



SummitTIMES

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ON TOP OF THE NEWS

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State “sleeping” over need to check encroachment of public land by religious bodies: HC observes

**SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 10 APR:**

The High Court of Sikkim has pulled up the State Government for not complying with the court's orders on framing a policy regarding unauthorized construction of religious nature in the State. Further, the court has imposed costs of Rs. 25,000 recoverable from the officers who have failed to take any initiative in the matter.

This observation was made by the court after the state government sought more time to file its response.

The bench comprising of Chief Justice SK Agnihotri and Justice Meenakshi Madan Rai

said that the court had issued notices to the state government in February directing it to respond and take initiative to examine the illegal encroachment on public areas and to frame a policy in respect of existing unauthorized construction of religious nature.

The bench observed that, “...without taking any initiative, the instant application has been filed seeking for time” further adding that the Counsel appearing for the State is not in a position to communicate as to what steps have been taken, whether a nodal agency has been appointed or whether the Chief Secretary conveyed a meeting of the concerned authorities or

whether circulars/notices have been issued to the concerned authorities to verify and submit a report.

While imposing the fine, the bench said that, “...the State is still sleeping over the issue without taking any action. In order to awaken the authorities, we grant further two weeks' time to file return, subject to deposit of a sum of Rs. 25,000 as costs recoverable from the officers, who have failed to take any initiative in the matter.”

The Supreme Court in January earlier this year while remitting the PIL back to the respective High Courts for taking necessary action had directed all the Chief Secretaries to frame

the policy in respect of existing unauthorized construction of religious nature and had also observed that the Chief Secretaries have not issued circulars to all the District Collectors despite the Apex court directions.

In compliance of the Order of the Apex Court, the Sikkim High Court had registered suo-motu PIL and issued notices to the Chief Secretary, Government of Sikkim, the Secretary, Buildings & Housing Department, the Secretary, Roads & Bridges Department and the Secretary, Ecclesiastical Affairs Department, Government of Sikkim on 28 Feb directing to file response to the orders of the Apex Court.

SC to hear BJP's fresh plea against WB poll panel's order on Wed

NEW DELHI, APR 10 (PTI): The Supreme Court today agreed to hear tomorrow the BJP's plea challenging the West Bengal State Election Commission's (SEC) decision to recall its yesterday's order extending the deadline for filing of nominations for panchayat polls by a day.

The West Bengal unit of BJP again moved the apex court, hours after the state poll panel suddenly recalled its yesterday's decision extending till today the last date for filing of nominations for next month's panchayat election in the state, allegedly under pressure from the ruling Trinamool Congress.

A bench of Chief Justice Dipak Misra and Justices A M Khanwilkar and D Y Chandrachud said the matter would be listed to **turn to pg03**

**SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 10 APR:**

“THE PRESENT STATUS of vegetable supply in all major vegetable markets throughout the state is normal and most varieties of vegetables are available in the market,” said Managing Director of SIMFED, Pawan Awasthy, today.

It has been ten days since the ban on import of non organic vegetables came into force in the State and normalcy has somewhat been restored in the markets.

There was no shortage of vegetables, especially tomatoes, today and almost all varieties of locally grown organic vegetables as well as non organic tomatoes, carrot, and green chilli are available



in the market as per the demand, informed the General Manager of SIMFED, Jeewan Sharma.

Onion, potatoes, beans, peas, carrot, leafy vegetables, and others were also available.

After the state administration lifted the ban on non organic to **turn to pg03**

No crisis. Situation under control, says SIMFED

Sikkim strength lifters bag five medals for India

**SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 10 APR:**

Three lifters from Sikkim have won five medals for the country in the 06th International Strength Lifting and Incline Bench Press Championship 2018 held from 07 to 10 Apr at Bali in Indonesia.

Pema Dorjee Bhutia won two silver medals in master's category, while

Pempa Tamang bagged a silver medal and a bronze medal in senior category.

Santosh Gupta won a bronze medal in senior category for India. The trio was part of the 52-member national team.

Mr Bhutia expressed his happiness on winning two silver medals for the country. Also being the chief coach of Sikkim Strength Lifting Associ-

ation, he expressed his happiness over the performance of his students, Mr Tamang and Mr Gupta, in the competition and for winning medals for the country.

“The competition was tough between the best lifters from different countries but we gave our best performance to win medals for India,” he said.

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ACTIVIST SPEAK

Protests against hydel power projects have always been a part of the hydropower narrative across the country and the world. Opposition to projects along the Subansiri river in Assam and Arunachal Pradesh, and the Teesta and its tributaries in Sikkim has been going on for some years now.

In this conversation with Summit Times, three activists at the helm of different protests over different times - SONAM P DENZONGPA, DAWA LEPCHA and KK CHATRADHARA - share how they arrived at the positions they took, their experiences, views on environmental activism and more...

**REBYNA RANA
GANGTOK, 10 APR:**

“IT WAS MY DREAM to see Phurki Lhamu and Reshme make it to the list of top women referees of the country. After six years of rigorous training and hard work, they have achieved the status that I had dreamt for them and I feel very proud today. They had enrolled as Category-5 referees in the month of Jan 2012,” said former international referee, Chamchuk Lama, who has been a mentor to Sikkimese women referees, Phurki Lhamu Bhutia and Reshme Chettri.

Phurki Lhamu and Reshme have passed the All India Football Federation Category-2 Referees' examination. They are now full-fledged national referees recognised by AIFF and Asian Football



Confederation

Speaking to Summit Times, their mentor, Mr Lama, said, “Refereeing has always been my passion. In my career as a referee, I have seen my referees being humiliated by football players at many instances but their determination to become a good referee has over-

ruled all the hurdles. They have seen good as well as bad days in the field of refereeing but they never gave up. We follow our motto of 3-Ds, Discipline, Dedication & Determination. There is still a long way to go. However, achieving the national referee status is not the only target. There is more

to achieve, making FIFA badge the next target.”

On the women referee scenario in Sikkim, he expressed confidence and said, “Sikkim can definitely produce more women referees provided they are given proper training and exposure to perform in tournaments. Sikkim Football Association has been providing continuous support and platforms for them.”

He further informed that recently, two Sikkimese women referees, Presilla Tamang and Sen Hangma Subba, have undergone Project Future India [PFI], a project especially for referees in India.

“We will soon be organizing training programme for referees in co-ordination with SFA. We would like to invite interested boys and girls of 18 years and above to

enroll their names once the official announcement is made,” added Mr Lama.

Extending gratitude to her mentor, Phurki Lhamu who hails from Bhusuk in East Sikkim, said, “Without the guidance and effort of our mentor, we wouldn't have been able to achieve what we have today. We will be receiving invitations from AIFF to participate in national tournaments where our performance will be under observation. If we succeed in impressing them, AIFF will be nominating us as referees for FIFA international tournaments.”

Likewise, Reshme Chettri who hails from Pangthang here has also extended gratitude to her mentor and the state government for providing support and opportunity.



spotlight
STORIES THAT MATTER
Features on Hydropower and Climate Change issues

Job mela held at CCCT, 130 candidates shortlisted

SUMMIT REPORT

JORETHANG, 10 APR:

South District Administration under District Administration Adopted Village (DAAV) scheme in association with Centre for Computers and Communication Technology [CCCT], Chisopani organized a job fair for employment in different private companies in different sectors.

The inauguration of the job fair had District Collector [South], Raj Yadav, Sub Divisional Magistrate [Jorethang], BC Rai, Principal [CCCT], Praveen Pradhan, officials and representatives from various companies and students.

Addressing the gath-



ering, Mr Yadav urged the companies to recruit as many students as possible and relax the experience limit as most of the students applying for jobs were freshers. He also urged the candidates to utilize the opportunity and excel in interviews.

Mr Yadav underlined the need for aspirants

to have a thorough discussion with the interviewers about their pay packet, facilities to be provided and other benefits before accepting the offer.

Twelve companies based in Sikkim namely Salas Pharmaceuticals, Mayfair, Alkem Health Science, IPCA, Cachet



Pharma, Marc Life Science, Aurochem Laboratories, Mankind Pharma, Godrej Consumer, Esvegee, Yuksom Breweries

and Swiss Garnier interviewed candidates for various posts in their respective companies. 284 candidates ap-

plied for jobs at various companies out of which 130 have been shortlisted for further assessment.

Lack of facilities in Gyalshing College, alleges SKM

SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 10 APR:

A team of Sikkim Arantikari Morcha's students' front interacted with the students of Gyalshing Government College at Tikjek in West Sikkim today.

During the interaction, the students raised various issues like the college being run in a rented building, lack of proper books in the library and unavailability of labs and playground for students. The students also demanded the provision of bus services and subsidy on LPG cylinder, quotas to Sikkimese students study-

ing in Sikkim University, etc, an SKM press release informs.

Expressing concern over the future of the students, SKM working president, MP Subba, and general secretary [press & publicity], Birendra Tamling, encouraged the students to come forward and speak up for their rights.

The release alleges that despite spending 21% of its budget on education, the state government has failed to provide proper facilities to Gyalshing College which has only five regular lecturers.

Mizoram government issues warning after deaths of pigs

AIZAWL, APR 10 (PTI):

The Mizoram government has issued a warning after a number of pigs have died during the past one month in some isolated places in the state, officials said today.

Though the cause of the death of several pigs and piglets were yet to be determined, the state did not rule out the outbreak of either the Porcine Reproductive and Respiratory Syndrome (PRRS) or the classical swine fever, an official of the state animal husbandry and veterinary department told PTI.

He said that both diseases had stayed permanently in the state since no culling were conducted during the past outbreaks.

The PRRS disease resulted in the death of more than 3,000 pigs and piglets in 2013 and more than 5,000 pigs and piglets in 2016.

NITI outlines five development missions for north east

BIJAY KUMAR SINGH AND

JAYANTA BHATTACHARYA

AGARTALA, APR 10 (PTI):

The NITI Forum for North East today outlined five development missions for promoting sectors like horticulture, tourism and food processing in the region, NITI Aayog vice chairman Rajiv Kumar said here today.

Other missions will cover bamboo-based handicrafts and medium scale industries with focus on 'Make in North-East', he said.

Kumar said it was Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision to establish a regional NITI Aayog forum for the north eastern states.

A regional forum for Himalayan and Coastal states will also be set up soon, he said.

