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Summit TIMES

Vol 06 | Issue 298 | Gangtok | Saturday 27 November 2021

ON TOP OF THE NEWS

RNI No. SIKENG/2016/69420

Pages 8 | Rs. 5

Aspiring Docs Rejoice: Sikkim gets 50 more MBBS seats at SMIMS

SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 26 Nov:

The National Medical Commission, which has replaced the Medical Council of India, has approved 50 additional seats for students from the State in Sikkim Institute of Medical Sciences. These seats are primarily for aspiring doctors from economically weak background, Chief Minister PS Tamang shared today.

With these additional seats, there are now 80 medical seats available for Sikkim students at SMIMS.

Speaking to media-persons here on Friday, the Chief Minister confirmed that the state received an official com-

munique from the National Medical Commission in Thursday evening informing the State Government about the approval of 50 additional seats for students from Sikkim.

The CM informed that the State Government had been continuously trying to get these extra seats, especially for students from underprivileged families who want to pursue an MBBS course.

He went on to point out that MBBS is an expensive course to pursue and many students, even though they had the aptitude and the grades, did not have the finances to enroll.

"Since there was no provision earlier, last year, we assisted such students through the CM's Discretionary Grant and CM Fund. But we had been requesting the Centre to provide us more seats," the CM said.

Significantly, these 50 seats will be totally free for the students.

The CM thanked the Central government and the National Medical Commission for this latest development and congratulated the people of Sikkim on a dream coming true for aspiring doctors whose dreams remained unfulfilled only because of their financial status.

He heralded the

50 seats as the biggest achievement for the State and the state government in as far as access to professional courses for its students was concerned and informed that the State Government has already signed an MoU with SMIMS on the same.

Additional Chief Secretary to the Education Department, GP Upadhyaya, added that this was a historic moment for the state.

He informed that the annual intake at SMIMS has now increased to 150.

The 50 extra seats will be nominated by the State government on the basis of NEET scores of students.

The ACS added that the request of the State government was nearly rejected by the commission in September since NMC could not inspect colleges due to the pandemic and Sikkim was told that the request will be processed only next year.

However, active initiative of the Governor and the CM who pursued the matter in earnest afresh, an NMC team was convinced to visit in October and approve the seats, the ACS informed.

He added that the state government was also pursuing plans to start a State Medical College with 100 seats by 2023.

Literature and litterateurs celebrated at Sikkim SahityaUtsav



ANNUAL SIKKIM LITERARY FESTIVAL FROM NEXT YEAR ONWARDS

GANGTOK, 26 Nov [IPR]: Poetry recitals by renowned litterateurs and upcoming poets, awards and recognition to noted literary figures, release of books, and cultural presentations marked the Sikkim SahityaUtsav 2021, a literary event, at Manan Kendra today. The daylong programme was

organized by HamroVarta Television to mark its second foundation day.

The event was graced by Chief Minister Prem Singh Tamang as the chief guest accompanied by his spouse Krishna Rai as a special guest. The programme had the presence of Speaker, Sikkim Legislative Assembly, L.B. Das, Cabinet Ministers, MLAs, Chairpersons and Advisors, renowned film actor from Nepal Bhuvan KC, renowned poet from Darjeeling Smt Pavitra Lama, renowned poet from Nepal NavarajPara-

juli, other renowned literary personalities, and audience comprising literature-lovers and students.

On the occasion, the organizing committee felicitated Chief Minister Prem Singh Tamang.

Likewise, the following literary personalities were felicitated by the Chief Minister to honour their contribution to the field of literature: Dr. RajendraBhandari, Chetan Raj Shrestha, Gupta Pradhan, K.N. Sharma, Beena Shree Kharel, Sashi Sherpa, **turn to pg02**

Raj Bhavan hosts grand Constitution Day celebration with mega blood donation camp

GANGTOK, 26 Nov [IPR]: The 72nd Constitution Day was celebrated with grand patriotic fervour and enthusiasm at Raj Bhavan today.

The function was graced by Governor Ganga Prasad as chief guest, and Chief Minister Prem Singh Tamang as the guest of honour.

The function had the special presence of the Speaker, Sikkim Legislative Assembly, LB Das and Cabinet Ministers, MLAs, MP Lok Sabha, Advisors and Chairpersons, along with Chief Secretary, Heads of Departments, Army officials, government officials, blood donors, members of various organisations and NGOs, University professors and scholars, school teachers and students, and members of the press and media.

Governor Ganga Prasad administered the reading of the Preamble of the Constitution which was followed by everyone assembled on the special occasion.

Thereafter, Governor Ganga Prasad and Chief Minister Prem Singh Tamang felicitated the highest regular blood donors in the State as well as NGO working relentlessly to promote blood donation. The individuals and organizations felicitated on the occasion were:

1. Kishore Baniya, TemiTarku,



South Sikkim, donated blood 66times.

2. ChewangPintsoThakpa, Borong South Sikkim, donated blood 65 times

3. Gaurav Raj Gupta, Gangtok, donated blood 62 times

4. SurenMohora, Upper Ramabing, South Sikkim, donated blood 62 times

5. Deepen Sharma, Namthang, South Sikkim, donated blood 55 times

6. BinoyThapa, Middle Arithang, East Sikkim, donated blood 50 times

7. Dr. Sri Prakash, Assitant Director Incharge, Regional Ayurver-

da Research Institute, for his work during the pandemic in the villages of Sikkim.

8. President National Integrated Forum of Artist & Activities (NIFAA), Gangtok, who have conducted blood camps several times in the state were felicitated and awarded with a cash grant of Rs. 1,00,000/-

9. President Voluntary Blood Donors Association of Sikkim, Gangtok were felicitated and granted a cash reward of Rs.1,00,000/- for conducting several blood camps including today.

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Sikkim completes a week without any Covid deaths

SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 26 Nov:

The State today reported nine new cases of Covid-19 in the last 24 hours taking the State's tally of confirmed cases to 32,207. There have been no Covid fatalities in the past 24 hours and Sikkim's Covid toll held at 403 for the seventh consecutive day. The last Covid fatality in the State was recorded on 18 November, last Thursday. Hospitalisations also continue to remain low and there have been fewer than 20Covid patients admitted in hospitals since 18 Nov.

As per the Daily Report of COVID-19 in Sikkim released by the Integrated Disease Surveillance Programme of Health Department, today's nine cases were

detected from the testing of 271 samples yesterday, giving Sikkim a daily test positivity rate to 3.30%.

This daily TPR compares reassuringly to the 7.30% Sikkim registered yesterday.

Of the nine new cases, eight were detected in RT-PCR testing of 132 samples and one in rapid antigen testing of 137 samples. Eight of the new cases were registered in East District and one in West District.

On the other hand, 10 more Covid patients were discharged from home isolation yesterday after making full recoveries to further improve the count of recovered cases here to 31,346, giving Sikkim a current recovery rate of 98.4%.

There are 119 active cases of Covid-19 in Sikkim at present, of whom only 17 have come down with symptoms severe enough to require hospitalisation. There are no under-18 year old Covid-positive minors in hospital.

Of the Covid patients in hospital, three are currently admitted in ICU facilities at STNM hospital.

Meanwhile, on the vaccination front, the state administered 526 doses of Covishield on Thursday. While 45 people received their first jab of the vaccine, 481 completed their vaccination schedule with the second dose yesterday. 90.15% of the State's adult population is now fully vaccinated against SARS CoV-2.

Kisan Goshti-Cum-Awareness Programme on Pig Farming

GANGTOK, 26 NOV (PIB): ICAR-Indian Veterinary Research Institute-Eastern Regional Station, Kolkata, West Bengal in collaboration with ICAR-KVK, East Sikkim, Ranipool, ICAR Research Complex for NEH Region, Sikkim Centre, Tadong, Gangtok, State Govt officials jointly organized a programme on "Kisan Goshti-Cum-Awareness Programme on Pig Farming" at Beyong-Phegyong, East District of Sikkim on 25 Nov.

The programme was held under the Chairmanship of Principal Scientist, Dr SC Das, ICAR-IVRI-ERS, Kolkata, West Bengal. Joint Director I/c, Dr RLaha, ICAR RC for NEH Region, Sikkim Centre was the chief guest of the programme.

Dr D Mandal, (Principal Scientist), Dr TK Biswas, (Senior Scientist) from ICAR-IVRI, ERS, Kolkata, West Bengal along with Head I/c, Dr JK Singh and SMS (Horticulture) of ICAR-KVK-East Sikkim, Boniface Lepcha, Ranipool participated in the programme.

Block Development Officer, Sonam Palden Bhutia, Sang-Martam Block Veterinary Officer, Dr Prarayan, Dept of Animal



Husbandry & Fishery and Panchayat President, Kusang Tamang, Beyong-Phegyong GPU also attended the function.

The main aim behind this programme was to make farmers aware about animal health management as well as providing necessary nutrition to their livestock and also to help the farmers of North East through ICAR Institute situated outside the North Eastern region of India.

A total of 25 selected farmers from the GPU attended the programme and benefited with two healthy piglets (per farmer) along with medicines and 2 bags pig feed/piglet.

At the outset Dr JK Singh welcomed everyone and briefed about the important activities of KVK East Sikkim for the welfare of farming community of East district farmers. He further requested the farm-

ers to opt the scientific livestock management practices to increase their farming income. Joint Director, Dr R Laha, ICAR Sikkim Centre emphasized the importance of the livestock sector for livelihood security of farmers as well as sustainable organic agriculture in Sikkim.

Principal Scientist & NEH programme in charge, Dr SC Das, Principal Scientist, Dr D Mandal, Senior Scientist

from ICAR-IVRI-ERS, Dr TK Biswas, Kalyani, West Bengal elaborated about the rearing and management of pig and their preventive and control measures during the interactive session.

Block Development Officer, Sonam Palden Bhutia, Sang-Martam Block encouraged the farmer to adopt scientific intervention in pig farming for their sustainable livelihood.

Panchayat president, Kusang Tamang, Beyong-Phegyong GPU appraised the ICAR Sikkim Centre, KVK East Sikkim and IVRI, Eastern Regional Centre, Kolkata, West Bengal for providing piglets along with feed and medicines as well as scientific knowledge of pig farming to the farmers during the programme.

Veterinary Officer, Dr Prarayan spoke on pig farming and use of locally available pig feed and housing for the better growth of pig. The programme was followed by a Farmer-Scientist Interaction Session and ended with a vote of thanks delivered by Boniface Lepcha. The programme was coordinated by SMS-Horticulture, Boniface Lepcha, ICAR-KVK East Sikkim.

Book analyses 'political isolation' of Bengal

NEW DELHI, Nov 26 (PTI): Bengal planted the seed of nationalism and nurtured it into a sapling, eventually leading to the creation of the world's largest democracy but the state has been isolated from the national political scene for nearly 45 years, argues public policy analyst Sugato Hazra in his new book.

In "Losing the Plot: Political Isolation of West Bengal", he attempts to trace the state's changing leadership, political ideology and discourse over the years.

The author argues that this so-called seclusion encouraged a move towards undemocratic systems and procedures which naturally led to socio-economic degradation of a state that once took the lead in national pride and identity.

He raises pertinent questions about the contemporary state of politics in West Bengal. Claiming that West Bengal has been isolated from the national political scene for the last 44 years, he sets about trying to find out how the state ended up becoming isolated. "Bengalis have come a long way since the early days of the British rule and the espousal of English education to the rule of a regional political party led by the first female head of the state," he writes in the book, published by Nyog Books imprint Paper Missile.

He says West Bengal is a story of an "unending descent - economically, culturally and politically. It is the story of a state that has lost its plot".

The book has 12 chapters that look into the complicated political

history of the state.

The first chapter traces the birth of modern ideas and nationalism in the state of Bengal and how these spread across India.

In the second chapter, Bengal's move towards neo-nationalism and its role in creating a separate line of political movement have been highlighted.

