



# SummitTIMES

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ON TOP OF THE NEWS

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## Fresh complaint by Teesta III-affected filed in High Court

VISHNU NEOPANEY  
GANGTOK, 17 DEC:

Tseten Lepcha of Chungthang has filed a fresh complaint with the Chief Justice, High Court of

Sikkim seeking the Court's intervention and directions to address long pending issues of the public of Chungthang, North Sikkim such as the rehabilitation and relief policy, employment of the Teesta Stage III project affected people.

Taking cognizance of the

complaint made during the High Court Judges' last visit to North Sikkim, the division bench headed by Chief Justice Satish Kumar Agnihotri and Justice Bhaskar Raj Pradhan issued a notice to the Chief Secretary of the state, Department of Power and Energy and also to the Project Manager, Teesta HEP Stage-III with directions to file response within four weeks.

With the acceptance of this Letter Petition, the High Court has recorded the highest number of PILs - 16 - registered in a year in Sikkim's judicial history.

In the letter petition, Mr Lepcha highlighted five major issues that the people of Chungthang are facing that includes accumulation of toxic waste in the Dam of 1200 MW Teesta III Hydro Electricity Project, Compensation for houses damaged by blasting during the construction of HEP still not fulfilled, denial of employment for educated youth of project affected area particularly Chungthang dam-

site, proper systematic mechanism required for CRS and utilisation of revenue of the project affected area and rim treatment around the damsite.

Having regard to the nature of grievance of the citizens involved therein, the bench appointed N. Rai, Senior Counsel assisted by Tamanna Chhetri, to assist the Court as Amicus Curiae.

The court has also directed the registry to supply the copy of the letter petition to the Amicus Curiae and the State Government.



## CM attends Losoong Celebration at Barfung, announces development of Tshozum Lake

NAMCHI, 17 DEC [IPR]: Chief Minister Pawan Chamling attended the Losoong Celebration 2017 organised by Barfung Lingtam Losoong Celebration Committee at Barfung Lingtam playground on 16 Dec.

He was accompanied by Tika Maya Chamling, Sikkim Legislative Assembly Speaker, KN Rai alongside cabinet ministers, Members of Legislative Assembly, chairpersons, advisors, officials from various departments under South District, Zilla Panchayat and Panchayat members among a huge gathering of public.

The CM extended warm Losoong greetings to the people of Barfung Lingtam GPU as well as the public of Barfung constituency. He also took the opportunity to announce the development of Tshozum Lake as a hub of tourist activities in the days to come which will thereby open up various employment avenues for the youth and students of Ravangla and surrounding areas. On this account he spoke on how the lake will be rich in flora and fauna integrated with environment friendly expertise so as to preserve the sanctity and virtue of the place.

Additionally, he also sought keen public opinion on suggestions of

development of tourist sites in their respective blocks and Panchayat units and assured all aid from the government for such prospective proposals. Citing examples of Buddha Park in Ravangla which assists healthy livelihood opportunities for public of Ravangla, the CM impressed upon the importance of preserving and maintaining the place.

Reiterating the state government's initiative of eradicating poverty through Kutcha House Free State Mission, the CM declared that the state government has devised a robust policy in the State to provide houses to the homeless, incentives for the non Certificate of Identity [COI] holders and endeavors to transform Sikkim into a 100% literate State.

Further, he informed the public about various pension schemes initiated by the state government wherein he announced the increase in pension fund for old age, unmarried, physical challenged, women and mothers of the state. The CM also announced the construction of old age home for senior citizens in all four districts of the state.

On the ban on import of non-organic produce in Sikkim from March 2018, he specified that apart from Potatoes, Onion, Garlic and dried chillies

none of the agricultural produce grown outside the state will be allowed to be sold in Sikkim.

The CM in a bid to encourage entrepreneurial ventures and self-employment opportunities for the youth of Sikkim announced the provision of Rs 15 lakh for setting up their own enterprises. He urged the youth to tap the benefits of the Sikkim Organic Mission and spelled out the importance of agricultural practice. He also said that the Government will hereon be stringent about issuing trade licenses to the Sikkimese youth.

Area MLA cum chief patron of the Losoong celebration committee, DD Bhutia also addressed the gathering on the occasion where he spoke about the need for the newly elected Panchayats and public to inculcate moral and ethical values to carry out their roles and responsibilities with a sense of ownership and dedication.

The program also saw the release of a Bhutia video produced by Area MLA, DD Bhutia through the chief guest and dignitaries present.

The public of Barfung constituency also facilitated the CM on the said occasion for his contribution in augmenting and bringing about expansive development in Sikkim.

## Woman mugged in DPH area

SAGAR CHETTRI  
GANGTOK, 17 DEC:

Another incident of bag snatching last evening has once again alarmed the local residents of Diesel Power House area in the capital. An unknown miscreant reportedly attacked a young lady from behind and snatched her handbag taking advantage of a short dark stretch near the stairs heading towards Arithang on Church Road. She was on her way home from work at around 8 p.m. on Saturday evening.

The victim has lodged a complaint against an unknown miscreant at Sadar Thana. It is informed that her handbag contained cash of around Rs 10,000, debit cards, credit cards, Aadhaar card, voter ID and PAN card along with two mobile phones.

It has to be mentioned here that similar cases have been reported at the same spot in the recent past. Following complaints by local people, the police had increased patrolling in the area and the concerned department also installed street lights on the spot which had put a stop to such incidents for some time.

It is informed that lights installed by the department at the spot are not working at present and there is no police patrolling in the area, which may have encouraged the miscreants to strike again.



## TNSS to represent India in Int'l Robotronics Competition

SUMMIT REPORT  
GANGTOK, 17 DEC:

Sir Tashi Namgyal Senior Secondary School team headed by Physics

PGT, Prem Das Chhetri is all set to participate in the International Robotronics Competition and Innovation in Dubai,

a press release informs. The school has been selected through a rigorous process of competitions at the zonal and

national levels. The zonal level competition was held across the country in fifteen different centers. *turn to pg02*

## Singtam boy lands job deal in Microsoft via SMIT

SUMMIT REPORT  
GANGTOK, 17 DEC:

Kunal Agarwal, a K.B-Tech student of Sikkim Manipal Institute of Technology [SMIT], Majhitar has received a job offer from Microsoft with a salary compensation of Rs 22 lakh per annum through the institute's Training and Placement Cell, a press release from the Sikkim Manipal University informs.

Kunal Agarwal, born to Bijoy Kumar Agarwal



and Sunita Agarwal is a resident of Singtam, East Sikkim and is currently an engineering student at SMIT pursuing his

career in the Computer Science Engineering Department.

Kunal will graduate from his programme in 2018.

With the placement deal, Kunal Agarwal has achieved the feat of becoming the highest package received by any SMITian as a fresher till date.

In addition to Microsoft, Kunal has also received offers in leading firms such as Amazon and Ixia Technologies

through the Training and Placement Cell of SMIT.

According to the press release, SMIT in 2016-17 invited 32 companies to conduct interviews with the students.

"This year, within 6 months of the academic session, 22 companies have conducted events with giants such as Amazon, Microsoft, Dell, Wells Fargo, Wipro, eConstruct, Daikin to name a few," reads the release.

## Winter Football Coaching Camp kicks off at Malbasey



SAURABH RAI  
SILIGURI, 17 DEC:

Winter Football Coaching Camp organised by Sanju Football Academy kicked off at Don Bosco School, Malbasey on Saturday.

International footballer, Sanju Pradhan who is the founder and mentor of the Academy informed SummitTimes that he will reach Malbasey on 22 Dec and spend few days training the players. Sanju is currently playing in the Indian Super League for Mumbai City FC.

"This year we have got a better location for the camp at Don Bosco School which has a good ground. We are thankful to the Principal, Father Martin Lakra. Father also said that the Don Bosco School is preparing for the LD Kazi Gold Cup so their players can also train during the camp with other boys," said Sanju.

Another camp is also being held at the home center of the Academy at Sombaria simultaneously. The Camp will be conducted by AFC C licensed coach, Bishal Tamang from Kathmandu assisted by at least three local coaches. It will run for 45 days.

Sanju Football Academy was set up in 2013 by Sanju Pradhan with the help of some football lovers in his home town of Sombaria.

Assistant Engineer [Roads and Bridges Department], Rajen Gurung was the chief guest of the occasion. Don Bosco School Principal, Father Martin Lakra also attended the programme.

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# Selep Tank residents come together to build a school



taken during a meeting a school reconstruction Area MLA, DR Thapa, who visited the site on Saturday, appreciated the efforts of the people

in taking this initiative. He also held that with the opening of this primary school in the area, younger students will not have to travel far for their primary education. With a generous Rs 06 lakh contributed by the people along with the support of local MLAs and HRDD, the reconstruction work has now started. The locals informed that every household contributed from Rs 500 up to Rs 20,000 while people also offered hard labour and logistical support. ST Bhutia, member of the school reconstruction committee, opined that due to the high rate of school drop-outs it was imperative for locals to come up with their own initiative. "From funding to labour our people have given their all in this project," he added. He further informed that a group of at least 30 people are actively working on the field for reconstruction of the school in a phase wise manner. Kabi MLA, Ugen Nedup Bhutia while deeply appreciating the efforts of the people also added that such initiatives can inspire citizens to work together as a community and touch people's lives in a positive way. The school reconstruction committee hopes to complete the five-room primary school within 3 weeks.

