



SummitTIMES

Vol 03 | Issue 128 | Gangtok | Thursday | 17 May 2018

ON TOP OF THE NEWS

RNI No. SIKENG/2016/69420

Pages 8 | ₹ 5

Sikkim commemorates 43 years of Statehood

GANGTOK, 16 MAY [IPR]: Sikkim celebrated its 43rd year of Statehood at a function held at Chintan Bhawan in Gangtok today.

As has been the continued tradition, the commemoration of the State Day saw the presentation of various awards and recognitions.

The LD Kazi Award for Democratic Movement containing a citation, shawl and Rs 1 lakh was conferred on Harka Bahadur Limboo and posthumously on the late Trilochan Dahal.

The Sikkim Sewa Samman comprising a citation, memento, shawl and Rs 1 lakh was awarded to Buddha Maya Subba [Social Worker], PR Bhutia [retired Joint Director, Pelling], Ganesh Pradhan [Ram Gauri Sangralaya, Rhenock], Pawan Awasthy [Managing Director, SIMFED/GFPF] and Nar Bahadur Pradhan [Poultry Farmer, Meli].

Sixty eight progressive and innovative farmers from all over the State received the Sikkim Krishi Samman that comprised of a shawl, memento and Rs 25,000.

Bag Bir Pradhan of Dung Dung, Khamdong received cash award of Rs 30,000 for being the longest serving Panchayat in the State.

Additionally, cash awards



ranging from Rs 1-2 lakhs were handed over to persons who got into officers rank in Government of India service. They were Pema Dorjee Bhutia, Rohan Bas-

net, Sonam Wangdi Bhutia, Raja Gyalchen Lachungpa, Puja Subba, Henuka Rai and Sangki Lama Tamang.

The Late Kashiraj Pradhan

Lifetime Journalism Award comprising a citation, memento, shawl and a cheque of Rs 5 lakhs was presented to CD Rai, Santosh Nirash, Priyadarshi Samiran Chettri and Amalendu Kundu.

Governor Shrinivas Patil and Chief Minister Pawan Chamling presided over the celebrations along with Speaker of State Legislative Assembly, KN Rai, Cabinet Ministers and Chief Secretary, AK Shrivastava.

Cabinet Ministers, MLAs, Chairpersons, functionaries of the Panchayati Raj and the Municipal Corporations were in the list of distinguished attendees at the function. Heads of various departments of the Government of Sikkim, officials and staff along with school children and the general public were also present at the State Day function.

The function started with the ceremonial lighting of lamps by the eminent guests and the welcome address which was delivered by Chief Secretary, Mr Shrivastava, who pointed out that the State Day celebration this year is of special significance as Mr Chamling has engraved his name in the chronology of the country by setting the record of being the longest serving CM in

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Next aim is to make Sikkim a model State worldwide: CM

**NITESH R PRADHAN
GANGTOK, 16 MAY:**

"EVERY WORK undertaken in Sikkim will be qualitative from now on," announced Chief Minister Pawan Chamling while addressing the State Day celebrations in the capital today.

The CM stressed that the second phase of development has started in the State, the basic minimum needs having been fulfilled in phase-1 of development here.

"Now, the aim is to make Sikkim a Model State for the country and worldwide," he stressed.

While highlighting the State's contribution to the country, he said, "Nowhere in the world can a unique history like Sikkim be found where people merged a country with another showing exemplary patriotism to the nation. We, as Sikkimese, should be proud of our Indian citizenship as we are equal contributors and partners in the process of nation-building."

He further held that Sikkim should utilise all the benefits enshrined in the State list of the Constitution.

Addressing government employees, that CM said that State has tried its best to implement

the Pay Commission. He, however, added that the government cannot give arrears at one go and it will be given phase-wise due to paucity of funds and the strain a lump-sum release would cause.

He informed that Rs 2,000 crore is spent from the State exchequer for payment of salaries to government employees. He also urged officers to be sympathetic towards pensioners and respect them for their past contributions and reach out to them for counsel.

As for the development of the State, the growth in GSDP and per capita income of the State is for all to witness and compare since the formation of his government 24 years ago, he added.

Highlighting Sikkim's mission on Sustainable Development, he said that Sikkim's revolution to raise forest cover was a message for the world to take care of the Earth.

He also announced the start of Water Security Mission and Food Security Mission in order to make the State completely secure and sustainable in these resources.

He added that he wished to make Sikkim like Cuba with regard to

infant mortality rate as Cuba has the lowest rate in the world.

He also sternly directed concerned officers and stakeholders like Panchayats to properly earnestly on issues of housing as the State has now embarked on a mission to make Sikkim kutcha-house free.

Providing infrastructure an extra push, he also informed that the State Government plans to upgrade connectivity at all four districts through roads and tunnels.

He also added that air connectivity will be a reality soon and that the State was pushing for international connectivity to Nepal, Bhutan and Bangkok from Pakyong.

In an impetus to sportspersons, the CM announced annual grants of Rs 12 lakh to A-grade sporting clubs along with 5% reservation in State government jobs to local sportspersons of national and international repute.

The CM further stated that Sikkim will be a self sufficient agricultural State within the next five years and announced that a planting festival will be undertaken in June-July which will see bigger-than-before **turn to pg03**

*How can
begging be
an offence if
govt unable to
provide food,
jobs: Delhi HC*

New Delhi, May 16 (PTI): How can begging be an offence in a country where the government is unable to provide food or jobs, the Delhi High Court today observed while hearing two PILs seeking to decriminalise begging. A bench of Acting Chief Justice Gita Mittal and Justice C Hari Shankar also observed that a person begs only out of "sheer necessity" and not by choice.

"You or we will not beg even if we are offered a crore of rupees. It is out of sheer necessity that some one puts out a hand to beg for food. How is begging an offence in a country where you (government) are not able to provide food or jobs," the court said.

The central government said there were sufficient checks and balances in the Bombay Prevention of Begging Act which criminalises begging.

The government had earlier told the court that begging should not be a crime if it was done due to poverty. It had also said that begging will not be decriminalised.

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Poklok Nandugaon BAC completes 100 stalled CMRHM/ REDRH constructions

**SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 16 MAY:**

Speaker KN Rai today inaugurated nine houses under Chief Minister's Rural Housing Mission [CMRHM] and Reconstruction of Earthquake Damaged Rural Houses [REDRH] scheme at Poklok Den-

chung, Salghari and Tinik Chispnai GPUs of Poklok Nandugaon BAC in South Sikkim, informs a press release received from the office of Block Development Officer, Poklok Nandugaon BAC.

Mr Rai, who is also the area MLA, interacted

with the local youth and urged them to engage in Agro Industry by utilising organic food products. Additionally, he congratulated the BDO and the BAC staff for completing constructions stalled since 2014 within three months since resumption.

It may be mentioned here, a total of 381 houses have been allotted for Poklok Nandugaon BAC under CMRHM and REDRH. The BAC has successfully completed 100 stalled houses. Ten more houses will be inaugurated later this month.

113 govt school students complete SAATHI training to tackle substance abuse



**SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 16 MAY:**

Sikkim Against Addiction Towards Healthy India [SAATHI] conducted its second offsite training camp for the year 2018-19 from 11 to 14 May at Indian Himalayan Centre for Adventure and Eco-Tourism [IHCAE] in Chemchey, South Sikkim which had the participation of 113 students from Government Secondary Schools of Assangthang, Sichey, Nandok and Sumin Linzey.

Over the two-daylong camp, various motivational and technical sessions on the problem of substance abuse along with learning-based fun and physical activities were conducted with the students.

A session on basics of counseling was taken by SAATHI Teacher Coordinator from Jorethang SSS, Rohan Poudyal, while Psychiatrist from Singtam District Hospital, Dr Devendra Singh, conducted a session on the medical aspects of drugs.

Likewise, a session on legal aspects of drugs was taken by Station House Officer, Ravangla Police Station, CCK Subba, with Saran Rai from SAATHI conducting a session on life skills and Counselor from Serenity Home, Gangtok, Udai C Rai, addressing social stigma and discrimination associated to substance abuse and addiction.

During the camp, newly launched SAATHI App was presented and demonstrated to the students by the SAATHI Project Team.

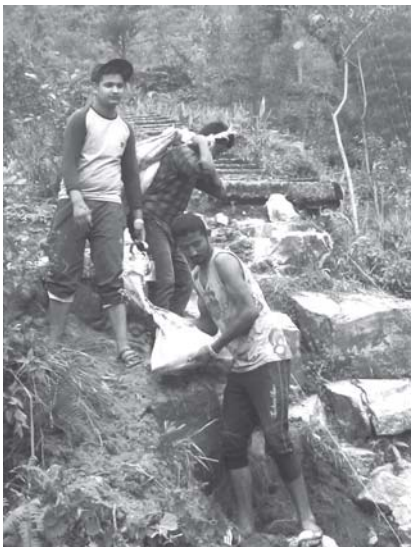
NSS unit of Luing School constructs footpath at Changrong

SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 16 MAY:

The National Service Scheme unit of Luing Senior Secondary School, East Sikkim, organised a special camp for the construction of a village footpath at Changrong in Luing from 11 to 14 May, a press release informs.

Under the guidance of Primary School Teacher of Luing SSS, Bhim P Khanal, and support of Panchayat member, Changrong, BS Dahal, and convensors of Green Valley Sangathan and Cherry Zone Club, KL Thapa and Jiwani Bhattarai, the NSS unit of the school along with volunteers from Green Valley Sangathan & Cherry Zone Club collected materials and successfully completed



the construction of the footpath for the convenience of the people of the area.

How can begging be an offence if govt unable to provide food, jobs: Delhi HC

contd from pg01

The PILs, by Harsh Mandar and Karnika Sawhney, have sought basic human and fundamental rights for beggars in the national capital, apart from decriminalising begging.

They have also sought basic amenities such as proper food and medical facilities at all beggars' homes in the city.

The petitioners have also challenged the Bombay Prevention of Begging Act.

The Centre and the AAP government had in October 2016 told the court that the Ministry of Social Justice had drafted a bill to decriminalise begging and rehabilitate beggars and homeless people. But, later the proposal to amend the legislation was dropped.

