



**AP'S SONG OF THE YEAR:  
KEEDRON BRYANT'S 'I  
JUST WANNA LIVE'**  
pg 08

**OXFORD COVID-19 VACCINE:  
NEWLY PUBLISHED RESULTS SHOW  
IT IS SAFE – BUT QUESTIONS  
REMAIN OVER ITS EFFICACY**  
pg 04

**OLIVA JADE GIANNULLI  
LEARNING FROM FAMILY  
COLLEGE 'MESS-UP'**  
pg 08



# SummitTIMES

Vol 05 | Issue 322 | Gangtok | Friday | 11 December 2020

ON TOP OF THE NEWS

RNI No. SIKENG/2016/69420

Pages 8 | ₹ 5

**Supreme Court Bar Association condemns use of force against protesting farmers**

**NEW DELHI, 10 DEC [PTI]:** The Executive Committee of the Supreme Court Bar Association has resolved to condemn the use of force and repressive measures against farmers protesting against the Centre's new agri laws.

The SCBA committee has called upon all concerned to uphold and protect the constitutional right of all citizens to peaceful protest.

"The Executive Committee of the Supreme Court Bar Association has been dismayed to read reports in the media about the use of brute force to break up peaceful protests, where citizens raise their voices against State actions which they believe denigrate their basic rights."

"The recent legislation on farm produce, which exclude the jurisdiction of civil courts, followed by use of force to prevent the farmers from holding non violent protests for their rights is a case in point. The farmers have sought to present their views on the legislations which in their opinion infringe their rights," the committee said in a release.

The resolution was passed in a meeting held on December 4 and

turn to pg 02

## CM attends foundation stone laying ceremony of New Parliament House via video

**GANGTOK, 10 DEC [IPR]:** Chief Minister of Sikkim, Prem Singh Tamang, offered his presence via video from his official residence at Mintokgang during the foundation stone laying ceremony (Bhumi Pujan and Shilanyas) of New Parliament House Building (adjacent to the old Parliament) in New Delhi today.

The event was chaired by the Prime Minister of India Narendra Modi in the august presence of Speaker of Lok Sabha, Om

Birla, Union Ministers, Deputy Chairman (Rajya Sabha), and the Leader of the Opposition (Rajya Sabha). Speakers, Ambassadors, Chief Ministers and other distinguished dignitaries also graced the event.

The President of India and the Vice President conveyed their regards on this historic day.

The former Prime Ministers Dr Manmohan Singh and H.D. Deve Gowda also sent their best

wishes. Spiritual leaders, representatives of the various religious institutions and organisation across the country were also present.

The Prime Minister stressed on camaraderie and unity, stating that the new Parliament Building will be a momentous milestone, representing traditional ethos and values of modern India with the essence of culture and traditions of the country.



## 42-year-old becomes Sikkim's 118th COVID-casualty

**SUMMIT REPORT  
GANGTOK, 10 DEC:**

**S**ikkim recorded one more COVID-19 related death taking the death toll in the State to 118 when a 42-year-old lady from Kazitar, Namchi in South District, passed away in the early hours of Thursday with co-morbidities.

In the daily health bulletin on Thursday, Health Department State IEC Officer, Sonam Gyaltzen Bhutia, mentioned that the patient was found positive for COVID-19 in rapid antigen testing on 30 November and admitted to the COVID-dedicated STNM Hospital.

The patient passed away at around 2:44 AM today. He informed that the patient had the co-morbid conditions of diabetes and hypertension.

Meanwhile, Sikkim's tally of confirmed cases of COVID-19 detected so far reached 5,263 with 24 fresh cases of novel coronavirus in the last 24 hours.

The number of discharged Covid

patients has further improved to 4,685. There are 366 active cases of novel coronavirus in Sikkim, of whom five are currently in the ICU facility of STNM Hospital.

Mr Bhutia informed that the 24 new cases were reported from the testing of 292 samples on Wednesday.

While 20 cases were detected in RT-PCR screening of 169 samples, two persons were found positive in TrueNat testing of 16 samples and another two cases picked up from rapid antigen testing of 107 samples.

Of the 24 new cases in the State, 22 were reported from East District and two from West District.

Among the new cases reported from in and around the capital are two persons from near DC Office in Sichey, one from Tathangchen, two from Forest Colony area in Baluwakhani, one from Buildings & Housing quarters in Deorali, one from Rongneck, one from

turn to pg 02

## India's COVID-19 tally rises to 97.64 lakh with 31,521 fresh cases

**NEW DELHI, DEC 10 (PTI):** India's COVID-19 caseload climbed to 97,67,371 with 31,521 fresh infections, while the total number of recoveries surged to 92.53 lakh, pushing the national recovery rate to 94.74 per cent, according to the Union health ministry data updated on Thursday.

The death toll rose to 1,41,772 with 412 new

fatalities, the data updated at 8 am showed.

The COVID-19 case fatality rate stands at 1.45 per cent.

The number of people who have recuperated from the disease surged to 92,53,306.

The active caseload remained below 4 lakh for the fourth consecutive day. There are 3,72,293 active corona-

virus infections in the country which comprise 3.81 per cent of the total caseload, the data stated. India's COVID-19 tally had crossed the 20-lakh mark on August 7, 30 lakh on August 23 and 40 lakh on September 5.

It went past 50 lakh on September 16, 60 lakh on September 28, 70 lakh on October 11, 80 lakh on October 29, and 90

lakh on November 20.

According to the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR), 15,07,59,726 samples had been tested up to December 9 with 9,22,959 being tested on Wednesday.

The 412 new fatalities include 75 from Maharashtra, 50 from Delhi, 47 from West Bengal, 35

turn to pg 02

## The caste that must not be named

KARMA LOBZANG

**B**efore you go through this article, take a moment and reflect on how you feel when you say or hear the words 'Kami-Damai'. No matter which community/caste you belong to, you may have heard or maybe even used these words yourself. You probably have your own set of prejudices too. If you think that through this article, I want to advocate to discontinue the use of these words, then you are mistaken, it's the contrary. Allow me to explain.

My friend Mira (name changed), who belongs to the SC community herself, narrated this

story to me. On a recent trip to Darjeeling with her friends, she met some new people. During a conversation, one gentleman she had recently met, casually asked her 'Timro jaat chai?'. My friend, who is quite used to getting such questions from people of the hills replied 'Mero jaat.. Kami'. "I was not surprised at the visible awkwardness on that person's face", Mira told me, "I was rather surprised to see the discomfort on my friends' faces when they heard me. It was as if I uttered the unspeakable." I wonder if her friends would have been equally uncomfortable had she said 'Chettri, Gurung, Bhutia or

Lepcha?'. How has the word 'Kami', a word to describe one's caste become more than just a noun?

The roots of casteism have spread far and wide even in the Sikkimese society- Bhutias, Lep-

### VIEWPOINT

chas and Sherpas being no exception. Though the religion, culture and tradition of Bhutias, Lepchas, Sherpas and others alike don't propagate, believe and allow caste-based discrimination, we have learnt well from our upper-caste Nepali friends and neighbours. One might argue that the SCs of our

turn to pg 02

**11 December International Mountain Day**

**BIODIVERSITY OF DARJEELING-SIKKIM HIMALAYA**  
Pathways to resilience

Online kura-kani on International Mountain Day

With Panelists

**Sunita Pradhan**  
Conservation Biologist  
ATREE

**Pema W Dorjee**  
Consulting Editor  
SummitTimes

**Rinzi Lama**  
Anthropologist  
NBU

**Priyadarshinee Shrestha**  
Team Leader  
WWF- India, KCL

**Moderator**  
**Roshan P Rai**  
DLR Prerna

**11 December, 2020**  
**11:00 AM**

**Join us**  
<https://bit.ly/36GkFCM>

Media Partners  
TV SummitTIMES

**Investor Education and Protection Fund Authority**  
Ministry of Corporate Affairs  
Government of India

**PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENT**

**Investor/Depositors whose shares, unpaid dividends, matured deposits or debentures etc. have been transferred to Investor Education and Protection Fund under Companies Act, 1956/2013 can now claim online refund**

**For Investors : How to File the Claim?**

- Register yourself on IEPF Website: [www.iepf.gov.in](http://www.iepf.gov.in)
- Fill the new web form IEPF-5 ONLINE
- Attach scanned copy of requisite documents with form
- Take print out of auto generated advance receipt and indemnity bond (IEPF website - >Forms-> Web Forms IEPF-5 -> MCA Services)
- Send all documents to the company
- Company to e-verify the claim in 30 days
- On the basis of verification report, refund of shares and amount by IEPF Authority.

**Note: Claimants are advised to file e-form IEPF-5 only when all documents are available**

**FOR COMPANIES: How to Process?**

- File the details of nodal officer in new e-form IEPF-2(IEPF website -> Forms -> Register for filling web form.
- e-verify the form IEPF-5 within 30 days of filing of the form.
- Company to retain all original documents.

**For ANY QUERY Claimants can call Toll Free Number 1800-114-667 or log on to [www.iepf.gov.in](http://www.iepf.gov.in) or send mail to Email: [iepf@mca.gov.in](mailto:iepf@mca.gov.in)**

**Note: Claimants are requested to BEWARE of any middlemen or broker for settlement of claims. The process of filing the claim to IEPF Authority is simple and transparent. The requirement of documents is enumerated in the Instruction kit as well as in the FAQ section of the official website of IEPFA at [www.iepf.gov.in](http://www.iepf.gov.in).**

**Ease of Doing Business (EODB) Initiative of Ministry of Corporate Affairs: Company Incorporation becomes quicker and easier SPICe+ and AGILE-PRO integrates 10 services into one. SPICe+ saves time & cost for Starting a Business**

**Investor Education and Protection Fund Authority**  
A Government of India initiative towards Investor Education, Awareness and Protection  
"Empowered Investor, Educated Investor, Smart Investor"

**Follow us on:**

[f /IEPFAuthority](https://www.facebook.com/IEPFAuthority) [ig @iepf](https://www.instagram.com/iepf) [t @authorityiepf](https://twitter.com/authorityiepf) [in iepfauthority](https://www.linkedin.com/company/iepf)

DAVP 07110/11/0009/2021



# Where Should People Change to Change Politics?

JIWAN RAI

Politics has been the most ridiculed institution and, at the same time, the most revered vocation. This is where we park our authorities to legislate our norms, to regulate our progress and to decide our destiny. This weakest of human institutions has been made the most powerful establishment of society. And we moan and groan about the misery of our lives. So much for the intelligence of humanity!

Nothing is going to change it. Politics will only get stronger with time, thus enhancing its influence on human life. Every new political greenhorn enters the scene with a booming announcement of his/her resounding promise to cleanse politics - only to become the next person to join the line of professional liars.

However, a few things can change only if the people change.

Leaders, in some senses, are the force of a collective punch of the people and politics, therefore, is a reflection of our social attitudes. The quality of leadership, to a large extent, is determined by the quality of public discourse. A few exceptional leaders do rise higher than the existing situation. But that is not always the case.

There are some social and cultural flaws endemic to Sikkim politics which must and can change. Let me list a few of them:

One, the unhealthy competition to endear oneself to leaders: The passion to become the most trusted and the dearest man or woman of the MLA, Minister or the Chief Minister among active workers is unmistakable. They leave everything including their duty to show their presence in front of their leaders on special occasions. The best gift they can bring to

their leaders is the tell-tale. These tale bearers (mis)report everything about what they have read in the newspapers, on social media, heard in the street, overheard in somebody else's house and so on. Imagine the quality of a leadership that feeds on such gossip. Has there ever been a dearth of super-sensitive, trigger-happy, outraged, judgmental and vindictive leaders in Sikkim's political history? Nothing weakens leaders more than these gossipmongers. The leaders who wear masks over their ears when attacked by them will survive the longest. Sikkim's short history is replete with examples of how these tale bearers are the first to leave their leaders when they are unseated from power.

Two, a myopic attitude to any criticism against the administration: The downfall of Trump was

primarily self-crafted by his utter inability to see merit in any criticism against him. There are plenty of overzealous people around the government, as there have always been in the past, who are ever ready to nip the criticism in the bud. It is as pernicious as shutting the mouth of a medical technician who makes a bad prognosis of a

## VIEWPOINT

disease to a patient. Often, such zealots lack intellectual insight and their zeal to overprotect the administration, for the most part, is ill-inspired by a personal interest to milk the government.

One of their famous techniques is to compare anything to the past. "They did it in the past so what is wrong about us doing it now?" they say. But should we now not focus on the future? The enthu-

siasm for comparison to the past must be balanced by a vision to look to the future. And no one can see into the future clearly without being willing to look through the lens of constructive criticism.

Three, a strawman form of argument: Politics always adopts a strawman argument. More so in the post-truth era. However, we in Sikkim have taken the strawman argument to the next level. In this fallacious form of argument, one first distorts the actual argument of the opposition and attacks this distorted (weaker version of) stance. The real issue is hidden and unaddressed. The extrapolation of such a trend results in the demonizing of their opponents in totality and undermines every good thing that they represent. The flip side to this is the deification of themselves totaling ignoring the faults in them. That is exactly how politics is done. The young generation Sik-

kimese must demand steel-manning in politics - which simply means that politicians must be told to stop making strawmen out of their opponents and to deal with the real and stronger version of the issue or argument. Cheap jokes, angry pronouncements, emotional blackmailing, flattery and their ilk are blinding us from the real face of politics.

The younger generation must initiate a process of public discourse on politics and socially significant issues. There are enough local dailies where they can write their opinions and counter-opinions. It is high time that the new generation raises themselves above the trend of angry, hasty posts unsupported by researched facts, obnoxious audio or videos on social media, vengeful exchanges of words on Facebook and expressions of blind devotion to their revered leaders.

