



KATY PERRY SAYS SHE USED TO PRETEND TO BE ZOOEY DESCHANEL TO GET INTO CLUBS
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IN THE SEASON OF FIRES

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ISLA FISHER SAYS HUSBAND SACHA BARON COHEN PERSUADED HER TO GET INTO COMEDY
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SummitTIMES

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ON TOP OF THE NEWS

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CM flags off Sikkimese mountaineer on Ama Dablam expedition



**SAGAR CHETTRI
GANGTOK, 22 DEC:**

Chief Minister, PS Tamang flagged off an expert mountaineer from Sikkim, Shanti Rai, on an international mountain expedition to Ama Dablam in the Himalayan range in Eastern Nepal here at Mintokgang on Tuesday.

Shanti is part of an international expedition with members from five countries and she is the only participant from India. She is a senior instructor at Indian Himalayan Centre for Adventure and Ecotourism [IHCAE], Chemchey and has already scaled around 25 mountains so far in the Himalayan range.

Ama Dablam is a mountain in the Eastern Himalayan Range in

Nepal and its main peak is 6,812 meters and Ama Dablam means 'Mother's necklace'. It is informed that Ama Dablam is considered a difficult peak to scale.

In the flag-off ceremony organized by the Tourism Department, the CM expressed his best wishes to Shanti Rai for a successful expedition. He further stated that it was a matter of pride that a Sikkimese is representing the country in an international mountain expedition. He said that the state government will provide all possible support to those participating in such activities at the national and international levels.

Shanti Rai expressed her happiness on getting the

opportunity to represent the country in this international mountain expedition. She stated that the winter expedition on the difficult peak of Ama Dablam is a big challenge and that she is happy to be a part of such a difficult and technically challenging climb. She also expressed her gratitude to everyone for supporting her in the journey of mountaineering.

Earlier, IHCAE Deputy Director, Kazi Sherpa mentioned that the expedition has mountaineers from Mexico, Onam, Turkey and Egypt.

On the occasion, Krishna Rai, wife of the CM, Tourism Minister BS Panth and officials of Tourism and Civil Aviation Department expressed their best wishes to the mountaineer by offering khadas.

Aakraman FC wins Losoong/Namsoong Futsal Tourney



**SAGAR CHETTRI
GANGTOK, 22 DEC:**

Aakraman Football Club emerged as the champions of Losoong/Namsoong Futsal Tournament 2020 played here at Fitnest Futsal Arena, Chandmari. In the nail-biting final match played this evening, Aakraman FC edged past Mayal Football Club 8-7.

The final match had MLA Sonam Venchungpa as the chief guest, while Advisor to Information Technology Department, Tenzing Lamtha was present as the guest of honour, who handed over trophies and cash prizes to its winners.

The winning team received cash prize of Rs 40,000, while cash prize of Rs 20,000 was awarded to the runner-up team.

Sangay Bhutia of Mayal FC was awarded the

Highest Scorer trophy for his 22 goals in the tournament, while the Most Promising Player trophy was received by Kunga Wangchuk Bhutia of Chandmari FC. Robin Sharma of Mayal FC was adjudged Man of the Tournament, while Man of the Final Match trophy was given to Avinash Chettri of Aakraman FC.

A total of 28 teams had participated in this tournament, which was kicked off on 12 December. The tournament was organised by Chandmari United Sporting Club which dedicated this futsal tournament to the world football legend Diego Armando Maradona and Late Phigu Bhutia of Chandmari to pay tribute for their contributions towards football. CUSC was formed in 2015 and has been organizing sporting and social activities in the area.

Rangpo to host month-long Agri and Livestock Fair for East Sikkim farmers

**SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 22 DEC:**

The State Government is organizing a grand, month-long "Krishi-evam-Pashu Dhan Mela 2020" [Agriculture and Livestock Fair] at Rangpo for farmers from the 13 constituencies of East district starting 24 December, a day after Kisan Diwas [Farmers' Day].

The ambitious fair will be providing farmers access to agricultural loans and financial support options apart from introducing them to more advanced breeds of livestock that farmers here can consider adopting. This latter aspect of the Fair, the Pashu Dhan Mela, is being held for the first time in Sikkim.

Chief Minister PS Tamang is scheduled to inaugurate this mega event on Thursday.

The more traditional agriculture aspect of the fair will have a keener focus on unveiling wider credit options to farmers

here, an initiative buoyed by the success of kisan credit loan melas held in South and West districts recently.

The push in this regard, is now on the "Development through Credit" mantra.

Towards this end, 1,400 loan application forms have already been distributed to farmers in East District, 477 of have already been processed for sanctioning after scrutiny of the required documents.

Loans have reportedly been sought on a range of farm activities from crop diversity to dairy to livestock.

While nearly 29% of the loan applications are from dairy farming activities, piggy has invited the interest of a little over 14% of the loan applicants,

followed by goater [12.6%],



horticulture [2.3%], sheep rearing [0.2%] etc.

The State Government, it is informed, has also decided to extend minimum support price to farmers for organic products like orange, turmeric, large cardamom, buckwheat and ginger.

Agriculture Minister, LN Sharma, addressed a press conference today to brief media-persons about the upcoming event.

With 34 new cases, Sikkim's Covid count rises to 5,610

**SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 22 DEC:**

Sikkim's tally of confirmed cases of COVID-19 rose to 5,610 on Tuesday with reports of 34 fresh cases of novel coronavirus being detected here in the last 24 hours.

Of these new cases, 26 have been reported from East District, seven from South district and one from West Sikkim.

On the other hand, the number of Covid patients discharged so far in Sikkim has climbed to 5,014. There are now 378 active cases in the State, of whom two are currently in the ICU facility of the Covid-dedicated STNM Hospital.

In the daily health bulletin on Tuesday, Health Department State IEC Officer, Sonam Gyaltsen Bhutia,

informed that the 34 cases were reported from the testing of 220 samples on Monday - 27 persons tested positive in RT-PCR screening of 167 samples, while seven new cases were detected via rapid antigen testing of 42 samples.

Among the new cases reported from in and around the capital are four persons from Tadong, three from the Pani House area [Gangtok], two from Development Area, two from Helipad area, one from near Zero Point, one from Upper Arithang, one from Sichey and one from Burtuk.

Likewise, one person from Lamaten, Rongli, one from Rhenock Sudunglakha, one from Linkey Pakyong and one from Rawtey Rumtek were also found

positive for COVID-19.

Similarly, one person from Namphing, one from Majhigaon-Jorethang, one from Tinzir, four from Namchi, one from Sumbuk, one from Nandugaon and one from Salghari in South District and one person from Zoom Supang and one from Guruthang in West District have also tested positive for COVID-19.

Mr Bhutia further informs that a 51-year-old female from Gangtok and another 28-year-old female from Sichey, who were found positive for COVID-19, could not be reached over the phone numbers provided by them and urged them to immediately contact the concerned authorities.



STATE BANK OF SIKKIM

(A Government of Sikkim Undertaking)

VERY IMPORTANT INFORMATION

The State Bank of Sikkim, being your and my Bank has adopted the policy of extending open minded approach to deal with all its customers including borrowers both regular and defaulters. The State Bank of Sikkim has its own loan recovery policy and process with option of flexible loan settlement scheme (One Time Settlement system (OTS)) based on practical matrix system which makes it easier for defaulters to repay their old loans on easy terms and get rid of stigma of defaulter.

However, despite availability of such facilities, many of our customers (defaulters) have not come forward to settle their old dues and hence the Bank is in the process of undertaking the below mentioned steps if the Bank see no sincere effort from our customers (**defaulters**). –

1. Based on the recent ruling of the State Information Commission, Sikkim the names, address, photographs and other details of the borrower (**defaulter**), his/her guarantors, sureties shall be published in print and electronic media.
2. The Bank will also start taking legal Criminal action before the concerned police station in cases of willful defaulters or the Bank finds its money was misused or are not repaying despite having sufficient income generation.
3. The Bank is also in the process of approaching all Registrars/Sub-Registrars forbidding its defaulter/guarantors from making any transaction of their immovable properties.
4. Filing of Recovery Suits.

The State Bank of Sikkim once again call upon all its valued customers (defaulters) to come forward and resolve their issue with the Bank on their defaulted loans and avoid the inconvenience of the above mentioned steps to be undertaken by the Bank. The Bank assures all its valued customers (defaulters) to extend full cooperation in settlement of their old dues.

December 14, 2020

sd/-

(P. Wangdi Bhutia)
MANAGING DIRECTOR

SETTLE YOUR OLD DUES AND BE A PART OF SIKKIM'S GROWTH STORY

Team of experts visits Gyalshing hospital



SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 22 DEC:

A team sent by the Central government visited District Hospital, Gyalshing and Mangalbaria PHC, in West Sikkim today.

A post on the Health Department's Facebook page informs that the team comprised of two doctors, Dr R N Sinha, Sr Public Health

Specialist, All India Institute of Hygiene & Public Health, Kolkata, and Dr Bhupen Burman, Associate Professor Medicine, IISER, Shillong.

The purpose of the visit is to assist the Department to review and to support in Public Health measures and for clinical management of COVID cases.

The team was briefed on steps taken by the District on infrastructure development and on COVID management which includes, Screening/ Surveillance/Testing/ Contact tracing/ Admission/Referral/ Treatment, since March 2020. They also visited DCCH (AYUSH)

& Trunat Lab.

During the discussion, many inputs and suggestions were given by the experts which cleared out many doubts in the minds of DSO, Medical Sp, Anaesthesiologist and others, paving a way for better surveillance & management of cases in future, the department states.

No board exams till Feb-end: Education Minister

NEW DELHI, 22 DEC [NDTV]:

The Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) exams for classes 10 and 12 will not be held till February end, Union Education Minister Ramesh Pokhriyal said during an interaction with teachers on Tuesday.

"I received a lot of requests from students and teachers to postpone CBSE board exams for Class 10 and 12. Keeping the COVID-19 pandemic in mind, we have decided that board exams will not be held in February," Mr Pokhriyal tweeted.

He added that the board exams would be held later, but did not indicate when saying dates would be announced soon.

Unlike classes, the board exams would not be held online since "many schools are in rural areas", the minister said, adding that exams would not be postponed either.

"The CBSE board exams will be conducted on a reduced syllabus. Thirty per cent of the total syllabus has been scrapped. While some states have declared as much, others are likely to make an announcement soon. There will also be 33 per cent internal choice in the exam," the minister said in an online interaction with stakeholders.

"We cannot allow COVID-19 to impact students and have them labelled as COVID-era students who cleared the classes without any examination. We have organised JEE, NEET exams this year. It was one of the biggest examination conducted amid COVID-19 pandemic," Mr Pokhriyal said in response to a teacher's query.

Despite widespread floods, partial Covid-induced lockdowns and soaring infections, lakhs of students wrote

the engineering and medical college entrance exams - JEE and NEET - in September this year after the Supreme Court dismissed a bunch of petitions saying "life has to go on".

