



**ACTION-THRILLER 'DHAAKAD'  
TO RELEASE ON OCTOBER 1**  
*pg 08*

**TOWARDS A KNOWLEDGE-BASED  
SOCIETY  
GET INFORMED... THEN DEMAND  
BETTER**  
*pg 04*

**BJP LEADERS DEMAND  
BAN ON 'TANDAV' FOR  
MOCKING HINDU DEITIES**  
*pg 08*



# SummitTIMES

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ON TOP OF THE NEWS

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## CM announces 'mega' tourism festival Visit Sikkim 2022

### SUMMIT REPORT

**GANGTOK, 18 JAN:**

Chief Minister Prem Singh Tamang today announced a mega tourism festival, 'Visit Sikkim 2022' in a bid to further promote tourism in Sikkim. He informed that the mega tourism festival with a series of tourism activities in the State would be organized either in the month of April or October, 2022.

On the same, he stressed that the Tourism Department and Travel Agents' Association of Sikkim [TAAS] and tourism stakeholders of Sikkim need to work hard to bring in a record number of tourists to the festival.

The CM was speaking as the chief guest at the inaugural function of 'Capacity Building Training for Tourism Stakeholders of Sikkim' here at Chintan Bhawan on Monday.

The capacity building programme is being sponsored by North Eastern Council, Ministry of DoNER, with the support of Government of Sikkim and is being implemented by Travel Agents' Association of Sikkim.

Speaking on the Visit Sikkim 2022 programme, he mentioned that the State government will organize the fest in peak tourist season [April or



October].

He directed the Tourism Department to work in close coordination with TAAS and other tourism stakeholders to make the festival successful.

The CM said that the State government will allocate funds for the promotion and marketing of Sikkim tourism in major cities of India to bring more tourists. He added that such training programmes of TAAS can help to bring out the best manpower in the tourism sector to provide the best service to tourists. He further urged the organizations to work continuously and assured to provide all possible support from the government.

The CM mentioned that the state

government has given the responsibility of STDC Chairman to a representative of TAAS, Lukendra Rasaily this time to use the suggestions and experience of travel agents in the promotion of tourism. He added that the State government has been organizing film festivals and tourism festivals to promote Sikkim tourism but people need to take advantage of these opportunities.

The pandemic has affected tourism a lot which in turn has affected the government's revenue stores, said the CM. He added that Sikkim was the first State in the entire north-eastern region to take the initiative to reopen the State's

borders for tourism and despite various criticism tourism resumed on 10 October last year with proper SOPs and safety guidelines.

He informed that the State has received around 3 lakh tourists from October 2020 to January 2021. The CM mentioned that the Economic Revival Committee has already submitted its report to the State government and the government is preparing to provide some relief to tourism stakeholders who were affected by the pandemic.

He stressed upon the importance of promoting village tourism in every corner of the State. On the same, he urged TAAS and tourism stakeholders to promote village tourism in every corner of the

State to make tourism the backbone of Sikkim. He also stated that the government would take up mega home stay tourism in the State by building houses as per the traditional design of Bhutia, Lepcha and Nepali communities in villages.

While congratulating the people of Sikkim on the launch of Pakyong to Delhi direct flight, the CM stated that this air service to Delhi would be a milestone for the promotion of Sikkim tourism. He also mentioned that road connectivity was very important in the development of tourism in the State and the state government has already been working for better road connectivity in the State.

## No new Covid cases on Sunday

### SUMMIT REPORT

**GANGTOK, 18 JAN:**

Sikkim registered no new cases of novel coronavirus in the last 24 hours keeping the number of confirmed cases COVID-19 in the State steady at 6,038.

Numbers are usually low on Mondays since the VRD Lab at STNM Hospital, where RT-PCR tests are conducted, remains closed on Sundays. Rapid Antigen Testing and TrueNat tests are however conducted and '0' new infections should bring a cheer to the State and authorities here.

In the meanwhile, the total number of recovered cases of COVID-19 in

Sikkim has reached 5,661 with the discharge of nine more patients from the isolation facilities.

The number of active cases of novel coronavirus in the State has thus further reduced to 152, of whom three are currently admitted in the ICU facility of the COVID-dedicated STNM Hospital.

In his health bulletin on Monday, Health Department State IEC Officer, Sonam Gyaltsen Bhutia mentioned that all 19 samples tested on Sunday were found negative on Sunday.

While 10 samples were screened by TrueNat, nine were put through rapid antigen testing.

## GJM Bimal faction's Chief Coordinator resigns

### SMRITAKHAWAS

**SILIGURI, 18 JAN:**

Chief Coordinator of GorkhajannuktiMorchha (Bimal faction), Tilak Chandra Roka has resigned from his post.

Addressing a press conference at Darjeeling Press Guild, Tilak Chandra Roka said, "Change in the political ideology of GJMM is the main reason for my resignation. When GorkhajannuktiMorchha was formed, the main agenda of the party was Gorkhaland (permanent political solution), but as of now GJMM is in alliance with the party that we were against in 2017, so everyone can see everything has

changed and I can't support this."

He said that he will continue to oppose GJMM [Binoy faction] but added that he has not decided if he will join any other political party.

When asked why he took this long to resign from his post, Mr Roka said, "I supported GorkhajannuktiMorchha (Bimal faction) till 2020 because I also wanted the displaced supporters to come back to their homes and it's not because GJMM left BJP and supported TMC that I resigned, but it's because we can never forget the pain and struggle which we went through since 2013 till 2020. If we do then

anyone can come up and make false promises again in the future."

Mr Roka further said that he had made two things clear in the meeting before organising the conference in Kolkata; that he will never appeal to the public to support or vote for the ruling party of West Bengal (TMC) and that he will never cast a vote in their favor.

"Whoever is in power at the Centre, may be BJP, Congress or any other political party, I believe they will give us justice to our community. But for now I cannot support the one who is leaving all of us in the middle of nowhere," said Mr Roka.

### SUMMIT REPORT

**GANGTOK, 18 JAN:**

Chief Minister Prem Singh Tamang inaugurated the "Capacity Building Training Programme for Tourism Stakeholders of Sikkim" here at Chintan Bhawan on Monday. The capacity building programme is being sponsored by North Eastern Council, Ministry of DoNER and supported by Government of Sikkim and implemented by Travel Agents' Association of Sikkim.

On the occasion, TAAS also felicitated the CM for working for the development and

promotion of Sikkim and for the welfare of tourism stakeholders.

A total of 748 participants from different parts of the State have registered for this capacity building training which has been divided into nine categories of - Post COVID-19 SOPs training for home stay, guest house and lodges, training on marketing & promotion, course on luxury hotel management, culinary training on local foods, butterfly guide training, training in souvenir product, trekking guide training, travel agencies training and training on

botanical guide.

It is informed that the training has been budgeted for more than Rs 1.50 crore. In his address, Sikkim Tourism Development Corporation Chairman, Lukendra Rasaily thanked the State government and the CM for reopening Sikkim tourism with proper SOPs and guidelines after lockdown.

He also thanked the state government for working for the betterment of travel agents and stakeholders of Sikkim.

Sikkim will witness a great transformation in tourism sector in the next two years and

there will be many new opportunities for local youth, said Mr Rasaily.

Additional Chief Secretary Tourism Department, Dr K Jayakumar congratulated TAAS for organizing such skill development programmes for tourism stakeholders to prepare manpower in tourism sector in the State.

He expressed that TAAS has done a commendable job during the pandemic period to disseminate COVID SOPs across the State and to prepare stakeholders for reopening of tourism in Sikkim. He also spoke about various tourism activities to

be taken up in the State in the days to come.

Earlier, TAAS president, Sonam Norgay Lachungpa mentioned that TAAS was established by a handful of travel agents in 1989 and now there are more than 350 members.

He also listed out various activities of the organization conducted so far.

Mr Lachungpa expressed his gratitude to the SKM government and the CM for working for the promotion and development of the tourism sector and for the betterment of tourism stakeholders of Sikkim.

...turn Pg3

## India records 145 Covid deaths, lowest daily count in 8 months

**NEW DELHI, 18 JAN [NDTV]:** India added 13,788 new cases in the last 24 hours - the second time the infections fell below 14,000 this month - to take the country's COVID-19 caseload to 1,05,71,773, the Health Ministry data this morning showed. The number of fresh infections is almost nine per cent higher than Sunday, when the country registered 15,144 cases. The daily COVID-19 infections were 12,548 on January 12.

In the 24-hour period, India reported 145 deaths linked to the virus -- the lowest in around eight months-- taking the total number of fatalities to 1,52,419.

The number of people who have recovered from the disease surged to 1,02,11,342 pushing the national COVID-19 recovery rate of 96.59 per cent, while the COVID-19 case fatality rate stands at 1.44 per cent. The daily new cases have been below 20,000 for the past 11 days.

The Covid active caseload remained below 3 lakh, the data updated at 8 am showed.

There are 2,08,012 active cases of coronavirus infections in the country which comprises 1.97 per cent of the total caseload, the data stated.

Kerala has the highest number of active coronavirus cases (69,209), Maharashtra follows with 53,852 active infections.

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

According to the ICMR, 18,70,93,036 samples have been tested up to January 17 with 5,48,168 samples being tested on Sunday.





## Blood donation camp at Lungchok-Kamerey



### SUMMIT REPORT GANGTOK, 18 JAN:

Lungchok-Kamerey Gram Panchayat Unit under Melli Block Administrative Centre, South Sikkim conducted a Voluntary Blood Donation Camp at Village Administrative Centre Premises today, a press release informs.

The donation camp

was held in collaboration with Voluntary Blood Donors Association of Sikkim with technical support provided by District Blood Bank, Namchi Hospital.

A total of 39 units of blood were donated in the camp with the support of Panchayat President, Deoraj Rai. The Panchayat

representatives, office staff, members of local NGO - Brotherhood of Tharpu ward and the members of various committees.

Similar blood donation camps were also conducted by the Gram Panchayat Unit previously and provided life to those who were in need of blood.

## Paksam youth organize Futsal tourney

### WANGCHUK BHUTIA MAKHA, 18 JAN:

A Futsal tournament and cultural program was organised by Paksam Youth on the occasion of Maghey Sakranti. The event was held at Paksam Club House ground in Makha, East Sikkim.

The tournament which started on 11 Jan and concluded on 16 Jan had the participation of 18 teams.