**Gangtok on Monday, 17 Dec**  
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**Temp:** 21°C /07°C  
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**Sunrise:** 06:19 AM  
**Sunset:** 4:44 PM

## Sushil Kumar wins gold at Commonwealth Wrestling

**NEW DELHI, DEC 17 (PTI):** Double Olympic medallist Sushil Kumar made a glorious return to the international arena by clinching a gold medal at the Commonwealth Wrestling Championships in Johannesburg, South Africa today.

Returning to international wrestling after more than three years, Sushil defeated New Zealand Akash Khullar's via a pinfall in the final of the 74kg freestyle category to clinch the yellow metal.

It was his first medal in international wrestling since his gold medal in the 2014 Commonwealth Games in Glasgow.

It was double celebration for India as other wrestler in same category, Parveen Rana also won a bronze medal.

Sushil returned to competitive wrestling in November at the Senior Nationals in Indore where he won a gold medal amid controversy after getting three walkovers from his fellow wrestlers.

Incidentally, it was Rana who gave him a walkover in the title clash in Indore, but the duo wrestled this time and Sushil came out on top with a 5-4 victory margin.

In his first bout, Sushil defeated Johannes Petrus Botha of South Africa 8-0 followed by the win over Rana.

**NITESH R PRADHAN GANGTOK, 17 DEC:** In a novel initiative, a dilapidated school is now being reconstructed with the active participation of people of Selep Tank area in the upper reaches of the capital. They have raised funds and taken over the construction of the school including hard labour. "We made this an initiative of the citizens and as citizens we thought we should come up with something on our own," said Kazi Sherpa, a local resident and also an Everester. There are about 180 houses in the area which fall under Upper Burtuk and Kabi constituencies. The decision to reconstruct the school was

# Sikkimese film wins Async Int'l short film competition

**SUMMIT REPORT GANGTOK, 17 DEC:** Filmmaker Sandup Lepcha's experimental narrative 'In a Happy Place' starring local kids, which was shot on zero budget with an analog handycam was adjudged as the winner among nearly 800 submissions for the Async International short film competition, a press release informs. The short film competition was organized and judged by Oscar winning composer, Ryuichi Sakamoto (The Revenant) and Palme d'Or winning Thai filmmaker Apichatpong Weerasethakul (Uncle Boonmee Who Can Recall His Past Lives). "Sandup Lepcha's film enchanted me. The image did not surrender to the music, nor did the music to the image—the film granted the music depth in meaning but also used the music to leap into transcendence. I wanted to share more time with these children on screen. I wanted to listen to the sound of the rain, the wind, I wanted to smell the earth and feel the moisture. The film made me want to join the children on that land." - Ryuichi Sakamoto said on his website. The filmmaker, in addition to the award will also be presented with the license to use one piece



of new music composed and produced by Ryuichi Sakamoto for his next film project, \$3,000 USD cash prize with the film's inclusion in the 5.1 inch Blu-ray edition of async. The film will also be introduced as a promotional film on Ryuichi Sakamoto's official site, sitesakamoto.com, the official website and YouTube/Vimeo channels of the Japanese label Commons and the official website and YouTube/Vimeo channels of the international label Milan Records.

Additionally, the filmmaker will also receive 10 signed albums chosen by Ryuichi Sakamoto from his discography. Sandup Lepcha, a writer whose collection of short-stories is due to be released next spring also started dabbling in film making after getting inspired from the works of cinema's biggest proponents like Kurosawa, Fellini, and Hitchcock. He was not only pleasantly surprised but also expressed his artistic satisfaction to have been lauded by Sakamoto who has

scored music for directors like Iñárritu, Almodóvar and other luminaries of the industry. He wrote, shot, edited and directed the entire movie, all by himself. Not only the filmmaker, but the cast comprising of 10-14 year old students- Maheshwari Kharka (Class IX), Tanushree Chettri (Class IX), Vyomeshwari Thapa (Class VI), Devrath Kharka (Class VI), Avdesh Pakhetra (Class VII) and Harsh Agarwal (Class VIII) were equally floored by the news and are motivated to explore the world of cinema.



## Shooting for Nepali film 'Anam Zorbu-the guide' begins

**SUMMIT REPORT GANGTOK, 17 DEC:** A new Nepali feature film titled 'Anam Zorbu-the guide' held its mahurat shot today at Saramsa Garden kick starting its month long shooting schedule across the State. The movie is presented by Alpha Movie Productions, Gangtok with Anand Gurung as the producer and direction by Ranjit Singh. Talking about the subject matter of the movie, director Ranjit Singh held that the film deals with contemporary themes and issues concerning the state. The film is replete with various themes including tourism, organic, self employment and other related issues which have been converted to a story. This film features a large number of artists from the state including technicians, added the director. Producer Chuni Lal Ghimeray stated that with Sikkim's ever growing interest nationally and internationally, many films have been shot in the beautiful Himalayan state. Adding on further, he said that the visual medium is an important form of art where all sections of society can understand the themes and story depicted in a movie. Director, Ranjit Singh while talking about the story of the film said, "Anam Zorbu is the name of the driver and the hero of the movie. Sikkim being a tourism hotspot, we have tried to create a story that deals with the relationship between the driver and his passengers along with a mix of romance and tragedy." Senior police officer, Praveen Gurung, who was also the chief guest in the function wished the team good luck on their journey and also rued about the lack of appreciation that local talent get in the state. The film features Denjam Lepcha as Anam Zorbu along with Bhumika Upreti as the leading lady along with a host of other local artists.



## Swachhta Hi Sewa campaign concludes at Pegong

**GANGTOK, 17 DEC:** The 11th Battalion of Indo Tibetan Border Police led by Commandant Rajesh Kumar Tomar organized the closing ceremony of the awareness and community mobilization programme under 'Swachhta Hi Seva' campaign at Pegong in North Sikkim on 16 Dec. Unit personnel of 11th Bn participated in cleanliness drive conducted at various places of Pegong. The local administration and the public extended gratitude to the ITBP team for taking the initiative, a press release informs.

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## Socially Challenged

For some resolutions beyond improving the self

Another year is drawing to a close, and in a year-end through which much continues to happen in the political arena, as was predictable given the closeness of the next election cycle, it is still social concerns which underline the problem areas for Sikkim.

Given that the SDF Government has completed 23 years in office and is now three years deep into its fifth term, a spurt of politicking was always on the cards and has been surfacing around it for a while now. There will obviously be some disgruntlement around and also the need to remain politically remembered, a task made easier by the State's intransigence to remain uncommunicative by way of explaining things even as it promulgates substantial policy decisions. But even as politics provides for some vicarious pleasures in the viciousness with which the different sections have a go at each other and the convenience with which divergent ideologies manage to find common ground by targeting a common adversary, experience bears out that these passions are only seasonal in Sikkim. What are leaving more permanent scars, however, are the worrying social challenges which have been around for a while now, but because they have remained largely ignored by the people at large, have grown in their potential to harm. Petty crime is on the rise, with occasional reports of muggings coming in from the capital's by-lanes, and suicides continue to haunt. Addiction consistently converts more people at still younger ages and corruption stories remain in circulation. Now, crimes logged under the POCSO Act also surface routinely to disturb and distress. Social crimes, frauds and scams have made it to the headlines this year as well.

Much as one would want to get convinced that these are problems erupting out of poor governance, because that would absolve the lay people of blame, fact remains that these are ills that a poor social fabric foment. All it takes to contain these "ills" is more sharing which will bring about more support and that will guarantee defence. There have been few, very few, instances when people have come together to further a good cause. There have been too many indications of a disinterested society more comfortable at sweeping its responsibilities under the carpet than addressing issues head on and solving them. The lethargy one often associates with the bureaucracy is as acute among the people who should make up the civil society and Sikkim remains the poorer for it. Agreed, there have been individual initiatives, some of which have dropped out while some continue with the struggle, but there has been no consolidated effort by the people [through their social organisations and other associations] for anything. Every initiative that should have come from the people has come from the government instead. This does not always work, because if the people themselves are not convinced or motivated enough or concerned enough, then mere legislations or policy initiatives will not help.

The present times are times of change, rapid change, and unless the society remains involved in this process of change, and thus noticing challenges early enough and preparing for it, it will soon realise that they have mutated into something ugly when they could have metamorphosed into something much prettier. With our vacuity, we also cripple the chances of an improved future for the coming generations. That will be a guilt difficult to live down and will hopefully play on all minds when New Year resolutions are made, again, in a fortnight's time. As more of us make resolutions to make or individual selves and healths better, perhaps some moments can also be spent ruminating over how we can collectively improve as a collective.