Kumar was addressing the

first meeting of the newly constituted forum here.

There has been outflow of resources of North East to other parts of India, he said, adding that the states in the region "must bring back not only its resources but also additional resources. For that we will have to create employment opportunities in the region".

There is a challenge to bring the north eastern region into the mainstream and the central government is working to connect it with the rest of India, he said.

"To make north-east more familiar in the rest of the country, one emporium would be set up in all the districts of the country, so that people can know about the products of the region," Kumar added.

He also pointed out that in

the 1950s, per capita income of North East was highest in India.

In his address, Development of North Eastern Region (DoNER) minister Jitendra Singh said that the government has already initiated talks with a private airline for connecting Agartala with Dhaka and Chittagong.

He also underlined the need for completion of the 15 km long Agartala-Akhaura rail link for improving connectivity of north-east with Bangladesh.

The meeting also discussed the need to complete of the bridge on the river Feni in Sabroom which connects Chittagong and Tripura, he added.

After completion of the bridge on the river Feni at Sabroom in South Tripura district, broad gauge railway track would be extended to Chittagong port,

and Tripura would act as the gateway for the North-East, the minister said.

Among others, the meeting was attended by Tripura Chief Minister Biplab Kumar Deb, Meghalaya Chief Minister Conrad K Sangma, Nagaland Chief Minister Neiphiu Rio and ministers from other North Eastern states.

The NITI Forum for North East was constituted in February 2018 to ensure sustainable economic growth of the region.

The secretariat for the Forum has been established in the DoNER Ministry.

The Forum includes representatives of all north eastern states, their chief secretaries and secretaries of the central ministries, directors of reputed institutions like IIT and IIM and journalists.

5 Indians in boxing semis, assured of medals at debut CWG

POONAM MEHRA

GOLD COAST, APR 10

(PTI): Veteran Manoj Kumar

(69kg) assured himself the second Commonwealth Games medal of his career as five Indian boxers entered the semifinals of the mega-event with contrasting victories in the quarterfinals here today.

The debutant trio of Amit Panghal (49kg), Mohammed Hussamuddin (56kg), Naman Tanwar (91kg) and Satish Kumar (+91kg) joined Manoj in the semifinals of the mega-event, where Indian boxers had won three silver and a bronze medal the last time around.

Amit defeated Scotland's Aqeel Ahmed in a split 4-1 verdict. The 19-year-old Naman, on the other hand, hammered Samoa's Frank Masoe 5-0 in his quarterfinal clash to move into



the medal round.

"I didn't expect Ahmed to be this good. He surprised me with his speed and my counter-attack wasn't working at all. The coaches then told me to go all out aggressive which is what got me the results that I wanted," Amit told PTI after his bout.

Chasing a third successive international gold, the 22-year-old from Haryana overcame a rusty start to turn the tables on his opponent.

"This is definitely going to be the biggest medal of my career so far. There is no doubt about that," said the world championships quarterfinalists.

Amit had lost the opening round on a majority decision but came back strongly to clinch the bout and a spot in the semifinals in his maiden appearance at a multi-sport event.

He had won gold medals at the India Open and the Strandja Memorial Tournament in Bulgaria before coming into the Games.

Naman is a former bronze-medallist from the youth world championships and defeated Asian silver-medallist Sumit Sangwan in the national trial to clinch a spot in the team.

"I didn't have any prior knowledge of my op-

ponent so I watched him for the first round and a half and then I got aggressive and stuck to my game plan," he said.

"My style of fighting is inspired by Melbourne (2006) Commonwealth Games gold medallist Akhil Kumar," he added for good measure.

The Delhi-boxer took to boxing to lose weight. He will be up against Australia's Jason Whately in his semifinal clash on April 13.

In the evening session, Manoj and Hussamuddin took the ring against Zambia's Everisto Mulenga and Australia's Terry Nickolas respectively.

Hussamuddin continued his rich vein of form to dismantle Mulenga 5-0 but Manoj had to toil hard against the crowd favourite who managed to clinch the final round

from the Indian.

"I feel confident. I had a quarterfinal loss in the last Commonwealth Games and now this is it. I have many, many goals, including this gold. My next target is the 2020 Olympics," Manoj said of his campaign so far.

Both Manoj and Hussamuddin will be up against English opponents in their semifinals bouts. While Manoj will face Pat McCormack, Hussamuddin will be up against Peter McGrail.

Later Asian Games bronze-medallist Satish defeated Trinidad and Tobago's Nigel Paul in his quarterfinals bout to book the fifth men's medal for India.

Earlier, M C Mary Kom (48kg) had assured herself of a medal at the event, winning her opening round clash.

FC Goa, Forca Goa Foundation launch soccer programme for kids

PANAJI, APR 10 (PTI): Professional football franchise FC Goa, in association with the Forca Goa Foundation, is launching a programme for kids.

The programme, FC Goa Soccer Schools, will be launched on April 20.

This specially-curated programme aims to help the development of the sport in Goa and provide opportunity to more children to take up the game, the club said.

The schools will run for a period of one month - from April 20 to May 20 - for children aged between 8 and 14.

FC Goa Head of Youth Development Derrick Pereira has curated a special coaching plan for the programme which aims to develop the technical ability of children interested in playing the sport.

Participants will also have the opportunity to interact with players of the FC Goa squad, in addition to taking home FC Goa branded footballs and customised school kits.

The programme will run from two venues in the state one each in North and South Goa.

Children will be divided into three different age categories U10, U12 and U14 - for the programme.

GPU level programme on organic farming at Nandok

SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 10 APR:

International Panaacea Limited, a service provider agency under the Sikkim Organic Mission, Government of Sikkim, organized a Gram Panchayat Unit level programme on Internal Control System [ICS] for Organic Certification and Organic vegetable production at Nandok in East Sikkim on 09 Apr, a press release informs.

Deputy Director, Sushma Pradhan, informed about various schemes for

farmers and emphasized on the present market value of leafy and leguminous vegetables. She also mentioned about crop rotation, land and manure preparation, organic seeds and seed treatment for different crops.

Block In-Charge, IPL, Tashi Bhutia, mentioned about the standard of Organic Certification and briefed about the standard of National Programme for Organic Production [NPOP] and National Organic Program

[NOP] technical standards [USA]. Mr Bhutia emphasized on training component demonstration for different formulation to control disease in crops and vegetables.

Panchayat Secretary of Nandok GPU, while addressing the farmers, highlighted on the production of vegetables and other crops in both seasons. He also urged the participants to follow the policy and methods of Organic Farming practices in the villages.



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Gangtok on
Wednesday,
11 Apr

Temp: 24°C / 11°C

Forecast: More
clouds than sun with
a couple of showers
and a thunderstorm
in the afternoon.

Sunrise: 05:16 AM
Sunset: 5:58 PM

SAA gears up for
CM's Traditional
Archery tourney

SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 10 APR:

Sikkim Archery Associ-
sation [SAA] is gearing
up to organize Chief Minis-
ter's Gold Cup Traditional
Archery Tournament 2018
from 22 Apr here at SAA
Archery Field in Tathang-
chen, East Sikkim.

"All interested archery
teams [compound bow]
need to give confirma-
tion of their participation
on or before 17 Apr. The
fixture will be drawn on
18 April at SAA archery
field," informed SAA pub-
licity secretary, Karma
Denzongpa.

Russian ballet

'Swan Lake' now
comes to Kolkata

KOLKATA, APR 10 (PTI):
Forty-five artistes from
the Royal Russian Ballet
will stage the iconic bal-
let 'Swan Lake' in the city
from April 12 to April 14,
after performing in other
cities of the country.

The production of the
current edition of 'Swan
Lake', has been choreo-
graphed by Vladimir Tro-
schenko and directed by
Anatoly Kazatsky, both
veteran ballet artistes.

'Swan Lake' is a ballet
having a 140-year old history
and its central plot originates
from Russian folk tales.

It is about Odette, a prin-
cess turned into a swan by
an evil sorcerer s curse and
how she breaks the curse
with the power of love.

'Swan Lake' is per-
formed on the classical
compositions written by
Russian composer, Pyotr
Ilyich Tchaikovsky. It was
composed in 1875 76

The ballet had previ-
ously held 36 shows in
Mumbai, Delhi and Ahmed-
abad with the last phase of
the tour being Kolkata.

The show will be
brought by Navrasa Duen-
de, a leading production
house and there will be
four shows between April
12 and April 14.

Dinesh Singh from
Navrasa Duende said, "The
response from the audi-
ences across the country
has been unprecedented,
especially for a niche per-
forming art like ballet."

Sikkim's total literacy credentials to be endorsed next week

SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 10 APR:

Sikkim will be declared the third
State of the country, after Tripura
and Kerala, to have achieved 100%
literacy later next week at a region-
al workshop which is expected to be
chaired by the Union Minister of for
Human Resource Development.

Sikkim is will be hosting the re-
gional workshop on development
and prospects of Human Resource

Development on 17 and 18 April
here in Gangtok. During the two-
day workshop, Chief Minister Pawan
Chamling is expected to declare the
100% literacy achieved by Sikkim.

It is informed that leaving aside
children aged below 6 years of age
(who are not counted in literacy enu-
meration), the rest of the population
here achieved literacy as per the last
count in end-February 2018.

Officials add that the education

system in Sikkim is being revamped
in line with the Total Literacy Mis-
sion which has been vigorously im-
plemented across the state and in-
volves every section of the society.

Total Literacy Mission as a 'Peo-
ple's Mission' was initiated in 2011-
12 and have involved panchayats
and elected representatives of the
respective constituencies to achieve
the target.

Services of pre-Primary and Pri-

mary teachers were engaged exten-
sively establishing one Adult Educa-
tion Centre in every Gram Panchayat
Ward to reach literacy to the unlet-
tered adult members of the villages
who missed school education for
various reasons.

Representatives and ministers
from all the northeastern states are
expected attend the two-day work-
shop next week.

As per Census 2011, after Kerala

which records 93.91% literacy rate,
Lakshadweep recorded 92.28% fol-
lowed by Mizoram at 91.58% and
Tripura with 87.75%. Sikkim was
placed in the 13th position with a lit-
eracy rate of 82.20% [Male Literacy
rate of 87.29% and female literacy
rate of 76.43%] during that Census.