## SDF Cheli Morcha holds meeting

SUMMIT REPORT  
GANGTOK, 10 DEC:

Cheli Morcha of Sikkim Democratic Front held a meeting here at the party head-office at Bye-Pass Road on Thursday.

The meeting discussed the present situation, future strategies and programmes of the party, informs an SDF press release.

During the meeting, office bearers of Cheli Morcha from different districts placed their thoughts and suggestions in the open discussion.

The release mentions that former MLA and senior leader, Manita Pradhan stressed that every party worker should work to strengthen the organization of the party. She stated that SDF has provided equal rights and privileges to women of Sikkim and everyone should support the party.

HAVE A  
STORY TO  
SHARE?

email us: [news@summittimes.com](mailto:news@summittimes.com)

## Assam Lingzey GPU holds Gram Sabha

SUMMIT REPORT  
GANGTOK, 09 DEC:

Gram Sabha of Assam Lingzey GPU was convened today wherein various proposals have been vetted in the sabha, a press release informs.

The Sabha was presided over by president, Ganesh Chettri and was also attended by MLA Namcheybong, Em Prasad Sharma, Chairman-Excise Department, Ganza Bhutia and the line department officials.

Amongst the demands on priority were; New Water Sup-

ply Schemes, new cow-sheds, pig sheds and goat sheds under MGN-REGA, Eco-Friendly Cycling Road from Mulasoo to Gaucharan via Raja Pokhari, new road from to Namrung via Gaucharan JHS, Khangchendzonga View Tower at Mulasoo, renovation of Kuwapani Pokhari, ICDS Centre at Mulasoo, Community Hall at Soureni, removal of all the mud sludges at flank side and view obstructing plants along Assam Pakyong Road from Zero Mile to 14th Mile.

Chairman, Ganza Bhutia welcomed the positive suggestions from all to make Assam Lingzey a more developed area and assured support.

The Area MLA reiterated his focus on development of Assam Lingzey and the constituency as a whole. He also asked the youth to follow up the demands passed in the Gram Sabha with the line departments and assured to place the demands with the Government for sanctions.

## SKM Nari Shakti meeting held in Mangan

WANGCHUK BHUTIA  
MANGAN, 09 DEC:

Continuing its series of coordination meetings, Sikkim Krantikari Morcha Nari Wing held a meeting today at Mangan for Lachen-Mangan and Dzongu Constituencies.

The programme was chaired by MLA cum In-charge SKM Nari Shakti, Sunita Gajmer accompanied by Nari Shakti, president, Kala Rai.

Ms Gajmer said that women are being given equal opportunity under the SKM government while Ms Rai alleged that

SDF only used women during election time but SKM is committed towards the upliftment of women in the state.

SKM Dzongu Constituency In-charge, Chung Kipu Lepcha expressed her gratitude to Chief Minister Prem Singh Tamang for giving priority and attention to women of Sikkim.

The SKM Government is focusing on bringing about development in North District, she said further highlighting the various measures steps undertaken to do so.

Also present were chairperson, Culture department cum SKM general secretary, Pooja Sharma, Chairman, Teesta Urja LTD., Gyan-den Lachungpa, Chairman, Primitive Tribes Board, C. N. Lepcha, SKM CLC Convenor, Tshering P Bhutia, SKM CLC Convenor, L-Mangan, Dina Lepcha, SKM CLC Convenor Dzongu, Nima Lepcha, SKM Org secretary, Mayalmit Lepcha, active members and around 370 women from both the constituencies.

visit us at: [www.summittimes.com](http://www.summittimes.com)

### 42-year-old...

Tadong, one from Manbir Colony, one from Bye-Pass Area, one from bye-pass road in Bojoghari and one from below helipad in Lower Burtuk.

Likewise, one person from the GREF camp at 8th Mile JN Road, one from Kupup, one from Namchey-bong-Pakyong and a Mintokgang staff member who is currently lodged in a COVID Care Centre.

Mr Bhutia informed that one person from Upper Ghurpisey, Namchi in South District and one person from Rinchenpong, one from Tikjuk and one from Arithang in Gyalshing in West District and one from Namprik in Upper Dzongu also tested positive for COVID-19.

He added that one person, who came with a patient to STNM hospital and was staying at Yatri Niwas, has also tested positive for COVID-19.

Meanwhile, a person from Siliguri, who came to STNM Hospital for testing and then returned to Siliguri, has also tested positive. Also today, a 43-year-old male from Sichey has tested positive but remains unreachable over the phone and has been urged to immediately contact the concerned authorities.

### To book ad-space, contact SummitTIMES at GANGTOK:

For circulation details Contact: (Sandeep) 9734152451 & for Advertisement booking at 9933427505 or at office no 03592 208698. Mail us at [advertise@summittimes.com](mailto:advertise@summittimes.com)

### SILIGURI:

Mr. Mani Rai, M/s. Space Ads, B.R. Ambedkar Building, Room No.7, 1st floor. Opp. Ganga Hotel. Hill Cart Road. Siliguri – 03. Ph. 9832318644/ 9800682989/ 9153035100 or mail at [mani\\_siliguri@yahoo.co.in](mailto:mani_siliguri@yahoo.co.in).

### KOLKATA OFFICE:

Irshad Ali/ Imteeyaz. Synapse, 6, Madan Street, Mezzine – 2, 2nd floor. Kolkata – 700072. Ph. 033-22124348/ fax 033-22124337/ mob. 9830547774/ 983108397. E-mail: [contact.synapse@gmail.com](mailto:contact.synapse@gmail.com)/ [irshad\\_ali123@rediffmail.com](mailto:irshad_ali123@rediffmail.com)

### The caste that...

state are not treated as badly as in other states but make no mistake that Sikkimese society has very often discriminated and made them feel small. I want to talk about the subtle aspects of discrimination that we might be a part of without noticing it ourselves. When a man belonging to SC caste gets drunk and misbehaves, he is condemned saying 'Kami-Damai ko beurai estoi ho' like as if all SC people are badly behaved drunkards. If he were any other caste, at least the whole community wouldn't be reprimanded. It's unfortunate yet common that when a person who belongs to the Scheduled Caste community makes a mistake, his mistake is tagged along his caste. I know a landlady in North Sikkim, who used to keep separate cutlery for Kami-Damai to eat in - something she learnt from upper caste labourers working in her home. My friend Mira, who comes from a well-to-do family, narrates the time when her grandfather passed away, "...my so-called upper caste 'Baun' neighbours came to pay their condolences but refused to even drink a sip of water at our house". "When you get used to all this in your childhood, you internalize it", says Mira. "You start believing that you are lesser than others. There was a time when I used to feel embarrassed to admit my caste, but I am not like that anymore. Education has empowered me".

This admission by my friend got me thinking about how ignorant and hypocritical we have become as a society. The most convincing proof of our caste hypocrisy comes in inter-caste marriages involving SCs. I am certain you can think of at least one family who has had problems with an inter-caste

marriage. Ironically, even SCs discriminate based on their sub-castes. Talk about the scandal or the disapproving looks of a far-away uncle when a Kami boy marries a Damai girl! Even the converted Christian SCs of Sikkim are at the forefront of practising the caste system when in reality, one of the prime reasons for them to abandon Hinduism and embrace Christianity, was to get out of this web of caste-based discrimination.

Article 15 of the Indian Constitution, prohibits the state from discrimination based on the ground of any Caste, race, sex, place of birth or any of them. Article 17 - prohibits untouchability. These mandates of the Constitution aren't enough to fight casteism as it is very much evident from Indian examples. For instance, more than 100 years before Martin Luther King Jr (fought against segregation and racism), our great reformers like Raja Ram Mohan Roy fought against the caste system. Americans got their first Black President (Obama) in 2008, but here we are in India where caste discrimination at all new level. Much of this rigidity in Indian society is also because of deeply rooted practices that come with religion. It is time we disown parts of ancient texts that contradicts the Constitution. Today when we have figures indicating a crime against Dalits every 15 minutes, 6 Dalit women getting raped every day- we need to seriously ask ourselves, are we treating fellow SCs any better?

The Scheduled Castes are very much a part of our society. This place is equally theirs as much as it is ours. We live in such a small area, but how very little

we know about each other. For many, or rather, for the majority the word Kami-Damai itself means a Slang. One can hear many times someone saying not to behave like Kami-Damai. Even when SC people progress and succeed, it is the weight of these words 'Kami-Damai' that they carry with them, no matter where they go, that tries to bring them down. So what do we do? Stop using it all-together? Well, that is probably not possible. But I have another suggestion which happens to be quite the opposite.

Remember how the word 'sex' and 'condom' used to be taboo, or 'feminism' a distant concept up until a decade ago and how gradually we got used to it? We got used to it because the mainstream media started showing it, we started talking about it. Similarly, we need to start talking about caste. WE NEED TO start having these uncomfortable and awkward conversations, until they aren't awkward anymore. As long as we as a society don't talk about these things, the discomfort will always stay there, just looking for a reason to manifest itself. The discrimination based on caste was never in the DNA of this land (Sikkim). If we keep ignoring the prevailing caste-based discriminative practices, the privileged and ignorant will continue to believe that casteism doesn't exist in our Sikkimese society. We need to make ourselves comfortable with the words- Kami or Damai- treat this community as one of us- setting aside the prejudices deeply ingrained in our societal conditioning.

Precarious is the time we live today. The country's largest political party in its largest state makes a law criminal-

izing inter-faith marriage, and most of us are silent spectators. No party wins an election in these significant states if they don't get their caste maths right. Sikkimese society, to some extent, has been immune to these social evils, but given the times we live in, we must keep the casteist devil within us in check.

I thought I would complete this article without mentioning COVID, but how can we ignore the fact that SCs are the hardest to suffer due to this pandemic? 90% of labours involved in sanitation and cleaning come from the SC community; these labours are underpaid, less protected and less appreciated. During the onset of this pandemic, PM Modi rightly said, the Virus doesn't discriminate between rich/poor, Hindu/Muslim or Upper Caste/ Dalits, but sadly society does.

To reiterate, we need to start having uncomfortable conversations. Only then, can we move beyond our differences and work collectively for this beautiful land that we share. We need to talk about Casteism, about Classism, about the growing trust-deficit and communalism among Bhutia, Lepchas and Nepali communities and many more issues that continue to knock on our doors. To participate more openly in conversations like this, you may join the FB page 'PeopleForSikkim'- a platform where we discuss our shared motherland and the things that threaten to divide us. This is a small effort which may not have much impact, but in the words of my favourite journalist- "Not all battles are fought for victory. Some are fought simply to tell the world that someone was there on the battlefield".

### Supreme Court...

released to the media today through SCBA's acting secretary Rohit Pandey.

The SCBA said it emphasises that the right of citizens to discuss, debate, criticise or protest against such Bills or Acts is sacrosanct and peaceful protest is a cornerstone of our Constitution, and the bedrock of human rights.

"The Executive Committee of the Supreme Court Bar Association has unanimously resolved to condemn the use of force and repressive measures against peaceful protesters, and calls upon all concerned Governments to uphold and protect the Constitutional right of all citizens to peaceful protest," the committee said.

### India's COVID-19...

from Kerala, 26 from Haryana, 20 each from Karnataka and Uttar Pradesh.

The total 1,41,772 deaths reported so far in the country include 47,902 from Maharashtra followed by 11,900 from Karnataka, 11,836 from Tamil Nadu, 9,813 from Delhi, 8,867 from West Bengal, 7,987 from Uttar Pradesh, 7,045 from Andhra Pradesh and 4,980 from Punjab.

The health ministry stressed that more than 70 per cent of the deaths occurred due to comorbidities.

"Our figures are being reconciled with the Indian Council of Medical Research," the ministry said on its website, adding that state-wise distribution of figures is subject to further verification and reconciliation.

## 18 families join SKM in Pathing

SUMMIT REPORT  
GANGTOK, 10 DEC:

Sikkim Krantikari Morcha Ward Level Committee for Pathing Ward under Rangang Yangang Constituency was conducted today wherein 18 families from the ward quit Sikkim Democratic

Front and joined SKM, a press release informs.

The WLC formation cum joining programme was chaired by SKM area In-charge, Raj Kumar Basnet who was also joined by SKM CLC president, Tengayla Namka, amongst others.

## ~ SummitTIMES ~ CLASSIFIEDS

### LAND FOR SALE

Two plots available – 30X40 sq ft and 50X30 sq ft  
Junkeri Dara, Samlik Marchak

Price negotiable

Contact : 6296366498,  
9641878315, 9593262407

### LAND FOR SALE

A land measuring an area for 50x32 1/2 at Road-side just below housing colony is for sale. It is just a one minute walking distance from Namchi bazaar taxi stand. Interested party may contact 9593373387 and 9434406761

### LAND FOR SALE

An area measuring 1 acre at Sadam South Sikkim near Loretto Convent School at Gupti road. Price negotiable any one interested can contact: 78640-04501,62970-03235, 98320-48410

### FOR RENT

Two and half storeyed (1st to 3rd floor) complex is available for rent in the heart of Ranipool Baazar (Opposite UCO Bank). The building area is 35'x60' appx. in each floor and is fit for offices, shopping complexes, guest houses, banks etc. Contact: 8509755220, 8348007688.

### GENERAL LAND FOR SALE

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

### Building for sale

A two storey building constructed on plot area 50×40 ft. Situated at Upper Phong near Phong SS , South Sikkim is on sale. Cost Rs 60 Lakhs (Negotiable ). Interested may contact : 8145829309, 7864937800, 9749897695.



