

SummitTIMES

Vol 03 | Issue 55 | Gangtok | Friday | 02 March 2018

ON TOP OF THE NEWS

RNI No. SIKENG/2016/69420

Pages 8 | ₹ 5

CM extends warm Holi greetings

SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 01 MAR:

Chief Minister Pawan Chamling and Tika Maya Chamling have extended warm greetings and best wishes to the people of Sikkim on the occasion of Holi.

In a press release, the CM has said that the festival of colours epitomizes unity and brotherhood among people of diverse cultures, religions and sects. He has added that since the festival announces the onset of spring, it signifies new hopes and aspirations for the people.

"Just as the festival symbolises coming together of several colours, may the people of Sikkim belonging to diverse faiths and cultures unite in a singular bond of harmony, brotherhood and love for humanity," the CM has said.

Union Cab clears Fugitive Economic Offenders Bill

NEW DELHI, MAR 1 (PTI): In a bid to tighten noose around fugitives like diamond merchant Nirav Modi and Vijay Mallya, the Cabinet on Thursday approved the Fugitive Economic Offenders Bill that provides for confiscating all assets of absconding fraudsters and loan defaulters.

The proposed law aims to impound and sell assets of Nirav Modi-type escapees with a view to quickly recover dues. The law will apply to defaulters who have an outstanding of Rs 100 crore or more and have escaped from the country.

Finance Minister Arun Jaitley said the Bill, which will be taken to Parliament for approval in the second half of the Budget session beginning March 5, defines a fugitive offender as someone against whom a court has issued an arrest warrant for a scheduled offence and who leaves or has left India so as to avoid criminal prosecution, or refuses to return to India to face trial.

The new law is different from the Prevention of Money Laundering Act, which also provides for confiscation of assets of economic offenders, he said.

Under PMLA, only profit of crime is confiscated and that too upon conviction. The new law extends to all assets irrespective of whether it is acquired as a result of crime or not, he said. "This is triggered by the

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FIRST FLUSH OF TEMI TEA PICKED

Plucking of the first flush of Organic Temi Tea for this season started today, 01 March, at Temi Tea Estate in South Sikkim. "This year, we have set a new record by plucking the first flush ahead of time. Usually it happens in the end of March but this year due to favourable weather conditions, the first flush is ready," said Temi Tea Estate Manager, LT Bhutia. [from NIRMAL MANGAR]

Most cases of sexual abuse of minors go unreported: Satyarthi

KARIMNAGAR (TELANGANA), MAR 01 (PTI): Fifty-three per cent of children below the age of 18 in the country are sexually abused and most do not come forward to report it, Nobel Peace Prize recipient and children's rights activist Kailash Satyarthi said.

He was interacting with schoolchildren here yesterday.

He added that his organisation, the Bachpan Bachao Andolan, had decided to make Karimnagar a child-friendly district or Bal Mitra Gram.

The initiative, the BBA's website claims, seeks to create villages where every child is free from exploitation, receives education, recreation and health facilities and their voices are heard in the community in an environment of friendliness and dignity.

He said that, as part of initiative, more than 600 villages in the country were now child-friendly.

"To become a child-friendly district, children should not be abused in any manner and every one of them should be sent to school," he informed the gathering yesterday.



ing yesterday.

Satyarthi said that the government needed to spend more funds on the safety of children and the participation of the corporate sector was also required.

He lauded the efforts of local Member of Parliament B Vinod Kumar who had introduced a private member bill demanding protection of rights of orphans.

"Children are makers of history and the development of the country was not possible without them," Satyarthi said.



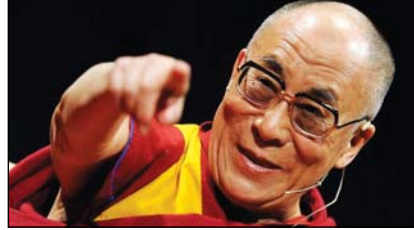
Minister Ghatani inaugurates REDRH, CMRHM, PMAY houses

SIGENG, 01 MAR [IPR]: Minister Arjun Kumar Ghatani inaugurated 10 houses constructed under Reconstruction of Earthquake Damaged Rural Houses [REDRH], Chief Minister's Rural Housing Mission [CMRHM] and Pradhan Mantri Awaas Yojna [PMAY] in Mabong Sigeng Gram

Panchayat Unit under Salghari Zoom constituency today. He was accompanied by Block Development Officer, Mangalbaray BAC, Prem K Subba, Assistant Engineer, Anglmit Lepcha, Panchayats, youth and others.

While interacting with the

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Dalai Lama says he feels inspired to work for another 20 years

DHARAMSHALA, MAR 1 (PTI): The 82-year-old Dalai Lama today said that he feels inspired to continue his work for 20 years.

The Tibetan spiritual leader said he wants to continue his work despite his old age.

He said this after more than 875 nuns from 40 nunneries, representative of the five sects of Tibetan Buddhism and Bon tradition, from India, Nepal Bhutan organised a prayer for long life of the Dalai Lama at the main temple - Tsuglagkhang - in Dharamshala.

The temple is near the Dalai Lama's official residence.

The spiritual leader, who was present at the function, said: "I am indeed happy that this offering is being made together by nuns of all five sects of Tibetan Buddhism. It is indeed applaudable."

He said now Tibetan Buddhist nuns have also earned the Geshe degree, the highest-level of scholarship, previously reserved for monks only.

"I am very proud of your achievement and encourage all of you to pursue the highest scholarship in Buddhist study. This is the 21st century and we need to understand Buddha's teachings in the light of reason.

"After coming to India and reviving monasteries and nunneries successfully, I encouraged monks and nuns to pursue study of Buddhas teachings, root texts and the five great treatises," he said.

The function was attended by Central Tibetan Administration (CAT) president Lobsang Sangay, Chief Justice Kargyu Dhondup and several religious leaders of the Tibetan community and Indians.

Sikkimey Ama Ko Choras to commemorate Mother Earth with rally

SAGAR CHETTRI
GANGTOK, 01 MAR:

Under the banner 'Sikkimey Ama Ko Chora', three Sikkimese youths namely Kunga Bhutia, Dawa Gurung and DS Limboo will be carrying out a rally from Rangpo to Zero Point in Gangtok as part of their 'Ama Chora Relay Prostration Campaign' from 07-08 Mar to commemorate the International Women's Day.

Addressing a press

conference, Mr Bhutia and Mr Gurung have urged people especially the youth to be a part of this campaign. He added that the main objective of the rally is to spread the message of love and respect to Mother Earth among the people.

He added that the rally also wants to register concern over the increasing rate of suicides and drug addiction and other social issues of the State.

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HRDD Minister inaugurates new Pry School at Kharpaney Budang



SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 01 MAR:

Minister of Human Resource Development, RB Subba, today formally inaugurated the newly established primary school at Kharpaney Budang village of Mangsari-Makarjung Gram Panchayat Unit under Soreng-Chakung Constituency.

A press release informs that the school has started with 35 students. There are three teachers offering their service voluntarily on temporary basis till the school gets regular teachers and Headmaster which will be done very

soon. The school is being run in a private building till the new departmental building is constructed.

The inaugural ceremony also had the presence of Joint Director/West, T Eden Bhutia, and other departmental officers of the district together with members of the public.

Free text-books, uniforms, shoes and exercise-books were distributed to the students during the programme.

It may be mentioned here, HRDD Minister, Mr Subba, has supported the school committee with financial help in order to start the school.

Meeting on Disaster Management and Land Rights in Namchi

**SUMMIT REPORT
NAMCHI, 01 MAR:**

A meeting cum awareness on Disaster Management, Land Registration, Power Transmission and Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation & Resettlement [LARR] Act was organized at Officer's Club in Namchi, South Sikkim.

The meeting was presided over by District Collector [South], Raj Yadav, and was attended by all Sub Divisional Magistrates, Joint Director, Training Officers, Quick Response Team of South District, Revenue Surveyor/Assistant Revenue Surveyor/Head Surveyor and Registration Clerks of all sub-divisions of South district.

A press release received from the DC Office informs that at the outset of the meeting, essential equipment such as compass, measuring tape, track suit, bag, etc were provided to the RS/ARS/HS and QRTs.



The SDM [headquarter] gave a brief presentation on land registration. He informed about all the necessary procedures to be followed during the registration and the importance of sale deed documents and stamp duties to be enforced. He also cited a few examples of High Court cases.

The DC [South] highlighted the key issues under National Highway Act, 1956. Rates calcu-

lation was explained at length. Certain examples of peculiar cases were also discussed.

The key features of RECTLARR 2013 and the multiplication factor and the solarium was also informed in detail. Additionally, he also gave a brief presentation on Disaster Management Act and updated about the types of fund under the SDRF.

He also requested the RS ARS to be prompt in

reporting all incidents of disasters within the district. Further, the way to fill up the ex-gratia form was also discussed at length. All the rates under the SDRF guidelines for damages to housing, agriculture, animal husbandry, etc was also provided.

The DC also requested the staff to get a certified report from concerned department with issues related to agriculture and animal husbandry.



More piglets and heifers distributed in Dzongu

**WANGCHUK BHUTIA
MANGAN, 01 MAR:**

Forest, Environment & Wildlife Department in coordination with Animal Husbandry Department, North Sikkim distributed 113 piglets and 35 heifers today for the beneficiaries of Lower Dzongu in North Sikkim under Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchayee Yojana [Integrated Watershed Management Programme-I, North].

It may be mentioned here, the Forest Department has targeted to distribute 226 piglets and 70 heifers for Dzongu constituency. A similar programme had been organized on 22 Feb at Namprikdang ground for the beneficiaries of Upper Dzongu.

The function was chaired by Deputy Speaker SLA cum Area MLA, Sonam Gyatso Lepcha, as chief guest in the presence of Chief Conservator of Forest cum Member Secretary, BP Pradhan, Zilla member, Tshering Gyatso Lepcha, Assistant Conservator of Forest-IWMP, TW Lachungpa, Panchayat members and other officials.

Divisional Forest Officer cum Project Implementing Agency, NT Bhutia, highlighted about the scheme and urged all the beneficiaries to take care of the animals. He further added that the Forest Department has been working for the welfare of the people by providing different schemes and urged all to take advantage of it. He also expressed his gratitude to the Chief Minister for the scheme.