The final match was played between Tanak FC and Makha Strikers. Makha Strikers lifted the trophy and the cash



prize.

The final day was also marked by many cultural programs by the youth of Paksam.

The event

was attended by Acharya Tshering Lama as the chief guest and panchayat president, KB Chhetri as the guest of honour.

## Six Sikkim IHRC members felicitated



### SUMMIT REPORT GANGTOK, 18 JAN:

International Human Rights Council [IHRC] felicitated six members of Sikkim IHRC team with the Netajee Subash Chandra Bose Bravery Award, a press release informs.

The national level

meeting cum award ceremony was held in Kolkata which was participated by more than 300 delegates from different parts of the Country.

Sikkim State in charge, Chotelal Prasad, President Ganesh Sharma, Vice President, Karma

Choda Bhutia, South District President, Srijana Subba along with MB Limbo and Srijana Limbo from Sikkim were awarded with Netajee Subash Chandra Bose Bravery Award-2021 by National President of IHRC, Sunny Saha.

## Training on mushroom cultivation at Padamchey

### SUMMIT REPORT GANGTOK, 18 JAN:

A two-day farmer's training programme on "Mushroom cultivation with its value-addition and marketing under Sikkim condition" was jointly organized by PI, Dr Deepak Jhajharia, All India Coordinated Research Project on Plastic Engineering in Agriculture Structure and Environment Management, CAEPHT, Gangtok centre and faculty of Multi Technology Testing Centre and Vocational Training Centre, CAEPHT, Ranipool, Sikkim at Padamchey, East Sikkim from 18 to 19 Jan, 2020.

As per a press release, thirty progressive farmers from in and around Padamchey, East Sikkim, participated in the training program. Prof Deepak Jhajharia, highlighted the main objectives of the project. Assistant Professor (GPB), Dr Diana Sagolsem and in-charge of



MTTC & VTC, briefed about the centre and its main mandates.

After the inaugural program, the technical sessions began with a lecture on different polyhouse structures by Prof Deepak Jhajharia. He also highlighted the new project on Mushroom polyhouse for year-round mushroom cultivation.

Dr Diana Sagolsem explained the importance of mushrooms and discussed the edible types of mushroom in Sikkim and across the country. Assistant Professor (Plant Protection), Dr Y Rupert Anand provided hands-on training on mushroom cultivation. He also gave a lecture on precautions to be taken during mushroom cultivation. Assistant

Professor (Agronomy), Dr Sunil Kumar Chongtham delivered his lecture on vermicompost preparation from the spent mushroom substrates.

Hands-on training on preparation of value added products from mushroom was provided by Assistant Professor (Horticulture), Dr Vinodh Subramanian and Assistant Professor (Agri. Extension), M Victoria Devi delivered her lecture on marketing channels of mushroom products in Sikkim condition.

At the end of the program mushroom spawns and mushroom bags were distributed by Dr Deepak Jhajharia and faculties of MTTC & VTC to the farmers of Padamchey, East Sikkim.

## Dr Wheelz launches in Namchi

### SUMMIT REPORT GANGTOK, 18 JAN:

After the state-wide launch at Mayfair Spa & Resort in Gangtok on 02 Jan, 2021, the doorstep automobile service DrWheelz has also launched in Namchi, South Sikkim, a press release informs.

Dr Wheelz auto services Pvt Ltd has officially commenced its operations in Namchi on 17 Jan. A street launch event was held at Central Park.

The automobile servicing brand will be fully functional in Namchi



with operations overseen by Abishek Rai. The street launch was addressed by DrWheelz CEO and founder, Balaji Mohan along with an energetic

team, who interacted with the general public and educated them on the core values and principles of the company.

With Gangtok and Namchi fully operational, the company is looking at setting up shop in Jorethang, the release mentions.

## Webinar on Covid-19 Vaccination by PIB

### GANGTOK, 18 JAN (PIB):

Effective Covid-19 Vaccination is a result of technological prowess of medical fraternity, experts opined in a Webinar organised by Press Information Bureau, Guwahati on the topic "Technological Achievements and Effective Covid-19 Vaccination Process for entire North Eastern States" here today. Experts from Medical along with academicians deliberated and discussed about Covid-19 Vaccination process and its awareness from medical, psychological, academic, societal, and policy perspective.

Director and HoD, Dr Subhas Singh, Department of Organon of Medicine, Chronic Diseases, Homeopathic Philosophy and Medicine, National Institute of Homeopathy, Kolkata said that Covid-19 Vaccination is not only to protect an individual but also their families, friends and communities from infection. Talking about initiatives of Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, he said that the vaccine have been brought to the public after various trials and tests on multiple parameters on safety. He also urged to continue Covid apt behaviour including sanitisation during and after vaccination. He said if any symptoms develop, please visit a doctor for medical help. He said that vaccine should be administered



with caution in persons with history of any coagulation issues such as Coagulopathy and platelet problems. He said that persons with those with history of Chronic diseases such as Cardiac, Renal, Neurological, Metabolic, Malignancies and Pulmonary issues could be vaccinated.

Deputy Technical Adviser, Nagendra Nath Tiwari, Food and Nutrition Board, Eastern Region, Kolkata said that there should be at least 14 days between the two doses of Covid-19 vaccines. He said that second dose should be of the same vaccine which was administered at the first dose of Covid-19 vaccination. He also talked about effect of nutrition on health system in tackling viruses.

Associate Professor, Dr Shams Tabrez Khan, Aligarh Muslim University said that technological prowess of medical fraternity would be demonstrated in this Covid vaccination process. He said that success stories and public awareness information about precautions

before and after Covid vaccination along with timely information dissemination would be vital for efficacious message communication. Lauding PIB Guwahati for the discussion, he said that similar activities would provide the answers to Frequently Asked Questions for people to be aware and informed in their decision on vaccination.

Psychologist and Clinical Hypnotherapist, Sayantani Sinha said that leveraging technology infrastructure would provide the strength, nimbleness and suppleness to the health care delivery system. She said with the knowledge and experience of past vaccination, the Covid vaccination could be provided in a very efficient manner.

Talking about the Indian Constitution, Advocate Delhi High Court, Abdur Rahman Mallick said that health is a topic which affects all the citizens of India. He said that huge awareness initiative would bring about sensitization on these pertinent

questions related to Covid-19 vaccination and the efficacy of precaution during and after vaccination.

The informative and knowledge webinar was planned and coordinated by Joint Director (M&C), Samrat Bandyopadhyay, PIB, Guwahati.

Senior officers of PIB were present in webinar. Ms Hiramani Das, Field Exhibition Officer, Regional Outreach Bureau, Guwahati welcomed the experts as the webinar delved into details on the various aspects of the topic such as Covid information management including in the arena of health, efficacy of communication, among others.

The interactive Webinar has enthusiastic participation of students, academicians and medical fraternity as they said that this information cum knowledge Webinar would help them in informed decision making and to be aware about the Covid precaution and about Vaccination process.

## ANTHYESTI KRIYA



The Anthyesthi Kriya of late Shri Man Bahadur Chettri (Roka) who left for heavenly abode on 10th January 2021 falls on 22nd January 2021 (Friday).

All relatives, family, friends and well wishers are requested to join us in offering prayers for the departed soul at our residence Lower Samdur, Ranipool, East Sikkim. We also express our gratitude to all those who stood by us during our time of bereavement.

### Bereaved Families:

**Bishnu Maya Chettri Roka (wife)**  
**Hem Bdr Chettri (son), Srijana Chettri (daughter-in-law),**  
**Pratima Chettri (daughter), Suraj Sapkota (son-in-law),**  
**Sony Chettri (daughter), Bhakta Bdr Roka (brother), Kharka Bdr Roka (brother), Tara Bdr Roka (brother), Indra Bdr Roka (brother)**  
**and entire Roka family.**

Contact- 9609906181, 9775445161, 8670765399

## ANTHEYSTHI KRIYA



The 13 day Anthyesthi Kriya of Late DK Khati (Dil Kumar Khati) ex Chairman, S/o Lt. Padam Singh Khati, R/o Pavitra Bhawan, Opposite Daffodils School, Development Area, Gangtok, East Sikkim. DOB - 5th June 1937 left for his heavenly abode on 13th

January 2021 falls on 25th January 2021 at our residence Pavitra Bhawan, opposite Daffodils school at Development area. All family friends and well wishers are requested to join us in offering prayers for the deceased. We also take this opportunity to thank all those who stood by us during our time of bereavement.

**Karuna Khati (Daughter).**  
**Roshan Khati (Son).**  
**Dhiraj Khati (Son).**  
**Srijana Khati (Daughter)**  
**Phone: 9434137305/9734009999**



# Work days under MGNREGA to be raised in Uttarakhand

**DEHRADUN, JAN 18 (PTI):** The number of work days under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) in Uttarakhand will be increased from 100 to 150, Chief Minister Trivendra Singh Rawat said on Monday.

announcement at a meeting held here to review the state employment guarantee council, Rawat said additional money for this will be arranged out of state funds.

"The number of work days under MGNREGA will soon be increased from 100 to 150 for which additional money

will be arranged from state funds," he said.

Rawat said the average of work days under MGNREGA should also be raised at the district level and employment given under the scheme reviewed every 15 days.

A total of 12.19 lakh job cards have been

made in the state under the scheme and 67.19 per cent of them are active card holders and 58.69 per cent active labourers, the meeting was informed.

The chief minister said 53.65 per cent of the job card holders are women and 2.66 lakh job card holders were added in the last one year.

## 580 adverse reactions, two deaths not linked to vaccine: Centre on Day 3

**NEW DELHI, 18 JAN [NDTV]:** A total of 3.8 lakh people have been vaccinated since the rollout of the coronavirus vaccines three days ago, the government said today. Among them, 580 cases of adverse reactions have been observed and seven persons have been hospitalized. Two persons have died also but neither deaths are related to vaccines, the government said.

A death was reported from Moradabad, Uttar Pradesh last evening. Mahipal Singh, 46, a ward boy at a government hospital, had received the vaccine shot 24 hours before. The district's Chief Medical Officer has said the death is

unrelated to vaccination. The postmortem report reveals the immediate cause of death as "cardiogenic shock/septicemic shock" due to "cardio-pulmonary disease", the state government said. According to his family, he had been unwell before the jab.

The second person to die was a 43-year-old man in Karnataka's Bellary. The government said he had died of cardio-pulmonary failure. The postmortem is yet to be done, the government said.