The third chapter shows how the Bengal leadership had differences with national politics particularly after Mahatma Gandhi entered the scene. The tussle over legislative entry and revolutionary politics between Bengal's popular leader Chittaranjan Das and Gandhi and the change in the political landscape after the untimely death of Das explain the eventual loss of prominence of the state in national politics. The days of confusion in Bengal after the system of elected government was introduced are captured in the fourth chapter.

The fifth chapter outlines the internal dissension and infighting within the Congress, highlighting its failure not only to protect its turf but conceding the same. The author focuses on the division of the state with catastrophic consequences for many Bengalis and he underlines the failure to bring in relief for them thereby delineating the sorry state of the people and its politics.

The beginning of democratic rule under Bidhan Chandra Ray was turbulent and a narrative in slow motion of the receding national political party (the Congress) and the emergence of a regional political narrative.

Raj Bhavan hosts...

Governor Ganga Prasad, in his address, extended his hearty wishes and congratulations to everyone present in the august gathering on the occasion of 72nd Constitution Day. He mentioned that on this day in 1949, the Constitution of India was adopted by the Constituent Assembly, thereafter it came into effect on 26th January 1950, which is celebrated as Republic Day.

He stated that all the functions of the government are directed by the Constitution, and the executive, judiciary and legislature is bound by the Constitution. He mentioned that today reminds us all of the largest written constitution of the world, that is the Constitution of India, which has descriptions and references for every Indian national to function socially, religiously and express their thoughts, free and independently. He stated that the Constitution allows us to exercise our rights and obey fundamental duties, but we must also consciously remember that a united country is paramount and it is our responsibility to take forward the country in the paths of progress as directed in the Constitution.

He reminded that while conducting an oath taking ceremony one is free to choose to swear between God or the Constitution, and that the Constitution holds immense importance. He mentioned that today's Constitution Day celebration is especially significant, for the 1st Mega Voluntary Blood Donation camp is being conducted at Raj Bhavan in collaboration with Voluntary Blood Donation Association of Sikkim, which is also a part of Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav celebration being observed nationwide, to commemorate 75 years of Independence and pay homage to our freedom fighters and martyrs. The Governor highlighted the importance of blood donation and organ donation to save others' lives.

The Governor concluded his address by making an appeal to the people to pledge to take the country forward in the paths of progress, as envisaged by the Constitution of India.

The Chief Minister, in his address, extended his best wishes and congratulations on the occasion of 72nd Constitution Day. He expressed his heartfelt gratitude to the Governor for hosting the function in grand patriotic fervour at Raj Bhavan.

He mentioned that Constitution Day is celebrated every year, in every State of the country with great patriotism and enthusiasm. He mentioned that the Constitution binds us together, and the government and the country functions with the direction and guidance of the Constitution. He said that today commemorates the birthday of our Constitution, with is a day of immense pride for all the Indians.

He mentioned that the Constituent Assembly adopted the Constitution on 26th November 1949, and two months later on 26th January 1950, the Constitution came into effect, for these dates hold immense significance in history. He remembered with deep reverence, the architect of the Indian Constitution, Babasaheb Dr. Bhim Rao Ambedkar,

the 1st President of India Dr. Rajendra Prasad, 1st Prime Minister Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, 1st Deputy Prime Minister Vallabhbhai Patel, 1st Education Minister of India Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, along with 299 members of the Constituent Assembly, the Father of the Nation, Mahatma Gandhi, and the martyr and freedom fighters of the Freedom movement for their unparalleled contribution for an independent Democratic Republic India.

He mentioned that the first celebration of the Constitution Day was held at Indo Mill Compound, Mumbai, in October 2015 at the Inaugural ceremony of Baba Saheb Ambedkar's Statue, thereafter on 19th November, 2015, the Central Government declared for 26th November to be celebrated as Constitution Day, across the country.

The Chief Minister also mentioned that the Foreign Ministry has directed Indian students studying abroad to celebrate Constitution Day and have also directed the embassies of various countries to deliver the Constitution of India in translated versions of different languages in libraries at their respective countries. Likewise, the State Government of Sikkim has delivered the Constitution of India in Nepali, to various Schools and Colleges across the state, so that everyone understands valuable wise lessons from the Constitution.

He mentioned that we mainly focus on the rights that have been laid down in the Constitution but often tend to neglect the duties that have been entrusted upon us by the Constitution, thus, today, he appealed to the people to exercise the rights lawfully but also to remember the fundamental duties of an Indian, which is a responsibility entrusted upon us, to become good citizens of the country and to take the country forward towards greater heights of progress.

Earlier, Secretary, Raj Bhavan, Raj Yadav in his welcome address apprised that the programme had received overwhelming response from all quarters and over 750 registrations had been received for voluntary blood donation, which is the highest number recorded till date. He also informed of the participation of Regional Ayurveda Centre and Rotary Club in the form of stalls and free eye and dental camp. He acknowledged the role of Voluntary Blood Donors Association of Sikkim as the co-partners for organizing the mega blood donation camp on the significant occasion.

On the occasion, Ms. Neha Gupta, Student, Sikkim Government Law College delivered a speech on the significance of the Indian Constitution.

Thereafter, the Governor and Chief Minister formally inaugurated the Mega Voluntary Blood Donation Camp.

The event was made special with the Chief Minister becoming the first person to voluntarily donate blood. The Chief Minister was joined by Cabinet Ministers, MLAs and senior officers of the State Administration.

At the end of the day, a record 486 units of blood were collected from the mega camp, which is the highest volume of blood donated in a single camp.

Khamsel at Tholung receives record turnout



WANGCHUK BHUTIA
DIKCHU, 26 NOV:

The triennial Khamsel ritual at Tholung Monastery in Upper Dzong during which costumes and implements believed to belong to Lhasa Chenpo are aired and displayed to the devout concluded today.

The ritual is special for Sikkim, and Tholung hosted a record turnout of devotees. Where the ceremony, given its remote location, would attract 500 people at best on most years, this time, more than 5,000 people

made the trip to the remote monastery. The fact that this ceremony, which would usually be held every three years, was being held after a gap of eight years this time, probably explains the high attendance.

The ritual had begun on 24 Nov and was attended by devotees from all walks of life. Today's ceremony was graced by Genjong Rimpoche and Lachung Rimpoche who also bestowed wang [blessings] to gathered devotees.

The ceremony was also attended by Sangha

MLA, RDD Minister Sonam Lama, his Cabinet colleague Samdup Lepcha, Dzongu MLA Pintso Namgyal Lepcha, MLAs, Secretaries and officials from various government departments, representatives from the Tholung House family etc.

The Khamsel ceremony at Tholung Monastery used to be hosted by the Tholung family until 1977 when it was handed over to the Ecclesiastical Department, informed Palden Gyatso Nangpa, an elder of the Tholung family.

Falcon FC lifts Futsal Gold Cup in Yuksam

PRITAM LAMA
GYALSHING, 25 NOV:

The first Gold Cup Futsal Tournament organised by Yuksam Friends Forever Sporting Club concluded in Yuksam, West Sikkim, on 25 Nov. The tournament saw the participation of 45 teams from across the state.

The finals were played between Falcon FC and XI-Batch Sikkim police in which Falcon FC emerged as the winner with a score of 3:2.

Sikkim Legislative Assembly's Deputy Speaker, Sangay Lepcha was present on the occasion as the chief guest. Also present were Transport Department Chairperson, Basant Tamang, Yuksam SDM, Tshering T Bhutia, SKM Jankalyan Prokasta State-president, Manoj Lama, Additional Political Secretary to CM, Madhu Sudan Sharma, Yuksam BDO, Samber Man Limboo, SKM district coordinator-West, Nandu Gurung alongside Gram Panchayat members, and members of Organizing Committee.

Deputy Speaker, Sangay Lepcha congratulated the club for organizing the tournament successfully. He then highlighted the various initiatives of the state government and said that he strongly believes that they can only be successful with the collective effort of all.

Yuksam Friends Forever Sporting

Club president, Sonam Chewang Bhutia who is also the organising committee general secretary expressed gratitude to the Yuksam SDM, Tshering T Bhutia for his support and co-operation.

Similarly, he thanked the Transport department Chairperson and SKM Yuksam-Tashiding CLC president, Basant Tamang, Yuksam BDO, Samber Man Limboo, Yuksam-Dubdi Gram Panchayat members, Local NGOs and volunteers. He also expressed deep gratitude to Deputy Speaker and area MLA, Sangay Lepcha for his untiring support and encouragement, especially in development of sports in the constituency.

He shared that this tournament will be held as annual event in Yuksam.

The organising committee also felicitated several young achievers in different fields.

Area MLA, Sangay Lepcha was felicitated for his untiring services to people of his constituency while Transport Department Chairperson and SKM CLC president, Basant Tamang was also felicitated.

SLA Dy Speaker, Sangay Lepcha handed trophy and certificate to the winners and runners up. Ronald Rai from Falcon FC was named as hero of the match.

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AFFIDAVIT : CHANGE IN NAME

I, Mrs Durga Chettri, legally wedded spouse of No. 9427808W Rand NK Name Hemant Kumar Chettri, r/o of Middle Rateypani Near Sr. Secondary School, Rateypani GPU, P.O. Namthang & P.S. Namchi, South District & presently residing at HQ 17 Mountain Div Camp, Gangtok do hereby solemnly affirm that I have changed my name from Durga Chettri to Durga Pradhan due to updation of my documents and my D.O.B is 07.07.1996. That my both names Durga Chettri and Durga Pradhan pertain to one and same person i.e. myself and this affidavit no A 275649 before the LD Oath Commissioner, Gangtok, Sikkim on 24.11.2021.

Constitution Day observed at Tashiling Secretariat

GANGTOK, 26 Nov (IPR): Constitution Day, also known as SamvidhanDiwas, was observed at Tashiling Secretariat today.

The brief function had the participation of officers and staff of all the Departments located within the Tashiling Secretariat premises.

To mark the important occasion, Secretary, Protocol, Home Department, Government of Sikkim, SK Pradhan led the Preamble reading ceremony which was participated by all the officers and staff assembled. He also spoke briefly about the significance of the day.

This year, the Consti-



tion Day programme was organized throughout the country on a wide scale and the Preamble Reading Ceremony was led by the President of India which was streamed live in all Government Institutions and

educational institutions throughout the country.

Constitution Day is celebrated in India on 26 Nov every year to commemorate the adoption of the Constitution of India. On 26 Nov, 1949, the Constituent Assem-

bly of India adopted the Constitution of India, and it came into effect on 26 Jan, 1950. The Government of India declared 26 November as Constitution Day on 19 Nov, 2015 by a gazette notification.

Singapore restricts travellers from 7 African countries hit by more contagious COVID-19 variant

SINGAPORE, Nov 26 (PTI): Singapore will restrict entry of people with recent travel history to seven African countries after reports that a potentially more contagious COVID-19 variant may be circulating there, the Ministry of Health said on Friday.

From 11.59 PM (local time) on Saturday, all long-term pass holders and short-term visitors with travel history within the last 14 days to Botswana, Eswatini, Lesotho, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa and Zimbabwe will not be allowed to enter Singapore or transit here.

The restrictions also apply to those who have obtained prior approval for entry into Singapore.

Singapore citizens and permanent residents returning from these countries will have to serve a 10-day stay-home notice at a dedicated facility.

There have been recent reports of a potentially more contagious variant of the COVID-19 virus, the B.1.1.529, which may be circulating in Botswana, Eswatini, Lesotho, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa and Zimbabwe, the Channel News Asia quoted the MOH as saying.

Scientists around the world are still finding out more about the new variant of virus, such as whether it is more transmissible than the Delta variant, whether it is more likely to lead to severe illnesses, and efficacy of existing vaccines against this new variant.

While Singapore currently has no cases of this variant, "we should take the necessary precautions to reduce the risks" of it spreading here, the MOH said.

South Africa was previously a Category II country with travellers serving a seven-day stay-home notice at their declared place of accommodation after arriving in Singapore. It has now been reclassified as a Category IV country.