Likewise, CCF cum Member Secretary, Mr Pradhan, underlined that the main objective of IWMP is to preserve and store water. He further encouraged Self Help Groups to take loan from the department at minimum interest as many such schemes are lying in the department. He also stressed that a monitoring team will be visiting to take stock of the progress of the schemes.

Joint Director, Animal Husbandry Department [North], Dr KT Bhutia, sensitized the beneficiaries about dairy farming and also informed about insurance for the animals. He further stressed that the

beneficiaries should immediately inform the Animal Husbandry Department in case of any animal falling ill. He also delivered tips on prevention of animal diseases.

"Apart from poultry and milk, we are still not self reliant and have to depend on neighboring hills for the procurement of animals. The department expects to fulfill such needs from our own locality," he stressed.

Addressing the function, chief guest, Mr Lepcha urged the farmers to undertake organic farming for healthy living. He further said that the state government has provided various schemes at the doorstep of the people but they still show their dissatisfaction.

He also announced that Rs 6 crore has been sanctioned for the carpeting of Rongdol Gor road and urged the Panchayat members to work for the people.

Urging the Forest & Animal Husbandry Departments to include more schemes for the people of Dzongu, he appealed to the people to be united and sincere for development.



Jorethang lad shares life of a teenager in debut book

**YUGAN TAMANG
GANGTOK, 01 MAR:**

In a function held at Green Park in Jorethang on 28 Feb, 21-year-old Mifsar Lama hailing from Jorethang in South Sikkim released his debut book "Good Days" in the midst of his well-wishers and supporters.

"Good Days" is a compilation of nine short stories based on his various experiences. The book also reflects the various situations and circumstances that a teenager comes across and also provides a lesson to the young minds through some fictional short narratives.

Born and brought up in Jorethang, Mifsar is the son of Mary Lama and Umesh Lama. He completed his schooling from St Francis School in Jorethang and Jorethang Senior Secondary School. Mifsar looks forward to publish many novels and collection of short stories in the days to come.

"Good Days" is a self-published book, edited by Nancy Markhaane and dedicated to his late grandfather.



Training on organic practices of maize and soil health card distribution

**SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 01 MAR:**

Krishi Vigyan Kendra, West Sikkim conducted training on Organic Package and Practices of Maize Variety C-1921 under National Food Security Mission [NFSM] at Ward no 4, Chumbung in West Sikkim for progressive farmers on 27 Feb.

A press release informs

that 32 farmers participated in the said programme.

Subject Matter Specialist [Agronomy], Jaya Prakash Dulal, welcomed the participants and explained the package and practices of maize along with organic nutrients management and methods of seed treatment before sowing.

Around 200 kg of

maize seed was also distributed during the event.

Subject Matter Specialist [Soil Science], Sai Parasar Das, first distributed the soil health cards and then highlighted the importance of soil analysis, method of soil sample collection and explained in detail the recommendations highlighted in soil health cards.

Sikkimey Ama Ko Choras to commemorate Mother Earth...

Contd from pg01

"We have also decided to present a memorandum to the Governor to take immediate action to curb these issues of the State," Mr Bhutia said.

The rally will be starting from Rangpo on 07 Mar. The participants have decided to cover the distance from Rangpo to Majhitar while prostrating along the way, followed by walking from

Majhitar to Golitar and again with prostrations from Golitar to Government Fruits Preservation Factory, Singtam and to end the first day of the rally walking from GPPF to 9th Mile. The participants have decided to halt at 9th Mile.

On the second day, the rally will be continued from 9th Mile and participants will be walking till Ranipool Bridge, then

continue with prostrations up to Organic Village and again walk from Orange Village to Holy Cross School. The rally will conclude with prostrations from Holy Cross School to Zero Point.

"This is totally an apolitical initiative so we would like to appeal to the young generation to come forward to be a part of this campaign," they said.

Minister Ghatani inaugurates REDRH, CMRHM, PMAY...

Contd from pg01

beneficiaries, Mr Ghatani briefed on pro-people policies and programmes of the state government under the leadership of Chief Minister Pawan Chamling to uplift socio-economic status of people.

Mr Ghatani inaugurated three REDRH houses in Doksing [Ward no. 1] and Lower Mabong [Ward no. 3] and handed them over to the beneficiaries Dhan Bahadur Rai, Tika Maya Rai and Chandra P Rai.

Thereafter, he inaugurated six PMAY hous-

es in Lower Sigeng and Middle Sigeng ward. The houses were constructed jointly under PMAY-G and MGNREGA wherein the beneficiaries Som Maya Tamang, Ram B Rai, Mani K Rai, Dorongay Rai, Suk Maya Tamang and Panchaman Rai expressed gratitude to the state government for successful implementation with close monitoring.

A CMRHM house, the construction of which had been stalled, was handed over to the beneficiary Dasharath Rai after completion at Lower Sigeng.

Later, Mr Ghatani visited the ongoing construction site of Primary Health Sub Centre in Middle Sigeng, under Salghari Zoom constituency, West Sikkim. He instructed the concerned officials to ensure water supply along with the completion of construction work. He also advised the public to unanimously pass the demand of road connectivity to PHSC in the Gram Sabha. The Minister took stock of applied techniques in the construction work and suggested to ensure quality output.



HOLIKA DAHAN IN GANGTOK

Chhoti Holi or Holika Dahan at Tadong, Gangtok. It is observed one day before the main festival of Holi wherein holy pyres are burnt signifying the victory of good over evil. People sing and dance around the fire and also perform parikrama of fire, take a round around the fire.

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Sunrise: 05:59AM
Sunset: 5:37 PM

Inter Pharma Fitness Competition to be held in Rangpo

SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 28 FEB:

Bodyvibe Gym and Fitness, Rangpo will be organizing an Inter Pharmacy Bench Press Push Up & Chinning Competition in association with Body Building & Power Lifting Association of Sikkim on 11 Mar at Rangpo Bazaar in East Sikkim.

Bodyvibe Gym and Fitness proprietor and trainer, Sanjay Chhetri, informed that the main objective of the event is to encourage people towards fitness and a healthy lifestyle. He added that the event will have participants from different pharma companies of the State.

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Sikkim gets another female referee

REBYNA RANA
GANGTOK, 01 MARCH:

Sikkim's daughter, Sen Hangma Limboo, is one of the few women in the State who have dared to take the unbeaten path venturing into the male centric game of football. Not only that, she has now become a referee.

Hailing from Yangthang in West Sikkim, 23-year-old Sen Hangma recently made her debut at the national level serving as assistant referee in the 23rd Senior National Women's Championship held from 28 Jan to 14 Feb this year at Cuttack in Orissa.

Among 19 referees selected for the tournament, two referees were from Sikkim namely Sen Hangma and Reshmi Chhetri.

Sharing her journey, Sen Hangma says, "Having received the opportunity to perform as an assistant referee at a senior National level tournament is the most wonderful experience. I am more confident and have learnt to apply new laws. Amongst all the participating referees, I was the junior most. To be able to learn from the seniors and officials is in itself a matter of pride."

She officially joined as a referee in Jan 2018 after completing the Member Association course which was held at Kerala



in Nov 2017 and attending the Project Future India organized by All India Football Federation

for referees on Jan 2018. Sen Hangma has participated in many interschool, inter-departmental and state level tournaments like the LD Kazi Memorial Cup and Oorja Cup.

Apart from being a referee, Sen Hangma also works at Forest Department, Government of Sikkim and juggles between serving the department and practicing her referee skills.

"I love my work, both as a government servant and a referee. I have been blessed to have Mamita Gurung, who was a Physical Education Teacher previously and now is the Additional Director of Sports Department, Soreng, as my mentor back at school. She has been there throughout, by my side," says Sen Hangma.

She has also extended gratitude to her friends and sisters for their genuine support and her mentor, Chamchuk Lama of Gangtok, who has encouraged and polished her to reach where she stands now. She also thanks senior referee, Reshmi Chhetri, for her unconditional love and support.

"My family is what inspires and motivates me the most. Without them, I am nothing," says Sen Hangma.

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No involvement in Gangtok rally say Bihar coaching institute students

SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 01 FEB:

Students of coaching institute Eklavya Super 50, Patna today clarified that the rally organized by different colleges and Sikkim University in solidarity with a molestation victim studying in Patna was done without their consent and knowledge and that none of their students were involved in the rally.

A press release issued by Eklavya Super 50 informs that their classes in Patna are going well and they are satisfied with studies and accommodation.

"On 17 Feb, an unfortunate incident occurred and the accused was arrested with the effort of the victim and other students. Soon we received a call from Additional Chief Secretary, HRDD, Government of Sikkim assuring all possible help and support. He said that he had called Home Secretary of Bihar to take strongest possible action against the accused. He also spoke with the victim and her father. He asked us to visit his office as soon as we reached Sikkim. We met the ACS on 24 Feb at

his office and he assured us admission of those students who want to study here in Sikkim. A meeting of all students and their parents was held in Gangtok on 26 Feb to discuss about the continuation of their studies," the release states.

It is further informed that out of 28 students, 11 opted to study in Sikkim while the remaining 17 wanted to continue their studies in Patna.

The ACS has assured the admission of 11 students in different schools around their locations and has asked the remaining 17 students and their parents to meet him on 05 Mar as he is out of station at present.

"Yesterday's rally accused the state government of not helping the students which is completely wrong. The accused is behind bars. We have been receiving continuous help from the head of HRDD since the unfortunate incident occurred," Eklavya Super 50 adds in the release.

They have extended gratitude to the ACS, Government of Sikkim for his unconditional support throughout.

SJE&WD grants incentives to 20 couples with differently-abled spouse

GANGTOK, 01 MAR [IPR]:

With an aim to improve the socio-economic standards of the people living with various disabilities, Department of Social Justice, Empowerment & Welfare awarded incentives to differently-abled persons, NGOs working in the field of Disabilities and Prevention of Alcoholism and Substance [Drug] Abuse and Marriage with Disabled Person here at its conference hall in Lumsey, Gangtok on 28 Feb.

Minister for SJE&WD, Tulsi Devi Rai, attended the occasion as chief guest.