On Tuesday, Mr Pokhriyal said, "Our government is in favour of students."

Ramesh Pokhriyal lauded efforts by students and teachers for conducting online classes during the pandemic.

"Many countries have cancelled their academic year due to COVID-19, but the teachers of our nation continued to work hard and did not let the academic year get wasted," he said calling teachers Corona Warriors - a term used to laud doctors and other frontline workers.

He also gave instances of teachers using unique methods as alternatives to online education.

"Many teachers are imparting education via loudspeaker by travelling long distances on motorcycles... We are using initiatives like One Class One Channel, DIKSHA, Pathshala... around 800 radio programmes are being aired, and classes are also being conducted via television," Mr Pokhriyal said.

Tuesday's webinar was meant to answer queries about whether the CBSE board exams would be conducted online or offline and addresses teachers' concerns shared on Twitter.

The interaction was initially scheduled for December 17, but was postponed after overwhelming response by teachers amid the coronavirus pandemic because of which most schools across states have remained closed since March this year.

Air pollution killed 17 lakh Indians in 2019: Study

NEW DELHI, 22 DEC [PTI]:

The economic loss due to premature deaths and morbidity from air pollution was ₹ 2,60,000 crore or 1.4 per cent of the GDP in India in 2019, according to a new scientific paper.

It also said that 1.7 million deaths (18 per cent of the total deaths) in the country were attributable to air pollution last year.

According to the scientific paper on health and economic impact of air pollution published in Lancet Planetary Health on Tuesday, household air pollution decreased in India resulting in 64 per cent reduction in the death rate attributable to it from 1990 to 2019, whereas the death rate from outdoor ambient air pollution increased during this period by 115 per cent.

The findings highlight that "lost output from deaths and diseases due to air pollution led to a loss of 1.4 per cent of the



GDP of the country".

India has a good economic and development trajectory, which can improve further with the reduction of air pollution, the scientific paper noted.

According to the paper, the economic loss due to air pollution as a percentage of the state GDP was higher in the northern and central India states, with the highest in Uttar Pradesh (2.2 per cent of GDP) and Bihar (2 per cent of GDP).

NITI Aayog member Prof Vinod Paul said the scientific paper presents

the latest evidence on air pollution in India, translating the health loss to economic impact.

"India has many ongoing major initiatives to reduce air pollution. This paper provides a robust assessment of the trends and current situation in each state, and highlights that augmenting the existing air pollution control efforts based on the specific situation of each state would be useful.

"Air pollution and its impact is not a matter for the health sector alone, and the solutions lie in a multi-sectoral

approach with a common commitment to reducing exposure to toxic air, which is impacting the health and productivity of Indians," he said.

ICMR Director General Balram Bhargava said various government schemes such as the 'Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana' and 'Unnat Chulha Abhiyan' have aided in reducing household air pollution in the country.

Such success encourages us to enhance efforts to reduce outdoor air pollution as well, he said.

"The findings in this analysis show that while 40 per cent of the disease burden due to air pollution is from lung diseases, the remaining 60 per cent is from ischemic heart disease, stroke, diabetes and neonatal deaths related to preterm birth, thus highlighting the broad ranging impact of air pollution on human health," Mr Bhargava added.

Kamerey discusses model village aspirations



SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 22 DEC:

Kamerey ward of Budang Kamerey Gram Panchayat Unit, Rhenock constituency,

East Sikkim held a ward meeting today to discuss converting the village into a model village, informs a press release.

The decision to

convert Kamerey into a model village is a joint initiative of Prakriti Parivar and Panchayat, the release mentions.

BDO Duga, IB

Chhetri, along with Government officers and representatives from various organizations were present in the meeting.

Sikkip EPCS wins ACSO Christmas Cup

SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 22 DEC:

The inter-church football tournament organised by All Sikkim Christian Organizations (ASCO) sports wing ended today at Namchi veterinary public ground.

The presence of international footballer Nirmal Chettri in the VIP gallery as a special guest inspired players on the

ground to up their game and set up a befitting final match between Sikkip EPCS and Namchi EPCS which the team from Sikkip won 1-0.

Speaking to SummitTimes, ASCO Lanam Tamang shared that the main aim of this tournament was to spread love, compassion, brotherhood and to "unite all in the name

of Jesus." He, it may be added here, had also contributed trophies for the winning and runner-up teams.

South district SKM vice president, who is also the Advisor ASCO, Satish Chandra Rai, said that Sikkim got a sense of the genuinely secular nature of Chief Minister, PS Tamang, in how he has

ensured the dignity of all religions in the year and half that he has been in office.

The organisers inform that the pandemic led them to scale down the pre-Christmas celebrations which have traditionally been grand here.

Minister LN Sharma was present at the venue as chief guest today.

Massive fire breaks out in huts next to Bypass in Kolkata

KOLKATA, 22 DEC [NDTV]:

A massive fire broke out today at a number of huts near a busy road in Kolkata. 15 fire engines are at the spot to control the fire.

The fire broke out this evening at the huts near the Bengal Chemical Industries, just off the EM Bypass

in the city's north. Traffic at the busy road has come to a halt.

State Disaster Management staff is also present and are trying to control the fire.

Bengal Fire Minister Sujit Bose is also at the spot.

Further details are awaited.



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COVID-19: India records lowest daily new cases after gap of nearly six months

NEW DELHI, DEC 22 (PTI):

The number of daily new coronavirus infections reported in the country was recorded below 20,000 after nearly six months while the COVID-19 active caseload fell below 3 lakh, according to the Union Health Ministry data updated on Tuesday.

India's COVID-19 caseload rose to 1,00,75,116 with 19,556 new infections being reported in a day. The death toll increased to 1,46,111 with 301 new fatalities, the data updated at 8 am showed.

The number of people who have recuperated from the disease surged to 96,36,487 pushing the national recovery rate to 95.65 per cent, while the COVID-19 case fatality rate stands at 1.45 per cent.

The COVID-19 active caseload has fallen below 3 lakh.

There are 2,92,518 active coronavirus infections in the country which comprises 2.90 per cent of the total caseload, the data stated.

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, 16,31,70,557 samples have been tested up to December 21 with 10,72,228 samples being tested on Monday.

The 301 new fatalities include 55 from Maharashtra, 41 from West Bengal, 27 each from Kerala and Delhi.

A total of 1,46,111 deaths have been reported so far in the country including 48,801 from Maharashtra followed by 12,016 from Karnataka, 11,995 from Tamil Nadu, 10,304 from Delhi, 9,401 from West Bengal, 8,212 from Uttar Pradesh, 7,078 from Andhra Pradesh and 5,212 from Punjab.

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.

AFFIDAVIT

This is to state that Mr. B. Pradhan and Smt S. Mukhia were legally bound in marriage in the year 2011. This is also to state that Mr. B. Pradhan has been living separately from Smt. S. Mukhia since march 2020 i.e. 9 months.

This is also to state that Mr. B. Pradhan & Smt S. Mukhia are not socially and martially obligated to each other

Sd/-
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General land sale at Lower Sichey, suitable for construction, good locality, near the road, Total size: 90x55ft, (30x55ft each plot). genuine person may contact@9734122366.

BUILDING FOR SALE

A two storey building constructed on plot area 50x40 ft. at Upper Phong near Phong SS, Namthang South Sikkim is on sale. Cost Rs 60 Lakhs (Negotiable). Interested may contact : 8145829309, 7864937800, 9749897695.

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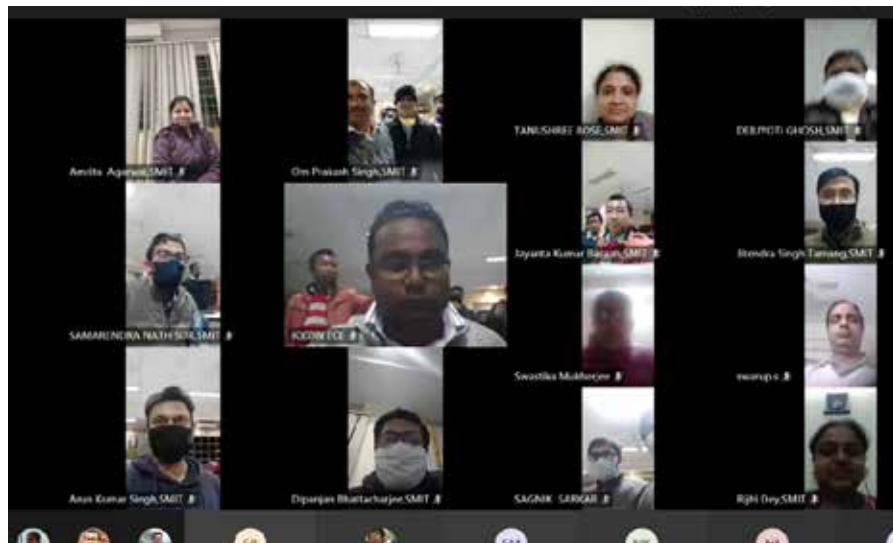
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4th International Conference in Communication at SMIT

SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 22 DEC:

4th International Conference in Communication, Devices and Networking (ICCDN 2020) was organized by the Department of Electronics and Communication Engineering, Sikkim Manipal Institute of Technology, Majhitar, Sikkim, today, a press release informs.

The theme of the conference was 'Smarter World-Connected world' wherein 43 papers, from the submitted 93 papers, were presented in the conference. The papers will be published in



Springer, Lecture Notes in Electrical Engineering (LNEE) Scopus Indexed.

The two-day conference was

inaugurated by Chief Patron, Lt Gen (Dr) Rajan SGrewal, AVSM, VSM, who was also accompanied by Vice Chancellor, Sikkim

Manipal University, Patron, Dr A Sharma, Director, SMIT Dr A Jha, Associate Director (R&D), SMIT General

Chair, Dr Sourav Dhar, ECE, SMIT, Program Chair, Dr Rabinranath Bera, ECE, SMIT and Dr Dinh-Thuan Do, Asia University, Taiwan.

Topics like trends for wearable and medical devices, field bus and networking, MIMO antennas: design and challenges, reconfigurable intelligent surfaces for connected society in 6G networks, speech technologies using deep learning, tunnel fets, and intelligent rooftop greenhouses were discussed in this conference.

SMCON hosts webinar on stress and COVID

SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 22 DEC:

A National level webinar on "stress & COVID" was conducted by Sikkim Manipal College of Nursing (SMCON) on 11 Dec virtually in the Microsoft (MS) team platform, a press release informs.

Arkieupaia Shadap, the organising secretary of the webinar, said that the plenary session lectures were

delivered by Professor Champa Sharma from SMCON, and Vithoba N Mhalkar from the Institute of Human Behaviour, Bambolim, Goa on the various strategies that should be adopted to manage stress associated with COVID-19 situation.

The webinar was attended by 230 participants from various Institutions & Organizations all over the country including

SMCON.

