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SummitTIMES

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ON TOP OF THE NEWS

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No new Covid deaths and recoveries continue to outstrip new cases in Sikkim

SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 01 SEPT:

Sikkim's recovery rate inched up to 95.2% on Wednesday with 130 people beating the virus and getting discharged from home and facility isolations after making full recoveries in the last 24 hours. Against the 29,954 people who have tested positive for Covid in Sikkim

since 28 Feb, 2020, as of today, 28,262 have already made fully recoveries and nearly a thousand are well on their way to recovery recuperating under home or facility isolation. Less than a hundred of the active cases have symptoms severe enough to require hospitalization.

What should also spread some more

joy in the State is that there were no Covid deaths here in the past 24 hours and the Covid toll held at 370 for the second consecutive day.

As per the Daily Report of COVID-19 in Sikkim released by the Integrated Disease Surveillance Programme of the Health Department this morning, 76 people tested positive for Covid

from the screening of 852 samples in the State on Tuesday. With this, the State's daily test positivity rate continued to remain below 10% at 8.9%.

While 40 samples returned positive from RT-PCR testing of 387 samples, 36 new cases were picked up in rapid antigen testing of 463 samples.

Out of the 76 new

cases, 33 were registered in East District, 11 in West District, 26 in South District and 06 in North District.

There are currently 1,039 active Covid cases in Sikkim, of whom 12 COVID patients are admitted in ICU facilities of STNM hospital and Central Referral Hospital. The past 24 hours saw only 13 new hospitalizations.

Rotary Club felicitates two media houses

SAGAR CHETTRI

GANGTOK, 01 SEPT:

In recognition of their contribution to the people of Sikkim and especially in the field of journalism, two local media houses, Summit Times and Sikkim Express were felicitated by Rotary Club of Gangtok South here on Tuesday evening. The awards were received by editors, Amit Patro of Sikkim Express and Puran Tamang of Summit Times.

Chairman Sikkim Housing Development Board, Karma Tashi Bhutia was present as the chief guest, while Tathangchen Councilor, Pema Lhamu Lamtha was present as the guest of honour.

In his address, the chief guest congratulated editors of both media houses for playing an important role in the so-



ciety, especially disseminating information to the people. He encouraged editors and their teams to continuously contribute towards the state and its people. He further thanked Rotary Club of Gangtok South for its selfless service in bringing stranded Sikkimese students back home during the first wave of COVID-19.

Likewise, the guest of honour congratulated both media houses for recognition of their hard work and dedication and further urged them to continuously deliver their responsibilities responsibly towards the society.

While thanking Rotary Club of Gangtok South, Sikkim Express editor, Amit Patro ex-

pressed that being the oldest newspaper in the State, Sikkim Express has a huge responsibility to keep the credibility alive especially during the era of digital media. He expressed that media in Sikkim is still growing.

Summit Times editor, Puran Tamang briefly spoke about the challenges and gradual growth of Summit Times.

He mentioned that although being a young media house in the State, Summit Times has already been awarded the Best Newspaper Award by the Media Federation of India in 2019. He also thanked the club for the honour.

On the occasion, Rotary Club of Gangtok South secretary, Dr Sujata Upadhyay informed that Governor of Sikkim Ganga Prasad has been inducted in the club as an honorary member.

The function also witnessed an induction ceremony, which was conducted by Rotary Club of Gangtok South president Gopal Basnet, where three new members joined the club.

In his welcome address, vice president of the club, Kiran Rasaily briefly spoke about both media houses.

CM calls on Rural Development and Agri Ministers in Delhi



NEW DELHI, 01 SEPT

(IPR): Chief Minister Prem Singh Tamang called on the Union Minister of Panchayati Raj and Rural Development, Giriraj Singh in New Delhi today.

He acknowledged the continuous development made by the Rural Development department in progressively changing the rural landscape. He added that the programmes and schemes of the Ministry of Rural Development and Panchayati Raj have assisted in enhancing the conditions in the rural areas and have tremendously benefitted the state and improved the living conditions.

Further, to achieve full potential under the said policies, the Chief Minister placed a detailed proposal for strengthening the Ru-

ral Development sector and Panchayati Raj institutions and requested the consideration of the proposals to ensure continued and sustained growth.

Similarly, the Chief Minister called on the Union Minister for Agriculture and Farmers Welfare, Narendra Singh Tomar in New Delhi.

The Chief Minister thanked the Union Minister for the support extended to the state through various incentives and schemes. He added that Sikkim being a certified organic state has set a precedent in the nation and is providing consultancy to Ladakh and Arunachal Pradesh.

As chemical fertilisers are not used in the state, Sikkim has forfeited subsidies amounting to Rs 800

crore to date.

In this regard, the Chief Minister informed that the state has been raising the matter through various platforms for compensation by providing subsidies on organic manures to the farmers as a substitute to chemical fertilisers.

He sought the support of the Ministry for extending benefits/financial assistance under the Large Area Certification (LAC) under the scheme Paramparagat Krishi Vikas Yojana (PKVY) in Sikkim and added that the state government will be submitting a concept note on Organic Nutrient Support to the farmers in the coming days.

The Chief Minister requested the consideration of the proposal to encourage and assist the farmers of Sikkim.

SFPB board meets, discusses Eco-Heritage Film City



GANGTOK, 01 SEPT

(IPR): The 2nd board meeting of Sikkim Film Promotion Board was held at the chamber of Chairperson, Sikkim Film Promotion Board, Pooja Sharma at Manan Kendra today.

The meeting chaired by the Chairperson, Sikkim Film Promotion Board also had the presence of Secretary, IPR Department, Siporah Targain, Director, IPR, Benu Gurung along with other board members.

In the welcome note, Director, IPR Department, Benu Gurung welcomed all the dignitaries and highlighted on the need for creation of single window system to

simplify and facilitate the film shooting process in the state and added that setting up of single window system will require full cooperation and coordination from the other concerned departments.

Pooja Sharma in her address informed about setting up of Eco-Heritage Film City at Yangang and added that Sikkim itself was a natural set for filming production and has great potential for it to stand out as a leading shooting destination in the country. The Eco Heritage Film City will also help in creating employment opportunities for the people of Sikkim, she added. She

also informed that the PPR of the Eco Heritage Film City has been submitted to the Ministry of DONER by the Minister IPR, Lok Nath Sharma and has received positive feedback.

Chairperson SFPB asked for the suggestions of the concerned departments for making the upcoming Sikkim Global Film Festival a grand success. Further discussion on Film Policy, grant in aids and other specific agendas were also discussed during the course of the meeting.

The meeting was well participated by all the board members wherein they gave their valuable inputs.

Bhawika and Jharna selected for Team India headed for World Bodybuilding and Physique Sports Championship

SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 01 SEPT:

Two athletes from Sikkim will be representing the country in the upcoming 12th edition of World Bodybuilding and Physique Sports Championship 2021 scheduled to be held from 01 to 07 October at Tashkent, Republic of Uzbekistan.

Bhawika Pradhan in junior category and Jharna Rai in senior category from Sikkim qualified for Team India in national selection trials held on 29 August in Chandigarh. Both of them will be participating in the world championship for the first time.

Body Builders Association of Sikkim [BBAS] had conducted a selection trial here on 15 August from which Bhawika and Jharna were selected for the national trials. The duo was accompanied by Indian Body Builders Federation [IBBF] women's committee secretary, Tashi Ongmu Lepcha, to the national selection trials.

Around 50 athletes were shortlisted to represent the country from the more than

150 who attended the trials.

Addressing a press conference here today, Bhawika expressed happiness on finding place in the national squad.

"I have been preparing hard for the upcoming world championship. I will give my best for my country on such a big international platform," she said.

Echoing the sentiments, Jharna pointed out that there was still a month left to prepare for the world championship and assured that she would prepare eyeing a medal for the country on her debut.

BBAS general secretary Pema WD Bhutia shared that the association has been working hard to support and promote local athletes to national and international events and thanked IBBF for supporting quality athletes from Sikkim.

IBBF women's committee secretary, Tashi Ongmu Lepcha informs that IBBF will bring more opportunities to local athletes and encouraged bodybuilders and fitness enthusiasts to work harder and with dedication to reach high-levels.

CM writes to PM, requests approval for construction of 51 bridges

SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 01 SEPT:

Chief Minister, Prem Singh Tamang wrote to the Prime Minister, Narendra Modi addressing several matters related to Sikkim, a press release from the Chief Minister's Office informs.

In the letter, the CM has requested for the approval and sanction of 51 bridges which, he has said, will be beneficial for the people and the nation considering the strategic location of the state and international borders.

There are many bridges that have crossed their lifespan and are in dilapidated condition and as roads are the primary source of transport and connectivity, he stated that the need for extending and improving them is essential. It will also be beneficial in terms of Defence and transportation of essential equipments, he added.

The Chief Minister also expressed his gratitude to the PM for the support rendered to the state for various development projects, especially in terms of connectivity. Further, he acknowledged the assistance provided for the commencement of the airport facilities and informed about the progress of the work on the railway front.

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3	Junior Engineer (Civil)/S1/ 29,600-1,19,500 (IDA)	68 (SC-11, ST-04, OBC-19, EWS-06, UR-26)
4	Junior Engineer (Electrical)/S1/ 29,600-1,19,500 (IDA)	34 (SC-05, ST-03, OBC-08, EWS-03, UR-15)
5	Junior Engineer (Mechanical)/S1/ 29,600-1,19,500 (IDA)	31 (SC-5, ST-02, OBC-08, EWS-03, UR-15)
6	Sr. Accountant/S1/ 29,600-1,19,500 (IDA)	20 (SC-02, ST-02, OBC-02, EWS-02, UR-12)

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Nawin Kiran wants Govt to clear ONORC doubts; Shares plans to build a new political institution in Sikkim

SUMMIT REPORT GANGTOK, 01 SEPT:

Sikkim Subject Committee [SSC] vice-convenor, Nawin Kiran Pradhan, today called on the State Government to clear all doubts and issues with regard to the One Nation-One Ration Card [ONORC] scheme of the Central government which has also been extended to Sikkim.

Mr Pradhan stressed that the State government should be able to place Sikkim's misgivings strongly with the Centre to ensure that this scheme does not affect the rights of the Sikkim.

Addressing a press conference here this afternoon, Mr Pradhan pointed out that ONORC has already been implemented in the state and cannot be withdrawn now.

While accepting that ONORC was a good system for lay people, he highlighted that this could harm the political rights of the Sikkim if ration cards become sufficient to establish citizenship.

Mr Pradhan also pointed out that the Constitution (Scheduled Tribes) Order has been amended and notified on 13 August to modify

the Scheduled Tribes list in relation to the state of Arunachal Pradesh.

He said that the Sikkim Government has missed an opportunity to include the leftout communities of Sikkim in the ST list and alleged that the SKM government has remained satisfied with submitting memorandums to the Centre but has not taken any concrete initiative on such issues.

He also urged the Sikkim Krantikari Morcha and its government to go through its election manifestos and then evaluate for itself whether it has delivered on any of its promises.



The lay people should also revisit SKM two election manifestos [for 2014 and 2019] support people who have been raising genuine issues of the state.

"Sikkim needs a better political institution with good political think-

ers who could take issues of the State forward," he commented, while adding that he will be proceeding on a statewide tour later this month to consult the people in his "mission to build a political institution in the State."