Addressing the gathering, Ms Rai said, "This endeavor is to help differently-abled couples ease into mainstream society and enable them to lead a life of happiness and dignity and to

stimulate and sustain economic growth by using this cash award. Our government is working tirelessly for the welfare of society and differently-abled persons."

It was informed in the

programmes that under Marriage with Disabled Person scheme, 42 couples have been honoured by the department for setting an example in the society.

Ms Rai also lauded the efforts of NGOs who are taking care of homeless old-aged persons, beggars and making Sikkim a beggar-free State. She congratulated and thanked these NGOs for their contribution in the society.

Twenty couples from all four districts of Sikkim received cheque of Rs 2 lakh under Marriage

with Disabled Person from the Minister.

Earlier, Secretary, SJE&WD, apprised about various governmental schemes for disabled persons and people with special needs.

Besides that, nine different NGOs who are working in the field of Disabilities and Prevention of Alcoholism and Substances [Drug] Abuse in the State received grant aid of Rs 2 lakh. During the programme, the department also distributed pressure cookers to 19 senior citizens.

Cataract Camp concludes at CRH



SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 01 FEB:

Three-day Cataract Camp sponsored by Ganjong Monastery concluded today here at Central Referral Hospital in Tadong, Gangtok.

A press release received from Sikkim Manipal University informs that 234 patients were operated on by Ophthalmologist, Dr Sanduk Ruit, and his support team from Tilganga Hospital, Nepal in collaboration with STNM Hospital, Singtam Hospital and Department of Healthcare, Human Service & Family Welfare, Government of Sikkim.

Ganjong Rinpoche envisioned this noble service with his disciple from Taiwan, Huang Shukuei.

The camp concluded with a valedictory function attended by Ganjong Rinpoche, Vice Chancellor, SMU, Lt Gen [Dr] MD Venkatesh, Medical Superintendent, CRH, Dr Gautam Dey, Head of Operations, CRH, Dr Mingma Lhamu Sherpa, Ophthalmologist, SMIMS, Dr Karma Loday, Head of Department of Ophthalmology, STNM Hospital, Dr BP Dhakal, doctors, nurses and volunteers.

Vice Chancellor, SMU congratulated the team and invited further

such efforts for community services via CRH for people of Sikkim.

Dr Ruit in his address said "The word Camp is a misnomer, just because we do it in large numbers but all the surgeries were performed using the latest technology and state-of-the-art facilities comparable to anywhere in the world."

Ganjong Rinpoche thanked the management of CRH, SMU, Dr Ruit and his team, his sponsors and expressed that his monastery will be undertaking such efforts in the future and sought support for the same from the sponsors, Dr Ruit and Sikkim Manipal University.

Training for pre-primary teachers of West district concludes

GYALSHING, 01 MAR [IPR]: Ten-day Orientation cum Refresher Training organised at District Institute for Education and Training [DIET] in Gyalshing, West Sikkim concluded today.

This training was the first of its kind wherein pre-primary teachers from nine BACs of West district participated.

As per a study conducted by State Council of Educational Research and Training [SCERT], many schools in West district have untrained pre-primary teachers thus such training was felt necessary.

Emerging pedagogical trends like the concept of print-rich environment, innovative practices in education and early childhood care and education [ECCE] were the topics highlighted during the training.

Intensive session on preparation of low cost teaching learning material was also held.

The programme was attended by Sonam Palzor Bhutia [Deputy Director, HRDD] as chief guest accompanied by Raju Bhandari [Assistant Education Officer], CL Gurung [retired teacher], MK Gurung [Ward Panchayat] and DIET faculties.

SMU appoints new Registrar & Director

SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 01 MAR:

Professor [Dr] Karma Sonam Sherpa and Professor [Dr] Ashis Sharma have taken charge as the new Registrar of Sikkim Manipal University and the new Director of Sikkim Manipal Institute of Technology [SMIT] today, an SMU press release informs.

The new Registrar, Prof Sherpa was the Head of the Department, Electrical & Electronics Engineering Department, Additional Registrar, Chairman [Admissions] and Associate Director [Research & Development]

along with Member of Academic Senate and Governing Council of SMU.

Prof Sharma is the first local to be elevated as Head of Institution under SMU and first local Director of SMIT. He was previously serving as Registrar of SMU from 2014-18.

Prof Sharma started his career as a lecturer in Mechanical Engineering at SMIT in the year 1997 and subsequently got elevated to Reader then to Professor. He has held the position of Dean-Training & Placement [SMIT] before taking up the assignment of Registrar, SMU.



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Spices Board conducts training on organic spice cultivation

GANGTOK, 01 MAR [PIB]:

A daylong training programme on Spice Production and Quality Improvement under Mission for Integrated Development of Horticulture [MIDH] for farmers was organized by Spices Board at Tadong in Gangtok on 28 Feb.

The module of the

training programme was augmented to incorporate pre-harvest, post harvest management practices of spices along with other aspects to provide holistic technical knowledge to 47 farmers from different parts of Sikkim. The farmers were invited for participation towards organic

farming of spices and related crops for sustainable agriculture under Sikkim conditions with thrust on large cardamom.

The training programme was chaired by JP Rai [President, CIG, ATMA, Assam Lingzey].

Speaking on the occasion, Mr Rai stressed on

the need to adopt scientific system of cultivation under organic norms to reap the benefit of the noble vision of an Organic State to his fellow farmers.

The interactive training interface was initiated by Rachana Gurung [Joint Director, ATMA]

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SummitTIMES

ON TOP OF THE NEWS

Ambition in Women

Don't support that, and everything else is just tokenism

Funds permitting, expect some awareness programmes, messages, maybe even some seminars or workshops and some more tokenism at the national and state level to mark International Women's Day on 08 March. Do not, however, expect the larger issues to be addressed or even "noticed" in the drum-roll of unbridled male chauvinism which continues to drown out all matters of significance. Expect promises of protection and care, those traditional umbrellas offered to keep women in their place and hobble them from, for want of a better term, reaching their potential. And that is how this will remain because unless the society accepts ambition in women as a normal progression of initiatives like the "beti padhao" undertaking, everything will remain superficial lip-service. The relegation of women as second-class citizens with limited access to identity, ownership, and, yes, even ambition, is unfortunate because that is not how things began and there is no reason why they should be allowed to remain so.

Women have had an eventful march through history. At the start of humankind, women were edified and almost all prehistoric legends refer to a Mother Goddess as the Creator, as their God. We find this in Sikkim too with the Lepcha legend of genesis which speaks of Itbu-Debu Rum, the Mother, the great Creator and sustainer who created everything on earth including 'Mu-tanchi-Rong kup,' [the Mother's Loved Ones] - the Lepchas. Power was first worshiped as a Female Force - Shakti - even before the Hindu pantheon was fleshed out, and women, because they were blessed with the power to give birth, were loved and respected, even feared. But man remained a hunter-gatherer at heart and as civilization grew, he started embodying the idea of god with traits of himself. Soon, everything that could not be understood was given a female form, perhaps because most aspects of womanhood remained inscrutable to men. It followed soon after that whatever mankind could not understand, it applied a negative female force to. Soon, the woman started getting seen as the corruptor.

This image sustained itself through centuries and at a subconscious level, continues to influence many minds, especially when even the slightest hint of ambition or even self-preservation creeps in. If we were to look at even the modern Sikkimese history, women have been painted in very poor light. Take for example, Pende Ongmu, the half-sister of the third Chogyal of Sikkim, Chagdor Namgyal, who, history tells us, schemed his assassination. While aspirations for the throne would have been more acceptable in a man, in Pende Ongmu's case, she was reviled as the reincarnation of a wicked queen of Tibet because she desired power. More recently, two important figures, Hope Cooke and Elisa-Maria Langford [wife of the first Chief Minister of Sikkim, LD Kazi], have been portrayed in less than favourable light by successive writers. Few have even bothered to give credit where it was due. Hope Cooke for example tried to modernise education in Sikkim and reinforce Chogyal Palden Thondup Namgyal's plans to give the Sikkimese a stronger sense of Sikkimeseness. It was her conviction to motivate Sikkim to celebrate its uniqueness that made India suspicious and her growing prominence must have made some in Sikkim insecure as well. Similarly, Kazini was an important support to LD Kazi's fight for democracy. Neither story ended too well, and both have been victims of male prejudice.

It is this prejudice that occasions like the International Women's Day should strive to eradicate. It has had but limited success and more often than not, ended up celebrating stereotypes instead. This, despite the fact that women are not demanding much. They do not want to be returned to their original position of reverence. All they ask for is an equal standing, but even that is proving difficult. The problem is not with the people at the work-place alone or men at large, it is the manner in which the role of women has been stereotyped even at home that holds women back when so many of them have also internalized the stereotype. It is this stereotype that needs to be broken. Ambition should not be seen as an unwomanly trait. Then, we would be looking at real change and begin the process real empowerment.

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International adoptions have dropped 72 percent since 2005 – here's why

MARK MONTGOMERY & IRENE POWELL
theconversation.com

When Ethiopia stopped allowing its children to be adopted by foreign parents in January, it became the latest country to eliminate or sharply curtail the practice. In recent decades South Korea, Romania, Guatemala, China, Kazakhstan and Russia – all former leaders in foreign adoption – have also banned or cut back on international custody transfers.

In 2005, almost 46,000 children were adopted across borders, roughly half of them headed to a new life in the United States. By 2015 international adoptions had dropped 72 percent, to 12,000 in total. Just 5,500 of these children ended up in the U.S., with the remainder landing in Italy and Spain.

Today, most children adopted internationally come from China, Democratic Republic of the Congo and Ukraine. But even China, which has been the top sending country since the late 1990s, has decreased its foreign adoptions by 86 percent.

Why are international adoptions imploding? Our recent book, "Saving International Adoption: An Argument from Economics and Personal Experience," explores the rationale – both real and invented – that countries use to explain curtailing foreign adoptions. Here's what we found.

IT'S IN THE CHILD'S 'BEST INTEREST'

When countries with high rates of international adoptions suddenly put an end to the practice, officials usually cite examples of abuse. The policy change, they say, is in "the best interest of the child."

In 2012, when the Russian parliament voted to ban adoptions by Americans, for example, lawmakers named the new law after 2-year-old Dima Yakovlev, who died in 2008 after being locked in a hot car by his adoptive father.

