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# SummitTIMES

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ON TOP OF THE NEWS

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*Steps to deal  
with rising  
petrol, diesel  
prices likely  
this week*

**NEW DELHI, MAY 22**

**(PTI):** With record fuel prices creating a "crisis situation", the government will work on an appropriate solution to ease the burden on common man, top officials said.

While Oil Minister Dharmendra Pradhan stated that he has aired concerns about high oil prices, a senior official said the government will come out with "some steps" this week to deal with record high petrol and diesel rates.

"I have loudly spoken about concerns (about high oil prices)," Pradhan said, adding that "appropriate steps" will be taken. He did not elaborate.

Indian Oil Corp (IOC) Chairman Sanjiv Singh said there is no direction from the government for moderating prices and the three week hiatus before the Karnataka poll was to avoid sharp spike in retail rates.

"We believed that fundamentals did not support such sharp spikes witnessed so we decided to moderate prices," he told press conference on the fourth quarter earnings.

Asked what changed their mind, he said fuel retailing runs on narrow margins and no company can continue to sell at below cost for long.

The government may not rely only on cutting excise duty, which makes up for a fourth of the retail selling price, said the official cited earlier, but he too did not elaborate on the various steps being considered.

"Rising fuel price is a crisis situation for government to take appropriate steps," he said.

## Amar Subba set to attempt his first all-night 12-hour run in Hyderabad



**SAGAR CHETTRI**

**GANGTOK, 22 MAY:**

Sikkim's Marathon Man, Amar Subba, is all set to compete in the 12 Hours [Night] Stadium Run scheduled to be held on 26 and 27 May at Gachibowli Stadium in Hyderabad. The 50-year-old runner will leave on Wednesday for the competition.

The event, organised by Bangalore-based Non-Stop Entertainment Business [NEB] Sports, selects long distance runners of the country based on reputation.

The all-night run will begin at 07 p.m. on 26 May and will continue for 12 hours till 07 a.m. on 27 May.

Mr Subba is participating in 12 Hours Stadium Run after a gap of three years and this is his first night run competition.

In his debut 12 Hours Stadium Run at Bangalore in 2014, he covered a distance of 96 KMs in 12 hours and came in third. The following year, he secured fifth position in another 12 Hours Stadium Run at Mumbai in 2015 covering the distance of 95.6 KMs in 12 hours.

He also participated in 24 Hours Stadium Run at Bangalore last year but had to leave the competition incomplete due to injuries.

"The competition will be very tough among some of the best ultra marathon runners of the country. I want to break my own record of 96 KMs in 12 hours this time to finish in top three of the competition," Mr Subba said while addressing a press conference here today.

He has undergone 10-day long rigorous training for the competition. At the final practice, he covered 60 KMs in a 12 hour uphill route in West Sikkim. He expressed his confidence to do well in the competition to keep the name of Sikkim on the top.

"I have been continuing with my passion to run mainly to encourage young generations to come into any sport and to live a healthy life," he said.

Mr Subba thanked the organizers for inviting him. He also thanked his supporters and well wishers for their continuous encouragement.

**CM'S JAN  
SAMPARKA  
ABHIYAN  
REACHES NAMCHI**

**NAMCHI, 22 MAY [IPR]:** Chief Minister Pawan Chamling while addressing a public gathering at Namchi Helipad in South Sikkim today maintained that the State Government has fulfilled the 'basic minimum needs' of the people.

Mr Chamling, who is currently on his 32-day State-wide public outreach tour 'Jan Samparka Abhiyan' reached Namchi today where he addressed the gathering



consisting of students, from Namchi Singithang constituencies. panchayats and officials and Poklok Kamrang Before addressing the

public at Namchi Helipad, the Chief Minister inaugurated the newly built Eye Department at District Hospital, Namchi where he also interacted with the patients and hospital staff.

Addressing the gathering, Mr Chamling spoke in detail about the objective of the tour which is to understand the needs and demands of the public at the grassroots level.

The Chief Minister urged the panchayats to disseminate the policies and schemes of the State Government which focuses on the benefit of the public. He further exhorted the panchayats

to publicize the aim of the State Government to make Sikkim free of Multi-Drug-Resistant Tuberculosis [MDR-TB] by 2022.

To encourage the State Government's aim, Mr Chamling announced that monthly grant of Rs 3,000 will be granted to every TB patient as nutritional support.

Additionally, the CM also announced cash prizes of Rs 05 lakh and Rs 10 lakh to TB-free Gram Panchayat Unit and Zilla Panchayat Territorial Constituency respectively.

He reiterated that the State Government has

provided free medical assistance to the public and urged people to utilize the Comprehensive and Total Checkup for Healthy Sikkim [CATCH-Sikkim], the government's annual health check up programme.

He further urged the panchayats to spread the policy decision taken by the State Government to give financial grant of Rs 7,000 and Rs 10,000 after first and second child respectively.

He asked the public of the constituencies to tap the business potential of the tourism spots in the district and generate

turn to pg02

## Thangu shepherd conferred India Biodiversity Award for Conservation

**NIRMAL MANGAR**

**GANGTOK, 22 MAY:**

Singhi Kalden Bhutia, who rears 195 Tibetan breed sheep at Thangu in the cold desert of North Sikkim, was conferred the 'India Biodiversity Award for Conservation' on International Day for Biological Diversity in Hyderabad today.

Mr Bhutia is the only

turn to pg02



## GANGTOK POST OFFICE JOINS NATIONWIDE INDEFINITE STRIKE

**GANGTOK, 22 MAY:** The Post Office at Gangtok has joined the indefinite strike called by the All India Gramin Dak Sevaks Union starting today. The strike has been called to press for their demands, particularly the immediate implementation of the GDS Committee recommendations.

[foto: Sagar Chhetri]



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## Lingi Paiyong SS observes International Biodiversity Day

### SUMMIT REPORT

**GANGTOK, 22 MAY:**

Eco Club of Lingi Paiyong Secondary School conducted a programme to mark International Biodiversity Day at its school premises today, a press release from the school informs.

Block Officer [Forests, Environment & Wildlife Management Department], Lingmoo Range, Sherap Lepcha attended the programme as chief guest and resource person.

A photo exhibition displaying the themes of International Biodiversity Day from 2004 was displayed by the school's eco club.

Chief guest, students and teachers planted saplings inside the school premises.

Speech competition and a quiz contest based on environment and biodiversity was also conducted by the eco club.

## Steps to deal with rising petrol, diesel prices likely this week

**contd from pg01**

ernment and it has to be handled with combination of steps. Finance ministry is consulting the petroleum ministry on rising crude prices," he said.

More than a week after the state-owned oil firms ended a 19-day pre-Karnataka poll hiatus on revising fuel prices, petrol and diesel rates have touched record highs. Petrol costs Rs 76.87 per litre in Delhi and diesel costs Rs 68.08 a litre. In last nine days, petrol price has risen by Rs 2.24 a litre and diesel by Rs 2.15.

Rates vary from state to state depending on the incidence of local sales tax or VAT. The prices in Delhi are the cheapest among all metros and most state capitals.

The official said the government has to be mindful of its fiscal maths while dealing with the option of cutting excise duty.

"We cannot rely on excise duty cut alone, although I am not ruling out a possibility of cutting excise duty. We have to be mindful of any fiscal impact of any excise cut on fuel," the official said. Both the Centre and states, where VAT makes up for 20-35 per cent of the retail cost and have gained from the rising oil prices, need to take measures, he said.

"Some steps to deal with rising oil prices are likely to come this week," he added.

The rupee, which has fallen to 16-month low of 67.97 against the US dollar, is also playing a role

in high oil bill, he said.

IOC Chairman said the companies have freedom to revive prices and they took a call in the best interest of consumers.

The central government levies Rs 19.48 a litre of excise duty on petrol and Rs 15.33 per litre on diesel. State sales tax or VAT varies from state to state. Unlike excise duty, VAT is ad valorem and results in higher revenues for the state when rates move up.

In Delhi, VAT on petrol was Rs 15.84 a litre, and Rs 9.68 on diesel in April. Today it is Rs 16.34 on petrol and Rs 10.02 a litre on diesel.

Every rupee cut in excise duty on petrol and diesel will result in a revenue loss of Rs 13,000 crore.

The government had raised excise duty nine times between November 2014 and January 2016 to shore up finances as global oil prices fell, but then cut the tax just once in October last year by Rs 2 a litre.

Subsequent to that excise duty reduction, the Centre had asked states to also lower VAT. Just four of them -- Maharashtra, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh and Himachal Pradesh -- reduced rates while others including BJP-ruled ones ignored the call.

In all, duty on petrol rate was hiked by Rs 11.77 per litre and that on diesel by 13.47 a litre in those 15 months that helped government's excise mop up more than double to Rs 2,42,000 crore in 2016-17 from Rs 99,000 crore in 2014-15.