Temi Autumn Festival begins



NAMCHI, 26 Nov [IPR]: The three-day long Temi Autumn Festival, themed 'Vocal for Local,' commenced with much fanfare at Temi Tea Garden today.

Chairperson, Sikkim Poultry Development Board, Krishna Gurung, was present as chief guest and officially declared the festival open. He was accompanied by officials and public at large.

Temi Autumn Festival aims to promote Temi Tea Estate where Sikkim's organic tea is grown. The festival also encourages local entrepreneurship

and provides a platform to local artists.

Addressing the event, the chief guest extended warm greetings to all on the commencement of the festival and congratulated the organising members for successfully hosting the carnival.

He said that the Temi region has great potential to attract domestic as well as international tourists. In this regard, the locals can turn this into a golden opportunity to create employment and sustain their livelihoods. Further, the chairperson also informed about various

other scopes of tourism to develop this area into a tourist hub.

The inaugural ceremony saw various cultural and musical performances by local artists.

It may be mentioned here that the carnival offers numerous array of stalls ranging from tea tasting, traditional, arts and handicrafts stalls which are set up by various Self Help Groups and local entrepreneurs. In addition, adventure activities such as horse riding, helicopter joy ride, jeep safari, zip lining, camping and many more are also available for visitors.

Master Training on large cardamom cultivation



SUMMIT REPORT GANGTOK, 26 Nov:

Spices Board, Divisional Office, Tadong organized a Master Training Programme as part of Quality Improvement Training on Large Cardamom for the Extensional Personnel and Field level functionaries of the Agriculture and Horticulture Department at SAMETI Hall, Tadong, today.

A press release informs that the programme was conducted in coordination with line departments like Agriculture and Horticulture department and was attended by more than 55 officials.

The programme began with a welcome address by Assistant Director, Spices Board, D.O. Tadong, K.T. Vivek. Additional Director (Spices

es) Govt. of Sikkim, B.L. Dahal, inaugurated the programme and delivered the inaugural address. Deputy Director (Agriculture), Govt. of Sikkim, Preeti Moktan, also attended the programme.

There were six technical sessions in the programme. Deputy Director, Spices Board, R.O. Gangtok, M.S. Ramalingam delivered a talk on the Export Promotion Measures and Marketing aspects of the Spices Board.

Scientist, ICAR, NEH, Sikkim Centre, Dr. Shaon Kumar Das, took a session on Nutrient Management in Large Cardamom with an Organic approach. Scientist in-charge, ICRI, RRS, Tadong, Dr. Ajay D spoke on the Diseases of Large Cardamom and its Management.

Scientist, ICRI, RRS, Tadong, Dr. T.N. Deka, delivered a talk on the Integrated Pest Management in Large Cardamom. Assistant Professor (Food Technology) CAEPHT, Ranipool, Dr. Prashant Pandharinath Said, took a session Post Harvest Processing of Spices. Scientist, ICRI, RRS, Tadong, Dr. S.S. Bora, delivered a session on the Nursery Management and Good Agricultural Practices in Large Cardamom.

K.T. Vivek explained about the developmental schemes implemented in Sikkim Region. There was an interactive session and general discussion as well.

The programme concluded with Vote of Thanks delivered by Farm Manager, DO Tadong, Birendra Dangal.

Odisha MP faces "egg attack" by Congress workers, 2 detained

BHUBANESWAR/BALASORE: A day after BJP supporters hurled eggs at the convoy of Odisha Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik in Puri, Congress supporters targeted BJD MP Aparajita Sarangi in the same way near Bhubaneswar.

Eggs were hurled at her vehicle and she was shown black flags at Banamalipur by Congress workers to protest against unemployment and price rise of various commodities including fuel. Police detained two persons in connection with the incident following a complaint lodged by the Bhubaneswar MP's representative Dhaneswar Barik.

The complainant alleged that the attackers also hurled stones at her vehicle and they were carrying knives and other weapons.

Meanwhile, there was a heated exchange of words between supporters of the ruling BJD and opposition BJP at the foundation laying ceremony for the new railway station building in Balasore town.

The incident occurred in presence of BJP MP Pratap Sarangi and BJD MLA Swarup Das who were present at the programme. As BJD workers raised slogans hailing CM Patnaik, BJP supporters did the same in favour of Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

As the slogan competition increased, it turned into a heated exchange of words. However, it was brought under control Sarangi and Das.

Special Summary Revision of Voter List

GANGTOK, 26 Nov (IPR): The Election Commission of India had announced the schedule for Special Summary Revision of Electoral Rolls with reference to 01 Jan, 2022 as the Qualifying Date, for all the Assembly Constituencies of Sikkim. Accordingly, Draft Electoral Rolls which was published on 01 Nov, 2021 are available at the DC Office/SDM Office/BDO Office and Booth Level Officers of the respective Polling Stations.

The Special Summary Revision, is for those persons who have attained 18 years of age or will be attaining 18 years of age as on or before 01 Jan, 2022. They can sub-

visit the relevant proof of age, residence, identity, etc., to the Booth Level Officers on or before 30 Nov, 2021. Similarly, deletion of names of deceased voters, correction, transfer/shifting of voter's name from one constituency to the another, correction of voter's date of birth in the Electoral Rolls, etc., will also be taken up during the Summary Revision.

The Special Summary Revision which started from 01 Nov, 2021 is going on in all the four Districts of Sikkim. The last date for submission of the Forms is 30 Nov, 2021. For further clarification, if any, one can call '1950' (Toll Free Number) or

visit www.ceosikkim.nic.in. The applicants can also avail all the above mentioned forms, from "Voter Helpline app" which can be downloaded from Google store as well as Apple store. They can also visit "www.nvsp.in"/"voterportal.eci.gov.in" and "PwD app".

The Election Department appeals to all the eligible voters of Sikkim and avail this opportunity to include/delete/modify their particulars in the Voter lists. Further this is to inform the public that updation of Electoral Roll will continue even after 30/11/2021 through the above mentioned apps and portals.

IN THE COURT OF THE DISTRICT JUDGE, EAST SIKKIM AT GANGTOK

Ref No. 70 DJ(E)

Date: 19.11.2021

Civil Execution Case No. 02 of 2020

(Ghanashyam Sharma v. Yognidhi Nirola)
NOTICE TO SHOW CAUSE WHY ORDER FOR ATTACHMENT SHOULD NOT ISSUE

(O.XI.R.16)

To,
Yognidhi Nirola (Judgement Debtor)
S/o Somdutta Nirola,
Assistant Professor,
Sikkim Government College, Burtuk
East Sikkim
P.O. Pakyong, Amba. P.O. & P.S. Pakyong, East Sikkim
A/P Manbir Colony, Burtuk, P.O. & P.S. Gangtok, East Sikkim.

WHEREAS, the Decree Holder named above has made an application to this Court for execution of Decree in Money Suit No. 272 of 2018 (Ghanashyam Sharma Plaintiff v. Yognidhi Nirola, Defendant) by way of attachment of your salary. AND WHEREAS, you have failed to appear before the Court on several dates and also failed to satisfy the decretal amount.

You are hereby directed to appear before the Court on 22.12.2021 at 10 o'clock in the forenoon and to show-cause as to why an order for attachment of your salary should not be passed in execution of the above decree.

Given under my hand and the seal of the Court, this the 11th day of November, 2021.

Sd/-
(Prajwal Khatiwada)
District Judge
East Sikkim at Gangtok.

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The Constitution's Yours

We might as well get to know it better

The nation celebrated Constitution Day on Friday, recalling the 26th of November 1949 when the Constitution of India was adopted by the Constituent Assembly. The Constituency itself came into force exactly two months later on 26 January 1950, the Constitution's day we are all more familiar with as Republic Day. The 26th of January invariably becomes too much about announcements and political positions and colour and displays for any real deliberations on the Constitution itself to be undertaken. In that sense, it is welcome that the Constitution is now enjoying a Day exclusively dedicated to it but what is not as encouraging is that not enough is being done to inform and involve the young in its understanding or virtues. Sure, the officials observed it at their respective offices with the same lack of fervour and matching tokenism as they observe the string of other sarkari events, and given that it fell so close to a weekend, and with the excuse of Covid protocol still conveniently at hand, things were expectedly lukewarm. Be that as it may, it is not enough for the day's significance to remain limited to the executive or the judiciary or the legislature and it is important that it is extended to the lay citizens as well. But that again is clearly not the temper of the times in which institutions which the Constitution of India wants to be more robust, the Civil Society, is flagged as the new front for war by discomfiting mindsets which are deciding the present for the country.

But let's leave those worries for another day and stay with the Constitution of India for now.

It was the adoption of the Constitution that made the nation a Republic of Free People. This is what the Constitution delivered to the people. The Father of the Nation had also visualized the Constitution of India in terms of universal values applied to the specific and special conditions of India. Agreed, in hind-sight, there were problematic inferences even in what Mahatma Gandhi wished for the country, but the root idea of delivering a free people underlines the document. The Mahatma did not live to see the Constitution drafted and adopted, but as early as in 1931 he had written, "I shall strive for a Constitution which will release India from all thralldom and patronage. I shall work for an India in which the poorest shall feel that it is their country in whose making they have an effective voice: an India in which there is no high class or low class of people, an India in which all communities shall live in perfect harmony. There can be no room in such an India for the curse of untouchability. We shall be at peace with the rest of the world, neither exploiting nor exploited. All interests not in conflict with the interests of the dumb millions will be scrupulously respected whether foreign or indigenous. Personally, I hate the distinction between foreign and indigenous. This is the India of my dreams for which I shall struggle."

This idea has been incorporated into the Constitution and if divisions still exist in our midst, it is not because the Document has let us down, but because the people and the leaders have failed the Constitution. And the architect of the Constitution, Dr BR Ambedkar, whose conflict with the Mahatma and the Congress was always obvious and is now being better understood, said as much. Speaking on the draft of the Constitution, Dr. Ambedkar had said, "It is workable, it is flexible and it is strong enough to hold the country together both in peace time and in war time. Indeed, if I may say so, if things go wrong under the new Constitution, the reason will not be that we had a bad Constitution. What we will have to say is that Man is vile."

With our continuing refusal to get to know the Constitution better are we destined to go down in history as vile men? What every Indian needs to remind himself is that the word "Republic" is no ordinary word. It is a commitment to the effect that, in our country, supreme power is exercised not by some remote monarch but by the people. The Constitution empowers us with this strength, but increasingly, because we blunder around oblivious to the specifics and history and the ideas behind the Constitution, we allow this power to be usurped by the loud and the entitled, by those who have received the mandate and those who have passed an exam or weaseled their way into favour with their sycophancy. When the Constitution replaced colonial and feudal networks with people, it paved the way for people to walk and collaborate to their free destinies, not be chaperoned or, worse still, herded. For that India, we have to walk the path not just know about it. Rights count for nothing for not exercised.

WRITE US:

Readers are invited to comment on, criticise, run down, even appreciate if they like something in this paper. Letters carrying abusive/ indecorous language and personal attacks, except when against people responsible in this newspaper (who are fair game), will have to be ignored. Letters which carry forward a conversation or initiate a dialogue will command immediate attention and receive prominence. Mail us at: news@summittimes.com

Freddie Mercury 30 years on – remembering the theatrical, eccentric genius

STEPHEN LANGSTON
theconversation.com

There is no doubt that Freddie Mercury was a genius: it's clear in his music, his theatrical performances, and his eccentrically stylised persona. These different art forms constructed a full creative package and made Mercury an icon. As we mark 30 years since his death, we should celebrate the revolutionary lyrics, piano mastery and flamboyant show business style that he brought to rock music.