Ethiopian lawmakers likewise recently invoked the 2012 case of a neglected Ethiopian 13-year-old girl who died of hypothermia and malnutrition in the U.S. to justify their new ban on international adoptions.

Such events, though high profile, are rare. Of 60,000 adoptees from Russia to the U.S., only 19 have suffered from abuse or neglect in the last 20 years, according to The Christian Science Monitor. That's an abuse rate of about 0.03 percent. In Russia, the rate of child abuse is about 25 times higher.

Such statistics call into question whether "the best interest of the child" is really why countries cancel international adoptions.

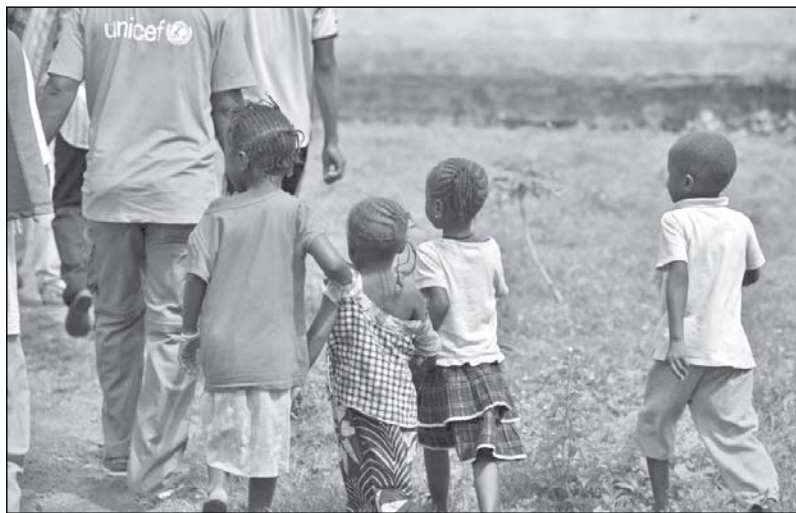
POLITICS AND HUMILIATION

Our analysis suggests that politics may more strongly influence many countries' adoption policies.

Russia ended U.S. adoptions two weeks after the 2012 U.S. Magnitsky Act, which imposed sanctions on some allegedly corrupt Russian officials. Asked about the new ban, Putin essentially linked the two events, saying, "The country will not be humiliated."

Political pressures can also be external. As it sought to join the European Union in the early 2000s, Romania – which in 1990 and 1991 sent more than 10,000 adopted children abroad – halted all international adoptions. The EU's rapporteur for Romanian accession to the union, Baroness Emma Nicholson, was famously opposed to the practice.

We also found that embarrassment can spur countries to halt international adoptions. After bad publicity during the 1988 Seoul Olympics, South



Korea – which had been allowing adoptions to the U.S. since the 1950s – temporarily banned overseas adoption. The remark of sports commentator Bryant Gumbel that the country's "greatest commodity" for export was its children likely helped trigger this policy change.

And after Guatemala imposed a moratorium on foreign adoptions – which dropped from 4,100 in 2008 to 58 in 2010 – a former member of the country's National Adoption Council expressed pride. "Our image as being the number one exporter of children has changed," he said. "Guatemala has dignity" again, he added.

Adoption scandals can also lead countries to rethink international adoptions. Every major sending country has seen accusations of "child trafficking" because some birth parents were paid to give up their children. There have been rare cases, too, where a child was kidnapped and put up for adoption.

Although infrequent, such incidents bring bad press, and with it pressure from international child welfare organizations like UNICEF and Save the Children to improve – or shut down – foreign adoptions.

WHO'S IN CHARGE HERE

The Hague Convention on International Adoption was supposed to resolve such problems by making adoption safer and more straightforward. This 1993 global agreement, which 103 countries signed by 2016, creates uniform regulations for adoptions worldwide.

But rather than encourage foreign adoptions, many experts argue that the convention has contributed to their decline.

Poor countries often struggle to meet The Hague's high international standards, which include creating a central adoption authority, accrediting local agencies and tightening approval procedures.

Even after Vietnam ratified the international adoption convention in 2008, the U.S. refused adoptions from the country because the State Department found it fell short of Hague rules. Vietnamese adoptions of special needs children to America reopened in 2016.

Rigorous international regulations have also made adoptions more expensive by imposing fees on agencies, adoptive parents, orphanages and countries. We believe that rising costs – which may have increased up to 18 percent in some countries – will lead to a decrease in the number of international adoptions.

THE HIGH COSTS OF NO ADOPTIONS

Critics will likely welcome the current decline in international adoptions, citing concerns that foreign adoptions remove children from their "birth culture", exploit poor birth mothers and enable illicit child trafficking.

But our book finds powerful – if uncomfortable – arguments in favor of foreign adoptions. When the child of a desperately poor family is taken in by parents from a wealthy country, the material benefits to that child are significant.

Children raised in rich countries are far more likely to receive a good education, for example. While the literacy rate in Ethiopia is 50 percent for males and 23 percent for females, 100 percent of people in most high-income countries, such as Canada and Norway, can read.

Our research shows that adoption can even save lives. We examined mortality figures for children under the age of 5 in Ethiopia and Guatemala and found that adoptions to the U.S. likely prevented the deaths of more than 600 children between 2005 and 2011.

Studies also show that the emotional costs borne by children of color being raised by white parents – which often occurs with international adoptions – are less dire than critics believe. Such adoptees do about as well on a wide range of indicators of self-esteem and ethnic identity formation as their non-adopted siblings.

Foreign adoptions can't solve global poverty. But ending them merely punishes thousands of vulnerable kids and their potential parents worldwide. And that's in nobody's best interest.

[Mark Montgomery is Professor of Economics, Grinnell College; Irene Powell is Professor of Economics, Grinnell College]

The world needs to build more than two billion new homes over the next 80 years

SEAN SMITH
theconversation.com

By the end of this century, the world's population will have increased by half – that's another 3.6 billion people. According to the UN, the global population is set to reach over 11.2 billion by the year 2100, up from the current population which was estimated at the end of 2017 to be 7.6 billion. And that is considered to be "medium growth".

The upscaling required in terms of infrastructure and development, not to mention the pressure on material resources, is equivalent to supplying seven times the population of the (pre-Brexit) European Union countries, currently 511m. With the global population rising at 45m per year, comes the inevitable rise in demand for food, water and materials, but perhaps most essentially, housing.

HOUSING NEEDS ARE CHANGING

Average household sizes vary significantly between different continents and also by country. According to the UN, recent trends over the last 50 years have also shown declines in household sizes. For example, in France, the average household size fell from 3.1 persons in 1968 to 2.3 in 2011, the same time the country's fertility rate fell from 2.6 to 2.0 live births per woman. In Kenya, the average household size fell from 5.3

persons per household in 1969 to 4.0 in 2014, in line with a fertility decline from 8.1 to 4.4 live births per woman.

Increasingly ageing populations, particularly in developed countries, are causing a demographic shift in future care needs, but it also means that people are staying in their own homes for longer, which affects the cycle of existing housing becoming available each year. One of the most marked changes has been the rise in one and two-person households in the UK and other developed countries.

Statistics published by the National Records for Scotland, for example, reveal the influence of these changing demographics, with future household demand rising faster than population growth. By 2037, Scotland's population growth is forecast to be 9%, with growth in the number of households forecast to be 17%. This 8% difference is in effect the household growth demand from the existing population.

In England, between now and 2041, the population is expected to increase by 16%, with projected household growth at 23%, resulting in a 7% difference in demand.

As people live longer and one and two-person households increase, the number of future households required rises faster than the population. In 2014, urban issues website CityLab dubbed the situation the

"world's ticking household bomb".

As more developing countries deliver infrastructure and progress similar to developed countries – improving the standard of living and extending life expectancy – household sizes will decrease, placing greater demand on supply of new housing. So if this difference between household demand and population growth occurs globally at around 7-8% over the next 80 years, this will require an additional 800m homes.

Taking an average global three-person household (1.2 billion homes) coupled with that 8% demographic factor of total global population over the period results in a need for more than two billion new homes by the end of the 21st century.

MEETING THE DEMAND

The current and future demand for new housing is compelling governments to push for further innovations in "offsite" – prefabricated – construction to speed up the supply of new housing. The UK Industrial Strategy published in November 2017 has a strong focus on offsite construction for the future. This sector has grown rapidly over the last decade with new markets in healthcare, education and commercial buildings. But for prefabricated construction to deliver more houses at a faster rate means looking at alternative solutions to the problem.

Things that slow down the rate

that prefabricated houses are built include the lengthy preparation time required for sub-structures and foundations; delays to the installation of utilities and building services; and a lack of well-trained construction-site managers capable of delivering the complex logistics involved. With more than 65m people displaced by man-made and natural disasters globally, this puts further pressures on countries unable to supply enough new housing as it is.

The issue of availability of materials to meet the demands of constructing two billion new homes emphasises the need for countries to resource them as efficiently as possible. Government policies which encourage the sustainable design of new buildings to maximise future re-use, reduce carbon emissions and manage resources properly will be essential. Over the next 30 years, the countries which promote policies to help sustain and increase new housing provision will be more likely to avoid problems in sourcing materials and price hikes.

For many countries, housing supply is a now a hot topic for national debate and policy strategy. For the rest of the world it will soon become the most pressing issue facing governments this century.

[the writer is Director of Institute for Sustainable Construction, Edinburgh Napier University]

GRC trying to disrupt peace: SPCC

SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 01 MAR:

Sikkim Pradesh Congress Committee has alleged that Gorkha Rashtriya Congress has been trying to disrupt communal harmony in the Hills with the Sikkim-Darjeeling merger talk.

A press release from SPCC vice-president, Tara Shrestha, states that Sikkim and its people have never asked for the merger.

The party has also stated that the Chief Minister's recent statement regarding 'outside forces' trying to disrupt peace in the state should be clarified. The CM is also the Home Minister so he should reveal details of such conspiracies against the State if he is aware of them and conduct proper enquiry, the party has said further adding that SPCC will also extend its support for this purpose.

