandhi', was born in Uthmanzai in the North-West Frontier Province of British India. His life was dedicated to the social reform of the Pukhtuns and he continues to be revered across the world by them. In India, he is known for his close association with Mahatma Gandhi and his

leadership of the Khudai Khidmatgar (Servants of God) movement from 1930-47, one of the most successful and sustained Gandhian non-violent campaigns anywhere in the world.

The book, whose foreword is written by historian and Mahatma Gandhi's grandson Rajmohan Gandhi, brings to life events and personalities of the independence

movement as Khan records the untiring energy and sacrifices that went into winning freedom.

"If our world wants to picture non-violent defiance, or inter-faith partnership, .. or a commitment to the rights of the vulnerable, it cannot do much better than study these two men together: Ghaffar Khan and, older by 21 years, Mohandas Gandhi, brothers in spirit, each armed with the swords of conscience and courage," writes Rajmohan, who is also the author of Khan's biography, "Ghaffar Khan: Non-violent Badshah of the Pakhtuns".

"The Frontier Gandhi: My Life and Struggle", priced at Rs 695, is available for sale in offline and online stores.



## Pre International Women's Day at Lungchok-Kamerey



### SUMMIT REPORT

**GANGTOK, 06 MAR:** Pre International Women's Day celebration was held today at One Stop Centre (South) under Lungchok-Kamerey GPU in South Sikkim. The

GPU under Sumbuk BAC South Sikkim has established a Women's Empowerment Centre and is the first Women's Empowerment Village Administrative Centre in the State, a press release informs.

## SDF Youth Vice Convenor of Yuksam-Tashiding resigns



### SUMMIT REPORT

**GANGTOK, 06 MAR:** Sikkim Democratic Front, youth vice convenor, Santosh Chawhan from Yuksam-Tashiding constituency of West Sikkim, has resigned from his post and party. He submitted his resignation to SDF president, Pawan Chamling, today, a press release informs.

Mr Chawhan said that lack of leadership quality and inefficiency of the party leader was the rea-

son behind his resignation from SDF.

The party president is blaming party workers for the loss in the last election, and this is wrong, he stated.

"I condemn such statements by the SDF president, Pawan Chamling. We served the party for many years without any personal benefit and now the president is blaming us for the loss. This is why I decided to quit SDF from today," said Mr Chawhan.

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# IPL to begin on April 9: BCCI source

**NEW DELHI, MAR 6 (PTI):** The 2021 edition of the Indian Premier League (IPL) will begin on April 9, exactly 12 days after the Indian cricket team completes its ongoing assignment against England, a BCCI source revealed on Saturday.

The third and last match of the ODI series against England will be held on March 28 in Pune. The duration of the popular T20 league has been fixed keeping in mind India's international schedule.

"We have provisionally decided that IPL will start on April 9 and end on May 30," a senior BCCI source told PTI.

"The formal approval of dates and venues will be done during Governing Council meeting next week," the source added.

Considering the prevailing circumstances when efforts are being



made to minimise the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, the BCCI has decided to host IPL matches in five cities -- Chennai, Kolkata, Bengaluru, Delhi and Ahmedabad.

The city of Mumbai will have to get clearance for hosting matches as the state of Maharashtra has seen a spurt in cases of late.

The allotment of matches to Chennai and Kolkata would be done, keeping in mind the state Assembly election scheduled there in the next few weeks.

Mumbai Indians had won the 2020 edition

# Large cardamom cultivation and climate change

### GANGTOK, 06 MAR (PIB):

Three-day training on Large cardamom cultivation under changing climatic condition was conducted by ICRI, Spices Board Tadong, Gangtok from 04-06 March.

The training was sponsored by All India Coordinated Research Project on Spices, ICAR-IISR, Kozhikode, Kerala was organized by ICRI, Regional Research Station Tadong, Spices Board.

The programme was held at ICAR, RC, NEH Region, Gangtok centre, Tadong. In the training programme, Dr. Rajib Gogoi, Scientist- E & In charge Botanical Survey of India, Gangtok Centre, Scientists from ICAR, RC, NEH Region, Gangtok center, Tadong Dr. Amit Kumar and Dr. Shaon Kr. Das; Dr. N S Chouhan, Professor of College of Agricultural Engineering & Post Harvest Technology, CAU, Ranipool, Sri Saroj Rai, MD, Lamaten Tibgmo, FPO Namchi, South Sikkim and Mrs. Bhamu Deuri, AGM, NAB-



ARD, Gangtok apart from the scientists of ICRI, RRS, Tadong delivered lectures.

They covered all aspects of large cardamom from impact of climate change to improved practices to mitigate the effect of climate change on large cardamom; mechanization and post-harvest processing; FPO formation and support of financial institution to develop large cardamom industry as a whole.

Participants from Sikkim, Darjeeling and Kalimpong District of West Bengal took part in the programme and expressed their satisfaction over the information and knowledge they got from the three-day training programme.

The programme

came to end with valedictory ceremony today where Dr. R K Avasthe, Joint Director, ICAR, RC, NEH Region, Gangtok centre, Tadong was present as chief guest along with Dr. A. Chakraborty, Central Integrated Pest management Centre Tadong, Gangtok as guest of honour.

The valedictory programme started with welcome address of Dr. T. N. Deka, Scientist-C & Dy. Director (Res.), ICRI, RRS, Spices Board Tadong followed by speech from guest of honour Dr. A. Chakraborty stressing on adoption of integrated pest management approach in managing the pest in changing climate condition and expressed that the programme was rightfully designed for the benefit of large car-

damom farmers.

Dr. R K Avasthe, Joint Director, ICAR, RC, NEH Region, Gangtok centre, Tadong mentioned about his experience on climate change in Sikkim in last 30 years and how it has affected crops in Sikkim and he stressed upon adoption of new technologies to mitigate climate change impact on large cardamom as well as other crops in the region to increase income.

On the occasion, a training manual on covered topics was also released and provided to the participants. The programme came to end with vote of thanks from Dr. S S Bora, Scientist, In-charge AICRPS, ICRI, RRS Tadong, where he acknowledged the support of Joint Director, ICAR, RC, NEH Region, Gangtok centre, Tadong as well as Project Coordinator, AICRPS, ICAR- IISR, Kozhikode, Kerala for funding the training programme and Director (R& D), Spices Board, Kochi Dr. A. B. Remashree for necessary guidance in organizing the training.

# 7 more file nominations in South

### NAMCHI, 06 MAR (IPR):

On the sixth day of filing nominations a total of seven candidates filed their nominations for Municipal Elections 2021 at the office of the Municipal Returning Officer (South) today.

The nominations filed today under Namchi Municipal Council are as follows:

Radhika Agarwal has filed her nominations from 01 Gangyap Ward. The said ward is reserved for UR (Woman) candidate. Narendra Chettri and Kishore Chettri have filed their nominations



from 02 Dambudara ward. The said ward is reserved for OBC (State List).

Pemu Bhutia has filed her nomination from 03 Upper Ghurpisey. The said ward is reserved for

ST.

Mamta Kalikotey has filed her nomination from 04 Lower Ghurpisey. The said ward is reserved for SC (Women).

Sabitri Tamang has filed her nomination

from 05 Upper Boomtar. The said ward is reserved for ST (Women).

Janga Bahadur Rai has filed his nomination from 07 Purano Namchi. The said ward is reserved for OBC (Central List).

No nominations were received for Naya-Bazar Jorethang Nagar Panchayat, today. The last day for the candidates to file their nominations for Municipal Elections, 2021 is at the office of South Municipal Returning Officer (South) on 08 Mar, 2021 from 11.00am to 3.00pm.

# SKM Nari Shakti prez files GMC nomination as independent



### SUMMIT REPORT

**GANGTOK, 06 MAR:** A senior political figure, Kala Rai has filed her nomination from Lower Sichey ward of Gangtok Municipal Corporation for the upcoming municipality elections in the State here on Saturday.

Kala Rai is state

president of Nari Shakti of Sikkim Krantikari Morcha party. She filed her nomination at the District Administration Centre [East] today and received a grand welcome from her supporters after filing the nomination.

Speaking to media persons here today, Ms

Rai clarified that she filed her nomination as an independent candidate in this municipality election and appealed to the people to vote for her based on her works and not as an SKM leader. She added that SKM is not supporting her in this election and she is fighting as an independent candidate.

# Melli FC defeats IRB Piple in Holi Cup



### SUMMIT REPORT

**GANGTOK, 06 MAR:** Melli FC defeated IRB Piple on the 6th day of the Holi Cup Football Tournament organised by Pintso Bhutia & Group at Rangpo Bazaar Playground today, a press

release informs. Melli FC won the match with a solitary goal to enter the next round of the tournament. They will now play Siniolchu FC on 11 March. Dragon Heart FC will play against V Guard FC on 07 March.

## It's time we start our campaign for World Cup: Mithali



**LUCKNOW, MAR 6 (PTI):** Indian women's ODI captain Mithali Raj on Saturday said lack of game time won't be an issue for the players and they are ready to hit top gear against South Africa in the limited over series as the team begins its World Cup preparation.

India will play five ODIs, starting with the first match on Sunday, followed by three T20Is in the home series against South Africa to kick off their calendar which was disrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

While the South Africans come into the series fresh from their 3-0 and 2-1 win over Pakistan in the ODI and T20I home series last month, the Indians last played on March 8, 2020 when they lost to Australia in the T20 World Cup final.

"Clearly they had a game time, but we are playing after a gap. Having said that we definitely have put in the efforts, trained ourselves, have these short camps, four days of sessions here," Mithali said during a virtual news conference on the eve of the first ODI here.

"It doesn't look like we are rusty or anything ... I think the girls clearly are quite excited to get on the field and start putting our best performances because it's time that we start our campaign for the World Cup, and start playing some cricket."

The Neetu David-led selection committee sprung a few surprises by including a lot of rookies, while excluding some big names in pacer Shikha Pandey and wicketkeeper Taniya Bhatia who were left out from both the ODIs and T20Is squads.

Indian women's batting sensation Shafali Verma too has not been included in the ODI team but the skipper said the explosive opener was very much in their radar.