Furthermore, a structured feedback questionnaire with 7 questions were filled and submitted back to the organising team by all the participants.

Principal of SMCON, Professor Mridula Das, has thanked all the participants, the internal and external faculty members and Sikkim Manipal University for facilitating the MS team resources.

8 new COVID-19 cases in Nagaland, tally rises to 11,866

KOHIMA, DEC 22 (PTI):

Nagaland on Tuesday reported eight new COVID-19 cases, pushing the tally in the state to 11,866, a health department official said.

Fifty more people also recovered from the disease, taking the total number of recoveries in the state to 11,244, he said.

"8 +ve cases of #COVID-19 have been detected today.

Mokokchung- 5, Dimapur- 3. Also, 50 +ve patients have recovered. Dimapur- 35, Kiphire- 10, Kohima- 4, Peren- 1," said Health Minister S Pangnyu Phom in a tweet.

The COVID-19 recovery rate in the state

has risen to 94.76 per cent, Director of Health and Family Welfare, Dr Denis Hangsing said in the daily COVID-19 bulletin.

Nagaland now has 417 active COVID-19 cases, he said.

The COVID-19 death toll rose to 76 with three more persons succumbing to the infection, the director said, adding that 129 patients have migrated to other states.

The district-wise distribution of COVID-19 cases is Dimapur (6,374), Kohima (3,694), Mon (603), Peren (498), Tuensang (244), Mokokchung (169), Zunheboto (142), Phek

(46), Kiphire (39), Wokha (39) and Longleng (18).

Of the confirmed cases, 4,827 are traced contacts, 4,643 are armed forces or security personnel, 1,831 returnees from other states and 565 frontline workers, he said.

The district-wise active COVID-19 cases are Kohima (207), Dimapur (124), Mokokchung (46), Peren (18), Mon (13), Kiphire (4), Tuensang (3) and Phek (2).

So far, a total of 1,19,085 samples have been tested for COVID-19 in Nagaland, including 72,087 through RT-PCR, 36,580 on TrueNat and 10,418 on Rapid Antigen Test, said Dr Hangsing.

Haryana CM's convoy turns around as farmers show black flags

CHANDIGARH, 22 DEC [NDTV]:

Hundreds of farmers protesting against new farm laws showed black flags to Haryana Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar while he was going to Ambala today. The BJP-led government in Haryana has been claiming that only some farmers aren't happy with the new laws. However, the number of farmers, some of who arrived from neighbouring Punjab, has been steadily rising and they have dug in along the border with Delhi.

The farmers today tried to block the long convoy that was escorting Mr Khattar. The police then persuaded them to give way. In



visuals, several farmers are seen waving black flags and even sticks at Mr Khattar's convoy.

The Chief Minister's convoy had to slow down considerably on seeing a large number of farmers blocking the road ahead, sources said. Eventually, the convoy had to take a

U-turn, they said.

The Chief Minister was going to Ambala to campaign for BJP candidates in the election to the municipal corporation.

On December 1, a group of farmers had shown black flags to Union Minister Rattan Lal Kataria at a village in

Ambala. He is also the MP from Ambala.

The farmers and the government have not been able to break the deadlock in talks. The centre says it is willing to amend the laws and even discuss them clause by clause.

The farmers, however, say they want

the laws to be withdrawn completely. Enacted in September, the three farm laws have been projected by the central government as major reforms in the agriculture sector that will remove middlemen and allow farmers to sell anywhere in the country.

However, the protesting farmers have expressed apprehension that the new laws would pave the way for eliminating the safety cushion of minimum support price and do away with the mandi system, leaving them at the mercy of big companies.

The farmers are now dug in along the Haryana and Delhi border. Talks between them and the centre are awaited.

BJP wins in Kashmir for first time

SRINAGAR, DEC 22 (PTI):

The BJP on Tuesday won an election for the first time from any seat in Kashmir while facing regional heavyweights like the National Conference and the PDP.

Aijaz Hussain won the Khonmoh-II District Development Council seat in Srinagar, while Aijaz Ahmad Khan gave the party more reason to cheer by winning the Tulail seat in Bandipora district.

Crediting the policies of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and hard work of party workers for his success, Hussain said the DDC election was a fight between the BJP and rest of the parties.

"This is a win for the BJP. The propaganda has been bust as people have shown their faith in the prime minister and his policies. This is a message that nationalists are prospering in Kashmir," he told reporters outside

the counting centre at SKICC here.

Senior BJP leader and Union minister Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi had campaigned for the BJP candidate in the predominantly Shia area of Balahama in the Srinagar district periphery.

Hussain said the BJP has put up a good fight against the regional parties in the valley who had come together on a single platform -- Peoples Alliance for Gupkar Declaration.

"They all came together against the BJP as they were afraid of it. But, still the BJP won seats from the valley. Now, they should introspect. People want development and this is a vote for development," he said.

The BJP candidate said the alliance was "spreading communal propaganda", but this win "shows there is no



place for that now".

"People want development and this win inspires us to work harder for securing seats in the assembly whenever the elections are held in the future," Hussain said.

The counting for the DDC polls has been completed in Srinagar with the independent candidates winning half of the seats.

"The returning officers in Srinagar district have declared the results of District Development Council

elections in all the 14 constituencies and handed over election certificates to winning candidates," District Election Officer (Deputy Commissioner) Srinagar, Shahid Choudhary said.

He said as per the final results, independent candidates have been declared winners in seven constituencies -- Srinagar-I, Qamarwari-I, Qamarwari-II, Harwan-I, Harwan-II, Harwan-IV and Harwan-VI.

Former finance minister Altaf Bukhari-

led Jammu and Kashmir Apni Party (JKAP) candidates were declared winners in three constituencies -- Harwan-V, Khanmoh-I and Srinagar-III.

Four political parties-- BJP in Khanmoh-II, PDP in Khanmoh-III, NC in Harwan-III and JKPM in Srinagar II have won one seat each, Choudhary said.

He said the results of the four seats of Srinagar Municipal Corporation (SMC) ward constituencies were also declared.

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What is Novel Coronavirus - nCoV?

The Novel Coronavirus (nCoV) is new strain of Coronavirus that originated in Wuhan, China. Notorious for mutating quickly and acquiring new qualities, it is a rising epidemic that was previously not identified in humans.

Symptoms of nCoV

- Fever
- Difficulty in breathing
- Dry Cough
- Severe acute respiratory syndrome
- Pneumonia - like symptoms

Treatment

- Treatment is symptomatic and supportive, based on the patient's clinical condition.
- No vaccinations available as of now.
- Visit Doctor in case symptoms detected.

Precautions to Prevent nCoV

- Wash your hands often with soap.
- Use an alcohol based hand sanitizer
- Observe good personal hygiene.
- Avoid touching your face with unwashed hands.
- Avoid contact with people with possible symptoms.
- Avoid contact with animals and consumption of undercooked meats.
- Avoid travel to nCoV affected places.
- Wear a mask if you have respiratory syndrome. and cover your mouth while coughing or sneezing.



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DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & FAMILY WELFARE
GOVERNMENT OF SIKKIM

In the Season of Fires

Precaution is still the best cure

Winter's upon us and as the mercury plunges, the need for artificial heating goes up. Yes, in Sikkim, the chill has not set in to the scale that the mountains of North India and even parts of Rajasthan are shivering through, but it is only a matter of a few days or weeks before it gets really cold. With the winter months also being the only "dry" season in the State, and the recent light showers do not make the hills wet enough, the danger of fires goes up. Yes, while there have already been some reports of fires in homes, winter bush fire incidents have not worried just yet this season. If recent records are anything to go by, it is only a matter of time before reports of such fires searing through Sikkim forests start making more headlines.

So much for the predictable part, now, if the concerned agencies and the lay citizenry would stand up and speak on how they intend to keep things safe in the coming months. Sikkim loses wooden structures to fires every winter and more hectares of forest undergrowth than is perhaps healthy, and yet it keeps exclusively busy dousing flames in the first quarter of every year. This is obviously because not enough initiative is taken to crackle some awareness which would help things be otherwise. This would require only very simple initiatives like better vigilance around the trouble-spots, some sensitisation programmes and imparting at least some basic fire-fighting skills at the grassroots level [no pun intended] since it is invariably resident people who notice forest fires first. Simple things like safer alternatives to heating, or at least more responsible methods need to be reiterated. Improperly ventilated rooms for coal fires are a definite no-no given the fatal toxicity of Carbon Mono-oxide that coal gives off when lit in closed rooms. Unattended heaters do not only trip the neighbourhood transformers, but can also spark an inferno when kept close to the inflammable woollens [the blankets included]. These appear to be obvious dangers that everyone is aware of, but need recounting because too many incidents in the past bear testimony to the fact that one can get dangerously careless at times.

What winters also do is expose the inferior electrical wiring that many people have opted for in Sikkim. Short-circuits have triggered many a fire in Sikkim and these are mostly thanks to either inferior wiring or improper connections, both, result when builders try to cut corners. What fires also expose is the unplanned manner in which urban areas have been laid out even in the capital. There are areas here which have to be reached through congested lanes which no fire tender can pass through or are situated in tight corners that no fire hose can negotiate. Given the fact that we know that many houses and many areas sit on potential tinderboxes, it is required of the Fire Department to identify these areas and then inform the residents there that they reside beyond the saving showers of the modern fire tenders. It would be nice if a plan of action on how to fight the fires in such "beyond reach" areas is drawn up, but if that is too much to ask for, a warning would have to suffice.

That done, sessions on how to avoid fires and, more importantly, how to fight it at their own level, with or without the help of trained firemen. We take too many things for granted and how to react to fires is perhaps one of them. Fact remains that most people don't know what to do first [except run] in case of a fire. Winters being a time for fires, the concerned Department should start coming out with public interest messages and community workshops on how to avoid fires, how to fight them and how to seek help in case of an emergency and how to stay safe through an emergency. As for the people, we have to bear in mind that as most banes of modern living, precaution remains the best cure even against fires.

The Psychology of Fairness: Why Some Americans Don't Believe the Election Results

DAVID M. MAYER
THECONVERSATION.COM

The electoral votes have confirmed Joe Biden won the 2020 United States presidential election. The presidential electors gave Biden 306 electoral votes to President Donald Trump's 232 votes. Biden also recorded a solid lead of over 7 million in the popular vote.

Nonetheless, results from a new NPR/PBS NewsHour/Marist survey found that approximately three-quarters of Republicans did not trust the election results. Corroborating this finding, a separate study of 24,000 Americans found that nearly two-thirds of Republicans lacked confidence in the fairness of the election and over 80% feared fraud, inaccuracy, bias and illegality. In addition, nearly 60 lawsuits filed by Trump claiming various forms of election fraud have been dismissed, including two evaluated by the U.S. Supreme Court.

Of course, doubting the fairness of a disappointing decision is not a Republican phenomenon – it's a human one.