Campaign for "fearless" Bengaluru launched by ex-IPS officer

BENGALURU, MAR 1 (PTI): A retired IPS officer today launched a campaign called 'Bhaya Mukta Bengaluru' (fearless Bengaluru), following an incident of alleged assault involving the son of ruling Congress MLA N A Haris in a pub-cum-restaurant brawl recently.

The campaign is part of "Bengaluru Nagarikara Surakshe Abhiyana", which intends to increase citizens' role and responsibility in fighting crime in the city.

It will also build pressure on political parties to ensure safety of the citizens.

Addressing a press meet, B N S Reddy said, "People are scared into submission and ignore such things as long as it doesn't impact them. That is why they became mute spectators to the reign of terror unleashed by Mohammed Nalapad."

Arunachal Express between Naharlagun-Anand Vihar flagged off

ITANAGAR, MAR 1 (PTI): A new train between Naharlagun in Arunachal Pradesh and Anand Vihar Terminal in the national capital was today flagged off by Union Ministers Kiren Rijiju and Rajen Gohain.

Speaking on the occasion Rijiju, the Union Minister of State for Home said "This is the beginning. Arunachal Pradesh is poised for a giant leap in the developmental front with survey of 11 railway projects in the state going on which, will change the face of the state soon."

"New Delhi is willing to work for Arunachal Pradesh but the problem lies with the state as the state government has failed to clear land acquisition process for any important project," he said and added that there was no dearth of



fund from the Centre.

Rijiju requested Gohain, the Minister of State for Railways to provide railway jobs to the youths of Arunachal

Pradesh in all categories as per laid down norms.

The new train, known as 'Arunachal Express' would cover the 2013 kilometre dis-

tance between Naharlagun and Anand Vihar Terminal in little over 38 hours and would have 14 stoppages en-route. With all air-conditioned

LHB (Linke Hofmann Busch) coaches, the train would offer all comfort and facilities to the passengers, NFR general manager Lokesh Narayan said during the flagging off ceremony.

This is the second direct train for Arunachal Pradesh and 14th for North East to connect with the national capital.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi during his visit to Itanagar on February 15 last had announced increasing the frequency of the Naharlagun-New Delhi AC Express train from one day a week to twice and to rechristened it as the 'Arunachal Express'.

Arunachal Pradesh Deputy Chief Minister Chowna Mein speaking on the oc-

casation stated that development process had begun for Arunachal Pradesh with BJP-led NDA government at the Centre attaching priority to Northeast considering it as the Engine of Growth for the country.

"The Centre is ready to help Arunachal Pradesh and we should take advantage of various projects like industrial corridor along the foothill areas of the state and frontier highway along the international border," Mein said.

Lok Sabha MP from Arunachal East constituency Ninong Ering requested Gohain to initiate measures for construction of railway lines along the international border to answer China's infrastructure development in the border.

Sino-India border remains sensitive, has potential to escalate: Bhamre

NEW DELHI, MAR 1 (PTI): Eight months after the Doklam standoff, junior Defence Minister Subhash Bhamre today said the situation along India's border with China is "sensitive" and it has the potential to escalate.

"At the Line of Actual Control the situation is sensitive as incidents of patrolling, transgression and standoffs have a potential of escalation," he said.

The nearly 4,000-km-long border between the two countries is referred to as Line of Actual Control (LAC).

"While confidence building measures are being enhanced, we shall continue to take all action deemed necessary to ensure sanctity of LAC," the minister of state for defence said, addressing



a seminar on the Army's contribution to nation building.

Troops of India and China were locked in a 73-day-long standoff in Doklam from June 16 last year after the Indian side stopped the building of a road in the disputed area by the Chinese Army. The face-off ended on August 28.

Sources said China has been keeping its troops in north Doklam and significantly ramping up its infrastructure in the disputed area.

In January, Army Chief Gen. Bipin Rawat had said the time had come for India to shift its focus from borders with Pakistan to the frontier with China, indicating

that situation along it was worrying.

Talking about the regional security situation, Bhamre also talked about likelihood of Pakistan becoming a "conduit" for spread of ISIS ideologies to countries like India.

He also said that rising instability in India's neighbourhood had increased the possibility of

proliferation of weapons of mass destruction to non state actors.

"Today, we are facing a difficult neighbourhood with myriad security challenges. Ceasefire violation along the Line of Control continues to target Army and civilians. Situation in hinterland in Jammu and Kashmir remains a challenge," he said.

Bhamre also emphasised the need to effectively deal with "inimical threats" to the country and added that rise in religious fundamentalism and its spread through social media remains a cause of concern.

"We need to continue with firm action to negate, mitigate and destroy elements inimical to our security," he said.

Centre approves Rs 2,900 cr to make cities safer for women

NEW DELHI, MAR 1 (PTI): The Centre today approved projects worth over Rs 2,900 crore under the Nirbhaya fund for eight major cities of the country in a bid to make them safer for women.

Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata, Chennai, Bengaluru,

Hyderabad Ahmedabad and Lucknow have been sanctioned a total of Rs 2,919.55 crore after a meeting today of the Empowered Committee, which is headed by the secretary of Women and Child Development (WCD), a official statement said.

The Nirbhaya Fund was set up in the aftermath of the gruesome gangrape and murder of a paramedical student in Delhi in 2012, and aims at improving safety for women.

Delhi has been sanctioned Rs 663.67 crore for using latest technologies,

such as video monitoring, facial recognition analytics and tracking of people.

The national capital will also get more police patrol vans equipped with GPS and the capability of sharing video feed.

Mumbai has been granted Rs 252 crore for projects, which include mapping of criminal hotspots, video surveillance as well as for strengthening the "Police Didi" programme which focuses on women police personnel interacting with women living in slums.

Kolkata will get Rs 181.32 crore for various schemes, including for strengthening nine women police stations.

Bengaluru has been sanctioned projects worth Rs 667 crore, which include setting up women police outposts and creation of safety islands at vulnerable places.

According to a senior official of the ministry of women and child development, "These proposals have been sanctioned for a period of three years on a cost sharing basis of 60:40 ratio with states."

Between 2013 and 2017, the corpus of Nirbhaya Fund has grown to Rs 3,100 crore. Another Rs 500 crore has been set aside for it for the next fiscal.

These programmes have been sanctioned after various rounds of meeting between the officials of the ministry well as municipal corporations and police commissioners of these cities. The Empowered Committee also okayed user trial of panic button feature on mobile phones in Uttar Pradesh to be initiated later this month. It has also sanctioned setting up of a model forensic science laboratory in Chandigarh.

Spices Board conducts training on organic...



Contd from pg03

with know-how on utilizing resources of extension by farmers, linkage with departments, modes for proper benefit of resources provided by Government of Sikkim.

Dr Kuldeep Rai [Spices Board] conducted a session on understanding the need for undertaking organic cultivation of spices.

Dr Jason [ICAR Tadong] provided information on methods to use bio-control agents under organic norms, keys of identification of prevalent pest and dis-

eases, etc.

IM Adhikari [Deputy Registrar, Cooperative Department] elaborated on the need to self empower groups in different villages of Sikkim through cooperative formation with information on how to do it as well. Approach for group mobilization, working standards of co-operatives, its pros and cons and future benefits and role of each citizen of Sikkim under Cooperative movement for organic revolution of Sikkim was also explained.

Bharat Gudade [Scientist ICRI, RRS Spices

Board] provided training on Organic package of practices for Large Cardamom Nursery Management to the farmers while NAD Shenoy [Deputy Director, Spices Board] provided a summing up of the sessions with focus on importance of farmers at the grassroots to understand not only agriculture at the farm level but to understand market, modalities of the different levels of organic value chain with clear future vision.

A session on ground reality for income generation under organic con-

ditions through organic farming of large cardamom and other integrated crops was conducted by a progressive farmer from Assam Lingzey, Amber Bahadur Chettri. He provided the gathering with factual inventory on how profit can be generated from farms under Sikkim conditions, citing his own example and that of some fellow farmers in his village.

During the deliberations, he also provided information to other farmers with details of an indigenously formulated bio agent.

Union Cab clears Fugitive Economic Offenders Bill

Contd from pg03

offender being a fugitive."

"A trial of fugitive will never be complete," he said, reasoning why confiscation of assets has been provided for.

The new law will apply "the moment warrant is issued (and) the court decides the man is not submitting," he added.

The law, though it was announced in the Budget for 2017- 18, has

been hastened after Nirav Modi and his uncle Mehul Choksi allegedly defrauded state-owned Punjab National Bank (PNB) of Rs 12,700 crore and left the country and are refusing to cooperate with law enforcement agencies.

The new law will allow quicker recovery of dues through a special court from such absconding offenders.

"In the last Budget,

there was an announcement that the government bring law to confiscate assets of fugitives under economic offences. That has been approved by (the) cabinet today," Jaitley said.

He said the law will apply to new and old cases of persons who have fled the country to avoid prosecution.

All assets, not just proceeds of crime, will be

confiscated of an offender fleeing the country, he said, adding that offender cannot pursue any civil case in the country.

The Cabinet also approved setting up of a National Financial Reporting Authority (NAFRA) to regulate erring auditors.

Under first instance, auditors of all listed companies and unlisted large companies will be covered under NAFRA.

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PNB fraud: ED attaches Rs 1,217 cr assets of Mehul Choksi group

NEW DELHI, MAR 1 (PTI): The Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Thursday said it has attached 41 properties, valued at over Rs 1,200 crore, in connection with its money laundering probe in the PNB scam against Gitanjali Gems and its promoter Mehul Choksi.

The central-probe agency issued a provisional order for attachment under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA).

The attached assets include 15 flats and 17 office premises in Mumbai, a mall in Kolkata, a four-acre farm house in Alibaug and 231 acres of land at locations like Nasik, Nagpur, Panvel and Villupuram in Tamil Nadu.

A 170-acre park in Hyderabad's Ranga Reddy district valued at over Rs 500 crore has also been attached, it said.

Four flats in Borivali (east) area of the Maharashtra capital and nine others in Khemu Towers in Santacruz (east) have been attached as part of the action.

"The total value of the 41 seized assets controlled by Choksi is estimated at Rs 1,217.2 crore," the ED said.