# State-level Kala Utsav concludes

**GANGTOK, 10 DEC [IPR]:** The two-day long online State Level Kala Utsav Competition 2020 concluded at the National Informatics Centre here today.

The programme was organized by Education Department under the aegis of Samagra Shiksha. This year's competition was held through online mode following COVID-19 norms. Participants from the districts also attended the competition from the respective district NICs.

Kala Utsav is an initiative of the Ministry of Education, Government of India, to promote arts in education by nurturing and showcasing the artistic talent of school students across the country.

The focus of Kala Utsav 2020 was on any one of the styles of traditional, classical or folk art forms.

The solo competition is being held in four areas of vocal music, instrumental music dance, visual art (2D and 3D) and indigenous toys/ games for girls and boys separately.

The event had Additional Chief Secretary, Education Department, GP Upadhyaya, as the chief guest on the inaugural day. The programme was also attended by the State Project Director (Samagra Shiksha), Bhim Thatal, as special guest followed by Joint Directors, Samagra Shiksha and other officials of the Department.

The Additional CS, in his inaugural address, blessed the participants and wished them luck for their future endeavours.

The inaugural day's programme started with a welcome address and a brief overview of Kala-Utsav by Deputy Director Samagra Shiksha, Kabita Moktan.



She also highlighted the importance of arts in education and provided brief details of the selection process for Kala Utsav competition.

A total of 33 participants took part in the State Level Competition which was virtually screened by eminent artists and officials as jury members and featured myriad colourful displays such as visual arts 2-D, visual Arts 3-D, vocal music, instrumental music and indigenous toy-making arts in boys and girls category.

In the competition, the children with special needs (CWSN) were also encouraged to participate and express their hidden talents.

It may be mentioned here that the competition was conducted in all four districts at block and district level earlier for selection of one male and female participant in each art form. The nine best solo performances in each domain of arts selected out of State Level Competition will represent Sikkim in the National Level Competition slated to be held virtually in January 2021.

The two-day programme concluded with valuable suggestions from the State Project Director, Samagra Shiksha along with declaration of results and distribution of certificates.

The names of the winners in each category is as follows:

- 1) Visual Arts 2D Boys- Bishal Sutradhar, Tadong Senior Secondary School, (East District).
- 2) Visual Arts 2D Girls- Chawang Doma Gurung, Mangan Senior Secondary School (North District).
- 3) Visual Arts 3D Boys- Arun Kumar Pradhan, Tadong Senior Secondary School, (East District).
- 4) Visual Arts 3D Girls- Reeta Chettri, Mangan Senior Secondary School, (North District).
- 5) Folk Music Instrumental Boys- Isha Hang Subba, Langang Senior Secondary School (West District).
- 6) Folk Music Instrumental Girls- Karen Barailly, Namchi Senior Secondary School (South District).
- 7) Instrumental Music Classic Solo Boys- Sushil Rai, Mang

gan Senior Secondary School (North District).

8) Dance Folk Solo Boys- Udai Rai, Sichey Senior Secondary School, (East District).

9) Dance Folk Solo Girls - Seeya Gurung, Dentam Senior Secondary School (West District).

10) Dance Classical Solo Girls - Leom Lepcha, Mangan Senior Secondary School (North District).

11) Indigenous Toys/Games Boys- Ugen Lendup Lepcha, EMRS, Swayem (North District).

12) Indigenous Toys/Games Girls - Grace Sundas, Tadong Senior Secondary School (East District).

13) Vocal Music classical Boys- Gyan Tshering Lepcha, Mangan Senior Secondary School (North District).

14) Vocal Music classical Girls - Mayalmit Lepcha, Mangan Senior Secondary School, (North District).

15) Vocal Music folk Boys- Kushal Manger, Assangthang Secondary School (South District).

16) Vocal Music folk Girls - Seema Rai, Sichey Senior Secondary School (East District).

## SSHRC observes International Human Rights Day

**GANGTOK, 10 DEC (IPR):** The Sikkim State Human Rights Commission (SSHRC) observed the International Human Rights Day in the office of the Commission here today.

SSHRC Member, MG Kiran, IAS (Retd) administered the International Human Rights Day pledge to the Officers and staff of the Commission. Secretary, Jagat B Rai, SSHRC graced the occasion with his benign presence.

"Recover Better-stand up for Human Rights" is the theme for Human Rights Day this year. The Sikkim State Human Rights Commission member in his brief address elucidated the significance of the day.

The National Human Rights Commission was established by the Government of India under Section 3 of the Protection of Human Rights Act, 1993. During the last 27 years, the Commission has been earnestly working for the promotion and protection of human rights in India. By enact-



ing the Protection of Human Rights Act and constituting the National Human Rights Commission, Government of India has not only fulfilled its international obligations, but also demonstrated India's dedication and commitment to the protection and promotion of human rights. It is also part of the endeavor to achieve the Constitutional goal of assuring the dignity of the individual.

The National Human Rights Commission is the symbol of Indian's willingness and capability to cooperate with other nations to promote and protect human rights anywhere and everywhere.

The General Assembly of the United Nations adopted and proclaimed the Universal Declaration

of Human Rights which provides a common standard of achievement for all people and all nations on 10 Dec, 1948. Considering the world-wide historic significance of the Declaration, 10 December is observed as the International Human Rights Day every year.

In pursuance to the Provision of the Protection of Human Rights Act, 1993, the Sikkim State Human Rights Commission was constituted by the State Government in October, 2008 with its Headquarter at Gangtok. Former Chief Justice, Justice Vijai Kumar Bist, High Court of Sikkim is the present Chairperson of the Commission and the office is located at Manan Kendra, Development Area, Gangtok.

## Lingi Payong School observes Fit India Week



### SUMMIT REPORT

**GANGTOK, 10 DEC:**

Lingi Payong School organised various sports activities from 01 to 08 December to observe Fit India Sports Week, a press release informs.

Students participated in various sporting activities throughout the week. The activities in-

cluded athletics, football, badminton, chess, kho-kho, cricket, yoga and free hand exercises.

The school had already registered with the Ministry of Sports and Youth Affairs and Sports Authority of India and had applied for 3 star rating under Fit India Schools, the release adds.

## Sikkim Bihari Jagran Manch celebrates 27th foundation day

### SUMMIT REPORT

**RANGPO, 10 DEC:**

Sikkim Bihari Jagran Manch celebrated its 27th foundation day at Singtam Bihari Dharamshala with a somber event following COVID protocol as issued by the State Government, a press release informs.

The SBJM central committee decided against a grand event to mark the anniversary in light of the ongoing pandemic and appealed to all the branches to observe the foundation day at the branch level itself.

In accordance with the decision, the branches followed this day at their respective levels, with the central com-



mittee members attending the event at Singtam Dharamshala.

The SBJM central committee president, Swaminath Prasad, general secretary Birendra Prasad along with all the present members discussed the achievements of the organization and outlined the future programs.

Mr Prasad also announced that once the Covid pandemic has passed After the end of the corona period, the President announced a grand program to be organized in State Level. In other side, Pakyong Branch of SBJM Celebrating the Foundation Day has Also Inaugurated their Branch Office.

## Ralong Namsong Football Tournament



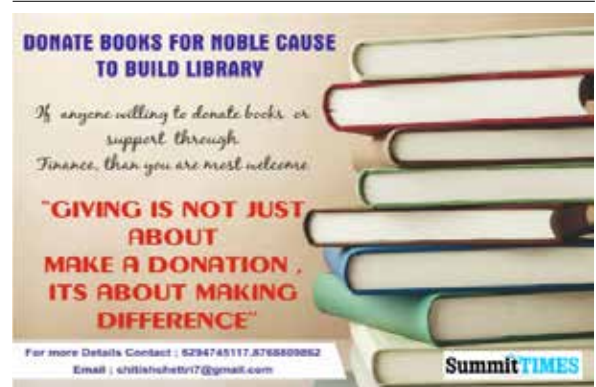
### SUMMIT REPORT

**GANGTOK, 10 DEC:**

Ralong Namsong Football Tournament is underway at Ralong under West Pendam Constituency in East Sikkim. Today's match was played between Beng Football Club and NSC

Samsing, a press release informs.

Social worker, Rita Karki was present as the chief guest. Organized by Ralong Football Club, the Beng Football Club entered the second stage of the competition by defeating NSC Samsing by 2-0.



## IHM holds 22nd Board of Governors meeting



**GANGTOK, 10 DEC (IPR):** The 22nd Board of Governors Meeting of Institute of Hotel Management, Gangtok, Sikkim Society was held at the IHM Campus on 07 December.

The meeting was chaired by Chief Secretary, SC Gupta. The Board Members Additional Chief Secretary to the Government of Sikkim, Department of Tourism and Civil Aviation, Administrator cum Director/Additional Secretary, Dr K Jayakumar, Tourism and Civil Aviation Department, Ad-

ditional Director, Kapil Meena, Department of Finance, Persis Luckson and Joint Director, Technical Education, Education Department, Rajiv Roka were present in the meeting.

The Chief Secretary along with other Board Members visited the entire campus and interacted with the students and staff.

During the meeting, all the issues and agenda raised by the Institute has been resolved by the Board. The Board assured that all financial

support shall be extended through State Government and Central Government to upgrade the facilities of the Institute for better performance in future. The Board also approved the demands of faculties and staff in terms of revised salary, 5th pay fixation arrear, promotion, gratuity, construction of staff quarter and hostel in the campus. The future action plan to improve the internal revenue opportunities of the Institute were also discussed in the meeting.

Specialized Dental Clinic of Siliguri  
(Sevoke Dental Clinic)  
Branch Open in Gangtok.

**GANGTOK DENTAL CLINIC**

**NOW OPEN**  
10AM to 7PM

**BOOK YOUR APPOINTMENT**  
**82106 99271**

**Dr. Anjali Gupta**  
BDS, Dental Surgeon

Near Sisa Golai  
Below Greendale Hotel  
Gangtok, East Sikkim

+91 8210699271  
+91 8768213966

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.

If you seek help, you may call :  
-Toll free no. 104  
District surveillance Officer  
EAST : 7029372100  
WEST : 9593297809  
NORTH : 9641957468  
SOUTH : 7407691463  
New STNM  
AMS : 9434711402

**DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & FAMILY WELFARE**  
**GOVERNMENT OF SIKKIM**



## Hill People and Their Day

*More people need to be involved in deliberations about the mountains*

Today, 11 December is International Mountain Day. The online option has allowed for the observance of this day to do away with VIPs and focus on stakeholders and experts and discussions and interactions against lighting lamps and exchanging Khadas. That said, the Day usually passes largely unaddressed. What one hopes though is for interactions about the mountains to extend to the plains-folk as well and the policy makers sitting too removed from the mountains and yet making decisions which affect the hills and the hill people. The theme for this year's observance is significant – "Mountain Biodiversity". The mountain folk know of their diversity, well, at least the older folk did, but are routinely forced to adapt because of decisions taken in places which require air-conditioners to weather the summers. The mountain folk, it can be argued, are part of the biodiversity in the hills, and identity is as much a personal and community experience as it is about how the others recognize it. Any deliberation on the mountains and the biodiversity there is thus incomplete unless stakeholders physically and emotionally removed from the mountains are involved in the discussions.

Pressures of modernity put too much stress on mountain lifestyles, and what is worse, the 'development' model of the plains is being increasingly imposed on hill people. This strains the careful balance that hill communities have evolved over generations of living with the environment as against the mainstream civilisation's exploitative engagement with natural resources. The demand for resources abundant in the mountains has always been there, but the pressure has increased in the past half a century or so; a coercive pressure which the mountain communities have not been able to resist or manage too effectively. The disintegration of mountain environments has accelerated with the steamroller model of development in the plains which requires resources from the mountains – the runaway slew of hydel projects which have scarred the hills are required to slate the thirst for energy in the plains, not the domestic consumption of the mountain people, for instance.

Of course, what cannot be ignored either is the stress caused as more and more hill people convert to lifestyles which distance them from the land which was earlier integral to their livelihoods and survival. This is not to suggest that hill people should be discouraged from aspiring for and acquiring modern luxuries and amenities and slotted away as museum pieces, or for the plains to take a hands-off approach. The rush of modernity does however need to be measured and balanced. Unfortunately, however, the exploitation has been too quick and the rootedness to the land which defines all rural populations [which most hill societies were until very recently] was snapped too suddenly in the hills. The crossover not being smooth, the communities find themselves maladjusted and this is obvious in the crumbling urban infrastructure and desolate rural scapes which define mountains at least in our country. The biodiversity of the mountains which will celebrated on 11 December is thus under extreme pressure of getting obliterated and/or becoming uniform and indistinguishable.

But all this is about more than just lifestyle changes or loss of culture and strikes much deeper, because if the mountains lose their biodiversity and balance, everyone, including the plains, will suffer.

The celebration of International Mountain Day presents an apt opportunity not only for the plainsfolk to learn about how things were in the mountains [and continue to be in some pockets], but also for the Hill People to begin the process of anchoring their responsibilities towards their environmental inheritance with more purpose.

About a decade and a half ago, the International Year of Mountains as designated by the UN was projected to "achieve a stronger engagement of actors/ institutions and the civil society in sustainable mountain development". This approach would have been best served if "sustainable" development programmes in the hills were based more on traditional arrangements of the hill people instead of the power-point presentations by resource persons speaking in generalisations which strike no resonance with the 'stakeholders' here. How can no one notice the condescension in non hunter-gatherers telling people who lived off the land in the mountains until two generations back about the biodiversity they live among?