## Opposition only after power, SDF fighting for Sikkimese: CM

### BIKASH CHETTRI

**NAMCHI, 22 MAY:**

Sikkim Democratic Front will be the only party to contest the next election for Sikkim and the Sikkimese while the opposition will be contesting only to overthrow SDF, said Chief Minister Pawan Chamling today at Assangthang, South Sikkim, during his Jan Samparka Abhiyan.

The CM added that the opposition in

Sikkim has never fought for the welfare of the Sikkimese people but only for power. In this pursuit for power many outsider agents are getting active in Sikkim and many new political parties are being formed, he said.

The CM also warned the public that the political situation in Sikkim is changing as outside forces and their agents are trying to change the political stability in the State by playing with caste and reli-

gious sentiments of the people.

"24 years of development can be destroyed in 24 hours if the people of Sikkim do not take responsibility," said the CM.

He urged the general public to not listen to outsiders who are trying to drive a wedge between the people of Sikkim.

During his address he also targeted SKM youth where he said that they are

visiting different areas of the state and are telling people that their leader is coming back.

"Everyone knows that their leader is in jail and has been convicted in a corruption case, if such a person leads our society what will be the future of Sikkim?" he stated.

The CM asked the SKM supporters to open their eyes and offered them a place in his party if they choose to do so.



## SKM holds coordination meet in West Sikkim

### SUMMIT REPORT

**GANGTOK, 22 MAY**

A coordination meeting of Sikkim Krantikari Morcha youth wing was held at Sanga Dorjee block under Rinchenpong constituency in West Sikkim today.

The meeting was chaired by former Deputy Chief Minister, PT

Lucksom as the chief guest and SKM vice-president, Pema Kuzong Bhutia.

An SKM press release informs that a 100-member Constituency Level Committee for Rinchenpong was constituted during the meeting.

The release informs that two

active youths from Sikkim Democratic Front formally joined SKM in the meeting.

A 72-member constituency level committee for Zoom-Salgari was also formed in a meeting at Jorethang on Monday, the release informs.

## BJP condemn CM's tour for involving school students

### SUMMIT REPORT

**GANGTOK, 22 MAY:**

Bharatiya Janata Party Sikkim Pradesh has condemned the Chief Minister's State-wide 'Jan Samparka Abhiyan' for involving school students and teachers in a political function, a press release from the party reads.

The party has called out the CM for 'forcing' students to listen to his speeches.

While criticizing the 'autocratic' governance of SDF, the party has stated that due to the low number of attendees, the government 'forced' students and school staff to attend the CM's function.

**WRITE US:** Readers are invited to comment on, criticise, run down, even appreciate if they like something in this paper. Letters carrying abusive/ indecorous language and personal attacks, except when against people responsible in this newspaper (who are fair game), will have to be ignored. Letters which carry forward a conversation or initiate a dialogue will command immediate attention and receive prominence. Mail us at: [letters@summittimes.com](mailto:letters@summittimes.com)

## Thangu shepherdder conferred India Biodiversity Award...

**contd from pg01**

surviving herder of Tibetan sheep at Thangu village above Lachen in North Sikkim.

The breed, found above the altitude of 16,000 ft, is endangered due to various factors. Braving all odds, Mr Bhutia still maintains a herd of the famous 'Luk' or

Bhyanglung, the Tibetan highland sheep.

The award was presented by Governor [Telangana and Andhra Pradesh], ESL Narasimhan.

The programme was organized by Professor Jayashankar Telangana State Agricultural University and Telangana Biodiversity Board.

**contd from pg01**

ample revenue. He urged the public of the constituencies to learn about branding various products manufactured organically at rural level. He spoke about the importance of village and hill-top tourism and urged the public to exploit these facets of tourism.

The Chief Minister also announced that Janta Mela for the BPL-level business community will be conducted soon.

He further informed the gathering that Lama Mela will be organized in Gangtok.

He assured to build and upgrade houses at every constitu-

ency of the State along with washrooms and toilets.

Further, the CM announced to distribute gas cylinders, pressure cookers and GCI sheets.

He also assured to provide land to landless people provided they have Sikkim Subject.

Mr Chamling also directed the Urban Development and Housing Department and Horticulture Department to look for vacant shops in the market to be transformed into organic outlets for farmers to sell their produce. He further assured the farmers that the State Government will bear transpor-

tation expenses for five years provided they sell their organic produce in the market.

The Chief Minister further asked the banks in Sikkim to cooperate with the State Government and give loans to entrepreneurs under Sikkim Startup Skill Scheme.

Further, he also announced that every senior secondary school in the State will have commerce and science streams for students.

He directed the panchayats and Water Security Department to make a detailed project report of drinking water pipes in the constituencies.

He also announced that wayside amenities such as cafeterias and washrooms in every home stay will be constructed by the State Government.

He further assured to sanction road upgradation in the constituency at the earliest along with construction of various registered places of worship.

Additionally the CM announced the construction of railway in Sikkim and the inauguration of Pakyong Airport.

During the course of the programme, the Chief Minister was felicitated by the public

and the students of Namchi Singhithang and Poklok Kamrang constituencies for his efforts in uplifting the State in various fields.

The CM also said that the demands placed by the public will be sanctioned soon and urged the panchayats to assist in implementing these demands once they are approved.

Also present during the program were Speaker, Sikkim Legislative Assembly cum MLA [Poklok-Kamrang], KN Rai, Cabinet Ministers, Chairmen, Advisors, Zilla Panchayats, Department officials and the public.



### Gangtok on Wednesday, 23 May

**Temp:** 24°C / 15°C  
**Forecast:** Cloudy, a couple of showers and a thunderstorm.  
**Sunrise:** 04:44 AM  
**Sunset:** 6:21 PM

## Electoral Literacy Club training held in West

**GYALSHING, 22 MAY**  
[IPR]: West District Election Department conducted an Electoral Literacy Club (ELC) training programme for various Block Level Officers, Nodal Officers from educational institutions, Non Governmental Organizations and Nehru Yuva Kendra members on 11 and 12 May at Kyongsa Zilla Bhawan in West Sikkim.

Sub Divisional Magistrate [Kabi] and State Level Master Trainer [SLMT], Mahesh Sharma briefed the participants about ELC and the importance of forming an ELC in their respective institutions and Blocks.

He educated the gathering on the importance of voting and the process and documents required when applying for a voter identification card.

District Collector [West], Dr AB Karki motivated the BLOs to make proper use of the ELC programme and further announced the prize money for the best three BLOs in the district.

Sub Divisional Magistrate [Dentam], RB Bhandari on the second day of the programme talked about the role of BLOs, NGOs and KVKs in spreading awareness on the importance of voting. The participants were also made aware about the enhanced version of BLO NET (Hybrid BLO Mobile App) and upcoming summary revision schedule.

The meeting was also attended by Deputy Secretary [Election Department], Tashi Choden Bhutia and staff members from District Election Department, West Sikkim.

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## Entel Motors celebrates 20th anniversary

**NITESH R PRADHAN**  
**GANGTOK, 22 MAY:**

Entel Motors today celebrated its 20th anniversary with a function organized at its office located at 6th Mile, Tadong in the capital.

The function was attended by Managing Director, Guru T Ladakhi and senior members of the company, Ugen T Lada-

khi, Pema T Ladakhi and Sonam Ongmu Ladakhi.

On the occasion, general manager, Rashmi Jhulka was promoted to the post of executive director.

Managing Director, Guru T Ladakhi thanked the board of directors for their support to the company.

He expressed gratitude to

the company staff for their service and support.

"In the glorious 20 years of the company there is a sense of joyful fulfillment," he added.

Adding further, he stated that the company is committed to its customers and hitting 20 years in the State is a 'milestone'.

He also thanked the customers for supporting and having

faith in the company.

"We look forward to many more years of association," said the MD.

It was informed that the company sells 1500 vehicles per year with an average of around 130 vehicles a month.

The function also had cultural presentation from the company's employees.

## SRM University signs MOU with Maantt Technology

**SUMMIT REPORT**  
**GANGTOK, 22 MAY:**

President, SRM Trust, Dr P Sathyanarayanan along with the vice-chancellor and registrar of SRM University, Sikkim signed a Memorandum of Understanding [MoU] with Maantt Global Services to launch and deliver a 'unique set' of job assured programs for its students at Sikkim, a press release from SRM University, Sikkim, informs.

The press release further informs that the university [SRM] through the MoU aims to provide an opportunity for its students to learn and get certified in industry relevant skills.

The program also facilitates honing distinctive skills which will empower students to seek and procure jobs in multiple industries, the release reads.

The program will start with five knowledge packed systematic courses



es that are designed to foster expertise of students in areas of Data Science, Artificial Intelligence, Supply Chain Management, Revenue Cycle Management and Medical Coding for duration of three months and 10 months.

Registrar, Professor Kumar expressed, "This is the beginning of the skill building programs in Sikkim. In another

few years, we would add more such courses to the School of Skill Building, to reduce unemployment among the youth and enable the students to be not only academically ready but also skillful, to get jobs in the corporate sector without any problems."