"She is definitely in the scheme of things. She

is in the radar. I think we need to have a little bit of patience and you see her very soon," Mithali said.

The ODI skipper said the series is very important to set their combination right for the World cup slated in New Zealand around this time next year.

"This series is very important in that context. We will try to see the composition of the team but at the same time also see that the team as a unit start to get that momentum right," Mithali said.

"...the series is very important for two reasons, one is to give the young players the right platform, to give them opportunities in the home condition.

"And at the same time, it's important to see that the core players get enough game time to get out there and start to develop that rhythm, and as a unit we come together. And take it from there," she added.

The 38-year-old was last seen in action in the away series against West Indies in November 2019.

Mithali said she will look to carry on her good batting form which had helped India beat West Indies 2-1.

"It's just like how I prepare myself before any series, it's been no different. In terms of gametime 'yes', we've not really played any matches as such. But in terms of training or preparation at home or back in the academy, I've prepared myself ...," she said.

"A lot has gone into the mental setup because clearly we are coming back from a long gap, it means that you have to be strong enough to put your best foot forward.

"All these years we've trained like that and I am definitely looking forward to getting more runs, because the last series against West Indies in 2019 I was in rhythm and I would like to continue from there.

### ANTHYESTI KRIYA

All relatives ,friends & well wishers are requested to join us in offering prayers for the departed soul at Shri Ramayan Prasad Residence, Reshi Bazar West Sikkim.

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

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# Sanju FA launches new jerseys

**RUDRA KAUSHIK  
GANGTOK, 06 MAR:**

The new set of jerseys which will be donned by the players of Sanju Football Academy, Sombaria, in the upcoming season was launched by Minister of Power & Labour Department, MN Sherpa, on Saturday. Sikkim Krantikari Morcha, CLC president, Tika Hang Subba was also present during the program.

The jersey along with the rest of the kit is designed and manufactured by Ambition Sportswear, a Kolkata based company, which has been producing top quality products since its inception in 2007.

"I am very happy to see sponsors coming in



for Sanju Football Academy and credit goes to Sanju Pradhan who is from the remotest part of Sikkim and with sheer dedication and determination, he has been able to reach the highest level an individual can reach.

I also personally thank, Ambition Sportswear for sponsoring the jerseys along with other kits for the Academy," said Minister, MN Sherpa.

Sanju Football Academy was represented at the function by its pres-

ident Gagan Subba, treasurer Prawash Shiwa, vice president Dipendra Sharma, advisors Lakpa Dorjee Sherpa and Binod Chettri along with some players of the Academy.

Indian International footballer Sanju Pradhan

who is the brainchild and mentor of the Academy was unable attend the function due to his club commitments. However, he had sent a message from Kolkata which said, "I am very grateful to Minister, MN Sherpa who gave us time from his busy schedule and launched the Jerseys. I also want to thank Ambition Sportswear for being our kit partner and supplying us with top quality kits," said Sanju Pradhan in the note.

Executive members and players of Sanju Football Academy expressed gratitude to the minister for his kind gesture of launching the jerseys and his words of encouragement.

## Namthang School bids farewell to retired Principal and teachers



**SUMMIT REPORT**

**GANGTOK, 06 MAR:**

Staff and students of Namthang Senior Secondary School organized a farewell program for retired and outgoing Principal and teachers at the school premises today.

SDM Jorethang and former Principal of Namthang School, CB Sapkota attended the program as a special guest who was also ac-

companied by the former teacher of the school, Sushma Kharel as guest of honour.

During the program retired teachers were felicitated with citation and token of love. All the retired teachers shared their experiences and best wishes for teachers and students of the school.

The program included colourful cultural performances by students and teachers of the

school.

Earlier, Vice Principal, BP Dhungel, gave the welcome address while the program was also addressed by the Principal.

The program concluded with the vote of thanks by DM Tamang and was hosted by Sudip Sharma.

Rita Kumari Pradhan, Man Maya Subba, PD Lepcha, BN Pradhan were present on the occasion.

## SBS felicitates former and retired officials

**SAGAR CHETTRI**

**GANGTOK, 06 MARCH**

State Bank of Sikkim [SBS] felicitated its former and retired officials as well as employees for their contributions and service towards the bank and the people of Sikkim here on Saturday.

In a felicitation-cum-farewell programme organized by SBS Employees Association [SBSEA], former SBS Managing Director, HK Chettri, Special DGP Sikkim Police, Akshay Sachdeva, who served SBS as Chief Vigilance Officer and Recovery Officer, and 22 retired employees of the bank were felicitated.

The programme had Political Secretary to CM, Jacob Khaling as the chief guest who was accompanied by Chairman SBS, DB Gurung and Advisor SBS, Mohan Kumar Rai as special guests amongst others.

In his address, the chief guest stated that the state government and the CM have already launched schemes and initiatives for the development and betterment of the bank. He informed that five branches of SBS have been launched



in remote parts of the State in the present SKM government. He further added that the CM is very serious about addressing all issues and problems related to SBS.

SBS is Sikkim's bank and it signifies history, identity, pride and future of Sikkim and its people, said Mr Khaling. He added that although SBS has seen many ups and downs, the bank has been playing an important role in the life of the Sikkimese for their development and progress. On the same, he asserted that everyone needs to be serious and responsible towards the development of the bank. He stated that good coordination and team work

in the bank would help in the development of the institution.

While congratulating retired employees of the bank, Mr Khaling stated that the future would always honour and recognize the sincere service and work of employees.

The SBS Chairman expressed gratitude to retired employees of the bank for giving most of their life and service for the progress and development of the bank. He further encouraged the entire team of SBS to work harder and more responsibly to take the bank to the next level.

Likewise, SBS Advisor stated that the service and contribution of the retired employees to the

bank and to the people would always be remembered by the State. He expressed hope that good and experienced team of the bank would take it to new heights.

In their address, former MD, HK Chettri, who served the bank for around 7 years and Special DGP, Akshay Sachdeva, who served the bank for around one year, also shared their experience of working in SBS and further thanked officials and employees for extending all support to them.

SBS Managing Director, Phurba Wangdi Bhutia stated that SBS is on a strong footing and credited this to the collective efforts of all officials and employees of the bank.

He stated that better service to customers would take the bank to new heights.

While mentioning that employees dealing directly with customers were the faces and ambassadors of the bank, he encouraged them to deal with customers better to maintain the good image of the bank. Mr Bhutia mentioned that SBS was a heritage institution so every person of Sikkim needs to save the heritage of Sikkim.

In his welcome address, SBSEA president, Sunil Tamang stated that as senior employees retire, the young employees of the bank need to take up the responsibility to serve the bank and customers better.

The programme, which was conducted by SBSEA general secretary, Rapden Bhutia, ended with the vote of thanks by SBS CGM, Shanti Ram Karki.

The second half of the programme witnessed the performance by renowned Nepali singers, Thupden Bhutia from Kalimpong and Nilima Ghimirey from Siliguri and local artists of Sikkim.

## Gavaskar felicitated on 50th anniversary of Test debut

**AHMEDABAD, MAR 6**

**(PTI):** Former India captain Sunil Gavaskar was on Saturday felicitated by the BCCI on the 50th anniversary of his Test debut with Board President Sourav Ganguly saying that the batting legend and his then teammates played a key role in making "the game as strong as it is today".

The 71-year-old former skipper received a commemorative Test cap from BCCI Secretary Jay Shah during the lunch break on day three of the fourth and final Test between India and England at the Narendra Modi Stadium here. Gavaskar is doing commentary for the match.

"Celebrating 50 glorious years of the legendary former #Team-India Captain Mr. Sunil Gavaskar's Test debut today," the BCCI tweeted.

Shah also posted pictures of the brief ceremony on his official Twitter handle while BCCI President.

"Join me in celebrating the 50th anniversary of Shri Sunil Gavaskar Ji's Test debut for India.

It is indeed a momentous occasion for all Indians and we are getting to celebrate it at the world's largest cricket facility Narendra Modi Stadium," Shah wrote.

Ganguly, also a former skipper, paid his tribute via twitter.

"This day marks the 50th Anniv of Mr. Gavaskar in international cricket and the team of 1971.. It is time today to once again congratulate them for what they have for Indian cricket. The game is as strong as it is today because they made a start then against all odds.@BCCI," Ganguly tweeted.

The BCCI also compiled a video of several of Gavaskar's contemporaries and former and current cricketers sending him their best wishes.

Head coach Ravi Shastri said apart from being a world-class opener, Gavaskar also serves as a great ambassador of the sport.

"Many congratulations on 50 years in the games that takes an awful lot of time. No one will ever forget those heady days of 1971

when you announced yourself on to the world scene as a world class opening batsman," Shastri said.

World Cup-winning skipper Kapil Dev said he felt privileged to have played alongside him.

"My hero, I am proud, lucky and happy to play with him and learned a lot, true professional," Kapil said.

A veteran of the game, Gavaskar featured in 125 Tests, 108 ODIs between 1971-1987. He many milestones in his career, including becoming the first to score 10,000 runs in Test cricket.

"India's victory in the 1971 West Indies series was a watershed moment in Indian sport. It was an incredible victory by a fantastic team, led by our young Indian batsman Sunil Gavaskar. In 50 years he has continued to inspire so many of us by his feats on and off the field," former skipper Rahul Dravid said.

Sri Lankan batting great Kumar Sangakkara also lauded Gavaskar's achievements, saying the 71-year-old epitomises courage and technique.

"Mr Sunil Gavaskar, the living legend. 50 years of cricket. The man who epitomises courage, technique, wearing what you always told be a plastic shell of a flower vase on your head against the might of the greatest fast bowlers of the world.

"What more can I say? Your record speaks for itself. your ability on the field and greatness speaks for itself. I wish all youngsters continue to learn from you," said Sangakkara.

Former England cricketer Allan Lamb recalled an incident which saw the 'Little Master' being taken off the field with a broken shin.

"I can't believe it was 50 years ago you made your debut for India and you are still going, it's incredible. I can remember the debut I made against

you in the 1980s and you were a very brave man, fielding at silly point to Ian Botham and you got carried off with a broken shin.