By 2015, Tripura had topped the
list surpassing Kerala with 94.65 per
cent literacy. Now, it is Sikkim's turn,
it appears.



Akraman FC proceeds to semis of
Dr BR Ambedkar tourney

SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 10 APR:

In the fourth quarter final match of the ongoing 1st
Dr Bhim Rao Ambedkar Jayanti Football Tourna-
ment 2018 played at Paljor Stadium here today, Akra-

man FC beat Apex Kalimpong 1-0.

Today's match was attended by Upper Burtuk
MLA, DR Thapa, as chief guest.

United Brothers Kalimpong will take on Sikkim
Police in the semi final on 11 Apr at 1:30 p.m.

No crisis. Situation under
control, says SIMFED

Contd from pg01

matoes, carrot and green chillies
last Saturday, SIMFED arranged
for 9 metric tonnes of tomatoes.
Since Friday, SIMFED has been
supplying 10 metric tonnes of
vegetables every day.

SIMFED has also established
a temporary wholesale market
at the proposed under construction
organic market building situated
near Denzong fatak.

Speaking to SummitTimes,
Pawan Awasthy, said that ex-
cept very few vegetables, al-
most all vegetables have been
made available to the traders
by SIMFED.

"The state government has
identified SIMFED as the market-
ing agency and we are working
tirelessly to make sure that gen-
eral public does not suffer and
this is the main aim of SIMFED,"
he added.

This is a new thing for the state,
the implementation of which may
face many obstacles and challeng-
es but it will definitely be sorted
out with time, said Mr. Awasthy.

"We expect all traders, farm-

VEGETABLE
SUPPLY STATUS

- Almost all varieties of organic
vegetables available in
markets.
- SIMFED supplying 10 metric
ton vegetables everyday
since Friday.
- SIMFED supplied 9 metric
ton of tomatoes on Sunday.
- Some shortage of cabbage
and beans today.
- Onion 4-5 metric ton
- Potatoes 2-4 metric ton
- Cabbage 4-5 metric ton
- Carrot 1 metric ton supplied
till Monday

ers and general public at large
to understand the situation and
help the state government's or-
ganic mission to be successful,"
he stated.

Mr Awasthy also lauded the
state government's decision to
ban non organic vegetables and
added that it is in the interest of
local farmers as well as the gener-

al public.

Speaking about the challenges,
Mr. Awasthy said price regulation
of organic vegetables is an import-
ant aspect to be addressed at this
time and the same has been com-
municated to the Minister, Depart-
ment and all concerned authorities
for consideration.

He urged farmers to provide
organic produces at reasonable
price which will benefit all.

Although the situation is un-
der control, there is some short-
age of few vegetable items but
that should not be termed a crisis
and SIMFED along with the Hor-
ticulture Department is trying to
find solutions, Mr Awasthy fur-
ther added.

As per today's report, there
is some shortage of cabbage and
beans but that will be resolved
soon, he said.

SIMFED will be more focused
on supply of organic vegetables
but if there is any shortage of per-
mitted non organic vegetables,
that too will be addressed, it is in-
formed.

SSBBA announces Mr Sikkim
bodybuilding c'ship in Apr



SAGAR CHETTRI

GANGTOK, 10 APR:

Sikkim State Body
Building Association
[SSBBA] has announced
that the 18th edition of
Mr Sikkim Body Build-
ing Championship will
be held on 29 Apr here at
Manan Kendra.

SSBBA is also or-
ganizing the inaugural
Men's Physique Compe-
tition and the first ever
Master's Body Building
Championship simulta-
neously with Mr Sikkim
bodybuilding contest.

The announcement
was made by SSBBA gen-

eral secretary, Arun Gu-
rung, in a press confer-
ence here today.

Mr Gurung further
mentioned that the
bodybuilding champi-
onships are being held to
motivate and promote
healthy lifestyle among
the youth.

According to Mr Gu-
rung, Mr Sikkim Body
Building Championship
has four categories - 55 KG,
60 KG, 65 KG and 70 KG
above. Binod Biswakarma
is the current Mr Sikkim.

Men's Physique Com-
petition and Master's
Body Building Champi-

onship will be conducted
in the open category with
bodybuilders from Dar-
jeeling, Kalimpong and
Siliguri scheduled to take
part in the competition.

He further mentioned
that Master's Body Build-
ing Championship is ex-
clusively for participants
above 45 years of age.

The conference was
also addressed by SSBBA
vice-presidents, Rabin
Pradhan and Bikash Kha-
was and organising sec-
retary, Suresh Chettri.

Interested candidates
can submit their names
by 29 Apr.

Workshop on Entrepreneurship and
its Challenges at CCCT Chisopani

JORETHANG, 10 APR

[IPR]: CCCT Polytech-
nic situated in Chi-
sopani, South Sikkim
with department of
Electronics and Com-
munication (DCE) and
Electrical and Electron-
ics (DEE) organized a
special session on "En-
trepreneurships and its
Challenges" at its cam-
pus today under Profes-
sional Practices.

CCCT being the only
polytechnic in the North
East to have implement-
ed outcome based cur-

riculum, Professional
Practice is one of the
subjects where guest
lecturers of repute are
invited to provide expo-
sure to students.

Resource person
for the workshop was
Founder and CEO of NE
Taxi, Rewaj Chettri. He
motivated the 450 stu-
dents and faculty mem-
bers with his inspira-
tional story. Students
were informed about
how to start and imple-
ment ideas and start
something out of small

funding.

In his hour-long ses-
sion, he enlightened
about the vital tools and
requirements to be a
good entrepreneur. He
also highlighted various
schemes of the govern-
ment for start-ups like
CMSS from Government
of Sikkim.

Memorandum of Un-
derstanding (MoU) was
signed between Rewaj
Chettri and CCCT to carry
out similar activities in
the future.

SC to hear BJP's fresh plea against WB poll panel's order on Thurs

Contd from pg01

morrow before the same bench
which had passed the verdict
yesterday.

Advocate Aishwarya Bhati,
appearing for the BJP, said the
apex court had passed the verdict
asking them to give a represen-
tation to the State Election Com-
mission with their grievances.

"They (State Election Com-
mission) have extended the dead-
line for filing the nominations by
one day, but today they have re-
called the order under pressure
from the ruling Trinamool Con-
gress," Bhati said.

She said the BJP has filed a
fresh Interlocutory Application
(IA) seeking proper representation
to the SEC and extension of the last
date for filing of nominations.

Bhati said that due to the re-
call of the order, BJP candidates
were not able to file their nomi-
nation papers.

The saffron party in its peti-
tion said it was seeking protec-
tion of the right of its candidates

to enable them to collect and
deposit the nomination forms
and participate in the panchayat
elections, scheduled to be held on
May 1, May 3 and May 5.

It said the state poll panel had
yesterday at 6 PM announced
that the last date of nomination
has been extended by one day
while acknowledging the fact that
several complaints were received
regarding candidates being ob-
structed from filing nominations.

The party said that "in abso-
lute colourable exercise of pow-
ers and in utter disregard to the
observations of this court sud-
denly at around 11 PM on April
10, the WB State Election Com-
mission has passed a fresh order
thereby recalling and rescinding
the previous order dated April 9,
2018".

"It may be mentioned at this
stage that the WB State Election
Commission relied upon a let-
ter issued by the Government of
West Bengal dated April 9, 2018
and also on a representation by

the ruling party of even date and
in reliance thereof recalled its or-
der of extension," the plea said.

The apex court had yesterday
asked the West Bengal state elec-
tion commission to "ensure fair
and free" panchayat poll in the
state and take appropriate steps
to allay the apprehensions of BJP
or other intending candidates of
not being allowed to contest the
elections.

It had, however, refused to
interfere with the poll process,
saying that with the April 22 noti-
fication of the State Election Com-
mission, the poll election process
has been set in motion.

The apex court had said if any
grievances were raised by any
political party or any candidate
in writing, then the State Election
Commissioner (SEC) would en-
sure disposal of such grievance
strictly in accordance with the
law forthwith.

It had said the SEC should
consider the grievance once
made by any party or candidate

and pass appropriate orders
keeping in view the nature of
grievance made and the relevant
factors concerning the poll and
its process.

The party had initially moved
the apex court seeking direction
to the SEC to issue nomination
forms to the party candidates, so
as to enable them file their nomi-
nations online and provide them
appropriate security.

Today, the State Election
Commissioner cancelled the poll
panel's previous order extending
the deadline for filing of nomi-
nations, saying there was no spec-
ific direction by the apex court
for extension of the nomination date.

According to the new noti-
fication, the State Election Com-
missioner received two letters,
one from the special secretary
of the state government and an-
other one from the Trinamool
Congress, citing legal infirmities
in the previous order of the com-
mission.

ANTHESTHI KRIYA



Smt. GOPINI MAYA PRADHAN

With profound grief and sorrow we inform the sad demise of our beloved Smt. Gopini Maya Pradhan who left for her heavenly abode on 31/3/2018.

Her anthesthi kriya will be held on 12/4/2018, thursday at MARUT BHAWAN, NAMCHI BAZAR.

REMEMBERED BY:

Bhoj Raj Pradhan- Husband (Bhoj sahuji) Harimandil Shrestha . Dirgha Raj Pradhan - Son Divya Raj , Yuwa Raj, Sri Raj - Grand Sons. Vrishank , Akansh - Great Grand Sons .	Rupa Devi Shrestha Indira Pradhan- Daughter in law . Sumita - Grand Daughter. Jyoti , Ashmita- Grand daughters in Law. 9733447255, 9735022613
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Expenditure Rush

Continuing March Madness in accounts sections of govt depts

In these times of climate change and global warming, readers are often informed about weather-related trends like the hottest year, coldest or wettest day of the year etc. Now, Sikkim can add the richest Month of the year to this list of extremes. And that honour will go to the month of March, the last month of a financial year when Sikkim's babus, the hands that form the executive branch of governance, suddenly wake up to their task of utilizing funds earmarked for various planned projects and undertakings. And even then they appear to wait right until the last day to spend (hopefully on development) crores which they should have staggered through the year to ensure that projects were not stalled or delayed.

A segment politely titled, "Rush of Expenditure", the Report of the Comptroller and Auditor General of India on State Finances for the year ended March 2017 informs that despite standing rules – as enumerated in the Sikkim Financial Rules (yes, ironically, there are such rules in place) – recommending that rush of expenditure be avoided in the closing month of the financial year, the accounts sections of various government departments continue to go on a spending overdrive because, clearly, for the rest of the eleven months they keep busy with something else.