When a decision is made and people get the outcome they want, they often tend to see the outcome as fair. For example, when people apply for a promotion and get it, they are more than likely to believe they deserved it. But if they didn't get the promotion, it is likely to drive a different reaction. At that point, the process used to make the decision becomes of utmost importance. Some might ask whether the process was free of bias, consistent and ethical.

To investigate this perplexing phenomenon, it's important to understand the psychology of fairness.

FAIR PROCEDURES USUALLY MATTER

Research consistently finds that when people get an unfavorable outcome but believe the process used to make the decision was fair, they react more positively.

They may be disappointed, but they tend to accept the decision and stay loyal to the institution that made the decision. This is known as the "fair process effect": the tendency for fair procedures to mitigate negative reactions to an unfavorable decision. However, research my colleagues



and I conducted in 2009 identifies an important caveat to this effect. We found that when an unfavorable decision is very important to someone – that it is central to their identity as part of a group or their personal values – they tend to look for flaws demonstrating that the process used to make the decision was unfair.

In the first study, we asked 180 university students about a decision that the administration would soon make about limiting the free speech of students. We manipulated whether the outcome was favorable such that half of the students were told the administration planned to restrict free speech and the other half were told there would be no restrictions. We also manipulated the process by telling students they had an opportunity to express their concerns in a public forum or did not have that opportunity.

We then assessed whether the decision made by the administration violated students' identity as a member of the university and their personal values.

We found that when students felt the decision violated their social or personal identity, they perceived the process and outcome were unfair even when they had the opportunity to express their views at a public forum. In other words, there was a weak or no relationship between providing an opportunity for voice and fairness perceptions for people whose identity was violated. In the second study we asked 277

adults with work experience about a time a decision was made at work when the outcome was favorable (or not) and the process was fair (or not).

As in the prior study, we found that an objectively fair process did not improve fairness perceptions when an outcome violated one's identity. Instead, these participants were more likely to say that there was a procedural flaw – they doubted the opinions they provided to the decision-maker were ever considered.

The fact that they did not get the outcome they wanted on something that was central to their identity led participants to seek out reasons that an objectively fair process was somehow flawed in a meaningful way. They felt the need to discredit the process.

These findings are consistent with other research showing that for those who have a strong moral stance on an issue, judgments about whether the process and outcome are fair are determined more by whether the outcome was favorable than whether the procedure was objectively fair.

For example, when participants supported abortion rights, and a defendant in a trial was not convicted of bombing a clinic that performed abortions, these participants believed the trial process was less fair than those who held anti-abortion rights beliefs.

Similarly, when participants held anti-abortion rights beliefs and a physician on trial for providing illegal late-term abortions was acquitted,

participants believed the trial was less fair than did those with abortion-rights beliefs. When we care deeply about an issue and get an unfavorable outcome, we question the process used to make the decision.

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

In an environment in which partisan and identity politics rule, perhaps it is not surprising that a decision that hurts one's in-group – in this case, Republican supporters – is dismissed on the basis of perceived procedural flaws that render the election unfair despite objective reality.

Of course, the act of discounting the fairness of a decision process when a decision violates one's identity is not limited to one political party. For example, after Brett Kavanaugh was confirmed as a Supreme Court justice, Democrats tended to believe that his confirmation hearings were unjust, including the withholding of important evidence.

Given that anyone can fall victim to this bias, several things can be done. First, it is important for leaders to legitimize the decision process. For example, when an organization makes a policy change to extend or reduce the number of remote days of work per week, it is important for leadership at all levels to clarify there was reasonable and fair process used to make the decision.

Second, it is critical to ask someone who is impartial. When wrestling with an ethical conundrum, people often come to a conclusion that is aligned with their self-interest – what psychologists call "motivated moral reasoning." Thus, a neutral person can more accurately assess the decision.

Third, reducing how much a person feels distinct and isolated from members of another group by not dehumanizing members of the other group can lessen beliefs that a decision process was rigged or biased.

People often do not get the outcome they want on issues central to their identity, so it is important to actively guard against questioning the legitimacy of an objective and fair process.

[the writer is Professor of Management & Organizations, University of Michigan]

Why We Need to Get Creative When it Comes to Talking About Pain

JASMINE HEARN & STELLA BULLO
THECONVERSATION.COM

What [do] I mean by sitting in a pit of fire? You've got every nerve ending that's just going hellfire, and you just don't know what to do with yourself.

Forty-two year old Emma has experienced chronic pain from a spinal cord injury for the last year. For Emma and many others, living with severe pain is now part and parcel of everyday life. It is estimated that 35-51% of people in the UK live with chronic pain. But communicating that experience can be a challenging endeavour.

We interviewed people with spinal cord injuries and women with endometriosis – a condition where tissue resembling the lining of the womb grows elsewhere in the body causing severe pain – in an effort to find out about their experiences and to learn more about how they talk about pain.

This research suggests that the inability to communicate pain effectively may partly account for delays in diagnosing some conditions. We also found that people with various types of chronic pain – such as that caused by endometriosis and spinal cord injury – often use metaphors to describe it.

Many speak of their pain in terms of being attacked. What might sound overly dramatic actually uses a variety of mechanisms, ranging from conveying high levels of pain severity and trying to make sense of the experience, to expressing the emotional consequences.

In using these expressions, sufferers may be trying to elicit support and empathy from others. At the moment though, widespread practice in pain consultation involves the use of numerical rating scales asking people to identify a number that best represents their pain.

The use of such potentially simplistic and reductionist tools means that a holistic assessment of the physical, psychological and social complexity of the pain experience is neglected.

USING METAPHORS TO TALK ABOUT PAIN

In conducting our research, we found that the ways people spontaneously talk about their experience of pain go beyond the measuring capacities of the

standard assessment tools. For example, the McGill pain questionnaire asks people to rank each of the descriptive words such as "searing", "pinching" and "flashing" in terms of their pain intensity.

But many people describe their pain in ways that aren't measured in this questionnaire. For example, one participant described their pain as feeling like "you're dragging your organs". Such creative and detailed descriptions often capture both the severity and the distress pain causes. However, not all expressions convey the intended message effectively.

Common pain descriptors such as "shooting" and "stabbing" pain may fail to articulate intended meaning as they have lost their metaphorical force due to overuse. These are known as dead metaphors. So more detailed creative descriptions, often involving similes, may be more effective in helping the listener to understand, assess and provide better support.

We found interesting examples of creative and extended metaphors such as: "It feels like somebody putting barbed wire through your belly button in a figure of eight ... And then they set fire to the barbed wire and it starts getting hot and everything's just being squished inside you."

Using highly personal and creative metaphors like this provides a mechanism to communicate pain in one's own terms rather than being restricted by standardised assessments.

It's like some little devil in the corner. Yeah, you know like that little exorcist thing in the corner ... torturing me.

This language could help others understand more clearly how a sufferer is feeling and perhaps elicit some support. However, these benefits may come at a cost to the person in pain. We also found that some metaphorical expressions alluding to torture and attack could reflect individuals' perceptions of pain as a physical threat, leading to higher levels of distress, fear and despair.

As a result, the use of such language could increase the attention that an individual pays to their pain. This has been shown to also lead to an increase in pain intensity, as people become more aware of, and sensitive to, the sensation.

PROMOTING EFFECTIVE PAIN TALK

Pain is a private experience; encouraging people to find different and more appropriate ways to talk about it can help them make sense of their unique experience and describe it more effectively.

People with different conditions tend to use similar types of metaphorical expressions. For example, we found that words like "pins and needles" and "electricity" are often used to describe nerve pain associated with conditions like spinal cord injury. Similarly, expressions involving physical action such as "tearing" and "pulling" are more commonly found in descriptions of endometriosis pain.

This, in turn, can potentially guide doctors to identify potential causes of pain in certain conditions, like endometriosis. For example, a description such as "feeling like a balloon is about to explode" may point to inflammation, while "felt like I had tiny people with ropes tied tightly around my insides and pulling down" may be indicative of a deeper, more visceral pain.

Pain is also an all-round experience, and its impact goes beyond the physical. The way that someone talks about their experience can also highlight its effect on other parts of their lives, such as mental health and socialising. For example, pain described as "all-consuming" could reveal an emotional dimension while talking about how people in pain "hide from the world" could indicate a drive to conceal pain from others and avoid seeking help.

Encouraging people to talk about pain in their own terms is key to understanding and supporting their individual needs. In fact, this is what our participants ask for: "Listen closely" or "Be more open-minded about the difficulty of describing pain I can't explain well".

Promoting creativity when it comes to talking about pain can empower those who feel their experience of pain cannot simply be captured or communicated by standardised measurements or numerical scales.

[Jasmine Hearn is Senior Lecturer in Psychology, Manchester Metropolitan University; Stella Bullo is Senior Lecturer in Linguistics, Manchester Metropolitan University]

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Amit Shah owes me Dhokla treat, says Mamata sharing stats

NEW DELHI, 22 DEC [NDTV]: Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee today fact-checked Union Home Minister Amit Shah on his searing criticism of Bengal's economy and said he owed her a "dhokla" treat for being proved wrong.

Continuing her offensive against the BJP and Amit Shah, its chief strategist for the Bengal election in four months, Mamata Banerjee listed data that she said proved that their claims about Bengal's dismal state of industry and crime were trumped.

"Amit Shah owes me a treat. I love dhokla and other Gujarati food," the Chief Minister remarked.

Amit Shah, in a weekend visit to Bengal, addressed a rally in which scores of rebels from Mamata Banerjee's Trinamool Congress joined the BJP. The Union Home Minister went on to describe what he called lawlessness and stunted progress in



Bengal on "Didi's" watch.

Mr Shah said Bengal's growth had plunged and its industrial production had dropped from 30 per cent of India's share in 1947 to just 3.5 per cent. Giving more unflattering data of jobs, investment and production, he questioned: "Who is responsible for this downfall?"

Mamata Banerjee has been refuting the figures since in daily press conferences.

"He made Bengal seem like a nightmare land. He made Bengal look like a state that is doing badly, underdeveloped, with no jobs... Did you see Bengal 11 years back? How can you compare? I have no objection with the truth, but if there is no truth to the criticism, I will challenge it," the Chief Minister said.

In her point-by-point rebuttal to Mr Shah's comments, Mamata

Banerjee cited national crime data to claim that political killings had decreased in the last 10 years under Trinamool's rule.

"When the home minister of the country says something, it should be backed by data, facts and figures. Bengal is ahead of other states on all development indices. But Amit Shah ji deliberately tried to depict a gloomy and

dismal picture of the state. I was challenged... here is my reply," she said.

"BJP leaders, while pointing fingers at others, should also speak up against the Hathras rape-murder incident in Uttar Pradesh," added the Chief Minister, referring to the alleged gangrape of a young woman, who died in hospital later, and criticism of the UP government's handling of the case.

