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# Summit TIMES

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ON TOP OF THE NEWS

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## 5 cases and no new Covid deaths in Sikkim

**SUMMIT REPORT**

**GANGTOK, 01 Nov:**

The Sunday slack at the two Virus Research & Diagnostic Laboratories in Sikkim when they carry out a fraction of tests of working week-days, gave Sikkim the calm of only five new cases of Covid-19 in the past 24 hours.

As per the Daily Report of COVID-19 in Sikkim released by the Integrated Disease Sur-

veillance Programme of Health Department this morning, the five cases were detected from the testing of 143 samples on Sunday, giving Sikkim a daily test positivity rate of 3.4%.

While three of the new cases were registered in East District, two were in West District.

Two new cases were detected in RT-PCR testing of 68 samples and three in rapid an-

tigen testing of 73 samples.

Sikkim's tally of confirmed cases of Covid now stands at 31,984.

Also over the same 2 hour period, 20 more COVID patients were discharged from home isolation to further improve the number of recovered cases to 31,083. Sikkim's recovery rate currently stands at 98.2%.

At present, there are 179

active Covid cases in the State, only 25 of whom are nursing symptoms severe enough to require hospitalization while the rest are on their way to recovery under homes isolation. Only two of those in hospital are admitted in the ICU at STNM Hospital.

No Covid deaths were reported in the State in the past 24 hours and the toll continues to hold at 396.

## Education Minister inaugurates new school building in Daramdin



**GYALSHING, 01 Nov**

**[IPR]:** Minister of Department of Education inaugurated a new extended building and a basketball court at the Kripasalyan Government Senior Secondary School at Daramdin today.

Accompanying him were Minister (Labour and Power Department) cum MLA (Daramdin), MN Sherpa, MLA (Soreng-Chakung) Adity-

aGolay, MLA (Zoom-Salghari), SunitaGajmer, ZillaPanchayats, ASC (Education), GP Upadhyaya, Secretary Education Amrit Raj Rai and Officials from Line Departments.

Addressing the audience, Education Minister, KungaNima Lepcha, warmly welcomed all the present dignitaries, invited guests, school staffs and students. He said that being appointed as the

first District Information Officer in West during his early service years, West District has always been closest to his heart.

He also appreciated the place for being traditional and culturally grounded and has always been a trademark for others to follow. Regarding to the education sector, Lepcha mentioned that the district has given

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## Infrastructure development completed at Tharpu School, inaugurated

**GYALSHING, 01 Nov**

**[IPR]:** The newly constructed Infrastructure of the Government Senior Secondary School, Tharpu, was inaugurated by the Minister of Education Department, KungaNima Lepcha.

He also graced the occasion as the Chief Guest for the day and accompanying him were Minister of Power and Labor Department cum MLA (Daramdin) M.N. Sherpa, MLA (Zoom-Salghari), SunitaGajmer, MLA (Soreng-Chakung), AdityaGolay, Political Advisor to CM, Jacob Khaling, Advisors, Chairpersons to the Government of Sikkim, Former Minister, R.B. Subba, Additional Chief Secretary (Education), G.P. Upadhyaya,



Secretary (Education), Anil Raj Rai along with the Officials from Line Departments.

The programme commenced with the unveiling of engraved wall memoir plaque by the Chief Guest followed by the lighting of the traditional lamps by the invited guests.

Addressing the gathering as the Chief Guest, Minister KungaNimaLec-

pha extended his warm greetings and welcomed all the esteemed guests and the audiences at large.

He said that West is being considered as the Aspirational District for others to follow and the Government has been focusing on redevelopment of the district. He further enumerated the schemes and policies under the State Government.

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## Beware of pickpockets: Rahul on rising fuel prices

**NEW DELHI, Nov 1**

**(PTI):** Congress leader Rahul Gandhi hit out at the Centre on Monday over the rise in fuel prices and said one should beware of "pickpockets".

"Beware of pickpockets," he said in a tweet in Hindi, using the hashtag "#TaxExtortion".

The former Congress chief cited a news report along with his tweet that said the petrol prices in some states have crossed Rs 120 a litre and that the Centre collected Rs 2.3 lakh crore in 2018-19 and Rs 2.58 lakh crore in 2017-18 by way of fuel taxes.

Gandhi and the Congress have been extremely critical of the government over the rise in fuel prices. The opposition party has accused the government of extortion in the name of taxes on petrol and diesel.

It has also charged the government with "profiteering" from fuel tax and "fleecing" the common people.

The government's collection from the levy of excise duty on petroleum products has risen by 33 per cent in the first six months of the current fiscal, as compared to last year, and is 79 per cent more than the pre-Covid levels, according to official data.

Data available from the Controller General of Accounts (CGA) in the Union Ministry of Finance showed excise duty collections during April-September, 2021 surging to over Rs 1.71 lakh crore from the Rs 1.28 lakh crore mop-up in the same period of the previous fiscal. Thanks to a steep hike in the excise duty rates, the collection is 79 per cent more than the Rs 95,930 crore mop-up in April-September, 2019.

In the full 2020-21 fiscal, excise collections were Rs 3.89 lakh crore and in 2019-20, it was Rs 2.39 lakh crore, the CGA data showed.

## SNS demands white paper on projects given to private companies

**SUMMIT REPORT**

**GANGTOK, 01 Nov:**

Sikkimey Naagarik Samaj [SNS] has alleged that various projects taken up by the State government on PPP mode are not in the interest of the people of Sikkim but for the benefit private parties from outside the State. The organisation has demanded that the State government issue a White Paper on details of projects given to private companies in the pipeline as well.

Addressing a press conference here today, SNS spokesperson, Pasang Sherpa said that the project coming up at the South and West taxi stand site in Gangtok on PPP mode has been given to a private company which is hardly eight months old.

He informed that the work has been given to Mesaso Infrastructure Private Limited which was registered on 08 February this year and has its office in Siliguri. He questioned how a 14-storied building would come up in the state which falls under seismic zone IV and such a big structure



near Arithang is too risky for the area.

Mr Sherpa added that it is surprising that the tender of Rs 7.20 cores for the demolition of the existing structure had been given to a different contractor. He informed that Gangtok Smart City Private Limited has already released Rs 13 crores to Mesaso Infrastructure Private Limited when it has not carried out any work. He further informed that owners of Mesaso Infrastructure Private Limited have also received a loan of Rs 70 crores from the State Bank of Sikkim.

The state government has handed over a public property to a private company to build a project on the people's

money, said Mr Sherpa.

If the PPP mode project was so easy then it should be given to local contractors or even SKM party workers who have contributed to the party, he contended.

Mr Sherpa mentioned that the state government has provided a hydel power project to Hanuman Ganga Hydro-projects Private Limited which does not have any prior experience and was registered on 03 February 2020. On top of that, the company has share capital of just Rs 1 lakh, he said.

Such work can be given to a Sikkimese instead of a company which does not have any prior experience or credentials, he asserted.

SNS strongly criticises and condemns how the state government is working in the interest of private companies instead of the people of Sikkim, said Mr Sherpa.

He went on to mention that Sikkim Democratic Front recently alleged that the state government has emptied the treasury of the State Bank of Sikkim by providing loans to people from outside the state following which SBS had also issued a press statement that the bank was fully secure. He added that the Chief Minister has also announced the framing of strict laws in the state assembly to recover money from defaulters.

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## In Aryan Khan case, WhatsApp chats not proof enough, says court

**MUMBAI, 01 Nov [PTI]:** A special court here while granting bail to Aachit Kumar last week in the drugs-on-cruise case said merely on the basis of WhatsApp chats, it cannot be gathered that he had supplied drugs to co-accused Aryan Khan, the son of Bollywood superstar Shah Rukh Khan, and Arbaaz Merchant. The court in its detailed order, a copy of which was made available on Sunday, also raised questions on the veracity of the Narcotics Control Bureau's (NCB) panchnama records said they were fabricated and seemed suspicious.

Special Judge VV Patil, designated to hear cases related to the Narcotics Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act, granted bail to 22-year-old Kumar on Saturday.

The court in its detailed order observed that except for the WhatsApp chats with Aryan Khan, there is no evidence to show Kumar was indulging in such activities.

"Merely on the basis of WhatsApp chats, it cannot be gathered that the applicant (Kumar) used to supply contraband to accused No 1 and 2 (Aryan Khan and Arbaaz Merchant), especially when the accused No 1, with whom there are WhatsApp chats, has been granted bail by the High Court," the order said. Aryan Khan and Merchant, who were arrested in the cruise drugs case on October 3, were granted bail by the Bombay High Court last Thursday.

The special court also noted that there was no evidence against Kumar to connect him with any of the other accused in the case.

"The panchnama is fabricated and was not prepared on the spot and therefore, the recovery shown under the panchnama is suspicious and cannot be relied upon," the court said. "There is no evidence on record showing that the applicant (Kumar) supplied drugs to accused No 1 (Aryan Khan) or to anybody

and therefore, the applicant is entitled to be released on bail," the order said. Kumar, the accused no. 17 in the case, was arrested on October 6 by the Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) based on the statement given by co-accused- Aryan Khan and Arbaaz Merchant.

The NCB had claimed to have recovered 2.6 grams of ganja from Kumar's residence. According to the anti-drugs agency, Kumar used to supply ganja and Charas to Aryan Khan and Merchant.

The NCB argued that it had evidence in the form of WhatsApp chats between Kumar and Aryan Khan which show they were dealing in drugs.

Kumar's advocate Ashwin Thool had argued that the 22-year-old was innocent and all allegations against him were false and baseless. The court in its order noted that though the NCB has claimed Kumar was a peddler, it has not stated a single occasion

where Kumar acted as a peddler. It also held that Kumar was put in illegal detention for a day as he was detained from his house on October 5, but was shown as arrested only on October 6.

The court further said there was nothing on record to show that there was any conspiracy between Kumar and Aryan Khan, and when Aryan Khan has been granted bail, then on the ground of parity, Kumar can also be released. The court, while granting bail to four others who were linked to the event management company Caneplus Trading Pvt Ltd which had organised live shows on the Cordelia cruise, noted that there was nothing placed on record by the NCB to show they had financed or harboured any offenders on the ship. The four accused were - Samir Sehgal, Gopalji Anand, Manav Singhal and Bhaskar Arora.

Of the total 20 people arrested in the case, 14 persons have been so far granted bail.



# AYURVEDA FOR POSHAN

DR. M.P. DASH

Ayurveda being an India’s ancient traditional system of Medicine lays great deal of emphasis upon proper diet for the preservation and promotion of positive health. Ayurveda indicates good and proper diet which provides strength vigor, good completion and good health. If a person suffering from any disease and does not follow the regulation of diet then as per Ayurveda the medicine may be fruitless. So, diet play a major role in human life from ancient time. In Ayurveda diet is planned in relation to panchamahabhutas(Earth, Water, Fire, Air and Sky) and Tridoshic(Vata-Air, Pitta-Fire and Kapha-Phlegum) impacts in the living body. Ayurveda classify the human body made of ofSaptadhatu (Seven body elements) such as Rasa dhatu (plasma and lymph fluid), Rakta dhatu (blood), Mansa dhatu (muscles), Meda dhatu (fat), Asti dhatu (bone), Majja dhatu (bone marrow)and Sukra dhatu (reproductive fluid or semen). Rasa dhatu play a major role for nourishing of other dhatus. To maintain balance and giving nutrition’s to tridosha and sapta dhatus three basic principles are require i.e. Ahara(diet), Nindra (sleep), Bramhacharya (self-discipline).

Ahara(Food) and life style (Vihara) significantly effect one’s overall health and the upsurgence of metabolic and degenerative diseases.

As per Ayurveda every diet has sixtastes (Sada Rasa)

- Sweet (Madhura)
- Sour (Amla)
- Pungent (Katu)
- Salt (Lavana)
- Bitter (Tikta)
- Astringent (Kashaya)

One should take the diet which is a combination of six taste as per ayurvedic swastavrita (Preventive medicine).

Since taste or rasa plays major role in proper digestion so food and food groups are classified in guralaghu (heavy-light) and snigdha-ruksha (oily-dry).