The law prescribes a penalty of more than three years of jail in case of first conviction for begging and the person can be ordered to be detained for 10 years in subsequent conviction.

Currently, there is no central law on begging and destitution and most states have adopted the Bombay Prevention of Begging Act, 1959, which criminalises begging, or have modelled their laws on it.



BJP celebrates State Day in Rongli

SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 16 MAY:

Bharatiya Janata Party's Sikkim unit celebrated the 43rd State Day at Rongli Bazaar in East Sikkim today in the pres-

ence of BJP state president, DB Chauhan.

A BJP press release informs that Mr Chauhan spoke on pertaining issues of the State and alleged that the State has not

been able to achieve the desired development so far due to regional party governments here.

He also lashed out against the SDF government

and accused it of corruption, favouritism and nepotism, adding that the ruling party has misled the Centre in organic farming and other issues.

ADG inspects progress of BRO works in East & North Sikkim, expresses satisfaction

SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 16 MAY:

Additional Director General [East] of Border Roads Organisation, Umesh Chandra Mehta, visited Sikkim from 11-15 May to review the progress of important strategic works in East and North districts.

Mr Mehta inspected critical infrastructure projects in the Eastern border and complimented the executives for their dedication and commitment to bring about rapid progress in ongoing projects despite inclement weather conditions, informs a BRO press release.

The ADG stressed upon the need to maintain highest standard of quality in construction while focusing on speed of execution and further exhorted BRO engineers, who were pioneers in hill road construction, to embrace latest machinery and technology to expedite progress.

It is informed that the ADG accompanied by Chief Engineer of Project Swastik, Harendra Kumar, also inspected the ongoing road tunnel project at Theng near Chungthang in North Sikkim and expressed sat-

isfaction over the quality and state of completion of work. The tunnel will be inaugurated very soon, the release adds.

It may be mentioned here, Theng tunnel is a bi-directional single tube double lane tunnel of 578 mt length which has been constructed by BRO at a cost of Rs 42.71 crore to obviate a very critical stretch of road on North Sikkim highway near Chungthang which was a sore point, being a perpetually landslide prone stretch, in the traffic network leading to Lachung and Lachen valleys.

The completion of tunnel will give a fillip of tourism in North Sikkim and boost economic activities due to dependable round the year connectivity.

The ADG [East] also called on the Governor on 11 May and apprised him of the status of the ongoing infrastructure projects being carried out by BRO.

To review, monitor and expedite road works in North Eastern States, Government of India, in keeping with its policy of Act East has created the office of ADGBR [East] at Guwahati in 2014 to oversee works of seven North Eastern States, the release adds.

protection of the State's natural resources and expanding the communal harmony and brotherhood, and thereby, cherish and cultivate an equitable Sikkim.

The function also featured the release of souvenir on Sikkim State Civilian Awards 2018 and the release of a book by Information & Public Relations Department titled, "Pawan Chamling- Globally Recognized Leader". A publication of Science & Technology Department named "Wetland Atlas of Sikkim" was also released during the event.

Chief Minister Pawan Chamling congratulated the recipients of the various awards and

expressed his deepest gratitude to the people for their extensive support and faith in the endeavors of the State Government.

Earlier, the Governor and the CM garlanded the statue of LD Kazi at the premises before proceeding to the main venue.

Renditions of patriotic songs by the students from West Point Senior Secondary School and Bojoghari Senior Secondary School added to the allegiance of the occasion.

Secretary, Cultural Affairs & Heritage Department, Yashoda Bhandari, presented the vote of thanks to conclude the 43rd State Day celebration.



ASGEA CEC elections within 3 months, adhoc committee announces

SAGAR CHETTRI

GANGTOK, 16 MAY:

The adhoc committee of the All Sikkim Government Employees Association [ASGEA] for group C & D has announced that the election for the central executive committee of the association will be held within three months. The present adhoc committee has been running the association since June 2016.

Addressing a press conference here today, ASGEA general secretary, SB Gurung, stated that it was the demand of the employees to hold elections for the

13-member CEC at the earliest to install a permanent committee.

On the same, he informed that the adhoc committee is presently working on conducting the CEC election within three months in a democratic and transparent manner.

Mr Gurung mentioned that it was mandatory for government employees of group C & D to have a membership with ASGEA in order to vote in the election. He informed that the new membership and renewal process is being conducted at the ASGEA office in Hospital Dara and has

appealed to government employees to contact the office for new or renewal of membership.

It is informed that the election will be conducted for the posts of chairman, vice-chairman, general secretary, joint general secretary, treasurer, assistant treasurer, publicity secretary, assistant publicity secretary, office secretary and executive members.

Adhoc committee joint general secretary, Pinky Rai, further informed that over these two years, the adhoc committee has carried out various works of

the association including renovation of the association office, fund raising and welfare measures of C & D employees.

"ASGEA is an umbrella association of 17 government employees associations of the State and has been working as a bridge between the government and C&D employees of Sikkim," she added.

The ASGEA adhoc committee has expressed gratitude to the State Government for consistently working in the interest and welfare of C&D employees of the State.

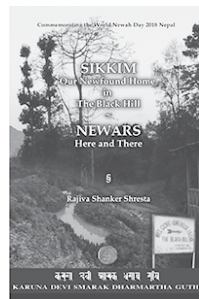
Rajiva S Shrestha releases new book on Sikkim and the Newars

SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 16 MAY:

On the occasion of the Mother's Day, and to celebrate 50 years of his first book, "Saral Jiva Vignay" [1968], Rajiva Shanker Shrestha has released another book on Sikkim and the Newars, "Sikkim - Our New-found Home in the Black Hill: Newars - Here and There", in the memory of Muma Karuna Devi at Rachna Books in Gangtok on 13 May, a press release informs.

Known for his monumental work, "Sikkim: Three Decades towards Democracy - Evolution of the Legislative System" [2005] and "The Newars World~Wide - Connecting the Dots: Sikkim" [2016], the present one is devoted to The Black Hill (Rhenock) from where the author hails



and spends in retreat.

Besides documenting the days there, the book also includes some rare photographs to make the book informative, the release adds.

Commemorating the World Newah Day 2018 Nepal, the book gives a glimpse of World Newah Organization [WNO] functionaries and the declaration made (translated by the author) to benefit all the readers.



Marwari Yuwa Manch Kalimpong holds oath-taking ceremony

SUMMIT REPORT

KALIMPONG, 16 MAY:

Marwari Yuwa Manch, Kalimpong branch, held its oath-taking ceremony at Thakurbari Shyama Devi Smriti Bhawan in Kalimpong in the presence of Paschim Bengal Sikkim Prantiya Marwari Yuwa Manch vice president, Perma waser Kejriwal, Marwari Samaj president, Mangtaram Agarwal, secretary CM Agarwal, and other members.

Vikas Golyan took the oath of president for a second term with Bikash Agarwal as secretary.

Adarsh Agarwal and Naman Agarwal have been appointed as vice presidents while Anish

Agarwal and Dhiraj Jindal took oath for the posts of treasurer and assistant treasurer respectively.

A total of 26 members have been appointed for the 2018-19 term.

Meanwhile, the Manch also felicitated four meritorious students of ICSE and ISC Boards.

Science stream students from Dr Graham's Homes School, Dipesh Agarwal [92%] and Abhay Bansal [96%], were felicitated for performing well in ISC Board exams this year while Koushal Bansal and Tanuska Agarwal were felicitated for topping ICSE Board exams.

Sikkim commemorates

the nation.

The Governor, in his address, congratulated Mr Chamling on the landmark record of becoming the longest-serving CM in the country and paid tribute to the leaders of the past and the people of the State for their sagacity in supporting a government that has always been pro-poor and pro-people.

He traced the comprehensive journey of Sikkim since 1975 and remarked with pride that the State has developed phenomenally into one of the top-notch States in the country by providing opportunities to the people and ensuring their success in every field of development.

He stated that the fruit of progress that the State is reaping today is the culmination of the sheer grit and hard work of the State Government and the unflinching faith of the people in the government.

"Today, the entire nation looks at Sikkim as a replica of innovation and progress that is cutting across all sectors," the Governor added.

He also congratulated the recipients of the various awards and recognition and wished for them to inspire and lead the State to greatness with their hard work.

In conclusion, the Governor called upon all to strive for the

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*Gangtok on
Thursday,
17 May*

Temp: 24°C / 13°C
Forecast: Clouds
and breaks of sun
with a few showers
in the afternoon.
Sunrise: 04:46 AM
Sunset: 6:18 PM

St Stephen's to begin admission process from May 21

NEW DELHI, MAY 16 (PTI): Delhi University affiliated St Stephen's College has announced that admissions to its undergraduate courses will begin on May 21.

"Applications for undergraduate admissions will be available online from May 21 onwards," said a notification issued by the college.

Being a religious minority college, St. Stephen's follows a different admission process, however, students first have to register themselves in the Delhi University admission portal along with an admission fee.

After a form number is generated, a student can apply to the college online using his/her email ID.

Later, students, who clear the cut-offs, will also have to take up a written test and an interview, unlike admission to other undergraduate colleges.

Delhi University began registration process for admissions to undergraduate courses offered by its affiliated colleges yesterday.

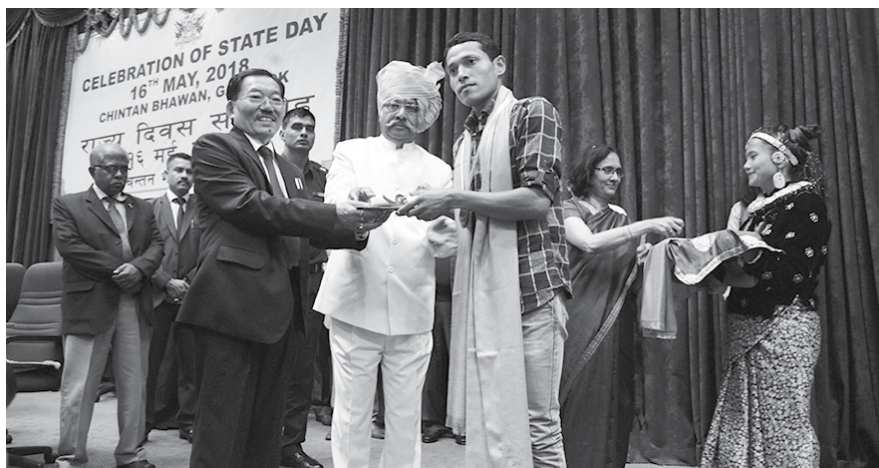
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State felicitates 16 youth and budding entrepreneurs

**YOUGAN TAMANG
GANGTOK, 16 MAY;**

To recognise the work done by young individuals and budding entrepreneurs of Sikkim, the Government of Sikkim today felicitated 16 young individuals and entrepreneurs with Letters of Appreciation during the 43rd State Day celebration function held at Chintan Bhawan in Gangtok.