Poshan Maah 2021 launched in Dzongu

SUMMIT REPORT

MANGAN, 01 SEPT:

Poshan Maah 2021 for Dzongu Constituency was launched at BAC Passingdang under Social Justice Welfare Department today.

The opening ceremony had the presence of the chief guest, SDM Dzongu, Sonam Rinchen Lepcha who was accompanied by BDO Dzongu, Sagar Rai along with CDPO Dzongu, Netuk Lepcha, Nutrition Inspector, Sonam Namgyal Bhutia, MO Passingdang, Premkit

Lepcha, AD Education, RO, all projects and staff of ICDS and Poshan Abhiyan Dzongu. CDPO Dzongu highlighted that Poshan Maah is part of the Centre's Poshan Abhiyan which aspires to reduce stunting, anemia, low birth weight, and under nutrition.

Coordination meet discusses border facilities in West Sikkim

GYALSHING, 01 SEPT

(IPR):

A coordination meeting with regard to basic infrastructure facilities in Border Outposts, BOPs of 36 BN SSB, Gyalshing situated at high altitude of Singalila Range was held at the Conference Hall of the District Administrative Centre, Rabdentse. The Additional District Collector, West, Agawane Rohan Ramesh chaired the meeting.

ADC, West, at the course of the meeting patiently lent his hearing to the floor issues, suggestions and demands by the present representatives from both 36 BN SSB, Gyalshing and 72 BN SSB, Yangtey. The concerned departmental representatives were then also consulted and apprised on the various issues pertaining to the developmental perspectives in favour of the Borderline outposts situated



at the Singalila Range through intensive to and fro discussion sessions.

Further, Mr Ramesh also suggested that the priority should also be given to the smallest of the issues concerning the Borderline matters, as it holds the sensitive element of National Security. In this regard, he informed that the engaged departments in the course should uphold the pivotal and humongous tasks to perform and should approach in

favour of the collective national interest.

Furthermore, he even advised the departments to wrap up with the Action Taking Plan Report at the earliest before the end of this month for the swift and authentic work compliance in a stipulated time frame. In case of the emerging difficulties he suggested to mention the current status of the issue and advised for writing about it directly about the concerned matter to the office of the

Additional District Collector, West for required assistance, he informed.

It was also informed that a joint survey shall be conducted with collaborative efforts of the both SSB and concerned departments for further assessments of the ground report. Once a month review meeting to follow up with the progress was also provisioned.

The meeting had the presence and participation of Commanding Officer, 72 BN, Gyalshing, S.K Awadhiya; 2nd in Command 36 BN SSB, Yangtey, Kumar Sundram; Superintendent Engineer, Power Department, Jeewan Thapa; Divisional Forest Officer, Territorial, Forest Department, Urmila Subba; Junior Telecom Officer, Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited, BSNL, K.B Gurung and other concerned departmental representatives.

SKM coordination meeting at Rangang Yangang

SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 01 SEPT:

SKM South District Constituency Level Coordination meeting was organised by District Executive Committee (South) at Yangang Cultural Park today. The meeting was held with the primary objective of coordinating with representatives of various frontal organizations of the Constituency, a press release informs.

The meeting saw the presence of Minis-



ter cum Vice President, SKM Youth Wing, Sanjeet Kharel along with other party leaders and functionaries.

In his address, Minister Sanjeet Kharel

talked about various works undertaken by the SKM Government despite the insurmountable challenges posed by the pandemic. He asked the gathering to commit-

tedly work for the development of Sikkim and its people.

Similar meetings will be held in various Constituencies under South District, the release informs.



targets livelihood generation for tribal gatherers and transforming them into entrepreneurs. One of the main components is, 'Mechanism for Marketing of Minor Forest Produce (MFP) through Minimum Support Price (MSP) & Development of Value Chain for MFP'. In Sikkim the nodal agency for this scheme is De-

partment of Science and Technology and the implementing agency is Co-operation Department.

Panchayat President of Barfung Zarrong GPU, Anil Rai chaired this program. Also present were Panchayat Presidents, Ward Panchayat, representatives from line departments, Master trainers and group leaders

from various Van Dhan Vikas Kendras (VDVK).

This program was primarily intended for Self Help Groups (SHGs) and members from all 8 VDVKS under Rabong also participated in the program.

The advocacy was led by Indramani Adhikari, Deputy Registrar (Head Office, Cooperation Department).

CM meets Animal Husbandry Union Minister



NEW DELHI, 01 SEPT

(IPR):

Chief Minister, Prem Singh Tamang called on Union Minister of Animal Husbandry, Dairy, Fisheries, Poultry, Shri. K. J. Somaiya in New Delhi on 31 Aug, 2021. He congratulated the Union Minister for his elevation to the Cabinet rank in the Union government and conveyed best wishes for his new endeavour.

The Chief Minister informed about the dairy and piggery incentives provided by the state government and briefed the Union Minister regarding its features. He also mentioned that the state government is looking forward to commencing with similar incentives in poultry and fisheries as well.

Speaking about the various pending proposals and matters, he requested the Union Minister for his intervention in releasing funds for implementing the schemes within the financial year. These include the proposal for poultry farming, various schemes and proposals of the National Livelihood Mission and others. Further, he also mentioned the additional

PMVDY Advocacy Program in Namchi

NAMCHI, 01 SEPT

(IPR):

An Advocacy Program under the Pradhan Mantri Van Dhan Yojana (PMVDY) was held for Namchi Subdivision at the District Administrative Centre conference Hall on 31 Aug, 2021. Additional Political Secretary (South) to Chief Minister, Anjeeta Rajalim, was the chief guest of the program.

Other dignitaries included officials from the line departments and from the implementing department. Participants for the advocacy program included the Team Leaders of the Van Dhan Vikas Kendras, Master Trainers under PMVDY, presidents of the Multipurpose Cooperative Societies (MPCS), Block Project Managers/Assistant Project Managers under State Rural Livi-



hood Mission and Managers/Surveyors of the Van Dhan Kendras.

The advocacy program was part of the sensitization of PMVDY and its implementation at the grassroots level. The Team Leaders and the Master Trainers shared their experience working under Pradhan Mantri Van Dhan Yojana (PMVDY) and how this Yojna could be a source of increasing their income through value addition of Minor Forest Produces (MFP).

The officials of the Implementing Department (Department of Cooperation) gave a brief status report of the Yojna

under the subdivision and the future course of action under PMVDY. The Block Project Manager in her address highlighted how SHG's have been tied up under these Van Dhan Vikas Kendras for value addition of Minor Forest Produces.

The chief guest in her address to the house assured every possible assistance in implementation of the Yojna and emphasized on how this Yojna could be a source of women empowerment through financial independence. The Program ended with a vote of thanks to all the Guests and the Participants.

LOST

I Kanchi maya Subba, daughter of pahal singh Limboo, Resident of Yangthang block under 02 Yangthang constituency, west Sikkim has lost her original Certificate of Identification (COI) bearing sl.no 149 volume number XI while travelling from Yangthang to Geyzing Tikjuk DAC, west sikkim. If found please contact: 8348532653

BEFORE THE LD. OATH COMMISSIONER, EAST SIKKIM AT GANGTOK

AFFIDAVIT

I, Dawa Tshering Lepcha, S/o Late. Paithan Lepcha, aged about 47 years, by faith Buddhist, by occupation farmer, resident of Markang PW, Sungdung, Near Chujachen School, Chujachen GPU, Chujachen, East Sikkim do hereby solemnly affirm under oath as follows:

1. That the name of my grandfather is recorded as 'Banet Lepcha' on my father's Certificate of Identification (COI) bearing serial no. 192/DCE, dated 26/03/1993 issued by the Office of the District Collector, East Sikkim, Gangtok.
2. That the name of my grandfather is recorded as 'Boje Passang Babu Basnet Lepcha' found recorded in the Old Sikkim Subject record register Serial No. 807, Volume VI, under Block Chujachen, East Sikkim, bearing Ref. No. 724/SDO/R/E dated 28/08/2018 issued by the Sub-Divisional Magistrate, Rongli, East Sikkim.
3. That this affidavit is sworn by me to state that the person by the names 'Banet Lepcha' and 'Boje Passang Babu Basnet Lepcha' denotes to the one and the same identical person i.e. my grandfather.
4. That this affidavit is made bonafide.

DEPONENT.



What is Novel Coronavirus - nCoV?

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

Symptoms of nCoV

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

Treatment

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

Precautions to Prevent nCoV

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



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New STNM
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Snow leopard declared new state animal in Ladakh

LEH, SEPT 1 (PTI): The government of Ladakh has declared snow leopard its state animal and black-necked crane state bird.

A notification in this regard was issued Tuesday by the Principal Secretary Forest, Ecology and Environment, Pawan Kotwal.

“The Lieutenant Governor of Union Territory of Ladakh is pleased to declare snow leopard (Panther unica) and black-necked crane (Grus nicricollis) as state animal and state bird, respectively, of the union territory of Ladakh from the date of issue of this notification,” Kotwal said in a notification.

Meanwhile, the erstwhile Jammu and Kashmir had the black-necked crane and Kashmir stag (Hangul) as its state bird and animal respectively.

The officials point out that both species are rare and had been symbols of the state for a long time.

While the black-necked crane is found in eastern Ladakh, Hangul is in Kashmir.

Following the bifurcation into separate administrative divisions, the black-necked crane could no longer be the state bird for the UT of Jammu and Kashmir, and the Hangul could no longer be the state animal of Ladakh, they said.

Experts put the population of snow leopards to be between 200-300 individuals in Ladakh alone and speak about the fragile relation of their healthy population to overall natural health of the mountains. Meanwhile, the black-necked crane found only in Eastern Ladakh's high-altitude wetlands and marshes and is listed as Near Threatened on the IUCN red list.

The birds arrive here as early as March for breeding and leave by October end or early November.

Their habitat loss could lead to the extinction of this species, at least from this region.

PET bottle shredder machine installed in Mangan

WANGCHUK BHUTIA MANGAN, 01 SEPT:

As a part of the Mangan Nagar Panchayat's efforts to find a solution to the waste management problem in the town, a plastic PET bottle shredder machine, the first in the state, was inaugurated by Minister Roads & Bridges Department cum MLA, Lachen Mangan, Samdup Lepcha at Mangan Bazaar today.

Also present were DC

North, TT Kaleon, Chairman Welfare Commission, Nim Tsh Lepcha, Additional Pol Secretary to CM, Tshering Wangyal Bhutia, MEO, Tempo Tashi Bhutia, officials and Councillors.

The shredding machine can be used by citizens for processing the PET bottles into smaller flakes or pieces making the waste management easier and sustainable. Urban Local Body of

Mangan has initiated the installation of the machine.

A meeting was held after the inauguration at MNP conference hall wherein the Municipal Executive Officer, Tempo Tashi Bhutia expressed gratitude to the government for providing Sikkim Garib Awas Yojna scheme to some beneficiaries of Mangan Bazaar. He further highlighted the status of solid waste manage-

ment dumping yard, salary of the staff, sewerage system, cess pool vehicle and the beautification of Mangan bazaar.

The Minister advised the MNP to construct one park for the elderly at Mangan Bazaar and also urged the DC to control road encroachment by public construction. He also stated that everybody should work in coordination for the welfare of the public.

The Minister appreciated the initiative taken by the MNP in installing the machine adding that it would definitely help in recycling plastic bottles. He said that some norms should be formulated for collection of PET bottles from different corners.