"To me that shows what courage you had playing all these quick bowlers. And your unbelievable record is just incredible," Lamb said.

Former Pakistan captain Zaheer Abbas said "Congratulation on celebrating 50 years of your debut and oh what a debut. Master has been my favourite batsman and a friend. He was a treat to watch."

A part of India's World Cup winning side in 1983, Gavaskar held the record for scoring most tons in Test cricket until Sachin Tendulkar surpassed his tally in 2005.

In his debut match against the West Indies, Gavaskar notched up half centuries in both innings, scoring 65 in the first and remaining unbeaten on 67 in the second essay.

India won that game by seven wickets and the went on to win the series 1-0.

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## When Public Seeks, Who really Benefits?

*Time to move beyond just packed with construction-related demands*

The Chief Minister is wrapping up a nearly week-long tour of rural West Sikkim. Reconnection in the people's own settings offers promising potential, and sure enough in every public engagement, without fail, with the rural folk through this tour, the CM was invariably inundated with memorandums. This is so expected a routine that it is almost part of protocol for the hosts to petition the CM with a set of demands. More power to them!

Also time and again, CMs, both the present and his predecessor, in their public addresses at such venues, have underscored that the demands presented should be "need-driven" and not "contractor-promoted". And still, go over any list of demands from anywhere in the State, and they are invariably packed with construction-related, contractor-requiring "urgent requests" - footpath here, a road there, a building, retaining walls, parking lots, even places of worship etc. While one accepts that infrastructure is something, which, given its scale, requires state-funding, Sikkim should sit back and wonder sometimes why its aspirations are almost always civil-engineering related.

A part of the answer might be in the staggering number of contractors that Sikkim has. There is a standing quip in Sikkim that if one were to pick up a pebble and throw it, it will hit a contractor, well, at least a registered contractor even of not all are working/ active contractors. For those who need specific data, try this - ten years ago, the office of the Comptroller and Auditor General of India worked out that the Roads & Bridges Department alone had 18,591 contractors registered with it! That worked out to one contractor for every 26 citizens in Sikkim!! This is not to demean the profession, but to highlight how big this sector is. Unfortunately, a significant number of them are not industrious enough which explains the litter of incomplete projects and the black hole of cost overruns.

This number does more than explain why demand lists are so "contractor-driven" in Sikkim, and the more worrying evidence it brings forth is about the suspected "cartelization" (CAG's inference which rings uncomfortably true) that has cemented in this sector. It transpires that even though there are such a huge number of people qualified to respond to Notices Inviting Tenders, in 90% of the cases, only the bare minimum number of bids, just enough to meet the required-by-law specifications, are received. When this is viewed against the established trend of how the lowest bids are also almost always higher than the projected cost, speculations arise about connivance. And even though this finding was from a decade back, it is unlikely that things on ground have changed by much.

While it might be okay for those in the business to work through the loopholes and game the system so long as no specific laws are being broken, it is not okay for the people to allow themselves to be so casually played. They have to be able to see through this misdirection and occasionally also aspire for things less material, like say quality education through proper faculty and facilities in their schools, more meaningful CSR by investors placed around them, better delivery by public servants, more engagements in the social sector and its challenges, for instance...

# Global obsession with economic growth will increase risk of deadly pandemics in future

TOM PEGRAM & JULIA KREIENKAMP  
THECONVERSATION.COM

As governments around the world roll out COVID-19 vaccine programmes and seek to kickstart their economies back to life, recovery seems to be within reach. However, hard questions must not be side-stepped. How did this pandemic happen? And how resilient are we to future global risks, including the possibility of deadlier pandemics?

Importantly, COVID-19 was not a "black swan" event - an event that cannot be reasonably anticipated. As Mike Ryan, executive director of the World Health Organization's emergencies programme, made clear in an impassioned address in February, COVID-19 is very much a human-made emergency. By continuing to privilege economic growth over environmental and social sustainability, "we are creating the conditions in which epidemics flourish ... and taking huge risks with our future".

Human civilisation is on a collision course with the laws of ecology. Experts have long warned of zoonotic diseases jumping the species barrier as a result of growing human encroachment on nature. A 2019 landmark global biodiversity assessment showed that species and ecosystems are declining at rates "unprecedented in human history".

Biodiversity loss is accelerating, driven by multiple interrelated forces, all of which are ultimately produced or greatly amplified by practices that push economic growth. These include deforestation, agricultural expansion and the intensified consumption of wild animals.

Climate change often steals the headlines, but it is becoming increasingly clear that the prospect of mass biodiversity loss is just as catastrophic. Crucially, these two challenges are deeply interlinked. Global warming is putting massive pressure on many of our most diverse natural ecosystems. In turn, the decline of these vital ecosystems weakens their ability to store carbon and provide protection from extreme weather and other climate-related risks.

These effects cannot be captured in simplified metaphors such as "the war on carbon", which may be politically expedient but obscure the complexities involved in protecting life-sustaining ecosystems. There is no single measurement that captures



the "the variability among living organisms from all sources including ... terrestrial, marine and other aquatic ecosystems and the ecological complexes of which they are part". In fact, many of the living organisms on Earth are still unknown to humans.

### UNCHARTED TERRITORY

Although it has long been argued that there are hard limits to unsustainable economic growth on a finite planet, these arguments have been largely dismissed by western economic powers. But market forces will not abolish natural scarcity or do away with planetary limits.

Belatedly, driven in part by growing public awareness of environmental destruction, economic planners are waking up to our ecological interdependence. As the recent Dasgupta Review, commissioned by the UK Treasury, puts it: "Our economies, livelihoods and wellbeing all depend on our most precious asset: nature. We are part of nature, not separate from it."

Buoyed by school climate strikes and the declaration of climate and nature emergencies around the world, UN Secretary General António Guterres has declared 2021 as "the year to reconcile humanity with nature". However, the lack of progress is sobering. Of the 20 global biodiversity targets agreed in 2010, none have been fully met a decade later.

The international community remains way off track when it comes to implementing the Paris climate agreement. And although the

COVID-19 crisis has led major economies to make commitments to build back better and greener, much of the recovery spending is flowing into business-as-usual economies.

### A FUNDAMENTAL SHIFT IN THINKING

How can political reality be brought into alignment with biophysical reality to ensure our societies do not prosper at the expense of the ecological life support systems upon which they ultimately depend?

Economist Kate Raworth's doughnut-shaped economic model for human development provides one prominent plan of action, placing social and planetary boundaries at the core of governance redesign. In other words making sure that no human being is deprived of life's essentials (food, shelter, healthcare and so on) while collectively ensuring that we don't put damaging pressure on Earth's life-supporting systems, on which all humans depend (a stable climate, healthy soil, a protective ozone layer).

But this is just one in a long line of ecological economic blueprints stretching back to at least the 1960s. The question remains: is society ready to relinquish its deep-seated will to power over nature for a different accommodation - one where we live in agreement with nature?

As ecologist Gregory Bateson observed: "The creature that wins against its environment destroys itself." The COVID-19 pandemic

is a canary in the coalmine; more are sure to follow. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change has made it clear that the environmental challenge requires "rapid, far-reaching and unprecedented changes in all aspects of society".

What is perhaps less clear from this statement is that the mindset, models and metaphors which shape society's goals and aspirations must also change. Where might we look for inspiration? According to the Yale Environmental Performance Index, Botswana and Zambia rank first and second in the world for biodiversity and habitat protection. In fact Botswana is unique in that most of its biodiversity remains intact. Such examples hold lessons for how we can converge towards a reconciliation with nature.

Political scientist William Ophuls argues that political struggle must now urgently focus on making ecology the master science and Gaia the key metaphor of our age. In other words, we need to stop thinking of ourselves as somehow above or outside the natural systems that support us. Humanity's efforts to embrace the politics of ecology could well prove to be the defining story of this century if we are to avoid indulging the tragedy of homo (in)sapiens.

[Tom Pegrakis Associate Professor in Global Governance and Deputy Director of UCL Global Governance Institute, UCL; Julia Kreienkamp is Researcher at the Global Governance Institute, UCL]

## This Frog's Lungs Act Like Noise Cancelling Headphones

JAKOB CHRISTENSEN-DALSGAARD  
THECONVERSATION.COM

For us humans, having a conversation in a crowded room is challenging - it's often called the cocktail party problem. The mix of sounds arriving at our eardrums needs to be analysed to pick out the sounds of individual talkers and that's a difficult task.

The neural computations involved in this kind of analysis are daunting and easily disrupted. Even a relatively minor hearing impairment, almost undetectable by standard clinical tests, leads to notable defects in being able to pick out individual voices.

For many species of frogs, the auditory space is just as crowded as in our pre-pandemic cocktail parties. When male frogs call out, they are sharing space with thousands of other frogs - from their own and different species - each also calling at the same time. Within this cacophony of croaks, the female frogs must make the important choice of finding the right male for mating based on the quality of his call.

Our new paper shows frogs may have a simple yet elegant solution to this problem. The tree frog appears to use its lungs as a simple noise cancellation filter, enhancing the audibility of the species-specific calls and suppressing sounds made by other species.

### FROG EARDRUMS

Frogs have two eardrums that pick up sounds, very much like our own eardrums. But in frogs the two eardrums can interact acoustically through the mouth cavity. This allows sound to reach both faces of the eardrum, and makes the ear inherently directional. However, sound can also enter the mouth cavity from the frogs' own lungs.

While she is listening, a female frog's lungs resonate at a certain frequency range depending on the volume of her lungs. These sounds are efficiently transmitted through the glottis - the open-



ing between the vocal chords - to the mouth cavity.

This kind of transmission from the lungs into eardrums has been found in several species of frogs, but has been puzzling up until now. The call frequencies of all species studied so far never matched the frequency range of lung resonance, so any functional implication of the lung to ear transmission was obscure.

We measured the transmission of sound through both eardrums and lungs in female green tree frogs using laser vibrometry - a technique to measure the vibration of lungs and eardrum and local sound stimulation. This enabled us to "dissect" the sound components.

Our measurements showed the sound component from the lung reduces eardrum motion - and hence sensitivity - in the frequency range where the lungs are most sensitive. In the green tree frog and many other species, this range is outside the frequencies of the species' call.