Meghalaya opens for outsiders, visitors need Covid-negative papers

GUWAHATI, 22 DEC [NDTV]: Meghalaya has opened up for visitors from outside the state, making it mandatory for everyone visiting the state to pre-register online for entry into the state through designated entry points only.

The first designated entry point was Umpling, Ri Bhoi district. Only those visitors who would have a COVID-19 negative report would be allowed, official sources added.

The first entry point was inaugurated by Meghalaya Deputy Chief Minister Prestone Tynsong, who said the Meghalaya government plans to set up two more facilitation centres in Bejengdoba and Ratacherra soon.

Even with a Covid negative report, people will be mandatorily tested at entry points as per the protocols of the Meghalaya government, official added.

Meghalaya Chief Minister Conrad Sangma, who is in isolation after he tested positive, tweeted:

Several civil society groups of Meghalaya have been pressing upon the state government for the implementation of the Inner Line Permit (ILP) regime in the state. ILP is a government travel document that allows an Indian citizen to visit or stay in a state that is protected under the ILP system. The system is in force in some north-eastern states such as Arunachal

Pradesh, Nagaland, Mizoram and Manipur.

"Visitors will feel at home. The whole process is technology driven and one can opt for pre-registration or spot registration. Nobody will be made to wait. People must not hesitate to visit the beautiful state of Meghalaya. This is just the beginning, there might be some shortcomings. However, people must give us suggestions to improve the same. We will modify it. The intention of setting up the same is to ensure that those coming from outside are safe. Another centre will come up in Bejengdoba and Ratacherra, Mr Tynsong said.

Over 1.89 lakh trees cut for UP's Bundelkhand expressway



BANDA (UP), DEC 22 (PTI): The Uttar Pradesh authorities have cut over 1.89 trees for the construction of the Bundelkhand expressway, an RTI query has revealed.

In a reply to Banda-based activist Kuldeep Shukla, Senior Manager of the UP Forest Department,

Atul Asthana, said the Expressway Industrial Development Authority (UPEIDA) has cut 1,89,036 trees for the 296-km-long project.

The trees were cut in Banda, Chitrakoot, Mahoba, Hamirpur, Jalaun, Auraiya and Etawah, it said.

The UPEIDA has planned to plant over 2.70

lakh saplings along the expressway, the RTI added.

Banda Divisional Forest Officer Sanjay Agarwal said the trees were cut after permission from the Centre.

The expressway will ensure better connectivity of the Bundelkhand area with the national capital region (NCR).

Will contest panchayat polls in UP: Bhim Army chief

AZAMGARH (UP), DEC 22 (PTI): Bhim Army chief Chandrashekhar Azad on Tuesday said his party will field candidates in the upcoming panchayat polls in Uttar Pradesh.

He also accused the government of settling scores with the opposition and expressed concern over the law and order situation.

Before the 2022 assembly polls, the Azad Samaj Party will field candidates in the panchayat elections, said the Bhim Army chief, who was here to meet the district magistrate over the alleged delay in providing help to a



Dalit village head killed recently.

The Bhim Army chief said he apprised the DM

of the poor law and order situation and discussed the case involving the killing of a village head,

Satyamev, here.

The Bhim Army chief allegedly had a heated argument

with policemen before meeting the DM.

"People should be given due respect in a democracy. The treatment meted out to me here proves that officials are threatening people," he alleged.

Attacking the BJP, Chandrashekhar Azad said while Home Minister Amit Shah is taking part in road shows and poll rallies in West Bengal, the winter session of Parliament has been cancelled on the pretext of coronavirus.

The government is doing this to avoid questions from the opposition as it does not have answers, he claimed.

Normal life hit in severe cold in interior Odisha

BHUBANESWAR, DEC 22 (PTI): Normal life in interior Odisha was severely hit on Tuesday as the mercury level plummeted to 4 degrees celsius at Phulbani in Kandhamal district making it the coldest place in the state.

The weather office has warned continuation of the cold wave to severe cold wave in five districts during the next 24 hours.

Minimum temperatures observed no large change at most places over the districts of Odisha. Almost all places experienced temperature below normal, the IMD said the condition is likely to prevail till December 24.

This apart, shallow to moderate fog has occurred at one or two places over the districts of Koraput, Malkangiri and Nayagarh of south Odisha.

The Regional Meteorological Centre said in a bulletin that the five districts affected by severe cold conditions are Angul, Dhenkanal, Kalahandi, Sundargarh and Jharsuguda.

While severe cold wave conditions prevailed at one or two places over the district of Angul of north interior Odisha and cold wave conditions also prevailed at one or two places in the districts of Sundargarh, Kalahandi, Kandhamal and Koraput in the interior parts of the state.

The night temperature in 13 places in the state dropped below 10 degree Celsius.

The Met office said Phulbani recorded 4 degrees celsius, followed by Daringbadi at 5.5 degrees, Angul 6 degrees, Koraput 6.6 degrees, Bhawanipatna

7.2, Jharsuguda and Sundergarh 7.5, Baripada 8.5, Balangir 8.8, Keonjhar and Titlagarh 9, Sonepur 9.2, and Boudh 9.5 degrees celsius.

The twin cities of Bhubaneswar and Cuttack registered minimum temperatures of 11.7 and 10.5 degrees celsius respectively, it said.

The highest maximum temperature of 30 degrees Celsius was recorded at Malkangiri and the lowest minimum temperature of 4 degrees Celsius was recorded at Phulbani in the plains of Odisha, the bulletin said.

There is no large change in minimum temperature (night temperature) over the districts of Odisha during the next 3-4 days, and it will be below normal by 3-4 degrees Celsius over the districts of coastal Odisha, the weather

office said.

On the impact of the continuing cold wave, the IMD said that there is an increased likelihood of various illnesses like runny/stuffy nose or nosebleed, which usually sets in or get aggravated due to prolonged exposure to cold.

Livestock too may be affected due to prolonged exposure to cold.

The IMD also suggested that people stay indoors during the night in view of the cold conditions, make arrangements to keep livestock in shaded or indoor areas, avoid movement at night specially in two-wheelers or open cars and take safety measures while using heating devices.

There is no large change in minimum temperature (Night Temperature) over the

districts of Odisha during next 3-4 days, and it will be below normal by 3-4 degrees Celsius over the districts of Coastal Odisha, the IMD said.

Keeping in view the IMD forecast, the special relief commissioner (SRC) P K Jena in a letter to all the district collectors and commissioners of municipal corporations said that necessary public awareness campaigns be conducted on dos and donts to protect the people and livestock from the prevailing cold wave.

All collectors are required to ensure that immediate arrangement is made for the opening of school buildings, community buildings and other available buildings for use as shelter during the night by homeless and needy people, the SRC added.

2 employees of oil firm kidnapped in Arunachal

ITANAGAR, DEC 22 (PTI): Two employees of an oil company have been kidnapped by suspected militants in Arunachal Pradesh's Changlang district, police said on Tuesday.

A drilling superintendent and a radio operator of the Quippo Oil and Gas Infrastructure Ltd were abducted on Monday evening from a drilling site at Kunchaikhra near Innao, Inspector General of Police (Law and Order) Chukhu Apa said.

Around 14 armed miscreants

kidnapped the duo from the site close to the Manabhum reserve forest, often frequented by NSCN (K), ULFA (I) and NSCN (IM) militants, he said.

"The abduction is suspected to have been carried out either by the NSCN (IM) or the ULFA (I) for ransom," police sources said, adding no ransom calls have been received so far.

The Arunachal Pradesh Police has alerted its Assam counterparts and a massive search operation along with Army and paramilitary forces has been launched, they added.



One more COVID-19 death in Ladakh



LEH, DEC 22 (PTI): One more person died due to coronavirus in Ladakh, while seven fresh cases were reported on Tuesday.

The union territory's COVID-19 tally has reached 9,286 and the death toll mounted to 125, officials said.

Fifty-two more patients have recovered from the disease, bringing down the number of active cases in the region to 309 266 in Leh district and 43 in Kargil.

The latest death and the new cases were reported from Leh

during the past 24 hours, the officials said.

Of the 52 new recoveries, 27 people were discharged in Kargil and 25 in Leh. So far, 8,852 people, which is 95 per cent of the total cases reported, have recovered from COVID-19.

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Sindhu hopeful of travelling to Thailand from UK despite increasing travel bans

NEW DELHI, DEC 22 (PTI): Unfazed by the worsening COVID-19 situation in England where she is training right now, world champion shuttler P V Sindhu on Tuesday told PTI that she remains hopeful of travelling to Thailand for tournaments in January despite countries increasingly banning flights from the UK.

Sindhu, who has qualified for the Tokyo Olympics, has been training in London for the last two months and is scheduled to play her first tournament since the break in Thailand. She will have to be in Bangkok by January 3 to compete in the two Super 1000 events (January 12 to 17 and January 19 to 24).

"I plan to travel in the first week of January. There is no travel ban from UK in Thailand, so I can travel from Doha. The idea is to use the Gulf route to reach Thailand," said Sindhu, who is managed by sports management firm Baseline Ventures.

Several countries around the world, including India, have imposed bans on flights on the UK because of a new and seemingly more contagious strain of the coronavirus in England.

The 25-year-old had left for London in October to focus on her nutrition and fitness at the Gatorade Sports Science Institute (GSSI) and also has been training alongside British shuttlers Toby Penty and Rajiv Ouseph at the National Training Centre.

"Thankfully, my training is going on

pretty well. The national center is not closed. It is run as a bubble center, so I have been able to practice ahead of the events in Thailand," Sindhu said.

The Thailand leg will mark the return of international badminton but the country has been dealing with pro-democracy protest movements and has recently seen a spike in COVID-19 cases as well.

Last Saturday, health officials in Thailand reported 548 new cases, most victims being migrant workers of the seafood industry in Samut Sakhon province, 34 kilometers southwest of Bangkok.

"Cases in Thailand are also increasing, so there is uncertainty about Thailand event too, we really hope that things are under control and the event goes ahead. We need badminton to restart just like other sports," said Yashwanth Biyyala, Director Athlete at Baseline Ventures.

The Sports Ministry had recently approved Sindhu's request to have her personal physio and fitness trainer accompany her to three tournaments in January.

Sindhu last competed in March when she participated in the All England Championship, following which all tournaments were either cancelled or postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

In October, Sindhu had pulled out of the Denmark Open, one of the only two events to be held since March. The other event was SaarLorlux Open Super 100 event in Germany.

Mark Waugh sees "no hope" of India bouncing back in Test series against Australia

MELBOURNE, DEC 22 (PTI): The Indian cricket team has "no hope" of making a comeback after the humiliation in Adelaide and will suffer a 4-0 whitewash in the four-match Test series against Australia, feels former batsman Mark Waugh.

India were bundled out for their lowest-ever Test score of 36 in their second innings as Australia claimed an eight-wicket win in the pink-ball Test to take a 1-0 lead in the series.

Asked if India could bounce back after losing the first Test, Waugh said: "No hope, no hope."