By the time Mercury was 18 years old he was demonstrating the idiosyncratic style that would later revolutionise the music industry. Alongside his love for classical music and opera, he was also a lover of musical theatre, elements of which we can see in his own music and stage presence. Mercury liked "the cabaret-ish sort of thing". He said: "one of my early inspirations came from Cabaret. I absolutely adore Liza Minnelli...the way she delivers her songs – the sheer energy". He also "loved the choreography, fluid sexuality and atmosphere of total excess" in Richard O'Brien's *The Rocky Horror Picture Show*.

Queen's 1975 song, *Bohemian Rhapsody*, which was written by Mercury, introduced beautiful melodies, operatic elements, and classical storylines into the rock song. This was the seventies, a time when music genres were merging from all areas, fashion influenced music and music influenced fashion. Rock artists were using the new platform of colour television to be more creative than the previous decade of the smartly dressed Beatles. Inspiration came from superstars such as David Bowie for his inventiveness, Elton John for his showmanship and Robert Plant for his voice.

Bowie was always crossing mediums and when Mercury saw him perform in the stage version of *The Elephant Man* (1980) he was so overwhelmed with the performance it led to a collaboration on *Under Pressure* (1981) and a lifelong friendship.

FASHION AND MUSIC INTERLINKED

Mercury's music never faltered during his career, and part of his continuing popularity can be accredited to the reinvention of his stage fashions to suit and illuminate the music. Mercury claimed: "we're not like anyone else. If anything, we have more in common with Liza Minnelli than Led Zepelin...we're more in the showbiz tradition than the rock'n'roll tradition".

This was exemplified through the 1984 release of "I Want To Break Free", with the band dressed in drag for the accompanying video. This video was

banned on MTV in the US. It was considered to promote cross-dressing and transsexualism, demonstrating the manipulative and archaic attitude of an industry that should have supported freedom of expression. Ironically, the ban highlighted the song's presence, which became a worldwide success, recently surpassing 500 million views on YouTube.

Mercury experimented with costumes and

influencer of change.

THE WIDER IMPACT OF AN ICON

The impact of such bold experimentation has lived on through modern performance. If you look hard enough, you will see some artists donning his proverbial cap in the form of Lady Gaga, Katy Perry, and Mika to name just a few. His influence went far beyond the rock world and crossed the borders into opera and musical theatre, where he eventually worked with the Spanish operatic soprano, Montserrat Caballe, to create the Olympic theme song "Barcelona".

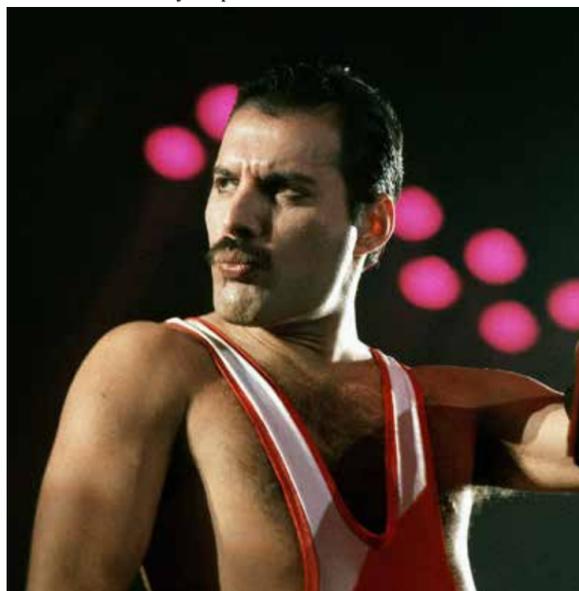
A true tribute to him after his death was made at the opening of the Barcelona Olympics in 1992 as the Olympic flame was lit. Grown men were seen in tears, throwing their expensive dinner jackets into the fountains as a mark of respect during the playing of *Barcelona*. Caballe and Mercury became very close friends during his last few years and he confided with her concerning his illness – as she explained. "He said, 'it is my duty to tell you this.' And I said, 'no, it is not a duty, but I am very thankful that you told me because it means I have your friendship, and this is most important as anything to me.'"

Mercury died of an Aids-related illness on November 24 1991 and in this case, the statement "he did not die in vain" is truly apt. One last Queen album, "Made in Heaven", was released in 1995, recorded just before his death, and his bandmates went on to highlight the growing problem of Aids by raising millions of pounds for Aids-related charities.

Mercury was a true artist who touched the world with his gift. I remember clearly that the day he died I was about to start delivering a lecture, and as the students walked in, I noticed a young man sobbing. I enquired if everything was okay, and he related the news to me. That was the effect Freddie Mercury had on his fan base.

In the early days of writing *Phantom of the Opera*, Andrew Lloyd Webber had only one person in mind to play the Phantom, and that was Freddie Mercury. He was invited to test for the role but never took it seriously, claiming eight nights a week would not suit his voice. Before Mercury died, however, he told Montserrat Caballe he always wanted to sing the aria from *Phantom of the Opera* with her. Caballe said "I will record it" - and she recorded it in the studio for him. Perhaps one day we might be able to hear it.

[the writer is Programme Leader for Performance, University of the West of Scotland]



looks even before *Bohemian Rhapsody*, often breaking rules in fashion at the height of the counterculture revolution. Jessica Bumpus from *Vogue* notes that "from fashion to film and even the John Lewis ad, Freddie Mercury's high-glam, theatrical and barrier-breaking style is having a moment, at just the right moment". Throughout his career, his "costumes" have influenced fashion. Even as recently as summer 2019 Mercury's music was used for the catwalk by both Balmain and Watanabe. The fashion collections featured demonstrated designs resembling some of the legendary sparkles, shoulder pads and provocative costumes Mercury originally wore.

Mercury's onstage persona was probably a demonstration of a man trying to "break free" of his own human limitations. Audience members probably saw the real Mercury on stage, rather than the showman. It's a tragedy that he did not live to witness and benefit from the current openness and understanding of today's society. He is still an ambassador for excellence in music and entertainment, but possibly more importantly as an

Dark side of Black Friday: the major drawbacks with this shopping bonanza

SARAH SCHIFFLING & NIKOLAOS VALANTASIS KANELLOS
theconversation.com

Black Friday is upon us again. It's one of the biggest shopping events of the year, although there are mixed signals about how successful it is likely to be in 2021. One recent study found that only a third of consumers plan to take part. The financial strain of COVID-19 is still evident, and inflation running at its highest level in a decade.

All the same, consumer confidence has been rising. According to GlobalData, shoppers are set to spend nearly £9.2 billion in the four days from Black Friday to Cyber Monday. This would still be a big increase on the £8 billion spent in 2020, and also the £8.6 billion in 2019.

Whether or not Black Friday ends up meeting retailers' expectations, it comes with a major problem: a huge proportion of the shopping will be happening online. Black Friday orders online rocketed during the COVID lockdowns of 2020, and are forecast to rise sharply again this year – GlobalData forecasts this will comprise almost two-thirds of all sales, compared to only 44% in 2019. This shift is bad news for the environment – and it will exacerbate the problems that the supply chain has been experiencing in recent months.

HOW WE'RE MISLED

Black Friday started in the mid-1960s as a post-Thanksgiving sale in the US. It has since gained popularity around the world. But the idea that it's one big day of discounts is misleading for several reasons.

The genuineness of deals is often questionable. And this year, reduced inventory, long shipping delays, and labour shortages are likely to mean that even fewer stores will offer deep

discounts than usual. A Which? study has found that the overwhelming majority of deals have been cheaper or the same price at other times of the year.

Many stores also extend the sales event from a single day to a longer period – often trying to tempt consumers for much of November. This can dilute the event in consumers' minds, though it does make it easier for operations to keep up with demand. This should at least be helping retailers in a year with so many supply chain problems. In best pandemic-speak, this is a way to "flatten the curve" and spread the pressure on staff, warehouses and logistics.

Meanwhile, some retailers are boycotting Black Friday entirely. About 85% of independent retailers in the UK will not participate, instead shutting down their websites for the day or donating part of their sales to charity. This is being billed as a protest against over-consumption and its environmental impact. It also highlights that smaller businesses are often at a disadvantage, unable to compete with the discounts of large retailers or handle the operational complexities.

GETTING PRODUCTS TO PEOPLE

Black Friday means that very high volumes of products need to travel through the various logistics channels. Spikes in demand are difficult to handle for supply chains at the best of times. And with a host of ongoing issues ranging from a shortage of microchips to not enough HGV drivers, retailers are under more pressure than usual.

This is generating a high demand for staff – especially in view of severe shortages in the labour market. Royal Mail and Amazon each announced in October that they were aiming to hire 20,000 temporary staff to cope with

consumer demand at the tail end of the year. Amazon has been offering one-off payments of up to £3,000 to attract new staff, while many retailers have been offering signing-on bonuses to drivers in recent months.

The increase in online shopping also reshapes urban delivery patterns – and bear in mind that the dominance of e-commerce means that many products will still be on their way for days after the sale. Rather than a large amount of products being sent to one store, shipments become smaller and more fragmented. Single items have to be dropped off at individual houses. This means that more drivers are needed to deliver the same amount of products to our doorsteps. Warehousing and packaging also becomes more complex.

One factor contributing to the lack of lorry drivers is that some qualified HGV drivers decided to switch to driving local delivery vans instead. Not only is demand for delivery drivers high, working hours can be more appealing. Consumers need to realise that all the parcels they order and the rows of empty supermarket shelves are all part of the same system.

BLACK DAY FOR THE ENVIRONMENT

The carbon emissions we create from buying a simple t-shirt online can be four times higher than buying it in a physical store. To put this in perspective, it would take 30 days for one common broadleaf tree to absorb the carbon emissions created by buying a T-shirt online (0.81kg).

The COP26 climate conference will have raised many consumers' awareness of the importance of securing global net zero by mid-century to keep 1.5°C global warming within reach. Unbridled consumerism with the impulse buys that Black Friday can create is a big contributor to

emissions.

It is true that many logistics companies are investing heavily in more environmentally friendly alternatives like electric vehicles or deliveries by cargo bike. The carbon footprint of home delivery should therefore at least be improving over time.

Nonetheless, consumers should be looking to alternatives. Many retailers provide a click and collect option. This allows customers to pick up their items at their convenience, for example on their way to work, without adding any extra trips and emissions.

Parcel lockers offer another convenient and environment-friendly alternative. They can help to reduce congestion by allowing multiple items to be delivered to one location rather than individually to customers' homes. They also have a high potential to save costs, lower required driver hours, and take complexity out of the delivery system.

Such arrangements also help reduce the number of failed deliveries. As many as 24% of e-commerce retailers admit that more than one in ten orders aren't delivered on the first attempt, creating further emissions for re-delivery or customer pick up. And virtually all of these organisations say that they sometimes have deliveries that fail altogether.

So before indulging in the next shopping spree, consumers need to take a moment to consider what happens behind the scenes. The pandemic has compounded our growing fondness for online shopping, and Black Friday looks likely to confirm that there is no end in sight.

[Sarah Schiffling is Senior Lecturer in Supply Chain Management, Liverpool John Moores University; Nikolaos Valantasis Kanellos is Lecturer in Logistics, Technological University Dublin]

Bihar, Jharkhand, UP Poorest States in India: NITI Aayog's poverty index

NEW DELHI: Bihar, Jharkhand and Uttar Pradesh have emerged as the poorest states in India, according to NITI Aayog's Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI).

As per the index, 51.91 per cent population of Bihar is poor, followed 42.16 per cent in Jharkhand, 37.79 per cent in Uttar Pradesh. While Madhya Pradesh (36.65 per cent) has been placed fourth in the index, Meghalaya (32.67 per cent) is at the fifth spot.

Kerala (0.71 per cent), Goa (3.76 per cent), Sikkim (3.82 per cent), Tamil Nadu (4.89 per cent) and Punjab (5.59 per cent) have registered the lowest poverty across India and are at the bottom of the index.

According to the report, India's national Multidimensional Poverty Index measure uses the globally accepted and robust methodology developed by the Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative (OPHI) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

Importantly, as a measure of multidimensional poverty, it cap-



tures multiple and simultaneous deprivation faced by households, it added.