This means the lung input is preventing "unwanted" sound from stimulating the ear - just like how a noise cancelling headphone quiets back-

ground noises by generating sound waves exactly out of phase with outside noises. This filtering is purely caused by passive acoustics, so it doesn't require any neural processing.

### AMBIENT NOISE

We then investigated the ambient noise generated by other frog species to determine the reason behind the the sound filtering. Here, we used a large database of surveys of frog populations in the US, collected through citizen science. The surveys showed 42 other species of frogs were reported to live in the same ponds as the green tree frog, all making noises at

the same time of day.

When we studied each of the individual frog frequencies, we found the calls of the two most common species matched the frequency of the noise made by the tree frog lungs. This means the tree frog lung noises cancel out these calls the most. By doing this, the green tree frog can hear its own species call more clearly.

This is how we concluded the tree frog uses its lungs to filter out the background noise. By suppressing the calls of other species calls, as noise cancelling headphones suppress the outside noise, it enhances those from its own species.

This solution to the frog's cocktail party problem has been worked out by co-opting existing structures - the lungs and mouth cavity - through evolutionary history. We don't know how general this mechanism is in frogs, but we have seen a similar mismatch between lung resonance frequency and call frequency in several other species and guess that these species could use a similar mechanism.

[the writer is associate professor in bio-acoustics, University of Southern Denmark]

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*Nepal records 47 new infections and no new deaths*

**KATHMANDU, 06 MAR [KATHMANDUPOST]:** Nepal did not record any Covid-19 related deaths in the past 24 hours, the Ministry of Health and Population said on Friday.

The country's overall death toll due to the Covid-19 related complications stands at 3,010.

In the past 24 hours, the ministry said, the country recorded 47 new coronavirus infections, pushing the overall infection number to 274,488.

According to the ministry, 270,828 infected people have recovered from the disease so far, 62 of them in the past 24 hours.

The active case count stands at 817.

Kathmandu Valley recorded 31 new infections in the past 24 hours. Of them, 28 cases were confirmed in Kathmandu and three in Lalitpur. Bhaktapur did not report any cases today.

In the past 24 hours, 33 new infections were recorded in Bagmati Province, four in Gandaki Province, six in Lumbini Province, three in Province 1 and one in Sudurpaschim Province.

As of Saturday, 2,188,725 PCR tests have been carried out across the country. A total of 3,535 PCR tests were performed in the past 24 hours, according to the data released by the ministry.

Nepal had recorded 120 Covid-19 infections on Friday and 107 infections on Thursday.

On Wednesday, the country had reported 87 Covid-19 cases and 233 deaths, 232 of which had been unreported to the ministry before.

## No new COVID-19 case in Andaman and Nicobar Islands

**PORT BLAIR, MAR 6 (PTI):** Andaman and Nicobar Islands did not report any new COVID-19 case in the last 24 hours, an official said on Saturday.

The coronavirus tally in the union territory remained at 5,024, the official said.

The archipelago now has eight active COVID-19 cases, while

# He is ungrateful, says TMC on Dinesh Trivedi joining BJP

**KOLKATA, MAR 6 (PTI):** Slamming its former Rajya Sabha MP Dinesh Trivedi for switching over to the BJP, the Trinamool Congress on Saturday said he is "ungrateful" and has backstabbed the ruling party in West Bengal ahead of the assembly polls. Trivedi quit from the upper House of Parliament last month, saying he was feeling suffocated in the Trinamool Congress and was unable to bear various incidents that are happening in the state.

Earlier in the day, he joined the BJP at its headquarters in New Delhi in the presence of saffron party president J P Nadda.

Reacting to the development, Trinamool Congress spokesperson



Kunal Ghosh said, "For the last so many years, he (Trivedi) did not say anything. Now, just before the state assembly polls, he has made complaints about the party. He is ungrateful and has betrayed people of the state."

"He held several

posts of the party and was entrusted with many responsibilities. At a time when he should repay the Trinamool Congress, he has backstabbed it," Ghosh said.

Trivedi was once a close confidant of West Bengal Chief Minister and Trinamool Congress

supremo Mamata Banerjee and was her choice for holding the important railway ministry portfolio in the Union Cabinet during the UPA government.

Echoing Ghosh, Trinamool Congress Lok Sabha MP Sougata Roy said, "People like Trivedi

enjoy power during their tenure and leave a party at the time of elections."

Several TMC leaders have quit the party in recent months to join the BJP as the saffron party mounts an aggressive all-out campaign to end Banerjee's 10-year-old reign in the state.

Apart from Trivedi, two former state ministers - Suwendu Adhikari and Rajib Banerjee - had quit the Trinamool Congress and switched over to the BJP recently.

Since the 2019 Lok Sabha polls, 19 TMC MLAs and a Lok Sabha MP of the party had joined the BJP.

Elections to 294 assembly seats in West Bengal will be held in eight phases, beginning on March 27. Votes will be counted on May 2.

## Akhil Gogoi to contest Assam polls from Sibsagar

**GUWAHATI, MAR 6 (PTI):** Jailed activist Akhil Gogoi will contest the upcoming elections in Assam from Sibsagar as a candidate of his newly-floated Rajjor Dal.

Announcing the list of 18 candidates that the party fielded in the first two phases, Rajjor Dal working president Bhasco De Saikia said that Gogoi, who is in judicial custody after arrest during the protests over CAA, will contest from the Sibsagar constituency in Upper Assam.

In the first phase, the party will contest in 12 seats, and in the second phase, it has fielded candidates in six constituencies.

"We have decided to contest in only 18 seats



with the intention of not dividing the votes so that the BJP is defeated and to ensure that there is an anti-CAA government in the state," Saikia said.

In the first phase, besides Gogoi from Sibsagar, the party named Dwiponjyoti Phulan from

Chabua, Mohini Mohan Ligira from Moran and Lohit Gogoi from Mahmara.

The other candidates who will be contesting the elections in the first phase are Kabindra Chetia Phukan (Teok), Jiwan Bora (Bokakhat), Najrul

Islam (Rupohihat), Mehbub Muktab (Dhing), Alok Nath (Tezpur), Anup Saikia (Bihpuria), Bijay Tirkki (Rangapara) and Dhariya Konwar (Thowrah).

In the second phase, it fielded Ruhul Das in Raha, Hareswar Barman

in Rangia, Jotil Deka in Kamalpur, Sahabul Islam Choudhary in Dalgaon and Dilwara Choudhury in Jamunamukh.

Gogoi was booked under the stringent UAPA during the protests against the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) in December 2019 and has been in judicial custody since then.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Congress leader Rahul Gandhi began their Assam campaigns from Sibsagar, and with Gogoi deciding to fight the election from the seat, it assumes significance.

The elections to the 126-member Assam assembly will be held in three phases, beginning on March 27.

## One fresh COVID-19 case in Arunachal, tally at 16,839

**ITANAGAR, MAR 6 (PTI):** The COVID-19 caseload in Arunachal Pradesh rose to 16,839 as one more person has tested positive for the disease, a health department official said on Saturday.

The new patient from the Capital Complex region was asymptomatic, State Surveillance Officer Dr Lobsang Jampa said.

Arunachal Pradesh currently has three active cases, while 16,780 people have recovered from the disease so far and 56 died.

Jampa said the recovery rate among coronavirus patients in the state stands at 99.64 per cent.

Tirap district has two active cases and the Capital Complex region, comprising Itanagar, Naharlagun, Nirjuli and

Banderdewa areas, has one.

Altogether, 4,07,682 samples have been tested for COVID-19, including 305 on Friday, and the positivity ratio is at 0.018 per cent, Jampa said.

State Immunisation Officer (SIO) Dimong Padung said 41,708 health and frontline workers, including 3,618 on Friday, have received vaccine shots thus far.

The health department has been carrying out the inoculation drive four days a week - Monday, Thursday, Friday and Saturday.

## TMC MLA Sonali Guha hints at joining BJP



**KOLKATA, MAR 6 (PTI):** Sonali Guha, once a close aide of Trinamool Congress supremo Mamata Banerjee and a four-time MLA of the party, on Saturday hinted at joining BJP after she was denied a ticket for the coming assembly poll in West Bengal.

The TMC MLA, who represented Satgachia seat for the past four terms, had broken down on Friday immediately after getting the news that she was not being given the party ticket this time.

Guha said she will speak to BJP national vice-president Mukul Roy and decide her future course of action.

"I wish to be given a honourable post, be acknowledged as a political personality," Guha said without elaborating.

She said, "May God give Mamata didi good sense and counsel. I have been with her from the beginning. I have to think about my future moves. I cannot sit idle being a political person".

Roy said apart from Guha many other Trinamool MLAs and leaders have contacted him since Friday evening after Banerjee announced the party's candidates for 291 assembly seats in the state.

Several TMC MLAs, an MP and a number of its leaders have already joined the saffron party.

Guha was seen in every movement and rally by Banerjee during her days in the opposition and after TMC came to power a decade ago. She was also a former deputy speaker of the state assembly.

## TMC, Left candidates begin campaigning for Bengal polls



**KOLKATA, MAR 6 (PTI):** Trinamool Congress and Left candidates kick-started their campaigns for the West Bengal elections on Saturday.

While the TMC announced the list of candidates for 291 seats on Friday, the Left named nominees for 39 seats that are going to polls in the first phase.

TMC's Ashokenagar candidate Dhiman Roy began door-to-door campaigning in the morning. The party's Jadavpur candidate Debabrata Majumdar also visited the voters in the area.

CPI(M)'s Jhargram nominee Madhujha Sen Roy also campaigned in her constituency.

In Behala, TMC supporters were seen busy painting wall graffiti in the support of the party's

two candidates from the area -- Partha Chatterjee (Behala West) and Ratha Chatterjee (Behala East).

Ratna, who has been fielded by the TMC from the constituency of her estranged husband and BJP leader Sovan Chatterjee, began her campaigning by offering puja at her Parnasree home.

"I will give my best efforts to win this seat. We all are working to make Mamata Banerjee our chief minister for the third time," she said.