The letters of appreciation were conferred on Captain Juhie Palmu Chettri [Pilot, Indigo Airlines], Sushil Kumar Tamang [Cherry Village Home Stay, Darap West Sikkim], Sonam Choden Bhutia [Taste Buds Chocolate, Gangtok], Smita Rai [Namchi Designer Candles], Devika Gurung [Fidgety Fingers, Gangtok], Bikash Rai [GBT Entertainment, Namchi], Jigme Lepcha [Milestone Vacations, North Sikkim], Priya Dahal [Self Help Group, Beautiful Earth, Namchi], Rewaj Chettri [NE Taxi, Gangtok], Dr Sujata Mukhia [Den-



tist, Dayspring Dental Clinic, Gangtok], Tenzing Dorjee Bhutia [Shuffle Momos, Gangtok], Yangchen Doma Lepcha [Beautician, Identity, Gang-

tok], and Songmit Lepcha, Thangmu Lepcha, Kanzang Lepcha & Sangken Rai of Oriens Global Marketing Pvt Ltd, Mangan.

The letters of appreciation were in recognition and acknowledgement of their entrepreneurial skills and contribution in their respective fields.

The young entrepreneurs in the State of Sikkim have not only sustained themselves independently but have also created employment opportunities for many. The felicitated individuals have created a niche and unique identity in Sikkim despite various circumstances and challenges.

One of the recipients of the felicitation, Devika Gurung, expressed happiness on receiving the letter of appreciation. She said that Sikkim's youth have huge potential and capability.

"The only thing that is needed now is the realization by our young minds," she added.

Founder, Beautiful Earth, Priya Dahal, appreciated the initiative of the State Government in recognizing the efforts of young entrepreneurs of Sikkim. She further thanked the Government for taking up all the initiative to create an entrepreneurship ecosystem in Sikkim.



Daramdin library opens to public

**SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 16 MAY:**

Ara MLA, DN Sherpa, inaugurated a public library at Daramdin Block Administrative

Centre in West Sikkim today in the presence of Block Development Officer, RH Subba, and other officials, a press release informs.

Addressing the gathering, Mr Sherpa extended gratitude towards Chief Minister Pawan Chamling for his vision in providing

every BAC and Gram Panchayat Kendra in the State with a public library.

He urged the public of Daramdin to use the

library well and develop the habit of reading.

"Reading books increases knowledge and helps us focus better," he stressed.

Special train to run between NJP and Howrah

**SMRITA KHAWAS
SILIGURI, 16 MAY:**

Northeast Frontier Railway has decided to run 12 trips of a special train between New Jalpaiguri and Howrah via Siliguri Junction-Bagdoga and back in a bid to ease the rush of passenger on the route.

The special train bearing number 03060 will leave from New Jalpaiguri every Wednesday from 23 May to 27 June [6 trips] while the special train bearing number 03059 will leave from Howrah every Tuesday from 22 May to 26 June [6 trips].

The special train will have three AC tiers, eleven sleeper classes and two general second class cum luggage coaches. It will leave from New Jal-

paiguri at 10:15 PM to reach Howrah at 11:45 AM the next day.

Likewise, the special train will leave from Howrah at 10:50 PM to arrive at New Jalpaiguri at 01:05 PM the next day. The train will stop at Siliguri Junction, Bagdoga, Naksalbari, Thakurganj, Aluabari Road, Kishanganj, Malda Town, Rampurhat, Bardhaman, and Bandel stations during its journey on both ways.

It may be mentioned here, NF Railway has been running special trains to various locations depending on demand and availability. Last year, a total of 1,387 trips of special trains were run creating more than 24 lakhs additional berths.

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Next aim is to make Sikkim a model State...

contd from pg01

icated tree plantation drives all over the State.

"One should not take things for granted. Sikkim's image will be destroyed with no economic activity if people start adhering to those trying to communalise Sikkimese society. Now we have to realise and maintain this development tempo," he further said.

He stressed that he was not interested in casteist communal issues and was only interested in development.

Adding a personal note, Mr Chamling also held that he often feels alone when meditating on issues of the people.

He further appealed to the people and all stakeholders to extend full cooperation to the second phase of Organic Mission.



NCSK Chairman applauds working condition of Safai Karm- acharis in the State

**SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 16 MAY:**

Chairman of the National Commission for Safai Karmacharis, Government of India, Manhar Valjibhai Zala, called on Governor Shrinivas Patil at Raj Bhavan this afternoon. It was a courtesy call by Mr Zala, who is on a four-daylong visit to Sikkim. He was accompanied by Principal Private Secretary to the Chairman, Mahendra Prasad, a press communiqué received from Raj Bhavan informs.

During a brief interaction, Mr Zala

praised Sikkim's natural beauty, cleanliness and the working condition and facilities provided to Safai Karmacharis. He briefly apprised the Governor on the mandate of the Commission and its concern on the welfare of Safai Karmacharis across the country.

The Governor, while giving a brief insight over the history of Sikkim, also informed him about various innovative programmes initiated by the State Government that have helped improve the living condition of common people in the State over the last few decades.

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State Day
Sikkim as a part of India

Yesterday was State Day, the day marking 43 years of Sikkim as a part of the Indian Union, time then for a quick recap of events which led to the first State Day back in 1975.

The decade of the Seventies began in Sikkim with a groundswell of aspirations for democracy and a heightened political consciousness among the people. This was not the first time that such sentiments coursed through Sikkim, and similar moments had arrived in the previous decades as well. However, like with most historic occasions, several things had to come together at the right moment for Sikkim to make history and set on course a new destiny.

The right combination of popular leaders, a supportive Delhi and a weakened palace led to the signing of the Tripartite Agreement of 08 May, 1973, with the Government of India, leader of the political parties of Sikkim and the Chogyal as signatories. Nar Bahadur Khatiwada, feted with the Sikkim Ratna on State Day some years back, was a successful youth leader of the movement for democracy in Sikkim and will be able to better explain the passion which inspired the Sikkimese at the time. He will hopefully do that some day, but for now, suffice to say that at the root of the upsurge was a general belief that the elections to the State Council in 1973 were rigged by the palace. Soon, there was anarchy on the streets, police stations even in remote Sikkim were being attacked and the Chogyal invited the Indian Political Officer to take over the administration. The Tripartite Agreement envisaged the Chogyal as a constitutional head, and set things up for the establishment of democracy, rule of law, fundamental rights, independent judiciary and universal adult franchise. As much as this set in place the parity formula for the first Assembly, a system which did not survive when the next election came along, adult suffrage was also a major victory for the subjects, and when the Sikkimese were given their first chance to vote in a democratic environment [in April 1974], the voters gravitated towards the person they saw as the leader of democratic movement in Sikkim – Lhendup Dorji Kazi, whose Sikkim Congress cornered 31 of the 32 Assembly seats.

The Tripartite Agreement, however, did not hold for long. Its provisions were being ignored and side-stepped within a year, or so the elected representatives believed. On 10 April, 1975, the Sikkim Assembly met for an emergency session and agreed that the Chogyal was violating the provisions of the Agreement and abolished the institution of the Chogyal and resolved to become a constituent unit of India. The Statement of Objects and Reasons appended to the 38th Amendment Bill of 1975 [which subsequently became Article 371F of the Constitution] records that the Sikkim Assembly, on 10 April, 1975, “...inter alia, noted the persistent harmful activities of the Chogyal which aimed at undermining the responsible democratic Government set up...” The Assembly then submitted its Resolution to the people for approval.

What Sikkim today calls the “Referendum” is referred to as “a special opinion poll” conducted by the Government of Sikkim. This “Opinion Poll” was held within four days of the Assembly’s resolution and 61,133 of Sikkim’s approximately 97,000 voters shared their opinion – 59,637 in favour of the Resolution and 1,496 against it and this high turnout and the presence of Indian paramilitary forces in Sikkim continue to feed speculations about the veracity of this “opinion poll”. Be that as it may, the verdict of the people was communicated to India on 15 April and the then Chief Minister and his Council of Ministers were in Delhi the very next day. On 19 April, the amendment to the Constitution was moved and Sikkim became a full-fledged State of India on 16 May, 1975.

With the passage of the Act, Sikkim became the 22nd state of the Indian Union, the institution of the Chogyal was formally abolished and provisions of the Indo-Sikkim Treaty, Tripartite Agreement and the Government of India Act, 1974 were made inoperative. Sikkim’s identity within India was to be decided by provisions of Article 371F.

Article 371F is a powerful tool providing Sikkim with its special status within the Indian Union. Unfortunately, it has also become just convenient dodge to rake up the past. The Act was inserted into the Constitution to guide Sikkim’s future, not nail it down to the past. One reason why it is not taken as seriously as it should is because Sikkim has been unable to remind Delhi what the Act is all about. Delhi, of course, with larger states to keep happy, rarely does its homework and bulldozes all over Sikkim. What people need to appreciate is that Article 371F has none of the incongruities of Article 370 and boasts near watertight provisions which allow Sikkim to remain unique while also wholly a part of India. It is a progressive Act and that is how it should be used, not as a political slogan to confuse people or to whip up nostalgia for an imagined utopia.

NATASHA EZROW
theconversation.com

All around the world, democracy is looking shaky. While consolidated democracies are struggling to stay healthy, many flawed ones have turned into outright authoritarian regimes – most notably Russia under Vladimir Putin and Turkey under Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. But the news isn’t all bad: on several continents over the last decade, longstanding dictators have resigned, lost elections, or been deposed.