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# Kenya's 2017 elections: how new media stole the mainstream's thunder

GEORGE OGOLA  
*theconversation.com*

Seven years ago then Nigerian president Goodluck Jonathan announced his presidential candidacy on Facebook. At the time the move was unprecedented and marked a significant departure from political tradition. His unusual choice seemed to symbolise a new dawn in Africa – the affirmation of social media as the new platform of choice for public communication.

The intervening years have seen social media emerge as a dominant force in the political space across the continent. This has been particularly true during elections, with Kenya's recent contested poll as the latest example.

Kenya is a particularly interesting case study when it comes to the role of social media in politics. Kenya's mainstream media is constrained by a number of limitations. These include reliance on government advertising, state intimidation and a partisan corps of journalists strongly wedded to ethnic loyalties. The recent elections show that it is losing its place as the pre-eminent agenda setter in the country. That role is gradually being taken over by social media.

Across Africa, mainstream media have traditionally been the unrivalled custodians and originators of the public agenda. They set the agenda, and the parameters of discussion. This dominance has been problematic. It has homogenised conversations and excluded many.

In Kenya, this dominance facilitated something particularly pernicious: thought control. Political discourse was in principle manufactured and not allowed to organically emerge and evolve. In part this was because the country's media sector has been dominated by two media organisations, the Nation Media Group and the Standard Group, since independence. Further institutionalising this exclusion were the state-owned VoK/KBC TV and radio.

But this year, that dominance has been violently disrupted. Social media burst onto the scene as a new regime of information production and dissemination, operating unencumbered by the structural and political limitations the country's mainstream media often face.

### SUBJECT OF RIDICULE

Kenya's mainstream media are now pejoratively referred to as the "Githeri media". A badge of dishonour, the term was coined following what many regarded as this media's obsession with the trivial – its unrelenting coverage of Martin Kimotho also



known as the "Githeri man".

Kimotho was photographed eating githeri, a humble meal of boiled maize and beans, out of a polythene bag while queuing to vote in the August general elections. A voter who took the photograph shared it with friends before it went viral. It was then picked up by mainstream media who turned Kimotho into an unlikely celebrity.

For days across local newspapers and TV stations "Githeri man" became headline news. An overnight celebrity, he was feted by companies as the mainstream media cheered on by giving him extensive coverage. He has recently received a Head of State Commendation.

The more serious issues about the highly contested elections, including electoral irregularities and malpractices, were being debated elsewhere – on social media websites, most notably Facebook and Twitter.

The characterisation of Kenya's mainstream media as the "Githeri media" underscored two important issues. First, it underlined the public's loss of faith in the mainstream media. The consequence was that many moved to alternative platforms for news.

Second, it was a subtle indictment of the media as irredeemably partisan. While boiled maize and beans is a meal enjoyed by many communities across the country, githeri actually indexes a specific community – the Kikuyu. The coded message was that the mainstream media was con-

trolled by – and therefore supported – Uhuru Kenyatta's government.

The shift to social media was not particularly surprising. Internet penetration in the country is staggeringly high at 90%. The average internet penetration rate on the continent is only 31%.

More important is what Kenyans use the internet for. According to Portland Communications, a UK based political and public relations consultancy firm, Kenya has arguably one of the most active online communities on the continent after Egypt, Nigeria and South Africa. Equally notable according to their report "How Africa Tweets" is that one out of 10 of the most popular hashtags in 2015 in Africa relate to political issues and politicians. This compares with only 2% of hashtags in the US and the UK where Twitter is used mainly for commercial campaigns.

### KENYANS ON TWITTER

Significant social and political issues are discussed by Kenyans on Twitter – or KOT as they are popularly known. The platform has become a powerful source of information and a point of reference for those disillusioned with the country's mainstream media. (This is true for the Kenyan media too.)

But the disruption of the agenda setting role of mainstream media doesn't mean that social media is providing the required corrective. The Kenyan social media scene is renowned for both its bravery as well as its bad behaviour.

It's force for good was shown

when during the elections Kenyans on Twitter called politicians to order. Once polling started this group forced the electoral commission to respond to various allegations of electoral irregularities.

But social media also had served as a platform for hate speech as many exploited the fact that they could post anonymously to abuse and threaten individuals and communities without fear of legal retribution.

### NOT A LEVEL PLAYING FIELD

Less talked about are also the various "divides" that hinder the role of social media platforms as credible alternatives to the mainstream media.

Digital media demands levels of digital literacy. This remains uneven because participation is determined in large part by class, age and geography. The progressive possibilities of social media are therefore tempered by the way in which it operates.

Significant too are the hierarchies that have emerged online. Those with the largest following tend to be politicians, celebrities, media personalities and those familiar with the digital literacy necessary to build a following. What these people say dominate conversations. The nature of agenda setting is thus personality driven. This is one of the most fundamental flaws of the online communication economy, and one that demands that we develop a deep circumspection about this new dawn in Africa.

[The writer is Reader in Journalism, University of Central Lancashire]

## Star Wars is colonial fantasy: How our future imaginings are limited by our past

J. ANDREW DEMAN,  
*theconversation.com*

Most Star Wars films open with the simple text "A long time ago in a galaxy far, far away..." To many people this is a cute gimmick, but it actually gives the audience an important sense of what is to come because the Star Wars franchise is, and has always been, far more interested in our past than in our future.

Despite the "long time ago," Star Wars is set in the future in terms of how we conceive of it. The human society depicted is one that features more advanced technology than we currently have, a technology that reflects our trajectory in transportation, telecommunication, military technology, artificial intelligence and robotics.

All the things they have, it seems, are better than what we have, yet these are all things that our society is clearly inching closer and closer to obtaining.

So what kind of future does Star Wars show us? Well, a familiar one, to put it mildly – one that in spite of the spaceships and laser-swords is more reflective than speculative. We are taken away to the far reaches of space, but, once there, we find the Second World War, feudal Japan, 1930s America and even the classical age of heroes from Greco-Roman culture.

### STAR WARS AS COLONIAL FANTASY

When George Lucas and his collaborators built their world, they sought to give it a sense of depth and politics (sometimes to the chagrin of the prequel-watchers). Star Wars draws on our past to create everything from political structures to the very ecosystems of the planets themselves.

One of the more commonly described oddities of the Star Wars universe is the notion of entire planets with one climate. We are introduced to des-



ert planets and ice planets and swamp planets. Of course, any one planet could have a myriad of different climates and ecosystems in the real world. But this peculiar detail reveals the metaphor that Star Wars is working with: each planet in Star Wars is basically each country in our world.

This metaphor allows the Star Wars universe to essentially retell stories from the era of British imperialism. The empire then becomes quite familiar to us, especially on the surface. In Star Wars, though, the empire is the enemy and the undisciplined, free-spirited rebels become the heroes – thus aligning Star Wars with thematic elements from the American Western even amid the trappings of British imperialist narratives.

A star destroyer, or perhaps even a Death Star, reads a lot like a navy warship and space itself becomes little more than an ocean to travel across in search of new adventures.

We see this metaphor further reflected in the ranks and hierarchies of the Galactic Empire, which

is often reminiscent of the British naval hierarchy.

Harkening back to imperialism is obviously problematic, yet still somewhat common for science fiction (SF). The great SF writer, Ursula Le Guin, wrote about this in her famous 1975 essay, "American SF and the Other."

"From a social point of view most SF has been incredibly regressive and unimaginative. All those Galactic Empires, taken straight from the British Empire of 1880. All those planets – with 80 trillion miles between them! – conceived of as warring nation-states, or as colonies to be exploited, or to be nudged by the benevolent Imperium of Earth towards self-development – the White Man's Burden all over again. The Rotary Club on Alpha Centauri, that's the size of it."

For Le Guin, who was writing just two years before the first Star Wars film premiered, this imperial metaphor was problematic and indicative of a tendency in SF to long for the past rather than to

turn to pg05

**No pay for 1 yr: Assam hills council plans VRS for staff**

**GUWAHATI, DEC 17 (PTI):** Having failed to pay salary to its nearly 2,300 employees for the last one year, the North Cachar Hills Autonomous Council is planning voluntary retirement for around 1,000 staff to "get rid" of them and has sent a Rs 200-crore proposal to the Assam government for approval.

The North Cachar Hills Autonomous Council (NCHAC), which controls almost all departments in the Dima Hasao district with executive power except general administration, police, treasury, election and judiciary, has not paid any salary to its employees since November 2016.

NC Hills Autonomous Council Employees' Union (NCHACEU) and activists have alleged massive corruption and leakage of funds for the situation.

The council, however, has blamed huge non-required hiring by earlier governments for the current situation and sent a proposal for a Voluntary Retirement Scheme (VRS) for its employees to the Assam government for approval.

"When the new administration took charge of the council 15 months ago, the salaries were pending for nine months. The earlier governments hired unnecessarily, giving jobs to their close ones and that led to this scenario," NCHAC Chief Executive Member (CEM) Debolal Garlosa told PTI. The council has 2,270 people on its rolls and salaries have not been paid since November 2016, he added.