In Ayurveda, Tridoshic (Vata, Pitta, Kapha) impact on digestion such as in Vataprakriti- sweet,sour and salty food is favorable, in case of Pitta prakriti- sweet, bitter, astringent diet should be advised. In Kapha prakriti pungent, bitter, astringent diet is favorable.

As per Acharya Charak(Father of Ayurvedic Medicine) 12 groups in dietary pattern are classified in Ayurveda-

1. Sukadhanya (Corns with bristiles)
2. Samidhanya (Pulses)
3. Mansha (Meat)
4. Saka (Vegetables)
5. Phala (Fruits)
6. Harita (Salad and un cooked vegetables)
7. Ambu (Water)
8. Gorasa (Milk and Milk products)
9. Ikshuvikara (Product of Sugarcane)
10. Kritana (Food preparation)
11. Aharayogi (Accessories food pattern)
12. Madaya (Wine)

This diet should be taken as per the power of digestion and metabolism (Agnibala and Srotabala) which varies according to the season as well as the age of the individual. While describing the general

Taste	Source	Function
Sweet	Fruits, Wholegrain, Sugar, Banana and mangos	Builds Dhatu (Tissues), Help in nerve weakness.
Sour	Amla, Lemon, Yoghurt	Detoxify the toxins, Increase the absorption of vitamins and minerals.
Salt	Salt, Sea vegetables	Increases the digestive power
Bitter	Leafy vegetables, spices like turmeric, black tea	Reduce the fat (lighten the tissues) and detoxify the toxins
Pungent	Garlic, Onion, Ginger, Cardamom, Chili, Peppers	Stimulates the digestion
Astringent	Green bean, Unripe banana, Grapes, Pomegranates	Reduce fat, increases the absorption power in intestine.

principal of taking Ahara (diet) Acharya Charak emphasizes on taking food which is hot and unctuous because it tastes well stimulates digestive fire carminates flatus and makes the body healthy. Ayurveda emphasize on seasonal consideration of food. During winter season (Hemant and Sisir) due to cold the digestive power of healthy people increases so capable of digesting heavy food but during spring season (Basant Ritu) light and easily digestible food should be taken and during Grishma (Summer) due to extreme hot intake of sweet liquid cold and unctuous diet and drinks are recommended. Salty, pungent and hot diet should be avoided during summer. During Barsha (Rainy season) the digestive power is weak so should take wheat, barley and vegetables soups. In

SaratRitu(October- November) light, cold, sweat and bitter food administered. In Ayurveda mental condition (Mana) also effects digestion of diet in an individual which have fear, anger, sorrow, excessive sleep

## ViewPoint

and grief.

Ayruvedarasayana (Rejuvenation) play an important role for providing nutrition to human body.Rasayana play a vital role in promoting good health. As per Ayurveda, Rasayana is of four types such as-

1. AharaRasayana- Good dietary habit
2. BiharaRasayana- Dinacharya (proper daily routine)

3. Achara Rasayana- Positive attitude and good conduct
4. OushadhiRasayana- Ayurvedic drug

Many ayurvedic herbs which giving nutrition and promotes health such as guduchi, aswagandha, shatavari, tulsi, amla, neem etc. Ayurveda provides many herbal medicines to supplements Saptadhatu (Rasa, Rakta, Meda, Mansha, Asti, Maja, Sukra) such as Am-lakirasayana, Aswagandharasayana, Chawanprash, Brahmi rasayana etc.

Ayurveda have many aspects for digestive, carminative and promotion of health not only for preventive part but also in curative aspects.

[The writer is Medical Officer Ayurveda, AYUSH, STNM Hospital, H&FW Department, Government of Sikkim]

## Cannot have complete ban on firecrackers: Supreme Court's new ruling

NEW DELHI, 01Nov

[PTI]: Green crackers - firecrackers made using relatively less-polluting materials - can be used during the festive season starting this week in West Bengal, the Supreme Court said on Monday, setting aside a total ban on crackers by the Calcutta High Court to check air pollution amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

Relying upon an order by the top court in another case involving firecrackers from Friday, the judges said, "There cannot be a complete ban of firecrackers. Strengthen the mechanism to stop misuse."

Supreme Court Justices AM Khanwilkar and Ajay Rastogi also asked the West Bengal government to explore the possibility of ensuring that banned firecrackers and related items are not imported in the state and stopped at entry points.

The judges, who assembled during the Diwali break to hear the matter, were hearing the pleas by manufacturers against the order of the high court banning the sale, use and purchase of all types of firecrackers in the state issued on Friday. The ruling comes just days ahead of Kali Puja, Diwali and other festivals.

Appearing for firecracker manufacturers, senior lawyer SiddharthBhatnagar told the Supreme Court on Monday: "De-

spite the fact that there are three orders of Supreme Court regarding green crackers and two orders of the National Green Tribunal, the Calcutta High Court has banned green crackers. The Supreme Court orders say that if air quality is moderate or better, green crackers may be permitted to be used."

The Calcutta High Court order had come over a Public Interest Litigation filed by environmental activist Roshni Ali who sought a ban on the sale and use of firecrackers during the upcoming festivities to safeguard people's right to clean, healthy and breathable air, particularly in times of the COVID-19 pandemic.

"The state should ensure that there is no use or display or bursting of firecrackers of any type at all during Kali Puja, Diwali celebrations as well as Chhath Puja, Jagadhatri Puja, Guru Nanak's birthday and Christmas and New Year's Eve celebrations this year," the High Court had said.

It had said that only wax or oil-based diyas may be used for the occasions.

Like many Indian cities, Bengal's capital Kolkata has recorded some of the highest pollution levels on the planet in recent years and residents are on track to lose nine years of life expectancy if 2019 levels persist, according to a new study by researchers from the University of Chicago.

### SNS demands white...

Further stating that the BJP state president also recently accused SBS of corruption and suggested that it should be brought into the mainstream, Mr Sherpa asked whether the state government and its alliance partner are together trying to dilute the old laws of Sikkim by bringing SBS into the mainstream.

Mr Sherpa stated that SNS will approach the Enforcement Directorate on the corruption allegations made by both the previous SDF government and present SKM government. If the state government is innocent, then it should open the doors for CBI in the State for investigation.

SNS president, Bharat Basnet stated that SNS is not against any political party and has been working in the interest of the people so the administration needs to take the demands of the organisation seriously.

While mentioning that the foundation stone of the 12 MW hydro power project at Ranipool was laid by Chogyal Palden Thendup, he stated that it is not right for such a historically important and heritage project to be given to a private company, Hanuman Ganga Hydroprojects Private Limited which has share capital of just Rs 1 lakh.

Further mentioning that SBS has recently started to use the IFSC code of YES Bank, Mr Basnett questioned the need to use the IFSC code of a bank which went bankrupt after demonetisation and closed all its offices in Sikkim.

### LOST

KedarNath Sharma an inhabitant of Bering, East-Sikkim-737133 lost his wallet in-between Namchi to Sumbuk South Sikkim while travelling which had Aadhar Card, PAN Card, 2 ATMs (SBI/CBI) & Cash Amount Rs.-4500/- (Rs. Forty-five hundred around).

**If Found kindly contact:-  
8116780077/ 9474144335**

### KUTSE SHEGU

Kutse Shegu (49th day puja) of Namna Dorjee, who passed away on 27 Sept, 2021 falls on 14 Nov, 2021. We therefore, humbly request our relatives, friends and well-wishers to join us in offering prayers at our residence at Arithang, Gangtok on the aforementioned date, duly following the Covid-19 protocol in place.

We also take this opportunity to thank everyone who stood by us during the time of bereavement. Your support and assistance was indeed a great solace to us. It means a lot and we are truly indebted to each and every one of you.

**Chumzey Doma (Chum Mail) - wife,  
Karma Doma Youtso - daughter,  
Yangchuk Den Youtso - daughter,  
Chopel Lepcha - son-in-law &  
Jigme Norbu - son.**

## Officials inspect Stairway to Heaven project site

**GYALSHING, 01 Nov(IPR):** Minister of Land Revenue and Disaster Management, KungaNima Lepcha along with the Minister of Labor and Power Department cum MLA (Daramdin), M.N Sherpa and MLA (Zoom-Salghari), SunitaGajmer visited the under-construction site of Stairway to Heaven (Swarga)Janae-Seeri) located at Daramdin, West Sikkim. Accompanying them were Additional Chief Secretary (Education), G.P Upadhyaya, Secretary (Education), Anil Raj Rai and other Line Department Officials.

Mr Lepcha held a brief



meeting with all the officials including the private contractor regarding the work in progress. He showed contentment with the current development but urged the concerned officials to complete the project as per the stipulated time-period.

The team also carried out detailed inspection of the work site and interacted with the concerned officials involved in the project.

The site is considered to be one of its kind monument especially for the Lepcha community.

### Education Minister...

birth to many notable and successful personalities be it in medical, political or any other field and in continuation to this, he advised the teachers to incorporate new aspects into their teaching techniques and to be friendlier in their approach so that the student can get the confidence to confide with them regarding their problems both personal and related to school which will eventually lead to a healthy and happy student.

Alongside, he urged the students to be more respectful towards their teachers and to strive for a better future. He acknowledged the fact that teachers are not treated adequately based on their contributions for they are the ones who will nurture our future leaders, thus he assured that the Government will endure in bringing about the recognition for the teachers, he added.

Speaking on the occasion, M.N. Sherpa congratulated the School for the infrastructural up-gradation required for better learning. He cited that West Sikkim can be a favorable district for tourism due to its serene environment and can attract more tourist inflow provided that the local community makes an effort in building a tourist-friendly environment for them.

Reminiscing his school days, he fondly spoke about the lessons he learnt because of good teachers, thus he urged the faculties to instill life values along with the knowledge to the students. He asked them to also equally concentrate on the overall development of a child not just on his or her academics as they

are the future of our State.

He also advised the students to focus on other unconventional career choices and not just on Government jobs. He also added that proper roofing of schools is being considered for future up gradation especially of those that were constructed a while ago.

The program commenced with a short welcome speech delivered by Upadhyaya wherein he expressed pleasure following the progressive report of the school along with the infrastructural expansion.

He informed that the Basket Ball court was funded under the NITI Aayog Scheme of the Government. He also raised his concerns regarding the studentenrollment and urged the teaching faculty to take steps in ensuring as many student registrations as possible. He also informed that the Education Department will soon be employing new teachers as per the requirement.

He also acknowledged the challenges faced by the students and the teachers regarding online classes and ensured that the State Government is steering into making connectivity more feasible and accessible for both parties.

In his concluding remarks, he suggested the School Management Committee have an interactive session between different Government Officials and the student wherein the Officials can share their knowledge and experience regarding their concerned field of expertise.

The program also included felicitation and farewell of 6 retiring teachers.

### Infrastructure development...

He briefly spoke about the National New Education Policy wherein new provisions will be implemented along with the coordination of the teaching facilities.

The 'Nar BahadurBhandari fellowship' programme that enables any student to have access to financial assistance from the Government after securing admission to any of the top Universities anywhere in the World will encourage the students to work harder in achieving their goals.

He also mentioned about the'Chief Minister Meritorious Scholarship' that has helped many students in accessing better education. Stressing on the current transition to digitalization in the education sector, he urged the teaching faculties to innovate new methods that can engage students into better learning while revamping the current scenario of orthodox teaching.

This will not only help the students in the long run but will also assist the teachers in understanding their student's needs and his/her drawbacks, he added.

While thanking the Government, he expressed his sincere gratitude towards the former Education Minister, R. B. Subba for laying a strong educational foundation and that the coming generations will forever be grateful for his contributions towards education and learning.

The Minister further re-affirmed the State Government's commitment and support towards the holistic development of the students along with accessibility to better infrastructure.

Briefly speaking on the occasion as a Guest of Honour, AdityaGolay warmly welcomed all the esteemed guests and the gathered audiences. He hoped that the construction of the new building and the facilities will encourage the students to study better and will also accentuate more student enrollment percentage.

He thanked the Government for always prioritising the Education department along with Health and Sanitation.