As the table below indicates, the number of dictators who’ve fallen in recent years for all sorts of reasons is a cause for optimism.

But has their demise led to any kind of democratic reform? It’s a mixed picture to say the least. While a handful of promising cases deserve praise, only a few of the dictatorships that have fallen in recent years have given way to lasting, stable democracies.

The 2010s began with tremendous optimism for the future of global democracy, reaching an apogee with the Arab Spring protests in 2011. Across the Middle East and North Africa, several dictators fell in a row: after Tunisia’s Zine El Abidine Ben Ali of Tunisia and Egypt’s Hosni Mubarak, Muammar Gaddafi of Libya was toppled in a civil war. Fighting also erupted in Yemen, leading to the eventual flight of longtime strongman Ali Abdullah Saleh.

It seemed for a moment that in one fell swoop, a clutch of countries were suddenly shaking off authoritarianism at last. But with the exception of Tunisia – whose situation is still somewhat fragile – none of them have developed into democracies.

Egypt’s brief spell under the elected Muslim Brotherhood came to an end in 2013, when a military intervention brought General Abdel Fattah al-Sisi to power. He remains president today, legitimised by largely meaningless elections. Libya is still a weak state beset by instability and violence; Yemen has slipped into devastating conflict and humanitarian crisis. Though protests exploded throughout the Middle East, only modest reforms took place elsewhere. And in Syria, the Assad regime’s crackdown on the 2011 protests helped spark a nightmarish conflict that has torn the country apart.

Iraq and Afghanistan, meanwhile, saw a change in leadership with the elections that forced Nouri al-Maliki and Hamid Karzai out of power. But neither country’s democracy has notably improved. Afghanistan is still authoritarian and unstable, and in Iraq, Maliki is still very powerful behind the scenes.

MIXED BAG

Latin America was home to a clutter of military dictatorships for decades, but since the mid-to-late 1980s, most of its countries have been flawed but functioning democracies.

The two notable holdouts were Venezuela under Hugo Chávez and Cuba under Fidel Castro – and in the last decade, the two have diverged considerably. While Cuba has reformed a little under the rule of Fidel’s brother Raúl, who has now handed over to Miguel Díaz-Canel, Venezuela is falling apart under the dictatorial leadership of Chavez’s hand-picked successor, Nicolás Maduro. Other regimes in Latin America continue to hold free and fair elections, but struggle to uphold the rule of law.

AGNES ANDERSSON DJURFELDT
theconversation.com

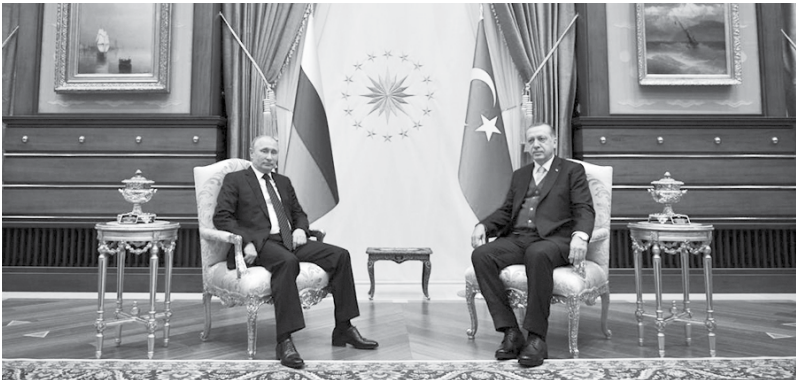
In the agricultural sector – the major employer for poor people in Africa – assets like land and livestock are owned and controlled mainly by men.

It makes sense, then, that many donors, national governments and civil society groups believe rebalancing asset and land ownership in favour of women will greatly empower women. The argument is that increasing women’s access, control and ownership of land will lead to stronger bargaining power and higher incomes. It is also posited as a way to strengthen women’s “voice” within households and communities.

But the reality in communities is very different. Our recent book, Agriculture, Diversification and Gender in Rural Africa, drew on a unique, longitudinal data set covering around 2000 households in 15 regions in six countries: Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique, Tanzania and Zambia. This data, coupled with more detailed qualitative research carried out in three villages in Malawi, highlights the limitations of approaches that rely on gender based redistribution of land from men to women.

We found that even when women own land, their husbands are still perceived as household heads. As such,

Are dictators on the way out – or on the way up?



DICTATOR/LEADER	COUNTRY	YEARS IN POWER	REASON FOR DOWNFALL
Joko Widodo	Guinea-Bissau	1988-1999/2005-2009	Military coup/execution
Zine El Abidine Ben Ali	Tunisia	1987-2011	Revolution
Hosni Mubarak	Egypt	1981-2011	Revolution
Laurent Gbagbo	Côte d'Ivoire	2000-2011	Arrest
Muammar Gaddafi	Libya	1969-2011	Revolution
Ali Abdullah Saleh	Yemen	1978/90-2012	Revolution
Melkior Zedeno	Ethiopia	1995-2012	Death
Hugo Chávez	Venezuela	1999/2002-2013	Death
François Bozizé	Central African Republic	2003-2013	Civil war
Nouri al Maliki	Iraq	2003-2014	Elections
Hamid Karzai	Afghanistan	2001-2014	Elections
Blaise Compaoré	Burkina Faso	1987-2014	Unsung/ resignation
Thein Sein	Myanmar	2011-2016	Elections
Fidel Castro	Cuba	1961-2011/2016	Elections/ Death
Yahya Jammeh	The Gambia	1994-2017	Elections/ eventual resignation
José Eduardo dos Santos	Angola	1979-2017	Resigned, but still holds power
Robert Mugabe	Zimbabwe	1987-2017	Coup, resignation
Almazbek Atambayev	Kyrgyzstan	2011-2017	Elections
Serzh Sargsyan	Armenia	2008-2018	Protests/resignation

In Asia, meanwhile, a few less-than-democratic countries have made strides towards reform, but most authoritarian regimes have stayed the same. Still, some reforms and resignations are noteworthy. In the Caucasus, Armenia’s Serzh Sargsyan was recently forced to resign after mass protests against his rule. Almazbek Atambayev of Kyrgyzstan also stepped down after elections, the first peaceful handover of power in the country’s history.

In South-East Asia, most of the attention since 2015 has been on surprising events in Myanmar, when the military regime that ran the country for decades allowed open elections for the first time since 1990. Myanmar’s military government was oppressive even by authoritarian standards, so it was quite something to see it holding elections, releasing political prisoners and allowing more press freedom. The regime’s leader, Thein Sein, stepped down to make way for Aung San Suu Kyi’s National League for Democracy.

But the democratic transformation was short-lived. The regime has continued to violate the human rights of its minority groups, most notably the Rohingya minority, and civil liberties and press freedoms are in serious jeopardy.

TURFED OUT

One place where things are looking up for democracy is Sub-Saharan Africa. The last decade has seen the overall standing of democracy in Africa improve. In the early 1980s, only five countries in Africa could be considered democratic: Botswana, Gambia, Mauritius, Senegal and Zimbabwe. The end of the Cold War saw the expansion of elections and civil liberties. But more recent years have seen the fall or peaceful resignation of important authoritarian figures, many of them old men who had

clung on to power for decades.

Yahya Jammeh of the Gambia eventually fled the country in 2017 after he lost the presidential elections to the opposition. Blaise Compaoré of Burkina Faso resigned after political protests broke out in 2014, following nearly three decades in power. José Eduardo dos Santos of Angola resigned after nearly 40 years in power (though he remains influential in Angolan politics). All three countries have become slightly more democratic

as a result.

But the biggest tree felled in Africa was undoubtedly Zimbabwe’s Robert Mugabe. In his capacity as president since 1980, Mugabe had become increasingly dictatorial and brutal, and his misguided leadership plunged the country into chaos. When he unceremoniously fired his vice-president Emmerson Mnangagwa at the end of 2017, his previous backers in the military decided they had finally had enough. With parliamentary impeachment hearings in the offing, Mugabe eventually resigned, and new elections are scheduled for July 2018.

The bloodless Zimbabwean transition was a heartening spectacle, but there are nonetheless plenty of other countries to worry about. Hungary’s Viktor Orbán is threatening to constrict his country’s democracy by clamping down on civil liberties, even as he wins landslide election victories. China’s Xi Jinping recently orchestrated the removal of term limits, giving him power to rule indefinitely. Thailand’s military is heading the most repressive government the country has seen in years. Still, while many countries have taken an authoritarian turn, others have made a success of their escape from dictatorship.

As recent events in Armenia attest, citizens the world over are becoming more involved in politics and taking their displeasure to the streets. And while it’s true that most dictators who fall are replaced by another dictator, there are enough examples to the contrary to give the defenders of democracy some hope.

[the writer is Senior Lecturer, University of Essex]

Why merely owning land isn’t enough to empower Africa’s women farmers

AGNES ANDERSSON DJURFELDT
theconversation.com

In the agricultural sector – the major employer for poor people in Africa – assets like land and livestock are owned and controlled mainly by men.

It makes sense, then, that many donors, national governments and civil society groups believe rebalancing asset and land ownership in favour of women will greatly empower women. The argument is that increasing women’s access, control and ownership of land will lead to stronger bargaining power and higher incomes. It is also posited as a way to strengthen women’s “voice” within households and communities.

But the reality in communities is very different. Our recent book, Agriculture, Diversification and Gender in Rural Africa, drew on a unique, longitudinal data set covering around 2000 households in 15 regions in six countries: Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique, Tanzania and Zambia. This data, coupled with more detailed qualitative research carried out in three villages in Malawi, highlights the limitations of approaches that rely on gender based redistribution of land from men to women.

We found that even when women own land, their husbands are still perceived as household heads. As such,

men have better access to public resources such as subsidised fertilisers and agricultural advisory services.

The findings suggest that genuinely empowering women and girls within agriculture requires interventions that go beyond the issue of land redistribution. Instead, policymakers and development agencies should adopt a multifaceted approach that includes aspects beyond agriculture. These include issues of sexual and reproductive rights, for instance, and freeing women from the heavy and time consuming drudgery of domestic work in poor, rural settings.