"The monthly salary requirement is Rs 6.3 crore, while our revenue collection is just around Rs 2 crore. Moreover, when we took charge, the DA was 65 per cent and now it is 109 per cent. So, how can we handle? No CEM can handle it unless the state or central government helps," Garlosa said.

When asked about the solution to the present crisis, he said the only way is to reduce the head count immediately so that there is minimum accumulation of wages to be paid, besides working to increase the revenue.

"We can function very well with about 1,200 people. So, around 1,000 people are extra and we need to get rid of them.



**Miss Kalimpong contestants visit orphanage**

**REBYNA RANA GANGTOK, 17 DEC:**

A sports event, one of the subtitle events for the upcoming Miss Kalimpong 2017, was held today at Dr Graham's

Homes School in Kalimpong.

A few days ago the contestants along with Miss Kalimpong CEO, Gyalshen Lha and board members interacted with the kids of an orphanage in

Kalimpong.

The team brought books, food, blankets, stationeries and chocolates for the kids. The orphanage is run by a Kalimpong resident, Kunal Ghatani.

"I feel this beauty pageant is all about bringing a difference in the society and showing all the youngsters that they actually can contribute to the society", stated Gyalshen Lha.

**Man-elephant conflict keeping Assam forest department on toes**

**DURBA GHOSH**

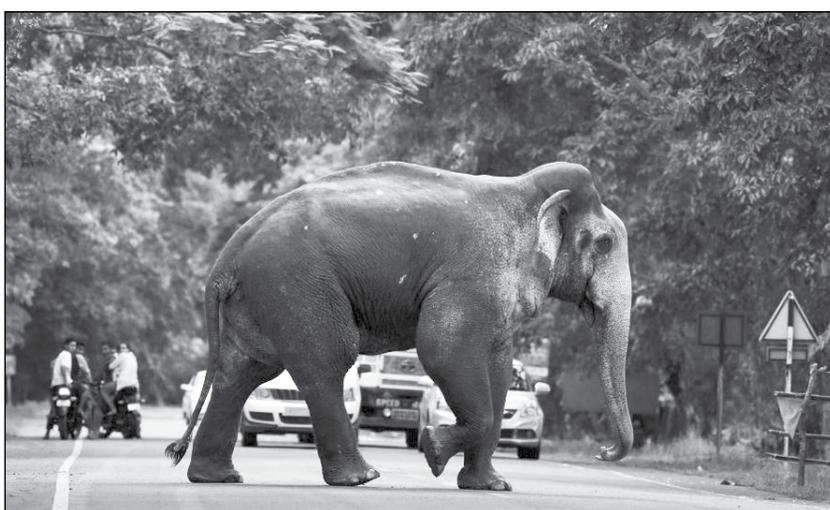
**GUWAHATI, DEC 17 (PTI):** The man-elephant conflict has assumed alarming proportions in Assam this year, raising the hackles of conservationists and compelling the state government to take initiatives to resolve the issue.

Altogether 70 elephants have died this year and causes vary from train accidents to poisoning and electrocution, according to the forest department.

Unnatural deaths account for 48 jumbo lives though conservationists claim the figure may go up to 70 if trans boundary fatalities are taken into account. Injured elephants often stray into neighbouring states and even to Bhutan and Bangladesh.

A total of 48 people have been trampled to death by elephants till November this year, a forest department estimate revealed.

The human casualties mostly occur during the dry season when the animals move out of their habitat in search of food and water.



Assam Chief Minister Sarbananda Sonowal has voiced concern over the recent incident of a train mowing down five elephants in Sonitpur district, and directed the forest department to take concrete measures to solve the crisis.

The recent rise in number of elephant deaths is a matter of serious concern, the CM said.

More number of jumbos are seen moving out

of their habitats to shift to new areas, he added.

Forest Minister Pramila Rani Brahma pointed out that her department has taken certain initiatives to resolve the man-elephant conflict, which has seen a rise in the recent years due to growth in human population, encroachment of forest areas and deviation of elephant routes.

The forest department has set up control

rooms at its divisional offices to monitor the situation and anti-depredation squads have been set up in each division to deal with the problem.

The department along with North East Frontier Railways has organised awareness workshops for train drivers to help them tackle a situation arising out of elephant movement near railway tracks.

"The department will

involve the local youths as volunteers to resolve the issue of man-elephant conflict," she said.

Forest officials have also appealed to the public to report about elephant movement in human habitats, near railway tracks or loose electric wires, at the nearest forest office, police station, circle office, electricity department and nearest railway station.

"The department is

striving hard to deal with the various challenges posed (by man-animal conflicts)... We cannot solve this complicated problem without the help and cooperation of the public," the minister said.

The primary reason behind the increase in man-elephant conflict is the decline of forest cover in the area, noted conservationist and the secretary-general of NGO Aarayank, Bibhab Talukdar, said.

Human interference in the guise of development has destroyed and fragmented wildlife habitats and blocked migration routes, he said, adding that fast distribution of compensation to the next of kin of those killed by elephants could reduce the anger of local people.

The conservationist also urged the forest department to undertake afforestation drives, identify areas where the elephants move and undertake joint patrolling with railway personnel, involve local people to provide information and conduct awareness campaigns.

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**Star Wars is colonial fantasy: How our future imaginings...**

*contd from pg04*

aspire toward the future.

**A LONGING FOR THE PAST**

Consider, for example, that Star Wars draws on the aerial dogfighting genre in order to create a satisfying yet familiar depiction of our future. If you compare that depiction to our current state of aviation warfare — with unmanned drones and missiles that leave the aircraft long before the enemy fighter is even visible to the pilot — the reality just isn't as satisfying.

Similarly, the cantina scene is a nod to the watering holes of film noir and, before that, to the den-of-thieves inns so common to fantasy literature.

The Jedi culture is, of course, feudal Japan by way of Akira Kurosawa's films. The Star Wars empire's aesthetic is that of the Nazi era.

Even the artificial intelligence is somewhat backwards in its conception, with advanced AI automatons who act within a familiar paradigm: the classic "odd couple" dynamic.

The plot is equally attentive to the past. As noted by many scholars, and by George Lucas himself, Star Wars is a classic example of a monomyth, the hero's journey — a basic storytelling structure identified by Joseph Campbell in 1949. The monomyth has some room for interpretation, but also a surprising amount of specificity to it; and Star Wars sticks very closely to that structure, thus aligning the journey of Luke Skywalker with that of classical heroes such as Hercules, Theseus and Odysseus.

**STAR WARS IS GREAT FANTASY, NOT SCIENCE FICTION**

All of this leads to a simple question:

If Star Wars is so compelled by our past, what does it say about us that, even in our most dynamic futurescape, we feel the need to seek out the familiar? The best answer to this might entail a sort of perceptual paradigm shift that begins with a controversial realization: Star Wars isn't science fiction.

Beginning with Mary Shelley and Jules Verne, SF was a genre that defined itself by exploring, in fiction, the consequences of our society's technological development. Star Wars, however, isn't engaged with that exploration. In fact, by most any widely accepted definition of SF, Star Wars doesn't count, and that's OK.

Instead of comparing it to the works of H.G. Wells or Isaac Asimov or Kim Stanley Robinson, we can compare Star Wars to the works of George MacDonald and

J.R.R. Tolkien and Neil Gaiman, and there we find a much more favourable lens by which to understand and appreciate what the Star Wars universe accomplishes. This isn't SF — it's fantasy in outer space, and, more than that, it's really good fantasy.

What makes Star Wars great isn't a vision of our future, but the imaginative satisfaction that Star Wars creates in drawing from our past. There's no prophecy here, just a tacit acceptance that thinking about the future is disorienting and frightening, and a little familiarity can be a whole lot of fun.

Perhaps more than that, Star Wars can be seen to provide our society with a sort of regression therapy, by allowing us to work through our past within the safe space of a detached future. With fresh eyes, we see the evil of imperialism, the

power of the righteous individual, and the range and scope of the transcendent force that binds us all as human beings.

With the release of a brand new Star Wars film, it is compelling to reflect upon just how much our love for the Star Wars universe says about who we are in this universe.

Wrapped in the visual trappings of a future society, Star Wars is a nostalgic hodgepodge of the most dynamic and captivating concepts from our past — real and fictional. The art of creating that, the delicate balance it requires (one that so many other films have tried and failed to achieve) is, like the best Star Wars films themselves, a wonder to behold.

*[the writer is Professor, University of Waterloo]*

# I'll knock Ernest out in early rounds: Vijender

**NEW DELHI, DEC 17 (PTI):** India's boxing sensation Vijender Singh is eyeing another knockout win during his double title defence against African Champion Ghana's Ernest Amuzu in Jaipur on December 23.

The 32-year-old Indian, who is the WBO Asia Pacific and WBO Oriental Super Middleweight Champion, currently holds a 9-0 record with seven knockout wins out of which six wins were recorded abroad and three in India.