This Report, tabled in the Legislative Assembly during the recent budget session, details that contrary to provisions of the Sikkim Finance Rules, the State Government incurred an expenditure of Rs 1,062.25 crore, 22.26% of the total expenditure for the year 2016-17, in the month of March 2017 alone! Lessons continue not be learned and recommendations of the CAG Report continue to be ignored with alacrity. This is made obvious from the fact that the State Government actually "improved" on its last-month spending in 2016-17. In the previous financial year, 2015-16, it had spent "only" 18.29% of its total expenditure for the fiscal in March. This had worked out to Rs 823.44 crore for March 2016.

On 31 March 2017, the last day of the financial year, the accounts sections burned the midnight oil to clear Rs 352.16 crore on one day alone – 7.38% of the total expenditure for the year. If it is any consolation, and it should not be, this was lower than what they had spent on 31 March 2016 – Rs 530.87 crore, 11.79 per cent of its total expenditure for the financial year 2015-16!

To get some context, an evenly distributed, properly planned and executed expenditure schedule for the year would have seen an average of 8.33% of the total expenditure spent every month. But the accounts divisions of government departments are clearly not bothered by such rules and regulations, and in fact appear resolutely intent on thumbing their noses at such directives. How else can one explain their temerity in not only rushing expenditure in the last month, but also leaving Sikkim with a scenario when planned expenditure for "28 Major Heads under 19 grants/appropriation" (CAG's words, not ours) of Rs 410.71 crore during March 2017 ranged between 50 to 100 per cent! In eleven of these cases, 100 per cent of the total provisions for the year 2016-17 were incurred in March! This revelation begs the question: What did the departments do with these projects through the previous 11 months? Most probably received complaints and dodged accountability.

Now, some readers might expect a comment to follow from the details shared above. But really, is a comment even required after a piece littered with so many exclamation marks and presentation of evidence of such mind-boggling ineptitude?

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

Gaza's nonviolent protesters exploited by Hamas, but feared by Israel

DOV WAXMAN
theconversation.com

Last Friday was an important day for Christians and Jews around the world. For Christians, it was Good Friday, the day that commemorates the crucifixion of Jesus; and for Jews, it was the beginning of the Passover holiday, which commemorates their liberation from slavery and exodus from Egypt.

Friday was also an important commemoration for Palestinians, called "Land Day." It marks the date in 1976, when six Palestinian citizens of Israel were killed by Israeli security forces.

Now future generations of Palestinians may well also remember Friday, March 30, 2018, as "Bloody Friday."

On this day, near the fence that separates the Gaza Strip from Israel, 18 Palestinians were shot and killed by Israeli soldiers. It was the highest Palestinian death toll since the 2014 war between Israel and Hamas, when more than 2,000 Palestinians were killed, most of them civilians.

For observers of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, indeed for anyone even remotely acquainted with it in recent years, this latest bloodshed might seem depressingly common – just another tragic episode of what is often characterized as a cycle of violence.

But what happened in Gaza last Friday was, in fact, quite different from what many people might assume. While the violence has dominated the news headlines, it is not the only big story from that day.

MAJORITY WERE PEACEFUL PROTESTERS

The deaths of 18 Palestinians should not distract all attention away from the fact that tens of thousands of Palestinians had gathered at six different places near the border between Gaza and Israel in peaceful protest.

They were protesting Israel's ongoing blockade of the small crowded coastal enclave now in its 12th year. They were calling attention to the resulting humanitarian crisis in Gaza. And they were demanding that Palestinian refugees and their descendants (who make up roughly two-thirds of Gaza's 1.9 million population) be allowed to return to their former homes and reclaim their lands in Israel.

An estimated 35,000 Palestinians participated in this protest, including many families who picnicked in several large tent encampments that had been set up hundreds of meters from the border fence. The vast majority of the protesters were unarmed and nonviolent.

Only a relatively small number of them – mainly young men – hurled stones and Molotov cocktails at Israeli soldiers and rolled burning tires toward them. Just a few approached the fence and tried to damage or breach it.

Although it was not completely peaceful, this mostly nonviolent mass protest by Gazans is just the beginning of a six-week campaign of nonviolent popular protests that organizers have called the

"Great March of Return."

The campaign will culminate on May 15, which Palestinians commemorate as "Nakba Day." The Nakba, meaning "catastrophe" in Arabic, refers to Israel's founding in 1948 and the expulsion and dispossession of Palestinians that accompanied it.

PALESTINIAN NONVIOLENT RESISTANCE

This is by no means the first time that Palestinians have staged mass protests or used nonviolent tactics – what they call "popular resistance" – to confront and challenge Israel and raise international awareness about their plight.

Most famously they did this during the first Palestinian intifada (1987-1993), which began in Gaza in December 1987.

More recently, masses of Palestinians in East Jerusalem peacefully protested last summer when Israel installed metal detectors at the entrances of the Al-Aqsa Mosque compound in Jerusalem.

Palestinians, in other words, have a long history

campaign, which was initiated by independent Palestinian activists in Gaza, suggests that it might be shifting its tactics away from relying upon violence, since that has proven to be disastrous for Gazans and ineffective for Hamas.

NEW TACTIC FOR HAMAS

Instead of firing rockets (that Israel's Iron Dome system can intercept), or using underground tunnels to ambush and capture Israeli soldiers or carry out terror attacks (which Israel's new anti-tunnel system can now detect and destroy), Hamas has, at least for now, apparently embraced mass protests as a relatively peaceful means to challenge Israel's blockade of Gaza and, it hopes, delegitimize Israel in the eyes of the world.

This allows Hamas to avoid a costly and destructive war with Israel. Another war would not only be unpopular among Gazans and unappealing to Hamas' allies, Qatar and Turkey. It would also be potentially fatal to Hamas' ability to remain in control of Gaza and its ambition to eventually take over the West Bank as well.

If Hamas can continue to mobilize tens of thousands of Palestinians to protest against Israel on a weekly basis, then it can ensure that the blockade of Gaza receives much more attention in international media and is placed higher on the diplomatic agenda of the international community.

ISRAEL'S PR PROBLEM

For Israel, Hamas' new tactic represents a completely different challenge than the military and terrorist threat that it has long been accustomed to and which it has largely succeeded in containing.

There is no high-tech Israeli answer to masses of unarmed Palestinian protesters congregating at Israel's border fence or even trying to swarm over it. Israeli soldiers are ill prepared and ill-equipped for this kind of confrontation, as last Friday's killings arguably demonstrated.

However much Israeli officials insist that Palestinian protesters are really terrorists trying to infiltrate into Israel, many people and many governments around the world are likely to sympathize more with the long-suffering Gazans, isolated and impoverished, than with Israel, especially when its troops fire live ammunition at demonstrators.

Mass demonstrations and marches by Palestinians are, in short, if nothing else, a public relations nightmare for Israel.

No wonder, then, that Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh declared after last Friday: "We wish to tell the world that the March of Return was peaceful and civilized, and women, youths, children and elderly participated in it."

The fact that this was not entirely true is beside the point. What matters more is how the world perceives the protest, and whether more of these popular protests, on a similar scale or larger, will take place over the coming weeks.

[the writer is Professor of Political Science, International Affairs and Israel Studies, Northeastern University]



of nonviolent popular protests, so there is nothing really new about the current campaign in Gaza.

What is new, however, and potentially very significant, is the involvement of Hamas, the militant Palestinian Islamist group that has controlled the Gaza Strip since 2007.

HAMAS VIOLENCE

Israel, the United States and the European Union all classify Hamas as a terrorist organization. There's good reason for that, given Hamas' track record of indiscriminate violence against Israelis, including dozens of suicide bombings during the second intifada and the launching of thousands of rockets into Israel since then.

Hamas is more than just a terrorist group. It is also a political party and a social service organization that funds hospitals, clinics, schools, orphanages and soup kitchens. But violence against Israel, including Israeli civilians, has always been a core component of its ideology and strategy, and, you might say, its "brand."

Hamas shows no signs of abandoning its armed struggle against Israel. Its new "policy document," issued last year, still emphasizes "armed resistance," just as its 1988 founding charter did. Its military wing, the Izz ad-Din al-Qassam Brigades, continues to prepare and build up its arsenal for the next round of warfare with Israel.

But Hamas' willingness to endorse and actively promote the so-called "Great March of Return"

Why Ozone levels pose a challenge to food security



cur, meaning that ozone concentrations are often higher downwind of urban and industrial centres.

Some important agricultural regions located close to urban and industrial centres experience elevated ozone concentrations, these include the Midwestern USA, much of mainland Europe, the South Asia's Indo-Gangetic plains, and the coast of China.

In these regions, ozone concentrations frequently become high enough to affect crop physiology, growth and yield. Hemispheric transport of ozone and its precursors can also occur so that emissions in one continent influence concentrations in another, for example, North American emissions can affect ozone-induced yield losses in Europe.

Ozone enters plant leaves through

stomata – pores that facilitate gas exchange – where it reacts with cellular components, producing a series of chemical reactions that create strong oxidative stress. Damage ranges from visible leaf injuries such as yellowing (chlorosis) and stippling and localised cell deaths (necrosis), to subtle physiological changes such as reduced photosynthesis and premature senescence. These effects ultimately reduce crop yields.

A GROWING CONCERN

Ozone levels have doubled since pre-industrial times due to anthropogenic emissions. Because of stringent air-quality controls, peak ozone levels have declined over the last few decades in Europe and North America. However, the "background ozone", which is the ozone concentration in absence of local anthropogenic sources,

has been increasing over the past few years globally.

In developing countries, especially South and East Asia, ozone levels are rising and this trend will continue at least until 2030 unless emissions of ozone precursors (NOx and VOCs) are reduced significantly.

It is important to note that regions experiencing high current and future ozone levels also hold a prominent position in global agriculture and food production and are vulnerable to food insecurity.

China and India are important examples of countries where ozone pollution already threatens crop production. In India, up to 14 and 6% yield losses in wheat and rice, respectively, are estimated to have been caused by ozone.