He expressed his sincere gratitude towards Lepcha for being the backbone of many progressive projects that are to be carried out under the Soreng Sub Division. He stressed that the West dis-

trict can become the next educational hub not just for the State but for the entire Nation as well and that it will eventually give rise to more tourist inflow bringing about more financial stability for the local community.

He urged that the civic society must come forth in assisting the Government to make the district a tourist-friendly environment and that they should be ready to accept the changes that are for their betterment. In his concluding remarks, Golay applauded R.B Subba and his family for starting a noble cause of providing yearly financial assistance, under the 'HimakarnaSancharani Educational Society Scholarship' program for students who excels in their studies.

In his welcome address, the ACS (Education) G.P Upadhyaya, on behalf of the department congratulated the students, the staff and the local community on receiving the new infrastructure. He expressed his gratitude towards the Government for its unrelenting support in bringing forth a better education system in the State. He also articulated the fact that the Government under the leadership of its dynamic CM, PS Tamang has been serving day in and out in bringing forth all the requisite Central schemes and policies.

He briefly spoke about the challenges faced by the Nation and it's citizens during the pandemic and how it has greatly impacted the day today lives of all concerned especially for the School administration and the students. Online classes being the next best option for learning have had their fair share of obstacles for the students and the teachers, he added. He advised the students not to bind themselves within the textbook knowledge but to expand their horizon into learning newer things.

During the event, AbinaSubba was awarded this year's 16th Himakarna-Sancharani Educational Society Scholarship program for securing 92 percentage and topping her school board exam.

Earlier a technical report was presented by the Additional Chief Engineer from the engineering cell Education department.

The event also featured a welcoming song performed by the teaching staff and a cultural extravaganza performed by the students of the GSSS, Tharpu.



# Remanti Rai's Hajurai Ko Dalanaima a Tihar gift

**SAGAR CHHETRI**  
**GANGTOK, 01 NOV:**

Remanti Rai's Hajurai Ko Dalanaima is all set to be released on 03 Nov as a gift to the people this Tihar. The teaser of this music video was released on social media last evening and its official release is scheduled to be held on the official YouTube channel of Remanti Rai and other social media platforms on 03 Nov.

Around 6 mins long, the music video of Hajurai Ko Dalanaima has been directed by celebrity dancer and choreographer, Nisha Rasaily assisted by Om Prakash Sewa. The song has been written and composed by popular folk artist, Naren Gurung and the music video features dancers Komal Gurung and Lila Timsina. Binesh K Rai is the cinematographer of



the music video and the audio was recorded at Psalms Studio, Gangtok while it was arranged, mixed and mastered by Matrix Sound Lab, Darjeeling.

Addressing a press conference here today, Remanti Rai mentioned that Hajurai Ko Dalanaima is a folk based music video. She stated that the music video tries to

showcase authentic local traditions.

The music video has been shot in Assam Lingzey and the shooting was completed in two days. She mentioned that local artists and dance groups have been featured in the music video. Ms Rai appealed to the people to support the music video and encourage local artists.

Naren Gurung ex-

pressed happiness on the young generation's interest in folk music. He stated that Remanti's vocal tone suits this folk based song perfectly.

Local singers, musician and artists are still not recognised or get the respect they deserve in the state, he stated.

He added that local artists have already proved themselves out-

side the state in different areas but preference is still given to artists from outside Sikkim. On the same, Mr Gurung stressed upon recognition and value of local artists in the state to further motivate and encourage them to reach higher levels.

Director, Nisha Rasaily expressed her happiness on working on this project as it reflects local culture. She added that people would definitely love and support the hard work and efforts of the team.

The project will help to take the culture and tradition to the younger generation, she said. Likewise, Om Prakash stated it was a learning experience to assist Nisha Rasaily in this project. The press conference was also addressed by Komal Gurung.

## NIT hosts Regional Conference on Buddhism and Literature



**SUMMIT REPORT**  
**GANGTOK, 01 NOV:**

A one-day Regional Conference (Hybrid Mode) on Buddhism and Literature was held on 01 Nov at the Namgyal Institute of Tibetology (NIT), Gangtok, a press release informs.

The conference was jointly organised by NIT in collaboration with

International Buddhist Confederation (IBC) and the Indian Council of Cultural Relations (ICCR), at the behest of different Ministries of Government of India. This was one of the 8 regional conferences; 4 in India at Dharamsala, Delhi, Gangtok, and Hyderabad and 4 abroad at Cambodia, Japan, Republic of Korea,

and Thailand. These regional conferences will lead to the Global Buddhist Conference (GBC) organised as part of the International Buddhist Conclave of the Ministry of Tourism from November 19-21, 2021 (tentatively) at Nava Nalanda Mahavihara (NNM) under the theme 'Buddhism in Literature'.

## Entrepreneurship Development training in Karfectar



**NAMCHI, 01 Nov [IPR]:**

A three day-long Entrepreneurship Development Programme (EDP) Training for beneficiaries under the Skilled Youth Start-Up Scheme (SYSS) concluded in the conference hall of Karfectar, Jorethang today. The training organized by Positron Computer Education Institute, Gangtok in collaboration with District Industries Centre (S/W) Jorethang had the participation of 41 beneficiaries under SYSS from both South and West Districts.

The closing session had the presence of Chairman Commerce & Industries M.B Chettri who graced the event as the Chief Guest in the company of GM DIC (S/W) Kerzang, D. Lasopa, Assistant Director (West), A.D Rai, Inspectors Anula Gurung, Jyulian Chettri and Joseph Bhutia along with MD (Positron Computer Education Institute), Jagannath Sharma.

Addressing the gathering,

chief guest Chairman Commerce and Industries Department M.B. Chettri underlined the objective of the EDP training which he said was to facilitate and develop entrepreneurial abilities among the beneficiaries under Skilled Youth Start-up Scheme (SYSS) in order to aid the entrepreneurs to conceive, plan, initiate and launch an economic activity or an enterprise successfully.

The Chairman in his address called upon the entrepreneurs particularly the youth of the state to pursue their aspirations and work hard towards utilising the government sponsored schemes and focus on being job givers rather than job seekers. He further assured to provide all aid and support from his end in bridging gap between the government, the department and the entrepreneurs if they face any issues of any nature.

GM DIC (S/W) also addressed the trainees

wherein she emphasized the importance of why EDP plays a mandatory and essential role in facilitating banks to provide loans to the beneficiaries under SYSS. She briefly spelled out seriousness of the three day long EDP session which will equip the beneficiaries with the required skills and knowledge needed for starting and running their respective enterprise.

In the course of the three day training programme w.e.f 30 October to 01 November 2021, various resource persons specialized in the field of sales and marketing, finance, planning, consultancy, book keeping of accounts and various other components required to develop and hone entrepreneurial traits imparted an extensive course to the 41 beneficiaries.

The program also saw the chief guest handing out certificate of EDP completion to the were 41 participants present.

## Election body likely to brief Parliamentary Panel on reforms

**NEW DELHI, 01 NOV [PTI]:**

Top officials of the Election Commission are likely to be called by a parliamentary panel to brief it on electoral reforms, including remote voting, linkage of Aadhaar with voter ID card, and one uniform voter roll for all polls, sources said on Monday.

The Parliamentary Standing Committee on Personnel, Public Grievances and Law and Justice chaired by senior BJP leader Sushil Modi has also decided to deliberate upon the issue of e-courts and will seek an appointment with Supreme Court Judge D Y Chandrachud who heads the e-committee of the top court.

After deliberating with members of the panel, Modi has decided to invite top officials of the poll panel and discuss with them remote voting, which allows anyone to vote from outside his or her constituency, and linking of Aadhaar card with voter ID card, which can do away with multiplicity of the cards voters need to show while going for voting, they said.

A discussion will also be held on various other electoral reforms planned by the EC, including singular voter list for the Lok Sabha,

state assembly and panchayat elections.

The officials from the poll panel are likely to be invited in the first week of November.

Former Chief Election Commissioner Sunil Arora, who demitted the office earlier this year, had expressed hope that the concept of remote voting will see "the light of day" by the 2024 Lok Sabha elections.

Earlier this year, the poll panel had started a research project for enabling remote voting in consultation with IIT Madras and eminent technologists from IITs and other leading institutions.

The Supreme Court's e-committee is the governing body charged with overseeing the e-courts project conceptualised under the National Policy and Action Plan for Implementation of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in the Indian Judiciary, 2005.

E-courts is a pan India project monitored and funded by the Department of Justice, in the law ministry. Its vision is to transform the judicial system of the country by Information and Communication Technology (ICT) enablement of courts.

## SEED Cell provides 10,000 RAT kits to Govt



**SUMMIT REPORT**  
**GANGTOK, 01 NOV:**

Sikkim Entrepreneurs & Economic Development (SEED) cell contributed 10,000 Rapid Antigen Test (RAT) kits to the Sikkim Government.

The consignment was delivered by Raj Lama and team, and was handed over to Secretary to CM, Dr. S.D. Dhakal and Secretary (Health),

Dr. Pempa. T. Bhutia at Tashiling Secretariat, a press from the Chief Minister's Office informs.

It may be recalled that the SEED cell has been extending support in the battle against Covid by delivering medicines to Covid Care Centres and to the people under home quarantine throughout the state. They also provided vari-

ous other assistance to the hospitals, Primary Health Centres (PHC), Primary Health Sub-Centres (PHSC) in coordination with the health department.

Their contribution and service have been appreciated and applauded by the Health Department and the Chief Minister's Office, the release states.

## Cong launches nationwide membership drive

**NEW DELHI, NOV 1 (PTI):**

The Congress on Monday launched its membership drive across the country with all its state units holding meetings to discuss ways to ensure a large number of people join the grand old party.

The drive was launched by state unit presidents of the Congress, which also started an online membership campaign "Join-CongressSaveIndia". It urged people to join the party to save the country from forces trying to destroy constitutional values.

The Congress has accused the BJP of spreading hatred and dividing society, and has said that it will fight back with Mahatma Gandhi's teachings of non-violence, truth and unity.

The membership drive, which started on Monday, will continue till March 31 next year.

Those wishing to take up the primary membership of the Congress will have to make a declaration of

abstention from alcohol and drugs. They will give an undertaking to never criticise the party's policies and programmes in public forums.

New members will also have to give a declaration that they will not own any property in excess of ceiling laws and will undertake tasks, including "manual labour", prescribed by the Congress.

People can become a member of the Congress by paying a fee of Rs 5.

Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot urged the youth to join the party and said its ideology is dedicated to uphold the country's Constitution and its democratic values.

Gehlot said the Congress is the oldest party in the country with a proud history and its leaders have sacrificed their lives before and after independence to keep it united.

He said the Congress aims at ensuring unity, social harmony and equality and urged

people to join hands with it to end the current era where "fascist forces" are bent upon destroying constitutional values.

The Congress will also focus on training its cadre to counter the BJP's "false propaganda" and will work out modalities for the upcoming training programmes.

The party's membership drive will be followed by organisational elections, which includes election of state unit presidents, vice presidents, treasurers, executives and AICC members by the Pradesh Congress Committee general body which will be held between July 21-August 20 next year.

The election for the new Congress president would be held between August 21 and September 20 next year.

The election of Congress Working Committee members and other bodies by AICC members will take place at a plenary session, dates for which will be announced before October 2022.

## AP farmers launch foot march for capital Amaravati

**AMARAVATI, NOV 1 (PTI):** Hundreds of farmers on Monday launched a 45-day padayatra (foot march), 'Nyayasthanam to Devasthanam' (court to temple), demanding that Amaravati be retained as the capital of Andhra Pradesh.

The Telugu Desam Party, Congress, CPI and other parties extended support to the farmers.

Former Union Minister Renuka Chowdhury drove a tractor, as the farmers marched on, and extended solidarity with them.

For over 680 days now, farmers in the Amaravati region have been continuing an agitation opposing the Jagan Mohan Reddy

government's move to trifurcate the state capital.

They are also fighting a legal battle on the issue.