This will be his fourth bout in the country.

With an aim to make it 10-0 in the Pro boxing ring, Vijender is training hard and warned his rival to not take him lightly.

"My trainers Lee Beard and John Joyce are in India and we have watched videos of Ernest, my previous opponent was



SouthPaw and now Ernest is Orthodox so I have worked alot on changing my technique according to this opponent," Vijender, who had won a bronze at Beijing Olympics, said.

"My coaches have worked out strategies against him in the ring. I am almost prepared for this fight. I know Ernest is experienced than me in professional boxing with 25 fights and 23

wins but my amateur experience always helps me when I face opponents in the pro boxing ring.

"I think he should not take me lightly in the ring, I will knock him out in the early rounds. This will be my last fight of 2017 and I would like to end my year on a winning note that too with a knockout win," he added.

Amuzu has threatened to leave Indian star boxer Vijender Singh "beaten and broken" when they clash at Sawai Mansingh Indoor Stadium.

"I know this is a mind game and before this all my nine opponents have tried same strategy but i am always focussed on my training," Vijender said.

"Let Ernest do this trash talk, but I am working hard doing 10 rounds of sparring daily with different boxers.

# Sindhu loses in summit clash of Dubai Super Series Final

**DUBAI, DEC 17 (PTI):** Olympic silver medallist P V Sindhu suffered another heart-wrenching defeat against World No. 2 Akane Yamaguchi of Japan to finish as runner-up at the Dubai Super Series Final here today.

In the prestigious season-ending tournament finale, Sindhu played her hearts out before going down fighting 21-15, 12-21, 19-21 to Yamaguchi in an energy-sapping summit clash that lasted an hour and 31 minutes.

It was Sindhu's third loss in a major final, following her narrow defeats at the Rio Olympics and Glasgow World Championship.

Coming into the match



with a 5-2 head-to-head record, Sindhu, who had defeat-

ed Yamaguchi on Friday in the last group match, failed to outlast the diminutive Japanese, who showed better precision and athleticism to clinch the title.

The 22-year-old Indian, who is playing her fourth Super Series final of the year, thus could not surpass Saina Nehwal, who had reached the final in 2011 and mixed doubles pair of Jwala Gutta and V Diju, who also ended runners-up in 2009.

Sindhu had won two super series titles at India Open and Korea Open, besides reaching the finals at Hong Kong Open and World Championship this year.

# From Harry Potter to Joker, heroes and villains at comic fest

**NEW DELHI, DEC 17 (PTI):** With round glasses on a thin face and a lightning bolt-shaped scar on the forehead, Harry Potter at the seventh Delhi Comic Con was precise down to the last detail -- except, of course, for the wizard's vivid green eyes.

Though his heart beats for DC and Marvel comic heroes, school student Aayush Mall, with a wavy tuft of hair, was cajoled by friends into dressing up as the J K Rowling character for his strikingly similar looks.

"I am not really into Harry Potter, but when friends told me I look like him, I thought 'why not!' It actually feels pretty amazing," a beaming Aayush, surrounded by fans from the muggle world, wizards' term for non-magic people, told PTI.

Massive and colourful young crowds have been thronging the NSIC Grounds in Okhla at the Delhi chapter of Comic Con which opened its door to a star-studded weekend.

The three-day festival ending on Sunday has been choosing five best-dressed cosplayers -- or costume players -- every day across categories such as comic books/graphic novels, animated series/movies, manga/anime, sci-fi/fanta-



sy and gaming.

"One lucky winner out of the chosen five get a chance to win Rs 50,000 cash prize each day. The winners get a chance to represent India at the Crown World Championship of Cosplay in Chicago," the organisers said.

The grounds were lined with shops for superhero action figures, pop culture posters and other merchandise, and young fans dressed as their favourite characters walked among the visitors.

While Aayush, cosplaying for the first time, felt "more like

Harry than himself", a swaying Aman Kumar with long hair and a braided beard, aptly imitating Captain Jack Sparrow, dressed so for the love of Hollywood actor Johnny Depp.

"I started cosplaying in 2014, and have always cosplayed as Jack Sparrow except last year. I'm a huge fan of Johnny Depp and that's why I grew my hair and beard," Kumar, who is a Delhi-based fashion photographer and graphics designer, said.

Last year, he was dressed as White Walker, a character from the television series 'Game of

Thrones'.

In another corner posing for photograph requests was Harley Quinn, a deranged psychotic villain from DC's 'The Batman Universe' joined by her boyfriend 'The clown prince of crime', The Joker, himself.

For first-time cosplayer Jahnvi Kataria, a Delhi student dressed as Quinn in a black and blood-red dress, it was all about matching the madness and passion of the psychologist turned psychopath.

"I have always come here as a visitor, but this time I wanted to do something of my own.

And I just love Harley," she told PTI.

While Quinn was more playful and jolly, Karan, a VFX student, dressed as The Joker, had some wisdom to share and not the villain's characteristic maniacal laughter.

Cosplaying for the second time, Karan said he chose the character from Batman because "ultimately everyone is wearing a mask to hide their true self".

And, he is a big fan as well. With almost 600 cosplayer registrations in the first two days, finding a Batman or two was not a difficult task.

Dressed as the Dark Knight, Aditya Mehra, a Mumbai-based real estate businessman, relates to the Caped Crusader as both of them "own a lot of property".

"For the last three years I have dressed as the Batman. No doubt I love Batman but also both of us deal in real estate so I feel a connection," Mehra said before disappearing into the crowd of fans.

The conference, an annual event, also featured programmes such as artist interactions, stand up comedy and sections for Virtual Reality experiences.

# Torres lifts Atletico above beaten Valencia

**MADRID, DEC 17 (AFP):**

Atletico Madrid leaptfrogged Valencia into second in La Liga thanks to Fernando Torres's first goal at the Wanda Metropolitan to edge out Alaves 1-0.

Valencia remain five points off leaders Barcelona in third after falling to a second defeat in three matches 2-1 at Eibar.

Barca can regain their six-point lead over Atletico and open up an 11-point gap over Real Madrid ahead of next weekend's El Clasico between the two with victory over Deportivo la Coruna on Sunday.

Atletico remain unbeaten in La Liga this season, but had to wait until 16 minutes from time to breakdown a dogged Alaves, who had won their first two matches since Abelardo Fernandez was named the club's third coach of the season earlier this month.

Torres had only been on the pitch six minutes when he stretched to fire home Sime Vrsaljko's cross for his first league goal of the season.

"I'm very happy to get the goal. When you score you always have the feeling that you have done a good job," Torres told BeIN Sports Spain.

Torres has started just one league game this season and is hoping his winner might encourage Diego Simeone to give him more opportunities.



"I just have to keep fighting for more minutes and score decisive goals," he added.

Simeone hailed not only the impact of Torres, but also Angel Correa and Yannick Carrasco from the bench as his side moved within three points of Barca and opened up a five-point lead over city rivals Real Madrid in fourth.

"The introduction of Correa, Carrasco and above all Torres in the second half gave us that extra impetus the game was crying out for," said Simeone.

At the other end of the table, Alaves remain three points off safety in 18th.

As Atletico's title charge gains momentum with a fourth straight win, Valencia's unlikely challenge is beginning to falter.

Los Cec missed the firepower offered by suspended top scorer Simone Zaza up front and even the return of playmaker Goncalo Guedes from injury as a second

half substitute failed to inspire Marcelino Garcia Toral's side.

Eibar also took advantage of some meek Valencia defending as a poor clearance teed up Takashi Inui perfectly on the volley to smash home the opener at the near post four minutes after the break.

Valencia reacted well to that blow, though, as a dangerous low cross from Manchester United loanee Andreas Pereira evaded two Eibar defenders and fell perfectly for Santi Mina to tap home his sixth goal of the season.

However, Eibar weren't to be denied as they moved up to seventh with a fourth win in five games when Joan Jordán rose highest to head home Ivan Alejo's cross.

Eibar are now top dogs in the Basque country as the region's two traditional powerhouses Athletic Bilbao and Real Sociedad played out a 0-0 draw at San Mames to remain mired in 13th and ninth respectively.