Earlier, the function was welcomed by Bazaar Officer, Palden Bhutia and wound up with the vote of thanks by NPA, MB Limboo.

HAVE A STORY TO SHARE?

email us: news@summittimes.com

Poshan Maah launched in Gangtok

GANGTOK, 01 SEPT (IPR):

The month-long event, Rashtriya Poshan Maah with the theme, “converging towards a healthy walk-through life,” was inaugurated at the Conference Hall of the Social Justice and Welfare Department (SJ&WD) today.

Minister of SJ&WD, Dr. M.K. Sharma attended the occasion as the chief guest, along with Nell Bahadur Chettri Mayor GMC, Samsher Rai Zilla Panchayat Adhyaksha (East), Tshewang Gyachho, Secretary SJWD and the Brand Ambassador of Poshan Maah for the State, Arjuna Awardee and Padmashree Tarundeep Rai, and officers from various departments.

The programme began with a signature campaign by dignitaries followed by the lighting of the ceremonial lamp. A Poshan Pledge was also taken by those present, following the lead of the chief guest.

Dr. M. K. Sharma, in his address, highlighted the importance of Poshan Maah as a medium to promote awareness about the importance of the initial days in the life of a mother and a child, since the moment a child is conceived including the first two years after its birth.

He stressed that providing proper nutrition during this critical time improves the physical



and mental growth of a child. He talked about malnutrition and how it affects children. He urged the Zilla Adhyaksha, the Mayor and the Anganwadi Workers to take steps to detect and identify malnourished children vigilantly. He also mentioned that initiatives should be taken at individual level, and added that establishing Nutrition Gardens would contribute not only in providing food with proper nutrients but also help impart a healthy environment for the mother and the child.

Furthermore, he brought up the need to revisit and rediscover our traditional foods and inculcate the nutritional values found in them in our diets again. He also emphasized the importance of Ante Natal Check-up to monitor the growth of the mother and the child.

The Minister mentioned that Poshan Maah was launched by the Prime Minister in 2018 with an aim to make the country malnutri-

tion-free by 2022.

Earlier, Secretary Tshewang Gyachho welcomed the guests and briefly talked about the various activities that would be conducted for the duration of four weeks of the month of September.

He urged that a competitive ground be made in the form of slogan writing competition, quiz competitions etc at the Municipal Level, in ICDS and various such platforms to promote Poshan Maah/ Matru Vandana Yojna during the first week. Activities to inculcate yoga practices under AYUSH, campaign related to Nutritional Kit and the identification of malnourished children and providing them the help and support will be held in the following weeks respectively.

He briefed that the Poshan Maah requires the inclusive participation of public representatives of local bodies, government allied departments of the State, social organisations and the public at large. In order to bolster

community and people's participation, the month of September is celebrated every year as Poshan Maah across the country, he added.

He further said that Poshan Maah is an integrated nutrition support programme to strengthen nutritional content, delivery, outreach and outcome with focus on developing practices that nurture health, wellness and immunity to disease and malnutrition. He concluded by saying that the various allied departments will come up with a planned series of activities like slogan writing and recipe competition to raise awareness about nutritious foods for pregnant women throughout the month.

Similarly, Tarundeep Rai spoke on the importance of proper nutrition for the mother and also for the child's development. He said that introducing exercises would also be beneficial in developing a healthy lifestyle. He also mentioned that activities such as

creating a kitchen garden is a good alternative to keep the mother and the child physically and mentally fit. He concluded his speech by thanking the Anganwadi workers for the work they are doing.

A presentation on the various nutritional interventions during the pregnancy and after pregnancy that would help decrease the mortality rate of children was also presented by Dr. Dechenla Tshering Bhutia, HOD Medicine, SMIMS. She gave an insight into the intervention during the first 1000 days of child life.

The presentation was about the importance of nutrition during the first 1000 days where it highlighted how the undernutrition if not tackled in time could cause irreversible damage to child's growth and brain development. She also briefed about the program packages of Interventions for the first 1000 days for health, nutrition and development.

Later, a short video skit with a message on Poshan Maah was presented by the officials of the Social Justice & Welfare Department.

Earlier, the programme began with the welcome address by Principal Director, WCD, Phuchung Bhutia. The programme concluded with a vote of thanks proposed by Sonam Lhamu Bhutia, Joint Director ICDS.

Poshan Maah launched in Chungthang

SUMMIT REPORT

LACHUNG, 01 SEPT:

Poshan Maah cum Matru Vandana Saptah was launched today in Chungthang, North Sikkim by Block Task Force Chungthang.

The launch had paraglider, Tashi Lachungpa flying with the Poshan Maah banner for awareness and to mark the opening of Poshan Maah from 01-30 September 2021.

Various other activities like rally and signature campaign were also held on the day.

CDPO Chungthang, C Laden sensitised the gathering about the programme.

Poshan Maah was also launched in all Anganwadi centres as well.



Poshan Maah launched in Namchi

NAMCHI, 01 SEPT (IPR):

The month-long celebration of Poshan Maah was launched by Vice Chairperson Namchi Municipal Council, Sabitri Tamang at Namchi DAC, Conference Hall today.

Ms Tamang was accompanied by DC (South), M Bharani Kumar, ADC (South) Anant Jain, CDPO (Namchi) Laxman Tamang, CDPO (Ravangla), Norbu Lepcha, AWW Workers and officials from Social Justice Empowerment and Welfare Department.

Addressing the gathering, she spoke about

the importance of 'Poshan Maah' and its benefit particularly towards women and children. She urged the concerned department and other stakeholders to follow the various activities of 'Poshan Maah' diligently and to vigorously involve women and children so that there is inclusive participation.

During the course of the launch programme, hand washing technique was also demonstrated by the Anganwadi workers. An array of nutritional food supplements for women and children was also displayed. It

was also informed that Matru Vandana Saptah will be observed from 01 to 07 September.

It may be informed that the entire month of September is dedicated to Poshan Maah. The month has been divided into weekly themes for focused and assimilated approach towards improving Holistic Nutrition. Poshan Maah is the central government's flagship programme to improve nutritional outcomes for children, adolescent girls, pregnant women and lactating mothers.

First-ever nation-wide quiz on sports and fitness launched

GANGTOK, 01 SEPT (PIB):

Union Minister of Youth Affairs and Sports, Anurag Singh Thakur, and Union Minister of Education Dharmendra Pradhan launched the Fit India Quiz, which is the first-ever quiz on fitness and sports, in New Delhi today. Minister of State of Youth Affairs and Sports, Nisith Pramanik also graced the launch event. Tokyo Olympics medalists Neeraj Chopra and P V Sindhu virtually joined the event. A few school students also took part in an impromptu Quiz to launch the said initiative.

The nation-wide quiz is aimed at creating awareness about fitness and sports among school-going children, while giving them a chance to compete on a national platform and an opportunity to win a total cash prize of more than Rs 3 crores for their schools. This Fit India Quiz is part of the central government's 'Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav' initiative to celebrate 75 years of India's Independence and is designed to not just bring students from all states on to one platform, but also to involve them in a competition of mental skill and physical fitness.

Speaking about the Fit India Quiz, Thakur said, “Mental fitness is equally important to physical fitness. The Fit India Quiz will inculcate mental alert-

ness at a very early age and the quiz is a perfect way to simultaneously enhance sports knowledge. India has a vast sporting history, along with our success at the Olympics; we'll add momentum to the goal of building a sports culture in the country with the school students as its champions. A sense of competitiveness also build team character and team spirit. Prime Minister Narendra Modi has emphasised on holistic education and the importance of sports in our lives. His interaction with children has also built a stress free environment for students to learn and grow; the Fit India Quiz is aimed in this direction.”

Speaking on the occasion, Dharmendra Pradhan said that there is a strong interconnection between fitness and education. New Education Policy (NEP)-2020 gives special attention to sports-integrated learning for students to adopt fitness as a lifelong attitude as envisaged in the Fit India Movement. Pradhan stated that COVID-19 pandemic continues to disrupt normal routines and the relevance of Fit India Movement has increased manifold. He said that Fit India Quiz will provide a national platform to students to showcase their knowledge about fitness & sports, create awareness about India's rich sporting

history, including indigenous sports, our sports heroes and how traditional Indian lifestyle activities hold the key to a Fit Life for all.

During his address MOS for YAS, Nisith Pramanik said that people of every age group have participated in the Fit India Mission and appealed to all schools to participate in Fit India quiz and make New India a Fit India.

Neeraj Chopra said that he is feeling very happy that now we are thinking and doing so much about sports. It will definitely motivate all students. P V Sindhu said that Fit India quiz is going to give a platform to students and she appealed to every student to participate in this quiz.

To participate in the quiz, the schools have will have to register on the link provided on the Fit India website between 1st September to 30th September 2021 and nominate their students who will take part in the preliminary round of the Quiz at the end of October.

The winners of the Preliminary Round will then take part in the State Round in the month of December and the winners of the state round will then go on to participate at the National level in January - February 2022. The Final round of the Quiz will be aired on Star Sports.

Poshan Maah launched in West Sikkim

GYALSHING, 01 SEPT (IPR):

The State-level Rashtriya Poshan Maah (Nutrition Month) on the theme 'Converging towards a healthy walk through life' event was organised by the Social Justice & Welfare department today at Zilla Panchayat Bhawan Kyongsa, Gyalshing.

The programme was chaired by Hari Narayan Subedi, Chairman PHE, Sontosh Alley, SDM HQ Gyalshing. Present amongst others were the Child Development Project Officer of West District along with other officials from various departments.

Addressing the house, the chief guest spoke of the objective to encourage people's participation for addressing malnutrition amongst children and women with a targeted approach

to ensure health and nutrition and attaining a malnutrition free India. He stated that Poshan (nutrition) is very important for women in different age groups.

He drew attention towards the important role played by nutrition in helping children and students to attain their optimum potential. He also encouraged all the stakeholders to work collectively for this noble cause and make the State and the country malnutrition-free. Further he added that the Government would fully support and provide all the assistance in disseminating information and sensitising the public regarding the importance of Poshan Abhiyaan through various platforms.

Addressing the meeting SDM Gyalshing informed that Poshan Maah is celebrated across the country in the month of



September with the aim of community mobilization and creating awareness to improve nutritional outcomes for children, adolescent girls, pregnant women and lactating mothers. He also spoke about the activities which can be included during the month-long celebration of poshan maah and the various kinds of events like handwashing and other competition which can be infused as a part of Poshan Maah.