OWNERSHIP AND DEMANDS ON WOMEN’S TIME

Female landholders have less land than men in five of the six countries we studied. This means they have lower access to one of the most important resources in rural Africa.

The quantitative data we collected confirms the existence of gender based gaps in farm sizes – female landholders have smaller farms in all countries except Kenya. And the gaps have grown in most of the regions since 2002, when the study started. In countries where average farm sizes have increased – Ghana, Zambia and Tanzania – men have tended to benefit more from this growth than women.

In parts of Malawi and Zambia matrilineal systems mean that women control and inherit land. But this hasn’t made a real difference to women’s lives. This is because of their other responsibilities, as well as societal bias and pressures.

Then there’s the issue of the responsibilities that women bear which interfere with their ability to focus on the business of farming. Through qualitative interviews in the three Malawian communities, we discovered that there are many demands on women’s time and labour outside agriculture. Women are expected to care for ill relatives, especially children and infants. Other demands are the need to collect firewood and water.

A woman cannot juggle these demands with participating fully in agricultural production, even if she is the owner of the land. Gender norms around the division of labour enable men to avoid time consuming domestic work.

Women’s relative lack of empowerment is also related to their limited mobility, which makes it harder for them to reach markets. Women are fettered by their domestic responsibilities, controlling husbands and by the potential dangers of moving around on their own, especially at

night. This means that women don’t have the actual power to control the income from products sold in agricultural markets.

Men’s relative superiority within the household and local communities is compounded by government policies that strengthen the male household head norm. For instance, governments divert substantial public resources into subsidisation programmes that favour household heads.

These programmes also withdraw resources earmarked for agricultural extension services for women. This means that areas that lose funding are those that would empower women – not in terms of land ownership, but in terms of support.

SUSTAINABLE SOLUTIONS

These findings suggest that empowering women farmers requires more than just ensuring they own land and assets. Women need support to deal with the many demands on their time. For example, addressing poor health among children might free up more time for women farmers who are also mothers. Improving women’s ability to get around easily is also important.

[the writer is Professor of Human Geography, Lund University]

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Post-poll alliances were preferred by Gov in Goa, Manipur

NEW DELHI, MAY 16 (PTI): Like the Karnataka election, a number of assembly polls in the last few years threw up a fractured mandate and the BJP invariably emerged as the party which either leading an alliance or being a junior partner- was given the first opportunity by respective governors to form government.

In states like Goa, Manipur and Meghalaya, the Congress won the largest number of seats and also staked claim before the respective governor to form government but the BJP managed to secure a majority there with post-poll alliances and their leaders were sworn in as chief ministers.

The Congress has cited these precedents to claim that the Karnataka governor should invite it and its post-poll ally JD(S) to form the government and not the BJP, the single largest party, as their alliance enjoys the support of the majority of MLAs.

BJP president Amit Shah had asserted yesterday that the mandate in Karnataka is in his party's favour and against the Congress as the latter's tally was reduced from 122 to 78 with outgoing Chief Minister Siddaramaiah losing from his traditional

seat and scraping through from the second seat he had contested. Over 16 ministers also lost.

The BJP, which has won 104 of the 222 assembly seats where elections were held, has also staked claim. On paper, the Congress-JD(S) combine has the support of 116 MLAs with 112 being the majority mark.

In the Manipur poll held last year, the Congress had

won 28 seats in the 60-member House and the BJP 21. The BJP joined hands with regional parties to claim support of majority of MLAs and Governor Najma Heptulla invited it to form the government, ignoring the claim of the Congress.

The Goa election, which was held along with Manipur's, also threw up a hung assembly with the Congress winning 17 of the to-

tal 40 seats while the BJP bagged 13. Here again the saffron party beat its rival in cobbling up a majority with post-poll allies and its leader Manohar Parrikar was sworn in by Governor Mridula Sinha as the chief minister.

In the Meghalaya polls held in February this year, the Congress emerged as the largest party by winning 21 of the 59 seats where elec-

tion was held. Its regional rival National People's Party won 19 while the BJP got two seats. Both joined hands and won over other regional parties and independents to secure a majority.

The Congress also staked claim before Governor Ganga Prasad to form government but he invited the BJP alliance led by Conrad Sangma after they met him and claimed a majority.

10 persons rescued from suspected couriers, 2 held

RANGIA (ASSAM), MAY 16 (PTI): Five minor boys and five men, allegedly being trafficked, have been rescued from the clutches of two suspected couriers at Rangia railway station, a RPF official said.

The two men accompanying them have been apprehended, the Railway Protection Force official said.

The minors were to board a train for New Jalpaiguri from where they would have been taken to Nepal while the five others, in their early 20's, were being sent to Ludhiana, the RPF official said.

Acting on a tip-off, the RPF personnel rescued them from a platform of the Rangia railway station yesterday when they were about to be taken outside the state by the two suspected couriers, RPF officer-in-charge Asoke Das said.

The 10 persons, who were allegedly being trafficked were in two groups, Das said.

Das said the minors hail from Bamunigaon village under Chhaygaon police station limits in Kamrup district while the five men were residents of Biswanath Chariali village in Sonitpur district.

The two suspected couriers, identified as Rajib Madahi and Hemanta Madahi of Bishnupur Dhanbil village in Baksa district, were apprehended by the RPF.

Duplicate copies of Aadhaar Card, driving license, PAN card, ATM card, two mobile handsets, a SIM card of Nepal, besides railway tickets were recovered from their possession.

Both the men claimed during interrogation that a man from Chhaygaon had handed over the minor boys to them to be supplied to another person of Jaiyabari village in Nalbari district, who resides in Nepal now, in lieu of commission, Das said.

After interrogating them, the RPF handed over the 10 persons and the suspected couriers to the police, he added.



Cargo plane crashes in Nepal, killing two pilots

KATHMANDU, MAY 16 (PTI): A small cargo plane today crashed in Nepal, killing both pilots onboard the aircraft, according to a media report.

Deputy Director General at Civil Aviation Authority of Nepal, Rajan Pokharel said the Makalu Air cargo aircraft crashed

at Simikot Pass in Bahun Kharka, Humla, Kathmandu Post reported.

The plane was flying at a height of 12,800 feet. The single-engine Cessna 208B Grand Caravan with call sign 9N-AJU had taken off from Surkhet to Humla district headquarters Simikot. It took

off from Surkhet Airport at 6:12 am this morning and was scheduled to land at 6:55 am in Simikot, the report said.

Makalu Air has three single-engine Cessna 208B Grand Caravan aircrafts to its fleet. Based in Nepalgunj, Makalu Air provides chartered passenger and

cargo services, it said.

The freight transporter aircraft was discovered wrecked and fragmented into three parts in Ekalbajkharka at around 11:00 am. The plane was mostly used for flying food and other supplies in the mountainous region.

Allow CSR in chief minister's relief funds, Bengal CM writes to PM

KOLKATA, MAY 16 (PTI): West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee has written a letter to Prime Minister Narendra Modi urging him to consider the contribution of business houses to the chief minister's relief funds (CMRF) as money spent on corporate social responsibility (CSR) activities.

The letter, a copy of which is with PTI, pointed out "one major infirmity in the present CSR framework as provided in the Companies Act 2013", concerning the interest of the states.

While contributions to the Prime Minister's National Relief Fund (PMNRF) was mentioned as an eligible activity under the CSR in the 2013 Act, the same made to the CMRF was not considered as an activity "eligible for contribution under the CSR", she wrote in the letter.

"It will indeed be praiseworthy if contribution to CMRF in the states is also made an eligible activity under CSR. The little contribution would be very helpful to all



the states to extend the much-desired assistance and relief to people in need," the letter read.

Stating that the CMRF is always under financial constraints because of limited donations from the companies, Banerjee has written that if the proposal is accepted by the Centre, the "contributions" will also enable the donors to claim tax breaks.

"You may be aware that West Bengal, like other states of the country, has an established CMRF, similar to the PMNRF.

We have been using the fund to provide medical, education and other kinds of relief to the most needy and distressed people in their times of

grave financial crisis.

However due to paucity of funds, "we are not being able to fulfill all the requests made for support," her letter read.

The current regime of the CSR in the country was introduced with the notification of Section 135 of the Companies Act 2013 and the CSR Policy Rules, 2014.

It mandates that from April 1, 2014 every company, private limited or public limited, which either has a net worth of Rs 500 crore or a turnover of Rs 1,000 crore or net profit of Rs 5 crore, has to spend at least 2 percent of its average net profit for the immediately preceding three financial years on corporate social responsibility activities.

Rotten meat will raise awareness of risk of animal food: FIAPO

KOLKATA, MAY 16 (PTI): The Federation of Indian Animal Protection Organisations (FIAPO) today said the carcass meat recovery from dumping grounds in West Bengal would hopefully raise awareness on the health risks of consuming animal products.

"With the extraordinary increase in lifestyle diseases, from kidney disease to heart disease, may be it is time we re-look at our diet...to move towards a greener diet over one including animal products," FIAPO director Varda Mehrotra said in a statement here.

Stating that it has information that meat consumption in the city is going down, Mehrotra said that many people were avoiding it after reports that meat was coming from dead animals of dumping grounds.

"Meat being sourced from rotten

bodies of cats, dogs and even diseased animals in unhygienic conditions is not uncommon. Animals bred for the purpose of meat are routinely given anti-biotics, growth hormones and other drugs and their meat may contain these drugs with many viruses and bacteria.

"Hopefully this situation can bring awareness... the FIAPO director said.

He said many people could not make the difference between the meat of carcass of dumping grounds and slaughtered animals as they were used to consume the final product with little or no consideration to where it was sourced.

Mehrotra said research showed that multiple lifestyle diseases were routinely caused or heightened by consumption of meat, milk and eggs.



GOVERNMENT OF SIKKIM

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R.O. No. 84/ipr/pub/classi/18-19 dt. 15.5.2018

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New book examines the tale of Mahabharata through the eyes of key players

NEW DELHI, MAY 16 (PTI): The story of Mahabharata, the 18-day-long epic battle fought between the Pandavas and the Kauravas, has been told and retold many a time.

Now, a new book re-examines the tale of loss and redemption through the viewpoints of key players such as Karna, Yudhishtira, Arjuna, Ghatotkacha and Dushasana, the younger brother of Kaurav prince Duryodhana.