Choksi and designer diamond jewellery businessman Nirav Modi and others are being investigated by the ED and other probe agencies after the bank fraud recently came to light, following a complaint by the PNB that they allegedly cheated the nationalised bank to the tune of Rs 12,000 crore, with the purported involvement of a few employees of the bank.

The CBI and the ED have registered two FIRs each to probe the case. Both Choksi and Modi are said to have left the country before criminal cases were lodged against them. They have, however, denied any wrongdoing.

The ED, a central probe agency under the union finance ministry, is investigating if the allegedly defrauded bank funds were laundered and proceeds of crime were subsequently used by the accused to create illegal assets and black money.

HARARE, MAR 1 (AFP): Multi-millionaire and self-proclaimed 'Universe Boss' Chris Gayle will rub shoulders with a battalion of teenage leg-spinners and a part-time bat designer when the 2019 World Cup qualifying tournament gets underway Sunday. It's the modern phenomenon of the globalisation of sport, although not in the manner that the likes of Gayle, and his estimated annual income of 7.5 million, would normally recognise.

The West Indies, world champions back in 1975 and 1979, were the biggest casualties of the International Cricket Council's controversial decision to shrink next year's World Cup to just 10 nations.

Sixteen teams took part the 2007 edition but just 14 graced the 2011 and 2015 tournaments.

India, the sport's financial powerhouse, played just three games in the 2007 competition, a woeful performance mourned by millions of fans and legions of business executives across the sub-continent.

Now, a differently-formatted 2019 and 2023 World Cup guarantees teams at least nine matches.

However, only the top eight nations were guaranteed places in the 48-game, 47-day marathon in England and Wales next year.

So the West Indies, no longer in the world's top 10, must rough it with newly-minted Test nations Afghanistan and Ireland as well as



hosts Zimbabwe, Scotland, Hong Kong, Papua New Guinea, the Netherlands, United Arab Emirates and Nepal in a three-week qualifier from which only two will make the finals.

The ICC has long argued that a trimmed down World Cup with 10 of the best -- only two more than the first edition back in 1975 -- is the sensible way to grow the game.

But not everyone is convinced.

When the decision was announced three years ago, Sachin Tendulkar called it a "backward step", even suggesting that the finals should feature up to 25 teams.

Interestingly, 2019's other global team tournament, the Rugby World Cup, will welcome 20 nations to its finals in Japan, from a starting base of 16 at its inaugural 1987 showpiece. The 2023 Rugby World Cup, to be staged in France, could see even more.

"To develop rugby we need a strong team in the USA, Russia and China, and emerging countries, to increase the capacity of rugby and to involve more people around the world," argued Claude Atcher, who led France's successful bid.

The 10 teams gathered in Zim-

babwe from Sunday until March 25 would envy similar enthusiasm from cricket's leaders.

Far removed from the likes of Gayle will be Scotland skipper Kyle Coetzer, a former English county player, who designs bats to top up his cricket income.

His predecessor Preston Mommsen, who was captain at the 2015 World Cup in Australia and New Zealand, quit two years ago at the age of 29 to take up a job in the corporate world.

TEENAGE LEG-SPINNERS

On the field over the next three

weeks in Zimbabwe, the 10 hopefuls are divided into two groups of five with the leading three in each pool making the second stage of Super Sixes from which the top two will seal passage to the 2019 finals.

With Gayle and Marlon Samuels having buried the hatchet with the West Indies board, the Caribbean side should have an edge even if all-rounders Kieron Pollard and Andre Russell, spinner Sunil Narine and batsman Darren Bravo opted for the lucrative Pakistan Super League T20 instead.

Afghanistan, with top-rated 19-year-old leg-spinner Rashid Khan, and fellow wrist spinner Mujeeb Ur Rahman, just 16, will also be amongst the favourites to reach the finals for the second time.

Recently they defeated Zimbabwe 4-1 although they were edged out 2-1 by Ireland in another ODI series.

"It feels good to see that Afghanistan is a favourite to qualify," said Khan, installed as temporary captain, whose team beat the West Indies by 29 runs in a warm-up game in Harare on Monday.

The Irish traditionally step up at the World Cup, famously beating Pakistan in 2007 and England in 2011.

Elsewhere, Nepal will rely heavily on 17-year-old leggie Sandeep Lamichhane, his country's first player to win a lucrative IPL deal, to reach a maiden World Cup.

Vinesh enters final of Asian Wrestling Championship

BISHKEK (KYRGYZSTAN), MAR 1 (PTI): Vinesh Phogat assured herself and India of at least a silver medal at the Asian Wrestling Championship as the Commonwealth Games gold medallist entered the final of the 50kg category with win over Japan's Yuki Irie.

The 2014 CWG champion earned the win by taking a bigger point as she locked the score 4-4 with her move.

The Asian Games bronze medal winner will now fight out with China's Chun Lei for the gold medal.

Another Indian woman wrestler, who is in medal contention is Sangeeta, who will fight for a bronze with Korea's Jieun UM in the 59kg category.

Sangeeta had lost her quarter-final 5-15 to Uzbekistan's Nabira Esenbaeva.

Lalita though had no luck going her way as she was outplayed 0-5 in the



55kg quarterfinal against Mongolia's Davaachimeg Eekhembayar.

Meanwhile, India's two Greco-Roman wrestlers have already won bronze medals.

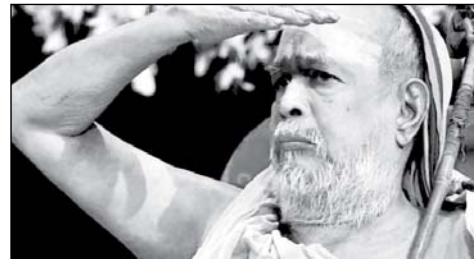
Harpreet Singh grabbed bronze in the 82kg when he outclassed Uzbekistan's Khashimbekov 11-3, winning on technical superiority.

Rajendra Kumar had won bronze in the 55kg as he beat Uzbekistan's Mirakhmedov after declared winner. He also got victory by points after levelling the score 3-3.

To miss out on a bronze medal was Kuldeep Malik (72kg), who lost the bronze medal bout 0-11 to Japan's Inoue Tomohiro and Manishm who was edged 4-6 by Uzbekistan's Rakhmatov Mirzobek.

Naveen, competing in the 130kg, lost his bronze medal round 1-3 to China's Xiaoming Nie. Naveen had reached the medal round after winning his repechage round 10-0 against Sonoda Arata from Japan.

Others who were ousted at earlier stages were Vikram Krushnath (63kg), Sunil Kumar (87kg), Hardeep Singh (97kg).



Chaotic scenes during Shankaracharya's burial

KANCHEEPURAM, MAR 1 (PTI): The final rites of Kanchi Shankaracharya Jayendra Saraswathi had its share of tense moments when the authorities blocked the view of the proceedings by drawing a curtain, making the crowd restive.

Those trying to force their way in were allegedly pushed out by some of the volunteers manning the burial ceremony.

A devotee, K Santhanam, claimed he was pushed away by some who stood close to the main entrance of the burial site -- Brindhavanam annexe -- which is a small enclosure.

Soon after the body was brought into the annexe, a

curtain was dropped in front of that building cutting the visibility for the devotees waiting outside.

LED screens in and around the venue which till then beamed live visuals of the ceremony like Abishekam, halted the screening when the rituals shifted to the annexe, leading to resentment among some devotees.

As several of the followers tried to gradually move forward to take a glimpse through the various entrances to the annexe, it led to a near stampede like situation.

All the three entrances to the annexe were closed by Mutt officials during the final stage of the ceremony.

INX Media & Aircel-Maxis: Long legal battle awaits Chidambarams

NEW DELHI, MAR 1 (PTI): A long legal battle is in the offing for senior Congress leader P Chidambaram and his son Karti Chidambaram as the father-son duo are in the radar of the probe agencies in another case concerning the Aircel-Maxis deal.

While Karti was arrested in connection with the INX Media case in which the CBI has alleged that he was paid USD one million bribe by the media company through foreign entities, Chidambaram's role in granting FIPB approval to a offshore firm in the Aircel-Maxis deal is also under investigation by the agency.

Karti is fighting legal battles in the Supreme Court, the Madras High Court and the trial court here, while Chidambaram has knocked at the doors of the apex court apprehending "continued harassment" to him and his family members through investigations being conducted by the CBI and Enforcement Directorate (ED) in these two cases.

Chidambaram's plea in the apex court assumes significance



as the CBI, in its charge sheet before a special court here in 2014 in the Aircel-Maxis case against former telecom minister Dayanidhi Maran and others, had said it was probing how the then Finance Minister (Chidambaram himself) had granted Foreign Investment Promotion Board (FIPB) approval to a deal involving a foreign firm when only the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA) was empowered to do so.

However, the CBI and ED cases in the Aircel-Maxis deal could not withhold judicial scrutiny as the

special court had in February last year discharged Dayanidhi Maran, his industrialist brother Kalanithi Maran and others saying the alleged charges were based on "misreading of official files", speculation and surmises of the complainant.

In April last year, the CBI had informed the Supreme Court that it was probing Chidambaram's role in the alleged irregularities in grant of FIPB approval in Aircel-Maxis case.

During the hearing before the top court, BJP leader Subramanian Swamy, who has filed a petition

in the top court in this regard, had said he had received a reply from CBI stating it was probing "all angles", including the FIPB clearance given to the deal by Chidambaram.

Swamy had filed a private complaint in the 2G spectrum allocation case and the alleged scam in the Aircel-Maxis deal that had cropped up during the CBI probe.

On January 4 this year, the apex court had directed the Centre to file a status report on the probe being conducted in the Aircel-Maxis deal case.

The CBI had said in its charge

sheet in the Aircel-Maxis case that Chidambaram had granted FIPB approval in March 2006 to Mauritius-based M/s Global Communication Services Holdings Ltd, a subsidiary of Maxis, owned by Malaysian business tycoon T Ananda Krishnan, who is also an accused in the case.

The CBI had claimed that M/s Global Communication Services Holdings Ltd had sought FIPB approval for 800 million USD for which only the CCEA was competent, but Chidambaram had given approval to the firm in March 2006.

"Further investigation is being carried out into the circumstances of said FIPB approval granted by the then Finance Minister. The related issues are also being investigated," the agency had said in its charge sheet.