Although mountains cover approximately one-quarter of the world's surface, it is home to barely 12% of the human population. The voice of the hill people does not thus carry very far when it comes to framing policy and establishing priorities. Thus far, they have been spoken on behalf of, sometimes by well-meaning and even informed well-wishers and sometimes by opportunistic issue-mongers. If the world body accepts that Mountain Life is worth celebrating, it is perhaps time that the mountain people were allowed direct access, a voice that is truly representative of what is at risk not only for them but also the rest of the world if the mountains, its ecological balance and its people are allowed to crumble away...



## Oxford COVID-19 vaccine: newly published results show it is safe – but questions remain over its efficacy

PAUL HUNTER  
*theconversation.com*

Full interim analysis of the safety and efficacy of the Oxford COVID-19 vaccine – developed in partnership with AstraZeneca – has been published in the Lancet. This paper represents the most comprehensive set of results from any of the phase 3 trials of COVID-19 vaccines to date.

These are still only interim results, meaning they show only how the ongoing phase 3 trial has progressed so far. The final results may differ. But what this analysis reveals is how the Oxford team calculated its vaccine's efficacy, which it announced in late November.

This interim analysis included 11,636 people, of whom 7,548 were in the UK and 4,088 in Brazil. All participants received two injections, but as has been widely reported, one of the UK groups received a half dose rather than a full dose for the initial injection. This has made analysing the effects of this vaccine more complicated than it probably will be for others in the late stages of testing.

Importantly, the evidence that the vaccine is safe is convincing. There were 175 severe adverse events reported in the trials, and these were actually more common in the control group (which received either saline or a meningococcal vaccine) than with those receiving the COVID-19 vaccine.

Three of these events were judged to be possibly related to either the experimental or control vaccine. They included a case of transverse myelitis, a rare but serious spinal inflammatory disorder, in someone in the vaccine group, a case of haemolytic anaemia in someone in the control group, and a further person who developed a fever of over 40°C. As yet we don't know whether this person received the COVID-19 vaccine or a control.

Across the study, ten patients became sufficiently ill with COVID-19 to require hospitalisation, but all were in the control arm.

### CALCULATING EFFICACY

The headline figure given for the overall efficacy of this vaccine is 70.4%. This is lower than the equivalent efficacy reported by Pfizer (94%) and

Moderna (94.1%) for their vaccines.

Both Pfizer and Moderna have based their estimates on rather bigger trials than the Oxford vaccine and so their estimates are likely to be more precise. But we still need to be able to see the full publication of their results in peer-reviewed journals before we can make valid comparisons between the efficacy and safety of the three vaccines. But a lower efficacy does run the risk of leaving a higher proportion of the vaccinated population unprotected.

But the most difficult issue with the Oxford/AstraZeneca study is that it has pooled analysis of the vaccine's efficacy from three separate trials. The UK-based arm of the trial was in effect two studies. One study used two standard-dose injections and the other a half dose followed by a standard dose. A third study in Brazil used two standard doses.

These different dosing strategies produced very different efficacy readings. Averaging efficacy across everyone involved in all three studies combined produces the 70.4% figure – but this doesn't truly reflect the efficacy of the vaccine in either dosing scenario.

Both standard-dose study arms gave similar estimated efficacies – 60.3% in the UK and 64.2% in Brazil. Combined, the efficacy of these two standard-dose trials was 62.1%. By contrast, the low-dose regimen indicated an efficacy of 90%. This finding would place the Oxford vaccine close to the reported efficacies of the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines.

But how reliable is this estimate of what is, in effect, a subgroup within the study? Breaking analysis down in this way to look at outcomes in specific groups can be appropriate in randomised controlled trials – but it increases the risk of what looks like positive findings simply being down to chance.

This sort of practice is "particularly unreliable" and "can produce spurious results", experts have noted. I would add that one needs to be even more cautious when subgroup analyses produce unexpected results – which is exactly what has happened here, as the low-dose regimen stemmed from an accident. Additional testing of the low-

dose regimen is needed.

A further issue is that the study arm that yielded the 90% estimate was only conducted with people under 55 years old and almost exclusively with people of white ethnicity. By contrast, the burden of serious disease and death from COVID-19 tends to fall on older people and those from Black and Asian ethnic groups and the priority populations for immunisation in the UK are largely over 55 years old.

Given their increased vulnerability, knowing whether older people respond well to this vaccine is important. Problematically, we know that older people often do not respond as well as younger people to vaccination. On the other hand, in another recent Lancet paper from the Oxford Vaccine Group, groups of participants aged 18-55, 56-69 and 70+ were all found to have similar levels of antibodies after receiving the standard-dose regimen, suggesting that it will be similarly effective across all ages.

But we don't know yet what the effect of the seemingly more efficacious low-dose regimen is in over-55s. So as well as needing further trials of the low-dose regimen, they also need to include older people and Black and Asian people. Only then can we be sure that it is effective across different groups.

We also do not yet know for certain how effective any of the COVID-19 vaccines will be at preventing asymptomatic infection or transmission of the virus. But the Oxford vaccine's phase 3 results do suggest that immunisation with the vaccine will generate some downward pressure on transmission.

Getting the development and testing of the Oxford vaccine this far is an incredible achievement – and the vaccine will undoubtedly become a major tool in our ability to combat the current pandemic. The vaccine is safe and effective, albeit maybe not as effective as the two other leading candidates from Pfizer and Moderna. The low-dose regimen may have an efficacy closer to these other vaccines, but we need more data to be sure.

*[the writer Professor of Medicine, University of East Anglia]*

## Anthropocene: Human-made Materials Now Weigh as Much as All Living Biomass

JAN ZALASIEWICZ & MARK WILLIAMS  
*theconversation.com*

Our deficiencies have always driven us, even among our distant ancestors, back in the last Ice Age. Having neither the speed and strength to hunt large prey, nor sharp teeth and claws to tear flesh, we improvised spears, flint knives, scrapers. Lacking a thick pelt, we took the fur of other animals. As the ice receded, we devised more means of survival and comfort – stone dwellings, ploughs, wheeled vehicles. All these inventions allowed small oases of civilisation to be wrested from a natural wilderness that seemed endless.

The idea of a natural world that dwarfed humanity and its creations long persisted, even into modern times – only to run, lately, into concerns that climate was changing, and species were dying through our actions. How could that be, with us so small, and nature so large?

Now a new study in Nature by a team of scientists from the Weizman Institute in Israel upends that perspective. Our constructions have now – indeed, spookily, just this year – attained the same mass as that of all living organisms on Earth. The human enterprise is growing fast, too, while nature keeps shrinking. The science-fiction scenario of an engineered planet is already here.

It seems a simple comparison, and yet is fiendishly difficult in practice. But this team has practice in dealing with such impossible challenges. A couple of years ago they

worked out the first part of the equation, the mass of all life on Earth – including that of all the fish in the sea, microbes in the soil, trees on land, birds in the air and much more besides. Earth's biosphere now weighs a little less than 1.2 trillion tonnes (of dry mass, not counting water), trees on land making up most of it. It was

several-fold to a little over half a trillion tonnes by the end of the century. In the past 20 years it has doubled again, to be equivalent to, this year, the mass of all living things. In coming years, the living world will be far outweighed – threefold by 2040, they say, if current trends hold.

What is this stuff that we make?



something like double that before humans started clearing forests – and it is still diminishing.

Now, the team has delved into the statistics of industrial production and mass flows of all kinds, and reconstructed the growth, from the beginning of the 20th century, of what they call "anthropogenic mass". This is all the things we build – houses, cars, roads, aeroplanes and myriad other things. The pattern they found was strikingly different. The stuff we build totted up to something like 35 billion tonnes in the year 1900, rising to be roughly double that by the middle of the 20th century. Then, that burst of prosperity after the second world war, termed the Great Acceleration, and our stuff increased

It is now of extraordinary, and exploding, diversity. The number of "technospecies" now far exceeds the estimated 9 million biological species on Earth, and counting them exceeds even the formidable calculating powers of this team. But our stuff can be broken down into ingredients, of which concrete and aggregates take a gargantuan share – about four-fifths. Then come bricks, asphalt and metals. On this scale, plastics are a minor ingredient – and yet their mass is still greater, now, than that of all animals on Earth.

It's a revealing, meticulous study, and nicely clear about what the measurements include and exclude. They do not include, for instance, the rock and earth bulldozed and landscaped as foundations for our constructions,

nor all of the waste rock generated in mining the ingredients: currently, nearly a third of a trillion tonnes of such material is shifted each year. Add in the Earth material that we use and abuse in other ways, in ploughing farmland, and letting sediment pile up behind dams, and humans have cumulatively used and discard-

ed some 30 trillion tonnes of Earth's various resources.

Whichever way that you cut the cake, the team's final point in its groundbreaking study hits home, and chimes with that of another recent analysis we both worked on. Since the mid-20th century, the Earth has been set on a new, human-driven trajectory – one that is leaving the stable conditions of the Holocene Epoch, and is entering the uncertain, and rapidly changing, new world of the Anthropocene. The weight of evidence, here, seems unarguable.

*[Jan Zalasiewicz is Professor of Palaeobiology, University of Leicester; Mark Williams is Professor of Palaeobiology, University of Leicester]*



# Assam NRC published last year not final, HC told

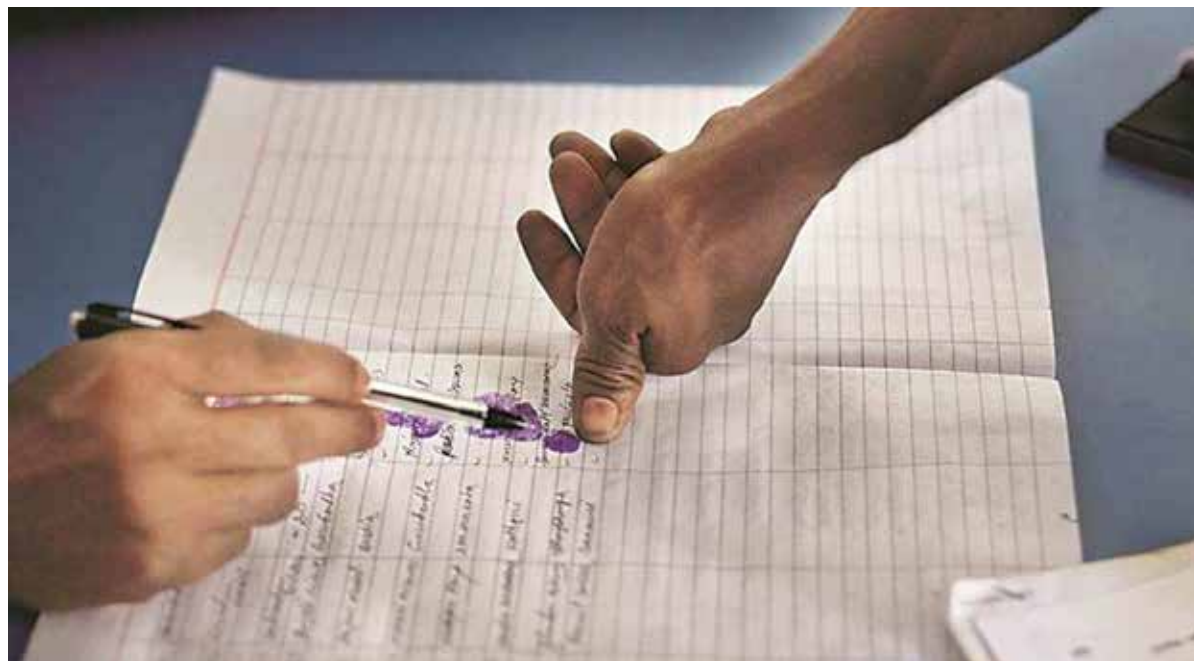
**GUWAHATI, DEC 10 (PTI):** The historic National Register of Citizens (NRC) in Assam published in August last year was only a "supplementary list" and the final document is yet to come out, state coordinator Hitesh Dev Sarma has told the Gauhati High Court.

In the "supplementary list" of the NRC, over 10,000 names were either wrongly included or excluded and necessary orders have been issued to delete nearly 4,800 "ineligible persons" from the document, Sarma said in an affidavit to the high court.

The final NRC was released on August 31, 2019 by excluding names of 19,06,657 persons. A total of 3,11,21,004 names were included out of 3,30,27,661 applicants.

The affidavit was submitted as per an order by the Gauhati High Court in relation to a writ petition by one Rahima Begam against a Nalbari district Foreigners' Tribunal order, declaring her a foreigner.

"...the Supplementary NRC was already published by the LRCPs on 31st August, 2019, but the final National Register of Citizens is yet to be published by the Registrar General of India as per Clause 7 of the Schedule of the Cit-



izenship (Registration of Citizens and Issue of National Identity Cards) Rules, 2003," it said.

Sarma further stated that after the publication of the "supplementary list" of inclusion and exclusion on August 31 last year, some of the District Registrar of Citizens Registers (DRCR) formally requested the NRC state coordinator to "change results" of NRC with "proper reasons".

"Altogether 10,199 Nos. of formal requests were received from DRCRs to change the results of NRC. Out of 10,199 persons, a total of 5,404 numbers were for changing the result from 'Reject' to 'Accept' and a total of 4,795 numbers were for changing result from 'Accept' to

'Reject'," he said. It was found that out of the total wrongfully included persons, 1,032 belonged to Declared Foreigners (DF), Doubtful Voters (DV), Persons having cases pending at Foreigners Tribunals (PFT) and their descendants (DFD, DVD, PFTD), he added. There are another 3,763 persons who were found ineligible for other reasons and they are still included in the NRC, the affidavit stated.

As per the rules of the NRC, the names of the persons belonging to the three categories cannot be included in the historical document along with their descendants.