FAR-REACHING SOCIOECONOMIC IMPLICATIONS

Ozone thus adds yet another factor to the existing nexus of poverty, malnourishment and climate-change effects that challenge food and nutrition security in some of these regions. It is also important to consider that instability of these food systems will have far-reaching socioeconomic implications via changes in food prices, farm incomes, consumer behaviours and nutritional access for different groups of society, including women.

Studies indicate that crop losses

turn to 07

The first protest against hydel projects in Sikkim was launched in 1995 when Sonam Paljor Denzongpa sat on a hunger strike for 28 days demanding the scrapping of the Rathong Chu hydel project in West Sikkim.

Twelve years later, Dawa Lepcha along with Tenzing Lepcha sat on a 63-day hunger strike also demanding the scrapping of hydel projects, but this time in North Sikkim.

Around the same time in Assam, KK Chatradhara was also involved in protests against the Lower Subansiri hydel project, the largest project in the country.

SummitTimes spoke to the three activists, posing them the same set of questions in trying to get an understanding of what convinced them to risk so much for causes which, despite the universal impact, attract the passions of so few. Their activism and their sacrifices are well documented, here we try and delve into their convictions, faith and drive.



Not anti-dam, but pro-people and pro-environment



SONAM P DENZONGPA
In May 1995, the Concerned Citizens of Sikkim (CCS) was formed to protest the Rathong Chu hydroelectric project. It was the first such protest against hydel projects in the State. Sonam Paljor Denjongpa, a Sikkimese businessman who had returned from the United States and had taken the robes as a monk, was a member of CCS. He went on to stage a hunger strike in Gangtok lasting 28 days. The Rathong Chu HEP was scrapped by the State Government two years later. Mr Denzongpa is currently the Director of Taktse International School. In the above pic he can be seen flanked by his CCS colleagues, Chukie Tobden to his right and Pema Namgyal to his left in 1995 (foto courtesy: Jigme N. Kazi).



KK 'Bhai' CHATRADHARA
Located on the Assam-Arunachal Pradesh border, the Lower Subansiri Hydro-Electric Power Project is the largest hydel power project being constructed in the country. Described as a run-of-the-river project by the project developers, NHPC Limited, the project is expected to supply 2,000 MW of power when completed. The size of the project raised deep concerns among people living in both the states and since 2011, has remained stalled following protests from various groups like People's Movement for Subansiri and Bramhmaputra Valley, All Assam Students' Union (AASU), Asom Jatiyatibai Yuva-Chhatra Parishad (AJYCP) and others.

KK Chatradhara, based in Gogamukh in Assam's Dhemaj district, has been part of the People's Movement for Subansiri and Bramhmaputra Valley for the past 12 years. He grew up on the banks of the river and shares a deep connect with the Subansiri.



DAWA LEPCHA returned to Sikkim in the early 2000's trained as a filmmaker. Educated in Gangtok and Kolkata, he also benefitted from the fact that he hailed from the Lepcha reserve of Dzongu in North Sikkim hence had a very organic connection with the land. This attachment went on to power his activism in later years and provided him the resolve to undertake two rounds of life-threatening hunger-strikes along with Tenzing Lepcha against hydel projects proposed in Dzongu.

In the first hungerstrike, they went without food for 63 days and the next time, barely a year later, for 93 days! As part of Affected Citizens of Teesta, he was successful in convincing the State Government to scrap all hydel projects in Dzongu for which only Letters of Intent had been issued. Only two projects, Pannan HEP (completely inside Dzongu) and Teesta Stage IV (which borders Dzongu and has some components inside) for which MoUs had already been signed, would continue.

This was a major victory, but ironically for Dawa, the only hydel project which remained was the one in his village, Lingzya.

TSHERING EDEN

SummitTIMES: *None of you had any overt political or activist engagements until you got involved in your respective movements. What brought about this change? What convinced you to get involved in direct action?*

DAWA LEPCHA: I had just finished my training in filmmaking and had come back home. I knew what was happening (with regard to hydel projects) but I thought it would just be one project (Teesta Stage V HEP). In 2002-03, however, I found out that 40-42 projects were being planned and I thought that was not a good idea. I met a few people who were involved with the Teesta-V protest.

There is always that point where you get that spark, you know. One day, I had just met Pemzang Tenzing and was going back to my village. I got off the vehicle and started walking home. It was evening time, the sound of crickets was all around and I was walking thinking about the hydel projects and all that. So as I was mulling over all these things, I got a strong feeling that I cannot let this happen to my place, I am not going to allow that. I was young, in my early 30s. That's when I made up mind I think, to do something about it.

SONAM P DENZONGPA: We were at Pemayangtse Monastery for a wang ceremony sometime in 1994. It was the Dorje Lopen, the Abbot, of the Pemayangtse Monastery who said that these projects (Rathong Chu HEP) will destroy the sanctity of the place. He was discussing plans on how the project could be stopped with some other monks but they could not figure out how to go about it.

We talked to him and he said maybe it's our generation that will have to do something about it. We discussed it amongst ourselves but we'd never done something like this before.

The next day the Abbot passed away. Then I felt like it had fallen upon me to do something about it. He had passed the ball to us in a way.

KK 'Bhai' CHATRADHARA: People of Subansiri valley, even from Assam, were happy to say "Subansiri project is coming and will brighten our future", long back during the 1990s to 2000. People demanded the project many times and it is even enlisted in Assam Accord of 1985. So, I was born and brought up in an environment where large dams were considered a good thing. At the same time, nature and our culture got me closely involved with the river.

When the construction started, it was disheartening to see the destruction of the beautiful landscape. I, Monoj and Binay started discussing about what development really means, what actually are large dams? That was 17 years ago. That was when I felt the need to get involved and build the movement. A paralysed Subansiri is painful to imagine, not acceptable at all.

From your experience, what are some of the biggest challenges facing environmental activists on ground?

DAWA: The biggest challenges are the lack of awareness among the masses and the well-oiled greed cam-

paign by the vested interests.

Talking about environment here is difficult. I don't believe in all these programmes held on environment, you know. They are all superficial. Actual work is never done. People haven't really understood the concept of environment. For instance, if you talk about saving trees in the villages, they will say 'there are enough trees here'. When you talk about the harm such projects will bring about in the future, it is difficult to convince people because we don't have anything to show.

Maybe we were also not well equipped at that time, we could have found other ways to do it. But then, convincing people is very difficult. You talk about environment, that doesn't work. You talk about social impacts, we don't have anything to prove that. You talk about culture and people think that is not something that can be affected.

SONAM: We didn't know how to



Sikkim monks, with Sonam P Denzongpa in white baku in the middle, rallying in Gangtok on 09 July, 1995, against the Rathong Chu hydel. (foto courtesy: Jigme N Kazi)

mobilize people. We relied more on the spirits and prayers. There were a section of people who really believed in it. We also believed that it's in the mind. We weren't doing anything negative but we didn't know how to get things out and mobilize.

CHATRADHARA: Environmental activists have been defined as a "Response to some type of threat to a person's environment, their family or an area or place that they love" (chase, 1999). Environmental activists usually emerge from the grassroots and the shortfall of organic leaders on the ground is one of the biggest challenges in current times. Also, it is easier to change the mindset of people who are anti environmental groups but are not well informed. Those who know the costs of harming the environment and yet oppose

environmental groups, changing how they think is a challenge.

How easy or difficult is it to gather information on hydel projects to build arguments against it?

DAWA: Gathering information is not that difficult. By the time our movement came about, the RTI Act had come in and the companies were also forthcoming. I think the difficult part is the actual finances involved; who, where, how. Who really benefits after the peanuts have been handed out.

Having said that, I have reservation about building arguments...it never ends. The back and forth of it, often ending nowhere.

SONAM: It was interesting... things just fell into place. There was a young guy, Sundar, he is in Delhi now. So, he appeared and he was an environmentalist. He said he wanted to help. Then people said that we have to go to court. So he went and found a Supreme Court lawyer, Rajeev Dhawan, who just volunteered to help us. And things started to fall into place. The government would do some kind of video against our argument and they would not be able to release it...they would plan fancy books about how good the hydel projects would be and somehow the books just couldn't get printed.

I think there were some people within the establishment also who felt that this is really not right. There was land that didn't exist, which on paper they claimed existed. There were officers in the establishment who really helped us. I guess at that time you couldn't get such papers out and they just helped us get it.

CHATRADHARA: Up to a level, it is not that difficult. Most powerful way is to gather as much information in favour of the projects, so that one can counter them.

Identity, beliefs or faiths are often invoked more than the environmental costs in building arguments against hydel projects. Do you think it is part of the plan or is there any planning involved at all?

DAWA: Of course, these above points are the most important and things that touch the sentiments of the people facing the direct onslaught of these developmental programs. So obviously they come in play whether there is a plan or not. If the masses were to understand the environmental argument, things won't be that difficult at all.

SONAM: Sense of sacred is not just religious; it is about those things that have been here for millions of years. Those are sacred.

So worship means to appreciate and acknowledge that, accept that because of them we are here. When you destroy them, you are destroying the future generations to come. You have to let them be. You don't have to do anything. You just have to let them be. Let the lakes be, let the forests be, let the rocks be. There are spirits that live in the rock called 'tsen', there are spirits in the trees called 'lha', there are spirits that live in the water called 'lu'. All these things are like us. They live, they are born. We don't see them now because our senses have become crude. As you become emotionally cruder you lose access to all these other beings. I, my, me is the focus.

We don't even see other human beings, forget about other kinds of beings.

People think environmentalism has come from the West but it has been a part of our tradition for thousands of years. Mt Khangchendzonga was not made by Buddha, it predates everybody. That's been here. It's our protecting deity. For thousands of years the rivers have been flowing. The belief that this is a hid-



Not anti-dam, but pro-people and pro-environment

Contd from pg05

den land means that whatever we do here affects the whole cosmos. We don't realize that. This place is very important and it is important to do positive things here.

Look at the weather patterns. There is no one cause. It is a cycle. When you pollute the sky it passes on to the water and in water lives 'lu' and 'lu' really suffers from pollution and then we get affected. It is all a cycle. But, it is a different way to look at it.

The hydel projects would carry out studies that would sometimes suggest that there were certain probable negative impacts but then suddenly they would come up with another report saying that everything is fine. It is basically greed. I am not so extreme as to say shut down all hydel projects but the river has to run. It is like our bloodstream, it has to run in our body. If you live in the mountains you've got to let the river flow. If you dam all the rivers, every living thing in the river gets damaged. What are you doing? I don't think that they can promise to produce such things. It's all calculations from their point of view. I wonder what will happen after 10-15 years and what we have destroyed, how would we build it back? Once it's destroyed, it's really destroyed.