Of the seven people hospitalized, three are from Delhi. Two persons have been discharged and one is under observation

at Max Hospital. Two cases have been reported from Karnataka, one of the patients is still under observation.

One person is under observation in Uttarakhand, at the All-India Institute of Medical Sciences in Rishikesh. Another person is hospitalized in Chhattisgarh's Rajanandgaon.

The World Health Organisation defines AEFI or Adverse Events Following Immunisation as any untoward medical occurrence which follows immunisation and does not necessarily have a causal relationship with the usage of the vaccine.

Of the 3,81,305 healthcare workers

vaccinated so far, 1,48,266 were administered the vaccine today. Today's drive took place across 25 states -- the corresponding figure yesterday was six. Every state has its own schedule and target for each vaccination site. Most states target vaccinating 100 beneficiaries each day at each site. In Telangana, the figure is 30.

Roughly one crore health workers and two crore frontline workers will receive the vaccine initially. Later, it would be the turn of 27 crore people who are either above the age of 50 years or suffer from comorbidities like diabetes and hypertension.

# Farmers in Punjab, Haryana observe 'Mahila Kisan Divas'

**CHANDIGARH, JAN 18 (PTI):** Ahead of the proposed tractor rally on Republic Day, farmers protesting against the Centre's new agri laws on Monday observed 'Mahila Kisan Divas' in recognition of the contribution and support of women in the protests.

At various places in Punjab and Haryana, women speakers managed the stage and the protest site.

In Punjab's Barnala, a function was held where the women members of Bharatiya Kisan Union (Ekta-Ugrahan) staged protests at Dhanaula village.

BKU(U) outfit woman activist Sukhdeep Kaur said, "We want to give a message that we fully stand behind our brothers who are protesting against the farm laws. We will keep our fight on till the farm laws are repealed by the Centre."

Events as part of 'Mahila Kisan Divas' were held at various places,



including Barnala, Ferozepur, Amritsar, Patiala, Moga in Punjab and Hisar, Jind, Bhiwani and Sonapat districts in Haryana.

Meanwhile, ahead of the proposed tractor rally, farmers' bodies in Punjab and Haryana have started preparations to mobilise the peasants.

Farmers leaders on Monday said later this week, several batches of peasants are set to begin their march from Punjab and Haryana in their tractor-trolleys for the rally.

Thousands of Enacted in September 2020, the central government has presented these laws as major farm reforms aimed at increasing farmers' income, but the protesting farmers have raised concerns that these legislations would weaken the minimum support price (MSP) and 'mandi' systems and leave them at the mercy of big corporations. The government has maintained that these apprehensions are misplaced and has ruled out a repeal of the laws.

has contributed 10 to 20 deaths and more than 20 states have contributed 2 deaths. The ministry said that 71.70 per cent of the new recovered cases are observed from seven states and UTs.

Kerala has reported the highest number of recoveries with 4,408 newly recovered cases in a single day. A total of 2,342 people recovered in Maharashtra in a span of 24 hours followed by 855 in Karnataka.

Over 76 per cent of the new cases are from six states and UTs.

Kerala continues to report the highest number of daily new cases at 5,005. It is followed by Maharashtra and Karnataka with 3,081 and 745 new cases, respectively.

# Arunachal Pradesh reports 3 new COVID-19 cases

**ITANAGAR, JAN 18 (PTI):** Arunachal Pradesh's COVID-19 tally mounted to 16,811 on Monday as three more persons tested positive for the infection, a senior official said.

Two new cases were detected from Tawang and one from West Kameng district respectively, State Surveillance Officer (SSO) Dr Lobsang Jampa said.

Barring one, all the new cases are asymptomatic, he said, adding that two fresh cases were detected through rapid antigen tests while one was diagnosed through RT-PCR method.

Seven more people recuperated from the disease on Sunday, taking the total number of recoveries in the state to 16,697, he said.

The COVID-19 recovery rate in the state has touched 99.32 per cent, the SSO said.

Arunachal Pradesh currently has 58 active coronavirus cases, while 56 people have succumbed to the infection so far, he said, adding that the fatality ratio in the state is 0.33 per cent and the positivity rate 0.34 per cent.

West Kameng district has the highest number of active cases at 25, followed by the Capital Complex region, comprising Itanagar, Naharlagun, Nirjuli and Banderdewa areas at 13, while Tawang and Changlang districts have five cases each.

The state has so far tested 3,87,291 samples, including 170 on Sunday, Dr Jampa added.

## TMC worker hacked to death in poll-bound Bengal

**JALPAIGURI, JAN 18 (PTI):** A worker of the ruling Trinamool Congress was hacked to death in West Bengal's Jalpaiguri district, the police said on Monday. Four persons were detained for questioning in connection with the killing of Ranjit Adhikari. The TMC accused the BJP of being involved in the incident, while the saffron party claimed that it was the result of the infighting in the ruling party.

The murder occurred months before the assembly election in the state.

Police said that Adhikari was attacked



at Saptibari area of Maynaguri block when he was returning home from a party programme on Sunday night.

Adhikari was taken to a hospital where he succumbed to his injuries. The body was

sent for postmortem examination.

Sibsankar Majumdar, a local TMC leader, alleged that the BJP is behind the killing of Adhikari.

Denying the charge, the saffron party's

Jalpaiguri district vice-president Dipen Pramanik claimed that the murder is the fallout of the infighting in the TMC.

The police said that they have started an investigation into the matter.

## Mizoram reports 1 new COVID-19 case

**AIZAWL, JAN 18 (PTI):** A 32-year-old woman tested positive for COVID-19 in Mizoram, taking the state's tally to 4,323, an official said on Monday.

The pregnant woman was found to be COVID-positive at a hospital in Aizawl before the delivery.

It is yet to ascertain how the woman, a resident of

the Kolasib district, got infected, the official said.

There are 79 active cases in the state at present, while 4,235 people have recovered

from COVID-19.

Mizoram has reported nine COVID-19 fatalities so far.

Altogether, 1,93,035 samples have been tested till date.

### Rs 1.5 cr capacity-building training

In her welcome address, TAAS general secretary, Yangchen Tongden Lepcha mentioned that this skill development and training programme for tourism stakeholders has been divided into nine categories. She stated that the main objective of the training programme is not only to teach the trick of the trade but build strong manpower in different areas of the sector to take Sikkim tourism to the next level.

The inaugural function ended with the presentation of vote of thanks by TAAS advisor, Karma T Bhutia.

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## Total Recoveries Exceed Active Covid Cases By Over 1 Crore: Health Ministry

**NEW DELHI, 18 JAN [PTI]:** India's total COVID-19 recoveries have surpassed the active caseload by more than one crore, the Union Health Ministry said on Monday, terming it as a landmark achievement. The total number of recoveries has touched 1,02,11,342, while the active cases in the country stand at 2,08,012 today.

"The gap between the two has progressively grown to touch 1,00,03,330. The total recovered cases are nearly 50 times the active cases in the country," the ministry underlined.

With this, India's COVID-19 recovery rate has touched 96.59 per cent. A total of 14,457 recoveries have been registered

in a span of 24 hours in the country while the number of new confirmed cases during the same period is 13,788.

"As India's daily positive cases see a continuous slide, the daily fatalities due to COVID-19 in the country have also seen a steady decline. The country has recorded less than 150 fatalities (145) in the last 24 hours after approximately 8 months (7 months 23 days)," the ministry underlined.

Providing the information on daily deaths contribution by different states in a span of 24 hours, the ministry said 15 states have contributed 0 deaths, 13 states have contributed between 1 and 5 daily deaths, 4 states have contributed 5 to 10 deaths, 1 state

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## Towards a Knowledge-Based Society

*Get informed... then demand better*

The talk about developing Sikkim into a “knowledge-based” society has been doing the rounds for a while. What it is being said in polite terms is that effort is required to draw Sikkim away from the mediocrity of its human resource that infiltrates just about every field of activity here.

Take journalism for instance. No one will praise the media in Sikkim as outstanding. Promising maybe... maybe even prolific, but not outstanding yet. At best, we can be accepted as average. Of course, we in the media will never admit even to ourselves that we compete in mediocrity, but that is for another debate. But why is the fourth estate so mediocre in Sikkim? Not because there is a dearth of committed media-persons in the region, but simply because no demands are made of them for excellence by the readers.

Mediocrity flourishes in the absence of pressure and this holds true for every other aspect of life here. Take governance for example. The bureaucracy remains somnambulant because the public representatives don't shake them up often enough. Around election time, they come in for some tongue-lashing, but the behavioral and procedural reforms so necessary are never initiated. Take a look around, administrative basics remain ignored until too late. Most of the times, tardiness does not hurt, but occasionally, like during a pandemic for instance, the babudoms disconnectedness becomes frustrating. What is worse, this privileged class then goes defensive, and instead of improving, learning or admitting [lapses], gets its guard up and starts instigating disaffection against the messengers instead of heeding the message. In routine times, there are too many delays, too many lapses and way too many excuses, but never any real accountability. Preparatory shortcomings, that getting caught off-guard arrive with enough advance warning, but remain unaddressed until only excuses and shifting of blame can be offered where simple outreach and consultations would have worked.

That said, even public representatives are not the most pro-active lot. They prefer to talk down and occasionally hand-hold, but never consult or listen. These primarily because the people don't demand better delivery or even performance from them and appear satisfied with securing favours and indulgence instead of claiming their rights.

It's a vicious cycle, but not one that is impossible to break. All it requires is involvement.

No one will strive for excellence if it is not demanded of them. Also, no one will strive for excellence if it is not recognized either. And recognition is possible only if the people differentiate between what is downright puerile, what is average and what sets the bar of performance higher. And that brings us back to the need of having a “knowledge-based” society. Simply put, only a society that is “knowledgeable” will be able to demand that its intelligence is respected. This knowledge should not be confused with literacy [Sikkim already does quite well on that front]. Knowledge is about being informed. People who are aware of what is happening around them can take intelligent decisions and once the people think intelligently, then those who serve them [from the media, to the public servant, to the public representative] will have to improve their performance too. The pressure for survival [as professionals] will itself pull Sikkim out of the mediocrity it wallows in at present.

But how does one go about it? It is not really as complicated as it sounds. For people to become more aware, all they have to do is get more involved, ask more questions and demand better answers. The government can contribute towards this transition by making information accessible. It is only after the people have been provided with information that they can mull over it and debate. Although the debates might be immature initially, they will get better eventually. Once that happens, the people themselves will shape the knowledge-based society that Sikkim needs to grow into now.