"These programs are packed with coursework and videos developed by highly competent

subject matter experts from diverse sectors. The students are really going to benefit with these programs," said the vice-chancellor.

The release further adds that the first batch of students will be offered 50% scholarship for the courses.

Anyone interested to know more about the program can contact the University officials.

## SDF cheli morcha coordination meet held at Pathuk Singbel



**YOGEN THATAL**  
**SINGTAM, 22 MAY:**

The East District Cheli Wing of the Sikkim Democratic Front has been conducting a series of coordination meetings at various Gram Panchayat Units and constituencies of the district since 07 May.

The organizers today conducted one such meeting at Pathuk Singbel GPU under Tumin Lingee

constituency which was attended by the SDF cheli coordinator, SDF cheli secretaries, vice-coordinator, and SDF health front members.

Issues related to women's empowerment, role of women in elections and schemes implemented by the State Government for women were discussed by the speakers.



## Riverfront cleanup drive at Rey Khola

**SUMMIT REPORT**  
**GANGTOK, 22 MAY:**

Continuing its riverfront cleanup drive, Forest Department officials along with the volunteers today cleaned the premises of Rey Khola and Rani Khola confluence here, a press release informs.

The seventh day of the cleanup drive was conducted by Divisional Forest Officer [River Valley Project] and team and coordinated by ENVIS, Sikkim.

30 students from Sikkim University and local residents took part in the cleanup drive.



### OBITUARY

It is with great sadness that Shri Tika Gurung and family announces the passing away of their youngest daughter Smt. *Urmila Gurung* on 17.05.2018.

Smt. Urmila Gurung will be lovingly remembered by her father Shri. Tika Gurung, mother Smt. Shakuntala Gurung, sister Smt. Pramila Gurung, brother Shri. Pravat Gurung and husband Shri. Jigme Tshering Bhutia. She will also be fondly remembered by her two nieces Preen Taj Gurung, Veda Rana, brother-in-law Shri. Navin Rana and sister-in-law Smt. Shweta Pradhan.

Smt. Urmila Gurung born on 2nd October 1978 all of age 39 truly lived life to the fullest through simple pleasures such as spending time with her family, guiding her nieces and carrying out generous charity work whenever time permitted. She was an affectionate daughter who loved her mother and father beyond words, a dotting sister who looked after the well-being of her siblings, a loyal loving companion to her spouse and a warm and genuine friend to those who knew her well. She was so smart yet so funny with a childlike innocence and a big heart. Even when times got tough, she could always make anyone laugh. She was a true fighter who fought life's battles and came out of it stronger. Her untimely death has caused irreparable loss to many particularly her family and she will always be fondly remembered as a true "Angel" in all forms.

A Memorial service in her name will be held on **24th May (Thursday)** at her residence at **PRAURMILA COTTAGE, MAJHIGOAN JORETHANG**.

Urmila Gurung will forever be remembered by her family and her well-wishers.

For further details, you may contact:  
• 94340 57367/96098 95767 - Tika Gurung  
• 7872209474 - Jigme Tshering Bhutia  
• 9733670372 - Pravat Gurung  
• 8145620806 - Anula Gurung

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# SummitTIMES

ON TOP OF THE NEWS

## Indifference Begets Resentment

*The young are suffering, but  
we withhold involvement*

A workshop on “Understanding the Drug Abuse Situation in Sikkim: Problems and Solutions” put together some while ago offered some interesting insights which, unfortunately, continue to remain ignored. While there was nothing new in the alarm that was raised about the situation created by substances of abuse, what should get the alarm bells ringing is the impression the young appear to have developed about the societal response to this very clear and present danger.

There was near unanimity among the young that among the leading triggers behind making addicts out of the youth was the breakdown of the family unit compounded by lack of options to occupy the leisure hours, uninspiring education, boring classrooms, easy access to substances of abuse and general societal disinterest in collaborating to find a solution beyond the law enforcement approach. Tease these issues a bit, and one is confronted with the thread which runs through all these issues - a lack of engagement and a refusal to get involved. The data collected by the students revealed that a majority of the addicts came from broken families or experienced discord at home. Pause with this situation a bit and one has to accept that family problems do not necessarily lead one to addiction but the absence of involved parenting creates the environment in which experimenting with substance abuse becomes easier to get away with. And it is the same lack of involvement which expands out of the family and into the society and governance which leaves them with nothing to do when they are free or makes buying “stuff” easier and delivers us a situation where only the government has stepped up to combat substance abuse by legislating a law - Sikkim Anti-Drugs Act - and now backing the SAATHI engagement at the schools, but the society at large remains unmoved and uninterested in addressing the problem.

What is worse, the young notice that everyone realizes that substance abuse has become a problem, hence the continuing refusal to engage becomes even more confounding for them. The involvement vacuum is something they cannot wrap their heads around, and this cannot bode well for Sikkim because this means that an entire generation - not just the addicts but also their peers - is growing up with a possible sense of resentment, noticing how indifferent the elders around them have remained to what they are facing.

A class XI student who kicked the habit thanks to friends who are part of the SAATHI initiative and a Principal who responded with more than reprimand and expulsion when addiction was detected, shared that it took him nearly a year since he resolved to get help, to actually seek it. And this at a school which has a very effective counseling and support system already in place! Imagine what it must be like in environments where stigma is the only response a teenager dealing with addiction is confronted with?

The only ray of hope in all this apathy comes from the young themselves. Students from a clutch of senior secondary schools have developed impressively sensitive explanations and solutions for the problem reveal none of the shallow condescension one sees in the more grown-up efforts at trying to address the substance abuse problem. They display an empathy which one finds sorely missing from the society at large and through SAATHI, have been invested with a confidence which will hold them in good stead throughout their lives and also equip them with the faculties to actually do something concrete about this problem in later years. Meanwhile, the least that the generation above them can do is begin searching for that dormant instinct to get involved. Do not do so and the younger generation when it comes of age will not care about us either.

**WRITE US:** Readers are invited to comment on, criticise, run down, even appreciate if they like something in this paper. Letters carrying abusive/ indecorous language and personal attacks, except when against people responsible in this newspaper (who are fair game), will have to be ignored. Letters which carry forward a conversation or initiate a dialogue will command immediate attention and receive prominence. Mail us at: [letters@summittimes.com](mailto:letters@summittimes.com)

# Flat Earthers vs climate change sceptics: why conspiracy theorists keep contradicting each other

GARETH DORRIAN & IAN WHITTAKER  
*theconversation.com*

Flat Earthism and the idea that human activity is not responsible for climate change are two of the most prevalent conspiracy theories today. Both have been increasing in popularity since the late 20th century. Currently, 16% of the US population say they doubt the scientifically established shape of the Earth, while 40% think that human-induced climate change is a hoax. But proponents of one of these theories are not necessarily proponents of the other, even though both are often motivated by a common mistrust of authority. In fact, they regularly contradict one another.

Flat Earthers, for example, tend to disbelieve organisations such as NASA on the shape of Antarctica - or indeed, that there is a southern hemisphere at all. Yet the president of the Flat Earth Society, Daniel Shenton, is quite convinced - presumably at least in part thanks to information from NASA - that climate change is happening and espouses a fairly conventional view on the subject.

Former White House communications director, Anthony Scaramucci (dismissed by president Trump after ten days in office), meanwhile, believes that the Earth is in fact round, but does not believe in anthropogenic climate change, as he made clear in an interview with CNN.

Such selective reasoning is common among conspiracy theorists who often lack consistency with one other. Despite this, the media, celebrities and even politicians regularly make broad comparisons between climate change scepticism, Flat Earthism and other conspiracy theories.

### FABRICATED DATA?

In the field of global climate change, scientific bodies often are accused, even by those in power, of fabricating data. But such criticism is often deeply flawed. Take those sceptics, for example, who believe that climate change is occurring, but because of natural - rather than man-made - causes. If one argues that data has



been fabricated to show warming where there is none, one cannot then also imply that warming is occurring after all, but naturally. Either there is warming or there is not. Similarly, Flat Earthers who state that images showing Earth's curvature are due to the shape of a camera lens, themselves believe in a disc which by definition has a curved edge.

Indeed, one of the few commonalities which exist between all major conspiracy theories is that somehow scientists and governments are involved in a grand conspiracy for reasons unknown.

A major part of the scientific anthropogenic climate change argument is that there is an increase in temperature extremes in both summer and winter. Evidently, a Flat Earth model cannot support this; in fact, the most accepted Flat Earth model, which maintains that the sun rotates in a non-variable circular orbit over the flat disk, implies that there should be no seasons at all, let alone multi-decadal seasonal extremes due to climate change. Nevertheless, to

quote Shenton:

“Climate change is a process which has been ongoing since (the) beginning of detectable history, but there seems to be a definite correlation between the recent increase in worldwide temperatures and man's entry into the industrial age.”