Reality is not out there, it is in our minds. Belief is part of the reality. When those beliefs are alive that is the reality. You can't say this is real and that isn't. You can't show calculations and say that is real. That's also made up. They say once it appears in numbers, that's real. How is it real? That's not real. We are living here, this place belongs to us and we have to take care of it.

CHATRADHARA: Identity, beliefs and faiths can be part of the argument against hydel projects, however, we also need to emphasise and link science with each of these. The environmental and socio-economic costs should be highlighted more.

In the case of Subansiri, one of the demands was a downstream impact study from the dam site to the confluence up to Brahmaputra by involving local experts.

What do you think of environmental activists taking an apolitical stand, choosing to steer clear of any links with political parties or ideologies? Do you think activism can or needs to be divorced from politics?

DAWA: After my experience and whatever environmental successes or failures there have been around the world, it is not easy to have apolitical stand. One way or the other politics will get in. Even when the activists try to keep the movement clean of politics it is difficult. All these because there is the scrupulous opposite group hell bent on having their vested interest implemented one way or the other. ACT was projected as opposition party! Ground reality is very different. I think it all boils down to 'whether you want result or you want to plod on and on and on?!'

So, my analysis is something like this. Suppose there is a political party which is in power and on the other side there are a few activists. When the activists' voices are not heard, they have to look for support elsewhere. That's when the opposition parties will try to come in. Even if the activists refuse their support, the ruling party will accuse the activists of being hand in glove with the opposition. Then the ruling party will activate its grass root level workers to lobby against the activists making it all the more difficult for the latter to convince people.

SONAM: We try to stay away from politics, as in party politics. When it comes to party politics, suppose one person comes to support you, because of that, another guy is against you. And you are in a camp now. When (opposition) politicians came to us, I just said look... this is for us, for the people, for the sacred land. Staying away from politics means not falling under any camp to avoid getting used. But I think it is political...in a way.

CHATRADHARA: Environmental activism is beyond political ideology or parties but one can't ignore the politics in activism as well. A meaningful distance from political and religious activists helps to achieve the purpose of environmentalism. It seems political activists put environmental issues in their agenda to take the chair for 5-10 yrs. As the present Prime Minister did in 2014 by saying that "I know citizens of Arunachal Pradesh are against the large projects. I respect your sentiments. But protecting the environment and using environmental technology, hydropower can also be harnessed using smaller projects." It was propaganda to win over the people for the short run.

Environmental activism continues to struggle in garnering mass support and wider public participation. What do you think is the reason behind the failure of so many protests across the globe? Why is en-

vironmental activism limited to the directly affected and how would you define 'stakeholders'?

DAWA: If you talk about environment, people don't understand. So you've got to find a strategy that works. Otherwise you are just 2-3 people shouting and nobody is listening. In the case of Dzongu, whether you like it or not, most of the land being taken for hydel projects belonged to Lepchas. So you can't help the movement becoming about Lepchas.

And it also becomes a strategy when all else fails. You talk about impacts on fish migration and they (project developers) will show you fish ladders. By the way, not one dam has a fish ladder. If you talk about deforestation, they'll say

mass plantations will be carried out.

As for the definition of stakeholders, it would comprise of the entire state and not only the directly affected but I think awareness levels among the general public is low.

SONAM: Sometimes I feel like we are not a nation anymore. It's Dzongu... its religion. For instance our movement was about religion. There was incredible opposition but there wasn't any real mobilization either, mass mobilization that is.

It's Dzongu, it's Lepchas. There was no mass movement and that shows that the connection was missing. We fail to understand that this is our land, no matter who you are. Actually Guru Rinpoche had said people born here are my people, you take care of this land. Somehow this unity has broken down into different communities. Movements like these



Assam protest against the Subansiri HEP, a movement of which KK Chatradhara is a part of [pic by International Rivers]

would be branded as Buddhist movement but we all share the river. It's ours, for generations to come. But that was difficult to overcome.

The positive thing was that those who could not support us openly were not ready to be manipulated by the political camps either. They did maybe feel like they weren't directly affected by the dams but they did not allow political groups with vested interests to push them against us either. So, it's unique.

CHATRADHARA: Romanticising environmental movements is one of the reasons for their failure. Class structures amongst the environmentalists/ activists is also adversely affecting movements as a whole. This happens to any form of movement. The concept of development is imposed with colonial mindsets and this is deeply rooted everywhere, so it is difficult to change the present form of developmental attitude within a limited period. It is human behaviour to respond or react only when you are hit and so is the case with environmental movements limiting activism to the directly affected.

But, Subansiri includes many other environmental movements so such limitations do not apply here. There is good support for the movements, only a few do not support us.

What do you think of anti-dam activists/activism always being branded as anti-development?

DAWA: The term is coined by groups with vested interests, be it the com-

pany or the authorities and all those down the ladder, which is fed to the masses who have no inkling of what it really means in totality. Activists should not be perturbed by such branding.

Personally, I think development is happiness in the long run and the hydel projects will make us cry in the future. I don't think that's development. Let's have a smaller project, find a balance, maybe we can have one or two mega projects. But we are damming every river, tributary, stream from mega to micro to mini. None of them are functioning properly or are implemented well. So is that development? If you have one good project, maybe 10-20 MW, I think that will do a good job.

Why do we need so much? It's like we are trying to finish the food just because we have lots of it in the godown. Almost from its source to where it ends in Bengal, the Teesta has been dammed and tunneled. It's the same for Rangteet. I think very soon people will not see Rongni Chu either once they put it inside the hill towards Rangpo at 32 Mile. In case they finish Teesta Stage VI HEP, there will be no Teesta either, because that too runs inside a tunnel.

SONAM: That's what they say, but I would counter that blocking every river is greed. That's not development. You show me how people in Dzongu or anybody is benefiting. How many people from Sikkim are employed in these projects? I've visited several of them, I don't see it. It's cordoned off, it's a world in itself, it's really isolated and it doesn't seem like it's part of us but it's

using all of our resources.

CHATRADHARA: It's a kind of strategy applied to suppress the voices of activists by the pro-dam lobby. Many times it works too but we need to challenge it. I think, those who favour large dams are dangerous. I don't want to position myself as an anti-dam activist but as pro-people, pro-environment, to safeguard our mother earth in the long run.

What role would you ascribe to the media in environmental activism?

DAWA: Well, media has always been a backbone of any activism around the world. Without it, it would be like shouting messages from one side of the valley to the other. In our case, we got good support from the media.

SONAM: I think just educating people, making them conscious, saying this is our land, this will affect you. We think we are so advanced but we are so far behind. When you take the native idea of all living beings and this modern idea...Now they are saying we are all citizens of earth because we are all facing same problems like climate change, etc. Native philosophy has always said that - we are all one.

One example, we do the mandala offering like this [brings both hands together intertwining fingers into the mandala mudra]. This [the ring fingers standing upright together] is the centre of the solar system and these [other fingers] are the four major planets. Now this is done by a village lady, uneducated, so called village lady. This signifies our solar system which means it's gone beyond our village, family, things like that...and this is the kind of education that has been going on for thousands of years...saying there are other beings, other planets, places beyond earth. That has been ingrained in our culture. It's only now we are saying - oh, one earth, one sky.

CHATRADHARA: Exploration and exposition are the key factors for success. Print, digital, social whatever medium plays a big role in encouraging people. It is the most powerful route to generate and disseminate information among the people. I have to say, media must take a pro-environment position, always.

What are the challenges in sustaining a movement?

DAWA: There are many but the most important is the support of the people. Without it, you get tired. During the hunger strike, there was a time when even sympathy was enough for us to soldier on. There were many passers-by who would not say very nice things to us. Of course, some people would shout "Ke tamasha ho yo!" but then there would also be those who would say "bechaara haru" as they passed by. That sympathy would also make us feel better, at that point of time.

SONAM: Sustaining a movement is really tough. We were only four of us so it wasn't that bad. Actually I didn't want to go to court but they said we have to. But it's difficult. That's why you have to have belief. You don't have to be religious but you have to have incredible commitment to your beliefs. It was really hard to go on. Afterwards, somebody suggested to me that I should get into politics. I said we didn't do it for politics. It sort of dilutes what we are and were for.

CHATRADHARA: Lack of unity among the people even when they are fighting for a common cause is one challenge. Also, strategies like bribing people used by pro-dam groups is a challenge in sustaining a movement.

People think environmentalism has come from the West but it has been a part of our tradition for thousands of years...

We try to stay away from politics, as in party politics. When it comes to party politics, suppose one person comes to support you, because of that, another guy is against you.

- SONAM -

Environmental activism is beyond political ideology or parties but one can't ignore the politics in activism either...

Romanticising environmental movements is one of the reasons for their failure.

- CHATRADHARA -

During the hunger strike, there was a time when even sympathy was enough for us to soldier on...

The biggest challenges are the lack of awareness among the masses and the well-oiled greed campaign of the vested interests.

- DAWA -

China files trade complaint against US over steel tariffs

GENEVA, APR 10 (AP): China has filed a World Trade Organisation complaint challenging US President Donald Trump's tariff hike on imported steel and aluminum, the trade body said today.

The tariff spat is one element of a wide-ranging trade dispute between Trump and Chinese President Xi Jinping's government.

Trump also has threatened to increase duties on USD 50 billion of Chinese goods in a separate conflict over technology policy.

China has requested 60 days of consultations with the United States on the steel and aluminum dispute, according to the WTO. If that fails, the next step could be for Beijing to request a ruling from a panel of trade experts.

Beijing says Trump's decision to impose additional duties of 25 percent on steel and 10 percent aluminum violate international trade rules.

Steel and aluminum are among Chinese industries in which supply exceeds demand. China's trading partners complain its mills are exporting their surplus at improperly low prices, threatening jobs in the United States and Europe.

The United States buys little Chinese steel and aluminum following earlier tariff hikes meant to offset what Washington says are improper subsidies to producers.

But economists said Beijing responded in order to show it would defend itself.

China's government issued a USD 3 billion list of U.S. goods including pork, apples and steel pipes on March 23 that it said might be targeted for retaliation if Trump fails to negotiate a settlement to the dispute over steel and aluminum charges.