Sarma said that instructions have been issued to all DRCRs on October 13 this year to

issue "speaking orders" for deletion of "names of ineligible persons".

"...it is found that in most of the cases, names of such persons were wrongly included due to data entry errors," he said in the affidavit.

Also, few districts reported that during the hearing, the Disposing Officers could not properly determine the status of DV, DF and PFT categories and their descendants, might be because various state agencies could not guide for correct identification.

"Moreover, the Disposing Officers were allowed to take up cases beyond their jurisdiction," the NRC state coordinator mentioned.

On the other hand, a large number of original

inhabitants were left out from the draft NRC and some of them did not even submit their claims petitions in the later stages, he added.

Sarma said the matching of 'Family Tree', which would have been a full-proof method, was not carried out with due diligence in many cases. Though the final NRC was made public last year, it has not been notified by the Registrar General of India yet. This leaves the historic and controversial document without any official validity.

After the publication of the final NRC, almost all stakeholders and political parties criticised it as a faulty document, alleging exclusion of indigenous people and inclusion of illegal migrants.

## Arunachal logs 24 new COVID-19 cases, tally 16,641

**ITANAGAR, DEC 10 (PTI):** Twenty four more people, including one Army man, tested positive for COVID-19 in Arunachal Pradesh, pushing the tally to 16,461, a senior health official said here on Thursday.

Of the 24 new cases, 15 were reported from Changlang, five from the Capital Complex region and two each from East Siang and West Kameng, State Surveillance Officer (SSO) Dr Lobsang Jampa said.

Two infections were detected through True Nat tests and the remaining 22 via rapid antigen tests, he said.

At least 17 of the newly infected people are symptomatic and have been shifted to COVID Care Centres.

Seven people were discharged from hospitals on Wednesday, tak-

ing the total number of recoveries in the state to 15,697, the official said.

The state's recovery rate has risen to 95.35 per cent.

Arunachal Pradesh currently has 709 active coronavirus cases, while 55 people have succumbed to the infection so far, the SSO said.

The positivity rate stands at 4.65 per cent and the fatality rate at 0.33 per cent, Dr Jampa said.

The Capital Complex region, comprising Itanagar, Naharlagun, Nirjuli and Banderdewa areas, has the highest number of active cases at 535, followed by West Kameng at 54, Changlang at 29 and East Siang at 17.

Over 3,66,530 samples have been examined for COVID-19 so far, including 595 on Wednesday, Dr Jampa added.

## Jharkhand reports 191 new COVID-19 cases, three more deaths



**RANCHI, DEC 10 (PTI):** Jharkhand's COVID-19 tally mounted to 1,10,830 as 191 more people tested positive for the infection, a health department official said on Thursday.

The death toll rose to 991 after three more patients succumbed to the disease, he said.

Two new fatalities were reported from Ranchi and one from Dhanbad, the official said.

Ranchi district registered the maximum number of fresh cases at 97, followed by Dhanbad at 16 and Bokaro at 14.

Jharkhand now has 1,739 active coronavirus cases, while 1,08,100 people have been cured of the disease so far, the official said.

The state has tested 17,929 samples for COVID-19 in the last 24 hours, he added.

## Ex-Bengal CM Buddhadeb's health condition improves but critical, says doctor



**KOLKATA, DEC 10 (PTI):** The health condition of former West Bengal Chief Minister Buddhadeb Bhattacharya improved a bit on Thursday morning but remained "critical", hospital sources said.

A five-member team of doctors will be reviewing his condition at around 10 am to decide on the next course of treatment, they said.

"His health condition has improved a bit. He is also maintaining a steady PCO2 level and the reading of which is at 42 this morning. This is normal for COPD patients.

"He is on ventilator support and his condition remains critical," a senior official of the hospital where he is undergoing treatment said.

Bhattacharya, 76, was put on mechanical ventilator support at the critical care unit of the private hospital where he was admitted on Wednesday afternoon as his breathing-related problems aggravated.

The veteran CPI(M) leader's oxygen saturation level is at around 90-95 per cent, and he has regained consciousness, the official said.

A senior doctor of the health facility expressed hope of putting Bhattacharjee off the ventilator if he continues responding in such a positive manner.

Bhattacharya tested negative for COVID-19 but the CT scan of his brain showed old lacunar infarcts.

The veteran CPI(M) leader was initially put on non-invasive ventilation (BIPAP) at the hospital after which his oxygen saturation improved to 95 per cent.

However, his condition deteriorated on Wednesday evening and he was put on mechanical ventilation.

A five-member team of senior doctors, including a cardiologist and a pulmonologist, was constituted to monitor his health condition.

Bhattacharya, who was the chief minister of West Bengal from 2000 to 2011, has been suffering from COPD (chronic obstructive pulmonary disease) and other old age-related ailments for quite some time. He has been away from public life for the past few years due to his health.

He had stepped down from the CPI(M)'s politburo and the central committee in 2015, and gave up membership of the state secretariat in 2018.

West Bengal Governor Jagdeep Dhankhar and Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee visited the hospital and enquired about Bhattacharya's health condition, praying for his quick recovery.

## 146 fresh coronavirus cases detected in Assam

**GUWAHATI DEC 9 (PTI):** Assam's COVID-19 tally went up to 2,14,165 on Wednesday after 146 fresh cases of infection were detected from various parts of the state, Health and Family Welfare Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said.

The death toll in-

creased to 998 with one more person succumbing to the disease from Dibrugarh district. The minister said that 178 patients recovered from COVID-19 during the day taking the total number of cured people to 2,09,622.

The number of ac-

tive patients at present is 3,542, he said adding that three patients have migrated out of the state.

Altogether 28,896 samples were tested for coronavirus on Wednesday, taking the number of such tests to 55,40,330 which includes both Rapid Antigen and RT-PCR tests.

# 1,500 turtles found in Bengal, 6 from UP held

**KOLKATA, DEC 9 (PTI):** Around 1,500 turtles of endangered species were found on Wednesday in West Bengal's North 24 Parganas district and six persons arrested, a forest official said.

All of those arrested in the joint raid by the Forest Division and the Wildlife Crime Control Bureau are from Uttar Pradesh, Chief Wildlife Warden VK Yadav said.

Acting on a tip-off, a vehicle with UP registration was intercepted

near Bongaon, he said.

In the MUV, 1,295 live Indian soft-shell turtles, 17 live peacock-mark soft-shell turtles and 188 dead soft-shell turtles were found, he said.

The six persons, travelling in the vehicle, were from different villages in the Sultanpur district of UP.

The seized turtles, protected under Schedule 1 of the Wildlife Protection Act, were hidden under a sack of onions and probably meant for

trafficking into Bangladesh through the nearby international border, Yadav told PTI.

Wildlife traffickers from UP and Madhya Pradesh are involved in the racket of illegally transporting turtles to Bangladesh, he said.

Turtle meat is considered a delicacy in West Bengal and Bangladesh.

The live turtles will be released in the waterbodies in Purbasthali by the Forest Department, Yadav said.

## Two men held for attacking PTI photojournalist

**GHAZIABAD, DEC 10 (PTI):** The Ghaziabad Police has arrested two people in connection with the attack on a Press Trust of India (PTI) photojournalist and his fianc e in the district two days ago.

Ravi Choudhary and his fianc e were on a motorcycle passing through the Ganga Canal Road in Muradnagar police station area when some miscreants in an SUV had picked up a fight with the couple on Monday.

The local police had initially refused to lodge an FIR in the case but later assured action in the matter, according to Chaudhary, whose photograph of a policeman hitting a protesting farmer with a baton recently got widespread attention.

The accused were arrested on Wednesday on a road leading from the Ganga Canal to Niwari. Those held are being sent

to jail while a search is on for the other accused in the case, Ghaziabad Senior Superintendent of Police Kalanidhi Naithani said.

Those held have been identified as Ankit (21) and Nikki Singh (22), both students and natives of Meerut district in western UP, Naithani said.

The police have also impounded the Bolero used in the incident by the accused.

The vehicle used by them was sold and purchased four or five times earlier and that is why it took the police a little time in confirming its history and tracking it down, Naithani told PTI.

The vehicle bore a sticker of 'Bharat Sarkar' and hence an additional charge of fraud had been added in the case against the accused, he added.

The FIR has been lodged under Indian Pe-

nal Code sections 147 (rioting), 323 (voluntarily causing hurt), 504 (intentional insult to provoke breach of peace), and section 420 (fraud) added, the police said.

An FIR was lodged in the case on Tuesday itself. In a swift action by the police, two accused have been arrested and the Bolero car used in the incident impounded. Further legal proceedings are underway, the Ghaziabad police said in a Tweet earlier.

According to Choudhary, the incident had taken place on a congested stretch of the Ganga Canal Road.

The Bolero's driver had stopped him from riding past his vehicle and hurled abuses at him and his fianc e. When Choudhary objected to this, the driver opened his vehicle's door wide to stop him from moving ahead.

## Haas condemn F1 driver Nikita Mazepin's 'abhorrent' Instagram video

**LONDON, 10 DEC [PA MEDIA]:** The American Formula One team Haas have said they do not condone the behaviour of Nikita Mazepin following an "abhorrent" video posted to his Instagram account.

The 21-year-old Russian, who will race for Haas next season, appeared to inappropriately touch a woman in the back seat of a car. The woman seemed to reject his action, raising her middle finger. Mazepin later removed the video.

"Haas F1 Team does not condone the behaviour of Nikita Mazepin in the video recently posted on his social media," the F1 team said in a statement. "Additionally, the very fact that the video was posted on social media is also abhorrent to Haas F1 Team. The matter is being dealt with internally and no further comment shall be made at this

time." Mazepin also issued a statement expressing his regret. He said: "I would like to apologise for my recent actions, both in terms of my own inappropriate behaviour, and the fact that it was posted on to social media.

"I am sorry for the offence I have rightly caused and to the embarrassment I have brought to Haas F1 Team. I have to hold myself to a higher standard as a Formula One driver and I acknowledge I have let myself and many people down. I promise I will learn from this."

Mazepin's father, the billionaire businessman Dmitry Mazepin, is ploughing money into the Haas team. Nikita Mazepin was only announced as an F1 driver for 2021 last week and will race alongside Mick Schumacher – the Formula Two champion and the son of the seven times world champion Michael.

**SummitTIMES**  
It's easy to relax...  
When you can trust the News.

**TO book ad-space, contact SummitTIMES at**

**GANGETOK:**  
For circulation details Contact: +91-974897695, +91-964702692  
& for advertisement booking at +91-9933427505 or at office no 03592  
208498. Mail us at [advertiser@summittimes.com](mailto:advertiser@summittimes.com)

**KOLKATA OFFICE:**  
Irshad Ali/Inteyssal Synapse, 6, Madan Street, Madine - 2, 2nd floor, Kolkata - 700072. Ph. 033-22124348/ fax: 033-22124337/ mob. +91-9830547774/ +91-Mr. Mani Rai, M/s. Space Ads, B.R. Ambedkar Building, Room No.7, 1st floor, 1821083977, E-mail: [contact.synapse@gmail.com](mailto:contact.synapse@gmail.com) or [irshad\\_ali23@rediffmail.com](mailto:irshad_ali23@rediffmail.com)

**Phone**  
03592-208498  
+91-9832556698  
+91-9832080753

**www.summittimes.com**  
[news@summittimes.com](mailto:news@summittimes.com)  
[summittimes1@gmail.com](mailto:summittimes1@gmail.com)  
[advertiser@summittimes.com](mailto:advertiser@summittimes.com)

**Address:**  
Santa Bhawan Complex, Church Road  
Near Diesel Power House (DPH)  
Gangtok, East Sikkim, 737101

**VIDEO NEWS SECTION**  
<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCm1Sg1ur1yShoo.com.in>

Sikkim SCAN | CapitalTIMES | Neighbourhood WATCH | Sports & Specials | ElseWhere | EICETERA



Australia to allow 30,000 fans per day at Boxing Day test

MELBOURNE, 10 DEC [REUTERS]: The Melbourne Cricket Ground will be permitted 30,000 fans per day during the Boxing Day test between Australia and India after authorities eased crowd restrictions on Thursday. The match was to be capped at 25,000 fans per day but Victoria sports minister Martin Pakula confirmed the increase on social media after the southern state confirmed it had notched its 41st consecutive day without a new case of COVID-19. The second test of the four-match series will be the first time fans have been allowed to attend the iconic stadium since 86,000 watched Australia win the Women's T20 World Cup final against India in March.

Mueller scores twice, US routs El Salvador 6-0 in exhibition

FORT LAUDERDALE (FLORIDA), DEC 10 (AP): Chris Mueller scored twice in his international debut, Ayo Akinola got a goal in his first game and the United States overwhelmed El Salvador 6-0 in its fourth and final exhibition of the pandemic-shortened year. Paul Arriola scored in his first start for club or country since tearing his right Achilles tendon in D.C. United's pre-season match on Feb. 15.

Brenden Aaronson, playing his second international game following his debut against Costa Rica in February, got his first goal. Before a crowd of about 2,500 in the Americans' first match before fans since the pandemic began, Bill Hamid got the shutout in his first international start since a 2-1 loss at Ireland in June 2018.

Using a line-up of players mostly from eliminated Major League Soccer teams, the U.S. had wide stretches of free space in a match played outside the FIFA calendar and without top stars. The Americans completed their fewest games in a year since playing three in 1987. A busy 2021 is ahead that includes a pair of March friendlies, the CONCACAF Nations League final four in June, the CONCACAF Gold Cup in July, the start of World Cup qualifying in September and possibly the first Olympics for the U.S. under-23 team since 2008. This match was used to expand the player pool. Right back Julian Araujo also started in his debut, and defenders Marco Farfan and Kyle Duncan debuted as second-half substitutes. Fifty-eight players have debuted since the October 2017 loss at Trinidad and Tobago that prevented the Americans from playing in the 2018 World Cup, including 42 since Gregg Berhalter became coach ahead of 2019. The U.S. line-up averaged 24 years and nine international appearances.