Further he mentioned that activities during the Poshan Maah will be observed and some of them will broadly focus on Plantation Drive by all the

stakeholders in the space available at Anganwadis, School Premises, Gram Panchayats and other places. He further mentioned that the Abhiyaan targets to address malnourishment and anaemia among young children, women and adolescent girls and to reduce low birth weight

H.B Shanker (CDPO West) highlighted the aims and objectives of Poshan Abhiyaan and major measures taken by the department in implementing the Poshan Maah. He further highlighted on the four pillars of Poshan Abhiyaan

Women as a Vote-Bank

Aim to leapfrog from Panchayats to the Assembly and Parliament

Panchayat elections are not very far away and this will be the third time that fifty percent of the representatives from rural Sikkim will necessarily be women. Women's reservation in panchayat elections started tentatively with 33% quota which was then hike to 40% and has now arrived at 50. Sikkim accords more seats to women in rural and urban bodies than are prescribed elsewhere in the country, and while it is easy to dismiss this as inconsequential as many would be wont to do, it has been a huge step forward towards securing an empowered future for the State's ladies. It was always also a very brave move by the State Government and the party in office at the time [when panchayat polls were party-based] since politics is essentially a male-dominated domain and finding the around 400 women candidates required to meet the quota was a challenging ask. Agreed, given the complete dominance that party's establish once in office and the easily-swayed ideologies of party "workers," just about everyone with any "purpose" and/or ambition ends up saluting the sun in the sky, filling nomination papers will not be difficult, especially now that parties, at least on paper, will have to maintain their distance from the poll process. In that sense, elbowing political parties away from panchayat polls has opened the doors even wider for non-partisan representation. Unlike the recent municipal elections, in which the number of wards was lower and the limelight very bright given the urban setting, at the panchayat level, the numbers are too many for the parties to micro-manage against non-partisan but politically-inclined individuals wanting to make a difference in communities they live in but don't want to kow-tow the way it is expected in the party set-up. For the voters, the scale offers the opportunity to find strength in numbers and express themselves for candidates and not casually camouflaged party colors. And to think that half of these will be women...

Panchayati Raj Institutions are split 50/50 between the sexes and it will now essentially be up to the women themselves on how far they can stretch this increased involvement in decision-making. The concept of reservations to deliver empowerment is not perfect, it has many flaws but the benefits win in the long run. Reservation for women in Panchayats all over the country fails to deliver the required results because many women Panchayats from the reserved wards are stand-ins for their more powerful and politically savvy husbands. Instead of delivering empowerment, this willingness of the womenfolk to allow such subversion only reinforces subjugation. A similar pattern can be spied in Sikkim as well but is not as entrenched as it is elsewhere. Here, the State has a chance to play the reservation concept to deliver real empowerment. The moment panchayat elections are announced, the womenfolk of the ear-marked wards could come together and agree on a candidate. The State Government is already committed to keep the elections non-partisan and this time around, this commitment needs to be ensured and proxy-candidates rejected, not necessarily because they are not good enough but because they pollute the non-partisan commitment. If the womenfolk were to ignore party considerations and loyalties and think only about themselves for a while and select only the most deserving lady candidate and not the lady with the most influential husband or family. Unfortunately, as mentioned, the practice of token women Panchayats is very much prevalent in Sikkim too. If the women were to demolish this practise and consciously ignore candidates who have been propped up by the male side of their families or parties, Sikkim could be looking at real empowerment.

The future should deliver even more than just 50% women panchayats; when there are 986 women for every thousand males in Sikkim, why should the elected representation not reflect similar figures at all levels – from the Legislative Assembly to the Parliament? Someone needs to ask, for instance, why Sikkim has never sent a woman to the Rajya Sabha, and only one to the Lok Sabha. The next leap however will have to be for the women to take themselves. They have been provided the stepping stool to reach there with the panchayat reservations and through their performance and increased political presence, they can secure increased representation at all levels if they so desire.

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Out of Afghanistan: Joe Biden and the future of America's foreign policy

ANDREW MUMFORD

THECONVERSATION.COM

As the last US forces leave Afghanistan, President Joe Biden's decision to press ahead with the American withdrawal has prompted the first major foreign policy crisis of his presidency. The harrowing pictures after the bombing attack at Kabul airport were the result of a desire on behalf of Biden to draw a line under a war he never truly believed in and shift the direction of American foreign policy away from under the long shadow of the "war on terror" as it nears its 20th anniversary.

In short, Biden is trying to ensure that an ongoing response to the events of 9/11 is not the major cause of US action abroad.

The US president has been rightly criticised for presiding over an ill-thought-through pullout that took international allies and the Afghan people themselves by surprise. But the logic behind his decision rests on his longstanding belief that the war in Afghanistan was never winnable. As the foreign policy analyst Edward Luce put it: "There is no elegant way to quit a war you have lost."

The US has poured US\$1 trillion (£726 billion) into training the Afghan National Army over nearly two decades. Successive administrations have been frustrated by the levels of incompetence and corruption at the heart of Afghan politics. Mindful of this – and aware of the overwhelming historical record that demonstrates Afghanistan's imperiousness towards the imposition of external military rule – Biden decided that enough was enough.

Of course, Biden's predecessor, Donald Trump, originally signed

a deal with the Taliban that had agreed to the withdrawal of US forces in February 2020. Yet in order to understand why Biden went ahead with this deal, we must understand two things. First, his track record opposing many key elements of the war in Afghanistan. And second, the wider foreign policy overhaul he is trying to engender.

BIDEN'S TRACK RECORD ON AFGHANISTAN

When asked in 2014 where he felt his vice president's greatest impact had been, Obama replied: "On the foreign policy front, I think Joe's biggest influence was in the Afghanistan debate." Just a week before their inauguration in January 2008, president-elect Obama sent Biden on a fact-finding mission to Afghanistan to assess the state of the war the new administration was going to inherit.

Biden immediately became the "in-house pessimist" on Afghanistan and sought ways to minimise American involvement. After receiving commanding officer General Stanley McChrystal's request for additional troops in Afghanistan in August 2009, Obama spent the next two months chairing ten formal meetings in which key members of the administration, including Biden, discussed a review of the Afghan war strategy.

In these meetings, Biden received the active encouragement of Obama to argue the case for an overt counter-terrorism approach to Afghanistan. This emphasised the targeted killing of Taliban and al-Qaeda leaders. It contrasted with the counter-insurgency option preferred by Obama's defence secretary, Robert Gates, and secretary of state, Hillary Clinton, which empha-

sised nation-building as a prelude to a reduction in violence. Biden and Gates clashed repeatedly over Afghanistan, especially over the need to inject a "surge" of troops into the country, which Biden opposed.

Yet this was an argument Biden lost. Obama set the course for a "surge" in Afghanistan of 30,000 additional troops in 2009. Yet this did not stop Biden from continuing to question the progress being made. The following year Biden publicly stated that the US would be "totally out" of Afghanistan by 2014. This prompted Gates to accuse Biden of disloyalty by actively working to show that the president "had been wrong ... and that the war on the ground was going from bad to worse".

All of this reveals a mindset that, according to one of his former policy advisers, Biden has "consistently since at least 2008 believed that the US was throwing good money after bad in Afghanistan". This withdrawal may be shocking, but it is not a surprise if we look at Biden's consistent scepticism towards what was achievable.

IMPLICATIONS FOR US FOREIGN POLICY

By withdrawing from Afghanistan so determinedly, Biden has firmly pressed the "reset" button on American foreign policy. He is keen to show that the "war on terror" era, as established by George W. Bush in the wake of the 9/11 attacks, is over. Biden has no patience for open-ended nation-building exercises undertaken by US soldiers prosecuting counter-insurgency operations. His mission is to recalibrate US foreign policy priorities for the century ahead and break free of a response to a terrorist attack from 20 years

ago.

Of course, terrorists will still threaten US national interests, including the Islamic State affiliate inside Afghanistan, ISIS-K, whose hitherto fractious relationship with the Taliban may develop into something more mutually beneficial. On the other hand – as the Kabul airport attack demonstrates – they could prove to be an unruly actor, independent of Taliban control. The capacity for ISIS-K to capitalise on the situation is big. Future Taliban-ISIS-K relations will be of huge significance for the future of Afghanistan.

But the focus on violent non-state actors has now been displaced in the broader realm of international relations by the return of great power politics. Responding to the military and political fallout from the rise of China is now the only game in Biden's town. Indeed, the US vice president, Kamala Harris, has been undertaking a tour of Asia while the Kabul crisis unfolded, during which she ramped up the rhetoric on China. The direction of travel for American foreign policy for the next few years is already clear to see.

Biden's old sparring partner on Afghanistan, Bob Gates, famously took a swipe at the 46th US president in his memoirs for being "wrong on nearly every major foreign policy and national security issue over the past four decades". The jury is still out on whether Biden will be on the right side of history for ending America's "forever war" in Afghanistan – but at least he can't be accused of inconsistency on the issue.

[the writer is Professor of War Studies, University of Nottingham]

Your smartphone is not making you dumber — digital tech can enhance our cognitive abilities

LORENZO CECUTTI & SPIKE W. S. LEE

Digital technology is ubiquitous. We have been increasingly reliant on smartphones, tablets and computers over the past 20 years, and this trend has been accelerating due to the pandemic.

Conventional wisdom tells us that over-reliance on technology may take away from our ability to remember, pay attention and exercise self control. Indeed, these are important cognitive skills. However, fears that technology would supplant cognition may not be well founded.

TECHNOLOGY ALTERS SOCIETY

Socrates, considered by many to be the father of philosophy, was deeply worried about how the technology of writing would affect society. Since the oral tradition of delivering speeches requires a certain degree of memorization, he was concerned that writing would eliminate the need to learn and memorize.

Plato famously wrote, quoting Socrates: "If men learn this, it will implant forgetfulness in their souls; they will cease to exercise memory because they rely on that which is written, calling things to remembrance no longer from within themselves, but by means of external marks."

This passage is interesting for two reasons. First, it shows that there was an intergenerational discussion concerning the impact of new technologies on the cognitive abilities of future generations. This is still true to this day: the telephone, radio and television have all been hailed as harbingers of the end of cognition.

That brings us to the second reason why this quote is interesting. Despite Socrates' concerns, many of us are still able to commit information to memory when necessary. Technology has simply reduced the need for certain cognitive functions, not our ability to execute them.

WORSENING COGNITION

Besides popular media's claims, some scientific findings have been interpreted to suggest that digital technology can lead to poorer memory, attention or executive functioning. Upon scrutiny of these assertions, however, one notices two important argumentative assumptions. The first assumption is that the impact has a lasting effect on long-term cognitive abilities. The second assumption is that digital technology has a direct, unmoderated impact on cognition. Both assumptions, however, are not directly supported by empirical findings.

A critical examination of the evidence suggests that the demonstrated effects have been temporary, not long-term. For example, in a prominent study investigating people's reliance on external forms of memory, participants were less likely to remember pieces of information when they were told this information would be saved on a computer and they would have access



to it. On the other hand, they remembered the information better when they were told it would not be saved.

There is a temptation to conclude from these findings that using technology leads to poorer memory — a conclusion that the authors of the study did not draw. When technology was available, people relied on it, but when it was not available, people were still perfectly capable of remembering. As such it would be hasty to conclude that technology impairs our ability to remember.

Furthermore, the effect of digital technology on cognition could be due to how motivated someone is, rather than their cognitive processes. Indeed, cognitive processes operate in the context of goals for which our motivations may vary. Specifically, the more motivating a task is, the more engaged and focused we are. This perspective recasts experimental evidence showing that smartphones undermine performance on tasks of sustained attention, working memory or functional fluid intelligence.

Motivational factors are likely to play a role in research results, especially considering that research participants often find the tasks they are asked to do for the study inconsequential or boring. Because there are a lot of important tasks that we carry out using digital technology, such as keeping in touch with loved ones, responding to emails and enjoying entertainment, it is possible that digital technology undermines the motivational value of an experimental task.

Importantly, this means that digital technolo-

gy does not harm cognition; if a task is important or engaging, smartphones would not undermine people's ability to perform it.