Aditya Iyengar's "A Broken Sun" is a sequel to his "The Thirteenth Day", which chronicled the battle from day 10 to day 13, ending with the death of Arjuna's son Abhimanyu in the 'Chakravyuha'.

"A Broken Sun" continues the story in the bloody aftermath when the warring cousins look to avenge their loss.

"I had originally wanted to write the novel from Abhimanyu's point of view. Over the course of writing it, I realised there were other equally interesting stories to be told, and got greedy, so I included multiple narratives in the same novel," Iyengar told PTI in an interview.

Namchi & Central Pendam boys advance to LD Kazi Gold Cup finals

REBYNA RANA GANGTOK, 16 MAY; The second semifinal match of the U-17 Boys LD Kazi Memorial Gold Cup Inter-School Football Tournament was played between Namchi Senior Secondary School [South] and Modern Senior Secondary School [East] at Chakung ground in West Sikkim today.

Namchi SSS defeated Modern SSS 5-3 via penalty shootout tie-breaker after the regulation time ended in a 1-1 draw.

Namchi SSS will take on Central Pendam SSS in the final match of the tourney scheduled to be held on 18 May at Chakung.



RCB aim to continue revival take on table-toppers SRH

BENGALURU, MAY 16 (PTI): Their chances of making the playoffs still hanging by a thread, Royal Challengers Bangalore will take on table-toppers Sunrisers Hyderabad in another must-win Indian Premier League encounter, here tomorrow.

The consecutive victories over Delhi Daredevils and Kings XI Punjab have revived RCB's hopes, while SRH has been on a roll, having won nine matches out of 12.

RCB are still languishing at the second last position on the table, while SRH are on top of the table with 18 points.

Virat Kohli's RCB has endured a tough season, having lost seven of its



12 matches so far but the recent turnaround has rekindled hopes of a possible shot at the playoffs berth provided some other results go the team's way.

The hosts are overtly dependant on Kohli and South African swash-

buckler A B De Villiers.

The two have combined to score nearly half of RCB's total runs this season but the side needs bigger contributions from the likes of Moeen Ali and Corey Anderson.

In peerless form, Kohli has been a stand-

out performer with 514 runs from 12 games. De Villiers (358 runs) is next to him, although he has played two games less than the Indian.

On the bowling front pacer Umesh Yadav has delivered for the team, taking 17 wickets so far.

SRH, on the other hand, depend quite a lot on opener Shikhar Dhawan (369 runs) and skipper Kane Williamson (544 runs) for inspiration.

Williamson has been an astute leader, who would look to consolidate the team's top spot and ensure a top-two finish at the end of the league stage.

Apart from Dhawan and Williamson, Yusuf

Pathan (186), Manish Pandey (189) and Shakib-Al-Hasan (166) have also chipped in at crunch situations for SRH.

But what has been truly outstanding for SRH is their diverse bowling attack. The bowlers, led by India pacer Bhuvneshwar Kumar (8), have been terrific.

Bhuvneshwar has been backed up superbly by Siddharth Kaul (13 wickets), Sandeep Sharma (8), leg-spinner Rashid Khan (13) and Shakib-Al-Hasan (12).

Given their consistent run, SRH would be expected to pull it off tomorrow but RCB, having rediscovered some form, might just spring a surprise



Maradona joins Belarus's Brest as chairman

MINSK, MAY 16 (AFP): Diego Maradona has signed a three-year contract to join top-flight Belarusian club Dinamo Brest as chairman, the club said.

Argentine legend Maradona, a former World Cup winner recognised as one of the all-time greats, last month stepped down as coach of United Arab Emirates second division club Al-Fujairah.

"Yes, Diego's with us!" the club wrote on its official Twitter account

late Tuesday, following media rumours over the weekend.

Maradona, one of football's most divisive figures off the field, will oversee the "strategic development" of the club when he takes over following the June14-July 15 World Cup in Russia, according to a tweet.

Dinamo, based in the south-west of Belarus, are currently in eighth position in the country's Premier league.



Saudis suspend World Cup referee over bribery

RIYADH, MAY 16 (AFP): The Saudi Football Federation have banned referee Fahad al-Mirdasi for life over bribery and urged FIFA to remove him from the pool of referees for the 2018 World Cup in Russia.

Mirdasi was suspended for offering to take a bribe to influence the outcome of a match, the federation's disciplinary and ethics committee said late Tuesday.

The 32-year-old is one of Saudi Arabia's most prominent referees, having earned a FIFA badge in 2011 and officiating at the Rio de Janeiro Olympics in 2016 and the Confederations Cup in Russia in 2017.

Mirdasi was chosen to referee Saudi Arabia's Kings Cup final between top clubs Al-Faisaly and Al-Ittihad on Saturday but was pulled from the roster just a few hours before the game.

In a statement, the disciplinary and ethics committee said Mirdasi had approached the president of Al-Ittihad asking him for a bribe to enable his team to win.

"The Ittihad president

Hamad Al-Sanayeh called the Saudi Football Federation to state there was evidence that Fahad Al-Mirdasi had reached out via text messages on WhatsApp. He asked for an illegal sum of money in exchange for helping his team win the game," it said.

The case was referred to the Saudi Football Federation, then the General Authority for Sport -- the highest sports authority in the kingdom -- triggering an administrative investigation.

Mirdasi confessed to the charges, according to the statement, and it was decided "to deprive him from participating in any football activity for life".

The committee recommended that Saudi Arabia officially request FIFA to remove Mirdasi from the list of referees participating in the 2018 World Cup and suspend him for life.

"Our integrity is above all considerations," said Turki Al-Sheikh, head of the General Authority for Sport.

Mirdasi was one of five Arab referees chosen by FIFA to officiate at the 2018 World Cup.

Russia, biathlon saga head agenda at WADA meeting

MONTREAL, MAY 16 (AFP): The fallout from the Russia doping scandal and a corruption crisis in biathlon will dominate the agenda as World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) chiefs gather in Montreal this week.

The global anti-doping watchdog's executive committee meet on Wednesday to discuss the status of Russia's national anti-doping agency RUSADA before presenting an update to WADA's 38-member Foundation Board on Thursday.

RUSADA has been at the centre of a standoff between WADA and Russia ever since the body's suspension in November 2015 following revelations of a vast doping scandal involving Moscow's main drug-testing laboratory.

WADA is adamant that RUSADA will continue to be ruled non-compliant until Russia accepts the findings of its bombshell McLaren report and also allows WADA inspectors into the Moscow testing laboratory.

WADA has set out a roadmap detailing the path RUSA-



DA must take to regain "compliant" status and rejoin the ranks of recognised testing authorities.

The agency has already been allowed to resume doping controls under the supervision of WADA-appointed monitors and the UK Anti-Doping Agency. RUSADA's new director-general, Yuri Ganus, meanwhile, has repeatedly vowed to restore trust in the tarnished testing agency.

However, in the eyes of WADA, RUSADA has still failed

to meet two key conditions necessary for it to regain its full compliant status, namely granting access to the Moscow laboratory and samples that may have been stored there, as well as fully accepting the findings of the McLaren report.

WADA President Craig Reedie told a symposium in Lausanne in March that Russia failed to respond to four letters requesting a joint inspection of their Moscow laboratory.

Russia's authorities have consistently denied allegations

of a state-sponsored doping scheme, a key finding of the McLaren report.

The WADA impasse takes on added significance with the football World Cup due to kick off in Russia in just under a month's time.

Russia's non-compliance has already led to deadlock in athletics.

The International Association of Athletics Federations (IAAF) says it will not lift its ban on Russian track and field athletes until WADA declares

Russia in compliance with all of its regulations.

That hardline stance saw Russian track and field athletes barred from the 2016 Olympics and 2017 World Championships in London, with the exception of a handful of exempted Russian athletes competing under a neutral banner.

Meanwhile, Russia has been forced onto the defensive in another scandal involving the sport of biathlon.

An internal WADA report alleged that Russia had attempted to buy the silence of International Biathlon Union chiefs to ensure that no proceedings would be opened against Russian athletes with suspicious biological passports.

"The main goal of the corruption is to protect doped Russian athletes," concluded the WADA report dated late 2017.

IBU President Anders Besseberg -- himself a member of the WADA Foundation Board -- was forced to resign following the revelations.

WHO publishes its first essential diagnostics list

NEW DELHI, MAY 15 (PTI): The World Health Organisation (WHO) today published its first 'essential diagnostics list', a catalogue of tests needed to diagnose the most common conditions as well as a number of global priority diseases.

The step was taken to address the problem of people's inability to access diagnostic services, thus failing to receive the correct treatment.

"An accurate diagnosis is the first step to getting effective treatment. No one should suffer or die because of lack of diagnostic services, or because the right tests were not available, said Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, WHO Director-General.



An estimated 46 per cent of adults with Type 2 diabetes worldwide are undiagnosed, risking serious health complications and higher

health costs, said a statement by the world health body.

Late diagnosis of infectious diseases such as HIV and tuberculosis increases

the risk of their spread and makes them more difficult to treat, it said.

The essential diagnostics list concentrates on in vitro

tests like tests of blood and urine. Apart from this, 58 tests are listed for detection and diagnosis of a wide range of common conditions, thus providing an essential package that can form the basis for screening and management of patients.

The remaining 55 tests are designed for the detection, diagnosis and monitoring of 'priority' diseases such as HIV, tuberculosis, malaria, hepatitis B and C, human papillomavirus and syphilis, the statement said.

Some of the tests are particularly suitable for primary health care facilities, where laboratory services are often poorly resourced and sometimes non-existent.

"Our aim is to provide a tool that can be useful to all countries, to test and treat better, but also to use health funds more efficiently by concentrating on the truly essential tests, said Mari ngela Sim o, WHO Assistant Director-General for Access to Medicines, Vaccines and Pharmaceuticals.

For each category of test, the Essential Diagnostics List specifies the type of test and intended use, format, and if appropriate for primary health care or for health facilities with laboratories.

The list also provides links to WHO guidelines or publications and to pre-qualified products.