The report said, India's Multidimensional Poverty Index has three equally weighted dimensions, health, education and standard of living - which are represented by 12 indicators namely nutrition, child and adolescent mortality, antenatal care, years of schooling, school attendance, cooking fuel, sanitation, drinking water, electric-

ity, housing, assets and bank accounts.

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) framework, adopted by 193 countries in 2015, has redefined development policies, government priorities, and metrics for measuring development progress across the world.

The Sustainable Development Goals framework, with 17 global goals and 169 targets, is significantly wider in scope and scale relative

to the Millennium Development Goals (MDG), its predecessor.

NITI Aayog Vice Chairman Rajiv Kumar in his foreword said, "The development of the National Multidimensional Poverty Index of India is an important contribution towards instituting a public policy tool which monitors multidimensional poverty, informs evidence-based and focused interventions, thereby ensuring that no one is left behind."

Mr Kumar further said this baseline report of India's first ever national Multidimensional Poverty Index measure is based on the reference period of 2015-16 of the National Family Health Survey (NFHS).

The national Multidimensional Poverty Index measure has been constructed by utilising 12 key components which cover areas such as health and nutrition, education and standard of living, he said.

Arunachal logs one fresh COVID-19 case

ITANAGAR, NOV 26 (PTI): Arunachal Pradesh registered a single COVID-19 case in the past 24 hours, while no fresh fatality was reported from anywhere in the state, a senior health official said on Friday.

A total of 54,944 people have recovered from the disease so far, he said.

The northeastern state's coronavirus tally stands at 55,258, and the death toll remained

at 280. Altogether, 11,97,453 samples have been tested for COVID-19, including 310 on Thursday, the official said, adding, the positivity rate has dipped to 0.32 per cent.

Arunachal Pradesh now has 34 active cases - the highest recorded in Tawang district (8).

State Immunisation Officer DimongPadung said 13,99,131 people have been inoculated in the state thus far.

11-year-old girl raped in UP's Amethi district

AMETHI, NOV 26 (PTI): An 11-year-old girl was allegedly raped by a man from her village here in Uttar Pradesh, police said on Friday.

The incident occurred on Tuesday when she had taken her goats to graze in a field, they said.

He mother has lodged a complaint against a 20-year-old man and the matter is being probed,

Deputy Superintendent of Police, Amethi, Arpit-Kapoor said.

According to her mother, the girl fainted as soon as she reached home and was admitted to the district hospital in Pratappgarh for treatment, police said.

The girl's mother said that after her daughter regained consciousness, she told her about the incident, they said.

Life convict killed in accident in Odisha

BERHAMPUR (ODISHA), NOV 26 (PTI): A 50-year-old life convict, who had unleashed a reign of terror in southern Odisha districts in the nineties, was killed in a road accident here, police said.

DillipNayak, out on parole for 90 days from May 26, died after his motorcycle collided with an unidentified vehicle at Saradha Bali area on Thurs-

day, they said. He was taken to MKCG Medical College and Hospital where doctors declared him dead.

Nayak was convicted for life by a local court in a murder case. His name featured in a number of murder and dacoity cases in districts like Ganjam, Gajapati and Kandhamal, police said.

He has been in jail since 1998.

Four killed as truck overturns in Bengal's Siliguri

SILIGURI, NOV 25 (PTI): A truck laden with boulders overturned in West Bengal's Siliguri area on Thursday evening, killing four people and injuring at least three others, police sources said.

A fire brigade team, on learning about the accident, rushed to Jaleshwari bazaar in Siliguri

and used a crane to move the toppled truck, under which several pedestrians lay trapped, the sources said. Seven people were rescued from the spot and rushed to two local hospitals in critical condition.

Two persons were declared "brought dead" at Siliguri District Hospital, while two others suc-

cumbed to their injuries at North Bengal Medical College & Hospital, the police sources said.

Identities of the deceased and injured were yet to be determined.

According to the sources, the truck driver lost control of the vehicle, following which it overturned.

LG launches 'smart schools' in tribal areas of J&K



JAMMU, NOV 26 (PTI): Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha on Thursday launched the government's ambitious project of transforming 200 schools into smart schools for tribal communities in Jammu and Kashmir at a cost of Rs 40 crore.

The modernisation of schools will be executed in two phases with the first 100 schools being transformed by March 2022 and the remaining by December 2022.

The LG also announced to provide scholarships to 21,000 children of Gaddi, Sippi, Dard, and Sheena communities who were deprived of the same for the last three decades.

In 1991, the Gaddi, Sippi communities were declared tribal but their children were denied scholarships. For three

decades they kept approaching governments but no decision was taken. This issue was brought to my notice just a few days back and we immediately decided that scholarships will be provided, he said.

Sinha congratulated the tribal communities and the concerned administrative departments for the historic beginning of a new era of educational empowerment of tribals in Jammu and Kashmir.

Our priority is to secure the future of tribal children. Smart schools in tribal and remote areas equipped with modern facilities will develop scientific temper in children and make them future ready, besides arresting the drop-out rate, said the LG.

The administration has formulated a frame-

work for the functioning of the smart schools. Members of the tribal communities, PRI representatives, and the people associated with voluntary organisations will be involved in the management so that these schools could perform the role of 'changemakers' in our society, said the LG.

Lives are changed when everything is connected. Tribal Education Plan, scholarships, smart schools will do justice to tribal communities in Jammu and Kashmir who were neglected for decades, the LG said.

These initiatives will also ensure that the members of tribal communities can keep pace with the revolutionary and rapid changes happening around them and connect themselves to the world, he added.

Book analyses 'political isolation' of Bengal

NEW DELHI, NOV 26 (PTI): Bengal planted the seed of nationalism and nurtured it into a sapling, eventually leading to the creation of the world's largest democracy but the state has been isolated from the national political scene for nearly 45 years, argues public policy analyst Sugato Hazra in his new book.

In "Losing the Plot: Political Isolation of West Bengal", he attempts to trace the state's changing leadership, political ideology and discourse over the years.

The author argues that this so-called seclusion encouraged a move towards undemocratic systems and procedures which naturally led to socio-economic degradation of a state that once took the lead in national pride and identity.

He raises pertinent questions about the contemporary state of politics in West Bengal. Claiming that West Bengal has been isolated from the national political scene for the last 44 years, he sets about trying to find out how the state ended up becoming isolated.

"Bengalis have come a long way since the early days of the British rule and the espousal of English education to the rule of a regional political party led by the first female head of the state," he writes in the book, published by Nyogi Books imprint Paper Missile.

He says West Bengal is a story of an "unending descent - economically, culturally and politically. It is the story of a state that has lost its plot".

The book has 12 chapters that look into the complicated political history of the state.

The first chapter traces the birth of modern ideas and nationalism in the state of Bengal and how these spread across India.

In the second chapter, Bengal's move towards neo-nationalism and its role in creating a separate line of political movement have been highlighted.

The third chapter shows how the Bengal leadership had differences with national politics particularly after Mahatma Gandhi entered the scene. The tussle over legislative entry and revolutionary politics between Bengal's popular leader Chittaranjan Das and Gandhi and the change in the political landscape after the untimely death of Das explain the eventual loss of prominence of the state in national politics.

The days of confusion in Bengal after the system of elected government was introduced are captured in the fourth chapter.

The fifth chapter outlines the internal dissension and infighting within the Congress, highlighting its failure not only to protect its turf but conceding the same. The author focuses on the division of the state with catastrophic consequences for many Bengalis and he underlines the failure to bring in relief for them thereby delineating the sorry state of the people and its politics.

The beginning of democratic rule under Bidhan Chandra Ray was turbulent and a narrative in slow motion of the receding national political party (the Congress) and the emergence of a regional political narrative.

With the passing away of charismatic leaders the confusion that ruled the state as also the nation and its effect on the lives of Bengalis are the focus of the seventh chapter.

This chapter points out how a weak and internally divided leadership failed in administering the state and, in fact, created multiple prob-

lems. The experiment of an unwieldy coalition government - consisting of political opposition to the Congress with no ideological harmony - and the harmful repercussions on the people of the state are neatly summed up.

The next chapter - chapter eight - captures the institutionalisation of violence as part of the politics of the state under a Congress government that came not through popular mandate but through its sheer control over violence - the most critical turning point in West Bengal's political history.

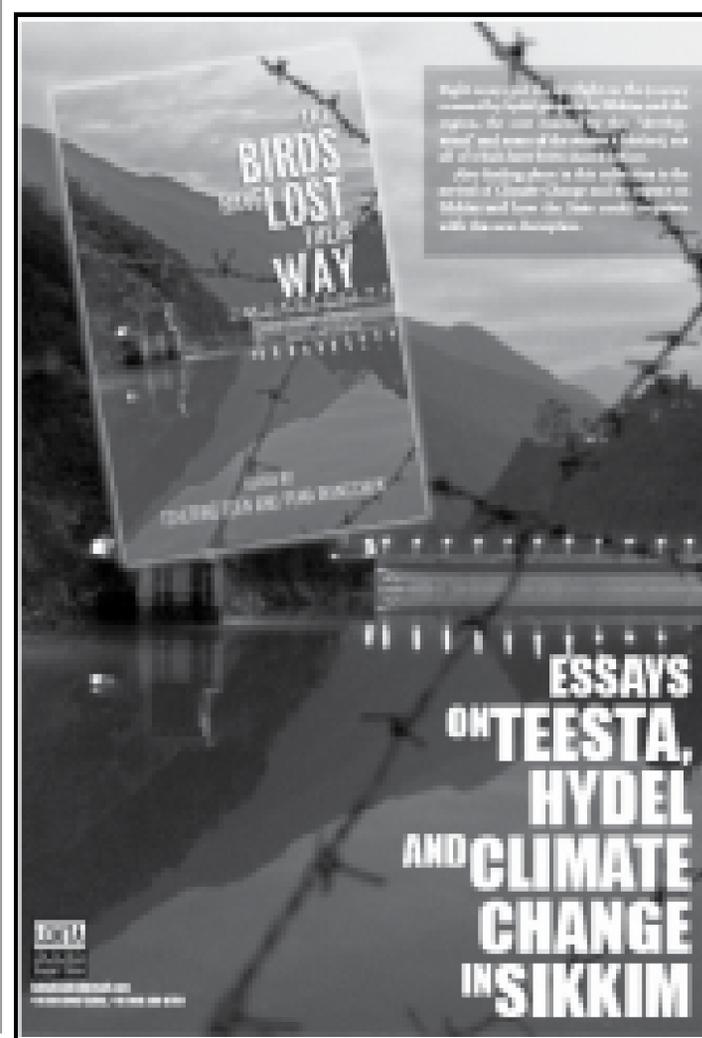
Chapter nine also explains the darkness in the system not readily acknowledged in popular discourse while chapter ten talks about the weaknesses which finally exposed the Left Front government and led to a change of governance - the Trinamool Congress led by Mamata Banerjee came to power in 2011.

The change in government, as seen in chapter eleven, was not exactly for the better but proved deeply isolationist hurting the betterment of the people of West Bengal, the book claims.

The final chapter of the book sums up the entire historical process, raising serious questions about the state's future.

Finally, in a post-script the author analyses the 2021 West Bengal state assembly election outcomes and its ramifications, noting that, "The extreme political bitterness between the TMC and the BJP escalated during the 2021 state election and it continues to play out even after the election."

In conclusion, the book makes the point that, "Politically West Bengal has opted for isolation from Hindi heartland politics, thereby holding aloft its distinct regional identity."



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Manisha scored dream goal after battling multiple odds

NEW DELHI, NOV 26 (PTI): Manisha Kalyan was up against multiple odds long before she sold a feint to her marker and fired a left footer into the bottom corner of Brazilian net in India's first match of the four-nation tournament in faraway Manaus.

The Indian women's football team scored once and kept mighty Brazil at bay till late in the first half but eventually lost 1-6.