CHANGING COGNITION

To make use of digital technology, internal cognitive processes are less focused on information storage and computation. Instead, these processes convert information into formats that can be offloaded onto digital devices — like search phrases — and then re-loaded and interpreted. This kind of cognitive offloading is like how people take notes on paper instead of committing certain information to long-term memory, or when children use their hands to help with counting.

The main difference is that digital technology helps us offload complex sets of information more effectively and efficiently than analogue tools, and it does so without sacrificing accuracy. One significant benefit is that the internal cognitive capacity that gets freed up from having to perform specialized functions like remembering a calendar appointment is freed up for other tasks. This in turn means that we can accomplish more, cognitively speaking, than we ever could before.

As such, digital technology need not to be viewed as competing with our internal cognitive process. Instead, it complements cognition by extending our ability to get things done.

[Lorenzo Cecutti is PhD Candidate, Marketing, University of Toronto; Spike W. S. Lee is Associate Professor, Management and Psychology, University of Toronto]

Two Bengal Ministers among those named in Narada sting case chargesheet



Narada Sting Case: The arrests in May, just days after Mamata Banerjee's big win in Bengal, was described as "vendetta politics" by the Chief Minister. Kolkata/New Delhi: A chargesheet has been filed by the Enforcement Directorate in the Narada sting case, which names two Bengal ministers - Firhad Hakim and Subrata Mukherjee. Trinamool Congress MLA Madan Mitra and former Trinamool leader Sovan Chatterjee have also been named in the

chargesheet, filed by the central probe agency months after the dramatic arrest of the four leaders. The arrests in May, just days after Mamata Banerjee's big win in Bengal, were called "vendetta politics" by the Chief Minister. She had spent six hours at the Kolkata office of the CBI to protest the probe agency's action, hours after central forces had arrived at the leaders' homes to take them to the Kolkata office.

"The way they have

been arrested without due procedure, CBI will have to arrest me also," she had said at the time.

The leaders have been accused of accepting ₹ 4 to 5 lakh as bribe in a sting operation by the Narada news portal in 2014. Those conducting the sting operation had approached the ministers as representatives of a fictitious firm and offered bribes in return of favours.

The tapes were released ahead of the 2016 state elections. Mamata Banerjee's party

had returned to power despite uproar over the Narada sting case and another case over the Sarada chit scam.

Trinamool leaders Subrata Mukherjee, Aparupa Poddar, Sougata Ray, Kakoli Ghosh Dastidar, Prasun Banerjee, Madan Mitra, Firhad Hakim and Iqbal Ahmed were seen in the Narada footage.

In May, the ruling Trinamool Congress had questioned the CBI's inaction against the BJP's Suvendu Adhikari and Mukul Roy, who were also on the tapes.

Snow leopard declared new state animal in Ladakh

Leh, Sept 1 (PTI): The government of Ladakh has declared snow leopard its state animal and black-necked crane state bird.

A notification in this regard was issued Tuesday by the Principal Secretary Forest, Ecology and Environment, Pawan Kotwal.

"The Lieutenant Governor of Union Territory of Ladakh is pleased to declare snow leopard (Panther unica) and black necked crane (Grus nivicollis) as state animal and state bird, respectively, of the union territory of Ladakh from the date of issue of this notification," Kotwal said in a notification.

Meanwhile, the erstwhile Jammu and Kashmir had the black-necked crane and Kashmir stag (Hangul) as its state bird and animal respectively.

The officials point out



that both species are rare and had been symbols of the state for a long time.

While the black-necked crane is found in eastern Ladakh, Hangul is in Kashmir.

Following the bifurcation into separate administrative divisions, the black-necked crane could no longer be the state bird for the UT of Jammu and Kashmir, and

the Hangul could no longer be the state animal of Ladakh, they said.

Experts put the population of snow leopards to be between 200-300 individuals in Ladakh alone and speak about the fragile relation of their healthy population to overall natural health of the mountains. Meanwhile, the black-necked crane found only in East-

ern Ladakh's high-altitude wetlands and marshes and is listed as Near Threatened on the IUCN red list.

The birds arrive here as early as March for breeding and leave by October end or early November.

Their habitat loss could lead to the extinction of this species, at least from this region.

Over a dozen JKAP activists detained in Jammu

JAMMU, SEPT 1 (PTI): Over a dozen activists of Jammu and Kashmir Apni Party (JKAP) were detained during a protest, demanding resumption of 'darbar move', an age old practice of shifting of offices between the twin capital cities of Srinagar and Jammu.

Led by Apni trade Union president Ajaz Kazmi, scores of JKAP activists assembled near Press Club here and staged a sit-in to press for the resumption of 'darbar move' and later tried to march towards the city centre but were intercepted by police.

Officials said about 15 JKAP activists were detained when they tried to take out a rally without permission.

Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha had on June 20 announced that



the Jammu and Kashmir administration has completely transitioned to e-office, thereby ending the practice of the biannual 'darbar move'.

Now both the Jammu and Srinagar secretariats can function normally for 12 months. This will save the government Rs 200 crore per year, which will be used for the welfare of the deprived sections, Sinha had said.

However, various stakeholders including traders and transporters in Jammu openly voiced their resentment against the decision on the plea that the practice, which was started by Maharaja Gulab Singh in 1872, gives a big boost to Jammu economically besides developing a bond between the people of the two regions.

Thousands of families from Kashmir used

to move along with darbar to spend winter in Jammu.

"We are holding this protest against the government decision to stop the age-old practice of darbar move. We impress upon the government to review its decision in the best interest of the people," Kazmi said.

He also demanded an employment package for the unemployed educated youth.

Arunachal Pradesh reports 71 new Covid-19 cases

ITANAGAR, SEP 1 (PTI): Arunachal Pradesh's COVID-19 caseload rose to 53,031 as 71 more people tested positive for the infection, a senior health official said here on Wednesday.

The COVID-19 death toll in the frontier state remained at 260 as no new fatality was reported in the last 24 hours, State Surveillance Officer (SSO) Dr Lobsang Jampa said.

Leparada district recorded the highest number of new cases at 12, followed by the Capital Complex Region (11), Tawang (8), Lower Dibang Valley (7) and West Kameng at four cases, he said.

Fresh cases each were also recorded from West Siang, Lohit, Kamle, Changlang, East Siang, Pakke Kessang, Namsai, Lower Subansiri, Kra Daadi, Anjaw, Papumpare, Dibang Valley, Lower



Siang, Upper Subansiri and Tirap districts, the SSO said.

Sixty-six fresh cases were detected through rapid antigen test, one through RT-PCR and four by TrueNat method, the official said.

Arunachal Pradesh currently has 863 active COVID-19 cases, while 51,908 patients have recovered from the disease, including 108 on Tuesday, Jampa said.

day, Jampa said.

The COVID-19 recovery rate in the state now is 97.88 per cent while the active percentage stands at 1.63 and the positivity rate at 1.79 per cent, the official said.

The Capital Complex Region - comprising Itanagar, Naharlagun, Nirjuli and Banderdewa areas - has the highest number of active cases at 182, followed by Lower Sub-

ansiri (82), West Kameng (64) and Upper Siang with 58 cases.

Altogether, 10,59,614 samples have been tested for COVID-19 in the state so far, including 3,962 on Tuesday, Jampa said.

State Immunisation Officer (SSO) Dr Dimong Padung said that a total of 9,76,273 people have been administered COVID-19 vaccine doses so far in the state.

Assam announces new COVID-19 curbs, imposes night curfew in all districts

Coronavirus: All state government offices, workplaces, private offices, and establishments will function normally but not beyond 8 pm in Assam.

Guwahati: To contain the spread of COVID-19 infections across the state, the Assam government on Wednesday in its new guidelines announced that a night curfew will be imposed across all districts from 9 pm to 5 am.

In case test positivity of COVID-19 in any area reaches more than 10 cases in the last seven days, jurisdictional District Magistrate will notify such areas as total containment zones and ensure necessary containment measures for COVID, the Assam government said in its new directives that will be effective from today until further orders.

According to the Standard operating procedure (SoP), all state government offic-

es, workplaces, private offices, and establishments will function normally but not beyond 8 pm.

"All business, commercial establishments, the takeaway of food items from restaurants, Dhabas, and other eateries. The opening of Sale counters, showrooms, etc. of cold storage and warehouses. Shops dealing with groceries, fruits and vegetables, dairy and milk booths, animal fodder will remain open till 8 pm," the guidelines read.

The dine-in restaurants, Dhabas, and other eateries will be allowed to function till 8 pm with 50 per cent seating capacity.

Auto rickshaws and taxis shall operate for passengers with 100 per cent seating capacity and observance of COVID-19 appropriate behaviour for passengers and compulsory wearing of masks.

The guidelines fur-

ther said that pillion riding is allowed with at least a single vaccinated person and compulsory wearing of a mask.

The government has also allowed intra-district and inter-district transport with a 100 per cent seating capacity for passengers having at least a single dose of vaccine.

"The physical classes for the postgraduate, graduate, higher secondary final year shall be allowed for students having at host single-dose vaccine. However, students of class 12 who are below 18 years of age and if not vaccinated, should not be allowed to attend the physical classes," it said.

It further said that the schools are allowed to open for the first three days only for the vaccination of students, teachers and staff. The physical classes will start from September 6, 2021.

Meeting or gathering at any open or closed spaces is allowed up to 50 single-dose vaccinated persons with prior intimation to local police. However, will all prior permission of jurisdictional DC for maximum gathering up to 200 persons (at least single vaccinated) may be allowed both for public and private functions which will also be applicable for closed spaces subject to a ceiling of 50 per cent of the hall capacity, it reads.

The government order further said that the funeral or last rites are allowed with not more than 50 per cent.

The religious places are allowed to open with up to 40 single vaccinated people per hour while the cinema or theatre hall will remain closed till further notice.

Assam on Tuesday reported five new deaths due to COVID-19, while 570 more people tested positive pushing the caseload to 5,89,426.

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Djokovic tops teen “Ruuune!” at US Open in calendar Slam bid

NEW YORK (AP): If the last-name chorus of “Ruuuuuune!” in support of his relatively unknown teenage opponent at the U.S. Open bothered Novak Djokovic, he never let anyone know. Nor was there any visible evidence that Djokovic was shaken by the shaky patches he went through while dropping a set Tuesday night as he began his historic bid to complete the first calendar-year Grand Slam in men’s tennis since 1969 and collect a record-breaking 21st major singles championship.

Djokovic was not perfect — “It wasn’t the best of my performances,” he acknowledged — but he didn’t need to be. All he needed to do was win, and he did, just as he’s done every time he’s played a Grand Slam match this season, whether on the hard courts of the Australian Open, the red clay of the French Open, the grass of Wimbledon or, now, the first of what he hopes will be seven times on the hard courts of Flushing Meadows.

Quickly regaining control after a second-set blip, then wearing down his cramping foe, Djokovic beat Danish qualifier Holger Vitus Nodskov Rune 6-1, 6-7 (5), 6-2, 6-1 to reach the second round.

“I mean, obviously you always wish to have crowd behind you, but it’s not always possible. That’s all I can say. I

mean, I don’t know; I’ve been focusing on myself and what I need to do,” said Djokovic, who next faces Tallon Griekspoor, a 25-year-old from Netherlands ranked 121st who got into the field when Roger Federer pulled out. “I guess I have to just see how it feels on the court and try to keep it together. That’s all I can do.”