PSG and Basaksehir players unite against racism before Neymar hits treble

PAUL MACINNES PARIS, 10 DEC [THEGUARDIAN]: Players and officials united to take a stand against racism in the Parc des Princes on Wednesday, as the postponed Champions League fixture between Paris Saint-Germain and Istanbul Basaksehir was resolved resoundingly in favour of the French side. A Neymar hat-trick in a 5-1 romp meant PSG claimed top spot in Group H ahead of fellow qualifiers RB Leipzig. The indelible moment of the evening, however, came just before kick off when both teams took the knee and raised their fists as the Champions League anthem played. The players were joined by referee Danny Makkelie and his assistants, a new team drafted in to replace officials who are now the subject of a Uefa investigation over alleged racially insensitive remarks that led to both teams leaving the pitch and the tie being suspended on Tuesday. European football's governing body has confirmed that an ethics and disciplinary inspector has been appointed to conduct an investigation into an encounter involving fourth official Constantin Coltescu, which could see the Romanian banned for a minimum of 10 matches. The incident is said to have occurred after Coltescu recommended the sending-off of Istanbul's assistant manager Pierre Webo to the referee, Ovidiu Hategan, a fellow Romanian, in the 14th minute. Coltescu is alleged to have pointed out the former



Cameroon international to Hategan by saying: "The black one over there. Go and check who he is. The black one over there, it's not possible to act like that."

The substitute Demba Ba confronted Coltescu and asked why he described Webo with reference to his skin colour. "You never say 'this white guy', you say 'this guy'," Ba was heard to say. "So why when you mention a black guy do you have to say 'this black guy'?" Both teams abandoned the field moments afterwards. Under Article 14 of Uefa's disciplinary regulations, which apply to match officials as well as to players, any individual who "insults the hu-

man dignity of a person ... on whatever grounds, including skin colour, race, religion, ethnic origin, gender or sexual orientation" will be subject to a ban of at least 10 matches. "Webo was really, really sad," said the Basaksehir manager Okan Buruk after the 5-1 win. "We supported him, but it was not him who must have felt bad. The culprit is the person who said these words. He's the one who must be feeling bad. We showed that we were all together with Webo. We must stop this, live together. Humanity is the most important thing."

Buruk also accused the referee Hategan of failing to properly manage the situation after the alleged comments made by compatriot Coltescu. "The fourth official used an unacceptable word. The referee should have dealt with the situation properly but didn't. We had to show that we were with Webo," continued Buruk. "The players decided to stop. Some of them didn't want to come back out. We are a team and we had to stick together." Webo's red card has been suspended pending the outcome of the investigation and he joined his colleagues and competitors in entering the ground in a "No to racism" T-shirt. Banners hanging around the empty stadium also expressed the solidarity of Paris fans. "Soutien a M Webo...

fiers des joueurs... against racism," read one which translated means "we support Webo... proud of the players". The terms and length of the Uefa investigation will be determined by the investigator and have, as yet, not been confirmed. The incident itself provoked a flurry of solidarity, and some dissent, across the football world. The international players' union, Fifpro, praised the unified actions of the players. "Racial or discriminatory language has no place in our game," it said in a statement. "The actions by Istanbul Basaksehir and PSG show players will not tolerate it. Fifpro strongly supports the historic

solidarity of the teams in response to the apparent racial abuse." José Mourinho said that the match will become "quite iconic" because of the actions of the players. "For a Champions League game to stop after 15 minutes for a very sad reason, hopefully it will never happen again," he said. "As a football guy I am very sorry that the situation happened in my industry."

The Benfica manager, Jorge Jesus, provoked controversy however when he said claims of racism in football were currently "fashionable". "I don't know what happened, what was said, but nowadays all this about racism is very fashionable," Jesus said ahead of his side's Europa League tie against Standard Liège. "These days anything that is said about a black person is always a sign of racism, and the same thing about a white man is no longer a sign of racism. It's a wave that is taking over the world. Maybe there was a sign of racism, but I don't know what they said to that coach."

The president of the Romanian football federation, Razvan Burleanu, told the Romanian sports news website ProSport: "If it is proved that we are talking about racism, there will be no understanding on my part. However, we must wait for all the actual details of this incident before drawing conclusions. The intention doesn't appear to have been to insult, I think that is obvious. The Uefa report will clarify the incident and the measure of guilt for those involved."

Unbeaten Leverkusen eye Bundesliga top despite absences

BERLIN, 10 DEC [REUTERS]: Unbeaten Bayer Leverkusen have quietly crept up the Bundesliga table and a win over Hoffenheim on Sunday could see them challenge for top spot as Peter Bosz' team deals with a long list of absences. Leverkusen are only a point behind leaders Bayern Munich, who have managed just one win in their last three league games and travel on Saturday to in-form Union Berlin. With six wins from their last seven Bundesliga games, Leverkusen have enjoyed a solid start to their campaign but still have to keep plugging numerous gaps with players sidelined with injury or the coronavirus.

While top striker Lucas Alario, with seven league goals, has returned to training on Wednesday following a knee injury, playmaker Kerem Demirbay went into quarantine for COVID-19. To make matters worse central defender Sven Bender, only back from injury last week, will be out again after picking up a knee injury in training on Tuesday. Leverkusen are already without long-term injured Exequiel Palacios and Charles Aranguiz as well as Santiago Arias and Paulinho. But the team has thrived despite that as Bosz came up with effective alternatives, including centre back Aleksandar Dragovic who is playing a fine season as a starting defender in the past few weeks. "There is a mentality emerging. Since the start of the season we are one team on the pitch," Bosz said. "We do not let ourselves be discouraged by setbacks. You can see that week in week out."

This is not new for the Dutch coach who this season is without two pillars of the team, with striker Kevin Volland and midfielder Kai Havertz, having left. Leverkusen have completely absorbed those blows, and are along with VfL Wolfsburg the only unbeaten teams left in the Bundesliga after 10 matchdays. It is not winning that is important this season for them as is maintaining order and stability, with the best defence in the league so far and four clean sheets. In the past Leverkusen often played an exciting brand of football but it was consistency that was their weakness, earning the nickname 'Neverkusen' for failing to win titles after coming repeatedly very close. Bosz' team is doing its best this season to shake off that tag and give the Bundesliga heavyweights a run for their money.

Guardiola hails Aguero's scoring instincts

LONDON, 10 DEC [REUTERS]: Sergio Agüero will never lose his goalscoring instincts, Manchester City manager Pep Guardiola said on Wednesday after the striker found the net 10 minutes into his return from injury against Olympique Marseille in the Champions League. Agüero, City's record goalscorer, missed the start of the season following a knee surgery and suffered another setback against Olympiakos last month. Making only his fifth

appearance of the season, the Argentine came off the bench to poke home from close range at the Etihad Stadium, taking his Champions League goals tally to 41. "His instinct to score goals will always be there," Guardiola told reporters after City's 3-0 win. "The important thing is he made a good three or four training sessions and the reaction after the training session was good." However, Guardiola said Agüero would not

start against Manchester United on Saturday. "Step by step. What is important is how his reaction will be tomorrow (Thursday) after this effort," he added. City are also concerned about the fitness of midfielder İlkay Gündoğan for the match at Old Trafford after he was substituted at halftime. "Ilkay had a knock on his ankle," Guardiola said. "He played the last game against Fulham 90 minutes so we didn't want to take risk."

Manchester United need a structure to break the blame-and-burn cycle

JONATHAN LIEW LONDON, 10 DEC [THEGUARDIAN]: There are certain clubs that seem to be built on chagrin: where the urge to fulminate and pontificate and point the finger after a big defeat almost soothes the pain of the defeat itself. At the moment, Manchester United feel like one of those clubs. Elimination from the Champions League on Tuesday night was many things: a shame for the club's fans, a big blow to the balance sheet, an enormous missed opportunity after the opening-day win in Paris. But it was also an unmissable chance to dish out some well-deserved blame. As ever, Harry Maguire was first to partake in the ritual blood-letting. Over the past few months, it has become something of a staple to see United's captain "fronting up" to BT Sport after a defeat. And here he was again, looking fittingly contrite and remorseful, like a naughty sea cadet who had wandered into the missile room looking for his jelly babies and accidentally fired a torpedo at Taiwan. Maguire seemed keen to take his share of the blame, and in fairness he works hard on the pitch to ensure he deserves it. It was probably his responsibility to clear the cross from which Justin Kluivert scored the decisive third Leipzig goal, his responsibility to organise and marshal a defence that has conceded 27 goals in 16 games in the Premier League and Champions League. So let's blame Maguire. But then you have to answer for David de Gea, who was slow to challenge Kluivert for the ball and who has become increasingly error-prone in the past two or three years. Proactive teams demand a proactive goalkeeper, and for all his shot-stopping ability De Gea feels increasingly like a man commanding his goal but not the spaces beyond. So let's blame him too. Then, of course, you have Paul Pogba: the "troublesome" midfielder who coincidentally seemed

to cause very little trouble when he was at Juventus. But he has underperformed at United, and besides he looks casual when he runs, has a dislikable agent and cost £90m, so let's blame him too. And let's also blame Aaron Wan-Bissaka, a defender who is excellent at dealing with danger but – as Leipzig's first goal demonstrated – less good at foreseeing it. While we're at it let's also blame Mason Greenwood and Marcus Rashford for not converting their chances, Luke Shaw and Alex Telles for failing to track Amadou Haidara for the second Leipzig goal, Victor Lindelöf for being Victor Lindelöf, Nemanja Matic for being Nemanja Matic, Scott McTominay for never playing a forward pass when a sideways pass will do nicely. Strange, isn't it, how one squad seems to have chanced upon so many underperforming players. And yet as the manager, Ole Gunnar Solskjær, was eager to get across, it's "the manager's responsibility to get everyone ready", which conceding a goal after 109 seconds suggests they probably weren't. Not to mention the fact that United have gone behind in seven of their past nine matches. Of course Solskjær changed the game, just as he did as a player. He made all five of his substitutions. Once again United stormed back into contention, scoring two late goals and very nearly stealing a point – and qualification – in the dying minutes. But throwing on £130m worth of midfielders doesn't make you an alchemist. Once again his tactics were exposed, his starting XI pecked to shreds, his powers of motivation badly lacking. So let's blame him too. But who appointed Solskjær? And who continues to keep him in place? Who decides to sign Telles and then not let Brandon Williams go on loan? Who spends most of the transfer window pursuing Jadon Sancho and not signing cover at centre-half? Whose fault is

it that Marcos Rojo, Jesse Lingard, Odion Ighalo, Phil Jones, Juan Mata and Eric Bailly are all still around the place, not playing football? Whose idea was it to sign Alexis Sánchez?

Certainly not the sporting director that United seem to have spent most of the last decade browsing without ever actually hiring. And in many ways most of the above decisions are actually non-decisions, the path of least resistance, the result of bureaucratic stasis and corporate apathy, of a Glazer regime that keeps the club at arm's length and a chief executive in Ed Woodward who seems to keep reality at arm's length. In many ways the problem here is that United got too big, too rich, too successful, too quickly. By 2013 they were a global hyper-brand essentially run on the whim of one genius coach and his ticking mind. The need to build an entire structure to replace Alex Ferguson, not simply a revolving door of pricey messiahs, was urgent then and remains urgent now. Every club make mistakes. Every business makes mistakes. But a proper apparatus, a cogent identity, a few more brains in the room, some bravery and strategy, might not only have minimised United's mistakes but learned from them. It might have given their squad a leaner, more logical shape. It might have helped establish a playing style that works with more than 40% possession. It might have foreseen the dangers in appointing a souvenir DVD as the manager of one of the world's biggest clubs. It might have snapped them out of their toxic cycle of blame-and-burn. In a way, you wonder if United's fans are their last hope here. The last decade saw 110 Premier League managers leave their jobs. So far in 2020, there has been only a single departure: Nigel Pearson at Watford. Doubtless this is on many levels a good thing. And yet you wonder too whether empty stadiums are a factor.



# African health official blasts ‘terrible’ vaccine inequality

**NAIROBI, KENYA (AP):** “It will be extremely terrible to see” rich countries receiving COVID-19 vaccines while African countries go without, especially as a new surge in cases begins on the continent of 1.3 billion people, Africa’s top public health official said Thursday.

As the world watches mass vaccinations begin in Britain, Africa Centers for Disease Control and Prevention director John Nkengasong has warned that Africa might not see vaccines until after the second quarter of 2021.

Nkengasong called it a “moral issue” and urged the United Nations to summon a special session to discuss the ethical, fair distribution of vaccines to avoid “this North-South distrust in respect to vaccines, which is a common good.”

COVID-19 will not be defeated in the West alone, he said, and he took aim at “today’s dialogue of suspicion” as rich countries buy vaccines “in excess of their needs while we in Africa are still struggling with the COVAX facility,” the multinational initiative designed to deliver at



least some vaccines to less developed countries.

Africa won’t receive nearly enough vaccines from COVAX to reach the goal of vaccinating 60% of the population to achieve herd immunity, Nkengasong said, and he appealed to countries with excess doses to give them to COVAX or countries in need.

“We need to show global cooperation, global solidarity,” he said, “The time to translate those powerful words into action is now.” He

has warned that the coronavirus could become endemic in Africa if vaccinations take too long. Africa’s 54 countries now have a total of more than 2.3 million confirmed infections, including 100,000 in the past week.