Winger Manishaequalised in the eighth minute for India after Debora Oliveira had put the 2007 World Cup runners-up in the lead in the very first minute of the match at the Arena da Amazonia.

"It was a dream come true for me to play against Brazil and to score against them was the icing on the cake," said Manisha, who was later seen getting clicked with Brazil's legendary midfielder Formiga Mota, who was felicitated by all parties present after the game, as she hung up her boots.

Needless to say, it was a big deal for the Indian scorer.

"To be on the same pitch as her (Formiga) was a big deal. I hope we can learn from this experience and do better in the next game," added Manisha.

"We always knew it was going to be difficult against a team of Brazil's quality. But as soon as we stepped onto the field, we forgot about the pressure. That is what we need to do in the upcoming matches and play with an open mind."

Like many female footballers from across the world, Manisha's journey too had its share of challenges right from her early days, in the small village of Muggowal in Punjab's Hoshiarpur district.

"I've been playing since I was 13, when I switched over from athletics to football after my coach Brahmji-sir asked me to change sports. The teamwork involved in football was really interesting to me, and I fell in love with this game," Manisha recalled.

While not everyone from her village supported Manisha's decision to take up the game, the player had the full support of her parents.

"Many in my village did not want me to keep playing. A girl playing football was just not acceptable to them. But my parents stuck right by my side and game me all the support I needed," she said.

The first time Manisha came into the national team fold was ahead of the BRICS U-17 Women's Football Cup in South Africa, and since then, the powerful attacker has not looked back.

"Yes, we had played Brazil in that tournament too, but that was a different kind of a game. Most of us were new to that level of football. But tonight's match was a memorable one for us.

India beaten 1-6 by mighty Brazil in women's 4-nation football tournament

MANAUS (BRAZIL), NOV 26 (PTI): The Indian women's football team scored one goal and kept mighty Brazil at bay till late in the first half but eventually lost 1-6 in its first match of the four-nation international tournament here on Friday.

Manisha Kalyanequalised in the eighth minute for India after Debora Oliveira had put the 2007 World Cup runners-up in the lead in the very first minute of the match.

Giovana Costa put Brazil in the lead again in the 36th minute to give the home side the advantage at the breather.

Brazil, however, pumped in four more goals in the second half through Ariadina Borges (52nd and 81st), Kerolin Ferraz (54th) and Geysse Ferreira (76th) to win the match with a tennis-like scoreline.

The match marked the international retirement of legendary midfielder Formiga at 43 year of age after playing 26 years and 233 games for Brazil. She came as a substitute with barely 15 minutes left in Friday's match at Arena da Amazonia.

Nicknamed the "ant" for her playing style, Brazil's most-capped player Formiga played in seven World Cups and as many Olympics, after women's football was added in the 1996 Games.

She was part of the 1999 World Cup bronze-winning Brazil team and the 2007 World Cup silver medal winning side. She has also won two Olympic silver medals, in 2004 and 2008.

Ranked seventh in the world as against 57th of India, Brazil expectedly were the far dominant side with



more than 70 per cent ball possession. Manisha's lone goal and goalkeeper Aditi Chauhan's strong performance were the bright spots for India.

Brazil got off to a flying start and took the lead in the first minute itself. Defender Daiana's long ball from the back found skipper Debinha whose initial effort was saved by Aditi Chauhan but the Indian custodian could do nothing about the rebound.

The Indian women roared back seven minutes later with a thrilling counter-attack to level the scores. Manisha picked up the ball on the left

in her own half and ran the length of the field before finishing clinically, sending a grounder into the far post bottom corner.

Brazil surged into the lead in the 36th minute when Ariadina Borges ran down the right-wing and found Duda with a cutback. The ball bounced off, and Giovana Costa was on hand to slot it into the net.

Changing over, a quick-fire double at the start of the second half put Brazil in a commanding position. Ariadina made it 1-3 in the 52nd minute and two minutes later, Kerolin Ferraz added to the cushion.

Geysse then made no mistake

from close range in the 76th minute. Five minutes later, Ariadina got her second of the match as she tapped in a rebound after Formiga's shot was saved.

For Formiga, it was an emotional moment as her mother flew down to watch her play for Brazil for the last time.

Her national team-mate Marta Vieira da Silva, considered the greatest woman footballer in the world, presented Formiga a bouquet in a picture on Brazil women's football Twitter handle.

"Brazil's Queen pays homage to Brazil's Godmother," read of com-

ment by FIFA Women's World Cup on that picture.

India head coach Thomas Dennerby was impressed with Manisha's goal, terming it "one of the highest quality on a football pitch."

"Individually, it is a top-class goal. It gave us a boost after conceding early on and that allowed us to come back," he said.

"Losing to Brazil is nothing to be ashamed of. We take the good things with us. It was a huge experience for them and that will help in the upcoming games."

India play Chile (November 29) and Venezuela (December 2).

He is not bowling so can we call him all-rounder? asks Kapil on Hardik Pandya



KOLKATA, NOV 26 (PTI): Legendary former India captain Kapil Dev on Friday asked whether Hardik Pandya can be called an all-rounder given that he has not been bowling as much as the role demands.

A vital cog in India's scheme of things in white-ball cricket, the flamboyant Pandya bowled in just two matches in the recent T20 World Cup where India went out in the group stage itself.

He is also under fire for not revealing the extent of his several fitness issues and was dropped from the home T20 series against New Zealand, which India won 3-0.

"He has to do both the jobs to be considered an all-rounder. He is not bowling so can we call him all-rounder? Let him bowl, he has come out from the injury," Kapil said at the Royal Calcutta Golf Course here.

"He is an extremely important batter to the country, for bowling he has to play a lot more matches, perform and bowl and then we will say," added India's first World Cup-winning captain.

Kapil also predicted that Rahul Dravid the coach will be a bigger

success than the immensely accomplished Dravid the cricketer.

Dravid began his new innings as the Indian team's head coach in the ongoing series against New Zealand, a post he has been given till the 2023 ODI World Cup in India.

"He's a good man, a good cricketer. He will do a better job as a coach than as a cricketer because in cricket nobody has done better than him. I'm just keeping my fingers crossed," Kapil said.

Dravid earlier served as the head of National Cricket Academy and was also the coach of India's Under-19 and A teams, nurturing several young talents who went on to represent the country with distinction.

Talking about Dravid as the chief coach, Kapil further said: "You can't just judge one after his debut, you don't go by one performance. Over a period of time, what Rahul will do, we will come to know. You only think positive."

The 62-year-old was here as the Board member of Professional Golf Tour of India that is conducting the ICC RCGC Open Golf Championship.

Asked about his favourite all-rounders,

Kapil named Ravichandran Ashwin and Ravindra Jadeja.

"I just go to watch cricket these days and enjoy the game. I don't see from your perspective. My job is to enjoy the sport. "I would say Ashwin, hats off to him," he said, adding Jadeja's name. Kapil, however, rued that Jadeja's bowling has not been at its best of late.

"Jadeja... What a fabulous cricketer he is, but unfortunately he improved as a batter and come down as a bowler to me.

"When he started, he was a far better bowler but now he's a far better batter. Every time India needs him, he will get runs. But he's not performing as a bowler," Kapil said.

The former India captain also hailed Shreyas Iyer for his debut century in the ongoing first Test against the Black Caps.

"When any youngster makes a hundred on debut, it means the sport is going in the right direction. We need cricketers like him.

"He waited for almost four-five years to play for India. Finally he got a chance and came out with flying colours," he concluded.

Manpreet to lead India in Asian Champions Trophy hockey

BHUBANESWAR, NOV 26 (PTI): Olympic bronze medal-winning captain Manpreet Singh will lead a 20-member Indian men's hockey team, which doesn't feature veteran goalkeeper PR Sreejesh, at next month's Hero Asian Champions Trophy in Dhaka.

While Manpreet will lead the side, star dragflicker Harmanpreet Singh has been named as the vice-captain for the tournament, to be held from December 14 to 22.

The squad for the tournament, which is India's first outing after the Tokyo Olympics, has plenty of new faces.

Talismanic goalkeeper Sreejesh has been rested and Krishan Bahadur Pathak and Suraj Karkera will take the place under the goal.

Harmanpreet will be in charge of the Indian defence in the company of Gurinder Singh, Jarmanpreet Singh, Nilam Sanjeev Xess, Dipsan Tirkey, Varun Kumar and Mandeep Mor.

The midfield will be manned by Manpreet alongside Hardik Singh, Jaskaran Singh, Sumit, Rajkumar

Pal, Shamsher Singh and the experienced Akashdeep Singh.

The forwardline will be led by Lalit Kumar Upadhyay, Dilpreet Singh, Gursahibjit Singh and Shilanand Lakra.

Defending champions India will begin their campaign on the opening day against Korea. The other teams in the tournament are Japan, Malaysia, Pakistan and hosts Bangladesh.

Talking about the composition of the side, chief coach Graham Reid said, "While selecting this team we now must have our eyes on the future. It takes a deep and strong squad to build sustained success so players have to be given opportunities to perform."

"We have picked a team that has a good mix of experience and younger guys who will have their chance to show what they can do.

"It is a hectic match schedule and given the COVID situation FIH and AHF have allowed 18 players to be chosen each game out of a greater squad of 20."

India will play their opening match against Korea on December 14, followed by games against hosts Bangladesh (December 15), arch-rivals Pakistan (December 17), Malaysia (December 18) and Japan (December 19).

The semifinals are scheduled for December 21 followed by the title clash on the next day.

In the previous edition of the event held in Muscat, Oman, India had jointly lifted the title along with Pakistan as the final was called off due to incessant rains.

Indian team:
Goalkeepers: Krishan Bahadur Pathak, Suraj Karkera.

Defenders: Harmanpreet Singh, Gurinder Singh, Jarmanpreet Singh, Dipsan Tirkey, Varun Kumar, Nilam Sanjeev Xess, Mandeep Mor.

Midfielders: Hardik Singh, Manpreet Singh, Jaskaran Singh, Sumit, Rajkumar Pal, Akashdeep Singh, Shamsher Singh.

Forwards: Lalit Kumar Upadhyay, Dilpreet Singh, Gursahibjit Singh, Shilanand Lakra.

Sindhu fights her way into Indonesia Open semifinal

BALI, NOV 26 (PTI): India's two-time Olympic medal-winning shuttler P V Sindhu came back from a game down to beat South Korea's Sim Yujin and enter the semifinals of the Indonesia Open Super 1000 tournament here on Friday.

Third seed Sindhu, the reigning world champion, had to toil hard to get the better of Yujin 14-21 21-19 21-14 in the quarterfinal that lasted an hour and six minutes.

The Indian will now play the winner of the other quarterfinal between Japan's Asuka Takahashi and second seed Ratchanok Intanon of Thailand in the USD 850,000 event.

The other India in fray, B Sai Praneeth will play Olympic champion and former world No.1 Viktor Axelsen of Denmark in the men's singles quarterfinals later in the day.

Praneeth, world no.16, staved off a spirited fight from France's world no 70 Christo Popov, claiming a 21-17 14-21 21-19 win in a gruelling second round match on Thursday.

India's challenge also exists in the men's doubles event where the sixth seeded pairing of Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty, ranked 11, will square off against the Malaysian combination of Goh Sze Fei and Nurlizzuddin in the quarterfinals later on Friday.

It was not smooth sailing from Sindhu against Yujin. The Indian started confidently racing to a 7-1 lead before the Japanese pocketed six straight points to draw the first game level.

But once Yujin took a slender 11-10 lead at the break, she didn't look back and won the game comfortably to grab the early momentum.

The Japanese continued in the same vein in the second game and matched Sindhu stroke for stroke till the first seven points before the Indian upped her game.

Sindhu displayed better control and authority over her strokes and engaged her rival in long rallies to surge ahead 14-8 before Yujin fought back.

Sindhu used her vast experience and held her nerves to draw the contest level.

In the decider, Sindhu enjoyed the early exchanges to race to a comfortable 11-4 lead but the Japanese secured seven consecutive points to make it 11-11.