So many differences between the two players in Arthur Ashe Stadium on a muggy Tuesday evening.

Djokovic is 34; Rune 18. Djokovic is ranked No. 1; Rune 145th. Djokovic owns 20 Grand Slam titles, the men’s mark he currently shares with rivals Federer and Rafael Nadal; Rune, the junior champion at Roland Garros two years ago, had never played a match in the main draw of a major tournament until Tuesday. Djokovic’s on-court career earnings entering this week were more than \$150 million; Rune’s were less than \$150,000.

Rune showed up with some belongings in a blue Ikea shopping tote — “It’s a nice bag,” he explained — and wearing a backward-turned yellow hat, which he exchanged for a blue one after the first set. His descriptions of this match sounded as if they arrived from someone very much his age: All in all, he found it to be a “crazy experience” and “a dream come true,” and the crowd support was “unbelievable” and a “pretty sick feeling.”



Rune did come in on a 13-match winning streak, built on the lower-level ATP Challenger Tour and the qualifying rounds in New York. The fans — back at the U.S. Open after all spectators were banned last year because of the coronavirus pandemic — gave him some serious backing, responding to his pumped fists and uppercuts and pleas for more noise when he was playing at his best level in the second set.

What initially sounded like booing to both players was actually “Rune-ing,” and the kid clearly loved the moment. So did his mother, clapping and smiling in his guest box, which also included Patrick Mouratoglou, Serena Williams’ coach. Rune has trained at Mouratoglou’s tennis academy in France.

Williams came so

close to going 4 for 4 at the majors in 2015, before losing in the semi-finals at the U.S. Open against Roberta Vinci in one of the biggest upsets in tennis history. Had Djokovic lost this, it would have been even more of a stunner.

Afterward, 2019 U.S. Open champion Bianca Andreescu closed out the first round by edging Viktorija Golubic 7-5, 4-6, 7-5 in a match that ended at 12:45 a.m. on Wednesday.

Andreescu needed a visit from a trainer in the second set because of stomach issues, but she improved to 8-0 at a tournament she won on her debut two years ago, then missed last year because of injury.

“My food was just, like, rumbling in my stomach, and I just felt like I had to throw up,” said Andreescu, a

21-year-old from Canada who is seeded No. 6. “Just super nauseous, which was super random.”

Earlier on Day Two, the top-seeded woman, Ash Barty, made a successful return to the site of one of the two Grand Slam tournaments she has yet to win.

The biggest holdup for Barty during her 6-1, 7-6 (7) victory over 2010 U.S. Open runner-up Vera Zvonareva came early in the first set. There was a delay of more than five minutes because the Hawk-Eye Live electronic line-calling system went down when a TV camera wasn’t working.

“Just needed to make sure all cameras were spot on, and just, I think, plug one back in,” said Barty, the champion at the French Open in 2019 and Wimbledon this July but never past the

fourth round at the U.S. Open, “and we were all right to go.”

She missed the tournament in 2020 because of the COVID-19 outbreak, remaining home in Australia.

This year, for the first time, every match on every court these two weeks is operating without any line judges. Instead, the only human officiating is the chair umpire, while every shot is ruled in or out by a system that uses cameras to detect where balls land.

Last year, electronic calls for each match except those played at the biggest two arenas, Ashe and Louis Armstrong Stadium, where people made the rulings. It was during a fourth-round match in Ashe against Pablo Carreño Busta that Djokovic was defaulted after

Malaysian shot putter disqualified after winning gold medal

TOKYO (AP): Even in the Paralympics Games, there is controversy over victory and defeat.

Malaysian shot putter Muhammad Ziyad Zolkefli appeared to have won gold in the shot put in the F20 class. But after the victory on Tuesday, he was disqualified because he had shown up late for the competition.

International Paralympic Committee spokesman Craig Spence said Zolkefli and two others — who did not reach the podium — were allowed to compete under protest after they failed to appear on time for the event.

“They were late, they may have had a logical reason for being late, and therefore we allowed them to compete and look at the facts of the matter afterward,” Spence said.

A statement from World Para Athletics, which governs track and field for Para sports, said a referee had determined after the event that “there was no justifiable reason for the athletes’ failure to report” on time. It said an appeal was also turned down.

The disqualification bumped Maksym Koval of Ukraine up to gold, and Ukraine teammate Oleksandr Yarovyi took silver. Bronze went to Efstratios Nikolaidis of Greece.

Spence said the disqualification was met with anger on social media. He described it as “very abusive.” Much of it targeted the Ukrainians.

“We are now seeing comments on all our social media posts that have nothing to do with the men’s shot put F20 event,” Spence said. He said the Ukrainian Paralympic Committee “was getting a lot of abuse from Malaysians.”

“I’m sorry. Rules are rules,” Spence said. “The decision was taken. It wasn’t the Ukrainians fault that the Malaysian was late.”

Spence said the three had arrived three minutes late. He said he did not see this as a harsh penalty. “Others get there five minutes early,” he said.

Spence said an excuse given was that the Malaysian and the two others said they “didn’t hear the announcement or it was in a language” they did not understand.

The F20 class in shot put is for athletes with intellectual disabilities.

The Associated Press attempted to reach the Malaysian delegation through an email address provided by IPC officials. There was no immediate response on Wednesday.

Early in 2019, the IPC stripped Malaysia of the World Para Swimming Championships for being unwilling to guarantee that Israeli athletes could compete.

Spence said the reaction then was similar.

“The level of abuse that was directed at the IPC then was through the roof,” Spence said.

Oksana Masters picks up 2nd gold medal at Tokyo Paralympics

TOKYO (AP): Oksana Masters won her second gold medal of the Tokyo Paralympics on Wednesday, bringing her career total to four gold and 10 medals overall in both summer and winter events.

The American won the women’s hand-cycle road race to go with a victory on Tuesday in the time trial. She could win one more gold in Tokyo in the relay event on Thursday. “I can’t believe it,” Masters said. “I’ve never won a road race in my life and I never thought I would ever win a road race in my life. I feel like I’m on cloud nine right now. At the start I was so nervous, I couldn’t even feel my grips.”

But she said once the race started it was a different matter.

“I did not trust my-



self, but the minute that clock went off and the whistle went off, I just let me body go on auto-pilot.”

Masters began her Paralympic career in 2012 in London with a bronze medal in rowing.

She has had equal

success in winter events. She won two gold medals in skiing at the 2018 Pyeongchang Paralympics. She added two more silver medals and a bronze in Pyeongchang. In Sochi in 2014, she picked up a silver and a bronze.

Masters was born in

1989 near Chernobyl, site of the world’s worst nuclear accident, and has birth defects believed to be from the aftermath of the disaster.

She was adopted by an American mother when she was a child. She had her left leg amputat-

ed near the knee at 9 and the right one at the same spot five years later.

She recently partnered with a deodorant brand as part of a campaign called “Watch Me,” which encourages young girls to stay in sports with resources and support. There were murals placed in New York, Philadelphia and Atlanta that feature Ashleigh Johnson (water polo), Chiney Ogwumike (WNBA), Chelsea Wolfe (BMX), Alex Morgan (women’s soccer) and Masters.

“There’s so much power when you’re able to have something that you can look at and see and be like, ‘OK, it’s here. It’s doable,’” Masters said in a recent interview with The Associated Press. “I’ve always been about seeing is believing, and when you can see something, you can be it and achieve it.”

Milan signs deal with Expo 2020 to boost brand in Arab world



MILAN (AP): AC Milan is aiming to strengthen its presence in the Middle East by signing a partnership with Expo 2020 Dubai.

Milan announced the deal on Wednesday and said it is part of its continued push to promote the club in what it sees as “a key market.”

The Rossoneri have played several friendly matches in the region in the past and the club also has a long-standing partnership with Emirates.

Expo 2020 is set to be the largest event to be held in the Arab world, with nearly 200 countries setting up pavilions to showcase innovations and achievements. It was rescheduled for this year because of the coronavirus pandemic. The city of Milan hosted the last Expo, in 2015.

“As a club based in Milan, a city that hosted the most recent World Expo in 2015, we know that Expo 2020 is a special moment in history that sees the world comes together to unlock its potential,” said Casper Stylsvig, Milan’s chief revenue officer. The club added that it will provide “unique content” with players for the Expo and “will bring its heritage and vision to promote the fundamental values of sport and inspire positive change through football.”

Seven-time European champion Milan is historically one of the most successfully clubs in the world. But it hasn’t won a major trophy in more than a decade. The Rossoneri finished second in Serie A last season, behind city rival Inter Milan.

Mumbai City FC sign defender Naocha Singh till May 2024

MUMBAI, SEP 1 (PTI): Reigning Indian Super League (ISL) champions Mumbai City FC on Wednesday announced the arrival of defender Huidrom Naocha Singh in the squad for the upcoming season.

Naocha has signed a three-year contract until May 2024, the club said in a media statement.

The 22-year-old

started his career through NEROCA FC’s youth set up and went on to play for TRAU FC before returning to NEROCA to feature in the 2018-19 I League.

“Making the step up to the ISL is something I have been working hard towards and joining the defending champions Mumbai City FC is nothing short of a dream,” Naocha said.

“The last two years of my career were very special indeed and while I got to be a part of a successful team at Gokulam Kerala, I want to do well and win silverware in the Indian Super League,” he added.

The Manipuri defender had signed for Gokulam Kerala FC ahead of the 2019-20 campaign and was in-

strumental in their successful 2019 Durand Cup campaign.

Naocha played every single minute in the tournament and also provided an assist for Gokulam Kerala’s winner in the final against Mohun Bagan.

Naocha, who is capable of playing on either side as a full-back, once again tasted success with the Malabarians as

Gokulam Kerala lifted the 2020-21 I League.

He played all 15 games and displayed impressive performances on both sides of the defence. Head Coach, Sergio Lobera said, “Naocha has shown his abilities in the I-League and previously, in the Durand Cup. He is a tough defender with great quality and we are very happy to have him with us at Mumbai City FC.

France starts COVID-19 booster shot campaign for the elderly

PARIS (AP): France on Wednesday started administering booster shots of COVID-19 vaccine to people over 65 and those with underlying health conditions to shore up their vaccine protection, as the highly contagious delta variant is spreading in the country.

People can get the shot on condition a minimum six-month period has passed since they got fully vaccinated with the Pfizer or Moderna vaccine.

Those who received the single-dose Johnson & Johnson jab can get a booster shot of Pfizer or Moderna at least four weeks after they first got vaccinated.

In nursing homes, a nationwide booster campaign is to start on Sept. 12.

About 18 million people are estimated to be eligible for the booster shot, according to the Health Ministry.

The French government followed the recommendations of the country's health authority, the HAS, which said last month that "recent studies suggest a fall in the vaccine's effectiveness, especially with the delta variant." The elderly and people with underlying health conditions are the most affected by the drop over time, the HAS said.

The booster shot was already available in France for some particularly vulnerable people, like transplant recipients and others with weakened immune systems.

The French government so far has made no decision regarding the potential extension of the campaign to the whole population.

France has been facing high numbers of confirmed infections since July, with a slight decrease in recent weeks — from over 23,000 per day around mid-August



to 17,000 now. But many fear a reverse of the trend as children will go back to school after summer holidays on Thursday.

Almost 44 million people, or 65.6% of the French population, are fully vaccinated.

France's decision to launch its booster campaign comes as the European Medicines Agency

said it is reviewing data to see if booster shots are needed.