# Russia: Alexei Navalny's return adds to an already challenging year for Vladimir Putin

LIANA SEMCHUK  
THECONVERSATION.COM

Political commentators both inside Russia and around the world are comparing Alexei Navalny's return to Moscow with Vladimir Lenin's “sealed train” journey from Switzerland to St Petersburg in April 1917. It was eight-day journey that, as Winston Churchill wrote, “turned upon Russia the most grisly of all weapons. They transported Lenin in a sealed truck like a plague bacillus from Switzerland to Russia”.

As we know, the plague bacillus spread and, by the end of the year, Lenin and his Bolshevik supporters were in control. Is this something that Navalny had in mind when making what appears to be a foolhardy return to his home country, bearing in mind that he was poisoned with a nerve agent the last time he was on Russian soil?

There's no doubt that, at least among some demographics in Russia, support is solidifying behind Navalny as an opposition voice. His approval increased from 9% in 2019 to 20% in 2020, although this was after he was poisoned, so it might reflect a degree of sympathy that might not translate at the ballot box.

There's little doubt that his “smart voting” programme, which aimed to coordinate support for anti-Putin

candidates in regional and mayoral elections last year, proved effective in Moscow where Putin's United Party lost seats. But there's little evidence that smart voting had traction in other regions and Putin remains the most popular politician in Russia.

Yet polling suggests that the Russian president's support is softening among younger voters (18-24 year olds), falling from 36% to 20% over the past year. This potentially indicates that in the long term Putin may struggle to remain relevant to a sizeable segment of the population.

### SHIFTING THE GOALPOSTS

What of Putin's long-term plans? There were rumours late last year over the poor state of his health. This has prompted speculation in some quarters that he may harbour plans for an early retirement – maybe even in 2021. The passage of legislation in November 2020 granting life-long immunity to former presidents seemed to add weight to these theories. But such rumours have been doing the rounds in cyberspace since as early as 2012. And constitutional reforms passed in July which would allow him to remain in power until 2036 would seem to suggest the opposite.

Other electoral amendments passed last year, introducing innovations such as online

voting and extending voting over several days, are both thought likely to increase the possibility of electoral manipulation.

The rest of the world will get an indication of how these measures might affect voting in September's crucial State Duma polls. United Russia is still expected to win an overall majority. But whether Putin's party will be able to hold on to its constitutional majority – which requires it to win two-thirds of the 450 seats in the Duma – remains to be seen. Navalny's presence in Russia may give opposition voters a figurehead to coalesce around.

### HOW THIS MAY PLAY OUT

Health rumours aside, it is unlikely that Putin is in a hurry to step down before 2024. Putin himself said last year that his presidency “must definitely end one day”. But he followed that remark with a reference to the change to term-limits being about reinforcing the sovereignty of the Russian federation and concluded that “As to what will happen in 2024 or later – we will see when the time comes”. This suggests that he is not only keeping his options open, but is also deliberately obfuscating his plans.

Kremlin watchers also point out that it's far from clear who might be being groomed to succeed Putin

– Russia's longest-serving leader since Joseph Stalin. The list of potential candidates is very limited – and the return of former president Dmitry Medvedev cannot be ruled out. Despite his low approval ratings (38% in December 2019) Medvedev is still seen very much as a Putin loyalist who was happy to occupy the presidency in 2008 for one term to clear the way for Putin to resume power in 2012. Of course, since last year's referendum, such machinations will not be needed for Putin to remain in power until the ripe old age of 84.

Medvedev's removal as prime minister early in 2020 and his subsequent appointment as deputy chairman of the Security Council has shielded him from criticism over the economic fallout of the pandemic. Some believe this has been engineered to allow him to stand as a more palatable candidate to extend United Russia's grip on the presidency.

All of which puts Navalny's return to Russia into context. As Putin's United Russia develops its long-term plans for control of the Russian Federation, the big question being asked around the world is whether the opposition figurehead, for now in police custody, can – like Lenin in 1917 – galvanise events as a catalyst for change.

*[the writer is PhD Candidate in Politics, University of Oxford]*

# Climate Change: What would 4°C of global warming feel like?

ROBERT WILBY  
THECONVERSATION.COM

Another year, another climate record broken. Globally, 2020 tied with 2016 as the warmest year ever recorded. This was all the more remarkable given that cool conditions in the Pacific Ocean – known as La Niña – began to emerge in the second half of the year. The Earth's mean surface temperature in 2020 was 1.25°C above the global average between 1850 and 1900 – one data point maybe, but part of an unrelenting, upward trend that's largely driven by greenhouse gases from human activities.

Limiting the average global temperature increase to 1.5°C could help avoid some of the most harmful impacts of climate change. This target will feature prominently at the COP26 discussions, scheduled for Glasgow in November 2021. But whether the world warms by 1.5°C or 4°C, it won't translate into the same amount of warming for everyone. Previous research with climate models has shown that the Arctic, central Brazil, the Mediterranean basin, and the mainland US could warm by much more than the global average.

So what might that mean for you in the years and decades to come? Statistics for “global mean temperatures” and “regional hotspots” are abstract concepts – helpful for policymakers, but not something anyone can actually feel. What's more, temperature projections from global climate models are typically for wild or agricultural landscapes, averaged over tens of hundreds of square kilometres.

These projections are far removed from the conditions that will be encountered on city streets, inside workplaces, public spaces, and our homes. But these are the places where health, comfort and productivity will be decided during the more intense heatwaves that climate change will bring.

### FEELING THE HEAT

One way of bridging the gap between climate models and the real world is to draw on personal memories of past extreme heat. Stop to think about the highest temperatures you've ever experienced outdoors in the shade. For me, it was 43°C in a suburb of Melbourne, Australia. This felt hot but was much less than the highest temperature ever reliably recorded above ground – 54.4°C in Death Valley National Park, California, on August 16 2020.

How about the hottest you've ever felt indoors? If I ignore saunas, mine was inside a home in Accra, Ghana. The room had wooden walls, a metal roof, and no air conditioning. Here, the temperature reached 38°C. Even though this



was lower than in Melbourne, with the poor ventilation and humid air, the heat felt stifling.

The highest outdoor temperature ever measured in the UK was 38.7°C on July 25 2019 in the Cambridge University Botanic Garden. According to UK Met Office analyses, global temperatures that are 4°C above pre-industrial levels may be reached as soon as the 2060s. Climate projections at the postcode level suggest that 4°C of global warming could bring temperatures of 43°C to Cambridge. I can now recall what the suburb felt like in Australia, and understand that this could be Cambridge in 40 years' time.

But this projection for the hottest summer day for Cambridge in the 2060s involved tuning climate models with temperatures averaged from weather stations. These tend to be located away from artificial heat sources and often in areas with grass and vegetation. Asphalt surfaces and high-density city centres are typically several degrees warmer and behave very differently to rural weather stations.

Even when climate models simulate temperatures for urban areas, projections may be simplified in other ways. To produce monthly temperature averages, models might smooth out the peaks and troughs of individual days. Urban land may be fixed at its present extent and possible actions that cities might take to adapt to rising temperatures – such as more green spaces or reflective roofs – are ignored. Complex variations in temperature between streets are still not resolved either. This means that even state-of-the-art models probably underestimate the true severity of future warming in urban areas.

### BRINGING CLIMATE SCIENCE INDOORS

We also spend much of our lives indoors so, if we really want to translate climate change into human experiences, we have to simulate

conditions within homes and workplaces. To capture this “felt” temperature, the heat we experience, other factors have to be considered, such as humidity, ventilation, and heat radiating from hot surfaces, plus the metabolic rate of occupants and their clothing. An air temperature of 38°C is dangerous at 30% relative humidity but can be lethal at 80%. This is because high humidity reduces the effectiveness of sweating – our natural mechanism for keeping cool.

What might that room in Accra feel like with 4°C of global warming? Indoor conditions will track outdoor temperatures because the room has no air conditioning. Worldwide, more than one billion people live in similar conditions. Without any adaptations, high indoor temperatures with high humidity could become unbearable – even deadly – for millions.

Our research showed that an insulated ceiling beneath a metal roof could hold peak indoor temperatures at their current levels even if it gets 4°C warmer outside. Unfortunately, this modification would raise night temperatures, because heat that builds up inside during the day is less able to escape at night. Already, indoor temperatures may not fall below 30°C during some nights in Accra. There's a trade-off between lower indoor temperatures by day or by night, so affordable adaptations have to be tailored carefully to each home.

Without action, the number of unbearably hot homes is set to grow. By 2050, 68% of humanity may live in urban areas and populations in the tropics will be most exposed to extreme humid heat. We know surprisingly little about these front lines of climate change, especially within the streets and homes of low-income communities.

I will not forget that room in Accra, especially during the climate negotiations in Glasgow.

*[the writer is Professor of Hydroclimatic Modelling, Loughborough University]*

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# Nongkhyllem Wildlife Sanctuary best protected area in NE, says report

**GUWAHATI, 18 JAN [SHILLONGTIMES]:** Nongkhyllem Wildlife Sanctuary in Ri Bhoi district of Meghalaya has been found to be the best protected area in the Northeast, a report on the management effectiveness evaluation (MEE) of national parks and wildlife sanctuaries, stated.

The MEE report, released by Union minister for environment, forest and climate change, Prakash Javadekar recently, observed that Meghalaya has a record of fairly good management practices.

In 2018-19, the ministry of environment, forest and climate change, with the technical assistance from the Wildlife Institute of India, conducted the MEE of 146 national parks and wildlife sanctuaries.

Till 2018, MEE of 324 national parks and wildlife sanctuaries was



carried out.

"The fact that the management plan in respect of Nongkhyllem Wildlife Sanctuary has been in place from 2001 through 2022 shows that irrespective of who's posted, there is continuity," it said.

"There are also prospects of increasing landscape continuity as efforts are on to increase protected

areas from the vicinity, which are community forests. The community is also supportive of conservation," the MEE report added.

In Nongkhyllem Wildlife Sanctuary, biotic interference in the park has been significantly reduced, zonation has been done in terms of core and buffer zones and it has a duly notified eco-sensitive zone, the

report added.

Management effectiveness evaluation of protected areas has emerged as a key tool for protected area managers and is increasingly being used by governments and international bodies to understand the strengths and weaknesses of the protected area management systems.