In this instance, the president of the Flat Earth Society is correct. Anthropogenic climate change sceptics, on the other hand, are often willing to accept the science behind the Earth's natural cycles, which they blame - instead of human activity - for the world's weather woes. Clearly, we again find an implicit difference of opinion between a Flat Earth model, and a non-anthropogenic climate change one.

It is also clear that many climate change sceptics believe in the (approximately) spherical Earth, even if only subconsciously, by their use of scientifically accepted global maps when discussing data - not to mention when calling it “global” warming. **AND WHAT ABOUT ALIENS?**

If governments and scientists are so untrustworthy and steeped in corruption, then why would one believe them on any issue? Where does the line of trust actually fall? Why would a person who mistrusts governments and scientists on the shape of the Earth, not hold the same politicians and scientific organisations similarly bogus on the issue of climate change? Or alien abductions, chem trails, or anything else?

But the problem isn't likely to go away any time soon. The US has the highest number of believers in both flat-Earthism and anthropogenic climate change scepticism, and the UK is not far behind. The US also has a high number (more than 50%) of senior political figures who deny man-made climate change, not to mention a democratically elected leader vocally believing the same. There are also numerous well-known celebrities who question the established shape of our planet.

While of course scientists can play the blame game, it could be that the scientific method itself is a major limiting factor in communicating results with the public. Science is not just a body of knowledge, but a method of critical thinking.

Scientists, by necessity, have to communicate their findings in a certain rigid way focusing on probabilities, certainty values and confidence intervals. These can appear dry or baffling to the public. But by providing more easily understandable narratives we can make scientific discussions with the public more productive.

In today's complex world of social media narratives, the engagement of scientists with the public is more crucial than ever. Thankfully, current funding for public engagement training and activities is accessible to scientists with a passion for communication and conversation, enabling them to communicate facts rather than “fake news”.

*[Gareth Dorian is Post Doctoral Research Associate in Space Science, Nottingham Trent University; Ian Whittaker is Lecturer, Nottingham Trent University]*

# Girls thrive with women teachers: a study in Francophone Africa

JIEUN LEE  
*theconversation.com*

Over the past few decades most advanced countries have witnessed two striking reversals of the gender gap. First, teaching has become a profession dominated by women. This is particularly true at primary school level, where 84.5% of teachers across all countries classified as “developed” by UNESCO are women.

The second reversal has been among pupils. Girls now outperform boys in almost every educational outcome across the board - they do better in terms of enrolment, achievement and graduation rate.

These changes have been achieved in several ways. When a country is in the early stages of development, there tends to be a gender gap in educational investment that favours boys. And the teaching profession in such countries is usually dominated by men. But as countries develop and incomes rise, spending becomes more balanced and girls are able to close to even entirely reverse the gender gaps in schooling and teaching.

Such shifts are starting to occur in many developing countries. But sub-Saharan Africa, particularly in its western and central regions, is lagging behind. Women teachers are still in the minority in countries like Benin, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Chad, Congo, Ivory Coast, Niger, Senegal and Togo.

And, we discovered, this has implications for how teachers' gender influences student learning performance.

Our study found that girls in the sixth grade - so on average around 13 years old - performed better on standardised tests in reading and maths when they are taught by women than when they are taught by men. This also has implications for how girls perform at school compared to boys. Girls



outperformed boys on the subjects under women teachers.

We found no evidence that boys' performance changed in maths whether their teachers were men or women. And in reading, boys performed a little better under female teachers than they did with male teachers.

These findings echo similar studies elsewhere in the world. They suggest that female teachers can act as role models who enhance girls' motivation and learning outcomes. The countries in our study - and others - should work harder to ensure gender parity when hiring teachers. This can empower girls and improve their results.

### MEASURING PERFORMANCE

We analysed the standardised test scores of more than 31,000 primary school pupils in 1,800 primary schools in the Francophone nations of Benin, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Chad, Congo, Ivory Coast, Niger, Senegal and Togo. In 2015, only 36.9% of primary teachers in these countries were female.

We decided to focus on test scores, which are graded by external evaluators, as they're an objective measure of achievement. This means they

provide the best evidence of how teachers' gender affects - or doesn't - pupils' results.

In addition to the data analysis, we asked pupils to report back about whether they enjoyed a subject more or less when it was taught by a teacher of the same gender. So, for instance, did girls enjoy maths more with a woman teacher? The answer was “yes”. Girls preferred being taught by women and their results reflected this.

### ROLE MODELS

Teachers are important figures when it comes to students' gender-related attitudes towards different school subjects. Along with parents, teachers determine the extent to which traditional academic stereotypes such as “boys are good at maths and girls are good at reading” are passed on to future generations.

Our research found that such stereotypes remain widespread in Francophone Africa - even among teachers themselves. Teachers' perceptions of the relative average performance of girls versus boys in their classes often differed entirely from the reality. In particular, both male and female teachers frequently overestimate boys' maths performance.

But these perceptions don't hold girls back from outperforming boys in maths. This suggests that female teachers' presence - and the roles they model simply by being maths teachers - inspires girls, makes them more motivated to do well and improves their results.

Based on our findings, we'd suggest that policies should be developed specifically to improve gender balance in teaching in the countries we studied. Hiring more female teachers can contribute to closing educational gender gaps without hurting boys' performance.

*[The writer is Graduate Student (Ph.D.), Korea University]*



# Sikkim volunteers in Meghalaya for disaster response training

**SHILLONG, MAY 22 (PTI):** A 15-day training programme for a team of disaster relief volunteers from Sikkim began today at an institute at Mawdiangdiang, around 7km from here, an official statement said.

The session, funded by the central government as part of its 'Aapda Mitra' initiative, will impart lessons in disaster response during floods to 200 community volunteers, it said.

The Aapda Mitra

scheme, launched by the Centre in 2016, aims to provide community volunteers with the skills to respond to their communities' immediate needs in the aftermath of a disaster.

"The terrain in Sik-

kim is very similar to Meghalaya, therefore you (volunteers) will greatly benefit from this session here," said Rinzing C Bhutia, Special Secretary, Sikkim Disaster Management Authority (SDMA) said while

addressing the inaugural programme.

Sikkim has recently set up its own training institute, it still lacks adequate facilities. The Central Training Institute of Civil Defence and Home

guards at Mawdiangdiang, on the other hand, has well-trained faculty and staff, he said.

Bhutia also urged the volunteers from Sikkim to make the most of this opportunity in Meghalaya.

MK Sangma, Joint Di-

rector of Civil Defence and Joint Commandant General of Home Guards, assured the officials from SDMA that their volunteers would receive the best-possible training at the institute.

"The instructors

here have been trained in the premiere institutions of the country and even abroad," he said, adding that the department will be happy to have more such collaborations with Sikkim in the future.

## SBI reports loss of Rs 7,718 cr in Q4 on higher provisioning

**MUMBAI, MAY 22 (PTI):** Country's largest lender State Bank of India today reported a standalone net loss at Rs 7,718 crore in the March quarter, due to higher provisions for bad loans and gratuity, and lower trading income.

The lender, which last year merged six banks into it, had reported a net loss of Rs 3,442 crore in the same quarter last year. However, excluding the results of the six banks, the bank had reported a net profit of Rs 2,814.2 crore in the March 2017 quarter.

This is the second consecutive quarterly loss for the bank, which had reported a loss of Rs 2,416 crore in the December quarter.

For financial year 2017-18, the bank reported a net loss of Rs 6,547 crore, compared with a net loss of Rs 1,805 crore in the previous year.



## 2 women mountaineers and TSAF instructor conquer Mt Everest

**JAMSHEDPUR, MAY 22 (PTI):** Two women mountaineers and an instructor of the Tata Steel Adventure Foundation (TSAF) here, have climbed the summit of the Mount Everest, a Tata Steel release said.

The two women mountaineers - Poonam and Swarnalata Dalai -- and instructor Sandeep Toliya climbed the summit on Sunday, it said.

Poonam (21) hailed from Uttarakashi of Uttarakhand, while Swarnalata Dalai (20) is a native of Odisha.

They had been undergoing training at the TSAF for the past one year.

Sandeep Toliya has been working with TSAF for more than 10 years as senior instructor, it said adding that the mission was sponsored by the Tata Steel.

"It's a great achievement by the trekkers which showcases their indomitable spirit, zeal and grit. We at Tata Steel are proud to have been able to support them to realise their dreams. TSAF, through this unique endeavour, will continue to promote the adventure sports in the country," vice president, corporate services of the Tata Steel, Sunil Bhaskaran said.

# US Supreme Court accepts appeal to hear dispute over power plant in Gujarat



**WASHINGTON, MAY 22 (PTI):** The US Supreme Court has accepted an appeal against an International Finance Corporation-funded power plant in Gujarat by villagers who claim that it caused devastation of the local environment.

"Petition granted", the Supreme Court said yesterday. The case would come up for hearing in the next session, beginning October.