The farmers, who reportedly parted with over 33,000 acres of their fertile lands for the construction of divided AP's new capital, have now undertaken the padayatra to Tirumala, the abode of Lord Venkateswara, to press their demand for retaining Amaravati as the sole capital of the state.

The foot march will traverse through over 70 villages in Guntur, Prakasam, SPS Nellore and Chittoor districts before reaching temple-town Tirupati on December 17.

## Teesta-V Power Station observes Rashtriya Ekta Diwas



**SUMMIT REPORT**  
**GANGTOK, 01 NOV:**

NHPC, Teesta-V Power Station, East Sikkim observed "Rashtriya Ekta Diwas" at its Balutar Colony to commemorate the birth anniversary of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel on 31 Oct, a press release informs.

Head of Teesta-V Power Station, Sanjay

Darbari administered the Rashtriya Ekta Pledge to employees. Speaking on the occasion, Sanjay Darbari said that it is a special occasion to foster and reinforce our dedication to preserve and strengthen unity, integrity and security of our Nation, by reinforcing the values of a strong and united India.

The first Deputy Prime Minister, the first Home Minister of India and the Iron Man of India, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel will always be remembered for his remarkable contribution in the freedom struggle, unification of India and various reforms also in the early days of independence, he added.



## Hold Us Accountable, Please

*News requires reader-engagement to stay the course*

Journalists live a charmed life. Those outside the clique have an inflated perception of our effectiveness and readers in general believe media persons to be much better informed than they actually are. This fiction, when it circulates too widely and for too long, can start convincing those who wield the pen [hammer keyboards nowadays] that they are indispensable, and with that comes the arrogance which, at least in our country, has also caused substantial damage to politics and administration. There is a fine line dividing standing up for something and becoming overbearing, but it is an important marker still, and over-stepping it can compromise the best of intentions. If the news-media is indeed seen as the fourth estate/ pillar in a democracy, then hollowing it out weakens the overall structure, so, as much as it needs to be supported and backed, it also needs to be held accountable. A free press, after all, is a necessity to ensure real progress.

It goes without saying that the right environment needs to be created for press to be free, and this is provided by institutional and civil-society support systems. It is also obvious that such an environment is always under constant pollutions by agencies which are threatened if journalists are allowed genuine freedoms. But new-media cannot be shackled only by a repressive systems, it can also be compromised by unethical practitioners. It is always a bad idea to pass the correctional cane into the hands of the powers-that-be, because they will definitely misuse it, so, it becomes important for every person with a stake in world affairs or national developments and also Sikkim to start reading newspapers [because more readers will mean more power, more independence for newspapers] and more importantly, start sending in more letters. At present, most letter writers are inspired by personal reasons to write. What is required for a more accountable media is to have a wider response base. Not eulogies, please write in hate mail, letters that point out errors, letters that demand clarifications, letters that complain of half-truths and incomplete reportage, letters that mention that readers notice the personal agendas of editors, publishers and reporters being packaged as news. The media needs feedback to stay on course, battle somnolence, remain relevant, and most importantly, remain accurate. The willingness to admit mistakes is an important part of being accurate. This has become even more significant in the age of online archives, although it has always been the case that mistakes in old newspaper cuttings could be repeated and result in an inaccurate report being circulated again years later. Accuracy, it needs no further stressing, is essential if journalism is to inform the public debate. And if public wishes to be served well with accurate information, significant perspectives and intelligent opinions, they need to engage, maintain a pressure which inspire excellence. Do that often enough, and even if newspapers do not publish them, the editors will be forced to read them and soon, the guilt will lead to more responsible, more accountable journalism.

This, in case you have forgotten how media peddled outright lies in how the Lakhimpur Kheri episode was reported, or how price rise is apparently affecting no one if prime time TV news is any indication of issues on ground, or the comatose disinterest with which the northeast continues to be reported, or how when a certain national party wins state elections it becomes about local issues but when another national party wins in states it is credited to the charisma of The Leader... all of these should convince any consumer of “news” of how the sector requires more professionalism. In Sikkim’s case, the news-media admittedly needs to evolve beyond the incident-based reportage and press release/ press conference-driven political reporting that currently pack our pages, in colour. These happen because the readers remain aloof consumers. Much more and much better will arrive if readers became more engaged and started demanding better.

### 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](mailto:news@summittimes.com)



# This Amazon dam is supposed to provide clean energy, but it’s destroying livelihoods and unique species

**BRIAN GARVEY & SONIA MAGALHAES**  
*theconversation.com*

The Volta Grande region of the Amazon is a lush, fertile zone supplied by the Xingu River, whose biodiverse lagoons and islands have earned its designation as a priority conservation area by Brazil’s Ministry of the Environment.

But a recent decision by the Federal Regional Court in the state of Pará, Brazil, allows the continuing diversion of water from the Xingu River to the Belo Monte hydroelectric dam complex – rather than to local indigenous fishing communities. This is a disaster for the ecosystems and people of the Volta Grande.

The ruling, which reversed a temporary order for river diversion to be suspended, means that 80% of Xingu River flow will continue to be diverted away from the communities of Volta Grande. This impedes the main transport route for many indigenous people who live along the river and reduces fish diversity, compromising food security and livelihoods.

The decision also alters the river’s flood and ebb cycles. In addition to their importance for species’ reproduction and agriculture, these cycles guide local social, cultural and economic activity.

According to the Federal Public Ministry, which is appealing the decision, this marks the seventh time the superior court has overturned previous legal decisions in favour of the construction and energy corporation Norte Energia, which owns Belo Monte.

Our team carried out research on the dam complex’s impacts in 2017 with the Brazilian Society for the Advancement of Science. We found persistent violations of the rights of traditional communities linked to Belo Monte, especially regarding their forced displacement from areas destined to form the dam’s reservoir.

In response, a spokesperson for Norte Energia said that the company has always operated in compliance with the environmental licensing for Belo Monte, and that all actions undertaken by Norte

Energia were evaluated and approved by the environmental licensing agency IBAMA.

BELO MONTE

Belo Monte is a hydroelectric complex formed by two dams. The first dam ensures sufficient water flow through the second one for electricity generation.

Marketed as supplying “clean energy”, the complex meets the industrial demands of the southern and north-eastern regions of Brazil. However, this appears to only refer to reductions in emissions, which themselves have been countered by evidence of increased greenhouse gas emissions from dams.

In response to these claims, the Norte Energia spokesperson said that hydroelectric power plants are expected to emit greenhouse gases. These emissions have been considered in Belo Monte’s Environmental Impact Assessment and are being compensated through initiatives including restoring local native vegetation and investments in conservation.

What’s more, the complex only generates 40% (4,571 megawatts) of its 11,233 megawatt capacity due to the large seasonal changes in flow rate of the Xingu River. A 2009 analysis predicted that the variability of the river’s flow – that reaches up to 23 million litres per second under natural conditions – would result in unreliable energy generation and conflict over water use.

Although IBAMA judged in 2019 that efforts to mitigate the dam’s impact were insufficient to prevent marked ecological disruption, it permitted continuing diversion of water in February 2021.

As a result, the annual river cycles that sustained communities for generations have been destroyed along more than 120km of the Volta Grande.

A fisherman we interviewed warned, “These children of ours ... won’t have the privileges that we had, and can learn nothing, I guarantee that. There’s nowhere for them now.”

The transformation of the region has resulted in the flooding of areas above the dam and droughts

to areas below, as well as significantly decreased fish populations and destruction of fish nurseries.

A survey carried out by a team from the Federal University of Pará in two areas shortly after the river’s flow was reduced also found the first signs of disappearance of organisms like “sarobal”: a type of vegetation that grows on rocks in the Xingu river bed, fundamental for the reproduction of many fish species.

A fisherwoman explained that sarobal “are resistant plants that when the river is flooded, they are submerged, but they do not die ... sarobal has a lot of fruit and fish consume the fruit ... I think almost every fish depends on it.”

Research found that these plants can withstand direct solar radiation, extremely high temperatures and cycles of severe drought, making their dwindling presence even more alarming.

SECOND PROJECT

The exploitation of this stretch of the Xingu River has been exacerbated by a second threat to the Amazonian ecosystem. The planned construction of Brazil’s largest open-pit gold mine within the Belo Monte dam area by Canadian company Belo Sun has been criticised for providing environmental impact assessments that allegedly ignore serious environmental contamination and violations of indigenous rights.

Now, groups campaigning against this project say they are subject to violent threats, although it has not been established who is behind this. A local resident explained to researchers: “Here we feel intimidated. The guys are really well armed, while we work just with our machete and our hoe.”

These claims appear to illustrate the stark power inequities in this region of Pará – the region with the highest number of attacks on indigenous leaders in Brazil in recent years – as well as the broader social consequences of energy creation schemes.

*[Brian Garvey is Lecturer in Work, Employment and Organisation, University of Strathclyde; Sonia Magalhaes is Adjunct Professor of Agrarian Sciences, Federal University of Pará]*

# What is the Metaverse?

**RABINDRA RATAN & YIMING LEI**  
*theconversation.com*

The metaverse is a network of always-on virtual environments in which many people can interact with one another and digital objects while operating virtual representations – or avatars – of themselves. Think of a combination of immersive virtual reality, a massively multiplayer online role-playing game and the web.

The metaverse is a concept from science fiction that many people in the technology industry envision as the successor to today’s internet. It’s only a vision at this point, but technology companies like Facebook are aiming to make it the setting for many online activities, including work, play, studying and shopping. Facebook is so sold on the concept that it is renaming itself Meta to highlight its push to dominate the metaverse.

Metaverse is a portmanteau of meta, meaning transcendent, and verse, from universe. Sci-fi novel-

ist Neal Stephenson coined the term in his 1992 novel “Snow Crash” to describe the virtual world in which the protagonist, Hiro Protagonist, socializes, shops and vanquishes real-world enemies through his avatar. The concept predates “Snow Crash” and was popularized as “cyberspace” in William Gibson’s groundbreaking 1984 novel “Neuromancer.”

There are three key aspects of the metaverse: presence, interoperability and standardization.

Presence is the feeling of actually being in a virtual space, with virtual others. Decades of research have shown that this sense of embodiment improves the quality of online interactions. This sense of presence is achieved through virtual reality technologies such as head-mounted displays.

Interoperability means being able to seamlessly travel between virtual spaces with the same virtual assets, such as avatars and digital items. ReadyPlayerMe allows people to

create an avatar that they can use in hundreds of different virtual worlds, including in Zoom meetings through apps like Animaze. Meanwhile, blockchain technologies such as cryptocurrencies and nonfungible tokens facilitate the transfer of digital goods across virtual borders.

Standardization is what enables interoperability of platforms and services across the metaverse. As with all mass-media technologies – from the printing press to texting – common technological standards are essential for widespread adoption. International organizations such as the Open Metaverse Interoperability Group define these standards.

WHY THE METAVERSE MATTERS

If the metaverse does become the successor to the internet, who builds it, and how, is extremely important to the future of the economy and society as a whole. Facebook is aiming to play a leading role in shaping the metaverse, in part by investing heavily in

virtual reality. Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg explained in an interview his view that the metaverse spans nonimmersive platforms like today’s social media as well as immersive 3D media technologies such as virtual reality, and that it will be for work as well as play.

The metaverse might one day resemble the flashy fictional Oasis of Ernest Cline’s “Ready Player One,” but until then you can turn to games like Fortnite and Roblox, virtual reality social media platforms like VRChat and AltspaceVR, and virtual work environments like Immersed for a taste of the immersive and connected metaverse experience. As these siloed spaces converge and become increasingly interoperable, watch for a truly singular metaverse to emerge.

*[Rabindra Ratan is Associate Professor of Media and Information, Michigan State University; Yiming Lei is Doctoral student in Media and Information, Michigan State University]*



# Green crackers allowed in Bengal, Supreme Court cancels High Court ban

The Calcutta High Court had said that only wax or oil-based diyas should be used during the festive season.

New Delhi: Green crackers - firecrackers made using relatively less-polluting materials - can be used during the festive season starting this week in West Bengal, the Supreme Court said on Monday, setting aside a total ban on crackers by the Calcutta High Court to check air pollution amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

Relying upon an order by the top court in another case involving firecrackers from Friday, the judges said, "There cannot be a complete ban of firecrackers. Strengthen the mechanism to stop misuse."