In Germany, authorities in Berlin, the capital, started on Wednesday offering booster shots to residents of elderly care homes. Several other German states have already begun offering boosters to vulnerable people.

Israel has expanded

this week its coronavirus booster shot program to include anyone over 12 — the latest phase of a booster program that began in July with Israelis over 60.

U.S. health officials announced last month plans to dispense booster shots to all Americans. The campaign is expected to start by the end of

September.

The head of the World Health Organization's European branch, Dr. Hans Kluge, said this week he agrees with the top U.S. infectious diseases expert that a third dose of coronavirus vaccines can help protect the people most vulnerable, and it shouldn't be seen as a "luxury booster."

Italy braces for train track protests against COVID passes

ROME (AP): Italy's government vowed to crack down on demonstrators threatening to block train tracks throughout the country Wednesday as a rule requiring COVID-19 tests or vaccines to use public transportation for long-distance domestic travel took effect.

In a bid to rein in the transmission of infections as Italians returned from summer vacations, the government announced weeks ago that passengers must show a so-called "Green Pass" to board domestic flights, trains and buses traveling between regions.

The passes certify the holder received at least one vaccine dose more than 15 days prior, tested negative in the past 48 hours or recovered from COVID-19 in the previous six months.

The requirement also applies to sea travel, although some ferries are exempt, such as ones serving tiny islands with no other connections to the mainland and those used by commuters between Sicily and the southern tip of the mainland in Calabria.

Local buses, trams and subways also are exempt from the rule,

which was announced by Premier Mario Draghi's government when daily caseloads started steadily rising as the delta variant of the virus became prevalent in Italy.

Opponents of the requirement called for sympathizers to gather at some 50 train stations, including in Rome and Milan, on Wednesday afternoon and vowed to occupy rail tracks, if necessary, to stop trains.

Earlier this summer, a Green Pass requirement began for dining indoors at restaurants, accessing gyms or attending crowded events like concerts.

On the eve of the transportation rule taking effect, Italian Interior Minister Luciana Lamorgese said there would be zero tolerance for law breakers at track protests or for any violence.

"No illegal acts will be permitted in protest initiatives at train stations" organized for Wednesday, Lamorgese said.

Militants of an extreme-right group, New Force, as well as some members of extreme-left organizations, have par-



ticipated in previous protests against the Green Pass requirement.

Several recent protests, including in Rome and Milan, turned violent. Police rescued a state TV journalist after a protester started yanking her by her hair, and a newspaper reporter was punched repeatedly in the face. Ministers and doctors have received threats.

So far, some 70% of Italy's residents 12 years or older have been fully vaccinated. But experts have voiced concern that many people in the 50-69 age group haven't received vaccines nor signed up

for them.

At the main train station in Florence, the new requirement was announced on digital displays and loudspeakers.

"It's great, because it allows us to travel more safely," Arianna Bini, a 48-year-old pharmaceutical company manager waiting for a train to Ravenna. "Since I travel a lot, I feel more at ease."

On a high-speed train from Milan, in northern Lombardy, to Reggio Calabria, at the southern "toe" of the Italian peninsula, a conductor asked passengers to show their passes along with their

tickets. U.S. tourists showed their U.S. vaccine cards (CDC vax cards) and were also asked for their passports.

Riley Smith, a 26-year-old from New York who was traveling to Naples with a friend, said she knew what to expect. "New York just passed similar measures. I think it's a good thing across the board."

Other countries have adopted similar requirements or are about to put them in place.

Turkey's Interior Ministry has ordered all domestic travelers over 18 to provide either proof of full vaccination, recovery from COVID-19

or a negative PCR test result. In a circular issued Tuesday, the ministry said the requirement would apply to intercity bus, train and air travel starting Sept. 6.

Greece applies the same rules for domestic travel as for international travel. The country's certificate requirements are similar to Italy's for long-distance domestic travel. Individuals without the proper certification aren't allowed to board. Unlike Italy, Greece's requirements haven't sparked protests.

France's instituted a "health pass" requirement for domestic transportation on Aug. 9 that applies to high-speed, intercity and night trains, as well as long-distance domestic flights and bus trips.

The French railway says that based on pre-boarding checks, 97% of travelers have produced a travel pass.

The requirement, along with mandatory vaccinations for health workers, prompted weeks of Saturday protests by far-right activists and others angry at the French government. The first few demonstrations turned violent.

Micronesia's president says he mandated vaccines to protect

WELLINGTON, NEW ZEALAND (AP): Micronesia President David Panuelo said Wednesday he'll continue to walk around his island nation without fear, despite an alleged death threat against him over his government's vaccine mandate.

A month ago, Micronesia became one of the few countries in the world to impose a broad rule requiring that all eligible citizens get vaccinated against the coronavirus.

Soon after, Panuelo signed a decree requiring anybody receiving federal funds to prove they've been vaccinated or risk foregoing their checks. It's a broad net that captures most of the adult population — everyone from business owners getting pandemic stimulus payments to government workers and pensioners getting social security benefits.

Some islanders have strongly objected to the measure. Last week, a man was charged with making threats and other related offenses, which carry a maximum prison sentence of 10 years if he's found guilty.

In court documents, prosecutors said the man wrote a Facebook post which read: "Mr President--My Decision, My Body ... You gona need an army to protect you from now on...You will be assassinate for sure..Mark my word MR. President."

In an interview with The Associated Press, Panuelo said that since the Facebook post was made, authorities had increased the security around his home and office.

"We're such a friendly country," Panuelo said. "To see this coming from within our country, from our population, is quite a surprising element that I've discovered for the first time."

He said he'd promised his administration would remain approachable and transparent while in office and he intended to continue with that.

"I tell my people I will still walk out in the open field," Panuelo said. "Anybody threatens me, I'm not worried about it."

Micronesia, which is east of the Philippines and is home to about 100,000 people, has gone without any local cases of COVID-19 since the pandemic began, thanks in part to strict border controls.

"You don't have to wear a mask. Our children are still going to school," Panuelo said. "There is no virus right now. We're enjoying the daily freedoms like we've been enjoying prior to the COVID breakout. And so we want to keep it this way."

He said when the nation's Congress first discussed making vaccines mandatory he raised concerns but later came to embrace the idea.

"We love our citizens, and this is the action that we take to protect our citizens," Panuelo said. "I'm behaving like a father, like I would to my kids."

Panuelo said he believed that personal

freedoms and liberties are sacrosanct, but also that the nation's Constitution grants the power to limit certain liberties in situations such as a pandemic.

He said people on the islands tend to live in very close-knit family and community groups, sharing utensils and sleeping on the floor together, and that any outbreak would spread like wildfire.

"I guess freedoms these days are important," Panuelo said. "But how can freedoms be important if you die from them?"

He said that since the mandate was imposed, vaccination rates had leaped from about 43% of eligible Micronesians being fully vaccinated and 52% at least partially vaccinated to about 60% and 70%, respectively.

He said he'd seen some of the backlash to the mandate on social media from people opposed to the vaccines.

James Movick, a restaurant owner, said he was pro-vaccine but had concerns about the mandate. He said it would help islanders maintain their virus-free lifestyles, but many Micronesians worried that any penalties could unfairly target vulnerable groups like pensioners.

Movick said he also wondered if the man who had posted on Facebook actually intended to do anything and if charging him was an overreaction.

Authorities are sensitive to such threats after American lawyer Rachelle Bergeron, 33, was shot and killed outside her home while serving as a prosecutor in Micronesia in 2019.

Two people were later charged in connection with her murder. Panuelo said he's been involved with that case, which has been delayed because of the pandemic.

As with the Bergeron case, the FBI has been helping investigate the alleged Facebook threat. Micronesia enjoys close relations with the U.S. under a compact of free association.

Panuelo said he doesn't necessarily think the charges in the Facebook case are an overreaction after the investigation revealed the suspect had a history of making threats and had been involved in other crimes.

He also pointed out that two presidents on the nearby island nation of Palau were assassinated in the 1980s.

In court documents, prosecutors said that Benneth Edmund, a retail store owner and assistant clerk, wrote the threatening post under the fictitious Facebook profile "Jaylo David."

A police report said that when interviewed, Edmund said he was friends on Facebook with Jaylo David but didn't know who was behind the profile.

Public defender Nixon Alten, who is representing Edmund, told AP that Edmund had been released from custody after his arrest and intended to plead not guilty at a hearing later this month. Alten said he couldn't comment further.

Pope inadvertently quotes Putin to chide West's Afghan war

MADRID (AP): Pope Francis has criticized the West's two-decade-long involvement in Afghanistan as an outsider's attempt to impose democracy — although he did it by citing Russia's Vladimir Putin while thinking he was quoting Germany's Angela Merkel.

Asked during a radio interview aired Wednesday about the new political map taking shape in Afghanistan after the United States and its allies withdrew from the Taliban-controlled country after 20 years of war, the pope said he would answer with a quote that he attributed to the German chancellor, whom he described as "one of the world's greatest political figures."

"It is necessary to put an end to the irresponsible policy of intervening from

outside and building democracy in other countries, ignoring the traditions of the peoples," the pope said, using his own translation into Spanish.

But the words were spoken last month by the Russian president in the presence of Merkel, during her visit to Moscow.

During the meeting on Aug. 20, Putin scathingly criticized the West over Afghanistan, saying that the Taliban's rapid sweep over the country has shown the futility of Western attempts to enforce its own vision of democracy. Merkel, meanwhile, urged Russia to use its contacts with the Taliban to press for Afghan citizens who helped Germany to be allowed to leave Afghanistan.

During her press con-

ference with Putin, Merkel conceded that "on another project, namely for there to be a collective position of the Afghan population for its own future, we did not achieve our goals — I want to say that very openly."

"I must say that, in our development cooperation efforts, we did not want to force any system on Afghanistan," she added. "But we saw that millions of girls were glad to go to school and that women could participate. There are many in Afghanistan who are very, very unhappy about developments now."

The pope's interview with Spain's Cadena COPE took place at the Vatican late last week. The radio station owned by Spain's Catholic bishops' conference aired the talk on Wednesday and

said that its content had been vetted by the pope himself.

Francis also said that "not all eventualities were taken into account" in the departure of Western allies from Afghanistan.

"I don't know whether there will be a review or not (about what happened during the withdrawal), but certainly there was a lot of deception perhaps on the part of the new (Afghan) authorities," said the pope. "I say deceit or a lot of naivety."

He said he believed that the Vatican's top diplomat was offering to engage in Afghanistan to make sure that locals don't suffer and called for Christians across the world to engage in "prayer, penance and fasting" in the face of events in Afghani-

stan.

In the interview, Pope Francis addressed direct questions about his health for the first time since he underwent bowel surgery in early July.

He said his body is adjusting well to the removal of part of his colon and that he can now eat whatever he wants and leads "a totally normal life."

He said that he expected his trip to Slovakia and Hungary between Sept. 12-15 would be as busy as previous ones and said he would continue visiting small European countries, including an upcoming tour taking him to Cyprus, Greece and Malta.

The pope also said he was expecting to appear and speak at the U.N.-sponsored COP26 climate talks in November in Glasgow.

The Big Pic



STATEMENT IN YELLOW! Actress Kristin Cavallari hosted a day of wellness in the Hamptons with her brand, Uncommon James.