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Draw No:3 DrawDate on:16/12/17  
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(Including Super Prize Amt)  
3rd Prize Rs.11 Lakhs/- A 8819  
(Including Super Prize Amt)  
4th Prize Rs.5.50 Lakhs/- C 5402  
(Including Super Prize Amt)  
5th Prize Rs.9000/- 0823 3263 3297 5361 5455 5550 5928 6957 7374 8308  
6th Prize Rs.5000/- 0224 0466 0933 2023 4589 5834 6139 6414 7118 8606  
7th Prize Rs.2000/- 2391 2824 4546 6445 6471 6582 6692 6728 7414 9492  
8th Prize Rs.1000/-  
0064 0250 0424 0428 0445 0500 0525 0670 0698 0860  
0874 1111 1121 1139 1141 1213 1462 1516 2009 2025  
2062 2394 2401 2779 3005 3016 3121 3369 3371 3553  
3557 3698 3764 3854 3872 3901 4060 4119 4205 4236  
4349 4397 4579 4637 4688 4769 4805 4897 4907 4989  
5040 5099 5152 5242 5271 5317 5372 5533 5570 5634  
5854 6180 6227 6240 6372 6504 6560 6669 6780 7053  
7130 7150 7186 7301 7432 7518 7708 7754 7775 8037  
8121 8251 8431 8450 8479 8487 8514 8549 8628 9159  
9274 9308 9378 9466 9485 9511 9534 9552 9612 9815  
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Draw Time: 11:55 am onwards  
Draw No:2 DrawDate on:16/12/17  
1st Prize Rs.26 Lakhs/- 81174640  
(Including Super Prize Amt)  
Cons. Prize Rs.9499/- 74640 (REMAINING ALL SERIALS)  
2nd Prize Rs.9000/-  
10960 36948 37861 49570 66191  
70763 75209 79686 82194 84038  
3rd Prize Rs.500/- 0585 1292 1996 3224 3214 4029 6054 6334 7596 9388  
4th Prize Rs.250/- 1360 1534 2721 3084 3449 3618 4566 5436 6865 9706  
5th Prize Rs.120/-  
0006 0152 0206 0210 0247 0367 0371 0384 0436 0487  
0558 0599 0718 0749 1058 1105 1115 1201 1315 1382  
1671 1738 1855 1879 1970 2058 2449 2486 2604 2706  
2722 2877 3028 3111 3138 3226 3235 3457 3578 3698  
3726 3743 3819 3962 3966 4125 4146 4212 4226 4352  
4390 4559 4611 4694 4946 5079 5321 5443 5477 5513  
5519 5777 5812 5856 5859 5946 6187 6226 6262 6263  
6285 6367 6643 6669 6880 6906 6963 7022 7062 7096  
7393 7429 7458 7503 7555 7709 7754 8186 8240 8286  
8384 8547 8699 9044 9012 9147 9358 9447 9602 9847

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### DEAR PRIZED

Draw Time: 04:00 pm onwards  
Draw No:2 DrawDate on:16/12/17  
1st Prize Rs.26 Lakhs/- 90D 74881  
(Including Super Prize Amt)  
Cons. Prize Rs.9499/- 74881 (REMAINING ALL SERIALS)  
2nd Prize Rs.9000/-  
00228 07707 16965 19652 36767  
75807 78238 87398 88610 93202  
3rd Prize Rs.500/- 1189 1986 2339 2687 3307 3608 4180 7433 8770 9943  
4th Prize Rs.250/- 0563 0746 1359 2813 3783 6270 7022 9003 9413 9526  
5th Prize Rs.120/-  
0097 0169 0247 0262 0513 0548 0649 0703 0801 0877  
0888 1015 1058 1072 1093 1111 1271 1373 1454 1531  
1594 1647 2037 2221 2291 2478 2488 2497 2633 3027  
3187 3324 3400 3602 3604 3650 3866 3980 3983 4113  
4140 4177 4198 4328 4458 4459 4679 4689 4739 4751  
4932 5167 5404 5483 5531 5582 5740 5779 5794 5932  
5975 6123 6253 6383 6689 6709 6727 6745 6865 7017  
7137 7183 7239 7314 7327 7557 7607 7675 7686 7932  
7996 8013 8017 8204 8652 8704 8751 8769 9102 9238  
9283 9318 9533 9704 9705 9709 9794 9829 9858 9884

## NAGALAND STATE LOTTERIES

### DEAR OSTRICH EVENING

Draw Time: 08:00 pm onwards  
Draw No:2 DrawDate on:16/12/17  
1st Prize Rs.26 Lakhs/- 96E 84398  
(Including Super Prize Amt)  
Cons. Prize Rs.9499/- 84398 (REMAINING ALL SERIALS)  
2nd Prize Rs.9000/-  
13469 17033 37488 49286 66018  
66754 68312 70389 80200 85774  
3rd Prize Rs.500/- 0002 1486 2624 3836 6899 7743 7783 8119 9279 9984  
4th Prize Rs.250/- 0975 2040 2203 2284 3388 4272 5201 6577 6687 7792  
5th Prize Rs.120/-  
0082 0105 0157 0188 0276 0312 0557 0599 0597 0779  
1050 1142 1188 1231 1288 1366 1422 1483 1550 1598  
1686 1807 1857 2188 2233 2291 2517 2860 3077 3133  
3166 3177 3193 3236 3254 3280 3457 3507 3531 3560  
3599 3829 4009 4068 4088 4610 4799 4819 4854 5080  
5135 5152 5235 5261 5369 5389 5396 5690 5725 5823  
5878 5961 5980 5985 6179 6352 6407 6679 6681 6714  
6742 6837 6887 6903 6967 7218 7260 7295 7536 7870  
8047 8153 8237 8320 8380 8403 8508 8536 8645 8713  
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4th Prize Rs.200/- 2005 5th Prize Rs. 205/- 3509  
6th Prize Rs.100/-  
1010 1040 1046 1057 1106 1139 1141 1166 1217 1233  
1245 1251 1262 1266 1290 1297 1305 1309 1388 1409  
1433 1481 1485 1487 1472 1494 1530 1542 1548 1567  
1601 1612 1613 1642 1646 1652 1659 1676 1785 1786  
1804 1827 1833 1874 1876 1911 1936 1987 2008 2010  
2032 2037 2072 2082 2121 2147 2154 2170 2175 2214  
2220 2233 2252 2262 2302 2303 2313 2332 2382 2500  
2511 2515 2574 2612 2643 2659 2699 2700 2761 2844  
2897 2918 2935 3019 3039 3079 3081 3087 3107 3116  
3131 3156 3162 3176 3199 3239 3315 3337 3384 3386  
3392 3397 3415 3424 3427 3436 3470 3483 3502 3534  
3546 3582 3599 3614 3651 3689 3702 3786 3806 3842  
3868 3887 3907 3927 3999 4001 4017 4059 4063 4076  
4088 4107 4118 4192 4209 4251 4284 4324 4339 4340  
4356 4385 4386 4410 4424 4446 4454 4459 4517 4534  
4560 4572 4574 4596 4611 4623 4631 4650 4663 4696  
4719 4728 4745 4757 4782 4787 4835 4838 4840 4848  
4861 4872 4885 4923 4955 4956 4964 4976 5029 5041  
5075 5139 5153 5162 5188 5189 5205 5215 5234 5300  
5326 5336 5338 5341 5422 5457 5473 5474 5519 5550  
5572 5598 5677 5695 5799 5872 5820 5845 5882 5904  
5966 5987 6003 6009 6012 6030 6031 6038 6214 6222  
6291 6302 6407 6443 6495 6501 6517 6527 6530 6545  
6564 6727 6730 6773 6785 6786 6862 6866 6866

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3rd Prize Rs.1,000/- 1741 4th Prize Rs.505/- 3772  
5th Prize Rs.200/-  
1001 1006 1007 1015 1025 1056 1058 1078 1127 1180  
1212 1215 1244 1257 1419 1434 1552 1635 1705 1706  
1721 1727 1757 1776 1781 1780 1816 1818 1856 1870  
1885 1886 1896 1946 1947 1963 1964 1972 1975 1976  
1983 1991 1992 1995 2003 2087 2089 2164 2170 2181  
2196 2266 2276 2288 2333 2345 2355 2368 2411 2416  
2435 2450 2454 2468 2520 2548 2569 2577 2589 2661  
2675 2686 2690 2695 2871 2962 2985 3014 3033 3071  
3089 3125 3138 3188 3212 3217 3236 3241 3270 3311  
3341 3361 3379 3388 3402 3415 3450 3453 3459 3470  
3477 3496 3547 3619 3633 3637 3638 3639 3644 3669  
3675 3686 3687 3745 3747 3764 3766 3797 3816 3850  
3851 3853 3874 3884 3897 3916 3934 3987 4088 4095  
4104 4118 4160 4200 4300 4321 4324 4326 4356 4414  
4423 4435 4513 4522 4545 4588 4593 4596 4616 4648  
4680 4919 4938 4939 4984 4995 4998 4985 5006 5007  
5048 5125 5163 5182 5200 5241 5250 5257 5260 5278  
5300 5305 5314 5333 5339 5345 5361 5383 5396 5399  
5404 5424 5425 5431 5443 5472 5481 5493 5537 5539  
5587 5598 5704 5799 5887 5883 5878 5896 5914 5942

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# 8 killed, 44 injured in suicide attack on church in Pak

**SAJJAD HUSSAIN**  
**KARACHI/ISLAMABAD, DEC 17 (PTI):** Heavily-armed terrorists attacked a church during a midday service today in the southwestern Pakistani city of Quetta, killing at least eight people and wounding 44 others including children and women.

The attack on the Bethel Memorial Church on Zarghoon road in Balochistan capital came just over a week before Christmas.