Second group of Iraqis return after failed Europe gamble

IRBIL, IRAQ (AP): Defeated but somewhat relieved, a second group of Iraqis returned home to northern Iraq on Friday after a failed quest to reach the European Union, citing maltreatment and abuse suffered at the hands of Belarusian authorities.

Over 170 people returned on a flight that landed in Irbil International Airport after 2 a.m. in Iraq's northern Kurdish-run region. A group of children showed reporters their hands with wounds and infections. A returned migrant lowered his surgical mask to embrace his children who came to meet him at the airport.

Iraq's northern Kurdistan region has been shaken by a migrant crisis resulting from thousands of people from around the Middle East — a disproportionate number of them Iraqis — trying to cross into the EU through a backdoor opened by non-EU member Belarus. Most of the repatriated Iraqis from Belarus have been Iraqi Kurds. It is the second repatriation flight to return from Minsk. Last week, 430 Iraqis returned home.

Another flight was expected to arrive at 7 a.m. Friday morning, according to a tweet by LawkGhafuri, spokesman for the semi-autonomous Kurdistan government. Word on that flight has yet to emerge. Some cited the cruelty of



Belarusian border authorities — from beatings to threats — and attempts to push them to cross into neighboring EU countries Poland and Lithuania. They had hoped to cross, just not under threats from the Belarusians.

Thousands of migrants remain stranded between borders. Most are fleeing conflict or hopelessness in the Middle East and aim to reach Germany or other western European countries. But Poland has taken a hard line about letting

them in, and Belarus didn't want them returning to the capital of Minsk or otherwise settling in the country.

"We are very thankful for arriving home, because the humanity and justice that people say about Europe is far from reality. It is not true at all. We have been beaten badly," said Awat Nassir, a returnee at the airport.

"Now people are regretting they went there and demand to come back home, because it is 15 degrees below zero in

Belarus now," he said, an exaggeration of the current temperature of around minus four degrees, but which may feel colder due to the damp and wind chill factor.

Iraqi Kurds in large numbers have chosen to make the perilous journey by selling their belongings to pay smugglers. They cite rising unemployment, endemic corruption and a recent economic crisis that slashed state salaries in the Kurdish-run region as driving their desire to leave.

Budget shortfalls spurred by a crash in oil prices last year has made life more difficult for Iraqi Kurds. The autonomous region relies on budget transfers from the federal government to pay public wages, but these have been intermittent because of a long-standing dispute over Kurdistan's independent oil export policy. As a result, austerity measures were introduced and wages were slashed last year.

Iraqi Kurds have taken to the streets to protest salary cuts and budget shortfalls. Water cannons were used to disperse dozens of student protesters in Sulaymaniyah province this week. They were mostly university students demanding the Kurdistan Regional Government pay their student allowances fallen into arrears.

The West has accused Belarus President Alexander Lukashenko of using the migrants as pawns to destabilize the 27-nation bloc in retaliation for its sanctions on his authoritarian regime. Belarus denies engineering the crisis, which has seen migrants entering the country since summer and then trying to cross into Poland, Lithuania and Latvia.

"The most difficult thing is when you see children stuck there," said Emad Hussein, another returnee. "It is very hard."

German air force to move ICU patients as COVID cases rise

BERLIN (AP): The German air force will begin assisting the transfer of intensive care patients Friday as the government warned that the situation in the country is more serious than at any point in the pandemic. Citing the sharp rise in cases, Health Minister Jens Spahn said contacts between people need to be sharply reduced to curb the spread of the virus.

"The situation is dramatically serious, more serious than it's been at any point in the pandemic," he told reporters in Berlin. Spahn said Germany was having to organize large-scale transfers of patients within the country for the first time since the outbreak began in early 2020.

German news agency dpa reported that a Luftwaffe A310 medevac plane will fly seriously ill patients from the southern town of Memmingen to North Rhine-Westphalia state Friday afternoon. Hospitals in southern and eastern regions of Germany have warned they are running out of intensive care beds because of the large number of seriously ill COVID-19 patients.

The country's disease control agency said 76,414 newly confirmed cases were reported in the past 24 hours. The Robert Koch Institute, a government agency, said Germany also had 357 new deaths from COVID-19, taking the total since the start of the outbreak to 100,476.

Responding to a newly discovered variant that's been spreading in South Africa, Spahn said airlines coming from there would only be able to transport German citizens.

Japan seeks extra defense budget amid China, N Korea concern

TOKYO (AP): Japan's Cabinet on Friday approved a 770 billion yen (\$6.8 billion) request for an extra defense budget through March to expedite the purchase of missiles, anti-submarine rockets and other weapons amid rising concern over the escalation of military activities by China, Russia and North Korea.

The request, still pending parliamentary approval, brings Japan's military spending for the current year to a new high of more than 6.1 trillion yen (\$53.2 billion), up 15% from 5.31 trillion yen in 2020.

The Defense Ministry says its "defense power reinforcement and acceleration package" is designed to speed up deployment of some of the key equipment from the 2022 budget request. The goal is to beef up Japan's defenses against North Korea's missile threat and China's increasingly assertive maritime activity around remote Japanese southwestern islands, officials said.

Japan has also raised



concerns over recent joint military activities by China and Russia near its waters and airspace.

A fleet of two Chinese H-6 fighters and two Russian Tu-95s flew from the Sea of Japan to the East China Sea and to the Pacific Ocean, triggering Japanese Self-Defense Force jets to scramble, Defense Minister Nobuo Kishi said Tuesday.

The budget request includes nearly 100 billion yen (\$870 million) for the advanced version of PAC-3 mobile surface-

to-air missile interceptors and related equipment, as well as cruise missiles.

Separately, more than 800 billion yen (\$7 billion) will go to speed up the purchase of reconnaissance planes and equipment, including three P-1s, equipment for P-3Cs and vertical launch systems to be placed on two destroyers, to step up surveillance around Japan's territorial waters and airspace.

Japan has been stepping up defenses in its

southwestern regions and islands, including Ishigaki Island, where a new military base with a land-to-sea missile defense system will be operational. Ishigaki is north of the uninhabited Japanese-controlled Senkaku Islands, which are also claimed by China, which calls them Diaoyu.

Tokyo regularly protests the Chinese coast guard's presence near Senkaku Islands.

The ministry also plans to build housing for ground troops on Ish-

igaki Island.

The combined budget for 2021 will be just over 1% of Japan's GDP, keeping its customary cap. Prime Minister Fumio Kishida has said he is open to doubling Japan's military spending to cope with the worsening security environment.

The extra budget also aims to ease burden on Japanese defense equipment and parts suppliers that are struggling to maintain the country's dwindling industry, officials said.

Critics say Japan, as the world's fastest-aging country with a shrinking population, should allocate more money toward health care and other services.

Japan's military spending and capabilities have grown continuously since former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe took office in December 2012, and has since risen by 17%. Abe's government allowed Japan's military to be more involved in international affairs by adopting a new interpretation in 2015 of the war-renouncing Article 9 of the constitution.

Israel warns of 'emergency' after detecting new virus strain

JERUSALEM (AP): Prime Minister Naftali Bennett said Israel is "on the threshold of an emergency situation" on Friday after authorities detected the country's first case of a new coronavirus variant in a traveler who returned from Malawi.

The Health Ministry said the traveler and two other suspected cases, all of whom had been vaccinated, were placed in isolation.

A new coronavirus variant has been detected in South Africa that scientists say is a concern because of its high number of mutations and rapid spread among young people in Gauteng, the country's most populous province. At a Cabinet meeting convened

Friday to discuss the new variant, Israeli Prime Minister Naftali Bennett said it is more contagious and spreads more rapidly than the delta variant. He said authorities were still gathering information on whether it evades vaccines or is deadlier.

"We are currently at the threshold of an emergency situation," he said. "I ask everyone to be prepared and to fully join in the work around the clock."

Late Thursday, Israel declared South Africa and six other African nations to be "red countries" from which foreign nationals are barred from traveling to Israel. Israelis are prohibited from visiting those countries and

those returning from them must undergo a period of isolation. Israel launched one of the world's first and most successful vaccination campaigns late last year, and nearly half the population has received a booster shot. Israel recently expanded the campaign to include children as young as 5.

But the country only recently managed to contain a wave of infections driven by the highly contagious delta variant.

Israel has reported at least 8,182 deaths since the start of the pandemic. It currently has more than 7,000 active cases, including 120 who are seriously ill, according to the Health Ministry.

France lashes out at Britain's latest proposal on migrants



CALAIS, FRANCE (AP): France reacted with fury Friday to Britain's latest proposals for dealing with the deadly flow of migrants between the shores as the war of words between the two countries over the dangerous crossings across the English Channel ramped up further.

In a public letter to French President Emmanuel Macron, British Prime Minister Boris Johnson laid out a series of proposals of how the two countries can deal with the crisis, following the sinking of a boat on Wednesday that saw 27 people die.

The letter, which was made public on social media, was deemed "unacceptable" by French government spokesman Gabriel Attal. As a result, he said Britain's Home Secretary Priti Patel was no longer welcome at a European meeting on Sunday to discuss the problem.

"We are sick of double-speak," Attal said. Among his recommendations, Johnson asked that France take back all migrants who cross illegally from its shores to Britain.

Attal dismissed the idea as "clearly not what we need to solve this problem." He said the letter "doesn't correspond at all" with discussions that Johnson and Macron had Wednesday after the tragedy.

Johnson also set out proposals for British border officials to begin patrols on the beaches of northern France as

early as next week — something Paris has long resisted. He also recommended joint or reciprocal maritime patrols in each other's territorial waters and airborne surveillance by manned flights and drones.

British Transport Secretary Grant Shapps said Johnson had made the proposals in "good faith" and urged the French to reconsider their decision.

"I don't think there is anything inflammatory to ask for close cooperation with our nearest neighbours," he told BBC radio. "The proposal was made in good faith. I can assure our French friends of that and I hope that they will reconsider meeting up to discuss it."

The French move marks a sharp deterioration in relations between the two countries which have for weeks become increasingly strained by the migrant crisis in the Channel.

U.K. officials have criticized France for rejecting their offer of British police and border officers to conduct joint patrols along the channel coast with French police. French authorities say Britain is stoking the crisis because it is too easy for migrants to remain in the country and work if they manage to cross the channel.

More than 23,000 people have already entered the U.K. on small boats this year, up from 8,500 last year and just 300 in 2018, according to data compiled by Parliament.

CORONAVIRUS
PRECAUTIONS & SAFETY TIPS
DON'T LOWER THE GUARD

LOCKDOWN HAS BEEN LIFTED, BUT UNFORTUNATELY, THE THREAT OF COVID-19 HAS NOT YET SUBSIDED.

As we adopt to the new normal, here is a reminder of the precautions you must take-

WEAR A MASK

Always wear a mask to prevent droplets from going outside

GET A FLU VACCINATION

Get your flu shot to develop an immune response before flu season begins, particularly if you have comorbidities

WASH YOUR HANDS

Wash your hands often, for about 20 seconds each, with soap & carry a sanitizer

MAINTAIN SOCIAL DISTANCING

Stay at least 6 feet (about 2 arm's length) from other people

GET TESTED

Get tested if you have symptoms of COVID-19. Stay at home until you get the result.

COVER YOUR MOUTH & NOSE WHILE SNEEZING, OR COUGHING

Before stepping outside, make sure to carry a handkerchief or a pocket of tissues.

FOLLOW PRECAUTIONS BEFORE STEPPING OUT

Carry your sanitizer, water bottle, mask, avoid large, crowded, crowded areas

CHECK YOUR TEMPERATURE

Monitor your temperature on regular basis

My feelings for Hawkeye have only deepened: Jeremy Renner

NEW DELHI, NOV 26 (PTI): It's been a decade since Jeremy Renner took on the role of Hawkeye and the actor says he is grateful for all the experiences that came his way while playing the character in multiple Marvel Cinematic Universe (MCU) films.