The villagers, led by Budha Ismail Jam, along with several other farmers and fishermen, allege that coal-fired Tata Mundra Power Plant in Tunda village in Kutch district, has resulted in widespread environmental damages.

Washington DC-based International Finance Corporation, the financing wing of the World Bank, has provided USD 450 million in financial assistance to the project.

The Supreme Court said it would decide whether the IFC enjoyed immunity under the 1945 International Organisations Immunity Act.

Jam and other petitioners knocked the door of the Supreme Court this year after lower courts dismissed their petitions arguing that the IFC enjoyed immunity, like other foreign countries, under the 1945 International Organizations Immunity Act.

In their petition, the villagers argued that the Tata Mundra Power Plant has failed to comply with international environmental standards. This has resulted in devastation of the local environment.

"International organisations play an ever-increasing role in the economic landscape of this country and the world. Therefore, the ques-

tion whether they are absolutely immune from any kind of lawsuit - no matter how strictly commercial their activities; no matter how egregious their actions; and no matter the views of the Executive Branch - has great significance," the petitioners argued.

In 2015, the applicants - Indian farmers, fishermen, a trade union of fishworkers, and a local government entity - sued the IFC in the US District Court for the District of Columbia. They brought claims for negligence, negligent supervision, public nuisance, private nuisance, trespass, and breach of contract.

The petitioners lost the case before a district court in 2016 and the US Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia in 2017. Both the courts argued that IFC enjoys immunity.

## Tripura CM asks officials to develop Tripurasundari temple

**AGARTALA, MAY 22 (PTI):** Tripura Chief Minister Biplab Kumar Deb has asked state government officials to make a comprehensive master plan to develop the Tripurasundari temple in Gomati district, an official release said.

"The temple development plan must be undertaken with a vision of developing Mata Tripura Sundari Temple as a world class pilgrimage centre in North East India," Deb told officials of the temple trust at a meeting yesterday.

The chief minister approved the formation of two sub-committees of the trust: the Temple Development Committee and Finance & Audit Committee.



He also cleared the formation of an 11-member executive committee of the trust, with the district magistrate and collector, DFO, Gomati and SDM, Udaipur as mem-

bers, the release said.

The Central government, under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, has championed the cause of pilgrimage tourism in

the country through its 'Prasad' and 'Swadesh Darshan' schemes, it said.

The Tripurasundari temple in Udaipur is one of the 51 'shaktipiths' of the Hindus.

## Nipah virus claims 10 lives in Kerala

**KOZHIKODE, MAY 22 (PTI):** The Nipah virus has so far claimed 10 lives in Kozhikode and Malappuram districts in north Kerala while the condition of two persons undergoing treatment for the viral disease is said to be critical, Health Minister K K Shylaja said today.

The World Health Organisation (WHO) has been informed about the outbreak of the virus in Kerala, she told reporters here today.

Two persons-- Rajan and Ashokan, who were undergoing treatment at Kozhikode, died this morning, have been confirmed to have contracted the virus, she said.

A nursing assistant, Lini, who died yesterday had also contracted the virus, she added.

Of the 18 samples sent for testing, 12 have tested positive for the virus, of which 10 people have died.

Two deaths reported on May



20 from Malappuram-- Sindhu and Sijitha, have tested positive for Nipah virus.

The two had come to Kozhikode Medical College Hospital for treatment and had been in touch with one of the infected persons who had died of the virus, the minister said.

No fresh case has been reported so far, she said adding the WHO has been informed.

Shylaja said Union Health

minister, J P Nadda, who is in Geneva, had called her and enquired about the situation in the state and has promised all help from the central government.

An expert team from the National Centre for Disease Control (NCDC), including its director, Dr Sajeet Kumar Singh and Head of Epidemiology, Dr S K Jain, are already in Kerala.

A high level team from AIMS has also reached the state, she said.





## Reina, Cannavaro face Italian FA grilling over alleged mafia links

**MILAN, MAY 22 (AFP):** Footballers Pepe Reina, Paolo Cannavaro and Salvatore Aronica have been ordered to appear before a Italian Football Federation (FIGC) panel over their alleged association with people linked to the mafia, according to reports in Italy today.

Naples' anti-mafia department opened an investigation and the FIGC's chief prosecutor Giuseppe Pecoraro has ordered the three players to appear before a disciplinary committee hearing on a date yet to be decided.

Both Cannavaro and Aronica played for Napoli for a few years, while former Liverpool goalkeeper Reina will leave Napoli this summer to move to AC Milan.

The three players will be questioned over allegedly "maintaining inappropriate relations" with the Esposito brothers Gabriele, Francesco and Giuseppe, who are alleged to be leading figures in Naples' Camorra mafia.

Gazzetta Dello Sport reported that Reina, 35, held a farewell party in a popular Naples nightclub owned by one of the Esposito brothers.

Reina and Cannavaro allegedly obtained free tickets for Napoli games for two of the brothers, with reports of an "exchange of favours".

Three Napoli employees including team manager Paolo De Matteis and former head of ticketing Luigi Cassano must also appear before the FIGC hearing.

Cannavaro, 36, retired last December and joined his brother, 2006 World Cup winner Fabio Cannavaro, on the coaching staff at Chinese Super League club Guangzhou Evergrande.

# Kane named England's World Cup captain

**LONDON, MAY 22 (AFP):** Tottenham striker Harry Kane will be England's captain at the World Cup in Russia, the Football Association announced on today.

Manager Gareth Southgate has shared the leadership role around since taking over as manager in 2016 but has now settled on Kane for the tournament, which begins next month.

The 24-year-old, who has scored 12 goals in 23 international appearances, was first handed the armband for the qualifier against Scotland last June and has skippered the side on three further occasions.

Southgate, who announced his decision during a team meeting at England's training base yesterday, said: "Harry has some outstanding personal qualities. He is a meticulous professional and one of the most important things for a captain is that they set the standard every day.

"He has belief and high standards and it is a great message for the team to have a captain who has shown that it is possible to be one of the



best in the world over a consistent period of time."

Southgate and Kane, who burst onto the senior international scene with a goal 79 seconds into his 2015 debut against Lithuania, appeared in a live video posted on England's Twitter account soon after the

official announcement.

"It's an amazing honour," said Kane.

"Obviously you always dream of playing for England, growing up. To be the captain is that little bit more.

"So excited, obviously excited for the World Cup. I just

can't wait to be there and experience it. To be leading the lads out is going to be special. But for me nothing changes -- I'm the same person, the same player, and it's just about the team. We've just got to do what we can and go as far as we can."

Kane's Spurs team-mate Eric Dier and Liverpool captain Jordan Henderson were seen as the other likeliest candidates for the role.

The standout star in England's inexperienced squad, Kane will travel to his first World Cup full of confidence

after another outstanding season in which he passed the 30-goal mark for club and country for the fourth season in a row.

Kane has netted 45 goals in 52 appearances for Spurs and England in 2017/18, missing out on a third consecutive Premier League Golden Boot title to Liverpool's Mohamed Salah.

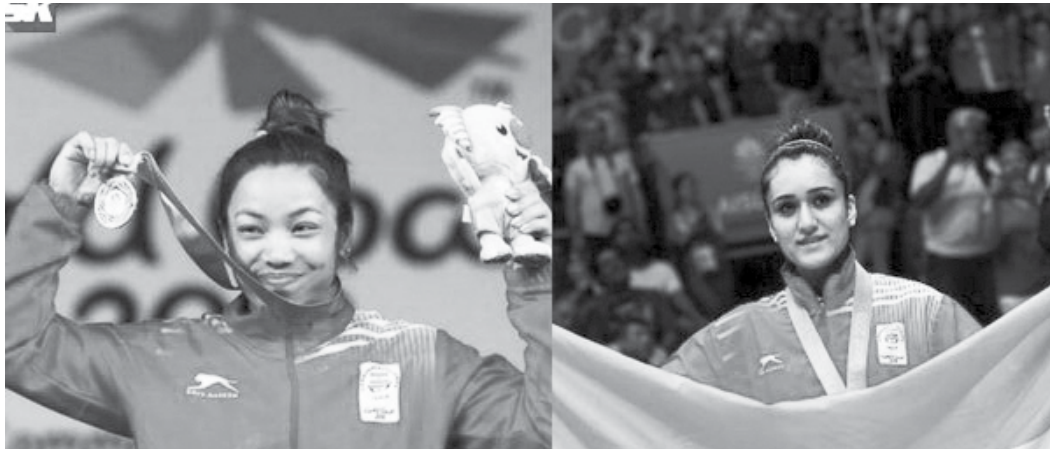
His goals fired Spurs to third place in the Premier League, meaning they qualified for the Champions League for the third season in a row.

The retired Wayne Rooney, the dropped Joe Hart and Gary Cahill, who is heading to Russia after a last-minute reprieve, have also captained England under Southgate.

"Of course, Harry will need the support of the other good leaders that we have got around him," said Southgate.