Similar to the WHO essen-

tial medicines list, which has been in use for four decades, the essential diagnostics list is intended to serve as a reference for countries to update or develop their own list of essential diagnostics.

The WHO will update the essential diagnostics list on a regular basis. It is also expected to issue a call for applications to add categories to the next edition.

The list will expand significantly over the next few years, as it incorporates other important areas, including antimicrobial resistance, emerging pathogens, neglected tropical diseases and additional noncommunicable diseases, the statement added.

Malaysia’s reformist icon Anwar freed, given royal pardon

KUALA LUMPUR, MAY 16 (AP): Reformist icon Anwar Ibrahim celebrated a “new dawn” for Malaysia after he was given a royal pardon and freed from custody today, transforming a political prisoner into a prime minister-in-waiting following his alliance’s stunning election victory.

Anwar, 70, was convicted of sodomy in 2015 in a case he said was aimed at crushing his alliance, which was making gains against Malaysia’s long ruling coalition government. His sentence was set to end June 8 but last week’s unexpected election win, which ended the National Front’s 60-year rule, led to his swift release.

“Now there is a new dawn for Malaysia,” he told a news conference at his house. Anwar said he was grateful to Malaysians “regardless of race and religion, who stood by the principles of democracy and freedom.” The election result was a demand for change and it’s the new government’s responsibility to ensure that mandate is honored, he said.

Earlier, Anwar was thronged by scores of supporters and reporters after he walked free from a hospital, where he was recovering from shoulder surgery, and whisked away to an audience with Malaysia’s king. The royal palace said in a statement that the monarch had



given Anwar a full pardon following advice from the Pardons Board. Analysts say his release could cause tensions in the new government led by Mahathir Mohamad, who after leading the four-party alliance in the election campaign has become the world’s oldest leader at 92. Mahathir is the chairman of the alliance and Anwar is its de-facto leader.

Anwar sought to allay those concerns, saying he was not in a hurry to take over from Mahathir. Anwar’s wife, Wan Azizah Wan Ismail, is currently the deputy premier. Anwar, who needs to contest a by-election to become a member of Parliament, said he doesn’t want any Cabinet posts yet as he plans to spend time with his family and travel abroad for speaking engagements.

He reiterated his full support for Mahathir’s leadership and said their political feud has long been buried. “I have forgiven him. He has proven his mettle. He made his sacrifices and was maligned in the media. I tell you, it is like deja vu,” Anwar said. “He has struggled and worked indefatigably hard. He has now supported the reform agenda. He facilitated my release. Why

should I harbor any malice toward him?” His party has disputed Mahathir’s appointment of three top Cabinet posts, but Anwar said it was only a difference over the consultation process, adding it was Mahathir’s prerogative as premier to form the Cabinet.

Mahathir, premier for 22 years until 2003, on Tuesday said that he will run the country for “one to two years” to fix Malaysia’s financial problems.

It was Anwar’s second spell in prison. Once a high flyer in the ruling party, Anwar was first convicted of homosexual sodomy and corruption after a power struggle with Mahathir in 1998.

Anwar and his supporters have long denied the sodomy allegations, saying they were concocted to destroy his political career. Yet rather than give up, Anwar worked from his prison cell to forge a new opposition alliance by ending the two-decade feud with Mahathir - a gamble that paid off when the alliance won the May 9 polls.

Anwar said the royal pardon was granted to him on the grounds of a “travesty of justice” and a clear conspiracy to kill his political career by Najib Razak, who was denied a third term as prime minister in the elections.

He said has no malice against Najib but the former leader “has

to answer” for corruption scandals that led to his coalition’s defeat. Anwar said he was touched that his 20-year struggle for reform has finally paid off.

Asked about the new government’s pledge to review large Chinese infrastructure projects, Anwar said like Mahathir, he welcomed Chinese investment but was concerned about the manner in which they were done. He said there must be transparency and accountability to ensure the deals were in the nation’s interest.

“The hope is that Anwar and Mahathir will find a way to work together especially during this period of transition,” said Rashaad Ali, research analyst with the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies in Singapore.

“This is an opportunity for both of them to move forward for the sake of the country. There may be clashes between these two big personalities but (officials in their) coalition as well as the expectations of Malaysians will provide a check and balance,” he said.

Anwar is expected to meet supporters at a rally later Wednesday.

Amnesty International said his release was a “landmark moment for human rights” in Malaysia and called for repressive laws muzzling freedom of expression and assembly to be repealed.

Indian-Tibetan descent Aftab Pureval wins Democratic primary in US

WASHINGTON, MAY 16 (PTI): Aftab Karma Singh Pureval, an American of Indian-Tibetan descent, has won the Democratic primary for the first congressional district of Ohio, but faces a Himalayan task of defeating a 11-time Republican Congressman.

But for the 35-year-old, who was the first Democrat to get elected as the Hamilton County Clerk of Courts in more than 100 years, says climbing the Himalayas is in his DNA.

Congressman Steve Chabot has represented the seat since 1995 from the Republican bastion.

“I am the first Tibetan-American to run for the Congress, Pureval told PTI in an interview.

“My story is improbably American. I am the son of a refugee. My mother was born in Tibet and she was forced to flee her home country along with my grandparents, he said.

He said, his grandparents and his mother made their way through the Himalayas to Nepal and entered India where she grew up as a refugee.

His mother studied in a school in Mysore and later went to Delhi for college education, where she met his Punjabi father. “My (paternal) grandfather was in the Indian Army (Brig. Ajit Singh),” he said, adding that after marriage, his parents moved to the US and settled in Ohio, where he was born in 1982.

“They (Tibetan community) are very excited. I am connected with a lot of the community in all parts of the country through social media. They are thrilled to see me run, a Tibetan-American run for the US Congress. It is driving a lot of energy and they have been incredibly supporting of my efforts,” Pureval said.



Guatemala inaugurated its Israel embassy in Jerusalem today, becoming the first country to follow in the footsteps of the United States’ deeply controversial move. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Guatemalan President Jimmy Morales were among officials attending an inauguration ceremony at the new embassy at an office park in the disputed city at the heart of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The US and Guatemalan moves break with decades of international consensus. The US embassy move on Monday was accompanied by mass protests and clashes along the Gaza border that saw Israeli forces kill 60 Palestinians.

Declaring India ‘Major Defence Partner’ opens door for increased cooperation: US official

WASHINGTON, MAY 16 (PTI): Declaring India a “Major Defence Partner” opens the door for increased mutual cooperation as India and the US have convergence of interests on a range of issues like maritime security, domain awareness, counter-piracy and counter-terrorism, a senior Pentagon official has said.

The US recognised India as a “Major Defence Partner” in 2016, a designation that allows India to buy more advanced and sensitive technologies from America at par with that of the US’ closest allies and partners, and ensures enduring cooperation into the future. India and the US are natural partners across a range of political, economic and security issues, Assistant Secretary of Defence, Asian and Pacific Security Affairs Ran-

dall Schriver said while testifying before a Senate Foreign Relations Committee’s Subcommittee.

“In 2016, the United States declared India a ‘Major Defence Partner’, which opens the door for increased cooperation on a range of defence issues, most notably defence trade and technology,” Schriver told the sub-committee on East Asia, the Pacific and International Cybersecurity Policy yesterday.

With a mutual desire for global stability and support for a rules-based international order, India and the US have an increasing convergence of interests, including maritime security and domain awareness, counter-piracy, countering terrorism, humanitarian assistance, and coordinated responses to natural disasters and transnational threats, he said.

Facebook shut 583 million fake accounts

PARIS, MAY 16 (AFP): Facebook axed 583 million fake accounts in the first three months of 2018, the social media giant has said, detailing how it enforces “community standards” against sexual or violent images, terrorist propaganda or hate speech.

Responding to calls for transparency after the Cambridge Analytica data privacy scandal, Facebook yesterday said those closures came on top of blocking millions of attempts to create fake accounts every day.

Despite this, the group said fake profiles still make up 3-4 percent of all active accounts.

It claimed to detect almost 100 percent of spam and to have removed 837 million posts assimilated to spam over the same period.

Facebook pulled or slapped warnings on nearly 30 million posts containing sexual or violent images, terrorist propaganda or hate speech during the first quarter.

Improved technology using artificial intelligence had helped it act on 3.4 million posts containing graphic violence, nearly three times more than it had in the last quarter of 2017.

In 85.6 per cent of the cases, Facebook detected the images before being alerted to them by users, said the report, issued the day after the company said about 200 apps had been suspended on its platform as part of an investigation into misuse of private user data.

The figure represents between 0.22 and



0.27 per cent of the total content viewed by Facebook’s more than two billion users from January through March.

“In other words, of every 10,000 content views, an estimate of 22 to 27 contained graphic violence,” the report said.

Responses to rule violations include removing content, adding warnings to content that may be disturbing to some users while not violating Facebook standards; and notifying law enforcement in case of a “specific, imminent and credible threat to human life”.

Improved IT also helped Facebook take action against 1.9 million posts containing

terrorist propaganda, a 73 percent increase. Nearly all were dealt with before any alert was raised, the company said.

It attributed the increase to the enhanced use of photo detection technology.

Hate speech is harder to police using automated methods, however, as racist or homophobic hate speech is often quoted on posts by their targets or activists.

“It may take a human to understand and accurately interpret nuances like... self-referential comments or sarcasm,” the report said, noting that Facebook aims to “protect and respect both expression and personal

safety”.

Facebook took action against 2.5 million pieces of hate speech content during the period, a 56 increase over October-December. But only 38 percent had been detected through Facebook’s efforts -- the rest flagged up by users.

The posts that keep the Facebook reviewers the busiest are those showing adult nudity or sexual activity -- quite apart from child pornography, which is not covered by the report.

Some 21 million such posts were handled in the period, a similar number to October-December 2017.

That was less than 0.1 percent of viewed content -- which includes text, images, videos, links, live videos or comments on posts -- Facebook said, adding it had dealt with nearly 96 percent of the cases before being alerted to them.

Facebook has come under fire for showing too much zeal on this front, such as removing images of artwork tolerated under its own rules.

In March, Facebook apologised for temporarily removing an advert featuring French artist Eugene Delacroix’s famous work “Liberty Leading the People” because it depicts a bare-breasted woman.