Supreme Court Justices AM Khanwilkar and Ajay Rastogi also asked the West Bengal government to explore the possibility of ensuring that banned firecrackers and related items are not imported in the state and stopped at entry points.

The judges, who assembled during the Di-



wali break to hear the matter, were hearing the pleas by manufacturers against the order of the high court banning the sale, use and purchase of all types of firecrackers in the state issued on Friday. The ruling comes just days ahead of Kali Puja, Diwali and other festivals.

Appearing for firecracker manufacturers, senior lawyer Siddharth-Bhatnagar told the Supreme Court on Monday: "Despite the fact that

there are three orders of Supreme Court regarding green crackers and two orders of the National Green Tribunal, the Calcutta High Court has banned green crackers. The Supreme Court orders say that if air quality is moderate or better, green crackers may be permitted to be used."

The Calcutta High Court order had come over a Public Interest Litigation filed by environmental activist Roshni Ali who sought a ban on the

sale and use of firecrackers during the upcoming festivities to safeguard people's right to clean, healthy and breathable air, particularly in times of the COVID-19 pandemic.

"The state should ensure that there is no use or display or bursting of firecrackers of any type at all during Kali Puja, Diwali celebrations as well as Chhath Puja, Jagad-hatri Puja, Guru Nanak's birthday and Christmas and New Year's Eve cel-

ebrations this year," the High Court had said.

It had said that only wax or oil-based diyas may be used for the occasions.

Like many Indian cities, Bengal's capital Kolkata has recorded some of the highest pollution levels on the planet in recent years and residents are on track to lose nine years of life expectancy if 2019 levels persist, according to a new study by researchers from the University of Chicago.

# Bihar man sexually harasses 2-year-old, held

**MANGALURU, Nov 1 (PTI):** A man from Bihar origin has been arrested on the charge of sexually harassing a two-year-old child here, police sources said. The victim and her parents also hail from Bihar, the sources said.

The incident came to light on Monday after the police got information that a child had drowned in a fish tank.

A police team immediately rushed to the place, rescued the unconscious child and admitted her to hospital where the harassment issue was revealed.

The sources said the child is out of danger. It is suspected that the accused had pushed the kid into the tank. A case of attempt to murder has also been registered against

the accused, the police sources said.

The children of several Bihar families, who are engaged in fish-cutting and salting business, were being sheltered in a room and the victim too was accommodated in the same place.

The victim's parents were not around when the incident took place, the sources said.

# Tottenham fires coach Nuno after losing half of EPL matches



**LONDON (AP):** Tottenham fired manager NunoEspirito Santo on Monday after losing half of his 10 Premier League matches in charge of the club.

The dismissal, after only four months in the job, followed a 3-0 home loss to Manchester United on Saturday when Nuno was booed and fans chanted "You don't know what you're doing" at the Portuguese coach.

In an increasingly volatile atmosphere, supporters also shouted "We want Levy out" at chairman Daniel Levy, who has now decided change is required again after firing Jose Mourinho in April.

Tottenham is in eighth place in the Premier League, 10 points behind leader Chelsea and five points behind fourth-placed West Ham.

The club said Nuno and his coaching staff had been "relieved of their duties" and that an update on the coaching "will follow in due course," with no successor announced.

"I know how much Nuno and his coaching staff wanted to succeed and I regret that we have had to take this decision," Tottenham managing director Fabio Paratici said. "Nuno is a true gentleman and will always be welcome here. We should like to thank him and his coaching staff and wish them well for the future."

A chaotic recruitment process in the offseason saw Levy try to re-hire Mauricio Pochettino and pursue Paulo Fonseca, Gennaro Gattuso and Antonio Conte before handing a two-year contract to Nuno.

The former Wolverhampton manager immediately had to grapple with

the uncertainty over the future of Harry Kane, who was denied a move to Manchester City and has looked a shadow of the striker who was top scorer in the Premier League last season. Kane's one goal in nine Premier League games and the failure to get a shot on target against United is reflective of Tottenham's malaise.

Nuno only managed the club for 17 games in all competitions.

While he was voted Premier League manager of the month after winning the first three games of the season in August, Tottenham has won only two of the seven games since then.

There has been progress in the League Cup to the quarterfinals but in the Europa Conference League Tottenham has won only one of three games.

The north London club qualified for Europe's new third-tier competition after finishing seventh in the Premier League, a far cry from the four consecutive top-four Champions League finishes from 2016-2019 under Pochettino.

The Argentine even reached the Champions League final in 2019 despite being unable to make any signings that season, missing out on the title to Liverpool. A poor start to the following season led to him being fired in November 2019 and he is now top of the French league with Paris Saint-Germain.

Tottenham is still struggling to reach the standards set by Pochettino, and reproduce the high-tempo attacking football to attract fans into its two-year-old stadium which increased the club's debt to 604.6 million pounds (\$828 million) in its most recent financial report.

# Covid: 11 new cases in Ladakh

Leh, Nov 1 (PTI):Ladakh recorded 11 fresh COVID-19 cases that took the infection tally to 20,962, officials said on Monday.

The number of active cases stands at 67 -- 62 in Leh and five in Kargil district, they said.

Authorities have declared ShalokTsemphukpaMatho area of Leh district as micro containment zone in view of positive cases there, officials said. Ladakh has registered 207 Covid-related

deaths -- 149 in Leh and 58 in Kargil -- since the outbreak of the pandemic last year.

Nine patients were discharged from hospitals, taking the overall recoveries to 20,687, they said, adding all the new cases were reported from Leh.

A total of 388 sample reports in Ladakh were found negative, they said.

There was no death reported due to Covid in Ladakh on Sunday.

# IndiGo starts six new flights connecting Kanpur

**NEW DELHI, Nov 1 (PTI):**IndiGo on Monday started six new flights connecting Kanpur with Mumbai, Bengaluru, and Hyderabad, a statement said.

The airline said these flights will operate on all days except Sundays.

Aviation Minister JyotiradityaScindia virtually flagged off the flights on Monday.

Kanpur is the 71st domestic city to be con-

nected by IndiGo flights, the statement noted.

Sanjay Kumar, Chief Strategy and Revenue Officer, IndiGo, said: "These new routes will connect Kanpur, a major financial and industrial centre in north, to the rest of the country through key hubs in western and southern India while augmenting trade and commerce within these regions.

# Ganga's cleansing of utmost importance to Government: Minister



The National Clean Ganga Mission has managed to connect the common man with the river, the minister said at the Ganga Utsav being organised here to celebrate rivers.

New Delhi: Ganga's cleansing is of utmost importance to the government as the sacred river has been the foundation of India's economic activity, Jal Shakti Minister GajendraShekhawat said on Monday. The National Clean Ganga Mission has managed to connect the common man with the river, the minister said at the Ganga Utsav being organised here to celebrate rivers.

"We have succeeded in connecting Ganga with the common man and made it a Jan Andolan under the NMCG. There are crores of people who are fulfilling their responsibility in carrying out the process of cleaning Ganga," he said.

"Ganga has been the foundation of India's economic activity and livelihood of 40 per cent of the country's population is dependent upon Ganga which also makes its cleansing of utmost importance for us," he added.

MrShekhawat said India is a diverse country and rivers like Ganga bind and unite people so our commitment towards them is necessary. "Earlier, the work to

clean Ganga was being undertaken in silos and efforts were not made at the desired intensity," he said. Jal Shakti Secretary Pan-kaj Kumar said that due to NMCG significant improvement on the ground can already be seen.

"We have already started seeing significant improvements on the ground with improvement of water quality whether it is in terms of dissolved oxygen or biological oxygen, or fecal coliform and this improvement can be being observed at many places," he said.

He further said the government is expanding cleansing of rivers and going beyond Ganga

# Odisha logs 316 fresh COVID-19 cases, three fatalities

**BHUBANESWAR, Nov 1 (PTI):** The twin districts of Khurda and Cuttack in Odisha accounted for over 58 per cent of 316 fresh COVID-19 cases reported on Monday, a health department official said.

The state's tally rose to 10,41,773, while the death toll mounted to 8,336 after three more patients - one each from Angul, Balasore and Ganjam districts - succumbed to the virus, he said.

Odisha had logged 488 new infections on Sunday.

Khurda, comprising state capital Bhubaneswar, reported 152 fresh cases followed by Cuttack (32) and Mayurb-

hanj (28). Eight districts did not register any new coronavirus case.

The state now has 4,237 active cases, and 10,29,147 patients, including 450 since Sunday, have so far recovered from the highly infectious disease, the official said.

Odisha has thus far conducted over 2.20 crore sample tests, taking into account 63,651 such clinical examinations on Sunday. The positivity rate stands at 4.72 per cent, he said.

Altogether, 1,15,46,891 people have been fully inoculated with double doses of COVID-19 vaccines, the official added.

# Only one new COVID-19 case in Arunachal, no deaths

**ITANAGAR, Nov 1 (PTI):** Arunachal Pradesh reported only one new COVID-19 case on Monday, officials said.

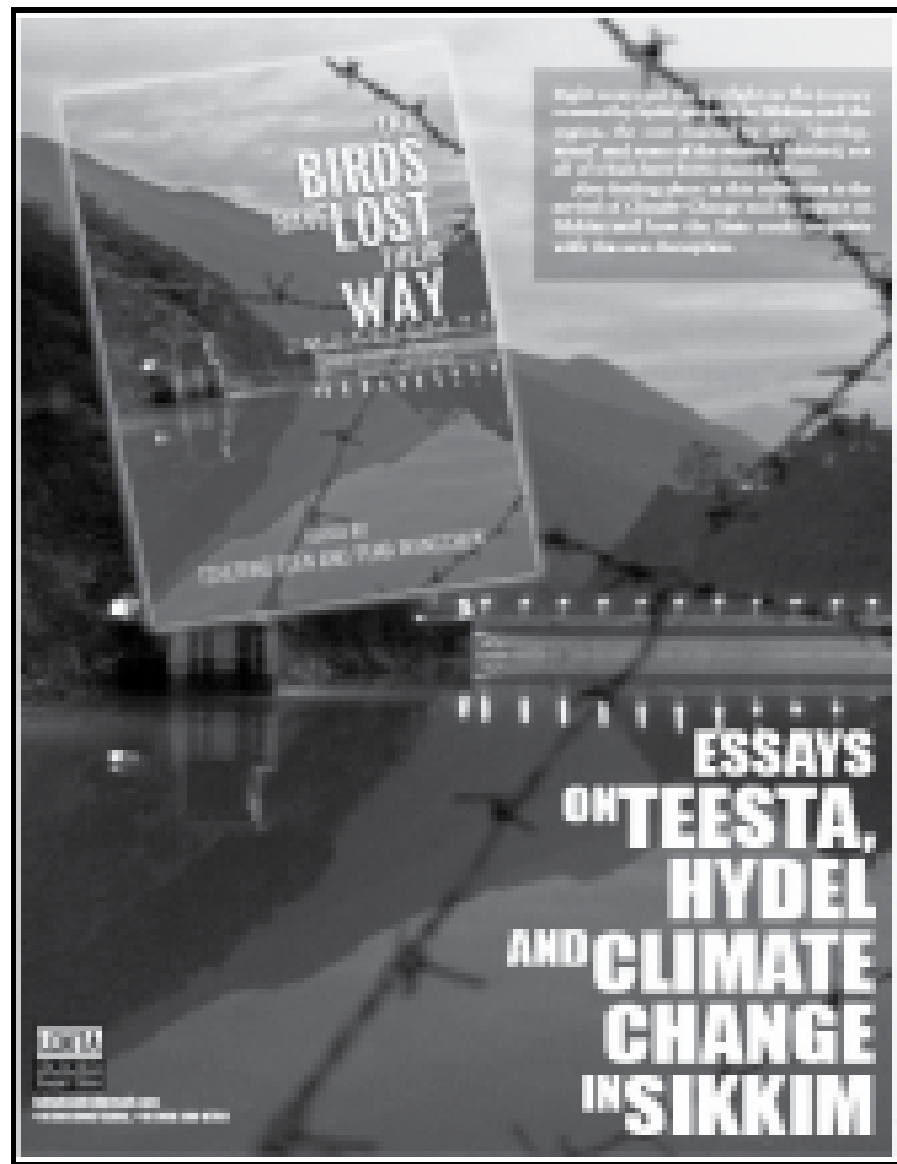
Nineteen people recovered in the last 24 hours, following which the number of active

cases dipped to 101, they said. The toll in the frontier state remained at 280 as no new death was reported, they added.