"You don't become a top team by just having a good captain with good values because that has got to spread right throughout the group but I think he is the one who is ready to take that challenge on.

## Manika, Mirabai sign up with IOS Sports



**NEW DELHI, MAY 22 (PTI):** Commonwealth gold medal winning table tennis star Manika Batra and weightlifter Mirabai Chanu have signed multi-year agreements with sports management firm IOS.

IOS will now manage their endorsements, appearances, brand profiling, patents, licensing and digital rights, images, and visibility on social networking sites, the company stated in a media release.

With this deal, Manika and Mirabai join the likes of boxing stars MC Mary Kom, Vijender Singh and Saina Nehwal on the IOS roster.

The 22-year-old Manika had bagged medals in four events, including an unprecedented gold in the women's singles and team championship, in the recently concluded Commonwealth Games at Gold Coast.

Commenting on this new association, Manika said "I am happy to be on board with IOS Sports & Entertainment. They have managed most of India's top sportspersons and I look forward to a great partnership with them."

The 23-year-old Mirabai, on the other hand, became the first Indian in two decades to clinch a gold medal at the 2017

World Weightlifting Championship in Anaheim.

"I have been performing well in the international circuit but at the same time I was looking for a professional sports management group that could manage my overall brand portfolio and logistics plus commercial activities in the best professional way," Mirabai said.

"I am really convinced in the manner in which IOS has been working in the market with some of the top talents of our country. I am looking forward to a great partnership with IOS," Mirabai added.

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# Rajasthan have a mountain to climb against Kolkata in IPL Eliminator

**KOLKATA, MAY 22 (PTI):** With odds stacked against them, former champions Rajasthan Royals will look to go full throttle when they lock horns with two-time winners and overwhelming favourites Kolkata Knight Riders in the IPL Eliminator T20 cricket fixture here tomorrow.

The Knight Riders have outplayed Rajasthan both in the home and away games this season.

If it was a seven-wicket win at Jaipur last month, Kolkata notched up a comprehensive six-wicket win over their rivals a week ago at Edens gardens en route to sealing their play-off berth.

With three wins on the trot, Kolkata Knight Riders are on a roll as they clinched the last-four berth for a sixth time.

From posting the highest total of the season to stunning table-toppers Sunrisers Hyderabad in their last match, it has been a no-nonsense approach for the Dinesh Karthik-led side.

To make it easier for them, Kolkata are the only team from the four qualifiers to get the home advantage in the Eliminator.

The winner of tomorrow's match will face the loser of Qualifier 1 between Sunrisers and Chennai Super Kings in the second



Qualifier -- also to be held at Kolkata -- which will decide the second entrant of the final.

Champions of the inaugural edition in 2008, Rajasthan, on the other hand, have been heavily reliant on the alignment of their stars for their passage into the play-offs.

Minus their two top English star performers -- Jos Buttler and Ben Stokes who were called for national duty -- Rajasthan were written off by many, but they managed to upset Royal Challengers Banga-

lore in their final league game on May 19 to keep their slender hopes alive.

The win, however, was still not enough as they needed two results to go in their favour to qualify for the play-offs.

Their prayers were answered exactly the way they wanted when the other contenders -- Mumbai Indians and Kings XI Punjab -- were eliminated after losing their respective matches and Rajasthan advanced to the play-off in a dra-

matic way.

But in the Eliminator stage, which is a virtual quarterfinal, there's no margin for error and the Ajinkya Rahane-led side have to rely on their resources.

First challenge for them will be to conquer the spin challenge of Sunil Narine, Piyush Chawla and Kuldeep Yadav, who haunted them with an IPL career-best 4/20 in their six-wicket defeat here.

Going through a prolonged lean patch, skipper Rahane (324

runs at 27.00) will be the key to Rajasthan's success.

He will look to lead from the front and hope that the likes of Sanju Samson and in-form opener Rahul Tripathi come good on a pitch that promises to be full of runs and would also favour the team batting second.

KKR will have to stymie the South African clean-hitting wicket-keeper-batsman Heinrich Klaasen who will look to play the finishing role for RR.

Karthik has been terrific as the new captain for KKR, playing the finisher's role for the team in most of the games with six unbeaten knocks.

Leading by example, Karthik has been their top rungetter with 438 runs at an average of 54.78 (strike rate 149.48).

Belligerent as an opener and smart with his spin bowling, Trinidadian Sunil Narine, a two-time IPL winner with KKR, is once again proving to be their most valuable player.

With Chris Lynn restraining his strokemaking for a dodgy shoulder, Narine has complemented well with a strike rate of 189.01 to give them a fiery start.

While the spinners have done their job, the pace department was

found lacking but young Karnataka pacer Prasidh Krishna came up with his T20 best figures of 4/30 against Hyderabad in their last match and he would look to provide the stability to their pace attack.

Three matches away from winning the title, KKR's batting and bowling has combined seamlessly so far and they will hope to produce their best tomorrow.

Teams (From):

Kolkata Knight Riders: Dinesh Karthik (c), Sunil Narine, Andre Russell, Chris Lynn, Robin Uthappa, Kuldeep Yadav, Piyush Chawla, Nitish Rana, Prasidh Krishna, Shivam Mavi, Mitchell Johnson, Shubman Gill, R. Vinay Kumar, Rinku Singh, Cameron Delpert, Javon Searless, Apoorv Wankhade, Ishank Jaggi, Tom Curran.

Rajasthan Royals: Ajinkya Rahane (C), Stuart Binny, Sanju Samson, Rahul Tripathi, Darcy Short, Krishnappa Gowtham, Jofra Archer, Dhawal Kulkarni, Jaydev Unadkat, Ankit Sharma, Anureet Singh, Shreyas Gopal, Prashant Chopra, Sudhesan Midhun, Ben Laughlin, Mahipal Lomror, Aryaman Birla, Jatin Saxena, Dushmantha Chameera, Heinrich Klaasen, Ish Sodhi.

Match starts at 7 PM.





**Mahathir taps prominent Indian-origin politician to become Malaysia's first Sikh Cabinet minister**

**KUALA LUMPUR, MAY 22 (PTI):** Gobind Singh Deo, a prominent Indian-origin lawyer and politician in Malaysia has become the first Sikh in the Muslim-majority country's history to be appointed a Cabinet minister.

Deo, 44, who has been given the communications and multimedia portfolio, is among the two politicians of Indian descent inducted by Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad yesterday.

The other Indian-origin lawmaker is M Kulasegaran from the Democratic Action Party (DAP), who has been made the human resource minister in the Cabinet by Mahathir, nearly two weeks after the 92-year-old veteran politician's shocking election win that ended Barisan Nasional's six decades of power.

Kulasegaran, 61, is the National Vice Chairman of the DAP and he represents Ipoh Barat, Perak. He was first elected to the Parliament in 1997 in a by-election.

Deo represents Puchong constituency in the Malaysian Parliament and is the son of late Malaysian lawyer and politician Karpal Singh. He was sworn in yesterday.

He was first elected as an MP in the 2008 general elections. Deo was re-elected to the lower house, with an increased margin, in 2013. He again won this year's election with a margin of 47,635 votes.

The Punjabi community in the country has hailed the appointment of Deo as a Cabinet minister.

"It is good to see Gobind Singh, a member of the Punjabi community in the Cabinet. It is a proud and happy occasion for our community. Other than being a recognition of his abilities, it is also a recognition for the long established Punjabi community in Malaysia, Miri Indian Association president, Councillor Karambir Singh was quoted as saying by the Borneo Post.

Malaysia, a Muslim-majority country, has nearly 1,00,000 Sikh population.

A total of 13 federal ministers took their oaths of office in a ceremony at the royal palace presided over by King Sultan Muhammad V.

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# Pak raises India's 'violation' of Indus Waters Treaty with WB

**WASHINGTON, MAY 22 (PTI):** Pakistan has raised with the World Bank the alleged violation of the Indus Waters Treaty by India, which inaugurated the Kishanganga hydro project in Kashmir, as the multilateral lender sought opportunities within the treaty to find an amicable resolution of the issue.

The four-member Pakistani delegation, led by Attorney General Ashtar Ausaf Ali, met the World Bank officials here yesterday, days after Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated the 330 MW Kishanganga hydroelectric project in Jammu and Kashmir.

The inauguration of the hydroelectric project was held amid protests from Pakistan which claims that the dam on a river flowing into Pakistan will disrupt water supplies.

Pakistan's Foreign Office had, on Friday, voiced concern over the inauguration of the hydroelectric project, saying inauguration without reso-



lution of dispute between the two countries will tantamount to violation of the Indus Waters 1960 that regulates the use of waters in the shared rivers.

"The Indus Waters Treaty is a profoundly important international agreement that provides an essential cooperative framework for In-

dia and Pakistan to address current and future challenges of effective water management to meet human needs and achieve development goals," a World Bank spokesperson told PTI.

"The meetings are discussing concerns raised by the Pakistan delegation and opportunities within the

treaty to seek an amicable resolution," the spokesperson said.