The MEE report however underlined

the need for the forest authorities to collaborate with local/regional research institutes to initiate research in key faunal species, especially in endangered species.

"Standardising frequency and periodicity of wildlife estimation will go a long way in looking at stability/viability of wildlife population," it said.

## Ageing Nepal bags UNESCO King Sejong Literacy Prize 2020

**KATHMANDU, JAN 18 [KATHMANDUPOST]:** Minister for Education, Science and Technology, Krishna Gopal Shrestha today handed over the UNESCO King Sejong Literacy Prize 2020 to Ageing Nepal.

Ageing Nepal is an organisation working in the field of adult literacy, especially the senior citizens.

Minister Shrestha handed over the medal of the Prize to Krishna Murari Gautam (Chatyang Master), President of Ageing Nepal, amidst a program at the ministry here today.

The prize carries a purse of 20 thousand US

Dollars (approximately Rs 2.33 million).

Head of UNESCO, Kathmandu, Christine Manhart presented the Award certificate on the occasion.

On the occasion, the education minister said that Nepal's name has been further highlighted throughout the world after the organisation won the prize. He said a program would be formulated for the education of the senior citizens in a new way with inputs from the experts.

Ministry Secretary Gopinath Mainali said it is a matter of pride for the nation to win this prize through

competition among 76 competing organisations from around the world.

President of Ageing Nepal, Gautam urged the government to adopt a policy for providing literacy to the senior citizens enabling them to use modern information technology as well.

Deputy Secretary General of Nepal National Commission for UNESCO, Dr Babu Ram Adhikari said the UNESCO Headquarters, Paris had announced the prize through a virtual programme on the occasion of the International Literacy Day and has already remitted the prize amount.

## First bird fest at Mahananda sanctuary from Feb 20



**KOLKATA, JAN 18 (PTI):** In a first, a bird festival is being organised at the Mahananda wildlife sanctuary in West Bengal

to provide an opportunity to enthusiasts to explore the forest and watch different birds, officials said on Monday.

The Darjeeling Wildlife Division will be organising the 1st Mahananda Bird Festival from February 20 to 23, they said.

The participants will be taken to the popular birding spots

such as Rongdong and Latpanchor, besides other birding trails within the forests, Chief Wildlife Warden VK Yadav said.

Visitors will be able to witness the diverse landscapes of rivers, plains, forests and hills during the festival, he said.

Those interested will have to register online through wbsfda.org and the applications will be accepted till February 2.

Experts will guide the participants throughout

the festival, officials said.

The participation fee is Rs 5,000 and it includes entry fees, food and lodging, they said.

Mahananda Wildlife Sanctuary is rich in fauna and has more than 300 species of birds.

The sanctuary has been designated as an 'important bird area' due to its critical role in the conservation of birds and their habitat.

The sanctuary is well known among the birding community, and bird watchers flock to it for sighting the Rufous-necked hornbill, among other birds.

## Odisha plans more session sites for COVID-19 vaccination

**BHUBANESWAR, JAN 18 (PTI):** Encouraged by over 85 per cent immunisation on the first day of the COVID-19 vaccination programme, Odisha government has formulated a strategy to increase the number of people getting COVID-19 jabs, a senior official said. As per the strategy all medical colleges, both government and private from Monday, will conduct at least five sessions per day in different locations and in each session site, 200 beneficiaries to be targeted, said Additional Chief Secretary, Health and Family Welfare, P K Mohapatra.

"For each session site, two vaccinators and four vaccination officers shall be deployed. Sessions



shall be conducted on working days," Mohapatra said.

Similarly, district headquarters hospitals and sub-divisional hospitals will conduct

one to two sessions per day based on the beneficiary load of the institution. The target will be 100

per day for each session.

Community Health Centres and Urban CHCs will conduct one session per day and the target for a session is 100. The sessions will be planned on Monday, Thursday and Saturday in such institutions.

The session micro-

plan will be prepared based on the vaccine availability and consolidated plan to be submitted to the state by Monday noon, he said, adding that session planning should be done in such a way so that the first phase of vaccination can be completed by

January 25. As many as 3.28 lakh front line workers from health and sanitation department will be covered in the first phase.

On the first day of the vaccination programme on Saturday, as many as 13,980 beneficiaries were administered COVID-19 vaccines across the state in 161 session sites. Six districts achieved 100 vaccination on the first day.

Though some side effects were noticed in Dhenkanal, Salipur and Rayagada after some people got the shot of COVID vaccine, it was "due to nervousness", said Director of Health Department Bijay Panigrahi adding, that no major side effects have been reported later.

## Parents apprehensive of sending kids back to schools after nine months

**ANUP OJHA KATHMANDU, JAN 18 [KATHMANDUPOST]:** Sumana Nainabasti sent her daughter Dishya Paudel back to school on Sunday, nine months after all educational institutions were closed amidst Covid-19 fears. She was worried at home throughout the day.

"I've been feeling restless ever since I sent my daughter to school. When she came back home in the evening, I was equally worried that she might be carrying the virus," said 40-year-old Nainabasti.

After most of the local governments in the Valley gave permission to reopen educational institutions from Sunday onwards, many schools have resumed classes adopting strict health safety measures like maintaining social distance, conducting classes in two shifts and making masks compulsory inside the school premises.

The Kathmandu Metropolitan City is yet to decide on whether to allow schools to reopen but many schools in the Valley have resumed classes nevertheless, claiming that they have

adopted all the needed health protocols.

All schools and colleges were closed since March 18 last year to contain the spread of Covid-19.

"Although the school has announced that it is following health protocols strictly, my daughter needs to share the same toilet and water tap with others and this is very risky," said a mother of a ninth grader in Tahachal. She is worried about her daughter, as she needs to prepare for the Secondary Education Examination next year. "I sent her to school so she can learn more, as her course has not gone smoothly in the past year."

Like Nainabasti, Sumitra Timlesena of Pepsicola was equally worried about sending her 12-year-old son to school.

"For the past nine months, we have all remained at home. Who will be responsible if my son contracts the virus," said 36-year-old Timlesena. She said that her son's health is of greater importance than education.

"The school had called us for a meeting

earlier to discuss the reopening of classes. But many parents were reluctant to send their kids back to school so the school administration did not resume classes from Sunday," she said. "But sooner or later, they will reopen classes and I do not feel like it's safe for my son to attend classes until everyone is vaccinated."

Not only Nainabasti and Timlesena but many parents across the Valley are worried and apprehensive over the decision of resuming schools.

In Humla, 32 students of a school tested positive for Covid-19 in November last year after the school decided to resume classes. Authorities had then decided to close all educational institutions in the district.

"Reopening schools is a very unwise decision," said Suprabhat Bhandari, chairperson of the Guardians Federation Nepal. "Except for the Kathmandu Metropolitan City office, all municipalities in the Valley have given permission to open schools. The situation is even more precarious outside the Valley."

Bhandari said he, along with other concerned stakeholders, met with Health Minister Hridayesh Tripathi last week to acknowledge the severity of the issue.

"Many schools have been pressuring the local bodies to allow them to resume classes," he said. "The school administrations want to get money from the parents, as they could not do so while conducting online classes."

Many private schools and a few government ones conducted online classes while the schools remained closed but the drive got widespread criticism, as many students from lower economic backgrounds could not attend such classes since they did not have access to laptops and internet facilities. The government last year had directed schools and colleges not to charge students for virtual classes but that order continues to be widely breached.

Meanwhile, the schools that resumed classes from Sunday say they did so after getting permission from the local body.

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## Yan Bingtao wins Masters snooker title on debut as comeback stuns Higgins

**LONDON, 18 JAN [THEGUARDIAN]:** Yan Bingtao was crowned the youngest Masters champion since Ronnie O’Sullivan in 1995 after sinking John Higgins 10-8 in Milton Keynes. The 20-year-old Chinese star rose to the occasion to see off the Scot, 25 years his senior, and claim the title in his debut appearance in the top-16-only tournament.

It was a remarkably composed display from Yan, the world No 11, who twice hit back from two frames behind before seeing off the vastly experienced former two-times winner.

Higgins will rue a series of costly errors at crucial moments, but it was Yan, who had come through three straight final-frame deciders to reach the final, who stepped up again when it counted.

From 8-8, Yan produced a superb 70 to move within one of his first major title, then shrugged off the prospect of yet another decider after repelling Higgins’ game attempt to claim three improbable snookers he required.

After the pair shared a nervous opening four frames, Higgins forged ahead with a break of 98 in the fifth frame then a gutsy 37 to establish a 4-2 lead.

A brilliant yellow from Yan set up a 97 clearance to reduce the deficit, but Higgins had re-established his two-frame led at the end of the first session. Yet if Yan had proved anything after winning three consecutive final-frame deciders on his way to the final, it was his ability to thrive under pressure.

In an extraordinary start to the concluding session, Yan retrieved a 67-point deficit with 67 on the table, before brilliantly cutting in the resulting respootted black. A 76 in the next frame punished Higgins for missing an easy yellow, and hauled the Chinese player level at 5-5.

Drawing on his decades of experience, Higgins chiselled out another two-frame advantage with back-to-back breaks of 74 and 116.

The Scot had the next at his mercy, but an inexplicable in-off from a safety handed Yan the chance to sweep up and ultimately pot a black that Higgins left dangling after an attempted double.

Yan pulled level again at 7-7 with a 103, his first century of the final, then nudged in front after Higgins missed a frame-winning blue. Higgins characteristically shrugged off his error to level with a well-taken 63, but the Yan replied with 70 to move one frame from victory.

By converting his first opportunity, Yan became only the second player from China to win the tournament, after the 2011 winner Ding Junhui.

# Solskjær’s United still can’t beat the best sides ... but that might not matter

JONATHAN WILSON

**MANCHESTER, 18 JAN [THEGUARDIAN]:** What does it mean? What does any of it mean? Manchester United’s 0-0 draw at Liverpool on Sunday means they remain top of the Premier League table one game before they reach their halfway point, but they’ve now played each of the other Big Six sides, plus Leicester whose consistency over the past five years perhaps affords them associate membership of that group, and they haven’t beaten any of them. Is that a title challenge? Perhaps it is, but it wouldn’t be in anything resembling a normal season.