The state has so far reported 55,155 cases, while 54,774 patients have recovered.

Tawang district has the highest number of active cases at 24, followed by Lower Dibang Valley (18), West Kameng (13) and East Siang (11).

The new case was detected after testing 334 samples.



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## Rivals see hope after noticing weakness in Bayern’s defense

**BERLIN (AP):** Though hardly to blame, Bayern Munich goalkeeper Manuel Neuer has conceded seven goals in his last two games.

While Bayern’s forwards are setting Bundesliga records, the team’s defense is offering rivals a route to success that few had attempted before. Most opponents concentrate first on their own defense in what is usually a futile attempt to restrain Bayern’s fearsome attacking lineup.

But Borussia-Mönchengladbach showed that attack is the best form of defense when it routed Bayern 5-0 in the German Cup last Wednesday — the Bavarian powerhouse’s biggest loss since 1978 — and Union Berlin showed again Saturday that Bayern’s defense can be fallible as it scored two goals before ultimately losing 5-2.

Union’s performance was indicative as it fell behind 3-0 after a hesitant start, then finally began playing after pulling a goal back. Bayern eventually won, but the late goals came against the run of play with Union pegging the visitors back.

Neuer was busy in both games helping his beleaguered defenders. DayotUpamecano was overwhelmed in Gladbach.

“With the exception of Neuer, it was a catastrophic performance from us,” Bayern forward Thomas Müller said after the loss in Gladbach. “I haven’t experienced anything like that before.”

On Saturday, Müller was happier after his team scored five goals of its own.

“We found the right answers with the goals,” Müller said.

Bayern’s forwards have now scored 38 goals in 10 league games, a record at this stage in the Bundesliga. Robert Lewandowski scored two Saturday to take his league tally to 12 goals.

Lewandowski, who broke Gerd Müller’s league record by scoring 41 goals last season, already has 17 in 14 games in all competitions, including five in the Champions League. Bayern’s defense has yet to concede in that competition in games against Barcelona (3-0), Dynamo Kyiv (5-0) and Benfica (4-0).

Bayern can advance to the next round on Tuesday with another win over Benfica in Munich. Bayern is waiting on the fitness of defender Lucas Hernández, who went off early Saturday after getting a knock below his knee.

“We hope he can be there Tuesday,” said assistant coach Dino Toppmöller, who has been filling in on the sideline for the coronavirus-infected Julian Nagelsmann.

Freiburg then visits in the Bundesliga on Saturday. Freiburg is in third place after conceding only seven goals so far — as many as Neuer in his last two games.

# Bowman wins as tension builds ahead of NASCAR title race

**MARTINSVILLE, Va. (AP):** Alex Bowman was the only driver celebrating after NASCAR set its championship four — and he’s not even racing for the title.

Bowman picked up the victory Sunday at Martinsville Speedway in the final elimination race ahead of the winner-take-all season finale. Bowman wasn’t eligible to make the championship round and his over-time victory denied both Kyle Busch and Brad Keselowski the final spot in the field.

The Cup will be decided next Sunday at sold-out Phoenix Raceway between favorite Kyle Larson and reigning champion Chase Elliott for Hendrick Motorsports, and Denny Hamlin and Martin Truex Jr. for Joe Gibbs Racing. It will pit a pair of Hendrick Chevrolets against two JGR Toyotas.

“I think the four most deserving teams are probably in the final four,” said Larson, the regular-season champion and title favorite. “I’m proud we were able to do it and look forward to battling everybody next week.”

Ford was locked out of the championship when Keselowski and Team Penske teammates Ryan Blaney and Joey Logano failed to advance.

Busch finished second to Bowman and Keselowski at last settled for third after a frantic push through the third stage. Truex’s car was damaged in several incidents and both Busch and Keselowski were trying to bump Truex out of the final transfer position.

It led to spirited racing up and down the grid, especially from Keselowski as he tried to bulldoze his way into the championship round for his final race driving for Roger Penske.



He and Busch had hard contact after the checkered flag that caused Busch to spin on the cooldown lap, and Busch seethed after that he should beat up Keselowski.

His verbal threats were a milder approach than the one taken by JGR teammate Hamlin after Bowman spun Hamlin from the lead with six laps remaining to send the race into overtime.

Hamlin had led 103 laps with victory in sight when Bowman spun him. Hamlin after the race drove his car to the frontstretch and parked in front of Bowman to prevent Bowman from a proper celebration on Bowman’s fourth win of the season.

Bowman insisted the contact with Hamlin was accidental and

wondered why Hamlin was so angry because Hamlin has done the same to him.

“He crashed me at Texas last year. Texted me and apologized. Said he’d give me a ride on his jet,” Bowman said. “We’re even, I guess, after that. He crashed the heck out of me there. He got loose underneath me, exactly same thing just on a bigger racetrack. My point is the shoe has been on the other foot, we’ve been on both sides of it.”

Hamlin, who already has five Martinsville grandfather clocks, still advanced into the championship on points. But his JGR crew had to radio Hamlin to back off as he confronted Bowman, who gave Hendrick Motorsports its 16th

## Carmelo Anthony scores 23, leads Lakers past Rockets 95-85



**LOS ANGELES (AP):** Carmelo Anthony scored 23 points in a reserve role and Russell Westbrook added 20 points in the Los Angeles Lakers’ 95-85 victory over the Houston Rockets on Sunday night.

Anthony Davis had 16 points and 13 rebounds, and LeBron James scored 15 points in the Lakers’ fourth win in five games after opening the season with two losses. Westbrook added eight rebounds and nine assists.

Eric Gordon scored 17 points and Christian Wood had 16 for the Rockets, who lost their fourth straight at the start of a five-game road trip.

Anthony had another dynamic game in his first season with Los Angeles, hitting five 3-pointers and tying his career high with four blocked shots. The 19-year NBA veteran, who has led the Lakers in scoring twice already this season, had at least four blocks and two steals in a game for the first time since Dec. 2, 2003.

“I think people don’t really understand me,” Anthony said. “I think there’s a misconception out there about me not being able to adapt to situations. I’m easily adaptable to any situation and I’ve always tried to adapt to any situation I’ve been in. This is an easy adaptation for me just being here and being around the guys, being ready, staying ready, understanding what’s needed and being prepared.” James went 6 for 19 in

his second game back from a sore right ankle, but he had eight assists and seven rebounds. Houston guard Jalen Green, the No. 2 overall pick in this year’s draft, finished with just seven points after getting in early foul trouble. The rebuilding Rockets trailed by 24 points in the first half and 28 in the fourth quarter before a late rally to trim the deficit. The Lakers shored up their defense, and Anthony was a big part of that, too.

“I didn’t expect to see him have the defensive performance that he did, he was great,” Lakers coach Frank Vogel said. “The steals and blocks, he’s always good with his hands. He was in the right position ... He’s willing to do all these things and he can do all these things. When he’s providing that kind of performance on the defensive side with the way he’s shooting it, he’s a huge part of our win.”

**HOUSTON WE HAVE A PROBLEM**

The Rockets didn’t do themselves any favors with 25 turnovers and 14 missed free throws.

“Turnovers wore us out,” Rockets coach Stephen Silas said. “It’s been a problem for the first part of the season and when you’re playing against a good team, which is what we’re doing every night, we have to understand our spacing and a lot of things that go into the turnovers. Some were just careless and others were forced. Forced isn’t necessarily bad but care-

less (ones) we’ll have to watch as a group because it’s becoming a problem night after night.”

**TO EAT OR NOT TO EAT ... CANDY**

The 36-year-old James puts a lot of work into taking care of his body, which is well-documented. That means no candy on Halloween, which he confirmed.

“I’m sure there’s a lot of candy in the house right now, probably from my daughter,” James said. “My boys aren’t candy kids. They used to be. My daughter can have whatever she wants, but I stay away from it.”

**TIP-INS**

Rockets: G Kevin Porter Jr., who played at nearby USC, was back in the starting lineup. A sprained left ankle forced him out of Thursday’s game against Utah. He played against the Lakers at Staples Center for the first time in his career ... F Danuel House Jr. (right foot) missed the game and is expected to miss Tuesday’s game as well.

Lakers: C Dwight Howard (neck stiffness) didn’t play ... Many of the Lakers dressed up for Halloween, including James as Freddy Krueger and Rajon Rondo as Wolverine. ... Coach Frank Vogel said his family was giving out a mixed bag of treats, which had Baby Ruth, Nestle Crunch, Butterfinger and Whoppers among them.

**UP NEXT**

A rematch on Tuesday night at Staples Center.

win in 35 races this season and fourth in a row.

“He’s just a hack, just an absolute hack who gets his ass kicked every week by his teammates,” said Hamlin, a Virginia native who audibly did not have any home-crowd support.

The well-filled grandstands erupted in cheers when Bowman spun Hamlin, and then loudly booed him when he was interviewed over the public address system. Asked after if he was surprised by the fan reaction, Hamlin blamed most popular driver Elliott and predicted the same reaction next week at Phoenix.

“It’s just Chase Elliott fans, man. They don’t think straightly,” Hamlin said. “They’re going to boo the (crap)

## Jazz hand short-handed Bucks third straight loss, 107-95

**MILWAUKEE (AP):** Donovan Mitchell scored 28 points and the Utah Jazz beat the short-handed Milwaukee Bucks 107-95 on Sunday to hand the defending NBA champions their third straight loss.

Both teams were coming off losses Saturday night.

Mike Conley added 20 points, Jordan Clarkson had 15 and Bojan Bogdanovic added 14 to help Utah rebound from its first loss of the season.

GiannisAntetokounmpo led Milwaukee with 25 points, seven rebounds and six assists.

Milwaukee has dropped three home games over the last five nights and has shot 27.5% (36 of 131) from 3-point range during that stretch. The Bucks opened the home stand with a 113-108 loss to Minnesota.

Khris Middleton missed Sunday’s game with an illness, causing one more obstacle for a Milwaukee team that already has been playing without usual starters Jrue Holiday, Brook Lopez and DonteDiVincenzo due to injury. Reserve forward Rodney Hood left with a bruised right hand after playing just 11 minutes.

**LAKERS 95, ROCKETS 85**

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**NETS 117, PISTONS 91**

out of me next week, I can tell you that.” Elliott shrugged off Hamlin’s critique.

“I’m going to lose so much sleep tonight. I might not sleep at all, that’s how concerned I am,” he smiled. “My fans don’t care either, by the way.”

Hamlin will try for a fourth time to win his first Cup title. Both he and Larson, the heavy favorite and a nine-race winner this season, have never won a NASCAR championship. Elliott is the reigning champion and Truex, who had to nurse a wounded Toyota to a fourth-place finish Sunday to stop teammate Busch from bumping him out of the finale, has one previous title.

But the final four festivities were muted with Hamlin unhappy about the finish, Elliott disappointed he was 16th after leading a race-high 289 laps and sweeping the first two stages, and Larson unsatisfied when speeding penalties and silly mistakes snapped his three-race winning streak.

Truex, at least, seemed relieved.

“It’s never an easy situation to be kind of on your last run of the race, be in one minute and out the next,” he said. “You know there’s not a whole lot you can do other than drive.”

Busch and Keselowski, meanwhile, were also unhappy. Keselowski wanted a shot at winning a second title with Penske, and Busch was upset he did didn’t advance and with teammates Hamlin and Truex.