Exuding confidence, TMC's Labhpur candidate Abhijit Singha said it appeared that there was no opponent against him.

"Last time, the party won by a margin of around 4,500 votes. Lets see what happens this time," the leader from Birbhum said.

## Mamata Banerjee faces ex-aide Suwendu Adhikari as BJP rival in Nandigram

**NEW DELHI, 06 MAR [NDTV]:** The blockbuster battle in Bengal has been declared. It will be Mamata Banerjee versus her former lieutenant Suwendu Adhikari in Nandigram. The BJP on Saturday announced names for 57 seats in the Bengal polls that begin later this month and Suwendu Adhikari is the BJP's choice to take Mamata Banerjee head-on.

The 50-year-old former minister for transport and environment had quit in December and joined the BJP in the presence of Amit Shah. He was the Trinamool MLA from Nandigram since 2016 and is widely seen as the BJP's most important acquisition before the polls.

Mamata Banerjee on Friday rolled up her sleeves for the battle declaring she would fight only from one seat and

that would be Nandigram. She had earlier said she may contest from her old seat Bhowanipore as well but cleared the air yesterday, handing the Bhowanipore seat in Kolkata over to her power minister Sovande Chatterjee.

Just before that, Suwendu Adhikari's father Sisir Adhikari who is a Trinamool MP and has avoided comment on the rift between his son and Mamata Banerjee said yesterday that her decision to take on his son would boomerang on her.

The Adhikari family, headed by Sisir Adhikari and comprising sons Suwendu, Dibyendu and Soumendu have a stranglehold over the Purba Midnapore district.

Sisir Adhikari is Trinamool MP from Kanthi, his son Dibyendu is Trinamool MP from Tamluk in the district. Soumendu

was chairperson of Kanthi municipality till his recent removal and Suwendu was the MLA from Nandigram. The district has a substantial Muslim population.

Mr Adhikari was virtually the architect of the ouster of the Left from Nandigram in 2007 after a bloody battle over land rights of farmers in the area where the CPM government wanted to set up a chemical hub. Trinamool's sweep in Nandigram in 2007 is one of the key factors that catapulted Mamata Banerjee to power in 2011.

The BJP's announcement incontrovertibly made Nandigram the most important contest of this election has been set up at Nandigram, with the two-time Chief Minister taking the fight straight to the BJP and, symbolically, all those who ditched her

for the BJP.

This week, Suwendu Adhikari had told the BJP leadership that he was confident of defeating Mamata Banerjee by "at least 50,000 votes" in Nandigram. But a final decision on fielding him against the top Trinamool face was left to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, according to sources.

Responding to her announcement on Friday, Mr Adhikari flipped the "outsider" tag used by Mamata Banerjee against the BJP, and paint himself as a "son" of Midnapore - the region that Nandigram falls in.

The Left-Congress-ISF combine has not yet decided which party will fight in Nandigram. The ISF had said they could like to field a member of the family of its leader Pirzada Abbas Siddiqui from Nandigram.

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## MLS investigating Beckham's Miami team over Matuidi signing

**NEW YORK, MAR 6 (AP):** Major League Soccer announced Friday that it is investigating whether David Beckham's Inter Miami violated salary budget and roster guidelines by its signing of French midfielder Blaise Matuidi.

The 33-year-old Matuidi, a member of France's 2018 World Cup champions, joined Miami on Aug. 13 from Juventus. Miami said it used targeted allocation money.

Each team was allowed two high-priced designated players whose budget charge could exceed the maximum plus a third if there was a USD 150,000 payment to the league split among other teams, under roster rules announced by the league on March 1 last year.

Ahead of its first season as an expansion team, Miami announced it signed Argentine midfielder Mat as Pellegrini as a young designated player from Argentina's Estudiantes on July 26, 2019; Mexican midfielder Rodolfo Pizarro as a designated player from Monterrey on Feb. 17, 2020; and Argentina forward Gonzalo Higua n as a designated player from Juventus Sept. 18. Matuidi was not announced as a designated player.

In its March 1, 2020 announcement, MLS said its rules for the season gave each team a salary budget of USD 4.9 million for the first 20 players on its roster, although teams were allowed to spread that budget over 18 players, and the league permitted a maximum UD 612,500 salary charge per player.

Designated players carry the maximum budget charge even if above USD 612,500 (or USD 306,250 if signed in the summer transfer window).

In addition, designated players 20 and younger count a maximum USD 150,000, and from ages 21-23 count a maximum USD 200,000 (USD 150,000 if signed in the summer).

Each team could use USD 1,525,000 in general allocation money to "buy down" a player's salary budget charge, and USD 2.8 million in targeted allocation money to sign new players whose salary and acquisition costs were above the maximum salary charge or to convert a designated player to a non-designated player.

The league did not immediately respond to an e-mail Friday asking whether those rules were modified in the negotiation to restart the season following the break caused by the pandemic.

Miami said in a statement it intended to engage with the league's review process.

Beckham, a former England captain and Manchester United star, is Miami's co-owner and president of soccer operations. Jorge Mas is the managing owner.

Miami finished 10th among 14 teams in the Eastern Conference with seven wins, 13 losses and three draws, and it lost to Nashville 3-0 in the first round of the play-offs.

## Is N'Golo Kanté's long search for form over at the perfect time for Chelsea?

JACOB STEINBERG

**LONDON, 06 MAR [THEGUARDIAN]:** The nadir for N'Golo Kanté came when he found himself desperately chasing Manchester City's Raheem Sterling moments after giving possession to Kevin De Bruyne. Coming a week after a poor performance from Kanté when Chelsea collapsed against Arsenal on Boxing Day, it was not a dignified look. The midfielder's error exposed Chelsea on the break and, although the Frenchman did his best to delay Sterling, he was powerless to stop the counterattack ending with De Bruyne making it 3-0 to City, laying bare Chelsea's chaotic defending under Frank Lampard.

Kanté was struggling with every aspect of his game. He looked worn down after expending all that energy on winning major honours for club and country since 2016. Time seemed to have caught up with Kanté, who had struggled with little niggles ever since playing through the pain of a knee injury when Chelsea beat Arsenal in the Europa League final in 2019.

The body no longer seemed to be cooperating. A player who once marauded around midfield, exhausting opponents with his indomitable energy, was becoming unreliable. No pre-season before the 2019-20 campaign inevitably took a toll: Kanté was restricted to 28 appearances last season and did not feature again for Lampard after the defeat to City because of a hamstring problem. He was still recovering when Chelsea replaced Lampard with Thomas Tuchel at the



end of January.

At that stage it was hard not to wonder whether Chelsea had seen the best of Kanté. He missed Tuchel's first game and looked rusty after returning to the squad. He was off the pace after coming on as a late substitute during the 1-0 win at Tottenham in February and was average when he made his first start under Tuchel in the nervy victory over Barnsley in the fifth round of FA Cup.

With Jorginho and Mateo Kovacic impressing as Tuchel's double sixes in central midfield, Chelsea could have been forgiven if they were starting to regret rejecting Internazionale's offer for Kanté last summer. It may well have been the perfect time to sell given that the pandemic is expected to affect spending this summer. Clubs such as Real Madrid, who have courted Kanté, are unlikely to be capable of affording a 29-year-old whose £290,000-a-week contract runs out in 2023.

Yet when Tuchel arrived at Chelsea, Kanté was one of the players who most excited him.

The German wanted the France midfielder when he managed Paris Saint-Germain and appreciated his quality. Tuchel was ready to wait, easing Kanté in slowly, glimpsing signs of his ball-winning abilities during last month's draw with Southampton.

It was worth persevering. Kanté was a substitute when Chelsea beat Atlético Madrid in the Champions League three days later and started next to Kovacic when they drew with Manchester United last weekend. The former Leicester midfielder was getting sharper and, although his passing was erratic against United, he did well enough to stay in the side when Chelsea visited Liverpool on Thursday night.

Something clicked. This was Kanté at his most disciplined and effective, constantly winning back possession and controlling midfield alongside the equally impressive Jorginho. Kanté kept shutting doors in Liverpool's face and there were also reminders that a player who helped France win the

World Cup in 2018 can actually use the ball, not least when he created Mason Mount's winner with an accurate pass from deep.

"It was clear from the first second of training what this guy is capable of doing," Tuchel said. "It's unbelievable. You see his intensity in the physical report after matches and you think they may have tracked two players and put it into the same sheet. He's unbelievable in what he delivers in terms of intensity, in terms of ball recoveries, his devotion to the group is world class."

Tuchel, whose side are fourth going into the weekend as they prepare to host fifth-placed Everton on Monday, is not the first manager to wonder whether there are two Kantés on the pitch. He knows, though, that he needs to manage the workload carefully. After starting against United and Liverpool, Kanté could return to the bench against Everton.

"He has come from an injury so he will not play now every 90 minutes before the international break," Tuchel said. "We will manage him. We have to take care that he is fit until the international break and when he comes back we hope he has the momentum where we can rely on him in every game."

It is a tantalising prospect. The transformation since Lampard's exit is remarkable. Chelsea remain unbeaten under Tuchel and opponents cannot get at a defence that has conceded twice in 10 games.

A fit and firing Kanté would make it even harder to find a way through.

## Claressa Shields beats Dicaire to become first four-belt champion at two weights



**NEW JERSEY, 06 MAR [THEGUARDIAN]:** Claressa Shields won a unanimous decision over Canada's Marie-Eve Dicaire in their junior middleweight title unification bout Friday night, becoming the first boxer in the four-belt era, male or female, to become an undisputed champion in two different weight classes.

The two-time Olympic gold medalist from the United States won 100-90 on all three cards in the headline attraction, which marked the first time in 20 years a women's boxing match was the main event of a pay-per-view.

Shields (11-0) was fighting in her home-

town of Flint – in a matchup that was previously scheduled for 9 May before being called off because of the coronavirus. Shields also had a fight scheduled against Ivana Habazin in Flint in 2019, but that was scrapped after an altercation before the weigh-in. Shields eventually defeated Habazin in a rescheduled fight in New Jersey.

Shields landed 116 of 409 punches (28%), compared to 31 of 263 for Dicaire (12%).