"I thought Adelaide was the Test that they

could win on paper and with Virat Kohli here for just the one Test. I thought the conditions would suit them.

"I just can't see how they can bounce back (after) Australia whitewashed them on the third day. So 'no' is the answer four-nil to Australia," he said on Fox Cricket.

Former Australia wicketkeeper Brad Haddin too had said the opening day/night Test was India's best chance in the ongoing series and it will be very difficult for the visitors to script a turnaround.

The second Test begins in Melbourne on December 26.

Gaza's parkour athletes jump for joy over new training facility



NIDAL AL-MUGHRABI

GAZA (Reuters) - Often injured in high-risk jumps over obstacles in cemeteries and abandoned buildings, Gaza's parkour enthusiasts can now practice their niche sport on safer ground.

The Palestinian territory's first parkour gym - equipped with wooden boxes over which youngsters can

soar in twists and flips, and padded mattresses to land on - has opened its doors.

Developed in France, the dynamic urban sport took root in Gaza around 15 years ago. It provides its own sense of freedom of movement in an area locked in conflict with neighbouring Israel, which blockades the enclave, citing security

concerns.

"I have played parkour for 13 years now. During those 13 years I have suffered several injuries, the worst was to my wrist, and it stopped me playing the game for a year," said Jihad Abu Sultan, 32, one of two coaches at the new Wallrunners academy.

Some 70 athletes, male and female and

aged between six and 26, are enrolled in his current free three-month course. Dozens are on waiting lists.

Abu Sultan, a co-founder of Gaza's first parkour group, began practicing his acrobatics at a cemetery in the territory's Khan Younis refugee camp. He said injuries forced some of his colleagues to quit.

"There were no safety

and security factors. Now with this hall and this first academy we can avoid injuries. A player will perform the moves easily," he said.

Mohammad Al-Masri, 17, said police used to give chase when he and others played parkour at schools.

"I used to be scared when I played," he said. "Now I am here, playing safe."

Let it go and move on: Smith's advice to deflated India after Adelaide debacle

ADELAIDE, DEC 22 (PTI)

Australian batting star Steve Smith has no time to think about how India might plot revenge in the second Test here this weekend but he does have a word of advice for the visitors jolted by the first game's battering -- "Let it go and move on".

The Australian troika of Mitchell Starc, Pat Cummins and Josh Hazlewood produced one of the finest fast bowling performances in recent times to dismiss India for their lowest Test score of 36 in the opening day-night Test here.

Australia won by eight wickets and the series will now move to Melbourne for the Boxing Day Test starting December 26.

"Look, the other day we just saw some pretty incredible fast bowling. It is probably the best I've seen our bowlers bowl collectively for about five years I think," Smith said in a virtual media conference facilitated by series' official broadcaster Sony Network.

"The lengths they were hitting were just impeccable. Sometimes that happens, you get a good ball and you nick it...You got to let it go



and move on and try and keep yourself in a positive mindset," the 31-year-old added.

Asked what he feels would be the Indian mindset after such a huge defeat, he said: "Again every individual is different, the way they take their dismissals, how they think about the game after it's finished."

"It's important to keep moving forward, look at yourself individually, what you could have done better."

Star pacer Mohammed Shami's fractured wrist has dealt a double blow to India as talismanic skipper Virat Kohli will be on paternity during the last three Tests.

"Not thinking too much about India and

how they're going to come back. For us, it's just about doing the things we need to do well. It's about just executing what we need to do out in the middle and doing it to the best of our ability," Smith said.

On Shami's absence, Smith said India still have some quality bowlers in Navdeep Saini and Mohammed Siraj.

"I think they're two quality bowlers who can have some good Test careers. Obviously they are missing Ishant (Sharma) as well, which is a big loss for them in terms of experience."

Smith was out for one, deceived by a beautiful Ravichandran Ashwin delivery, in the opening Test and asserted that he has learnt his lessons.

"The spinners that do well here generally those who get over the top of the ball and beat you with more bounce or in the air as opposed to ones that come around the ball.

"It's about finding a way to adapt and that's what the best players do around the world. I'll hopefully learn something from that, move forward and play a little bit better in the next game," he explained.

On the next match, the star batsman said he gets shivers down the spine from the thrill of batting in a Boxing Day Test.

Since his first Boxing Day Test appearance in the Ashes 2010-11, the talismanic batsman has smashed four centuries

-- three of them unbeaten -- and three fifties in seven games.

"I always remember watching the Boxing Day Tests at home and with the family after Christmas. It's sort of like a dream-come-true moment in a way. As a kid, I always wanted to play in a Boxing Day Test match," Smith said.

"There's nothing like the thrill and you get the shivers down your spine, and the hairs on the back of your neck rise up when you walk out to bat on Boxing Day with the crowd yelling," added the player, who averages an astonishing 113.50 at MCG.

"I like batting at the MCG on those sort of big occasions. I'd like to try and make the most of them."

Smith further hoped his home turf Sydney will be able to host the New Year Test as planned despite a spike in COVID-19 cases of late.

"I think everyone's preference here would be to play in Sydney. Personally I'd love Sydney to happen, I love playing at the SCG, it's my home ground, but we will always be guided by experts," he concluded.

Pakistan wins third T20 for morale boost before tests

NAPIER (NEW ZEALAND),

DEC 22 (AP): New test captain Mohammad Rizwan showed his leadership quality in a bold innings of 89 which steered Pakistan to a four-wicket win over New Zealand in the third Twenty20 on Tuesday.

Rizwan will lead Pakistan in the two-match test series against New Zealand starting on Sunday in place of Babar Azam, who is injured.

In Azam's absence he also opened the batting in all three T20s, making 17 in Auckland and 22 in Hamilton before achieving a maiden half-century and career-best 89 from 59 balls on Tuesday. Rizwan beat his previous best of 33 not out.

With Rizwan's leadership, Pakistan surpassed New Zealand's moderate total of 173-7 with two balls to spare.

Rizwan batted his team within sight of victory when he was out in the final over at 171-6. Pakistan still needed three runs to win with four balls left. Iftikhar Ahmed settled the issue when he hoisted the fourth ball of the last over out of the ground for six, lifting Pakistan to 177-6.

New Zealand had already secured the series but Pakistan's win at McLean Park sends it into the test series in a much more positive frame of mind.

Pakistan won the toss in all three matches, batting first in the first two. A change of tactics on Tuesday to bowl first on a tricky pitch proved successful.

Rizwan put on 40 for the first wicket with Haider Ali (11), then 72 in a match-winning partnership with Mohammad Hafeez. Coming off his unbeaten 99 in the second T20, Hafeez made 41 from 29 balls with two fours and three sixes.

When he was out, Hafeez was just 12 runs short of equaling Shoaib Malik's record of 2,335 runs for Pakistan in T20s.

Pakistan had nervous moments near the end of the innings, especially when Tim Southee dismissed Faheem Ashraf and Shadab Khan with consecutive deliveries with the total 163. Iftikhar survived the hat trick ball and struck the winning runs an over later.

"We lost the series but the last match is very important for the next series," Rizwan said.

"We wanted to create energy in this match so we take momentum into the test match."

"It's a big honor for me to be named captain of Pakistan. It's a dream for me and I can't explain my happiness."

New Zealand's innings progressed in fits and starts. While partnerships were created, few endured. The pitch was two-paced and the slower ball or cross-seamer was especially effective against batsmen trying to settle in.

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First batch of COVID-19 vaccines arrives in Singapore

SINGAPORE, DEC 22 (PTI): Singapore has received its first shipment of COVID-19 vaccines, making it the first country in Asia to take the vaccine developed by Pfizer and BioNTech as it plans to inoculate its 5.7 million people by the third quarter of 2021.

The first batch of the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine landed in Singapore on Monday, The Straits Times reported.

Singapore is one of the first few countries to approve and get COVID-19 vaccines. Others that have approved the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine are Britain, the United States, Canada, Switzerland, Bahrain and Qatar. Britain, the US and Canada are already carrying out vaccination exercises.

The vaccines were received by Transport Minister Ong Ye Kung and were taken to a cold-chain facility for



storage and ground transportation.

Ong assured that the city-state has the capabilities to make sure the process is secure.

Singapore also wants to become a COVID-19 vaccine distribution hub for the region, Ong said.

Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong announced on December 14 that Singapore authorities had approved the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine for pandemic use and that the first shipment would arrive by end-December.

The vaccine shipment comes a week before Singapore is set to go into Phase 3 of its reopening on December 28.

Lee said on Monday evening he was "delighted" to see the successful arrival of the first shipment, describing it as a "welcome 'present' that we've all been looking forward to".

In a Facebook post, he thanked the agencies and workers that made the shipment possible, and said the multi-

ministry task force handling the COVID-19 outbreak in Singapore would announce details of the roll-out "in due course".

"It's been a long and arduous year. I hope that this news will give Singaporeans cheer this festive season, and reason to be optimistic for 2021," he said.

Lee has said that he and his Cabinet colleagues will be getting themselves vaccinated early to show everyone that

they believe the vaccines are safe. For the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine, two doses are required, to be administered 21 days apart.

Other vaccinations are also expected to arrive in Singapore in the coming months, and the country "will have enough vaccines for everyone" by the third quarter of 2021.

Vaccinations in Singapore will be voluntary and priority will be given to those at greatest risk, such as frontline and healthcare workers, as well as the elderly and the vulnerable, Lee had said.

Thereafter, an Expert Committee on COVID-19 Vaccination has proposed to progressively vaccinate the rest of the population and to cover everyone who wants a vaccination by the end of 2021.

Vaccinations will be free for all Singaporeans as well as long-term residents currently in Singapore.

Volcano erupts on Hawaii's Big Island, draws crowds to park

HONOLULU (AP): Kilauea volcano on Hawaii's Big Island roared back to life Sunday night as lava went shooting into the air, boiling away a water lake and sending a massive plume of steam, gas and ash soaring into the atmosphere.

In the first hours of the eruption, lava mixed rapidly with water in the summit's crater lake to create steam. The sky above the eruption turned shades of orange and red as people lined up to watch the billowing column of gas and vapor rise above the volcano in the middle of the night.

Tom Birchard, a senior forecaster with the National Weather Service in Hawaii, said lava poured into the crater and mixed with the water to cause a vigorous eruption for about an hour. When lava interacts with water it can cause explosive reactions.

All the water evaporated out of the lake and a steam cloud shot up about 30,000 feet (9 kilometers) into the atmosphere, Birchard said.

The water was the first ever recorded in the summit crater of Kilauea volcano. In 2019, after a week of questions about a mysterious green patch at the bottom of the volcano's crater, researchers confirmed the presence of water. The lake had continued to fill since then.

The eruption began late Sunday within the volcano's caldera, the U.S. Geological Survey said. Because of the location of the erupting lava, no homes were evacuated and there was little risk to the public. The crater, named Halemaumau, is located within Hawaii Volcanoes National Park and was home

to a longstanding lava lake that was present for years before a 2018 eruption caused it to drain.