Renner played Clint Barton aka Hawkeye, an expert marksman and archer, for the first time in 2011's "Thor" before becoming one of the central figures of the MCU with "The Avengers" (2012).

Since then, the 50-year-old actor has essayed the role in "Avengers: Age of Ultron", "Captain America: Civil War" and "Avengers: Endgame", earning his own dedicated army of Marvel fans.

Now, he returns with the character for Disney+ Hotstar series "Hawkeye", which also stars Hailee Steinfeld as Kate Bishop.

"My feelings for this character have only deepened. This series is a great way to express the character, over the six hours and I was very grateful for that. My daughter realises what the heck I do for a living, really grateful for that. This will be the first thing she's ever seen me do.

"I love the life experiences that it's bestowed upon me. And very blessed for that and for the friendships and life experiences that I got around the globe," Renner told PTI in a group interview over Zoom.

"Hawkeye", which started streaming on Disney+ Hotstar from Wednesday, is set two years after the events of "Avengers: Endgame".

It follows Barton who must partner with Kate Bishop to confront enemies from his past as Ronin in order to get back to his family in time for Christmas. Renner, whose impressive acting re-

sume also include critically-acclaimed movies such as "The Hurt Locker", "The Town", "Arrival", "The Wind River" and two "Mission: Impossible" movies, said the show allowed him to venture into uncharted territories with the character: "Personally, with this series, I got to explore different sides of him and be able to share with fans because the

So it's kind of a nicer introduction. And I can tell that it widens the lens here a little bit."

Renner also praised Steinfeld, one of the emerging stars of Hollywood, and said he was glad to have her as his partner-in-crime.

"I love, appreciate, respect and admire Hailee for her intelligence, her



fans are really the ones that make this happen. I'm very thankful and happy to explore all these other kinds of fun sides and darker sides."

Besides, the show also cements a lot of things that audiences already know about Barton, Renner added.

"I liked the sense of humour and it's also with the different characters that are introduced in the show. They bring up different sides of him, which I think are really great.

"I love starting out in this world as not in superhero mode and with the end of the world scenario, which is nice. It's like you get a cup of coffee first and enjoy the day and then the aliens come.

skillset, and courageousness. I adore her kindness towards her family and her connection to her family.

"I love to witness her expression of her spirit through art. I think she's a tremendous actress and I got to work with her. And so it was pretty amazing to witness," he said.

"Hawkeye" has been created by Jonathan Igla and co-directed by Rhys Thomas and filmmaker duo Bert & Bertie.

The show also stars Vera Farmiga, Fra Fee, Tony Dalton, Zahn McClarnon, Brian d'Arcy James, and Alaqua Cox.

"Hawkeye" is available for streaming on Disney+ Hotstar in English, Hindi, Tamil, Telugu and Malayalam.



The BIG PICTURE

SEEING THE FUCHSIA! The Duchess of Cambridge, Kate Middleton looks chic in a pink turtleneck and matching coat, paired with black slacks and heels while visiting Nower Hill High School in London.

Katrina Kaif-starrer 'Phone Bhoot' to release in July 2022



MUMBAI, NOV 26 (PTI): Bollywood actors Katrina Kaif, Ishaan Khatter and Siddhant Chaturvedi's "Phone Bhoot" will debut in cinema halls in July 2022, the makers announced on Friday.

The supernatural-comedy is directed by Gurmeet Singh of "Mirzapur" fame and produced by actor-filmmaker Farhan Akhtar and Ritesh Sidhwani's Excel Entertainment. In a statement, Excel

Entertainment said "Phone Bhoot" will release in cinemas on July 15, 2022.

The film, which marks the first collaboration between Kaif, Khatter and Chaturvedi, is written by Ravi Shankar and Jasvinder Singh Bath.

Besides this film, Kaif, 38, will be teaming up with Akhtar for his directorial venture a road trip movie named "Jee Le Zaraa" along-

side Priyanka Chopra Jonas and Alia Bhatt and the third part of Tiger franchise.

Chaturvedi will be re-teaming with Excel Entertainment for romantic action-thriller "Yudhra" and an untitled movie with filmmaker Shakun Batra in which he features alongside Deepika Padukone.

Khatter's next is war drama Pippa, helmed by director Raja Krishna Menon.

Bryan Adams tests positive for Covid-19 for second time

LOS ANGELES, NOV 26 (PTI): Canadian musician Bryan Adams has once again tested positive for coronavirus. The 62-year-old singer tested positive soon after arriving in Milan, Italy ahead of the unveiling of the 2022 Pirelli calendar, which he photographed.

This marks the second time the singer has caught the virus in the past month.

"Here I am, just arrived in Milan, and I've tested positive for the second time in a month for Covid. So it's off to the hospital for me. Thanks for all your support," Adams wrote on Instagram on Thursday.

The singer also shared pictures of him at the Milan Malpensa airport and in an ambulance.

Adams also tested positive for COVID-19 on October 30 when he had to pull out from his scheduled appearance at Tina Turner's Rock and Roll Hall of Fame induction ceremony.

The singer was to perform a medley of songs including "It's Only Love", which is a duet between Adams and Turner from his 1984 album.

Veteran lyricist Bichu Thirumala passes away at 80

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, NOV 26 (PTI): Eminent lyricist Bichu Thirumala, known for a handful of evergreen superhit songs in Malayalam cinema which still make music buffs nostalgic, passed away at a private hospital here following a cardiac arrest on Friday, family sources said.

He was 80 and was suffering from various health issues and had been under ventilator support for some days, they said.

A prolific lyricist who penned various genres of songs from lullabies and romantic songs to fast numbers and devotional ones, Thirumala had over 3000 film songs and about 2000 devotional songs to his credit during his career spanning over three decades from 1970s.

Born on February 13, 1942 in Sasthamangalam in the capital city, he was originally named as B Sivasankaran Nair but he later adopted his pet name 'Bichu' while turning into a creative career as a lyricist.

After entering tinseltown as an assistant director of filmmaker M Krishnan Nair for the 1970 movie "Sabarimala Sree Dharma Sashta", Bichu Thirumala later tried his luck as a lyricist for the movie "Bhagavandam", which however was not released.

"Akkaldama", produced by eminent actor Madhu, was the first film to be released with songs written by Thirumala.

He worked with a handful of iconic music composers including the legendary A R Rahman and M S Baburaj during his stint as lyricist.

The lyrics of the evergreen popular song "Padakali", composed by Rahman in the Mohanlal-starrer Yodha, was penned by Thirumala.

He won the state awards for the best lyricist in 1981 and 1991 for the movies "Thrishana", "Thenum Vayambum" and "Kadinjoolkalyanam" respectively.

Thirumala also tried his hand in script writing in the movie "Istapraneswari" and dialogues in the film "Shakthi".

He is survived by wife Prasanna and son Suman.

Condoling his death, Governor Arif Mohammed Khan tweeted, "Sad to know about the demise of Shri Bichu Thirumala, noted lyricist and poet whose melodies penned over three decades enthralled all sections of people alike."

Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan remembered Thirumala's contributions as lyricist and said he was a writer who had popularised the film songs and made them closer to the people.

Aries:

Think about all the times the team has shown up for you, Aries. All the times they have supported your growth at their own cost. You're being called to stand by them this time around. Trust that what you will gain is far greater than what you could potentially lose. Freelancers and small business owners are being encouraged to get out of their bubble too, and connect with fellow warriors who match their vibration. If the omens are anything to go by, exchange of ideas could lead to magnificent findings in the days to come. Tip: Trust in the greater good than the things you could lose.

Taurus:

If we all followed the rulebook at all times, we would be carbon copies of each other. What sort of world would that be! Today, the cards are urging you to honour the rules, but not get hung up on them. The more you hold space for yourself to experiment, the newer layers you will uncover. So, just have fun with it! You'll thank us later. Tip: Give yourself room to experiment and be different.

Gemini:

Nothing in life is without a purpose, Gemini, and this includes a certain karmic lesson. Instead of worrying yourself sick about "the how" and "the why", accept. Accept, accept, accept. Understand that there is a

hidden gift buried underneath it all, which you will discover in due course of time. The good news is, the worst is now behind you and you are gently being led to a better place. Tip: It all happened for a reason.

Cancer:

The cards are pointing towards the burden on your shoulders. How much are you going to commit to and at what cost? We all have limitations, and it's time to accept yours. And if you've been glorifying the multitasking narrative, it's time to discard that too. No, you will not be able to achieve it all at once. At least not in a way that will make the process pleasurable "and" render sweet results. PS: Focusing on one thing at a time will change the quality of your work. Tip: One thing at a time, Cancer.

Leo:

You've been saying yes to everything that comes your way, but you have your limitations too, Leo. It's time to assess the projects or situations that are really worth your time and effort, and invest accordingly. Trying to please everybody is not going to work in your favour. Besides, not everything you're being offered is as good as it seems. Looking beyond the illusion will help you gain clarity on matters. Tip: What are you saying yes too.

Virgo:

You're at it again, Virgo! You're worrying incessantly about the things you have no control over, and this attitude is only becoming a stumbling block in your growth. So, write it down on a piece of paper. Write it all down. And then, surrender your worries to the Universe. The answers you are seeking will come through unexpectedly, this is a promise from the cards! Tip: Write your worries down on a piece of paper to seek clarity.

Libra:

It's a 'say yes' kind of day in the Libra HQ. You're committed to bringing more joy into your experience and making space for the kind of activities that take you closer to Source. What's more, you're deepening your connection with fellow warriors too, and sharing gifts of love with each other. Remember, the process alone is the meditation. Where it leads you to or what it brings forth is not for you to worry about. So, breathe, surrender, breathe. It's all coming together! Tip: Focus on the process of creation, rather than the result.

Scorpio:

You're manifesting maven, Scorpio, and you're just beginning to realise your superpower. So, actively let go of the lack mentality. The fears and the insecurities that keep you small. Trust in the Divine support you are re-

ceiving. Trust that both your wants and needs will always be provided for. Here's the secret to manifesting more: don't just ask for yourself. Keep all of Creation in mind as you send out your prayers, which in turn will multiply the blessings that come your way.

Tip: Can you keep all of Creation in mind as you send out your prayers today?

Sagittarius:

Most successful people are known to wake up between 4.30 and 6 am, sweat it out, meditate and eat a healthy breakfast consisting of, say, oats and fruits before taking on the day. This is a regimen we highly consider you adopt, along with intention-setting, journaling and chanting your special affirmation or mantra. There is so much you're meant to create in the coming days, and rising in the sun will improve clarity, focus, optimism and productivity so you can give the world all that you have to offer, beautiful. Tip: Rise and shine, sunshine!

Capricorn:

When we commit to a new task, we tend to take on a result-oriented approach. We're always fixated on the end goal, and what our endeavours will lead to. But, that's for the Universe to worry about, Capricorn. Not us. Our job is merely to surrender to the process and give it our all. So, show up. Practice even when it's hard to, and be open to both feedback and criticism. Something tells us you will

attain mastery in the coming years.

Tip: Show up even when it's hard to, beautiful.

Aquarius:

The trouble is, we spend too much time fixating on the past or worrying about what the future beholds. But neither of these are in your control, Aquarius. The present is the only thing you have dominion over. So, redirect your gaze towards what you are being offered and what's already on your plate, as you realise the Universe is a kind and loving parent that's looking out for you in every way. If your finances are a cause of concern right now, be patient. The help you need is around the corner. However, it's best to put those big expenses on hold right now. Tip: The present is the only thing you have dominion over.

Pisces:

The cards are bringing your attention to the ego. The ego that convinces you you are better or that your point of view is supreme. Watch the stories carefully, and act from a space of awareness. Being hung up on 'I' will only get you so far, Pisces. Thinking and acting from a space of 'we', on the other hand, will help find creative solutions. Besides, it's all about bridging the gap. Tip: Thinking and acting as a "we" is what you're being guided to do.