Though the court has discharged Marans and others in the case, further probe by CBI regarding FIPB approval is still going on. Similarly, the ED is carrying out separate probe in the Aircel-Maxis deal.

An FIR, filed by the CBI on May

15 last year, had alleged irregularities in FIPB clearance to INX Media for receiving overseas funds to the tune of Rs 305 crore in 2007 when Chidambaram was the Union finance minister.

While the CBI has alleged that Karti had received funds to the tune of Rs 10 lakh in the INX Media case, the ED has also registered a money laundering case in the matter.

Chidambaram, in his petition before the apex court, has said that his fundamental rights were being violated due to "illegal" investigations being carried out by the CBI and the ED and the central government has been "misusing" its probe agencies.

He has said that being the Finance Minister then, he had granted FIPB approvals in the INX Media case and the Aircel-Maxis case in the "normal course of official business" and in discharge of his functions, he has "never allowed any member of his family, including his son, or any other person to interfere with or influence the conduct of official business".



Mahatma Gandhi's original letter on Jesus Christ up for sale

WASHINGTON, MAR 1 (PTI): A powerful and emotional letter written by Mahatma Gandhi in 1926, in which he discusses the existence of Jesus Christ, is up for grabs in the US for USD 50,000.

The letter dated April 6, 1926 written by Gandhi from his Sabarmati Ashram in India.

Typed in faint ink and with a bold, unaffected signature, the letter was part of a private collection for the past several decades and is now being sold by the Pennsylvania-based Raab Collection.

"Jesus was one of the great teachers of mankind," Gandhi wrote in the letter to Christian religious elder in the United States, Milton Newberry Frantz.

Nathan Raab, principal at the Raab Collection, described the letter as the embodiment of Gandhi's vision for a world of religions at peace. "His belief in Jesus as a teacher of mankind shows his efforts to find commonality with his fellow man," he said.

"It a powerful, emotional letter," he said.

What makes this letter powerful, Raab said, is Gandhi's stated respect for other religions.

"I think his message of tolerance, of not preaching only his feelings, is as important now as it was back then," he said.

"This is one of the finest letters on religion that Gandhi ever wrote," the Raab Collection said in a press statement.

"Our research discloses no other letter of Gandhi mentioning Jesus to have ever reached the public market," the historical-document dealer said.

In the letter, Gandhi, who was a Hindu, expressed respect for all faiths and beliefs.

"Dear Friend, I have your letter. I am afraid it is not possible for me to subscribe to the creed you have sent me. The subscriber is made to believe that the highest manifestation of the unseen reality was Jesus Christ. In spite of all my efforts, I have not been able to feel the truth of that statement," Gandhi wrote in the letter.

"I have not been able to move beyond the belief that Jesus was one of the great teachers of mankind. Do you not think that religious unity is to be had not by a mechanical subscription to a common creed but by all respecting the creed of each?" he asked.

"In my opinion, difference in creed there must be so long as there are different brains. But who does it matter if all these are hung upon the common thread of love and mutual esteem?" Gandhi wrote in the letter.

Tusk ‘absolutely sure’ EU will accept controversial Brexit draft treaty

BRUSSELS, MAR 1 (AFP): EU President Donald Tusk said today he was “absolutely sure” the bloc’s members would accept a draft treaty for Brexit that has stirred anger in London over its provisions for Northern Ireland.

“I am absolutely sure that all the essential elements of the draft will be accepted by all,” Tusk told business leaders in Brussels, saying EU states would review the text in the coming week.

British Prime Minister Theresa May angrily rejected the draft unveiled on Wednesday, saying she would never allow the bloc to undermine her country’s “constitutional integrity”.

She took particular aim at a proposal to keep British-ruled Northern Ireland in a customs union if there is no better solution to avoid a hard border with EU-member Ireland.



Tusk said if May didn't like the proposal, she should come up with an alternative.

"Until now, no-one has come up with anything wiser than that (plan)," he said.

"In a few hours I will be asking in London whether the UK government has a better idea, that would be as effective in preventing a hard border between Ireland and Northern Ireland."

Ireland and the EU have called for any Brexit agreement to avoid a hard border including customs checks, in order to protect the 1998 Good Friday agreement in Northern Ireland, which ended three decades of bloody sectarian violence.

The EU's chief Brexit negotiator Michel Barnier insisted the plan to keep Northern Ireland in the customs union was simply a "fallback" option in case Britain's two preferred options -- hi-tech frictionless border controls, or a solution linked to a future EU-UK trade deal -- both fell through.

But Tusk warned that Britain's self-imposed conditions for leaving the EU -- that it must quit the

customs union and single market -- made "frictionless" trade impossible.

"Everyone must be aware that the UK red lines will also determine the shape of our future relationship," the former Polish premier said.

"I want to stress one thing clearly. There can be no frictionless trade outside of the customs union and the single market. Friction is an inevitable side effect of Brexit by nature."

The 120-page draft withdrawal agreement puts into legal text the details of a provisional deal sealed in December by May and European Commission chief Jean-Claude Juncker, which largely fudged the Irish question.

As well as Ireland the paper also covers other issues including the rights of EU citizens living in Britain and the financial settlement Britain will pay as it leaves the EU. AFP KIS KIS



The Turkish attack on the Kurdish enclave of Afrin in northern Syria is likely to have the same devastating outcome as the Syrian army siege of Eastern Ghouta, destroying everything but failing to capture the area, says a senior Syrian Kurdish leader. The official says it was inevitable that Afrin would come under siege, comparing it to Eastern Ghouta where hundreds of thousands of civilians have been left without food or humanitarian aid, adding that Afrin has a single supply line controlled by the Syrian government and the Russians "but they could block the way at any moment". Aldar Khalil, co-chair of the Movement for a Democratic Society, the Syrian-Kurdish dominated organisation that controls 30 per cent of Syria, also predicted that the war in Syria may last "another four years until a new balance of forces becomes clear".

Blow to Trump as Hope Hicks quits as White House communications chief

WASHINGTON, MAR 1 (PTI): Hope Hicks, one of US President Donald Trump's longest-serving and trusted aides, today announced her resignation as the powerful communications director, in a major setback to him and the embattled White House amidst the inquiry into alleged Russian meddling in the 2016 election.

The 29-year-old former model and ex-Trump Organization employee has been by Trump's side for years.



Her resignation came a day after she testified before the House Intelligence Committee on allegations related to the Russian interference during

the presidential campaign.

She during her testimony told the panel that in her job, she had occasionally been required to tell white lies but had never lied about anything connected to the investigation into Russia's interference in the election, US media reported.

Although Hicks maintained an unusually low profile over the past three years, she recently attracted scrutiny after Special Counsel Robert Mueller escalated his probe

into potential collusion between the Trump campaign and Russia.

She is leaving the White House after serving Trump for three years in various capacities. This included being his campaign spokesperson and Director of Strategic Communication when Trump was sworn in as the president on January 20, 2017.

"There are no words to adequately express my gratitude to President Trump," Hicks said in a statement.

"I wish the President

and his administration the very best as he continues to lead our country," she said.

President Trump praised Hicks for her outstanding work.

"She is as smart and thoughtful as they come, a truly great person. I will miss having her by my side but when she approached me about pursuing other opportunities, I totally understood. I am sure we will work together again in the future," he said.

China lashes out at US over bill promoting Taiwan ties

BEIJING, MAR 1 (AFP): China lodged an official protest with the United States today, saying it was "strongly dissatisfied" after the US Senate passed a bill promoting relations with self-governing Taiwan.

The US Senate passed the Taiwan Travel Act, intended to encourage visits between the United States and Taiwan "at all levels", by unanimous consent on Wednesday, following its approval in the House of Representatives in January.

The bill adds that it should be US policy for high-level Taiwanese officials to enter the United States, meet with US officials and conduct business in the country.

President Donald Trump's signature is now all that is needed for the bill to become law -- something that is not likely to be an obstacle, given that the bill was passed unanimously.

Washington cut formal diplomatic ties with Taiwan in 1979, recognising the Communist mainland rulers in Beijing as the sole government of "One China."

Chinese foreign ministry spokeswoman Hua Chunying said that while some of the new bill's provisions are not legally binding, it "seriously violates" the One China principle.

"China is strongly dissatisfied and firmly opposes it," Hua told a regular news briefing, adding that Beijing had made "solemn representations" to the US -- a diplomatic protest.

The United States, she said, should stop official exchanges with Taiwan and handle Taiwan issues "prudently and properly" to avoid "damaging Sino-US relations".

Under the terms of the 1979 Taiwan Relations Act, Washington maintains an ambiguous approach to the island, maintaining trade relations and selling Taipei weapons.

Trump sparked protest from China shortly after his election in 2016 by accepting a phone call from Taiwan's leader Tsai Ing-wen, an action seen as breaking the protocol of the One China policy.

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1st Prize Rs.10,000/- 4825
2nd Prize Rs.1,000/- 1707 3rd Prize Rs.500/- 4750
4th Prize Rs.300/- 3974 5th Prize Rs. 203/- 6295
6th Prize Rs.100/-
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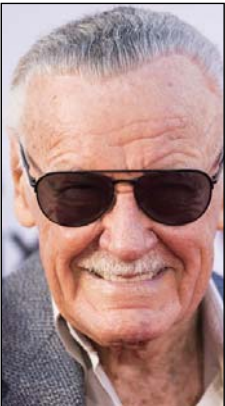
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NOT YOUR AVERAGE STAR! Natalie Portman reveals her rock star makeover on the set of new movie Vox Lux. The 36-year-old actress looked punk rock chic in downtown Manhattan as she donned a pair of distressed jeans and a motorcycle jacket for the role.

STAN LEE SAYS HE IS SUFFERING FROM PNEUMONIA



Comic book legend Stan Lee has said that he is battling from pneumonia.

The 95-year-old Lee, who is best known for co-creating some of the iconic superheroes characters such as Spider-Man, the Hulk, Iron Man and the X-Men, shared the news through an emotional video, reported TMZ.

"Hiya heroes, this is Stan Lee. I haven't been in touch with you lately. I had a little bout of pneumonia I've been fighting, but it seems to be getting better," Lee said.

"I want you all to know I'm thinking of you, of course I always think of the fans, and I hope you're all doing well, and I miss you all. I miss your enthusiasm, I miss all your notes, all your photos and emails and I want you to know that I still love you all," he added.