With the win over Dicaire (17-1), Shields became the unified WBC, WBO, IBF and WBA champion at 154lbs. She had previously unified all four of the major

sanctioning body belts at 160lbs with a points win over Christina Hammer in April 2019.

Shields said she will take a week to celebrate her birthday and before setting up camp in New Mexico ahead of her mixed martial arts debut in June.

Also Friday, Danielle Perkins (3-0) outpointed Monika Harrison (2-2) to win the WBC silver heavyweight championship, bantamweight Jamie Mitchell (6-0-2) stopped Noemi Bosques (12-16-3) in the fifth round, and 2012 Olympic bronze medalist Marlen Esparza (9-1) outpointed Shelly Barnett (4-4-2) in another bantamweight fight.

## Katie Ledecky wins third title in return meet as Ryan Lochte reaches first final



**SAN ANTONIO, 06 MAR [THEGUARDIAN]:** Katie Ledecky led all the way in winning the 200m freestyle Friday at the TYR Pro Swim Series meet, earning her third title in three days.

She touched in 1 minute, 56.62 seconds, adding the 200 free to her earlier wins in the 400m free and 1,500m free. She finished third in the 100m free on Thursday.

"I'm so happy where I'm at even though some of the times haven't been there this week," said Ledecky, who like many of the swimmers is competing in her first national meet in a year.

Ryan Lochte is bidding to make his fifth Olympic team at age 36. He finished eighth in the

200m free final. Andrew Seliskar won in 1:47.01; Lochte touched last in 1:50.27.

"It's a good confidence boost knowing that I'm making the finals and being able to be somewhat in the race with these other guys," Lochte said. "The more racing I do, the better I'm going to be."

Lochte didn't make it out of the 100 butterfly preliminaries, finishing 31st. He's been in heavy training in Gainesville, Florida, which has left him "dead tired". He missed making finals in the 100m breaststroke and 100m freestyle Thursday. He is expected to swim one more event Saturday.

Olympic champion

Ryan Murphy won the men's 200m backstroke in 1:56.06, the fastest time in the world this year.

Kathleen Baker won the 200m back in 2:07.54, the second-fastest time in the world this year. World-record holder Regan Smith was second at 2:08.80.

In the 400m individual medley, Chase Kalisz took the men's race in 4:16.53, and Melanie Margalis won the women's event in 4:37.81, second-quickest in the world this year.

Smith came back to win the 100m fly in 57.88, second-fastest in the world this year. Tom Shields, who at 29 was the oldest finalist, won the men's race in 52.25.

## Qatar up for 2032 Olympics bid despite IOC backing Brisbane

**DOHA, MAR 6 (AP):** Qatar was still committed Friday to bidding for the 2032 Olympics despite the IOC heading into exclusive talks with top choice Brisbane.

The International Olympic Committee used its new, more flexible bidding process last week to name the Australian coastal city its preferred choice more than 11 years before the Games.

That decision seemed to surprise other expected candidates including Qatari capital Doha and

Budapest, Hungary.

The Qatar Olympic Committee on Friday "reiterated its total commitment to maintaining continuous dialogue" with an IOC-appointed panel which can have ongoing talks -- and even approach -- likely candidates for any future Games.

Doha applied to enter two previous Summer Games bidding contests but did not progress to be accepted on the IOC's list of candidates.

One factor weighing against Qatar is searing

heat in the July-August slot the IOC prefers to hold the Summer Games. Doha hosted the 2019 track and field world championships from late-September into October.

"We have listened and learned from our two previous bids and humbly believe that we are now perfectly positioned to deliver a low-risk, sustainable and world-class edition of the Games," Qatari Olympic leader Sheikh Joaan bin Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Thani said in a statement.



## Canada clears Johnson & Johnson vaccine, first to approve 4

**TORONTO (AP):** Canada is getting a fourth vaccine to prevent COVID-19 as the country's health regulator has cleared a Johnson & Johnson shot that works with just one dose instead of two, officials said Friday.

Health experts are eager for a one-and-done option to help speed vaccination. Canada has also approved vaccines from Pfizer, Moderna and AstraZeneca and Health Canada is the first major regulator to approve four different vaccines, said Dr. Supriya Sharma, Health Canada's chief medical adviser.

Like many countries, Canada does not have domestic production and has struggled with an immediate shortage of vaccines. The U.S. so far isn't allowing locally made vaccines to be exported, so Canada — like the other U.S. neighbor, Mexico — has been forced to get vaccines from Europe and Asia.

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said Canada has an agreement with Johnson & Johnson for 10 million doses before September. It was not immediately clear when Canada would get its first shipments of those.

But Trudeau announced Pfizer would deliver an additional 1.5 million doses to Canada in March and another 1 million doses ahead of schedule in both April and May.

"We have reasons to be optimistic. We're going to be able to move things forward," Trudeau said. "But at the same time, we also know that these are global supply chains that are being set



up and there's always possibility for disruptions."

The U.S. approved Johnson and Johnson last month. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration said J&J's vaccine offers strong protection against what matters most: serious illness, hospitalizations and death. One dose was 85% protective against the most severe COVID-19 illness in a massive study that spanned three continents — protection that remained strong even in countries such as South Africa, where the variants of most concern are spreading.

J&J also is seeking authorization for emergency use of its vaccine in Europe and from the World Health Organization. The company aims to produce about 1 billion doses globally by the end of the year. Last month, the island nation of Bahrain became the first to clear its use.

The vaccine shortage is so acute in Canada that provincial governments are now saying they will extend the interval between the two doses of Pfizer, Moderna and As-

traZeneca vaccines to four months rather than three to four weeks so they can quickly inoculate more people.

"It is a reasonable recommendation. If we can get earlier doses, we don't have to wait for four months to give second doses if the supply opens up," Sharma said.

Retired Gen. Rick Hillier, who leads the vaccine program Canada's most populous province of Ontario, said all adults could receive the first dose by June 20.

"Our aim would be to allow the province of Ontario to have a first needle in the arm of every eligible person who wants it by the first day of summer," Hillier said.

The Manitoba provincial government is now predicting it will be able to offer all eligible adults the first dose this spring — months ahead of its previous plan.

"It is possible that we have further good news and good predictions to share in the coming weeks," Trudeau said.

Trudeau said officials have been assured by the European Union that Pfizer and Moderna vaccine deliveries to

Canada won't be disrupted. A shipment of over a quarter million AstraZeneca vaccines destined for Australia has been blocked from leaving the European Union in the first use of a European export control system to make sure big pharmaceutical companies respect their local contracts.

Trudeau noted that Canada is getting Pfizer and Moderna doses from Europe now and said those two companies are not likely to face export disruptions from Europe. He said Canada won't get AstraZeneca vaccines doses from Europe for months. Canada received 500,000 AstraZeneca doses from India this month.

The provincial Ontario government, meanwhile, said it is lifting its stay-at-home order next week in Toronto, Canada's largest city. Ontario will allow retailers to reopen for in-person shopping, but only with a 25% capacity limit. Many restrictions will remain in place. Indoor and outdoor dining service will continue to be prohibited. Hair salons also can't reopen.

## Speedy variants power virus surge sweeping Europe



**MILAN (AP):** The virus swept through a nursery school and an adjacent elementary school in the Milan suburb of Bollate with amazing speed. In a matter of just days, 45 children and 14 staff members had tested positive.

Genetic analysis confirmed what officials already suspected: The highly contagious coronavirus variant first identified in England was racing through the community, a densely packed city of nearly 40,000 with a chemical plant and Pirelli bicycle tire factory a 15-minute drive from the heart of Milan.

"This is the demonstration that the virus has a sort of intelligence, even if it is a single-cell organism. We can put up all the barriers in the world and imagine that they work, but in the end, it adapts and penetrates them," lamented Bollate Mayor Francesco Vassallo.

Bollate was the first city in Lombardy, the northern region that has been the epicenter in each of Italy's three surges, to be sealed off from neighbors because of mutant versions that the World Health Organization says are now powering another uptick in infections across Europe. The variants also include versions first identified in South Africa and Brazil.

Europe recorded 1 million new COVID-19 cases last week, an increase of 9% from the previous week and a reversal that ended a six-week decline, WHO said Thursday.

"The spread of the variants is driving the

increase, but not only," said Dr. Hans Kluge, WHO regional director for Europe, citing "also the opening of society, when it is not done in a safe and a controlled manner."

The so-called U.K. variant is spreading significantly in 27 European countries monitored by WHO and is dominant in at least 10 by the agency's count: Britain, Denmark, Italy, Ireland, Germany, France, the Netherlands, Israel, Spain and Portugal.

It is up to 50% more transmissible than the virus that surged last spring and again in the fall, making it more adept at thwarting measures that were previously effective, WHO experts warned.

"That is why health systems are struggling more now," Kluge said. "It really is at a tipping point. We have to hold the fort and be very vigilant."

In Lombardy, which bore the brunt of Italy's spring surge, intensive care wards are again filling up as more than two-thirds of new positive tests are of the UK variant, health officials said this week.

After putting two provinces and some 50 towns on a modified lockdown, Lombardy's regional governor announced tightened restrictions on Friday and closed classrooms for all age groups. Cases in Milan schools alone surged 33% in a week, the head of the provincial health system said.

The situation is dire in the Czech Republic, which registered a record-breaking total of nearly 8,500 patients

in the hospital with COVID-19 this week. Poland is opening temporary hospitals and imposing a partial lockdown as the variant has grown from 10% of all infections in February to 25% now.

Kluge cited Britain's experience as cause for optimism, noting that well-considered restrictions and the introduction of the vaccine have helped tamp down the variants there and in Israel. The vaccine rollout in the European Union, by comparison, is lagging, mostly because of supply problems.

In Britain, the emergence of the more transmissible strain sent cases soaring in December and triggered a national lockdown in January. Cases have since plummeted, from about 60,000 a day at the peak in early January to about 7,000 a day.

Still, a study shows the rate of decline slowing, and the government says it will tread cautiously with plans to ease the lockdown. That process begins Monday with the reopening of schools. Infection rates are highest in people ages 13 to 17, and officials will watch closely to see whether the return to class brings a spike in infections.