No other details about the nature of Pakistani grievances were made available by the World Bank officials.

The discussions are scheduled to continue today.

Pakistani daily Dawn said the talks would cover four key points: the height of the dam built on the Kishanganga River, its capacity to hold water, Pakistan's demand for setting up a court of arbitration to settle the dispute and India's counter-demand for an international expert.

Islamabad had been raising objections over the design of the hydel project, saying it is not in line with the criteria laid down under the Indus Waters Treaty (IWT) between the two countries. But, India says the project design was well within parameters of the treaty.

The project, located at Bandipore in North Kashmir, envisages diversion of water of Kishan Ganga

river to underground power house through a 23.25-km-long head race tunnel to generate 1713 million units per annum.

The Kishanganga project was started in 2007 but on May 17, 2010, Pakistan moved for international arbitration against India under the provisions of the Indus Waters Treaty.

The Hague-based International Court of Arbitration allowed India in 2013 to go ahead with construction of the project in North Kashmir and upheld India's right under the bilateral Indus Waters Treaty to divert waters from the Kishanganga for power generation in Jammu and Kashmir.

The international court, however, decided that India shall release a minimum flow of nine cubic metres per second into the Kishanganga river (known as Neelam in Pakistan) at all times to maintain environmental flows.



**Syria's military says the country's capital and surrounding areas are free from militants for the first time in nearly seven years. The announcement that the Islamic State group has been ousted marks a milestone in the war and comes after government troops captured a southern part of Damascus and the Palestinian refugee camp Yarmouk. A military spokesman told state media: "The Syrian army announces today that Damascus, its outskirts and surrounding towns are completely secure."**

## As summit looms, North Korean media return to angry tone

**TOKYO, MAY 22 (AP):** North Korean media stepped up their rhetorical attacks on South Korea and joint military exercises with the United States, warning Tuesday that a budding detente could be in danger.

State media unleashed three strongly worded commentaries slamming Seoul and Washington for the maneuvers and demanding Seoul take action against defectors it claimed were sending anti-North Korea propaganda leaflets across the border.

The official media had until recently taken a relatively subdued tone amid the North's diplomatic overtures to its neighbors, including a summit with South Korea's president last month and plans for leader Kim Jong Un to meet US President Donald Trump in Singapore on June 12.

That first changed last week, when it lashed out against the maneuvers, cut high-level contacts with Seoul and threatened to "reconsider" the Trump summit.

One of the reports on Tuesday, which came as North Korea allowed an airplane full of foreign journalists into the country to cover the dismantling of its nuclear test site this week, accused Seoul of teaming up with Washington for military drills intended as a show of force and as a "war drill" against it.

It's not unusual for North Korea's official media to turn to hyperbole to make a point and



the rhetorical barrage coincides with a visit to Washington by South Korean President Moon Jae-in. Strongly worded messages don't necessarily mean it is backing away from diplomatic negotiations.

But the North's abrupt sharpening of its words has raised concerns the Trump summit may prove to be a bumpy one - or that it could even be in jeopardy. Trump has suggested he is willing to walk away if Kim isn't willing to have a fruitful meeting and it appears both sides have agendas that remain far apart from each other.

There has been no indication that North Korea will cancel plans to dismantle the test site, an important gesture of goodwill. The North has also not suggested it will go back on its



promise to halt underground testing and launches of intercontinental ballistic missiles.

But it did ban South Korean journalists from the trip to the nuclear site. And the language Tuesday offered a veiled threat that talks could be harmed.

"Dialogue and saber-rattling can never go together," said the commentary published in Minju Joson, one of the country's four main daily newspapers.

"There are some arguments describing the improvement of the situation on the Korean Peninsula as 'result of hard-line diplomacy' of the US and 'result of sustained pressure,'" said another, by the official KCNA news agency.

"It seriously chills the atmosphere of the DPRK-US dialogue and is of no help to the devel-

opment of the situation." DPRK is short for the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, the North's official name.

Yet another article lashed out at South Korean authorities for allowing defectors to send anti-North Korea leaflets across their border.

It noted that the two leaders agreed at their summit in the Demilitarized Zone last month not to conduct hostile acts against each other and said the authorities have an obligation under that agreement to block such actions, even by private citizens.

"If the North-South relations face a grave difficulty again owing to the provocation of human scum, the blame for it will be entirely on the South Korean authorities," the report said.

## Chinese official media slams report on mining near Arunachal border

**BEIJING, MAY 22 (PTI):** Slamming a report about large-scale mining by China at the Arunachal Pradesh border, official Chinese media here today questioned the report's motive while hoping that India would not be "provoked" by it and blight the progress achieved at last month's Wuhan summit.

The Hong Kong-based South China Morning Post on Sunday reported that China has begun large-scale mining operations in Lhunze county under its control adjacent to the border with Arunachal Pradesh where a huge trove of gold, silver and other precious minerals valued at about USD 60 billion has been found.

The report also claimed that China is rapidly building infrastructure to turn the area into another South China Sea-like scenario.

It is to be hoped that India will not be provoked by this report, lose focus on the big picture of the relationship between Beijing and New Delhi and get off the track of Sino-Indian cooperation, the Global Times tabloid daily, known for its abrasive commentaries against India, said in an editorial today.

The editorial titled, 'Dodgy report disturbs Sino-Indian ties' said, the report poked a sensitive spot in Sino-Indian ties but severely lacked factual evidence.

It also said the Chinese expert quoted by the Post told the Global Times that he did not mention the South China Sea at all in his comments.

Terming the report as coarse, the editorial said it attracted widespread attention from Indian media on Sunday. Since the paper quoted people familiar with the project as describing China's move as a part of an ambitious plan by Beijing to reclaim South Tibet, relevant news stories from Indian media were full of vigilance," it said.

But to many Chinese people, their first impression is that the report is not credible, given

the vague facts, the geopolitical point quoted by a geologist and the denial by the expert, it said and questioned the motive saying that it is aimed at seeking to disturb Sino-Indian ties.

"The report was bound to make waves. Lhunze county is not a disputed region. Whether or not there are mining operations there falls entirely within China's sovereignty. The Sino-Indian border dispute is different from the South China Sea issue and so it is quite farfetched to compare the two, the editorial said.

It also said after the Doklam standoff, Beijing and New Delhi increased their strategic communication and coordination in the border areas.

"After Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Wuhan last month and his meeting with his President Xi Jinping, the two sides achieved major progress in strengthening mutual trust. Both countries have no intention of provoking border disputes and China is unlikely to kick-start an aggressive plan on territorial issues," it said.

The two governments, not the media, should take the lead in solving border disputes, as the latter can easily mislead public sentiment. Negotiations should be conducted by the two countries' professional diplomatic and security teams, which should present a solution acceptable to both parties and the two nations' societies," it said.

The daily also quoted experts alleging that Western countries are trying to create discord between India and China.

The 'groundless hype' reflected the fact that some Western powers are constantly sowing discord between China and India, and using Delhi as a pawn on the frontline challenging Beijing," Hu Zhiyong, a research fellow at the Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences' Institute of International Relations told the daily.





**MAKE WAY FOR STAR LORD!** Actor Chris Pratt takes off his wet jacket after getting caught in the rain at the Jurassic World: Fallen Kingdom premiere in Madrid, Spain.

WILL SMITH & NICKY JAM TO PERFORM OFFICIAL FIFA WORLD CUP SONG WITH ERA ISTREFI

Will Smith and Nicky Jam, together with Kosovo singer Era Istrefi, will perform the official 2018 FIFA World Cup Russia song, according to published reports and independent sources. The track will be produced by Diplo and is slated for release May 25.