United, at least, offer some predictability in an unsettling world. The only side to whom they’ve dropped points this season other than the Big Six Plus Leicester is Crystal Palace, but that was their first game, and a lot of sides who had played in Europe in August looked undercooked to start with. But since then the pattern has been very clear: United beat mid-table sides and lower, and they don’t beat those likeliest to join them in the top seven at the end of the season. Given United went out of the Champions League after defeats to Paris Saint-Germain and RB Leipzig, a startling conclusion begins to emerge: they get better results against weaker teams than good ones.

Which sounds facile, and to an extent it is, but that wasn’t the pattern last season when United won seven and drew three of 12 games against the Big Six Plus Leicester but averaged just 1.62 points per game against the Rest. This season,



they’re rattling along at 2.75 points per game against the Rest. United have got much better at breaking down lesser sides. To an extent, that’s an issue of personnel. Since the arrival of Bruno Fernandes almost a year ago, United have had far more creative bite, while the introduction of Edinson Cavani in October has added intelligence of movement and sharpness in the box. United’s squad is still far from perfect, but it is far more coherent than it has been probably at any point since Sir Alex Ferguson left.

But that has gone hand in hand with a comparative lack of effectiveness against better sides. Ole Gunnar Solskjær’s programme of 90s revivalism has moved beyond comebacks after an early concession to the reintroduction of the 0-0 draw. That’s three now this season but where the six José Mourinho achieved in 2016-17 was evidence of a lack of attacking flair, this season they have come dressed in a more positive light (and not just because none yet have been against West

Brom or Burnley).

The policy seems not to have changed since last season. United sit deep against better sides, look to draw them on and strike on the break. That is the one thing even Solskjær’s harshest critics accepted he was good at. As Louis van Gaal – with his very specific ideas about the moral righteousness of possession – keeps reminding us, it’s still the basis of how Solskjær plays.

As to why that’s not bringing the results it did last season, the answer would appear twofold. On the one hand, opponents mindful of the recent past, are perhaps offering Solskjær more respect. Manchester City, who lost three times to United last season, were certainly warier in the league game last month. But also football as a whole has retrenched. The disrupted calendar means teams have neither the energy nor the preparation time to press with the same intensity that they did before the pandemic. Everybody is sitting deeper. There is a general conservatism.

After the wildness of the first month of the season, goals per game will dip below last season’s average if Arsenal and Newcastle draw 0-0 on Monday night.

Certainly Liverpool, once their Thiago Alcântara-inspired storm had blown out, seemed to settle for a point relatively early on Sunday. In the final hour of the game, it was United who had the better chances. What was striking, though, was not only the efforts Fernandes and Paul Pogba had saved in the last 20 minutes, it was how often United threatened to get in behind Liverpool, particularly towards the end of the first half. United were caught offside seven times in that first half, for which it’s not unreasonable to credit the discipline of Liverpool’s line. At the same time, though, Marcus Rashford was a little over-eager in making his runs, the result perhaps of the adjustment from playing wide to through the centre.

All of which means what, precisely, for

United’s title challenge? (And it is one, however unexpected: no side within a couple of points of the top at the halfway stage, as United are certain to be, can be said not to be in the race). Nobody, surely, can win a league just by relentlessly beating the bottom two thirds of the table?

And that perhaps comes back to the central doubt about Solskjær. He can set sides up to sit deep and play effectively on the break. Quality of player will overcome lesser sides (and none of the recent wins over Burnley, Aston Villa and Wolves were emphatic). But can he structure an attack to get the better of a high-class opponent prepared to defend against him? Of that there remains scant evidence. Does that matter? Perhaps not: in this very odd season, precedents matter little. But City’s mounting form and the way they dismissed United in the Carabao Cup semi-final suggest at least one element of normality is returning.

## Marseille’s title challenge in Ligue 1 has ended before it started

**ADAM WHITE & ERIC DEVIN PARIS, 18 JAN [THEGUARDIAN]:** It wasn’t so long ago that we found ourselves tipping Marseille as outsiders for the Ligue 1 title. After six straight wins in the league, they sat just two points off the league leaders in mid-December. They also had two matches in hand: a fairly tricky game against Lens and an eminently winnable fixture against a rudderless Nice side. Marseille had been shockingly poor in Europe but, now that their relentless, squad-stretching Champions League campaign was behind him, could they make a fist of things domestically?

Given their results in the last month – capped by their 2-1 defeat at home on Saturday to lowly Nîmes, a side that had lost seven of their previous eight matches and have by far the worst defensive record in the division – the answer is looking increasingly likely to be no. Marseille have only won one of their last six games in the league.

This downturn comes amid a busy transfer window for the club, with the loan departure of Kevin Strootman, the arrival of Pol Lirola and the hoped-for signing of Arkadiusz Milik. Strootman’s salary has been an albatross for some time, and Lirola, an attack-minded right-back, could offer the sort of dynamism going forward that Hiroki Sakai seems incapable of delivering. Milik, out of favour at Napoli, might at last provide the club with the goalscoring striker they have been lacking since the departure of André-Pierre Gignac in 2015, but his potential arrival comes as the team is roiled by internal conflict and external pressure from their notoriously demanding fans.

While it is far from an unfamiliar sight to see fans unfurling banners or marching in protest outside the Vélodrome – as they were on Saturday – the revelation that club president Jacques-Henri Eyraud had delivered a fiery diatribe to the team on Sunday morning shows how unsettled the club has become internally. An anonymous player told RMC: “He said that our match was pathetic, that we were rubbish and that we were walked all over by the bottom side in Ligue 1, that we showed no desire. We have rarely seen him like that. He was furious. He said we were not worthy of the shirt and that we did not respect the supporters. That if the stadium had been full we would not have been home until three in the morning.”

Eyraud reportedly told the foreign players to learn French or be sold in the summer and informed the players who will be out of contract at the end of the season to let him and sporting director Pablo Longoria know their future plans within the next 48 hours. The club has

every right to plan ahead but, given that this group includes key players such as Florian Thauvin and Jordan Amavi, the intensity of his ire will have unsettled things further, even if he did reportedly apologise later.

One has to wonder if the fissures at the club are now beyond repair. In André Villas-Boas they have a manager who is undoubtedly talented and adept at getting the most out of limited resources, but given his reported reluctance to continue last summer – he was eventually talked into staying by his players – his future seems as up in the air as it has ever been. Without Villas-Boas, Marseille would surely be in an even worse position.

In the post-match press conference, Villas-Boas said he was “worried about the future”. Worried is an understatement. Thauvin, who had been in fine form in the league before the break, appears to be running on fumes, having started his fourth match in 11 days on Saturday. Aside from the winger – who was named captain in Steve Mandanda’s absence and offered a spark in the match’s early stages before disappointingly missing a penalty – Villas-Boas has precious few options in attack.

Dario Benedetto did score on Saturday, but he has been a wildly inconsistent presence when leading the line. Dimitri Payet has been a shadow of his incandescent best this season and his recently signed contract extension, which will keep him on the club’s books until he turns 37, looks likely to be more of a millstone than a source of security.

The bottom line is that Marseille have lacked a consistent overarching sporting approach and transfer strategy for some time now. When the club have invested in domestic talent (Valentin Rongier, Morgan Sanson), they have done well. But in continuing to pay over the odds, both in terms of transfer fees and wages, for veterans or punts from other leagues, Marseille have built a squad that is too small, too old, and lacks resale value.

In a compressed season, there is no easy way out of this. With Rennes resurgent and Monaco flying, Marseille could miss out on European football altogether. Even if Milik does arrive, he has not played football this season, having been left out of Napoli’s squads in both Serie A and Europe.

It would probably be best for Marseille if Eyraud’s threatened clearout actually happens. Losing Thauvin on a free transfer would be a bitter blow, but players such as Duje Ćaleta-Car and Sanson could fetch handsome fees, particularly if the former can impress for his country in the European Championship.

# Athletics has served 196 doping bans since 2017. There’s a lesson here for other sports

SEAN INGLE

**LONDON, 18 JAN [THEGUARDIAN]:** And still the headlines come. On Thursday the Rio Olympic 100m hurdles champion, Brianna McNeal, was provisionally suspended and could face an eight-year doping ban for “tampering”. The week before, the 2017 long jump world champion Luvo Manyonga was suspended and could face a four-year ban for whereabouts violations. Both cases are yet to be prosecuted, and the usual caveats about being innocent until proven guilty apply, but the message is increasingly clear. Track and field is a sport which takes anti-doping seriously.

How seriously? Well, since the Athletics Integrity Unit was set up in April 2017 to oversee drug testing and investigations, 66 Olympic and world medallists have served a doping ban. That is an astonishing statistic. Another 130 athletes, many of them winners on the prestigious Diamond League circuit or major road races, have also

been banned, bringing the total to 196. These are big numbers and big stars – and they don’t include prominent cases under appeal to the court of arbitration for sport, either.

There will be some who will shudder at this news. Think of the bad publicity, they will mutter. I disagree. The high numbers should be celebrated, shouted from the rooftops. Because they indicate that track and field doesn’t pay lip service to catching cheats but is actively going after its biggest stars.

How big? Take a roll call of those sanctioned in the past year or two:

- The world 100m champion Christian Coleman, who was banned in October after the AIU showed his claims that he had come back in time from a Christmas shopping trip to be tested was false. Coleman could have been one of the faces of the Tokyo Olympics. Now he will miss the Games.

- The former world marathon record holder Wilson Kipsang, who is serving a four-year ban after the

AIU’s investigators uncovered his use of a fake photograph of an overturned lorry to justify one of his missed tests.

- The Rio 2016 steeplechase gold medallist Ruth Jebet, who was banned for four years for testing positive for EPO.

- Jemima Sumgong, the Olympic marathon champion whose ban was doubled to eight years after her claims the she was injected with EPO by an “impostor” at a Kenyan hospital during a doctor’s strike were shown to be fraudulent.

There are plenty more, of course. However there is nothing inherent in track and field that makes athletes more likely to cheat. So the logical conclusion is that other sports have similar problems – but lack the resources and perhaps the resolve to uncover them.

So what could they learn from the AIU? The first is that catching cheats costs serious money. According to its annual report, World

Athletics devotes 12% of its budget, around £6m a year, to the AIU. It allows the AIU to have nine staff in intelligence and investigations, eight in testing, five in case management and two each in education and admin. What might football, rugby or the International Olympic Committee achieve if they devoted similar resources to fighting the good fight?