While the U.K. variant is dominant in France, forcing lockdowns in the French Riviera city of Nice and the northern port of Dunkirk, the variant first detected in South Africa has emerged as the most prevalent in the Moselle region, which borders German and Luxembourg. It represents 55% of the virus circulating there.

The South Africa variant also is predominant in a district of Austria that extends from Italy to Germany, with Austrian officials announcing plans to vaccinate most of the 84,000 residents to curb its spread. Austria is also requiring motorists along the Brenner highway, a major north-south trucking route, to produce negative test results.

The South Africa variant, now present in 26 European countries, is a source of particular concern because of doubts over whether the current vaccines are fully effective against it. The Brazilian variant, which appears capable of reinfecting people, has been detected in 15 European countries.

WHO and its partners are working to strengthen the genetic surveillance needed to track variants across the continent.

The mayor of Bollate has appealed to the regional governor to vaccinate all 40,000 residents immediately, though he expects to be told the supply is too tight at the moment.

Bollate has recorded 3,000 positive cases and 134 deaths — mostly among the elderly — since Italy was stricken a year ago. It took the brunt in November and December, in the fall resurgence, and was caught completely off guard when the variant arrived, racing through school-age children before hitting families at home.

"People are starting to get tired that after a year there is no light at the end of the tunnel," Vassallo said.

## Protests, tear gas in Myanmar after UN envoy urges action

**YANGON, MYANMAR (AP):** Security forces in Myanmar again used force Saturday to disperse anti-coup protesters, a day after the U.N. special envoy urged the Security Council to take action to quell junta violence that this week left about 50 peaceful demonstrators dead and scores injured.

Fresh protests were reported Saturday morning in the biggest city of Yangon, where stun grenades and tear gas were used against protesters. On Wednesday, 18 people were reported killed there.

Protests were also reported in Myitkyina, the capital of the northern state of Kachin, Myeik, in the country's far south where police fired tear gas at students, and Dawei in the southeast where tear gas was also used. Other places included Kyaukse, in the eastern state of Mon, Loi-kaw, the capital of Kayah state in eastern Myanmar, and Myingyan, a city where one protester was killed on Wednesday.

The escalation of violence has put pressure on the world community to act to restrain the junta, which seized power on Feb. 1 by ousting the elected government of Aung San Suu Kyi. The coup reversed years of slow progress toward democracy in Myanmar,

which for five decades had languished under strict military rule that led to international isolation and sanctions.

Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy party led a return to civilian rule with a landslide election victory in 2015, and with an even greater margin of votes last year. It would have taken a second five-year term of office last month, but instead she and President Win Myint and other members of her government were placed in military detention.

Large protests have occurred daily across many cities and towns. Security forces responded with greater use of lethal force and mass arrests. At least 18 protesters were shot and killed last Sunday and 38 on Wednesday, according to the U.N. Human Rights Office. More than 1,000 have been arrested, the independent Assistance Association for Political Prisoners said.

U.N. special envoy for Myanmar Christine Schraner Burgener said in her briefing to Friday's closed Security Council meeting that council unity and "robust" action are critical "in pushing for a stop to the violence and the restoration of Myanmar's democratic institutions."

"We must denounce the actions by the military," she said. "It is crit-



ical that this council is resolute and coherent in putting the security forces on notice and standing with the people of Myanmar firmly, in support of the clear November election results."

She reiterated an earlier appeal to the international community not to "lend legitimacy or recognition to this regime that has been forcefully imposed and nothing but chaos has since followed."

The Security Council took no immediate action. Council diplomats said Britain circulated a draft presidential statement for consideration, a step below a legally binding resolution.

Any kind of coordinated action at the U.N. will be difficult because two permanent members of the Security Council, China and Russia, are likely to veto it.

Schraner Burgener earlier this week warned Myanmar's army that the world's nations and the Security Council "might take huge, strong measures."

"And the answer was, 'We are used to sanc-

tions, and we survived those sanctions in the past,'" she said. When she warned that Myanmar would become isolated, Schraner Burgener said "the answer was, 'We have to learn to walk with only a few friends.'"

The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies urged immediate protection for all Red Cross volunteers and health workers.

The statement came after video from a surveillance camera that was circulated widely on social media showed members of an ambulance crew in Yangon being savagely beaten after they were taken into custody by police on Wednesday.

"We express profound sadness that Myanmar Red Cross volunteers have been injured while on duty providing life-saving first aid treatment to wounded people, in line with fundamental principles of humanity, neutrality and impartiality. Red Cross volunteers should never be targeted," the federation said.

### Italy surpasses 3 million coronavirus cases

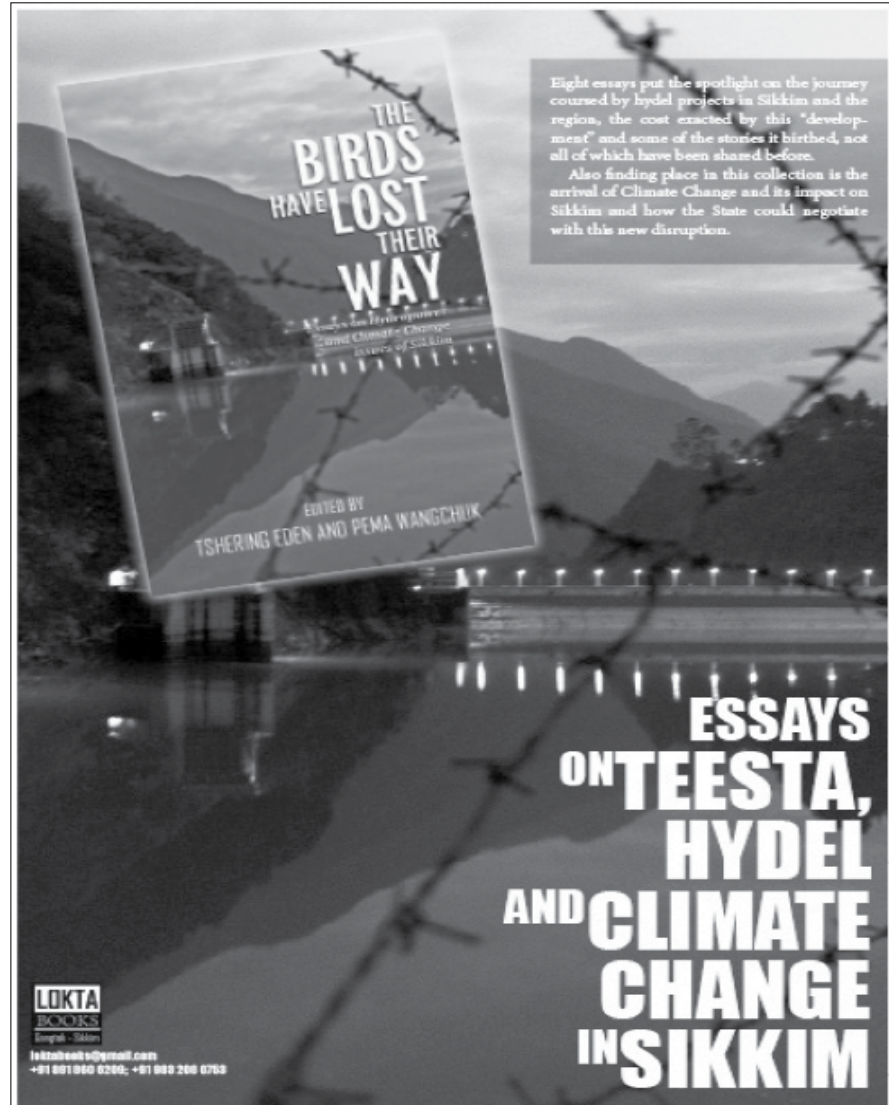
**ROME, MAR 6 (AP):** Italy surpassed 3 million confirmed coronavirus cases on Friday, the third straight day this week that daily new caseloads exceeded 20,000 cases.

With the 24,036 new confirmed infections registered by the Health Ministry, Italy has reached 3,023,129 cases. The actual total is widely considered higher because testing wasn't extensive early in the pandemic.

The virus variant first found in England is potentially fueling the increase, along with another variant, detected in Brazil. Italy registered 297 more deaths, raising the confirmed death toll to 99,271.

We can't wait for more vaccines and doses of vaccines to arrive,' said Dr. Gianni Rezza, a health ministry official, noting the slow delivery of shots.

In Italy, some 3.5 million people have received at least one dose of a COVID-19 vaccine.





# Nicolas Cage Marries Riko Shibata in His Fifth Wedding Ceremony

After proposing to Riko Shibata over FaceTime, Nicolas Cage married his fifth wife in Las Vegas last month. Nicolas Cage is officially a married man... yet again. Source confirms the National Treasure star wed Riko Shibata in Las Vegas on Feb. 16. He tells us, "It's true, and we are very happy."

Nicolas, 56, and Riko, 26, tied the knot in Sin City's Wynn hotel on a date chosen to honor his late father's birthday. While the groom wore a Tom Ford tux, his bride wore a handmade Japanese bridal kimono.

A rep for the actor shares with source, "They exchanged traditional Catholic and Shinto vows with poetry from Walt Whitman and Haiku sprinkled in."

This marks the star's fifth marriage, taking place close to two years after he annulled his four-day marriage to Erika Koike in March 2019.

Prior to his split from Erika, Nicolas and Alice Kim



were married for 10 years, but separated in 2016. They share 15-year-old son Kal-El Coppola together. E! News is told both Alice and Kal were present for Nicolas' nuptials.

He and Lisa Marie Presley were infamously married for just over 100 days in 2002, and in 2001 his six-year marriage to Patricia Arquette

came to an end.

So what's there to know about Nicolas and Riko's love story? Well, let's just say distance made their hearts grow fonder.

Back in August, Nicolas announced he got engaged to Riko, but said the coronavirus pandemic prevented him from proposing in person.

As he described on brother Marc Coppola's radio show, "She left New York and went back to Kyoto, Japan, and I went back to Nevada and I haven't seen her for six months. We're really happy together and we're really excited to spend that time together so I finally just said, 'Look, I wanna marry you,' and we got engaged on FaceTime."