The eruption continued throughout Monday and scientists said it's hard to know how long it will last. With the water gone, a lava lake was forming in the crater throughout the day.

An advisory was issued by the National Weather Service in Honolulu, warning of fallen ash from the volcano. Excessive exposure to ash is an eye and respiratory irritant, it said. The agency later said the eruption was easing and a "low-level steam cloud" was lingering in the area.

Hawaii Volcanoes National Park spokeswoman Jessica Ferracane said in a telephone interview that the volcanic activity is a risk to people in the park and that caution is needed.

"It's pretty spectacular this morning," she said, "but there are high amounts of hazardous sulfur dioxide gas and particulates and those are billowing out of the crater right now and those present a danger to everyone, especially people with heart or respiratory problems, infants, young children and pregnant women."

She also said cars are lining up at the park entrance to get a glimpse of the lava.

"There is a lot of cars waiting on Crater Rim Drive to get out to Kilauea overlook. People should expect long waits for parking places," she said.

Ferracane also said people should be mindful of the coronavirus pandemic and take measures to remain safe.

"We're not doing crowd control yet, but that could happen," she

said. "Right now, we're urging people to wear a mask to reduce the spread of COVID-19. We did see quite a few visitors last night unmasked."

By 1 a.m., USGS officials told Hawaii News Now that there were reported lava fountains shooting about 165 feet (50 meters) into the sky.

David Phillips, a Hawaiian Volcano Observer, said the agency was monitoring the "rapidly evolving" situation. "We will send out further notifications on Kilauea and other Hawaiian volcanoes as we observe changes," he said.

A magnitude 4.4 earthquake hit about an hour after the volcano began erupting.

The USGS said it received more than 500 reports of people who felt the earthquake but significant damage to buildings or structures was not expected.

Kilauea last erupted in 2018, destroying more than 700 homes and spewing enough lava to fill 320,000 Olympic-sized swimming pools. An area more than half the size of Manhattan was buried in up to 80 feet (24 meters) of now-hardened lava. The lava flowed over the course of four months.

The 2018 eruption occurred along a rift zone on the volcano's flank where many residential neighborhoods had been developed. Last night's eruption was contained to the summit caldera within the national park.

The volcano had not erupted since 2018 but before then had active lava flows for more than three decades. Kilauea is one of the most active volcanoes on earth.

Israel on cusp of fourth national elections in two years

JERUSALEM (AP): Israel appeared headed to its fourth election in two years on Tuesday after a last-ditch effort to keep the government afloat and push off the automatic dissolution of parliament failed.

Negotiations meant to bring about a budget compromise between the government's two main parties broke down early Tuesday and in a late-night Knesset session, members of the Likud and Blue and White parties voted against a proposal to postpone Tuesday's budget deadline for another two weeks. The measure failed by 49 votes to 47.

If the government does not pass a budget by midnight Tuesday,



Israeli law stipulates that the Knesset dissolve and triggers snap elections in 90 days. Most avenues to evade that deadline have been closed off.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's Likud and Defense Minister Benny Gantz's Blue and White party

have been at loggerheads over the national budget issue since forming a unity government in May.

Netanyahu and Gantz had proposed pushing off Tuesday's deadline by two more weeks in an effort to reach a compromise on the 2020 budget. But

members of their own parties voted against the motion in a late-night, 11th hour break from party ranks.

"We do not want elections and we voted against them this evening, but we are not afraid of elections — because we will win!" the

prime minister wrote on Twitter.

Once parliament dissolves, Israelis will head to the polls in March for a fourth time since early 2019, this time in the midst of the coronavirus pandemic, a major economic recession, and while Netanyahu is on trial for a series of corruption charges.

Netanyahu also faces a challenger from within his own camp, Gideon Saar, who broke from the Likud party earlier this month and has called for the long-ruling prime minister's ouster. Several members of Netanyahu's party who shot down Tuesday's proposal are expected to join ranks with Saar.

Still stuck: 1,500 France-bound trucks stranded in England

LONDON (AP): More than 1,500 trucks were stranded in England on Tuesday morning amid fears that Britain could face food shortages if travel restrictions put in place to slow the spread of a new strain of the coronavirus aren't lifted soon.

Dozens of countries around the world have slapped tough travel curbs on the U.K. in recent days: From Canada to India, nations banned flights from Britain, while France barred the entry of trucks from the country for 48 hours from late Sunday while the strain is assessed.

Home Secretary Priti Patel told BBC radio that the British government is "speaking constantly" with France to achieve a swift resolution in order to get freight moving again. In the meantime, trucks were piling up in Kent, the county in southeast England that is home to some of the most popular cross-Channel ports.

Patel said 650 vehicles were lined up on the main highway into the Port of Dover, while another 873 had been redirected to the

nearby disused Manston Airport.

"It's in both our interests, both countries to ensure that we have flow, and of course there are European hauliers right now who want to be going home," she said.

While the French ban does not prevent trucks from entering Britain, the move stoked worries about shortages at a time of year when the U.K. produces very little of its food and relies heavily on produce delivered from Europe by truck.

Many trucks that carry cargo from Britain to the continent return laden with goods. The fear is that will fall off. Also, some drivers or their employers might decide against entering Britain for fear they won't be able to get back home.

Given that around 10,000 trucks pass through the Dover every day, accounting for about 20% of the country's trade in goods, retailers are getting increasingly concerned if there is no resolution soon.

Andrew Opie, director of food and sustainability at the British Retail



Consortium, warned of potential shortages of food like lettuce, vegetables and fresh fruit, after Christmas if the borders are not "running pretty much freely" from Wednesday.

"The problem actually is empty lorries, so the empty lorries which are now stuck in Kent, they need to get back to places like Spain to pick up the next consignment of raspberries and strawberries and they need to get back within the next day or so, otherwise we will see disruption," he said.

Over the weekend, Johnson imposed strict lockdown measures in London and neighboring areas amid mounting

concerns over the new variant to the virus.

The chief executive of BioNTech — the German pharmaceutical company behind a vaccine now being rolled out in the U.K. and elsewhere — said he was confident that its shot would work against the new variant, but further studies are needed to be completely sure.

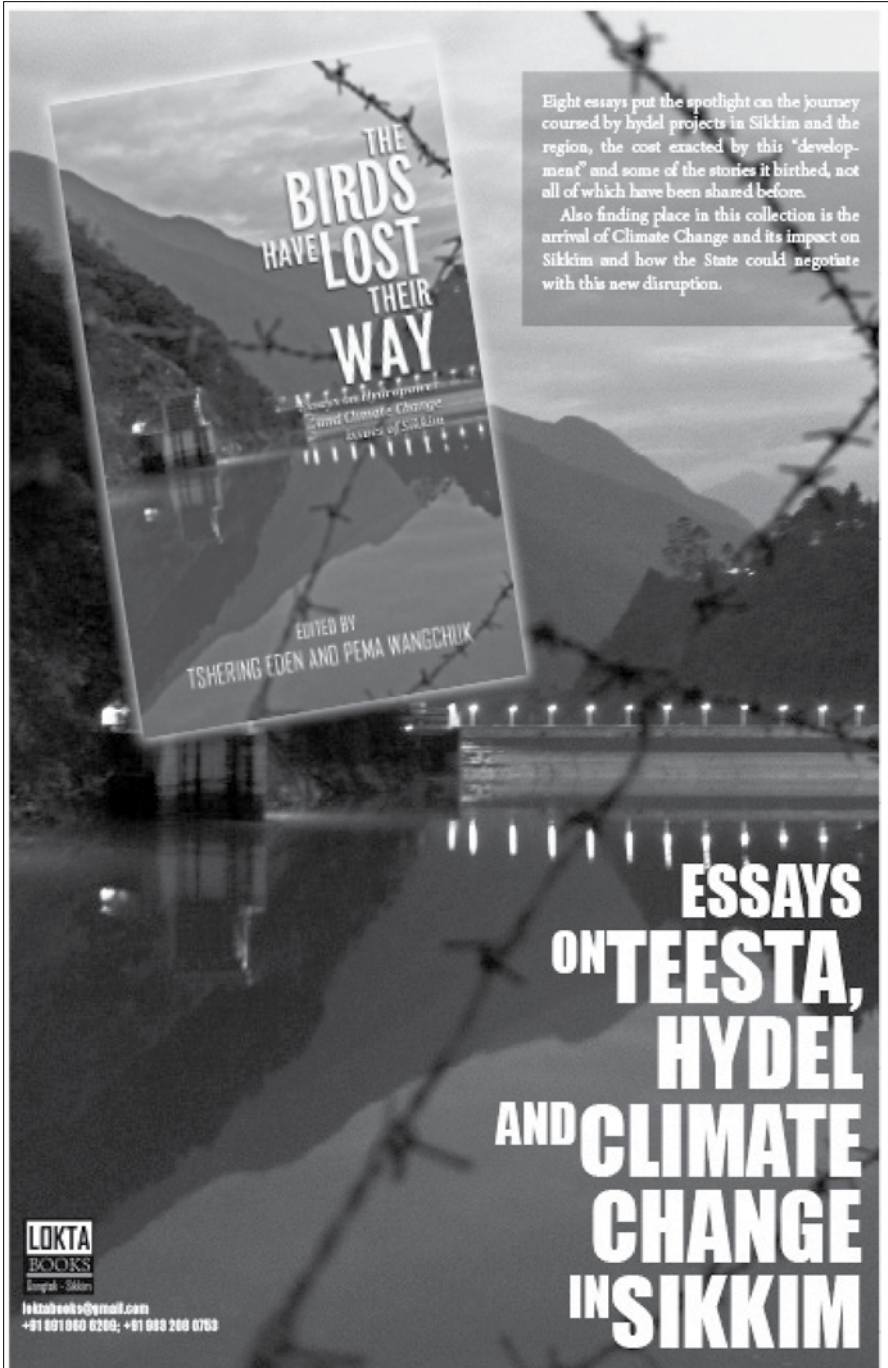
Ugur Sahin said Tuesday that "we don't know at the moment if our vaccine is also able to provide protection against this new variant" but because the proteins on the variant are 99% the same as the prevailing strains BioNTech has "scientific confidence" in the vaccine.

Johnson said early

indications are that the variant is 70% more transmissible and is driving the rapid spread of infections in the capital and surrounding areas.

As a result, he scrapped a planned relaxation of rules over Christmastime for millions of people and imposed other tough new restrictions in the affected zone. No indoor mixing of households will be allowed, and only essential travel will be permitted.

The virus is blamed for 1.7 million deaths worldwide, including nearly 68,000 in Britain, the second-highest death toll in Europe, behind Italy's 69,000.



Isla Fisher says husband Sacha Baron Cohen persuaded her to get into comedy

LOS ANGELES, DEC 22 (PTI):

Actor Isla Fisher says it was her husband, actor-comedian Sacha Baron Cohen, who pushed her to take up comedy seriously.