“Clearly the second wave is here, no doubt,” Nkengasong said. He called this “a pivotal moment in the history of our continent” with Africa’s development in the balance. As he spoke, the World Trade Orga-

nization was meeting in Geneva on a request by South Africa and India to waive some intellectual property rules to allow for faster, easier access to COVID-19 vaccines around the world.

“But a small group of high-income countries and their trading partners have opposed it including Brazil, the European Union, Canada, the United States, Japan and the United Kingdom,” Human Rights Watch said in a statement with Amnesty International support-

ing the waiver. Rohit Malpani, a Paris-based public health consultant, said opposition to the waiver would further delay the production of vaccines.

“We have a situation where donor countries say they’re willing to provide funds to COVAX to buy vaccines but there are none available because of the (intellectual property) issue,” he said.

“It’s like inviting someone to dinner and giving them a plate but then keeping all the food.”

## Over 80 mn people forcibly displaced globally as of mid-2020, COVID further worsened crisis: UN

**UNITED NATIONS, DEC 10 (PTI):** More than 80 million people were forcibly displaced worldwide as of mid-2020, with existing and new conflicts as well as the COVID-19 pandemic dramatically affecting their lives this year, a UN report has said.

According to its report on trends in global forced displacement released on Wednesday in Geneva, The UN Refugee Agency UNHCR estimates that global forced displacement surpassed 80 million at mid-year.

At the beginning of this year it said that about 79.5 million people had been forced from their homes due to persecution, conflict, and human rights violations. This total included 45.7 million internally displaced people (IDPs), 29.6 million refugees and others forcibly displaced outside their country, and 4.2 million asylum seekers. Existing and new conflicts and the novel coronavirus have dramatically affected their lives in 2020, the UN agency said.

An estimated 30.34 million (38.43 per cent) of the 79.5 million forcibly displaced persons are children below 18 years of age (end-2019).

More than two thirds of all refugees under UNHCR’s mandate and Venezuelans displaced abroad came from just five countries - as of mid-2020- Syria (6.6 million), Venezuela (3.7 million), Afghanistan (2.7 million), South Sudan (2.3 million) and Myanmar (1 million). Turkey hosts the largest number of refugees, with 3.6 million people. Colombia is second with 1.8 million, including Venezuelans

displaced abroad.

The agency noted that for people forced to flee, COVID-19 became an additional protection and livelihoods crisis on top of the global public health emergency.

The virus has disrupted every aspect of human life and severely worsened existing challenges for the forcibly displaced and stateless, UNHCR said, adding that some of the measures to curb the spread of COVID-19 made it harder for refugees to reach safety.

At the peak of the first wave of the pandemic in April, 168 countries fully or partially closed their borders, with 90 countries making no exception for people seeking asylum. Since then, and with UNHCR’s support, 111 countries have found solutions to ensure their asylum system is fully or partially operational while ensuring necessary measures are taken to curb the spread of the virus.

The agency said despite UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres’ appeal in March for a global ceasefire while the world fights the pandemic, conflicts and persecution continued.

Violence in Syria, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Mozambique, Somalia, and Yemen drove new displacements in the first half of 2020, it said, adding that significant new displacement has also been registered across Africa’s Central Sahel region as civilians are subjected to brutal violence, including rape and executions.

With forced displacement doubling in the last decade, the international community is failing to safeguard peace, UN High Commissioner for Refugees Filippo Grandi said.

## China says 2 Canadians have been indicted, tried



**BEIJING (AP):** China’s Foreign Ministry said Thursday that two Canadians who have been held for two years in a case linked to a Huawei executive have been indicted and put on trial, but gave no details.

Former diplomat Michael Kovrig and businessman Michael Spavor have been confined since December 10, 2018, just days after Canada detained Huawei executive Meng Wanzhou, who is also the daughter of the founder of the Chinese telecommunications equipment giant.

Asked about the Canadians at a daily briefing, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Hua Chunying said the two had been “arrested, indicted and tried,” in what appeared to be the first public mention that they had been brought to court.

Chinese prosecutors had announced earlier this year that Kovrig had been charged on suspicion of spying for state secrets and intelligence, and Spavor on suspicion of spying for a foreign entity and illegally providing state secrets.

Neither China nor Canada has released specifics about their cases.

Canada detained Meng at the request of

the United States, which is seeking her extradition to face fraud charges.

Hua said her case and those of the Canadians were “different in nature,” with Meng’s being a “purely political incident.” Despite that, China has consistently linked the fate of the two Canadians to its demands that Meng be released immediately.

Canadian Foreign Minister Francois-Philippe Champagne issued a statement Wednesday marking their two years of captivity, saying: “These two Canadians are an absolute priority for our government, and we will continue to work tirelessly to secure their immediate release and to stand up for them as a government and as Canadians.”

“I am struck by the integrity and strength of character the two have shown as they endure immense hardship that would shake anyone’s faith in humanity,” Champagne said.

Meng’s arrest severely damaged relations between Canada and China, which has sentenced two other Canadians to death and suspended imports of canola from Canada.

Meng, the chief financial officer of Huawei

Technologies, is living in a luxury Vancouver home while her extradition case continues in a British Columbia court. The U.S. accuses Huawei of using a Hong Kong shell company to deceive banks and do business with Iran in violation of U.S. sanctions.

It’s not publicly known where Kovrig and Spavor are being held or under what conditions, although Canada’s ambassador to China testified to a House of Commons committee this week that they were “robust.”

Canadian diplomats had been denied all access to the two men from January to October because of coronavirus precautions cited by the Chinese side. On-site visits were banned and not even virtual visits were permitted.

Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, who has described China’s approach as coercive diplomacy, spoke last month with U.S. President-elect Joe Biden about the case of the two men and said he expects Biden to be a good partner in persuading Beijing to release them.

Canada’s Foreign Ministry did not immediately reply to an emailed request for comment on Hua’s remarks.

## Beirut silos at heart of debate about remembering port blast

**BEIRUT (AP):** Ghassan Hasrouty spent most of his life working at the silos in Beirut’s port, unloading grain shipments to feed the country even as fighting raged around him during the 1975-90 civil war.

Decades later, he perished under the same silos, their towering cement structure gutted by the force of the Aug. 4 explosion at the port, when 2,750 tons of improperly stored ammonium nitrates ignited in what became one of the largest non-nuclear explosions in history.

In a horrific instant, a burst of power ravaged Beirut. More than 200 people died and the horror and devastation scarred the survivors.

Hasrouty’s son, Elie, wants justice for his father and thinks the silos should stay as a “mark of shame” and reminder of the corruption and negligence of politicians that many Lebanese blame for the tragedy.

A government-commissioned study in the wake of the disaster says the 50-year-old silos could collapse at any moment and should be demolished, sparking an emotional debate among the city’s residents over how to preserve the memory of the tragedy.

In Lebanon, where a culture of impunity has long prevailed and where those behind violent attacks, bombings and assassinations have rarely been brought to justice, the debate is steeped in suspicion.

Sara Jaafar believes the government wants to obliterate the silos and move on as if nothing happened. “It is a reminder of what they did,” said Jaafar, an architect whose apartment overlooking the silos was destroyed in the explosion.

“I never want to lose the anger that I have,” she said.

Just days after the catastrophic blast, as public outrage mounted, Lebanese Prime Minister Hassan Diab stepped down, saying the country’s endemic corruption was “bigger than the state.”

The massive, 48-meter-high silos absorbed much of the explosion’s impact, effectively shielding the western part of the city from the blast that damaged or completely destroyed thousands of buildings.

The investigation into how such a large amount of dangerous chemicals was poorly stored for years under the nose of the port authority and the wider political leadership has dragged on. Rights groups and families are concerned it’s a tactic to protect senior officials, none of whom have so far been detained or charged with any wrongdoing.

More than four months later, rotting wheat is dripping from the shredded but still-standing silos, which stored up to 85% of Lebanon’s grain. Pigeons and rodents have found home among the wreckage.

Emmanuel Durand, a French civil engineer who volunteered for the government-commissioned team of

experts, spent several weeks using a laser scanner to gather digital data for an analysis of the silos’ structure after the explosion.

Though they may look structurally sound from afar, the silos are tilted and their foundation is broken, which has caused vertical cracks in two of them. They could collapse at any moment, Durand said, although it is impossible to calculate when.

“Silos are very strong as long as they have integrity, just like an egg,” Durand said. “Now if the shell of the egg is slightly broken, it becomes very weak and you will have no difficulty in crushing the egg.”

The army has plans to demolish the silos with equipment that crushes concrete and rebar, Durand said. Kuwait, which financed the building of the silos in the 1970s, has offered to donate to rebuild them.

Then came a proposal by Fadi Abboud, a former tourism minister and member of the largest Christian party, the Free Patriotic Movement, to turn the port and silos into a “tourist attraction,” a site that would rival the Roman ruins in Baalbek.

Families of the victims protested, called it a heartless commercialization of the site where so many died.

“In their dreams!” vowed Gilbert Karaan, whose 27-year-old fiancée, firefighter-medic Sahar Fares, died battling the fire that broke out just before the explosion. “They will not profit off the martyrs.”

Jonathan Dagher, a journalist with the independent online media platform Megaphone, said Abboud’s words were in line with comments by Gebran Bassil, the party’s leader, who said the explosion could be turned into a “big opportunity” to secure international support for Lebanon’s cash-strapped government.

“These words are not an accident” and belittle the tragedy of what happened, Dagher said.

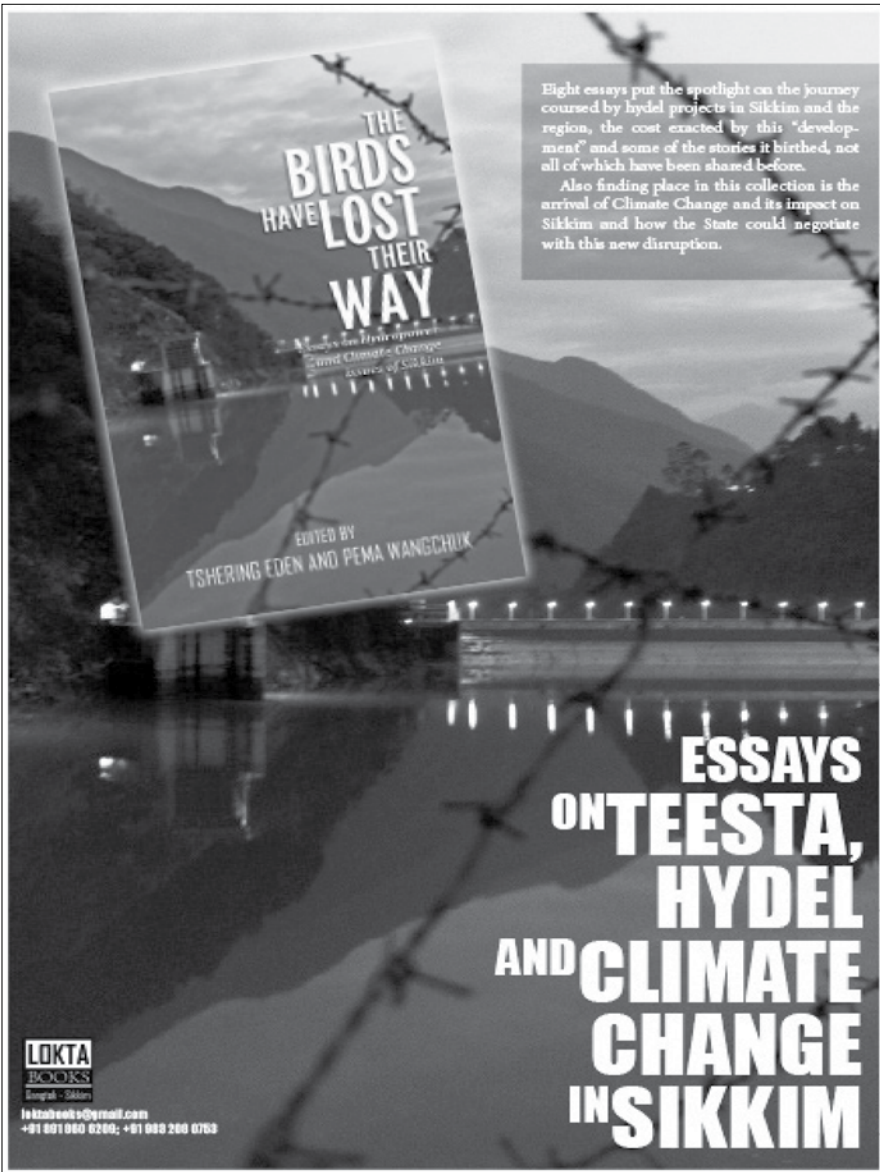
There are concerns the port blast could be treated in the same way as Lebanon’s 15-year civil war.

The war is not taught in schoolbooks. There is no memorial for the 17,000 missing from the war. A general amnesty allowed warlords and militia leaders to dominate the country’s post-war politics. After the war, downtown Beirut was quickly rebuilt, a high-end corporate hub emerging from the ruins and devastation.

Jaafar, the architect, said pushback against demolishing the silos stems from fear that a similar scenario, based on a “concept of amnesia” — if you don’t see it, it didn’t happen — is being engineered for the Aug. 4 blast.

Lebanese architect Carlos Moubarak says the gutted silos should remain in place, their sheer size forever an echo of the massive explosion.

“There is something very, very powerful about the silos,” he said. “They are now part of the people’s collective memory.”







**WELCOME TO MIAMI!** The model Chantel Jeffries and Chainsmokers DJ Drew Taggart share a kiss as they enjoy the sunshine in Miami Beach, Florida.