Vanderpump rules moms reunite for the first time with all their babies

One fabulous Vanderpump Rules reunion! Scheana Shay, Lala Kent, Stassi Schroeder and Brittany Cartwright all hung out at The Grove with their little ones. See the adorable photo.

As Scheana Shay famously once said, “Hashtag: It’s all happening!”

The Vanderpump Rules star, who welcomed her first child with fiancé and rugby player Brock Davies in April, took to Instagram to share the sweet reunion she had with her past and present co-stars and fellow moms.

“Mamas day out!” Scheana captioned the adorable post on Tuesday, Aug. 31, alongside several candid shots of her fun-filled day. “We finally got all the bubs together!”

In one snapshot, Scheana enjoyed an afternoon outing with Lala Kent, Stassi Schroeder and Brittany Cartwright. The gal pals, who spent time at The Grove shopping center in Los Angeles, each posed with their little ones.

Of course, the reality TV stars all looked fabulous out and about with their babies. Scheana donned a pastel green blouse that she paired with denim jeans and black booties. Her daughter, Summer Moon, 4 months, dressed just as cute, wearing a black onesie and frilly white tutu.

Brittany, who also welcomed son Cruz with husband Jax Taylor in April, rocked a blush-colored button-down and beige biker

shorts, which perfectly complemented her baby boy’s gray outfit.

“Cruz with all of his GF’s,” the Vanderpump Rules alum captioned a post of their reunion.

Additionally, Stassi posed with 6-month-old Hartford in an all-white get-up, as her baby girl dressed in a rainbow-colored ensemble.

“We used to pose with cocktails,” she cheekily wrote on Instagram, alongside the same group photo of them holding onto their babies.

As for Lala? The beauty mogul opted for a cozy-chic outfit and even twinned with her bundle of joy. For the outing, Lala wore a colorful tie-dye loungewear set that adorably matched with her 7-month-old daughter Ocean’s.

This marked the first time the Bravo stars got together with their kids. Brittany confirmed the news on Instagram Stories, captioning a video of their lunch, “Our first group play date.”

But knowing these gal pals, it’s safe to say this won’t be the last time they all hang out together with their children.

Last year, both Stassi and Brittany confirmed they would not appear on the next season of VPR. Click here for a closer look at season nine’s new cast following its recent shake-ups.

LOS ANGELES (AP): Britney Spears and her new attorney say her father is trying to get about \$2 million in payments before stepping down from the conservatorship that controls her life and money, a move they liken to extortion in a court filing Tuesday.

The document filed by lawyer Mathew Rosengart says the upcoming scheduled accounting of the conservatorship, which James Spears says he wants completed before he steps down, will mean significant payments for him.

“Britney Spears will not be extorted,” the filing says. “Mr. Spears’s blatant attempt to barter suspension and removal in exchange for approximately \$2 million in payments, on top of the millions already reaped from Ms. Spears’s estate by Mr. Spears and his associates, is a non-starter.”

A representative for James Spears did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

The filing is a supplement to Rosengart’s July petition on Britney Spears’ behalf for the removal and suspension of James Spears, which will be addressed at a Sept. 29 hearing.

In his response, James Spears revealed that he had already been planning to step down from his daughter’s conservatorship, which he has controlled at least in part since it was established



in 2008.

But James Spears offered no timetable for his departure, saying it would come only after several lingering issues, including the next accounting, are resolved.

James Spears said he would fight any attempt to force him out, that there were no grounds for doing so, and that he has always only acted in his daughter’s best interest.

Rosengart’s latest filing contends that while there is plenty of misconduct to address, it is not yet the issue.

“The only question before the Court — which has, unfortunately, been lost for years — is whether Mr.

Spears’ prompt suspension and removal are in best the interests of Britney Spears,” the filing says, later adding that “the unequivocal answer is yes.”

Since 2019, James Spears has controlled only his daughter’s finances, after stepping down as the overseer of her personal life.

He was nevertheless the target of much of his daughter’s ire in a pair of speeches before the court in June and July, in which she called the conservatorship “abusive.” Spears said she had been required to use an intrauterine device for birth control, take medications against her will and prevented from

getting married, having another child or even riding in her boyfriend’s car unsupervised.

“This conservatorship is doing me way more harm than good,” the 39-year-old Spears said at the time. “I deserve to have a life.”

In an unrelated case, authorities in Ventura County are investigating an allegation of misdemeanor battery from a staff member at her home who said Britney Spears struck her.

Rosengart called the incident “a manufactured ‘he said she said’ regarding a cellphone, with no striking and obviously no injury whatsoever.”

Top Hong Kong singer loses concert venue amid crackdown

HONG KONG (AP): A popular Hong Kong singer and pro-democracy activist will not be allowed to perform at one of the city’s top theaters later this month, in an indication that a crackdown by authorities on dissent is reaching the entertainment and cultural scene.

The Hong Kong Arts Centre cited a public safety clause in canceling Denise Ho’s venue reservations for her concerts, according to a statement posted Wednesday on Facebook by the singer’s company, Goomusic.

The cancellation came days after pro-Beijing newspaper Ta Kung Pao accused Ho of being “anti-China” due to her involvement in the 2019 pro-democracy movement in Hong Kong. Ho is an outspoken activist and joined in widespread protests during the city’s Umbrella Movement in 2014 and later in 2019 that sought to protect Hong Kong’s longstanding civil liberties from mainland Chinese interference.

“We can’t help but ask how the Hong Kong Arts Centre, as an independent institution supporting contemporary art which has been operating for 44 years, can now arbitrarily suspend contracts

without substantive evidence?” Goomusic said.

The Hong Kong Arts Centre did not immediately comment.

Ho’s sold-out concerts were slated for Sept. 8 to 12.

The cancellation has fed concerns that Hong Kong’s flourishing cultural scene, which in the past was known for its freedom of expression, is the latest target as Beijing tightens its control over the city.

Hong Kong authorities have over the past year arrested dozens of pro-democracy activists and pushed through electoral reforms that would reduce the number of directly elected legislators in the city.

Critics have accused Beijing and Hong Kong authorities of limiting freedoms promised to the city when it was handed over by the British to mainland China in 1997.

According to Goomusic, the Hong Kong Arts Centre canceled the reservation under a clause stating that it could terminate the booking of a venue if the person renting the venue fails to observe the terms and conditions in

circumstances where “public order or public safety would be endangered.”

Ho’s company said the Hong Kong Arts Centre had told Goomusic representatives that it was “bound to observe closely the recent developments in society.”

Ho’s company said it would refund ticket buyers and that the singer will livestream her concert instead on Sept. 12.

“We may face constraints in performance venues, but the stage itself is not limited by boundaries,” Goomusic said.

The cancellation came days after Hong Kong film director Kiwi Chow was fined 5,000 Hong Kong dollars (\$640) for allegedly flouting coronavirus restrictions during a private movie screening.

Chow, who directed the films “Ten Years” and “Revolution of our Times” about the city’s democracy movement, held a private screening of his film “Beyond the Dream” last week.

Authorities raided the screening and accused attendees of flouting social-distancing rules, since public gatherings in Hong Kong are currently limited to four people.

ARIES:

It’s time to check in with yourself, Aries. How far have you come since you first began walking the path and how do you see yourself progressing as you move forward? Take a moment to marvel at all of your victories, big and small, but also make a conscious effort to integrate the many learnings. It wouldn’t be wise to repeat the same mistakes over and over, would it now?

TAURUS:

Like the rams, you’re being asked to hit the pause button, to look back at the week that was, and consciously integrate the many lessons. Nothing in our lives is without a purpose, and this includes the so-called setbacks. If you’re looking for a new career path, take a moment to analyse what has and hasn’t worked for you. The answer to “Which way should I go from here?” is a lot simpler than you think, Taurus.

GEMINI:

Each phase of our lives brings with itself its own trials and tribulations—trials and tribulations that challenge us to grow differently. What is the lesson you’re being asked to honour today, Gemini? Are you closing yourself off to a new way of being? This is the beginning of a fresh chapter, beautiful. So, let go of the trepidations and allow yourself to step into the unknown. As you do, consciously build a stable foundation that can support the manifestation of your dreams.

CANCER:

The trouble is, we’ve grown up in a society that views vulnerability as the enemy. As a result, we overextend

ourselves at the cost of our mental health. Could this be true for where you are, Cancer? Are you holding yourself back from reaching out for help? What the cards want you to remember is that the support and guidance you require is available to you now and in every moment.

LEO:

It’s a (vibrational) match, Leo, and you and your beloved are feeling that soulmate connection like never before! Arriving at this point of acceptance has been anything but easy. You’ve had to fight opposition within and without to make your way into each other’s arms. No wonder you value every single moment spent together! What the cards want you to remember: it gets better from here. It truly gets better from here. Trust that and stay in the vibration of unconditional love.

VIRGO:

You’ve been taking your beloved for granted, beautiful. So, the cards are urging you to rekindle your romance and spend quality time together. Engage in activities that bring you *both* joy. Playing your favourite video games, for instance, or cooking a wholesome meal with fresh produce from your garden. Single Virgos are being reminded to work through the disappointment that’s been weighing them down. Turn that poison into a sweet elixir as you stay in the vibration of the love you truly desire.

LIBRA:

Mediocrity is easy. Following the crowd? Easier. You know what takes an insane amount of courage? Being an

artist in a world of content creators. The month ahead sees you awakening to your true path and purpose as you bring forth the gifts that were given to you at birth. So, dare to be different, Libra. Dare to honour your truth in a way you never have before. As you do, let go of the need to judge others or allow their judgements to interfere with you.

SCORPIO:

The suitor at hand has a way with words, but do they really mean what they’re saying? We surmise you already have the answer to this one. Word for the wise: it’s time to stop giving people the benefit of the doubt. On the upside, the cards are talking about your heightened ability to manifest the life you desire and deserve. So, make time to revisit your vision board as you think about where you would like to go from here. Something tells us you’re in the mood to co-create magic!

SAGITTARIUS:

Let’s talk about the flaws in the manifestation process. Often, we affirm something consciously without believing it to be our truth on a subconscious level. But, bridging the gap between the two is something you have been working on consciously, Sagittarius. No wonder you are making space for radical change! No wonder you’re able to move through the perceived limitations like never before! What the Universe wants you to remember: you are the conscious creator of your reality, and that the power to claim your best life is already within you.

CAPRICORN:

You’ve been on the path of self-healing for a while, Capricorn, and the week ahead sees you transmuting the shadows and coming into your light like never before. But, the transformation you’re going through right now is more internal than external. It’s the kind that cannot necessarily be put into words. So, trust the signs, beautiful. Trust what the Universe is guiding you towards right now without letting your logical mind interfere.

AQUARIUS:

There are times in our lives we try our best to move forward only to face one set back after another, but now is *not* such a time in your life, Aquarius. You are moving forward with courage and confidence, serving your role in the Divine Matrix in the way that you are meant to. Overheard at the cosmic conference: success and recognition are also going to be big themes for you. So, lead by example, Aquarius. Know that by living your true purpose, you are inspiring others to do just the same.

PISCES:

Chaos precedes creation. Read that again, Pisces, as you allow what needs to come undone, to come undone. Trust that this is going to be your biggest wake-up call yet, one that will help you redirect the course of your life for the better. Remember, playing the blame game isn’t going to serve anyone. You are responsible for your reality. Everybody else has merely been sent here as a catalyst for your transformation.