The Australian actor, who has iconic comedy movies like "Wedding Crashers", "Hot Rod", "Confessions of a Shopaholic" to her credit, said initially in her career she was focusing more on "dramatic" roles.

"Sacha was the reason I got into comedy. I was going up for a lot of dramatic roles and getting rejected. He said, 'You're one of the funniest people I know. You should be doing comedy,'" Fisher told People magazine.

The 44-year-old actor, who started her career with Australian soap opera "Home and Away", landed her breakout



I'd played before. (If the sequel happens) That would definitely be a lot of fun. I would love to read the script," she said.

Fisher and Baron Cohen, 49, got married in 2010. The couple has three children.

Katrina Kaif champions cause of right to education, urges people to donate for Madurai school



MUMBAI, DEC 22 (PTI): Actor Katrina Kaif has urged people to donate towards building classrooms for underprivileged children at a school in Madurai, Tamil Nadu.

Kaif took to Instagram on Tuesday and shared a video of the Mountain View School, which has been built with the assistance of the Bollywood star's mother Suzanne.

"So proud to present to you all the school built from the ground up by my mom and her charity. Since 2015, Mountain View School in Madurai has actively been working to provide quality English-medium education to lesser privileged children," the 37-year-old actor wrote.

Kaif said the school currently teaches 200 students and has classrooms up to grade four.

As a part of the campaign by Relief Projects India, the "Bharat" star urged people to fund the school.

"Let us do our bit so that more and more children can fulfil their dreams. Considering the tough times we are in, it is even more important to be there for one another," she added.

The school's fundraiser page on Ketto stated that there is a need of 14 more rooms to accommodate classes up to eighth standard.

Through the initiative, Kaif aims to work towards quality education without discrimination and spread awareness on issues such as female infanticide, foeticide and girl child education.

Seduction and vulnerability not mutually exclusive: Amber Heard on her role in 'The Stand'

MUMBAI, DEC 22 (PTI): Actor Amber Heard says it was great to play a "complex and nuanced" character like Nadine Cross in the latest screen adaptation of author Stephen King's book "The Stand".

The series, based on King's 1978 novel of the same name, follows a story of a group of survivors whose lives intersect after a deadly virus destroys most of the world's population.

The destiny of humankind depends on the 108-year-old Mother Abigail (Whoopi Goldberg) and few survivors, who gather in Boulder, US, to fight and establish new social systems.

Their worst nightmares are embodied in a man with a lethal smile and unspeakable powers: Randall Flagg (Alexander Skarsgard), the Dark Man while Heard's Cross has her allegiance to Flagg despite understanding the consequences of her actions.

Heard said her character is using the tools she has to survive in a chaotic world.

I would like to thank King and his genius in creating characters with real back stories that are complex, interesting and nuanced. Nadine is no more of a seducer than she is a survivor and she's using the tools that she has to survive in a world," Heard said in a group interview over Zoom.

"I think a seducer can also

be vulnerable. Seduction and vulnerability are not mutually exclusive. I don't feel as a woman, I have to apologize for one in order to justify the other or vice versa, Heard said when asked if Nadine is a seducer and fragile woman.

The Aquaman actor said for every character, she follows a different process. Cross, she said, comes with a lot of psychological baggage.

For me, Nadine is a character coming with a lot of psychological baggage so a lot of preparation for how people behave when they have been groomed. Seeing Nadine across her journey was like understanding people who come out of cults or people who have committed horrendous crimes."

Heard said to prepare for the character, she read interviews of people who had been "either kidnapped, brainwashed or otherwise intoxicated into a culture mentality and brought on to participate in crimes, which is unfortunately a fairly common thing."

The 34-year-old actor, a self-confessed bookworm, said she has been a fan of King's books since she was a kid and The Stand is one of her favourites.

The series, which started streaming in India on Voot Select from December 17, has released at a time when the world is still reeling under the coronavirus pandemic.

It's certainly interesting timing

now," Heard said on the coincidence.

"It's based on a global pandemic that wipes out most of the population of earth and leaves with the best and the worst of humanity and exemplifies them and in an ultimate battle for the best survival of our species. Like how we don't just survive but how we thrive and come together to do so.

Her co-star Jovan Adepo, known for his role as Cory Maxson in the film adaptation of Fences, plays Larry Underwood in CBS All Access' miniseries.

He said having shot for the series, he couldn't see the situation (of the pandemic) coming in real-life too.

I still feel like I got blindsided. However, it's been a challenge for all of us. We are trying to do what's right and keep everybody as safe as possible... It will be fun and interesting for the audience to see. There're so many interesting characters in the story, Adepo said.

The Stand also features James Marsden, Odessa Young and Greg Kinnear among others.

The nine-episode series is written and created by The Fault in our Stars director Josh Boone and "Homeland" scribe Ben Cavell.

Cavell serves as executive producer on the show along with Taylor Elmore, Will Weiske, Jimmy Miller, Roy Lee and Richard P Rubinstein.



MAKING COLD WEATHER FASHIONABLE! Model Irina Shayk wore an olive jumpsuit from sustainable denim brand DL1961 while out and about in New York.

Katy Perry says she used to pretend to be Zooey Deschanel to get into clubs



LOS ANGELES, DEC 22 (PTI): Pop star Katy Perry has revealed that during her initial days in the entertainment industry she used to claim to be actor Zooey Deschanel to get into the nightclubs.

The singer made the revelation during a Instagram Live session with Deschanel hours after the release of the music video of her new song "Not the End of the World", featuring the 40-year-old actor.

"When I moved to LA maybe 18 years ago... I was pretty much a nobody, and you were like just getting so huge at that time, it was like Zooey Deschanel ran the world. In that moment, I was so complimented to look like you," Perry said.

"But I have to admit something to you. When I first got to LA, I went to the club. A lot. And I wanted to get into the club, but I had no money, I had no clout, I had nothing, and sometimes I would pose as you to get into the club," the 36-year-old

singer added.

Deschanel, best known for her work on films like "The Good Girl", "The New Guy", "Elf", and sitcom "New Girl", said she knew about Perry pretending to be her as many people from the industry at that time mentioned they had met a girl who had an uncanny resemblance with her.

"People were like 'I saw you!' But I'm such a goody two-shoes, and people kept going like, 'I saw you out! I made eye contact with you! Then everybody kept telling me about you, 'This girl Katy, she looks just like you,' and I'm like, 'Who is this Katy?'"

"And then when I first met you, I was so relieved because you're so pretty, and I was like, 'Oh, thank God. She's so pretty,'" the actor said.

The video of "Not the End of the World" is also a fun, ironic reference to the fact that Perry and Deschanel are always called lookalikes.

ARIES:

You didn't think you could ever make it here, yet you did! If this doesn't tell you about your capabilities, what does? Today, you're being asked to hit pause, take a moment to lovingly gaze at your creations, and give yourself the validation you sometimes seek from others. Remind yourself that you deserve every bit of the success you have attracted into your Universe. Yes, there is an important lesson in here for you, Aries—the realisation that stepping into your power makes you a magnet for miracles.

TAURUS:

That this is an emotionally challenging time for most of us is not brand new information, Taurus. The real question is: are you willing to become the eye of the storm? To move through the turbulence with the awareness of a Zen master? Remember, you have been preparing for this monumental change. The tools required to turn the wounds into wisdom are already within you.

GEMINI:

The thing is, you're too hung up on the outcome. You're too hung up how you will be perceived, and whether or not your endeavours will be profitable. But you've always

been the most creative member of the crew, one who inspires others to push their own boundaries time and again. What's keeping you from practicing your own mantra, Gemini? Today, consider changing the approach a little. Do what you love with all your heart and let everything else fall in place. The mysterious forces are with you, helping you at every step along the way.

CANCER:

You gave them a fair chance, Cancer. You gave them a chance to prove their mettle. Yet, they failed to recognise the strength of this bond. They failed to show up for you in the way you showed up for them. It's time for you to understand what the signs are pointing towards. Choosing yourself has never come easy to you. But you've got to do what you've got to do for yourself.

LEO:

Suppressed emotions don't just go away, Leo. They continue to live on and influence our behaviour from the depths of our unconscious. What are the dark alleys of your unconscious drawing your attention towards? Recognise the unhealed wounds that are secretly sabotaging your growth. The Universe is holding space for you to do the inner

work. So, don't shy away from looking within and confronting the so-called darkness that's looking back at you.

VIRGO:

It's easier to practice kindness with strangers. But, what happens when somebody we know and love comes into the equation? Are we ever able to give with all of our heart, or do we maintain a record and weigh the relationship down with our (unrealistic) expectations? It's time to come face to face with the truth, Virgo. It's time to let go of the false, and meet your innermost self, who has mastered the art of being unconditional in every sense of the word.

LIBRA:

Libra, the mysterious smile on your face reveals you're happier than you've been in a while. That you are becoming increasingly aware of the truth that the present is where the magic is—and where it has been along. So, instead of oscillating between the past and the present, you are awakening to the gifts this moment is offering you. Trust that this shift in your consciousness will lead to a massive shift in your reality too.

SCORPIO:

You've spent so much time manifesting this love in your life, Scorpio. What's keeping you from embracing it fully? What's keeping you from sending out that prayer of gratitude into the Universe? Take a good look in the mirror, Scorpio. Take a good look at the reflection staring back at you and start a dialogue with your innermost self. In moments of silence, you will realise you are deserving of this love. You have been deserving of it all along, beautiful.

SAGITTARIUS:

You're all about the fireworks, Sagittarius. You're all about the connections that make you feel alive. But, sometimes the fire is ignited immediately. At other times, the connection builds slowly. So, don't be in a rush to reject somebody or repeat the 'things aren't quite right' story. Truth is, everything is working in your favour. Cultivating patience will help you open your eyes.

CAPRICORN:

Sometimes, you try your best, but you don't succeed. At other times, your intention combined with inspired action helps open many doors for you. It's such a time in the Capricorn HQ, and you'll find that the forces are

giving you that much-needed push. Once again they're asking you the question, "What do you want to create over the next 365 days?" Don't wait until tomorrow. Start now.

AQUARIUS:

It's a cup-hath-runneeth-over kind of day in the Aquarius HQ, and you'll find your familial ties are taking centre stage. It's a time to get to know your tribe on a deeper level and to share both your joy and your sorrows with them. Their support will help you get through whatever it is that you're going through, the turbulence you may be experiencing at the moment. What's more, marital bliss is on the cards. Couples who've said 'I do' will find that the passage of time is making their love grow stronger.

PISCES:

Deadlines, who? Prepping for the holiday season is a big mood around here, and you're consciously reconnecting with old friends and family alike. Some of you may be planning to travel to see a sibling too. Keep it simple (and small) this time around, Pisces. Exchange gifts, sip on mulled wine, sing your favourite songs, and let each member of your tribe know how much they mean to you.