Facebook’s head of global policy management Monika Bicket said the group had kept a commitment to recruit 3,000 more staff to lift the numbers dedicated to enforcing standards to 7,500 at the start of this year.



WHO KNEW THEY WERE SUCH GOOD FRIENDS?

While Paris Hilton [37] wore a plunging purple number, Nicole Scherzinger [39] opted for a busty black mini dress at De Grisogono party.

STAN LEE FILES BILLION-DOLLAR LAWSUIT AGAINST POW! ENTERTAINMENT

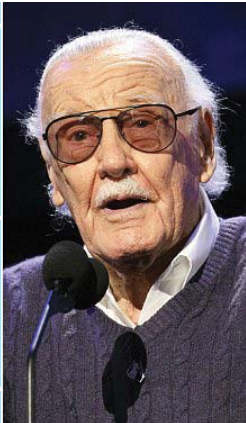
Comic book legend Stan Lee has filed a lawsuit against his former business partners at POW! Entertainment for a whopping USD one billion.

The 95-year-old comic book writer claims the company, which he co-founded, conspired with two of its officers, CEO Shane Duffy and co-founder Gill Champion, to steal his identity, reported Deadline.

According to the suit filed in Los Angeles Superior Court, Lee has alleged that Duffy and Champion did not disclosed the full terms of the company's sale to Hong Kong-based Camsing International in 2017.

"Defendants conspired and agreed to broker a sham deal to sell POW! to a company in China and fraudulently steal Stan Lee's identity, name, image, and likeness as part of a nefarious scheme to benefit financially at Lee's expense," the court documents read.

"Pursuant to their conspiracy and agreement, Defendants knowingly made material misrepresentations



of fact, and forged or fraudulently obtained a signature from Lee to give POW! Inc. the exclusive use of Lee's identity, name, image, and likeness and each of them knew that their objective was unlawful and they intended to aid each other in achieving that unlawful objective," it added.

The suit also stated that Lee does not recall anyone reading to him the terms of the agreement and that he

did not knowingly sign the document.

It also claims that after the death of Lee's wife, Joan Lee, he became "the target of various unscrupulous businessmen, and opportunists who saw a chance to take advantage of Lee's despondent state of mind, kind and devotion to his craft - a devotion that often allowed him to overlook the bad intentions in others when it came to his property."

Lee, who last month filed a case against his former manager Jerardo Olivarez for business fraud, has added him in the suit but not as defendant.

Lee claims that Olivarez used his influence to convince him to sign over powers of attorney.

The suit, filed through attorney Adam DH Grant, seeks to rescind the license agreement as well as "damages in excess of one billion dollars".

Ryan Reynolds jokes daughter James has "terrible ego"!



Ryan Reynolds and Blake Lively's eldest daughter was featured on an album that went triple-platinum. James was featured in the intro on one of the singles from Reputation titled Gorgeous. And though James is only three-years-old, it seems like it has all gone to her head.

Ryan, 41, appeared on Good Morning America on Tuesday morning as he joked about his older of two daughters having an appearance on Taylor Swift's latest album.

Ryan has been vocal about not wanting his children to work in showbusiness but was asked by George Stephanopoulos about his daughter lending her vocal talents to the hit song by the 28-year-

old singer.

The Deadpool 2 star joked: "My daughter has a really, really terrible ego problem now after that song. Oh she's insufferable. Yeah she's in a Taylor Swift song. I don't know if she knows she's in a Taylor Swift song."

Ryan's wife Blake Lively is really good friends with Taylor as he detailed how the cute collaboration went down.

He explained: "A little intro there, yeah, um... That was a voice memo that ended up on a song."

The Adventureland actor would not mind his children practicing the craft of acting but was asked by the 57-year-old veteran journalist if he would like them to be in

showbusiness.

Reynolds said: "No, mostly because I'm against child abuse. Showbusiness for a little kid, that's a crazy pursuit, you know. Acting is great, you, theater, school, [that's] amazing, but I don't know why you would want to put your kid in showbusiness."

Ryan and 30-year-old Blake have another daughter named Ines who is one-years-old.

The two A-listers are very private when it comes to their two children but they were in attendance when Ryan got his star on the iconic Hollywood Walk Of Fame back in December 2016. The two youngsters stole the show as the happy family celebrated the milestone together.



Sonam turns heads in her second appearance at Cannes

For her second red carpet appearance at the Cannes Film Festival, Sonam Kapoor opted for a Vera Wang couture gown.

Matching with her beige and yellow gown with a corset, Sonam wore minimal accessories and sported a messy bun. She rounded off her look with dramatic eyes.

Sonam's sister, Rhea shared her photos from the Cannes Film Festival and wrote, "The most glam go with the flow ever."

Earlier in the day, Sonam made several appearances for the brand. She sported a blue denim from Bhane, a clothing brand owned by husband Anand Ahuja.

In the afternoon, the "Veere Di Wedding" star wore a white and red striped dress from designer Emilia Wickstead and coupled it with Sophia Webster shoes and Bottega Veneta shades.

Sonam wore a Ralph and Russo lehenga-inspired outfit for her first appearance at the French Riviera this year as the brand ambassador of cosmetic brand L'Oreal.

Clash of the siblings!



Harshvardhan Kapoor's Bhavesh Joshi Superhero, which was initially set to release on 25 May, has suddenly postponed its release to 01 June, the same day when Sonam Kapoor's Veere Di Wedding will hit the screens.

Yes! Taran Adarsh just tweeted the change in date along with the new poster of Bhavesh Joshi Superhero. Now this could mean two things. Either Bhavesh Joshi Superhero will benefit from all the positive buzz surrounding Veere Di Wedding which is a fun entertainer that also stars Kareena Kapoor Khan or it will be sabotaged by the latter's mass appeal.

Only 1st of June will let us know if this decision to clash with Veere Di Wedding would prove profitable for Bhavesh Joshi Superhero or not.

Having said that, Bhavesh Joshi Superhero



has averted a clash with John Abraham's Parman which will now have a solo release on 25 May.

Talking about Bhavesh Joshi Superhero, the trailer has received quite a positive response with viewers appreciating Harshvardhan's brave attempt at pulling off some amazing action stunts. And the fact the film has an unusual super-hero plot is drawing all the more attention. For those of you who don't know, Bhavesh Joshi Superhero revolves around the lead character Bhavesh and his friends, who take charge to make the country corruption free. Soon after becoming the victim of the political scenario, Bhavesh goes behind the mask and comes out as a superhero to change the society.

Now that you know Bhavesh Joshi Superhero and Veere Di Wedding are releasing on the same day, which film will be your pick?

THE DAY AHEAD

ARIES: Try not to get weighed down by emotions today, Aries, but give them the opportunity to have their time in the spotlight. You may find that there is a strong force working to cover up the truth of what you really feel. Make sure you express yourself openly and honestly. At the same time, you don't want to be overly dramatic that you blow things out of proportion.

TAURUS: It may be difficult to express yourself fully today, Taurus. Somehow the words aren't coming out quite as clearly as you'd like. Powerful emotions are getting in the way. It could be difficult for you to find solid footing on such a muddy surface. Don't try to confine yourself to one way of doing some-

thing. Patience is a key virtue now. Wait until things clear before you proceed.

GEMINI: You might need to hold your tongue today, Gemini. People's feelings are more easily hurt now, and the slightest criticism could be misinterpreted as a terrible insult. When in doubt, keep your mouth shut. Turn your attention inward and focus on your emotions. Try to keep your mental chatter to a minimum and concentrate more on how you feel rather than on what you think.

CANCER: You'll find that you have a much better than usual connection with the people around you, Cancer. Your psychic sense is acute, and you should use this sixth sense to pick up

things that other people might miss. Don't let the busy chatter of the day disrupt your connection with deeper thoughts and ideas. People are more malleable today than usual.

LEO: Be persistent and don't give up the fight today, Leo. It might seem as if you aren't making progress and that it's harder to make decisions about anything. You'll find that other people are just as confused as you. Find a clever way to express what you feel. You can sort the issues out with the help of others as long as you're in touch with your inner state.

VIRGO: Your current plan of attack may run into some snags today, Virgo. This might be caused by an emotional need that you

may not have recognized earlier. The problem is that your head may say one thing while your gut tells you something else. You might need to put everything on hold while you sort out this inner turmoil. There's a great deal of compassion in the air.

LIBRA: You may need to take a more disciplined approach to your communication today, Libra. Try not to be so harsh and limiting with your words. People respond better to comforting expressions and a sympathetic tone. Cold, abrasive facts will only aggravate an existing wound. Tone things down. Allow yourself some quiet time to be alone and contemplate your state of mind.

SCORPIO: This is an excellent

day for you, Scorpio. You should find that things are running smoothly and to your advantage. Watch out for those who may want to rain on your parade by bombarding you with information that doesn't really connect with the way you feel. This information is unrelated to the real issues - how you feel and why. Pay attention to your heart.

SAGITTARIUS: You may feel rather lazy and out of touch today, Sagittarius. It could be that your emotions have taken a stronger hold on your psyche than your rational way of thinking. Therefore, making decisions might be quite difficult. In matters of the heart, you could feel a bit more romantic than usu-

al. There is a great sentimental mood to the day that's causing you to empathize with others.

CAPRICORN: Today is a good day to dream, Capricorn. Be aware that structured forces may try to convince you the route you want to take isn't the most practical. You don't necessarily have to be practical in order to be successful or prosperous. Use your imagination. Let your creative spirit lead you to the next step. Find true strength in your ability to recognize and understand the needs of others.

AQUARIUS: You might feel like your emotions are up in the air, Aquarius. As soon as you feel emotional, there may be a more structured force telling you to be

reasonable. Both camps are valid, so try not to let one overpower the other. Don't completely disregard your emotions in favor of a more cerebral way of handling a situation. And don't let your emotions take control of your actions either. Balance is the watchword today.

PISCES: Your head is filled with passion today, Pisces, and you may be feeling a bit more sentimental than usual. The one difficulty with this is that there may not be an appropriate situation in which to express this emotion as fully as you might like. Try to navigate the waters toward a safe place where the people around you support you. Avoid those who might want to pop your bubble.