The second key takeaway is that the AIU explicitly acknowledges that testing athletes rarely works in isolation. How can it when banned drugs can be in and out of an athletes’ body in hours? As Victor Conte, the pharmacist who was sent to jail for his role in the Balco scandal in 2003, once told me: “Can athletes microdose with EPO and testosterone and get away with it? Yes, they can ... It’s like taking candy from a baby.” However when athletes are relentlessly target-tested, based on tip-offs and intelligence

work, the scales can be tipped in the authorities’ favour.

Crucially the AIU makes heavy use of the rule that three missed tests in a 12-month period equates to a positive drugs test – even if someone has never tested positive. It is the doping equivalent of getting Al Capone for tax evasion. But who cares if it works?

Finally, the AIU conducts serious investigations. Look at what happened when the 2017 world indoor high jump champion Danil Lysenko was suspended in 2018 for missing tests. It led to a 15-month investigation, involving 22 witness interviews and an extensive digital forensic analysis of more than six terabytes of electronic data. The result? Not only was Lysenko banned but the board of Russian Athletics stepped down after a wider conspiracy was unearthed, that involved using fake notes from a bogus clinic in Moscow.



# China economy grows in 2020 as rebound from virus gains

**BEIJING (AP):** China eked out 2.3% economic growth in 2020, likely becoming the only major economy to expand as shops and factories reopened relatively early from a shutdown to fight the coronavirus while the United States, Japan and Europe struggled with rising infections.

Growth in the three months ending in December rose to 6.5% over a year earlier as consumers returned to shopping malls, restaurants and cinemas, official data showed Monday. That was up from the previous quarter's 4.9% and stronger than many forecasters expected.

In early 2020, activity contracted by 6.8% in the first quarter as the ruling Communist Party took the then-unprecedented step of shutting down most of its economy to fight the virus. The following quarter, China became the first major country to grow again with a 3.2% expansion after the party declared victory over the virus in March and allowed factories, shops and offices to reopen.

Restaurants are filling up while cinemas and retailers struggle to lure customers back. Crowds are thin at shopping malls, where guards check visitors for signs of the disease's tell-tale fever.

Domestic tourism is reviving, though authorities have urged the public to stay home during the Lunar New Year holiday in February, normally the busiest travel season, in response to a spate of new infections in some Chinese cities.

Exports have been



boosted by demand for Chinese-made masks and other medical goods.

The growing momentum "reflected improving private consumption expenditure as well as buoyant net exports," said Rajiv Biswas of IHS Markit in a report. He said China is likely to be the only major economy to grow in 2020 while developed countries and most major emerging markets were in recession.

The economy "recovered steadily" and "living standards were ensured forcefully," the National Bureau of Statistics said in a statement. It said the ruling party's development goals were "accomplished better than expectation" but gave no details.

2020 was China's weakest growth in decades and below 1990's 3.9% following the crackdown on the Tiananmen Square pro-democracy movement, which led to China's international isolation.

Despite growth for the year, "it is too early to conclude that this is a full recovery," said Iris Pang of ING in a report. "External demand has not yet fully recovered. This is a big hurdle."

Exporters and high-tech manufacturers face uncertainty about how President-elect Joseph Biden will handle conflicts with Beijing over trade, technology and security. His predecessor, Donald Trump, hurt exporters by hiking tariffs on Chinese goods and manufacturers including telecom equipment giant Huawei by imposing curbs on access to U.S. components and technology.

"We expect the newly elected U.S. government will continue most of the current policies on China, at least for the first quarter," Pang said.

The International Monetary Fund and private sector forecasters expect economic growth to rise further this year to above 8%.

China's quick

recovery brought it closer to matching the United States in economic output.

Total activity in 2020 was 102 trillion yuan (\$15.6 trillion), according to the government. That is about 75% the size of the \$20.8 trillion forecast by the IMF for the U.S. economy, which is expected to shrink by 4.3% from 2019. The IMF estimates China will be about 90% of the size of the U.S. economy by 2025, though with more than four times as many people average income will be lower.

Exports rose 3.6% last year despite the tariff war with Washington. Exporters took market share from foreign competitors that still faced anti-virus restrictions.

Retail spending contracted by 3.9% over 2019 but gained 4.6% in December over a year earlier as demand revived. Consumer spending recovered to above the previous year's levels in the quarter ending in September.

## N. Korea's parliament rubber stamps new development plans



**SEOUL, SOUTH KOREA (AP):** North Korea's rubber-stamp parliament has passed decisions made by a major ruling party meeting where leader Kim Jong Un vowed to bolster his nuclear deterrent and established plans to salvage the country's battered economy.

The North's Korean Central News Agency said Monday that members of the Supreme People's Assembly during Sunday's meeting unanimously supported the development plans for the next five years that were revealed during the Workers' Party congress that ended last week.

The assembly also approved a major reshuffle of the Cabinet, which Kim had criticized over failures in economic policies. KCNA said six of the Cabinet's eight premiers were replaced.

North Korean premier Kim Tok Hun, who has led the Cabinet since August after his predecessor was sacked, said during a speech at the assembly that "serious mistakes" were observed while the Cabinet implemented the previous five-year development plan that ended last year.

Reports and images from state media suggested Kim Jong Un did not attend the assembly. State media also didn't mention a reshuffling of the State Affairs Commission, the government's highest decision-making body that is led by Kim.

Meetings of the Supreme People's Assembly are usually

brief, annual affairs that are intended to approve budgets, formalize personnel changes and rubber-stamp policy priorities set by Kim and the ruling party leadership.

During the party congress, Kim called for accelerated national efforts to build a military arsenal that could viably target Asian U.S. allies and the American homeland and announced a long wish-list of new sophisticated assets, including longer-range intercontinental ballistic missiles, nuclear-powered submarines, spy satellites and tactical nuclear weapons.

But it's unclear whether North Korea is fully capable of developing such systems. While the country is believed to have accumulated dozens of nuclear weapons, outside estimates of the exact status of its nuclear and missile program vary widely.

The North showcased some of its most advanced strategic assets during a nighttime military parade on Thursday, including what appeared to be a new ballistic missile that is being developed to be fired from submarines.

In an article published last week on 38 North, a website specializing in North Korea studies, analyst Michael Elleman said that the new missile was similar in size with another submarine-launched ballistic missile the North rolled out during a parade in October. He noted that the

new missile, which the North designated as "Pukguksong-5," had a payload shroud that was slightly longer than the previous one.

"These dimensional similarities indicate North Korea is still in the process of settling on a specific design for its next-generation SLBM," said Elleman, who projected the Pukguksong-5 to have a possible range of around 3,000 kilometers (1,860 miles) when completed.

But "there have been no reports of North Korea ground testing large solid-rocket motors recently, another indication that the Pukguksong-5 design remains on the drawing board," he said.

Analysts say Kim, with his repeated hardline comments, is trying to pressure the incoming U.S. administration of Joe Biden, who inherits stalled nuclear talks from President Donald Trump that imploded over disagreements over sanctions and disarmament.

Kim also used the congress to announce new national development plans for the next five years to salvage his broken economy. Some analysts say the prolonged sanctions combined with pandemic-related border closures and natural disasters that wiped out crops last year are possibly setting conditions for an economic perfect storm in the North that destabilizes markets and triggers public panic and unrest.

## Navalny's arrest adds to tension between Russia and the West

**MOSCOW (AP):** Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny's arrest as he arrived in Moscow after recovering from his poisoning with a nerve agent drew criticism from Western nations and calls for his release, with Germany's foreign minister on Monday calling it "incomprehensible."

Navalny was detained at passport control at Moscow's Sheremetyevo airport after flying in Sunday evening from Berlin, where he was treated following the poisoning in August that he blames on the Kremlin.

Navalny's arrest adds another layer of tension to relations between Moscow and the West that have long been strained and were worsened by his poisoning.

German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas noted that Navalny had returned of his own volition and said "it is completely incomprehensible that he was detained by Russian authorities immediately after his arrival."

"Russia is bound by its own constitution

and by international commitments to the principle of the rule of law and the protection of civil rights," Maas added. "These principles must of course also be applied to Alexei Navalny. He should be released immediately."

European Council President Charles Michel tweeted that Navalny's detention is "unacceptable" and also called for his immediate release, a call echoed by France's foreign ministry and by Polish Foreign Minister Zbigniew Rau.

"I express my solidarity with all Russian people who share the ideals of the detained Russian opposition leader," Rau added. "Alexey, don't give up!"

U.S. President-elect Joe Biden's pick for national security adviser called on Russian authorities to free Navalny. "Mr. Navalny should be immediately released, and the perpetrators of the outrageous attack on his life must be held accountable," Jake Sullivan tweeted.

The outgoing U.S. secretary of state, Mike Pompeo, said the U.S. "strongly condemns"

the decision to arrest Navalny, which he called "the latest in a series of attempts to silence Navalny and other opposition figures and independent voices who are critical of Russian authorities."

Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said Monday the stream of reactions to Navalny's arrest by Western officials reflects an attempt "to divert attention from the crisis of the Western model of development."

Navalny's detention was widely expected because Russia's prisons service said he had violated parole terms from a suspended sentence on a 2014 embezzlement conviction.

The prisons service said he would be held in custody until a court rules on his case. No date for a court appearance was immediately announced. The service earlier said that it would seek to have Navalny serve his 3 1/2-year sentence behind bars.

Navalny, 44, President Vladimir Putin's most prominent and determined foe, brushed off concerns about arrest as he boarded his flight

in Berlin.

"It's impossible. I'm an innocent man," he said.

Navalny fell into a coma while aboard a domestic flight from Siberia to Moscow on Aug. 20. He was transferred from a hospital in Siberia to a Berlin hospital two days later.

Labs in Germany, France and Sweden, and tests by the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, established that he was exposed to a Soviet-era Novichok nerve agent.

Russian authorities insisted that the doctors who treated Navalny in Siberia before he was airlifted to Germany found no traces of poison. Russia refused to open a full-fledged criminal inquiry, citing a lack of evidence that Navalny was poisoned.

Last month, Navalny released the recording of a phone call he said he made to a man he alleged was a member of a group of officers of the Federal Security Service, or FSB, who purportedly poisoned him in August and then tried to cover it up. The FSB dismissed the recording as fake.

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## Action-thriller ‘Dhaakad’ to release on October 1



**MUMBAI, JAN 18 (PTI):** High-octane action film “Dhaakad” is set to hit the theatres on October 1.

The official Twitter page of the movie, featuring Kangana Ranaut, Arjun Rampal and Divya Dutta, announced the release date and unveiled a new poster on Monday.