“Anytime you go into a season with Toyota, Joe Gibbs Racing, this 18, M&M’s team, myself, you expect to be championship four, in contention, eligible,” Busch said. “Anything other than that is a failure. Guess (I) get an F”



# Australia, Thailand reopen borders after lengthy lockdowns

CANBERRA, Australia (AP): Sydney's international airport came alive with tears, embraces and laughter on Monday as Australia opened its border for the first time in 20 months, with some arriving travelers removing mandatory masks to see the faces of loved ones they've been separated from for so long.

Australia and other countries in the Asia-Pacific have had some of the world's strictest COVID-19 pandemic lockdown measures and travel restrictions, but with vaccination rates rising and cases falling, many are now starting to cautiously reopen.

Some, like China and Japan, remain essentially sealed off to foreign visitors, but Thailand also started to substantially reopen Monday and many others have already started, or plan to follow suit.

Traveler Carly Boyd seized the opportunity presented by the new Australian regulations to jump on the first flight home from New York to surprise her parents, whom she hadn't seen in three years.

"Just being able to come home without having to go to quarantine is huge," she told reporters at Sydney's airport, where the country's unofficial anthem "I Still Call Australia Home" was playing. "There's a lot of people on that flight who have loved ones who are about to die or have people who died this week, so for them to be able to get off the plane and go see them straight away is pretty amazing."

In Thailand, a country where tourism accounted for some 20% of the economy before the pandemic, the lockdown has caused massive job losses and hardship, and the government hopes the return of foreign visitors will provide a much-needed boost.

Still, only a few months removed from a surge fueled by the delta variant of the vi-



rus that saw deaths rise dramatically, many Thais remain worried that an influx of outsiders could trigger new outbreaks.

Bangkok taxi driver IsarapongPaingam lost his mother to COVID-19 during the recent surge, and said it would make more sense to him for the government to focus its attention fully on reopening domestically before introducing foreign travelers into the mix.

"The government has not yet told the public what they would do if an outbreak takes place again," the 34-year-old said. "I don't understand why they don't let people in the country live normally as a trial to see the trend (of COVID-19 cases) before welcoming tourists."

Thailand has allowed residents to travel during the pandemic, but mandated a strict two-week quarantine in specially designated hotels for people entering the country.

Foreign arrivals plummeted from 40 million in 2019 to 6.69 million in 2020

— almost all in the first three months before the pandemic restrictions were introduced — to fewer than 100,000 so far in 2021.

Monday's reopening builds on a pilot scheme launched in July on the resort island of Phuket, which allowed fully vaccinated travelers from selected countries to spend their quarantine moving around the island instead of in a hotel room.

Starting Monday, if travelers are fully vaccinated and from one of 63 countries and territories deemed "low risk" — which some cynical Thais have noted seem to be based more on spending power than coronavirus infections — they are exempt from quarantine. They need to spend one night at a designated hotel and can't check out until they have a negative COVID-19 test, but then are free to travel.

Travelers from countries not on the preferred list or those who are unvaccinated are still subject to various quarantine rules.

Restrictions are also be-

ing relaxed in the destination areas, including widespread reopening of businesses and other facilities such as department stores, spas, tattoo shops, schools and sporting events.

With the combination of strict screening of visitors and higher vaccination rates in Thailand, SupatHasuwanakit, president of Thailand's Rural Doctor Society, said he is not concerned about foreign tourists sparking a new surge in cases.

But he said he does worry about the planned reopening of bars and clubs in December, noting that recent domestic outbreaks came after the government allowed people to gather for activities such as religious services and weddings.

"Once people start to gather, eat and drink, it has a high possibility to create a new outbreak," he said. "Most bars and nightclubs are indoors with bad airflow, so it is easy for COVID-19 to spread once they reopen."

Rules requiring masks and distancing remain in

place, much like other countries in the region that have begun reopening.

In India, which saw a peak of 400,000 daily cases in April and May, officials have been warning that people need to continue following such restrictions to avoid causing "super spreader" events during the holiday season as the country gradually reopens.

India began granting tourist visas on Oct. 15 for fully vaccinated people arriving on charter flights, and will extend them to tourists on commercial flights starting Nov. 15.

Neighboring Sri Lanka has already started to allow fully vaccinated travelers without quarantines, and partially or non-vaccinated people with some restrictions. South Korea, which on Monday began to allow larger social gatherings and lifted operating-hour restrictions on restaurants, has a similar scheme.

Vietnam is still closed but plans to open the popular resort island of PhuQuoc

to fully vaccinated vacationers by the end of the month, and neighboring Cambodia, which on Monday lifted restrictions on domestic travel, has a similar plan to open two seaside provinces to international travelers. Malaysia intends to open its northern resort island of Langkawi on Nov. 15 to fully vaccinated tourists.

Australia is betting that vaccination rates are now high enough to mitigate the danger of allowing international travel.

Initially only Australian permanent residents and citizens will be free to enter the country. Fully vaccinated foreigners traveling on skilled worker and student visas will be given priority over international tourists.

But the government expects Australia will welcome international tourists back to some degree before the year ends.

Already, Australia announced Monday that vaccinated tourists from Singapore — which has one of the highest vaccination rates in

the world — will be welcome from Nov. 21 under a bilateral agreement.

The new freedoms also mean that fully vaccinated Australian permanent residents and citizens can leave the country for any reason without asking the government for an exemption from a travel ban that has trapped most at home since March 25, 2020.

Sydney was the first Australian airport to announce it would reopen Monday because New South Wales was the first state where 80% of the population aged 16 and older has been fully vaccinated. Melbourne and the national capital, Canberra, also opened on Monday after Victoria state and the Australian Capital Territory achieved the vaccination benchmark.

Even though Australians are now free to travel overseas, four Australian states and a territory are still maintaining pandemic restrictions on crossing state lines.

Australian Ethen Carter, who landed at Sydney's airport from Los Angeles on Monday, expressed his frustration at having to apply for permission to visit his dying mother in Western Australia state.

He pleaded through the media to Western Australia Premier Mark McGowan, who has said the state border will not open this year, to let him in. "Mark, think of the people that are suffering, like, mentally to see their family. That's also a health issue," Carter said. "And we know we've got to protect people's lives, but you've got to bring families together again, you have to."

McGowan said his government would consider allowing Carter to enter the state if he applies for an exemption.

"These situations are very sad and very difficult and we've seen much of this over the course of the last two years," McGowan said.

## Ugandan kids lose hope in long school closure amid pandemic

BUSIA, UGANDA (AP): Dressed in his school uniform, Mathias Okwako jumped into the mud and started his daily search for gold, a commodity that may be closer to his grasp than another precious asset: an education.

His rural school in Uganda sits idle just across the road from the swamp where he and scores of children now work as informal miners. Weeds grow in some classrooms, where window frames have been looted for firewood. Another school nearby is renting out rooms to tenants.

Uganda's schools have been fully or partially shut for more than 77 weeks because of the coronavirus pandemic, the longest disruption anywhere in the world, according to figures from the U.N. cultural agency.

And unlike many parts of the globe, where lessons moved online, most public schools, which serve the vast majority of children in this East African country, were unable to offer virtual schooling.

In the void left, some students got married. Some are dealing with unwanted pregnancies. Others, like 17-year-old Okwako, found jobs.

The pandemic has manufactured "outcasts," a lost generation of learners now "in a battle of how to fit in," said Moses Mangeni, an official with the local government in Busia, where Okwako lives.

Efforts to control the spread of COVID-19 have disrupted the lives of children in every corner of the globe, squeezing their parents, complicating their care, and often removing their safety nets. Perhaps most crucially, it has thrown their schooling into chaos.

The result is the "biggest global education emergency of our time," according to the aid group Save the Children, which last month identified 48 countries, including Uganda, whose school systems are at extreme or high risk of

collapse. Most are in sub-Saharan Africa, a region long marked by high drop-out rates and a shortage of qualified teachers.

Some other parts of the world that saw protracted closures also struggled to teach students. Mexico, where internet connectivity is low in many places, opted for educational programming via television. Ultimately, the pandemic was devastating for children in Mexico, which saw millions leave school as well as increases in child homicides, teen pregnancies and domestic violence.

In Iraq, remote learning was similarly "limited and unequal," according to the World Bank.

Some wealthier countries fared better. In Kuwait, because most public schools weren't equipped to go online when the virus first struck, all schooling was suspended for seven months in 2020. But then the oil-rich Gulf Arab sheikhdom poured \$212 million into an e-learning platform, and all schools went online. The rollout is considered a success.

But in Uganda there is no success to speak of.

The country first shut down its schools in March 2020, shortly after the first coronavirus case was confirmed on the African continent. Some classes were reopened to students in February, but a total lockdown was imposed again in June as the country faced its first major surge. It is now the only country in Africa where schools remain closed — though President Yoweri Museveni announced last week that they would reopen in January.

That comes as virus cases have tapered off in recent months, with the country now recording an average of 70 new infections each day and a couple of deaths, according to Johns Hopkins University. So far, Uganda has fully vaccinated about 700,000 of its 44 million people. First lady Janet Museveni, who

is the country's education minister, has rejected criticism that the government isn't doing enough to teach kids. In a speech in October, she asked "why our children cannot be safe at home. What happened to the family?"

The problem, some Ugandans say, is that the government hasn't found a successful way to keep up learning during lockdown. A suggested national program to broadcast lessons via free radio sets didn't materialize, and in rural areas many children don't have learning materials of any kind.

As elsewhere, schools typically also provide a refuge to vulnerable children: They may be fed there or receive their routine childhood vaccinations or have access to other services not easily available at home.

But in Uganda's poorest homes, children are now often left to their own devices, without the private tutoring or Zoom lessons that wealthy families can afford.

In Busia, even before the pandemic, the sight of kids peddling goods in the streets wasn't uncommon. Things have only become worse.

Many children who spoke to The Associated Press expressed hopelessness amid the protracted lockdown.

Okwako, who said he was wearing his school uniform while searching for gold because he had nothing else to put on, sought work out of boredom but regrets that the tiring days leave him little energy to study on his own.

"No time (for) reading books," he said. "If you try to open a book, you just go asleep, and sleep up to tomorrow."

At the informal gold mine, students toil alongside adults, including some of their teachers, under the scorching sun. Witnesses said the risks and frustrations of the precarious work have led to fistfights, and some children have broken limbs while digging.

A typical day can bring in just over

\$2, enough for a child to buy a pair of used shoes. Okwako is proud of the two pigs he bought with his earnings. Other children said they use the money help to look after their families, regularly buying salt or soap.

"We come here to make money," said 16-year-old AnnetAita, whose job is to wash the sandy soil in which gold dust is trapped, using highly toxic mercury.

But work also provides a refuge from other dangers that stalk those not in school. Aita said she felt more fortunate than some friends who "got pregnancies at home."

Teacher Francis Adungosi said he now works at the mine "from Monday to Monday" and warned that he will need a "refresher course" before going back to the classroom.

As for his students, "they are traumatized. Remember they are having a lot of challenges. Some of them are pregnant. Some have already got married. Handling those children is going to be so tasking."

That's for those who go back. Many say they won't.

Some of the children now say, "we don't recall what we read, so why should we go back?" said Gilbert Mugalanzi, of the group Somero Uganda, which carried out a survey in November to assess how the pandemic was affecting schoolchildren in parts of Busia.

At Okwako's Mawero Primary School, teacher Emmy Odillo said he expects a small fraction of the 400 students to return next year.

Others have similarly low expectations.

BoscoMasaba, the director of studies at Busia Central Primary School, the private school nearby that has been converted into rentals, said he regularly sees some students in the streets selling tomatoes or eggs. He heard that some girls became domestic workers across the border in Kenya.





## Candace Cameron Bureresponds to criticism of her family's "unattractive" wedding attire

Candace Cameron Bure's Instagram post from a recent wedding was met with criticism over her family's fashion choices, leading the star to respond directly to a number of the negative comments. Candace Cameron Bure seemed to have no idea that tension would be afoot after she posted sweet family photos.

The 45-year-old Fuller House alum took to Instagram on Saturday, Oct. 30 to share two pics from a wedding she attended with her family over the weekend. The images showed both Candace and daughter Natasha Bure in striking red dresses, while the star's husband, Valeri Bure, and son Lev Bure both wore suits. Missing in action was son Maksim Bure, who is attending college.