France warns of 'response' if 'red line' of chemical arms crossed in Syria

PARIS, APR 10 (AFP): France will retaliate against the regime of Syrian President Bashar Al-Assad if evidence emerges that it was behind a recent suspected chlorine gas attack in a rebel-held enclave, government spokesman Benjamin Griveaux said today.

"If the red line has been crossed, there will be a response," he told Europe 1 radio, adding that intelligence shared by President Emmanuel Macron and US President Donald Trump "in theory confirms the use of chemical weapons."

France has repeatedly warned that evidence of the use of chemical weapons in Syria is a "red line" that would prompt French strikes on Syrian government forces.

LALIT K JHA

WASHINGTON, APR 10 (PTI): Mark Zuckerberg has apologised to the US Congress and taken personal responsibility over the Cambridge Analytica scandal for "not doing enough" to protect Facebook's 87 million users' private data from being misused and manipulated.

In a testimony released yesterday on the eve of his first congressional appearance, Zuckerberg accepted responsibility for the social network's failure to protect private data of its users and prevent manipulation of the platform.

"We didn't take a broad enough view of our responsibility, and that was a big mistake. It was my mistake, and I'm sorry," Zuckerberg said in his written testimony released by a House of Representatives panel.

"I started Facebook, I run it, and I'm responsible for what happens here."

"It's clear now that we didn't do enough to prevent these tools from being used for harm as well. That goes for fake news, foreign interference in elections, and hate speech,"

Zuckerberg said.

Zuckerberg, 33, who is facing the worst crisis of business, will testify before senators later today and a House panel tomorrow amid a firestorm over the hijacking of data on millions of Facebook users by the British political consulting firm Cambridge Analytica.

In prepared remarks released by a congressional panel, Zuckerberg admitted he was too idealistic and failed to grasp how the platform, used by two billion people, could be abused and manipulated.

Yesterday, he met Senator Bill Nelson and other lawmakers.

"I just met one-on-one with Zuckerberg and in no uncertain terms reminded him that Facebook has a responsibility to its users to protect our personal data. Facebook failed us," Nelson said.

"Not only did they fail to safeguard the personal information of millions of users, they concealed it from us and this is not the first time the company mishandled user information. Only now are they coming

clean and informing those who have had their information compromised and telling us they are going to make things right," he said.

Last week, Zuckerberg admitted making a "huge mistake" as personal data of up to 87 million users may have been improperly shared with British political consulting firm Cambridge Analytica, a figure higher than the previous estimate of 50 million.

Zuckerberg, who co-founded Facebook in 2004, once again admitted the lapses and asked for another chance to lead the company.

Embroiled in a massive data breach following the Cambridge Analytica scandal, Facebook had said data on about 87 million people - mostly in the US - may have been improperly shared with Cambridge Analytica.

Nelson said he has asked the Congressional leadership to to haul Cambridge Analytica in to answer questions at a separate hearing.

"The bottom line here is: if Facebook can't fix its privacy problems, then how can Americans trust them

to be caretakers of their sensitive information?" he asked.

In his written remarks, Zuckerberg said it's not enough to just connect people.

"We have to make sure those connections are positive. It's not enough to just give people a voice, we have to make sure people aren't using it to hurt people or spread misinformation. It's not enough to give people control of their information, we have to make sure developers they've given it to are protecting it too," he said.

"Across the board, we have a responsibility to not just build tools, but to make sure those tools are used for good. It will take some time to work through all of the changes we need to make, but I'm committed to getting it right," the Facebook CEO said.

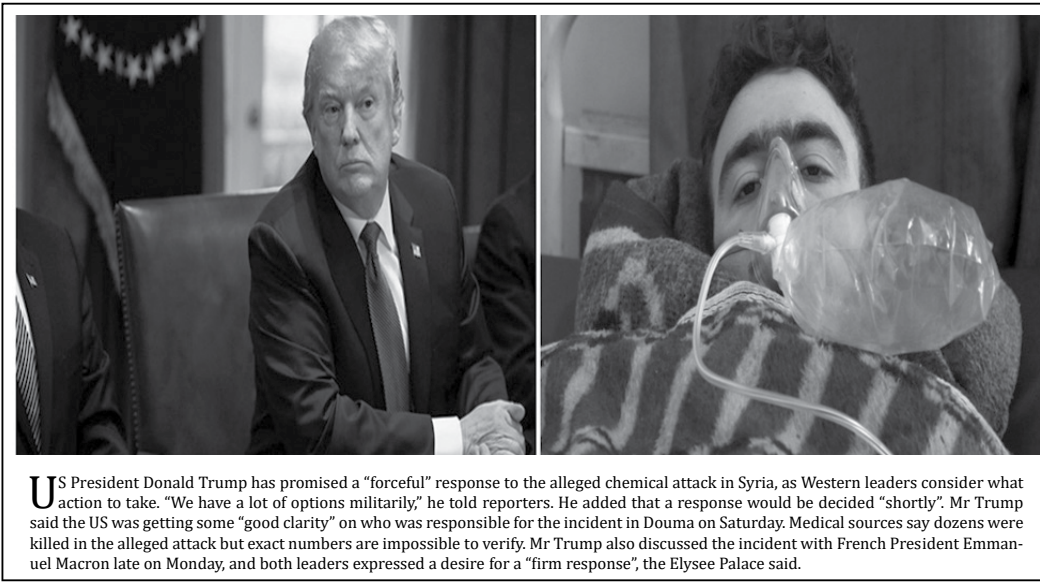
Zuckerberg said his top priority has always been his social mission of connecting people, building community and bringing the world closer together. "Advertisers and developers will never take priority over that as long as I'm running Facebook," he said.

"I started Facebook when I was in college. We've come a long way since then. We now serve more than 2 billion people around the world, and every day, people use our services to stay connected with the people that matter to them most. I believe deeply in what we're doing. And when we address these challenges, I know we'll look back and view helping people connect and giving more people a voice as a positive force in the world," Zuckerberg said.

Yesterday, Facebook also began notifying the 87 million people whose data may have been harvested by Cambridge Analytica by posting a notification that they would see when they logged into the social network, The New York Times reported.

In addition, all Facebook users will see a new feature highlighting which apps they use and which information they have shared with those apps.

The White House Press Secretary Sarah Sanders said the Trump administration is looking forward to his testimony.



US President Donald Trump has promised a "forceful" response to the alleged chemical attack in Syria, as Western leaders consider what action to take. "We have a lot of options militarily," he told reporters. He added that a response would be decided "shortly". Mr Trump said the US was getting some "good clarity" on who was responsible for the incident in Douma on Saturday. Medical sources say dozens were killed in the alleged attack but exact numbers are impossible to verify. Mr Trump also discussed the incident with French President Emmanuel Macron late on Monday, and both leaders expressed a desire for a "firm response", the Elysee Palace said.

Lanka: SLFP ministers boycott Cabinet meeting

COLOMBO, APR 10 (PTI): President Maithripala Sirisena's Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP) ministers today boycotted a Cabinet meeting, days after they voted in favour of a no-confidence motion against Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe.

Senior ministers Sajith Premadasa and Gami-

ni Jayawickrama Perera said none of the SLFP ministers were present at the Cabinet meeting this morning.

The SLFP ministers' move came after the party's central committee meeting last night held under Sirisena's chair.

It was decided that the six ministers who had vot-

ed in favour of the no-confidence motion against the prime minister should stay away from the Cabinet until a decision is made on the SLFP's continuation as part of the unity government with Wickremesinghe's United National Party (UNP).

"We wanted to leave the government but we

can't decide until the party decides on it," said Anura Yapa, the Disaster Management Minister.

Yapa was one of those who voted in favour of the no-confidence motion. Yapa added that a firm decision on SLFP's future in the government would be made soon.

Wickremesinghe early

this month comfortably defeated the no-trust motion moved by the Joint Opposition against him. Wickremesinghe, who leads the national unity government in alliance with President Sirisena's SLFP, received 122 votes against the motion while 76 favoured the motion to oust him.

Why Ozone levels pose a challenge to food security

Contd from pg04

due to environmental factors often hit farmers by increasing debts and intensifying workloads as well as altering gender relations.

At the same time, closing the yield gaps in existing and future agricultural regions is essential for global food security.

Farmers and policymakers often fail to identify air pollution as a contributor to lower crop yields and air quality concerns remain focussed on cities and urban centres where elevated pollution impacts human health.

Therefore, it is important that media, scientists and environmental activists take a lead to reach out to farmers, public and policymakers, and provide

them with evidence of risk and damage and cooperate in understanding where solutions are required to abate ozone pollution and its consequences.

INTEGRATING OZONE POLLUTION

Recognising these challenges, scientists should consider integrating ozone pollution in seasonal crop-yield forecasts. Researchers at Stockholm Environment Institute are developing ozone risk and damage assessment tools for crops. A recent report highlights the importance of ozone-monitoring networks in rural areas for assessing background ozone concentrations and the frequency of high ozone episodes.

This is particularly import-

ant because air-quality monitoring is generally focused on urban and semi-urban areas. This report synthesised information from 15 ozone-monitoring networks over the world, including the European Monitoring and Evaluation Programme, along with data collected by individual researchers or smaller regional to national networks.

Such networks will allow integration of information on ozone pollution with the potential to provide early warnings of ozone episodes (which can often last for days to weeks) helping farmers to minimize crop loss through suitable management practices.

Research to develop resilient agricultural systems would ideally integrate adaptation to avoid

the worst effects from ozone pollution alongside climate change through improved crop breeding and agronomic practices. However, it is an absolute necessity to understand the linkages and interactions between air quality, climate change, agriculture, food supply, and associated socio-economic implications at the local, regional and global scale to generate a complete picture of the problem and thereby offer effective solutions.

[Divya Pandey, is Research Associate, Stockholm Environment Institute, York, AXA Research Fund; Lisa Emberson is SEI York Centre Director, University of York; Sofie Mortensen is Research Associate, Stockholm Environment Institute]

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2099 2123 2161 2162 2163 2183 2209 2320 2246 2292

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3183 3187 3226 3279 3284 3287 3301 3307 3322 3329

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3512 3571 3581 3609 3615 3624 3648 3678 3711 3770

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3995 4011 4013 4090 4096 4110 4126 4189 4358 4397

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4808 4822 4832 4834 4876 4927 4952 4976 5005 5049

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ARUNACHAL PRADESH STATE LOTTERIES,TANAGAR.