Balochistan Home Minister Mir Sarfaraz Bugti said that at least two suicide bombers were involved in the attack on church. "One attacker was killed at the gate by police after an intense firefight while the other wearing suicide vest entered the church and detonated his explosives," he said.

Bugti said that the terrorists had weapons and it seems they wanted to take hostages inside the church.



"The security forces foiled their plan," he added.

Balochistan's Inspector General Moazzam Ansari said there were 400 worshippers inside the church when it was attacked.

Ansari said that police assigned to the church's security

reacted in a timely manner and averted a much larger tragedy.

"Security forces have cleared the church," he added.

Dr Wasim Baig of Civil Hospital said that eight people were killed while 44 others injured, including children and

women. He said that nine injured are in critical condition.

According to the church's Facebook page, it had organised different programmes all throughout December to mark Christmas, and was holding a 'Sunday School Christmas Programme' at the

time of the attack.

No group took responsibility of the attack but the Taliban militants targeted minorities including Christians in the past.

The Bethel Memorial Church has been the target of a terrorist attack in the past.

Meanwhile, there were conflicting reports about the number of attackers.

Ansari said that three militants were involved. He said one was killed by police and the second was able to detonate explosives. He said there are reports that a third militant fled from the scene and police was searching for him.

Earlier, DIG police Abadul Razzaq Cheema said two more attackers were involved but they ran away after one of the attackers was gunned down by police.

Following the attack, an emergency was declared in all hospitals across Quetta.

Pakistan Interior Minister

Ahsan Iqbal condemned the attack, which came a day after Pakistan observed the third anniversary of the Peshawar school attack of 2014 which killed at least 150 people, mostly students.

Foreign Office Spokesperson Muhammad Faisal condemned the terror attack, saying Pakistan's resolve against terrorism cannot be deterred by these cowardly acts of terrorists.

Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf Chairman Imran Khan also strongly condemned the terror attack.

"The govt must ensure special protection for churches as Christmas approaches. My prayers go to the victims' families and for the speedy recovery of the injured," Khan tweeted.

On March 15, 2015, the Taliban suicide bombers attacked two churches in Lahore's Youhanabad neighbourhood, killing 15 people and wounding 70 others.

## More than 30 dead in Philippines due to slow-moving storm

**MANILA, DEC 17 (AP):** A slow-moving storm has left more than 30 people dead and several others missing mostly due to landslides and floods and stranded thousands of holiday travelers in the central Philippines, officials said today.

Sofronio Dacillo Jr, a disaster-response officer, said 26 villagers died and 23 others were missing mostly due to landslides in different areas in the island province of Biliran, where the weather has improved after Tropical Storm Kai-Tak blew over yesterday.

At least seven other people were killed in landslides and floods in four central areas due to Kai-tak, which weakened into a tropical depression but moved south-westward and picked up speed Sunday with sustained winds of 55 kilometers per hour, according to officials and police.

The National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council said it was trying to confirm the reported deaths caused by the storm, which forced more than 89,000 people to flee to emergency shelters. Thousands of Christmas holiday travelers were stranded due to canceled inter-island ferries and flights.

Kai-tak, known locally as Urduja, has remained almost stationary over the eastern section of the central Philippines in recent days, drenching island provinces, setting off landslides and floods and knocking out power in some areas.

President Rodrigo Duterte said he would visit the storm-hit region. About 20 typhoons and storms, mostly from the Pacific, lash the Philippines each year, making the poor country of more than 100 million people one of the most disaster-prone in the world.



Residents of downtown Santa Barbara fled their homes on Saturday as 60mph winds fed wildfires that have been tearing through California. The mandatory evacuations were put in place in Montecito, neighboring Summerland and a portion of Santa Barbara. Workers at the Santa Barbara zoo began putting some animals into crates and kennels in the hopes that they can be evacuated. The 404-square-mile Thomas Fire was moving rapidly westward north of Montecito, home to Oprah Winfrey, Ellen DeGeneres and many other celebrities.

## 2018 year of political writing, say publishers

**NEW DELHI, DEC 17 (PTI):** From memoirs to essays, a spate of books written by Indian politicians will be out in 2018, which promises to be the year of political tomes, publishers here said.

On the anvil are books written by parliamentarians and other politicians. The list includes works by former ministers Kapil Sibal and Shashi Tharoor, and CPI(M)'s general secretary Sitaram Yechury.

Representatives of publishing houses here said the genre of political writing was becoming more and more popular in India.

"The year 2018 will see a number of books written by politicians. Some may be biographies, others are on political situations or equations," said Kapish Mehra, managing director of Rupa Publications.

Though politicians have often penned down their thoughts, the publishers said there was a growing interest among young readers in such books.

"We find youngsters are really getting involved (in this genre). As more and more youngsters vote, they also want to read and be better informed (on politics)," said Ananth Padmanabhan, CEO of HarperCollins.

HarperCollins will publish Yechury's book on Indian politics today, described by the publisher as "one of its kind from a Left leader".

Rupa, who had earlier this year published the writings of former pres-

ident Pranab Mukherjee and former Samata Party leader Jaya Jaitly, will be issuing several new books in 2018.

From former Union ministers Sibal, Manish Tiwari and Salman Khurshid to Parliamentarian Tharoor and former Jammu and Kashmir chief minister Omar Abdullah, readers will have a wide range to choose from.

Sibal's book is on the UPA and his experience as a minister; Abdullah will focus on Kashmir, while Tiwari's is a memoir.

"I think people enjoy reading political memoirs... because there is a political personality involved. A wide gamut of national and international issues get presented to the readers, with an insider's perspective," Mehra said.

Padmanabhan said Indian politicians today felt the need to voice their views, which was "good for democracy" and the country.

"A book makes a statement. When you write a book, you provide clarity and you give new directions. We are glad that people are sitting down to write their books and are not afraid," Padmanabhan stated.

Books by politicians from other countries will also make an appearance next year. Among them will be the memoirs of French President Emmanuel Macron.

"Called revolution, it is a personal memoir -- why he contested and what he wants to do as a president for a better France," Padmanabhan said.

## Cake for 'joyful' pope on his 81st birthday

**VATICAN CITY, DEC 17 (AFP):** Pope Francis celebrated his 81st birthday today with a hero cake and a message urging the world -- and children in particular -- to join in the holiday mood and be joyful.

The Argentine pontiff thanked the crowds gathered in Saint Peter's Square for the Angelus prayer as they sang happy birthday, and was expected to slice into his birthday cake after lunch.

It sports a picture of the pope carrying the world on his shoulders, designed by Italian graffiti artist MauPal.

The artist -- whose real name is Mauro Pallotta -- famously depicted Francis as Superman in 2014 and has since begun supporting Vatican charitable projects by selling T-shirts bearing the flying pope.

The pear and cinnamon delight shows Francis in his white cassock, holding up with one hand the world, which is divided in two but stitched back together -- a symbol of the pope's uni-



fying force, Rome pastry maker Hedera said.

Francis's birthday this year falls on Gaudete Sunday, which the church marks as a moment of particular joy as celebrations for the birth of Jesus Christ approach.

"Be always joyful, even when things don't go as we wish they would," the pope said during the Angelus prayer.

He had earlier stressed the importance of sheltering children from adult woes.

"When children see problems at home, parents that fight, they suffer. Don't make them sad. They must always grow up with joy," he said as he met disadvantaged youngsters looked after by a Vatican foundation.

### NOTICE FOR CHANGE OF NAME

M/s Denzong Lhomen Kiduk, an association registered vide Item No. 186, Volume No. 1, Under Notification No. 2602 A/H dated 25.03.1960 on 19.10.1984, in the meeting of its trustees unanimously decided to change the name of the organization as "Denzong Culture and Heritage Foundation" and the organization has now approached the Law Department, Government of Sikkim to carry out necessary change in its name. Hence, any individual having any OBJECTION against the change of can approach the concerned Department within 30 DAYS from 16.12.2017.

SIKKIM STATE LOTTERIES	
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DEAR TENDER MORNING	DEAR ADMIRE
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## QUANTICO STAR PRIYANKA CHOPRA COULD BE MEGHAN MARKLE'S BRIDESMAID

The friendship between Meghan Markle and actress Priyanka Chopra is sparking rumours she'll be considered to be a bridesmaid.

A Bollywood actress who apparently never reads her emails could be one of the bridesmaids to accompany Meghan Markle when she weds next May.

There is speculation that Priyanka Chopra will be asked by Ms Markle to be part of her bridal party when she gets married to Prince Harry in Windsor on 19 May.

Ms Chopra hit the headlines earlier this year when a friend posted a picture of her holding her phone which displayed more than 250,000



unread emails.

But she was already one of Bollywood's biggest stars and a regular on the red carpet. She was most recently in Bay-

watch, where she played Victoria Leeds alongside Dwayne Johnson and Zac Efron.

Ms Markle met the former Miss World at a party in To-

ronto, when she was filming *Suits*.

She has shared pictures of the two of them together, thanking her for "girl talk", and Ms Chopra congratulated her friend on Instagram when her engagement to the prince was announced.