"Wedding season and I am HERE FOR IT !!!" Candace captioned the post, adding a number of heart emojis. "Mama gets another family pic (minus Maks who's away at college.)"

Surprisingly, the seemingly innocuous post led to negative comments from a number of her followers who seemed bothered by the family's fashion choices. In particular, some social media users questioned the decision to wear red at a wedding, in addition to the fact that Val and Lev didn't appear to be wearing socks.

One fan wrote, "while I absolutely love the red, it's my color, it's considered a no-no at weddings, along with white!" This led Candace to reply, "anything goes in L.A. there were 4 women wearing red dresses to the wedding."

A comment from a different individual read, "Supposed to avoid red at

weddings it's a power color steals spotlight from the bride." To this, Candace offered, "different style rules in Los Angeles," adding a winking emoji.

When a follower wrote, "The no sock look is a no for me," Candace responded with the seemingly sarcastic retort, "thanks for letting us know!"

Another user commented, "Love y'all so much but men really should wear

more ppl" if she were to "post reality" instead of "happy smiley pictures." This led Candace to write, in part, "I'm always honest, but let's get real. Most people don't want to hear about everyone's hardships and problems."

Later, the clearly frustrated actress added a message to the top of her post that read, "Don't poke mama bear. Some of you still need to learn manners. Don't



socks with dress shoes. Just sayin." Candace replied, "we have a different opinion." The criticism wasn't over yet. After someone shared, "I don't get why guys don't wear socks with a suit. It doesn't look good," Candace came back with, "in your opinion."

And when a fan wrote, "The no sock thing is very unattractive," Candace replied, "comments like this are unattractive. People enjoy style in different ways. It's not always necessary to share your opinion."

Yet another user commented that Candace "would be a vessel of God to

like? Scroll through. Some of you ruin the fun of sharing on social media for everyone."

Although this post led to an unexpectedly high number of negative comments, Candace has previously proven she isn't one to shy away from telling fellow social media users how she feels.

In January, she posted about her disappointment regarding "so many unkind comments" having been made at the time about her family's Christmas photo. "Shame on you," she wrote back then. "It doesn't matter if you're 10 or 90 years old, rude is rude."

### North West and friends embrace their inner Goth side as "cerealkillers" for Halloween

Kim Kardashian's daughter North West, who is known for loving goth culture, wore a colorful wig and all-black attire as she joined her friends to become "cereal killers" on Halloween.

Kim Kardashian has previously made it clear that daughter North West has a goth streak in her, and so there's no better time to celebrate it than Halloween.

On Sunday, Oct. 31, Tracy Romulus, Kim's longtime friend and the chief marketing officer of her KKW Brands, shared a carousel of Halloween pics to Instagram of her own daughter Ryan Romulus, along with North and the girls' friend Haidyn. The images showed the three girls dressed in matching pink and green two-tone wigs, black metal band-style T-shirts, black skirts, studded belts and bloodied platform boots.

"Cereal Killers," Tracy captioned it, adding knife, spiderweb, bowl, drop of blood and skull emojis.

Last month, Kim offered insight into her 8-year-old daughter's personality when she told Ellen DeGeneres about North, "She puts fake tattoos on her face, and she listens to Black Sabbath, and she's just like a full goth girl." Along with North, Kim and ex Kanye West share children Saint West, 5, Chicago West, 3, Psalm West, 2. Kim's Halloween plans were the talk of the weekend, as she was photographed tightly holding hands with Pete Davidson on a roller coaster at Knott's Scary Farm, the seasonal rebrand of Knott's Berry Farm amusement park in Orange County, Calif.

## Priyanka Chopra's father-in-law accidentally photobombed pic with Sophie Turner and Danielle Jonas

**NEW DELHI:** Priyanka Chopra managed to scoop some time from her super busy schedule and spent some quality time with husband Nick Jonas and his family in Los Angeles. The actress

posted a super cute picture with Nick Jonas on her Instagram story and she wrote: "My happy place." She also shared a picture with her sisters-in-law Sophie Turner (married to Joe Jonas) and Danielle Jonas (married to Kevin). The photograph also features another member of the Jonas family, her father-in-law Paul Kevin Jonas Sr. Priyanka Chopra captioned the post: "About last night...With these beauties. Also don't miss senior in the corner. Jonas Brothers family roast. Roasted coming to Netflix on November 23."

Nick, Kevin Jonas along with brother Joe, are a part of the famous musical band Jonas Brothers. The band became a household name after they made appearances on the Disney channel. Nick, Kevin and Joe started the band in the year 2005 and they featured in the Camp Rock films. They were also a part of the Disney series

titled Jonas. The Jonas Brothers returned to the music scenario in March 2019 with their comeback single Sucker, which ruled all the music charts.

Priyanka Chopra and Nick Jonas



met at the grand fashion event Met Gala 2017, where they represented designer Ralph Lauren. Well, Nick Jonas is a true blue romantic. The singer had shut down an entire Tiffany's store in New York to pick out Priyanka Chopra's ring. He had proposed to Priyanka on her birthday while vacationing in London. They got married at the Umaid Bhawan Palace in 2018.



### WHO YA GONNA CALL?

United States Representative, Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez dressed up as a Ghostbuster for a community Halloween celebration in New York City.

## Actor Kal Penn comes out as Gay, announces engagement to partner of 11 years

**NEW DELHI:** Kal Penn, who is all set for the launch of his book You Can't Be Serious, has come out as gay. The actor, in a recent interview with People, opened up about his relationship, how his parents reacted and his wedding plans. Kal Penn, 44, has been in a relationship with his partner Josh for 11 years and the couple are engaged. The actor told People that he discovered his sexuality relatively later than most people. "I discovered my own sexuality relatively later in life compared to many other people. There's no timeline on this stuff. People figure their s\*\*\* out at different times in their lives, so I'm glad I did when I did."

The Namesake star added that he felt "very supported" when he told his parents. "I shared things with my parents and close friends first," he said. He added, "I know this sounds jokey, but it's true, when you've already told your Indian parents and the South Asian community that you intend to be an actor for a living, really any conversations that come after that are super easy. They're just like, 'Yeah, okay.' I felt very supported by everyone. That's a wonderful thing. I know everybody has different experiences with that and so I definitely feel very fortunate," People quoted Kal Penn



as saying. Speaking of his wedding plans, the actor said, "Obviously I am engaged to a man and our families will be there for the wedding. The big disagreement now is whether it's a huge wedding or a tiny wedding. I want the big a\*\* Indian wedding. Josh, hates attention. Or we could just do quick 20-minute thing with our families and that's it. So we have to meet halfway in the middle."

Kal Penn is a star of House, Designated

Survivor, the Harold And Kumar film series. 1998's short film Express: Aisle To Glory was Kal Penn's debut project as an actor. He also starred in The Girl In The Photographs, Speech And Debate, to name a few. He has also featured in brief roles in sitcoms like The Big Bang Theory and How I Met Your Mother among many others. He also spent two years working in the White House for the Barack Obama administration.

Aries:

It's time to believe in happy endings, Aries. It's time to get intoxicated on that lethal mix of hope, joy and optimism. Yes, things have a way of turning around unexpectedly, and this is something you're about to witness first hand. What you're making space for this week: a deeper connection with your beloved. The Universe is holding space for you to transmute those throat chakra blockages and express how you really feel about this connection. Tip: It's time to believe in happy endings, boo!

Taurus:

Here's the thing, Taurus: you "have" to make all kinds of terrible choices. You've got to trip and fall a million times before you crawl your way back into the game. Think of this as an integral part of the evolution process. Rites of passage, if you may! If anything, these experiences have made you bulletproof and taught you the kind of lessons success never will. So, just for today, take it in your stride. Take it all in your stride. Embracing life with an attitude of gratitude will make way for big changes. Tip: Be grateful for the failures as you are for the victories.

Gemini:

When we're not in alignment with our truth, it becomes almost impossible to move forward. The roadblocks show up as a reminder that we need to reassess our choices. When we do what we're meant to be doing, on the other

hand, the green flags appear consistently and the pathway begins to clear itself. So, pay attention to what the signs are telling you, Gemini. Looks like you're being offered a second chance by the forces!

Tip: The signs are onto something, baby!

Cancer:

This phase of your life calls for big dreams and bigger actions, Cancer. But, before you go forth and conquer, take a moment to assess your past. Take a moment to assess what has and hasn't worked for you so far. This will give you a deeper insight into what is truly in alignment with your path. Remember, in order to move forward, you will have to let go of some of the old ways, and that's okay. Welcome this transition as a necessary part of the growth and evolution process. Tip: Pause and look into the rearview mirror, beautiful.

Leo:

You can dream about a better life all you want, Leo. But, until you put yourself out there - until you talk to the people who matter - nothing significant can be achieved. What the cards are urging you to do is to revisit your vision board. Understand how and where you need to realign as you plant your seeds consciously. Remember, opportunities don't just come our way. We have to create them for ourselves. Tip: Playing your cards right will come in handy today.

Virgo:

Like every other skill, meditation too requires patience and persistence. So, show up for your practice even when it's hard to. And then, one day, unexpectedly, the portal of divine wisdom will open its doors for you. As such, this is a time of looking inwards, rather than outwards. A time of connecting with yourself on a deeper level. So, be mindful of how you utilise your time and energy. Yes, that means learning not to apologise for refusing the things that do not resonate with your soul. Tip: Your time and energy are precious, baby!

Libra:

Not all transformations are tempestuous in nature. Some of them are benign and warm-hearted, like the gentle waves of the ocean on a summer night. So, breathe, beautiful, breathe. Watch those wounds turn into wisdom. Witness hope and faith overcome the fears. Things are going to get better from here, Libra. Things are going to get better - we promise. There will be a time when the memories that haunt you today will lie at the back of your attic like old photographs - long-forgotten. Tip: Watch those wounds turn into wisdom, baby!

Scorpio:

Scorpio, you're the wise one. The decisive one. The one who usually has their feet firmly planted on the ground. So, why are you feeling so flighty this time around? Is

there a possibility that you're avoiding the decision-making process so you don't let other people down? Remember, you'll never be able to please everybody, even if you try your best to. So, do what's right for you. Do what takes you closer to your goals, without adversely affecting those in your path, of course. Tip: You've got to do what's right for you.

Sagittarius:

To think that the Universe would withhold your share of blessings is an act of blasphemy, Sagittarius. It's time to surrender your woes to a higher power. It's time to acknowledge the rejection as redirection, beautiful. Trust that it is all taking place in accordance with the law of divine timing, and that you'll look back at this time in your life with gratitude in your heart and a smile on your face. Tip: it's all taking place in accordance with the law of divine timing.

Capricorn:

"I am worthy of health, wealth, and abundance." Say this affirmation out loud to the Universe. Better yet, pin these words onto your work desk where you can refer to them over and over. This is a powerful time of transmutation, Capricorn. A time of bringing the light of awareness to those deep-seated fears and self-limiting beliefs. Remember, nothing and nobody can stand in your way the second you decide to create a better life for yourself.

Tip: You are being called to address self-limiting beliefs of all kinds.

Aquarius:

When we turn to the outside world for validation, we continue to vibrate in the frequency of fear and self-doubt. When we turn inwards for guidance, on the other hand, we begin to peel away the layers and come closer to our truth. So, eliminate the distractions, Aquarius. Create a sacred space that facilitates the metaphorical journey within. Something tells us that 'aha moment' is closer than you imagine. Tip: Let your inner compass guide you, beautiful.

Pisces:

The trouble is, you're too hung up on what you will achieve as a result of the hard work you're putting in. The only reason you are giving your all is in order to seek external validation. But, this kind of effort will only take you so far, Pisces. You will plateau after a point. What's more, the joy and satisfaction you are seeking will evade you till the very end. So, consider changing your approach a little. Pour all of your love into creations as a prayer to the Universal forces. Practicing the law of non-attachment will enhance both the quality of your life "and" your sacred offerings. Tip: Create from a space of joy, beautiful.