Although there are multiple songs

Ricky Martin's "The Cup of Life."

associated with the World Cup, the official anthem is usually the most high-profile and is performed at the finale of the World Cup, which will be watched by an estimated 2 billion people. Past anthems include Shakira's "Waka Waka" and

THIS WEEK'S TOP 10 SONGS ON BILLBOARD HOT 100

- 1. Childish Gambino- This Is America
- 2. Drake- Nice For What
- 3. Drake- God's Plan
- 4. Post Malone Featuring Ty Dolla \$ign- Psycho
- 5. Bebe Rexha and Florida Georgia Line- Meant To Be
- 6. Zedd, Maren Morris, Grey- The Middle
- 7. Ariana Grande- No Tears Left To Cry
- 8. BlocBoy JB Featuring Drake- Look Alive
- 9. Camila Cabello- Never Be The Same
- 10. Ed Sheeran- Perfect



THE DAY AHEAD

**ARIES:** Your courageous strength and desire to take a leadership role may be threatening to others today, Aries. Be careful of automatically assuming the dominant position before learning what other people feel about the situation. You could make some drastic mistakes if you don't watch out for the well-being of others. Things could get quite emotional, so beware of potential flare-ups. **TAURUS:** You can cut through to the truth quite easily today, Taurus, so don't hesitate to do so. If you come to an intersection and no one seems to know who should go next, take the initiative and go. It might not be a bad idea to signal your intentions to the other drivers before you

make your move. Being aggressive with your actions doesn't mean you have to be reckless. **GEMINI:** You may want to keep your ship on an even keel today, Gemini, but remember that no matter how hard as you try, this simply might not be possible. The wind is blowing pretty hard and you might just have to trim your sails and go full speed ahead. You'll move much more quickly, but it will also mean that you'll be more prone to capsizing. Live on the edge. **CANCER:** This is your day to shine in many respects, Cancer. The action you take is right on target, so draw back your arrow as far as you can before letting it fly. There is a quiet strength to your being that comes out oc-

asionally. When it does, people will note it for miles around. Today gives you the opportunity to display your incredible strength and passion to the world. Don't hold back. **LEO:** You could be wondering why everyone has to be so serious and emotional all of a sudden. You're likely to be feeling this way, too. Take this as a reminder that there are many different walks of life and not all of them necessarily intersect your path. Those forces are apt to make themselves known in quite a traumatic fashion today. Prepare to defend yourself and your motives, Leo. **VIRGO:** Don't put up with anyone's shenanigans, Virgo. Your time is too precious and your

energy too powerful to waste on those who see you as a fair-weather friend or emotional crutch. Concentrate on your own problems. If someone has a sob story, tell him or her exactly what you think. No need to pad the honest truth with a bunch of fluff just to make the other person feel good. **LIBRA:** You may have the intellectual side of the equation completely set in your head, Libra. You've collected all the facts and have all the data worked out in such a way that it's impossible for anyone to fault your calculations. Don't think you're done, because there's one part of the picture left to consider - emotions. Extreme feelings could put a monkey wrench in your plans.

Be prepared. **SCORPIO:** Other people might have a hard time navigating through the day, thanks to the intensity and corruption that's likely to surface. You have nothing to worry about, Scorpio, because your adaptable nature is perfectly suited to dealing with the stubborn forces that are likely to rear their heads. This is a good time to clean out your closet and throw away things you no longer need. Be ruthless. **SAGITTARIUS:** Secure your bunker and make sure it's fully stocked with heavy artillery, because there is bound to be a battle, Sagittarius. Trust that you need to be fully prepared in order to enter the fight today, because you do. There are

some battles that you actually like - the ones that get things rolling and produce results. It will soon become clear which type this is. **CAPRICORN:** You tend to get quite emotional about things even though you don't always show it prominently to the outside world, Capricorn. The difference today is that more people are likely to be openly acting out their emotions, so you, in turn, could feel safer about exposing your true feelings to the people around you. Have faith that you'll find friends who share similar opinions on this day. **AQUARIUS:** If situations get too hot and heavy, Aquarius, your first instinct is to run away or jump to the next subject before

anyone notices you're avoiding the serious ones. That's one way to deal with today's intensity, but deep down you know it isn't the best. What you really need to do is dig deep and take advantage of this emotional energy to thoroughly take care of things instead of skim over them. **PISCES:** Your actions today could take an investigative approach, Pisces. You're able to probe much more deeply than usual as you search people's eyes for the answers you seek. Feel free to take aggressive action based on your gut instincts. Use your powerful emotions as a tool instead of something that holds you back. People may come to you for advice, and you're in the perfect position to give it.

THE EXPENDABLES 4 CONFIRMED; MAY START FILMING IN EARLY 2019

Sylvester Stallone previously dropped hints about Expendables 4 happening, and now the film is confirmed to be going forward. When it released back in 2010, the first Expendables played like a tremendous action movie jam session, featuring old school heroes like Sylvester Stallone and Arnold Schwarzenegger sharing the stage with new school stars like Jason Statham and Jet Li. And in classic '80s action movie fashion, the film whipped up enough graphic violence to earn an R rating.

Audiences embraced the semi-nostalgic Expendables formula to the tune of \$274 million in worldwide grosses. The Expendables 2 followed, with Schwarzenegger receiving a beefed-up part, and scared up \$315 million worldwide. By the time Expendables 3 rolled around however, the formula had begun to seem tired, and it didn't help that producers, apparently



reaching for a bigger audience, elected to go for a PG-13 rating instead of an R. Despite the third movie's diminished returns - only \$214 million worldwide - Stallone has long hinted that Expendables 4 would still happen (despite his apparent battles with Millennium Films).

As reported by Deadline, the fourth Expendables movie has gotten the go-ahead af-

ter Millennium Films struck an all-important deal with exhibitors Dadi for Chinese distribution rights. Deadline reports an early 2019 start date for the film.

Along with the Expendables 4 news, Deadline also reports that Millennium has sold Chinese rights for Rambo 5 as part of the same deal, with the movie going before cameras in September. Stall-

one previously revealed a Fall 2019 release date for the fifth Rambo film, which will reportedly see Rambo taking on a Mexican drug cartel. Stallone himself has been working on the script with an eye toward possibly directing. At the present moment, Stallone continues work on Creed 2, which sees him playing the role of Rocky Balboa for the eighth time.

OPRAH WINFREY AND MERYL STREEP PUTTING WORLD LEADERS 'ON NOTICE' OVER GENDER EQUALITY

Oprah Winfrey, Meryl Streep and Chadwick Boseman are among several stars putting world leaders "on notice", demanding gender equality across the globe.

In an open letter, backed by actors such as Reese Witherspoon, Michael Sheen and Thandie Newton, they call for

year. From the G7 to the G20; from the African Union to your annual budgets; we will push you for commitments and hold you to account for them. And, if you deliver, we will be the first to champion your progress.



commitment to help every girl get an education.

The letter, led by the ONE Campaign, highlights inequality between men and women, particularly in some of the poorest countries in the world.

Amy Schumer, Chelsea Clinton and Ryan Reynolds are also among the 140 high-profile names backing the letter.

"Dear World Leaders, we're putting you on notice," it reads.

"For 130 million girls without an education. For one billion women without access to a bank account. For 39,000 girls who became child brides today. For women everywhere paid less than a man for the same work.

"There is nowhere on earth where women have the same opportunities as men, but the gender gap is wider for women living in poverty.

"Poverty is sexist. And we won't stand by while the poorest women are overlooked.

"You have the power to deliver historic changes for women this

"We won't stop until there is justice for women and girls everywhere. Because none of us are equal until all of us are equal."

One of the signatories, Nashville actress Connie Britton spoke in the wake of the Time's Up movement against sexual harassment.

She said: "We have seen an astounding level of attention paid to the harmful impacts that sexism and systemic gender inequality have on our society.

"We must do more to lift up and empower those who are most overlooked, so that every girl and woman has access to an education and to the same opportunities as their fellow brothers.

"This year, it is my hope that all of us, especially our leaders, join in the fight for full equality."

The UK director of the ONE Campaign said girls' education was "essential" in the fight to end poverty.

Romilly Greenhill said: "Until we're able to break down the barriers holding girls and women back on a global level, extreme poverty and gender inequality will continue to exist."



BTS 'FAKE LOVE' CONFIRMED BIGGEST 24-HOUR YOUTUBE DEBUT OF 2018

K-pop band BTS is confirmed as having the biggest 24-hour debut of 2018 as the final numbers come in from YouTube. The BTS "Fake Love" video finally got 35.9 million hits in its first day. It has now gone onto 70 million after just three days and still tops YouTube's list of trending music. The video had 4.8 million views in its first hour alone.

It first-day showing leaves the seven-member boy band in third place for a 24-hour start behind "Gentleman" by fellow Korean pop artist Psy, the follow-up to his hit "Gangnam Style," which finally just edged it. "Gentleman" got 36 million in 2013.

The all-time best remains Taylor Swift, with "Look What You Made Me Do" (on Big Machine records) which got 43.2 million in a day last August.

All three remain some way in front of the rest of the top 10, with a lot of recent songs featuring. This shows both the growing popularity of the streaming medium and social media alerting fans to new material within hours of its release. BTS won the Top Social Artist at the Billboard Music Awards last week, where it performed "Fake Love" for the first time.

In fourth place for YouTube 24-hour debuts is Puerto Rican Nicky Jam and Colombian J. Balvin with the official video to "X (EQUIS)" on Sony Latin, which got 29.7 million plays on its release in March. This was yet another example of a world-music cross-over with dance-hall trappings.

Following this song is Adele, whose "Hello" on XL Recordings was watched 26.3 million times in October 2015. In sixth place are Daddy Yankee, RedOne, French Montana and Dinah Jane. The video to their track "Boom Boom" got off to a 24.1 million start last year.

In seventh place is Miley Cyrus with 2013's "Wrecking Ball" (RCA) on 22.6 million. The eighth is predictable: The big summer smash from last year, Luis Fonsi and Daddy Yankee with the "Despacito (Remix Audio)" featuring Justin Bieber on 22.4 million. This was on the Universal Latin label, and of course another dance track with Latin flavorings.