Model Emily Ratajowski shows off her toned midriff as she arrives at the airport in sunny Los Angeles.

NEVER GOING BACK AGAIN?

Buckingham leaves Fleetwood Mac

The guitarist, who first quit in 1987 before rejoining in 1996, has left again, as it's announced he won't be on the next tour.

Fleetwood Mac have announced that Lindsey Buckingham has left the group for a second time.

In a statement, the band said the singer and guitarist would not be joining them on their next tour.

It said: "Lindsey Buckingham will not be performing with the band on this tour. The band wishes Lindsey all the best."

He will be replaced by former Crowded House singer Neil Finn and Tom Petty's guitarist, Mike Campbell.

Fleetwood Mac co-founder Mick Fleetwood said: "Fleetwood Mac has always been about an amazing collection of songs that are performed with a unique blend of talents.

"We jammed with Mike and Neil and the chemistry really worked and let the band realise that this is the right combination to go forward with in Fleetwood Mac style.

"We know we have something new, yet it's got the unmistakable Mac sound."

Lindsey Buckingham originally joined that band in 1974 with then-partner Stevie Nicks, teaming up with Mick Fleetwood, John McVie and Christine McVie.

Despite strained relationships and stories of wild hedonism, they produced some of



the most memorable pop songs of the 1970s, with Buckingham helping to write, produce and perform on many of their most famous numbers.

They reached the peak of their success with the 1977 LP Rumours, which became one of the bestselling albums of all time, shifting 40 million copies worldwide.

TRAILER FOR ALIA BHATT'S FIERCE ESPIONAGE THRILLER 'RAAZI' RELEASED

Right from the onset of the two-minute-long trailer of Raazi, you get a sense of what the film is going to, in a good way.

It is definitely going to be one of Alia Bhatt's finest performances of her promising career so far. For director Meghna Gulzar, it will be one more feather in her cap after Talvar and for Vicky Kaushal, it will be his big Bollywood breakout role. Therefore, if what you see in the trailer is further enhanced in the film, then Raazi is going to be a game changer for a lot of people.

Raazi is the tale of a young Indian woman Sehmat, who is married off to a Pakistani boy who hails from a family of army-men. Sehmat's father is a true-blue patriot (or so he thinks) and asks his daughter to be the "eyes and ears of



India" in the neighbouring country. Rigorous martial arts, shooting and fitness regimes take over and Sehmat remains the focal point of the trailer. Her character is mysteriously splendid and so self-aware. Kaushal, who clearly has no idea who he's married to, is faithfully by her side, unaware. Considered the lasting impact of its trailer, Raazi looks like it has the potential to be one of the most successful films of the year.

Torn between her duties

as the wife of a Pakistani and her Indian-ness, Bhatt's Sehmat remains the focal point of the trailer. Her character is mysteriously splendid and so self-aware. Kaushal, who clearly has no idea who he's married to, is faithfully by her side, unaware. Considered the lasting impact of its trailer, Raazi looks like it has the potential to be one of the most successful films of the year.

Backed by Junglee Pictures and Dharma Productions, Raazi releases on 11 May, 2018.

Nicolas Cage thinks he'd be the 'perfect' Joker

Nic Cage has had a long, storied history with the comic book movie genre. He's a huge fan of Superman – to point that he even named his son Kal-El – and famously signed on to play the character in Tim Burton's Superman Lives.

Unfortunately, despite the project going through numerous drafts and costumes being designed, it was cancelled by Warner Bros. due to the rising cost. Cage's dream recently came through though, as he'll get to voice Superman in upcoming animated movie Teen Titans GO! To The Movies.

He's had a number of near misses with other projects too, including playing The Scarecrow in cancelled sequel Batman Unchained and the Green Goblin in Sam Raimi's Spider-Man. He's got scratch his comic book itch eventually, playing the titular role in both Ghost Rider movies. While his quirky performances were easily the highlight of the two movies, they both received weak reviews. Cage also played Big Daddy in Kick-Ass, where he got to channel Adam West's Batman.

Cage was recently musing on his comic book movie days in a new interview with where he was asked if there are any characters he'd still love to play. The actor thinks that if he was to be drawn back to the genre, it would be for a juicy villain role:

"I mean, I think my comic book days



are kind of...I'm on to other things, but I always thought I'd make a great Joker and I always thought that I would've been a good villain in one of the Marvel [movies] like Doctor Doom. But, Doctor Doom you have to wear that mask, but I thought the story leading up to Doctor Doom could've been interesting. At this point if I was to go back into the format it would probably have to be as a villain."

He's also agreed the Joker would be the best role for his bombastic acting style.

In terms of a comeback role in a mainstream blockbuster, the Joker would be an ideal fit for Cage. That said, the role looks booked up for the foreseeable future. Jared Leto is still lined up to play the character again for Suicide Squad 2, and DC's solo Joker is current-

ly linking Joaquin Phoenix for the role – though the actor is seemingly playing coy for now. The Room's Tommy Wiseau would also very much like to be in the running, though his campaign feels a little tongue in cheek.

The Joker is arguably the most famous comic villain of all time, and actors like Jack Nicholson, Mark Hamill and Heath Ledger have all made the part their own. Despite being the rumored first choice for The Dark Knight, Sean Penn recently confirmed he was never approached about the Joker.

Maybe if Phoenix decides the Joker movie isn't for him, Nicolas Cage would be in with a chance; regardless of the quality of the resulting movie, he'd undoubtedly give a performance audiences would never forget.

APPLE ANNOUNCES PRODUCT (RED) EDITION OF IPHONE 8 & IPHONE 8 PLUS

Apple announced Monday (April 9) the release of a special-edition iPhone 8 and iPhone 8 Plus in collaboration with (RED), a partner of the Global Fund, a nonprofit that works to eliminate HIV and AIDS in Africa. (RED) was founded in 2006 by U2's Bono and Bobby Shriver.

The PRODUCT (RED) iPhone will be available to order online and in store on Friday.

This isn't the first time Apple has worked with (RED): An all-red version of the iPhone 7 and 7 Plus was released in 2017. There have also been PRODUCT (RED) models of the iPod Touch and the iPod Nano.

"Today's announcement is further evidence of Apple's



leadership in and commitment to the AIDS fight since the beginning of (RED) in 2006," Deborah Dugan, (RED)'s CEO, said in an Apple press release.

Apple has also announced another PRODUCT (RED) item: an iPhone X Leather Folio case. PRODUCT (RED) versions of the Beats Pill+, the Beats Solo3 Wireless Headphones and an Apple Watch wristband are available on Apple's website.

ARIES: You've been juggling career, romance, and creative interests for the past year, Aries. This is apt to continue. However, you could find yourself building a new career involving writing or speaking, perhaps in addition to your current career. You're also apt to develop a vigorous interest in improving your health. You could make a powerful effort to change your diet and exercise habits. Good luck with it all!

TAURUS: Ingenuity blossoms when you make the effort to do a little writing, Taurus, perhaps technical manuals or other professionally oriented projects. This could represent a new stage in your professional life. You're apt to do well and attract considerable attention from

higher-ups. Don't get too caught up in the need to revise, edit, then revise and edit again. It will only take up time, and it's possible to do too much rewriting.

GEMINI: Are you considering moving to a new residence, redecorating, or making some home improvements, Gemini? If so, this is a good time to do it. These types of projects promise to go well, so don't let doubt get in your way. Explore every possibility, consider all the pros and cons, and then if it looks like it's going to work, go for it!

CANCER: You might need to make a lot of phone calls and get through some lingering paperwork today, Cancer. A business partner or friend could be instrumental in helping clear up some loose

ends that have been left hanging. Be sure you get any leftover work out of the way, because soon you'll probably be even busier. If you get bored, remember that success lies ahead. Good luck!

LEO: If you've been worrying about having spent too much recently, Leo, the astral configuration indicates you should be able to put those worries behind you. There are plenty of opportunities that could bring increased income, possibly a new job, even a new career. A lot of phone calls, emails, or other communications could bring news of these possibilities your way. Be sure to record the ones that seem most promising.

VIRGO: Communication takes

a prominent place in your life today, Virgo. Your practical, direct, and down-to-Earth manner can be very impressive. You're known for succeeding where others have failed. This isn't lost on those above you on the hierarchical ladder. And they know that you aren't easily fooled. Expect steady personal and professional progress and a great boost to your self-confidence!

LIBRA: You could be surrounded by secrets, Libra. A number of colleagues might be leaving to pursue new opportunities, and you could wonder if there's a reason for it that escapes you. It might even have you reevaluating whether or not you should stay put! However, don't panic because others leave. If

there are things about your job that bother you, by all means consider your options.

SCORPIO: A phone call or email from a friend could open up new career possibilities for you, Scorpio, perhaps involving the communications industry. Tales of people who have hit it big in this field could be circulating widely, but you should carefully consider all the aspects of any new option before jumping in. You don't want to have any regrets about your decision later. Think about it!

SAGITTARIUS: Communication of all sorts could be vital to you today, Sagittarius. You might spend much of the day on the phone organizing an important event or perhaps clearing up a misunderstanding. This

could make it a rather stressful day. It might be one of those days you just need to get through. Give yourself a bit of solitary downtime tonight to counterbalance the busy energy of the day.

CAPRICORN: Your outlook is apt to be optimistic, enthusiastic, and practical, Capricorn! You have both creative and workable ideas. They're likely to lead to success, although it could take considerable time and effort to make it happen. Communication with colleagues is likely to be open, honest, and very dynamic as projects and enterprises take on a life of their own. Work hard, make it happen, and enjoy the journey!

AQUARIUS: Tending to paperwork could take up

much of your time today, Aquarius. A lot could be riding on your careful planning and projections, so you're probably taking it very seriously. Nonetheless, don't be intimidated. Trust your instincts. You know what you're doing. Be very thorough, check everything over carefully, then put your plan into action and wait for it to bear fruit!

PISCES: Communication between you and either a business or romantic partner should get a fresh start today, Pisces. You've gotten to know each other better and feel more comfortable being honest and open with each other than before. All signs are that any partnerships begun, renewed, or confirmed today are likely to be successful and profitable.