To the world she was 'Chandni', but to me she was my love: Boney Kapoor

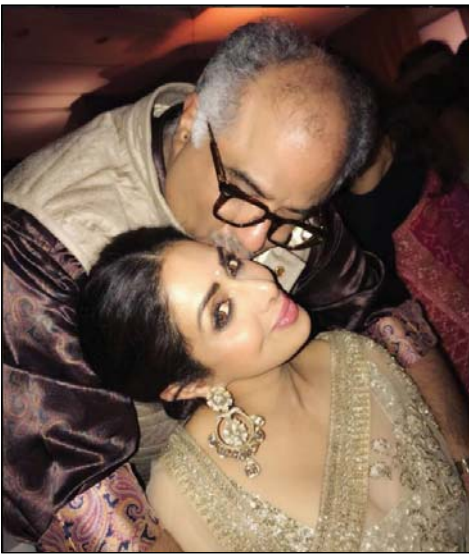
Hours after Sridevi was cremated yesterday, her husband Boney Kapoor shared one last post from his wife's Twitter handle where he remembered her as the love of his life and the axis around which his family ran.

In an emotional letter, the filmmaker said his primary concern now was to protect the couple's two daughters - Jahnvi and Khushi.

"Losing a friend, wife and mother of your two daughters is a loss inexplicable in words... I am blessed to have the support and love of Arjun and Anshula, who have been such pillars of strength for myself, Khushi and Jahnvi. Together, as a family we have tried to face this unbearable loss," he wrote, thanking family, friends, colleagues, well-wishers and fans for standing by him like rocks.

"To the world she was their Chandni... the actor par excellence ...their Sridevi... but to me she was my love, my friend, mother to our girls... my partner. To our daughters, she was everything... their life. She was the axis around which our family ran," he said.

Recalling Sridevi's vast legacy as an artiste, he said curtains never come down on an actor's life as they live on the silver screen forever.



But requested for privacy to grieve.

"As we bid goodbye to my beloved wife and Khushi & Jahnvi's mama, I have a sincere request. Please respect our need to grieve privately . If you need to talk of Sri, let it be of the special memories that connect each of you to her. She was and is an actor that is irreplaceable. Love and respect her for that.

"My only concern at this time is to protect my daughters and find a way to move forward without Sri. She was our life, our strength and the reason we always smiled. We love her beyond measure. Rest in peace my love. Our lives will never be the same again," he wrote.

The Indian cinema icon Sridevi was cremated with state honours in Vile Parle crematorium here today.

The actor died of accidental drowning in her hotel bath tub in Dubai where she had gone to attend a relative's wedding ceremony.

Why so much hypocrisy?

While Priyanka's Arabian magazine cover was celebrated, Kim's Indian mag cover receives flak...

The television personality Kim Kardashian hits the headlines again and this time it's for all the wrong reasons. Kim was recently seen gracing the cover of Vogue India. While in the first cover she was seen donning a red one-shouldered red dress from Jean Paul Gaultier, in the other one she turned up the heat in a black strappy number by Philipp Plein. However, it's not the cover which caught our attention, but the inside picture where Kim is dressed in an ethereal avatar. She left her Indian fans floored dressed up in a lehenga choli by Anita Dongre. While she featured on the Indian magazine, we surely did not expect her to don the Indian attire and look so mesmerising.



and Vogue India somehow chooses kendall jenner and kim kardashian for their covers. How hard is it to have Indian women represent Indian culture."

"I have nothing against Kim Kardashian but @VOGUEIndia is really doing itself a disservice by continually neglecting to

portrait brown women in their "magazine"— you're perpetuating a detrimental cycle of under-representation. Stop white washing your own damn culture."

"No shade on the Kardashians.. but like y'all seriously couldn't find an INDIAN for the cover? First Kendall & now Kim?" and many others.

However when Priyanka Chopra was recently seen donning the cover of Harper's Bazaar Arabia, people couldn't stop praising her for how she is bagging international magazines and making India proud. So why bash Kim Kardashian's Vogue India cover?

Some went a bit too far and said that Kim Kardashian wearing a lehenga was culture appropriation. There were comments like, "the issue with vogue india putting kim Kardashian on the cover is not the fact that's she's a white woman like magazines try to be international and get big names on their covers all the time and they've had plenty of brown women before but, why is she wearing a lehenga" and "Umm Kim k for vogue India? Wearing a lehenga?" What is your opinion on this ongoing Twitter controversy?

'IT'S MINE': DEFIANT KHLOE KARDASHIAN DEFENDS CRADLING HER BUMP IN SOCIAL MEDIA POSTS... AS IT'S CLAIMED SHE'S HAVING A BABY GIRL!

Khloe Kardashian is standing up to critics who are taking issue with pics of her cradling her baby bump.

The pregnant reality star, 33, is eight months along and is often photographed in public with her hands on her swollen belly.

On Wednesday, Khloe posted another Instagram snap wearing a low cut silver sparkly dress and with both hands top and bottom of her baby bump.

'People are very opinionated about my bump,' Khloe tweeted in addition to posting the photos.

'I choose to cradle my bump because it's MINE. I've waited for this VERY short moment for YEARS, she explained.

'I have only months to enjoy this phase in my life, so I will touch my bump and love my bump as often as I choose. Mommy loves you baby! 🍼'

Khloe has been enjoying a trip to Tokyo with her sisters Kim and Kourtney as she awaits the birth of her first child.



The baby daddy is her 26-year-old NBA player boyfriend Tristan Thompson of the Cleveland Cavaliers and she's said she plans to deliver her baby in Cleveland.

It's previously been thought the couple are having a son but People reported Wednesday that signs are they're actually

having a girl.

An insider claimed to People: 'Early on, Khloé was telling people that she is expecting a baby boy. But getting ready for her baby shower, she is only registering for pink and neutral colors.'

'There is no blue at all on her registries,' the insider revealed.

Meanwhile, fans of Keeping Up With The Kardashians will find out for sure when the season finale of the reality show airs on Sunday.

A teaser for the episode has Khloe asking her sisters Kim and Kourtney during a trip to San Francisco: 'Do you want to know what I'm

having?'

The clip doesn't include the gender reveal but does have Kourtney's reaction.

'I'm shocked,' the 38-year-old mom of three says.

Then Kourtney and Kim go over to the Revenge Body star for a big group hug.

THE DAY AHEAD

ARIES: Be prepared today, Aries. A longtime dream regarding your career may finally become a reality. At first you might not believe it, fighting the news in order to avoid possible disappointment. Don't fall into this trap; it creates negative energy, which can get in your way. You've worked hard to be where you are, and you aren't likely to stop advancing. Accept your accolades, thank everyone, and then move on.

TAURUS: You tend to be your own worst critic, Taurus, and today you're more likely to be that way. Recent setbacks on the job might find you harboring doubts about your own capabilities. Be objective about the situation. Whatever happened was probably above and beyond your control, so it isn't fair to doubt your-

self because of it. Work hard, continue to do the best you can, and don't let outside events sap your belief in yourself.

GEMINI: Today could be a strange day where money is concerned, Gemini. You might not be sure exactly where you stand financially, so it might be a good idea to get all your records together and go over them carefully. This isn't a good day for gambling or making investments of any kind. Instead, get whatever information you can on investments that interest you, study them, and make appropriate decisions later.

CANCER: Unsafe conditions could exist around the house, Cancer, which may result in accidents if they aren't rectified. Some may not be readily apparent, so warn family members to

be careful. This isn't a good day to do any heavy work around the home. If you're planning major repairs, it might be a good idea to postpone them. This is, however, a good day for planning such repairs, as you can be especially methodical right now.

LEO: Leo, one or more of your co-workers could appear to be rather upset or depressed on the job today, and this is likely to affect your own efficiency. Your colleagues in question aren't going to be very much into communicating, so it's best just to turn a blind eye and keep on working in spite of the situation. It's going to be tougher than usual, but it's nothing you can't handle.

VIRGO: Profligate spending in the past may come back to haunt you now with regard to money, Virgo. There could be blocks in

receiving funds you were expecting or an unexpected but necessary expense could come up. It's going to take all your talent for careful planning to work your way around this situation, but take heart. The situation can turn to a positive one in the blink of an eye, and probably will.

LIBRA: Boredom and restlessness may plague you today, Libra. You could feel the need to break loose from the ties that bind you to mundane affairs, to run away and seek adventure, although you aren't certain what kind of adventure! The walls may be closing around you at home and on the job. You might want to plan some kind of outing for an upcoming weekend in order to give yourself a needed break.

SCORPIO: Your concentration

should be high today, Scorpio. You're likely to be more observant than usual. Don't be surprised if you find yourself noticing people and sensing their thoughts and feelings even more than usual. This is a good day to read, study, attend a class, or otherwise acquire new information. You may discover something new about a subject that really interests you, and you might want to spend the day reading about it.

SAGITTARIUS: Worries about money could be uppermost in your mind today, Sagittarius. You may have suffered some financial setbacks and wonder how you can muster enough funds to get over the hump. However, help is on the way. An outside source could provide funds to tide you over. Whatever other

problems you may have will all be straightened out later. Your own ingenuity and a little help from your friends will probably see you through.

CAPRICORN: Setbacks on the job might have you a little depressed and worried. Don't worry, Capricorn; all will be well. Think of this as a challenge to overcome. Your natural practicality and efficiency will see you through. Someone isn't being totally honest with you. Encourage people around you to open up and communicate a little. What they say may not be all that agreeable, but at least you'll be better able to assess the situation.

AQUARIUS: Sudden events that come to you via TV, newspapers, or the Internet, could shake up long-cherished belief systems

today, Aquarius. This could have you feeling momentarily disconcerted and a bit disillusioned. At the same time, this information could open up new doors for you. Your natural curiosity will eventually win out, and you're likely to want to read all you can about whatever is on your mind. New discoveries can be fascinating!

PISCES: A task that you've been working on for a long time could come to a standstill today due to circumstances beyond your control. You're likely to feel quite frustrated, Pisces, as there seems to be nothing you can do to speed things up. Don't agonize over this, however; it will get going again. The best thing you can do is find something else to work on until the blockages have been released.