## Neetu Kapoor is 'grateful for all love and support' as she confirms COVID-19 diagnosis

Neetu Kapoor was shooting in Chandigarh for her upcoming film Jug Jugg Jeeyo when she was diagnosed with the coronavirus.

Actor Neetu Kapoor, in an Instagram note on Thursday, confirmed her COVID-19 diagnosis and confirmed the reports swirling about her health. Taking to her official Instagram page, Neetu said that she tested positive for coronavirus earlier this week and is currently under self-quarantine.

In her statement, Neetu said, "Earlier this week I tested positive for Covid-19. All safety measures are being followed and I am thankful to the authorities for all their help and quick response. I am in self-quarantine, taking medication on my doctor's advice and feeling better. I am so grateful for all your love and support! Please stay safe, wear a mask, keep safe distance. Take care."

For the uninformed, Neetu was shooting in Chandigarh for her upcoming film Jug Jugg Jeeyo when she was diagnosed with the coronavirus. Her co-star, Varun Dhawan, has also tested positive for the virus.

Varun shared the news of his COVID-19 diagnosis in an Instagram post and said, "So as I returned to work in the pandemic era I have contracted #covid\_19 all precautions were taken by the production but still nothing is certain in life especially not covid-19. So please be extra careful. I believe I could have been more careful. I see the get well soon messages and my spirits are high taking each day at a time. thank u." The film's other two lead actors, Anil Kapoor and Kiara Advani, had tested negative for the virus on Friday afternoon. No other person in the unit is known to have tested COVID-19 positive.

## AP's song of the year: Keedron Bryant's 'I Just Wanna Live'

**NEW YORK (AP):** The top 10 songs of the year by Associated Press Music Editor Mesfin Fekadu (a playlist of the songs can be found here ):

1. Keedron Bryant, "I Just Wanna Live": During times of turmoil and unrest, people respond differently. Some protest. Some cry. And some sing. Following the gruesome death of George Floyd, Johnnetta Bryant turned to God and asked for a pray — and the lyrics to "I Just Wanna Live" were born. She asked her son, then 12-year-old Keedron Bryant, to sing the song and the rest is for the history books. Keedron Bryant's powerful performance about being a young Black man in today's world went viral, with everyone from Barack Obama to LeBron James praising the

bound to become a country music classic.

4. Kelly Rowland, "Coffee": A smooth, sexy number from a R&B goddess.

5. Charlie Wilson featuring Smokey Robinson, "All of My Love": Uncle Charlie plus Uncle Smokey equals musical bliss. The soul icons joined forces for one of the year's best collaborations that will surely put a smile on your face.

6. Roddy Ricch, "The Box": Insert fire emoji here.

7. Dua Lipa, "Don't Start Now": With this addictive pop gem and updated dance moves, Dua Lipa is well on her way to world domination.

8. Gabby Barrett featuring Charlie Puth, "I Hope": Breakthrough country singer



future superstar and his family for their strength and positive message. The song not only helped Keedron Bryant land a record deal, it helped heal the world at a time when music is a language that unites us all.

2. Chloe x Halle, "Do It": To the window, to the walls, 'till the sweat drops down my... Chloe x Halle took us to the clubs — aka the living room — during a pandemic year when we desperately needed an epic dance tune to help us get through the day.

3. Mickey Guyton, "Black Like Me": Digging deep to write personal lyrics about her upbringing — and being that rare Black singer on the country music scene — Mickey Guyton birthed a beautiful, touching song that is

Gabby Barrett already had a hit with the original version of "I Hope," but then Charlie Puth slide into her DMs and asked to add his vocals to the song and update the beat. The result is an undeniable pop smash.

9. Pop Smoke featuring DaBaby and Lil Baby, "For the Night": Late rapper Pop Smoke clearly had a knack for hip-hop melodies, which explains why most of his songs have exploded on TikTok. "For the Night" is a monster hit that also featured other acts leading the new class of rap.

10. BLACKPINK featuring Selena Gomez, "Ice Cream": K-pop all-stars BLACKPINK came out swinging with this trap-pop bop that was as sweet and irresistible as ice cream.

## Google trends 2020: Amitabh Bachchan, Rhea Chakraborty among most searched personalities

Following US President-elect Joe Biden and Arnab Goswami, was Bollywood singer Kanika Kapoor, who made it to Google's most searched personalities this year.

Google on Wednesday released its anticipated 'Year in Search 2020' to detail the top trending searches in India and around the globe this year.

Singer Kanika Kapoor, actors Amitabh Bachchan, Rhea Chakraborty, Aniketa Lokhande and Kangana Ranaut have bagged the top spots for being some of the most searched personalities on the search engine. The results placed Kapoor on the third spot, after the US President-elect Joe Biden and journalist Arnab Goswami.

Kanika had made head-

lines for being the first Indian celebrity to contract coronavirus. She further drew flak for reportedly not following quarantine rules and hosting a grand party for her friends after her return from London. The singer was subsequently booked by the UP police for negligence and committing acts that are likely to spread the disease. The FIR was registered at Sarojini Nagar police station based on a complaint by the Lucknow chief medical officer.

Bachchanis ranked at the fifth position in the list of most searched personalities in India. The veteran actor too tested positive for coronavirus along with his son Abhishek, daughter-in-law Aishwarya and granddaughter Aaradhya.

Chakraborty is featured seventh on the list. She has been in news due to her arrest by Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) in connection with the Sushant Singh Rajput death case. The actress later said in her bail plea filed that the NCB is "deliberately" trying to invoke stringent charges against her and her family. Chakraborty spent a month in Byculia jail before she was released on bail.

Ranaut, who made her Twitter debut earlier this year, rounds out the list.

As for the movies, Dil Bechara became the top-searched film, followed by Tamil action-drama Soorarai Pottru. At number three spot was Ajay-Devgn-starrer Tanhaji followed by Vidya Balan's Shakuntala Devi.

## Olivia Jade Giannulli learning from family college 'mess-up'



**LOS ANGELES (AP):** Maybe Olivia Jade Giannulli had hoped for kid-glove treatment in choosing the family vibe of "Red Table Talk" for her first public comments about the college admissions scandal involving her famous parents.

If so, she was quickly enlightened during Tuesday's episode of the Facebook Watch series.

"What were some of the repercussions throughout this whole situation?" asked a skeptical Adrienne Banfield Norris, mom of series host Jada Pinkett Smith. "Because you're a beautiful young white woman who's been born into privilege, and there would be some people that would feel like, she'll be fine. I feel that way."

Giannulli, 21, who admitted to nerves but said she considered the show a safe and open space, denied that she was seeking sympathy. Her parents, "Full House" actor Lori Loughlin and fashion designer Mossimo Giannulli, are behind bars after pleading guilty to paying a half-million dollars to get Olivia Jade and sister Isabella, 22, into the University of Southern California as crew recruits, though neither were rowers.

"I'm not trying to victimize myself. I don't want pity. I don't deserve pity," Giannulli replied to Norris. "We messed up. I just want a second chance to be like, 'I recognize I messed up.' And for so long I wasn't able to talk about this because of the legalities behind it."

"I never got to say I'm really sorry that this happened, or I really own that this was a big mess-up on everybody's part. But I think everybody feels that way in my family right now," said the onetime social influencer, who lost deals with prominent brands and left USC in the scandal's aftermath.

"What's so important to me is ... to learn

from the mistake, not to be shamed and punished and never given a second chance," said an earnest Giannulli, dressed in a bright pink pantsuit.

She said she's trying to overcome her sheltered perspective and find a way to contribute.

"I understand that I, just based off my skin color, I already had my foot in the door and I was already ahead of everybody else. ... I can recognize that going forward. I do want to do stuff to change that and to help that," she said, adding that had worked with children in an afterschool program in the Watts section of Los Angeles recently.

Pinkett Smith, who said she had agreed to bring Giannulli on her show over her mother's objections, struck an understanding tone with her. So did Pinkett Smith's daughter, Willow, also part of the series.

Giannulli was asked about seeing both parents incarcerated.

"No matter what the situation is, you don't want to see your parents go to prison.... But also, I think it's necessary for us to move on and move forward," she said. She hasn't been in touch with either of them since they entered prison, which she said may have to do with COVID-19 quarantine restrictions.

Loughlin began serving her two-month sentence in a federal prison in California on Oct. 30, while her husband's five-month term, also in the state, began Nov. 19. Plea deals also called for fines and community service for the pair.

They were among some 30 prominent people, including actor Felicity Huffman, to plead guilty in the case federal prosecutors dubbed Operation Varsity Blues. It uncovered hefty bribes to get kids into elite colleges with rigged test scores or fake athletic credentials.

Aries:

Do you ever just look around and notice all the things that are transpiring for you, all the ways in which the Universe is conspiring so you can live the life you have always dreamed of? The miracles are endless, Aries. The support of both your earth angels and spirit team is strong. So take a moment to redirect your gaze from what isn't working out to what is, and watch how your reality shifts with you. A mantra you want to swear by: "As within, so without."

Tip: The miracles are endless.

Taurus:

The more you focus on the flaws, the more you nitpick, the more magnified they will seem. Bringing forth the energy of love, healing, and acceptance, on the other hand, will help you create a major shift in your reality. So what will you choose, Taurus? Something tells us your higher self is coming through and helping you watch your circumstances from a higher perspective.

Tip: Rise above.

Gemini:

What if there is more than one side to the given story—multiple sides, in fact? Today, you're being asked to pay attention to what your higher self is telling you, and carefully consider the other side too. Love, compassion and empathy are the virtues that will help you rise above the murkiness. Remember, it's not about winning or losing an argument. It's about bringing forth the energy of hope and healing. PS: Something tells us you're going to be the flagbearer of peace in these turbulent times.

Tip: Love, compassion and empathy are the virtues that will help you rise above the murkiness.

Cancer:

There's a part of you that's still stuck in the past—and that part of you is unwilling to let go of the memories from a time long gone. Here's something to reflect upon, Cancer: is your attachment to the past serving you, or keeping you from embracing your fullest potential? In moments of silence, you will understand how you have been sabotaging your own growth for years now. Today, even if it feels odd in the beginning, reaffirm the story in which you emerge victorious. This is the first step towards changing the dated narrative.

Tip: It's time to reaffirm the story in which you emerge victorious.

Leo:

The Universe speaks to us in mysterious ways. What if the song on the radio or the article in the paper caught your attention because it holds a potent message? Still your mind, Leo. Know that the answers you are seeking are seeking you too. Remember, your logical mind will always try to intellectualise your experiences. But not everything can be explained rationally or put into words. So, give yourself the permission to believe in magic and know that you are being looked out for, now and in every moment.

Tip: The song on the radio is onto something!

Virgo:

When it comes to painful experiences, we find it easier to bury them instead of recognising what they have to say. But do these painful memories ever go away, or do they continue to live on in the unconscious? Something to think about, dear Virgo. Today, you're being asked to confront the demons of your past with love and awareness. Remember, you are far more evolved today than you were when you had to go through them. Trust yourself to hold space for the healing process.

Tip: Face what you have buried deep within the unconscious.

Libra:

Libra, there is a reason you are attracted to the given subject. It is a vibrational match for you, and in alignment with your soul's purpose. So stop doubting what your intuition is telling you and take a deep dive into the matter. You won't regret a thing—we promise! If the cosmic cues are anything to go by, the week ahead promises to be a time of major revelations.

Tip: It's time to take a deep dive into the given subject.

Scorpio:

We're always seeking intellectual stimulation. Some kind of 'logical reason' to understand why things are unfolding in a certain way. But what's taking place right now in your reality can best be described as a happenstance. A certain something being orchestrated by the mysterious forces. So let go of the need to intellectualise your experiences and embrace the mystery that surrounds you. In the words WB Yeats, "The world is full of magic things, patiently waiting for our senses to grow sharper."

Tip: Believe in the magic that surrounds you.

Sagittarius:

Like the Scorpios, you're being asked to become cognisant of the magic that surrounds you, now and in every moment. Spirit is coming through, Sagittarius, with signs, symbols, and synchronicities from the beyond. Ultimately, it is your openness that will help you receive what's being sent towards you. So listen to your heart, Sagittarius. Trust what your intuition is telling you without trying to intellectualise all of your experiences. In the golden words of Roald Dahl, "Those who don't believe in magic will never find it."

Tip: The signs are screaming for your attention.

Capricorn:

Capricorn, the cards are urging you to keep your chin up, despite the ups and downs you are facing on the financial front right now. It's true that unpredictability is the only constant. But resisting what the Universe is pointing you towards will only add to the chaos. So, pause. Breathe. Ask yourself the questions, "What are my circumstances teaching me? Is there a soul lesson that I am avoiding in the process?" In moments of silence, you will realise you are blessed with the wisdom and resources required to start over.

Tip: You are blessed with the wisdom and resources you need.

Aquarius:

Here's the thing, Aquarius: people will always have their opinions. Opinions that come from their own perceptions and baggage. Opinions that have nothing to do with you in the first place. So, be mindful of taking things too personally or making their story your own. Spirit wants you to observe the mental prison you have found yourself in and reclaim the freedom that was always yours. What you want to remember now and for the rest of your life: you are the creator of your reality. The power to manifest the life you desire is and has always been within you.

Tip: Let 'freedom' become your power word.

Pisces:

It's a good thing, tending to the small stuff. But how much is too much? Are you getting so caught up in the minute details that you've lost perspective of the bigger picture? Spirit is urging you to zoom out of the given situation and remember the larger plan. Pisces, you have the wisdom and resources required to pull this off. Stop undermining your power or looking outside for support. Tip: Zoom out of the given situation.