The 35-year-old is also an ambassador for Unicef, so she and Ms Markle may have shared interests in humanitarian work.

They frequently refer to each other as "my girl" or "my babe" on social media.

Ms Chopra also leapt to her friend's defence when she feared she'd become known as Harry's girlfriend. She told *People*: "Some-

times women become plus-ones and guys become plus-ones. It's who is on the radar more.

"I think in an overall scheme of things, it's harder for girls to be able to make their own and stand for what they are, and I'm a girl love kind of girl."

Jessica Mulrone is also rumoured to be in the mix, and Ms Markle took her to the Invictus Games to meet Prince Harry soon after they made their first official public appearance.

Former *Made In Chelsea* star Millie Mackintosh is close friends with the American actress as well, and could be a contender.



## THIS DAY IN HISTORY

18<sup>TH</sup> DECEMBER

**1914:** Great Britain placed Egypt under its protection of the Crown. The official Press Bureau read, "The suzerainty of Turkey over Egypt is thus terminated, and His Majesty's government will adopt all measures necessary for the defence of Egypt and the protection of its inhabitants and interests."

**1930:** The Northwest costal provinces of Spain are quiet now after a revolt against the monarchy. Soldiers loyal to the crown subdued the rebels. However, a general labour strike occurred and street cars were manned by soldiers. Socialist and republican ring leaders fled.

**1950:** A Russian news source stated that a "peoples' government" has been established to govern the newly developed Tibet's Sikkang province in south-east China.

**1987:** Union Carbide Corporation was ordered to pay out \$270 million in temporary relief to Indian

victims of the 1994 disastrous gas leak which took 2,000 lives. A complete settlement for the plaintiffs had not been finalized even three years later.

**2006:** Partial results from the Iranian elections are suggesting a setback for President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. The elections were for the powerful clerical body, the Assembly of Experts, as well as for local government. With a turnout of sixty percent the winners appear to be the moderate conservatives, while reformists have made a better showing than the last three elections. Former President Akbar Rafsanjani sealed a landslide win for a seat on the Assembly of Experts. With most of the results in for the local elections it would seem that Ahmadinejad's allies have failed to win control of any council.

**2011:** The last US troops to leave Iraq entered Kuwait in a convoy of armored vehicles almost nine years after the initial invasion. A total of 157 US soldiers remained in Iraq for training purposes at the US embassy.

## TIGER ZINDA HAI STARRING KATRINA KAIF AND SALMAN KHAN GETS A U/A CERTIFICATE



**Tiger Zinda Hai** directed by Ali Abbas Zafar and stars Salman Khan and Katrina Kaif as the lead pair. The film is produced by Yash Raj Films and will see Salman and Katrina sizzle on screen after five long years.

The songs and the trailer of the film have created a lot of curiosity among the audience. *Tiger Zinda Hai* will hit the theatres on the December 22 this year and the movie has just been cleared by the CBFC. The CBFC, which is headed by Praseon Joshi currently, has given the film a U/A certificate. Previously, there was a doubt whether Salman Khan and Katrina Kaif's movie would make its scheduled release date. CBFC had brought out a rule that was lying in the dust about movies being submitted to them 68 days before the release. This rule was specifically brought to trouble the

makers of *Padmavati*, but its implementation also troubled the producers of other movies, including *Tiger Zinda Hai*. So the Board relaxed the rule for the other movies and ensure that the producers and the distributors remain relaxed.

Yet another reason to watch Salman's action-packed film is that the first trailer of Rani Mukerji's upcoming film *Hichki* will be attached to *Tiger Zinda Hai*.

*Tiger Zinda Hai* is based on the real-life incident of Indian nurses being abducted and kept captive by Iraqi rebels in 2014. The same incident also inspired Malayalam movie, *Take Off*, that, interestingly, also released in 2017.



**LOVELY COUPLE:** Ellen DeGeneres and wife Portia de Rossi held hands as they did some Christmas shopping in L.A.

## FIRST POSTER FROM THE ALL-FEMALE 'OCEAN'S 8' IS HERE AND IT'S FAB



The spinoff of the original franchise stars A-list actresses including Sandra Bullock, Rihanna and Cate Blanchett.

This is going to be one haute heist. Warner Bros. released its first poster for the all-female "Ocean's 8" film recently and from the looks of it, this movie's going to have a whole bunch of rad ladies rocking slick shades and chic coats.

The poster features Sandra Bullock, Cate Blanchett, Anne Hath-

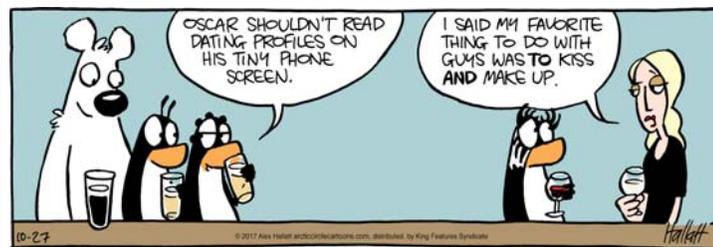
away, Helena Bonham Carter, Rihanna, Sarah Paulson, Mindy Kaling and Awkwafina looking like a pack of stylish thieves trying to be incognito. But c'mon, who's not going to notice Rihanna's green get-up or Blanchett's leopard-print number?

The sequel to Steven Soderbergh's "Ocean's" trilogy stars Debbie Ocean (Bullock), the sister of Danny Ocean (George Clooney). After Debbie gets out of jail, she recruits a crew — Lou

(Blanchett), Nine Ball (Rihanna), Amita (Kaling), Constance (Awkwafina), Rose (Carter), Daphne Kluger (Hathaway) and Tammy (Paulson) — to help her pull off a jewelry heist at New York City's star-studded annual Met Gala.

"The Hunger Games" Gary Ross is directing "Ocean's 8," which is set to hit theaters on June 8. We wish it were sooner because these sleek thieves are stealing our hearts!

## ARCTIC CIRCLE



## BABY BLUES



**THE DAY AHEAD**

**ARIES:** Try to keep your emotions in check today. It's possible that you could become extremely angry and do some damage to yourself and others around you. It's important to maintain certain modesty and humility at all times. You'll build good character that earns the respect of others, including your superiors.

**TAURUS:** You may feel like someone is trying to rain on your parade. It's important not to forget who you are now. Don't be surprised if you feel a negative pull from someone or something. If so, step away from the situation. It's not your responsi-

bility to make everyone happy. Don't bring yourself down as you try to bring others up.

**GEMINI:** Today is a terrific day for you. You're able to accomplish a lot during the day, leaving the night open for excitement with others. Once you take care of the necessary things, feel free to grab a big helping of fun. You've earned the right to break loose and party. There's confidence in your step, so strut your stuff.

**CANCER:** Promote balance and harmony today by letting off a bit of steam before you try to engage with others and their dramas. Secure yourself in a

stable environment where you can vent your concerns, punch pillows, or jog around the block. Once you get that out, you'll have a fresh, new attitude with which to participate in the adventures of the day.

**LEO:** There's aggressiveness to you today, but this feeling can be useful to you and what you have going on. There's a practical force helping you stay grounded and realistic about certain issues. Don't make promises that you know you can't keep. Don't be the salesman who promises the world and then fails to deliver anything.

**VIRGO:** There's increased

emotional tension today. You may be at the forefront of the action as you take things higher and farther. Have a map handy or you could wind up alone in the middle of nowhere. Other people will be looking for something practical in your approach so they have something solid to lean on during this time.

**LIBRA:** Don't hold back today. You're the right person for the job in about every situation you encounter. You'll have the instincts required to move on a project, see what needs to be done, gather the resources, and get the ball rolling. There's an aggressiveness to you that's

urging you to make a grand conquest, paving the way for a huge celebration of feast and fun.

**SCORPIO:** You should try to hold your tongue today. Although you think you have all the answers, you might not have taken all the pieces of the puzzle into account. There is an emotional aggression to the day that may have a strong effect on everyone, especially you. Consider being more of a listener than a talker.

**SAGITTARIUS:** Don't be surprised if you feel like you're being poked with a stick today, as something urges you to get moving. There's an aggressive

energy moving about and making demands on everyone. You should think about how your skills and perceptive nature can be best used to help do things efficiently and effectively.

**CAPRICORN:** Pull yourself together, and figure out what it is your heart desires. There's an aggressive force tugging at your heartstrings today. Unless you have it firmly in your mind what it is you want and feel, you'll be easily pulled off track. Stay grounded and you should be OK.

**AQUARIUS:** Point your aggressiveness in the right direction today. That shouldn't be

too hard since you know and understand the meaning of a job well done and what's required to get things accomplished. You're anxious to get the ball rolling on certain projects. You've done the organization and planning. Trust that you know exactly how to proceed.

**PISCES:** Today isn't a day to lounge around. There's a very important practical matter that must be dealt with before you can engage in any lighthearted activities. The night's events will be fun and rewarding as long as you complete the duties of the day, leaving your mind free of obligations.