“@SohamRockstrEnt’s #Dhaakad, India’s first female led mega action thriller starring @KanganaTeam, releasing in cinemas on 1st October 2021,” the tweet read.

The film is directed by Razneesh Razy Ghai, a noted ad filmmaker and produced by Sohail Maklai Productions and Asylum Films.

The makers had released the first teaser of the film in 2019.

## BJP leaders demand ban on ‘Tandav’ for mocking Hindu deities



**MUMBAI, JAN 18 (PTI):** BJP MP Manoj Kotak on Sunday said he has written to Information and Broadcasting Minister Prakash Javadekar seeking a ban on Amazon Prime Video’s series “Tandav” for ridiculing Hindu deities. “Tandav”, starring actors Saif Ali Khan, Dimple Kapadia, Sunil Grover, Tigmanshu Dhulia, Dino Morea, Kumud Mishra, Mohd Zeeshan Ayyub, Gauhar Khan and Kritika Kamra, premiered on the streaming platform on Friday.

Filmmaker Ali Abbas Zafar has created, directed and produced the political drama with Himanshu Kishan Mehra and it is written by Gaurav Solanki, best known for “Article 15”.

The Mumbai North-East MP said attempts are often made on such platforms to not show Hindu deities in good light.

Different organisations and individuals have complained that Hindu Gods and Goddesses have been ridiculed in ‘Tandav’ web series. Comments have been passed about them, Kotak said.

Hence, we have made a demand to Javadekar ji and have written to him to ban the web series immediately. The actors, producers and directors should apologise for hurting sentiments, he added.

Sharing the picture of his letter to Javadekar on Twitter on Sunday, Kotak said

as there is no law or autonomous body governing digital content, such platforms are full of sex, violence, drugs, abuse, hate and vulgarity. Sometimes, they also hurt religious sentiments.”

“It seems that makers of ‘Tandav’ have deliberately mocked Hindu Gods and disrespected Hindu religious sentiments, he said in the letter dated January 16.

Another politician, Ram Kadam, a BJP MLA from Ghatkopar West, also asked the director to remove the portion of the web series in which Lord Shiva is ridiculed.

The legislator said he has filed a complaint in this connection at the suburban Ghatkopar police station.

Filed complaint against Tandav Web Series at Ghatkopar police station. Police has assured quick investigation, FIR under Sec 295A of IPC, Section 67A of IT Act & Atrocities Act. Producer, Director, Writer, Actors & Amazon to be summoned soon. #BanTandavNow #Boycottandav, he tweeted.

The scene at the heart of the controversy relates Zeeshan’s Shiva doing a stage play where he is dressed as Lord Shiva. The sequence talks about how Lord Ram has become more popular today.

When contacted Amazon Prime Video PR said the platform “won’t be responding” on the matter.

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**BEACH BABE!** The reality tv star, Heidi Pratt frolics in the water at the beach to beat the heat.

## Shahid Kapoor’s ‘Jersey’ to release on Diwali

**MUMBAI, JAN 18 (PTI):** Actor Shahid Kapoor on Sunday announced that his film “Jersey”, a Hindi remake of 2019 Telugu blockbuster of the same name, will hit the theatres on November 5.

“Jersey” chronicles the story of a talented but failed cricketer, who decides to return to the field in his late 30s driven by the desire to represent the Indian cricket team and fulfil his son’s wish for a jersey as a gift.

Kapoor, 39, who plays the lead role in the movie, said the story celebrates undying “human spirit”.

“JERSEY releasing in theatres this DIWALI 5th November 2021. The triumph of the human spirit. A journey I am so very proud of. This ones for the TEAM,” Kapoor wrote on Instagram.

The “Kabir Singh” star had started filming the movie earlier last year but the shoot was put on hold in March 2020 due to the coronavirus pandemic

The team resumed the production in October and shot in various location in and around Dehradun and Chandigarh with safety



protocols in place.

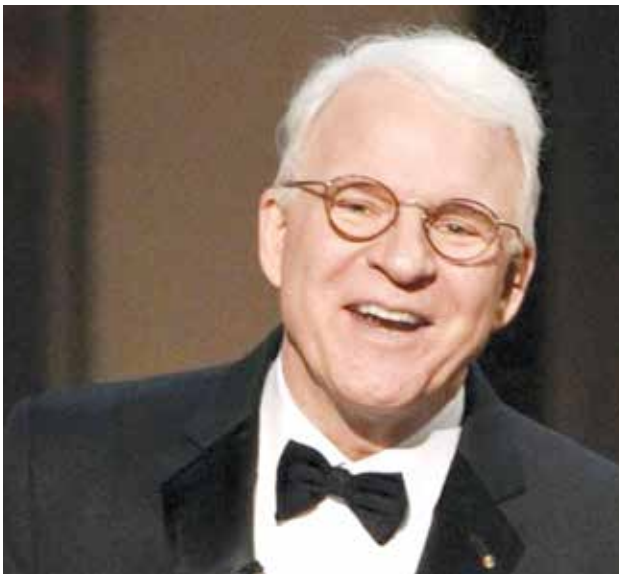
Producer Aman Gill said Diwali is the perfect time to release a family sports drama like “Jersey”.

Diwali is the biggest family festival of the year, and is the perfect time to bring Jersey,’ a family sports drama to audiences, a time when all families can come together to celebrate this journey,” Gill said.

Also starring Mrunal Thakur and Pankaj Kapur, the movie is directed by Gowtham Tinnanuri, who helmed the original as well.

“Jersey” is presented by Allu Aravind and produced by Gill, Dil Raju and S Naga Vamsi

## Steve Martin receives COVID-19 vaccination



**LOS ANGELES, JAN 18 (PTI):** Veteran actor-comedian Steve Martin has announced that he has received his first round of COVID-19 vaccination.

In a Twitter post on Sunday night, the “Father of the Bride” star said he was doing fine.

“Good news/bad news. Good news: I just got vaccinated! Bad news: I got it because I’m 75. Thank you all, and thank you science, Martin wrote.

The actor, who lives in New York, said he waited in person at the Javits Center to receive his jab.

“The operation in NYC was smooth as silk (sorry about the cliché @BCDreyer!) and hosted to perfection by the US Army and National Guard. Thank you all, and thank you science,” he added.

Martin said that the vaccine has had no side effects till now.

“Right now, I’m having no fide resects,” he quipped while responding to a fan.

On the work front, Martin is currently filming his upcoming series, “Only Murders In the Building”.

### ARIES:

It’s one of those days, Aries. You’re surrounded by love and laughter. Not to mention, the people you adore the most. So celebrate your soul family and let them know how special they are. For some of you, this could be a time of reconnecting with your sibling(s) or cousins, and remembering that the passage of time has only strengthened this bond.

### TAURUS:

You’ve been ignoring the signs for a while. It’s time to tune into the wisdom of your body. It’s time to understand what’s really going on here. The cliché ‘a stitch in time saves nine’ comes to mind, Taurus. Remember, western medicine will only alleviate the symptoms you are experiencing. So supplement your treatment with holistic therapies, which in turn will help you deal with the root cause.

### GEMINI:

Geminis who’ve said ‘I do’ will discover that their love, like fine wine, does indeed get better with time. So renew your vows in your own sacred space, and promise to show up for each other in the best possible way. Your relationship may not be perfect, but it is absolutely flawsome, and that shall do for now! Some of you may also be thinking about getting into business with your SO. Set some rules straight from the beginning. This will help you maintain a

boundary between the personal and the professional.

### CANCER:

You’ve been using aggression to get your point across, and it hasn’t worked wonders for you so far. Why not change the approach a little? Why not bring a little bit of love and a little bit of gentleness into the equation? Today, the cards are urging you to be a team player. This way, you’ll transform both, your relationship with the crew and the outcome of the project.

### LEO:

This is your big moment, Leo. The moment you’ve been tirelessly working towards. So don’t shy away from claiming the centre stage or (tastefully) tooting your own horn. Making the right connections at this point could take your career to the next level. If you’ve been struggling to get your boss to notice how much work you’ve been putting in lately, trust that that’s about to change for the better too.

### VIRGO:

Virgo, you are so loved and so supported—a belief your external reality is beginning to mirror back to you. Allow yourself to receive the love and kindness you have been putting into the Universe, without feeling like you need to heal or fix something or somebody in return. Those who’ve been in a relationship for a while now may feel inspired to take the next step. The life you’re building

together may not look perfect from the outside, but you know your commitment will help you get through this.

### LIBRA:

This relationship may have served you in the past, however; it has become a cause of anguish recently. It will be easy for you to make the other person the villain in your story, or to repeat the ‘good things don’t last’ narrative. Zoom out a little, Libra. Look at your circumstances from a higher perspective. This will help you realise that things are neither good nor bad. The person in question is simply playing a role in your awakening process. The best thing you can do for yourself at this point is to cut the cords gracefully and move on.

### SCORPIO:

We glorify new beginnings to no end. But they all come with a fair share of challenges—challenges you may or may not be prepared to handle. The cards are urging you to tread cautiously and to read the offer document carefully. Getting a bit of advice from somebody who has walked this path before may also be a good idea at this point.

### SAGITTARIUS:

A lot of you may be thinking about starting your own business or investing in a project close to your heart. Yes, the time is right to leap into the future. So remain in that space of clarity and take action in the manner you’re being

guided to. When you look back at this moment, you’ll be so, so glad you did. What does require a bit of mindfulness are your finances. Word for the wise: create a reserve.

### CAPRICORN:

It’s never easy being let down by somebody you love and trust so much. Yet, what is done cannot be undone. Instead of going down the rabbit hole of negative emotions, accept the situation for what it is and awaken to the truth that is being revealed to you in this moment (without blaming yourself for what transpired). Being mindful of the soul lesson will prevent you from making this mistake again.

### AQUARIUS:

You’re tired of the uncertainty that is synonymous with transient relationships. You’re tired of going back and forth with the one you love. You’re in the mood to manifest a connection that grows stronger with the passage of time. So set an intention for this meaningful change as you vow to stay open. The Universe has a way of surprising us when we least expect it.

### PISCES:

Pisces, you may feel like you’re in an animated movie with the devil on one side and the angel on the other. While Satan’s offer is rather tempting, it may or may not last. Word for the wise: make a practical choice, especially when it comes to matters of the heart. Choose somebody who is willing to stand by you, and trust that the passage of time will help your connection grow stronger.