The actor said he popped the question with a black diamond ring and mailed it to Japan.

"Her favorite color is black so she wanted the black gold, and the black diamond," he explained, noting, "I customized and personalized it and I actually sent it to her FedEx."

At the time, Nicolas was hopeful they'd exchange vows in a "really beautiful Shinto wedding" in Japan, but plans obviously changed for the newly minted husband and wife.

As the old adage goes, when you know, you know!

## Taapsee Pannu breaks silence on I-T raids

**MUMBAI, MAR 6 (PTI):** Breaking her silence on the IT department raids against her, actor Taapsee Pannu on Saturday put out three tweets on an alleged bungalow in Paris, the alleged receipt of Rs 5 crore and her memory of 2013 raid.

On March 3, the Income Tax Department searched the homes and offices of Pannu and filmmaker Anurag Kashyap as well as his partners who launched the now shuttered production house Phantom Films.

Pannu posted a three-point statement on Twitter and also took a jibe at Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman's statement that the actor was raided in 2013 as well.

Three days of intense search of 3 things primarily 1. The keys of the alleged' bungalow that I apparently own in Paris. Because sum-

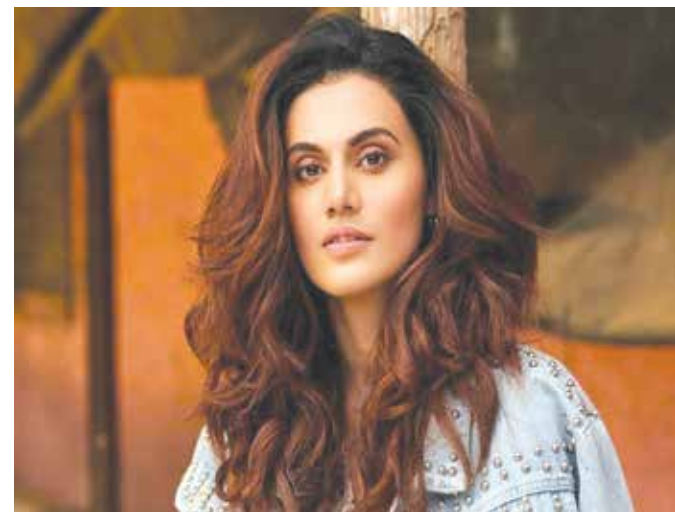
mer holidays are around the corner, read the first post.

The second said, 2. The alleged' receipt worth 5 crores to frame n keep for future pitching coz I've been refused that money before.

The third dealt with Sitharaman's comment. 3. My memory of 2013 raid that happened with me according to our honourable finance minister P.S- not so sasti' anymore."

Sitharaman on Friday said the same people were raided in 2013 as well, but no issue was made out then as it is being done now. Refusing to comment on individual cases, she said it is in the national interest to know if some evasion is happening.

The searches targeting Pannu and Kashyap, known for their outspoken views on a range of issues, is part of a tax evasion probe against Phantom Films. They also



covered Reliance Entertainment group CEO Shibhasish Sarkar and some executives of celebrity and talent management companies KWAN and Exceed, officials said.

The others searched included some employees of Phantom Films, which was dissolved in 2018, and its then promoters Kashyap, director-producer Vikramadi-

tya Motwane, producer Vikas Bahl and producer-distributor Madhu Mantena.

The business transactions of films made under the banner of Phantom Films are also being probed

Kashyap and Pannu, who worked together in the 2018 film "Manmarziyaan", are currently filming "Dobaara", a thriller.

## Aanand L Rai to venture into Marathi cinema with Paresh Mokashi's next film

**MUMBAI, MAR 6 (PTI):** Filmmaker Aanand L Rai on Friday announced his foray into Marathi cinema with 'AatmaPamphlet'.

Rai, who has directed and produced films like "Tanu Weds Manu", "Raanjhanaa", "Shubh Mangal Saavdhan", has joined hands with filmmaker Paresh Mokashi of "Harishchandrachi Factory" fame and Bhushan Kumar's T-Series for the Marathi film.

His production house Colour Yellow Productions shared the news on Instagram along with the poster of the film.

"Lights, camera and action! We are excited to announce that our first Marathi venture 'AatmaPamphlet' has started shooting," it said.

The film, written by Mokashi and it will be directed by debutant director Ashish Avinash Bende, is produced by Rai, Bhushan Kumar, Kishan Kumar and Mokashi's company Mayasabha Karamanuk Mandal.

The shoot for the film begins in Mumbai today.

Besides this film, Rai is looking forward to the release of his directorial "Atrangi Re", featuring Akshay Kumar, Sara Ali Khan and South star Dhanush, on August 6.

He is set to collaborate with Kumar for another film "Rakshabandhan". Rai has also



backed Janhvi Kapoor-starrer "Good Luck Jerry".



**FOXY LADY!** The actress, Megan Fox looks stunning in a grey ensemble with yellow purse and shoes as she runs errands in Encino, Calif.

## Jeanne Tripplehorn to star opposite Chris Pratt in thriller series 'The Terminal List'



**LOS ANGELES, MAR 6 (PTI):** Actor Jeanne Tripplehorn has joined Chris Pratt, Constance Wu and Taylor Kitsch in Amazon's conspiracy-thriller series "The Terminal List".

The show, based on Jack Carr's bestselling novel of the same name, will be directed by Antoine Fuqua, who has also co-written the script with David DiGilio.

According to Deadline, the story follows James Reece (Pratt) after his entire platoon of

Navy SEALs is ambushed during a high-stakes covert mission.

"Reece returns home to his family with conflicting memories of the event and questions about his culpability. However, as new evidence comes to light, Reece discovers dark forces working against him, endangering not only his life but the lives of those he loves," the plotline reads.

Pratt also executive produces the series along with Fuqua and DiGilio.

### ARIES:

What does the term 'happy' mean to you? Is it dependent on your external circumstances, or simply a state of being? Today, you're being asked to reclaim your happiness. To let go of your need to please other people or to perceive yourself through their lens. The journey of coming back to that space of wholeness within yourself begins right now and in this moment.

### TAURUS:

Today, you're being asked to check in with yourself after each and every interaction. Do you feel a sense of joy or are you overcome with anger and sadness? The truth is, the company we keep has a direct effect on our vibration and state of being. Just because somebody has been in your life forever does not give them the permission to treat you badly. Reclaim your personal space, Taurus. Set boundaries wherever necessary. This will help you tell the healthy relationships apart from the ones that are not.

### GEMINI:

Every time you take a step in the direction of love, your fears rear their ugly head, threatening to take you a few steps back. Become aware of this pattern, Gemini. Become aware of how you are sabotaging your own relationships. Looking your inner demons in the eye is the

only way out. The waning moon is providing you with a wonderful opportunity to do the shadow work. Start by journaling about how you are feeling right now.

### CANCER:

The cards are talking about the law of karma. The principle of cause and effect, which states that every thought, word, and action, sets off a wave of energy through the multiverse. What is the effect you want to have on the macrocosm, Cancer? Do you want to plant the seeds of revenge and misery or let your higher self come through? Stay in awareness. Act conscientiously. Remember, you want to do what it takes to keep your records clean.

### LEO:

Karma plays an integral role in determining the course of our lives. Before we board the spaceship to the earthly realm, we commit to mastering certain lessons. But that doesn't mean we are stuck in a loop forever. We always have the option to do the work, learn what we need to, and make that metaphorical shift into a new paradigm. It all comes down to how consciously we are willing to walk through the maze. Word for wise: it's time to let go of the old story and realise that there is a parallel reality available to you in this moment

### VIRGO:

Spirit 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 channel your inner Monica, clear out the clutter, and organise your possessions. While you're at it, pull out the sage (or agarbatti) and engage in a cleansing ritual. A distraction-free space will help you live an intentional life and focus on what truly matters.

### LIBRA:

If the forces could come down and tell you what needs to be done here, trust us, they would, Libra. But they're a lot more creative than that and so are sending you fortune cookie-like messages via the song on the radio, Instagram posts and newspaper ads. It all comes down to how awake you choose to be. As such, this is a time of hope, optimism, and new beginnings. A time of taking the metaphorical leap of faith in the right direction. It's a good idea to trust what the signs are telling you about the big change.

### SCORPIO:

What if we said nothing is written in stone and that you have the power to create your destiny

as you go along? It's time to exercise those manifesting muscles, Scorpio. It's time to set your intentions mindfully, knowing that they will have an impact on the next chapter of your life. Don't be in a rush to move forward, though. Experience this in-between phase fully. Revel in what it is revealing to you. It's not everyday that one gets the opportunity to simply 'be' and dream a brand new world into being.

### SAGITTARIUS:

This is going to be an action-packed weekend in the Sagittarius HQ. Things that have been on hold, both personally and professionally, will get that much-needed push. However, just because there are a multitude of offers on the table after a period of lull does not mean you're obliged to accept everything that comes your way. Use your discretion at all times. Ask yourself the question, "Is the given project in alignment with my mission?" before you put your name on the dotted line.

### CAPRICORN:

There are two types of people in this world: people who wait for things to happen, and people who make things happen. We have a feeling you fall into the second category, Capricorn. The cards are urging you to examine the dreams that have been on hold. It's true the

timing wasn't quite right before and that there were challenges blocking your growth. But the coast is clear now, giving you the chance to conquer what has always been yours. Plan your next move carefully. Time is running out.

### AQUARIUS:

Your worth is not measured by your productivity. We repeat: your worth is not measured by your productivity. It's time to balance your need to 'do' by allowing yourself to 'be'. It's time to prioritise rest and rejuvenation over everything, Aquarius. Dreamwork may also be on the cards for some of you, especially those who are drawn towards the world of mysteries. Pay attention to what you are being shown when you are in an altered state of consciousness. Maintaining a dream journal will help you decipher the downloads.

### PISCES:

What if we said both the past and the future are an illusion, and that the only thing we truly have is this moment? Come back to the present, Pisces. That's where the magic is at. As such, this is a time of hope and optimism. A time of indulging your curious nature and examining the unknown. As an intuitive being, you sense a great change coming your way, and you're being asked to prepare for it now.