



SummitTIMES

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ON TOP OF THE NEWS

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Protest march for passage of women's reservation bill

NEW DELHI, DEC 13 (PTI): With the winter session of parliament just two days away, various women organisations today rallied for the passage of women's reservation bill.

The organisations took out a solidarity march in the national capital, reminding the government to keep its widely circulated promise of passing the bill in the parliament, at the earliest.

The women activists said the NDA-led government's majority in the Lok Sabha was enough to fulfil the party's manifesto promise to pass the long-pending bill.

"The women of India are disgusted and appalled to see the government ignoring the bill even after three and half years of being in power. The present government needs to act on it quickly to regain people's trust," Ranjana Kumari, director, Centre for Social Research said.

Under the banner of National Alliance for Women Reservation Bill, activists from more than 50 organisations and RWAs were present at the rally. Centre for Social Research, Joint Women's Programme, Justice Seekers, Women Power Connect, YWCA and many others also joined the demonstration.

Mizo villagers object to commissioning of power project by PM

Aizawl, Dec 13 (PTI): People of a village in Mizoram have objected to the commissioning of a power project of the NEEPCO, scheduled to be inaugurated by the Prime Minister on Saturday, alleging that the company did not follow norms.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi is scheduled to inaugurate the 60 megawatt Tuirial Hydro Electric Project from here during his visit to the state on December 16.

"Public hearings on environmental issues were never held and the NEEPCO (North Eastern Electric Power Corporation) failed to provide compensation to a large number of families who were displaced by the project and those who lost agricultural land," the All NGO Committee said today.

Two-lane RCC bridge across Mantam sanctioned, State tells HC

SUMMIT REPORT GANGTOK, 13 DEC:

The state government has sanctioned a two-lane permanent RCC bridge to connect Upper Dzongu with the rest of the State across the Mantam lake. Following the Mantam landslide on 13 August last year which dammed the Rongyong Chu into a massive lake at Mantam, several villages under the three Gram Panchayat Units of Up-

per Dzongu like Sakyong-Pentong, Tingvong and Lingthem-Lingdem were cut-off, it may be recalled.

The proposal was sanctioned by the state government in principle after the High Court of Sikkim intervened and passed several orders to address the problems being faced by people living in Upper Dzongu.

Today, the state government, in follow-up to

earlier orders of the High Court, informed the Court that the government has sanctioned an amount of Rs. 49,05,75,000 for construction of an RCC bridge and said that necessary steps will be taken at the earliest to expedite the work.

Additional Advocate General, JB Pradhan, informed the division bench of High Court headed by Chief Justice Satish Kumar Agnihotri

and Justice Meenakshi Madan Rai stating that the Government has already taken a decision to establish two-lane permanent RCC bridge connecting the people living on the other side of the lake.

The bench in its order said that the Suspension Foot Bridge shall be installed to facilitate the movement of goods and basic necessities to the people, who are stranded

on the other side of Mantam lake without vehicular access.

The court has directed the state government to file an affidavit within two weeks on installation of the Suspension Foot Bridge to facilitate the movement of goods and basic necessities to the people.

On supply of a copy to the Amicus as well as the Advocate, as Intervener, they are expected to

seek instructions and submit a report, within two weeks, thereafter.

The bench has also relieved SP Bhutia as Amicus Curiae, after he was recently appointed as judicial officer and appointed senior counsel N Rai along with Tamanna Chettri to assist the court in place of Mr. Bhutia.

N Rai is already representing the community as intervener seeking court permission to

maintain the lake as a tourist attraction. The State Govt, it may be recalled, plans to drain the lake.

It may be recalled that the Syok Bhir landslide of 13 August had blocked the Rongyong Chu and formed a lake at 4 Mile, Mantam. Fourteen houses were submerged along with a bridge that cut off three GPUs comprising of thirteen villages from the rest of the state.

IMI conducts nature walk on Int'l Mountain Day

SUMMIT REPORT GANGTOK, 13 DEC:

Integrated Mountain Initiative, Sikkim chapter observed International Mountain Day with an early morning walk for students, teachers and other nature enthusiasts on 11 Dec, a press release informs.

The walk was designed in an interactive manner to enable knowledge sharing on trees, birds and wildlife, and the significance of mountain regions.

Thirty-five people comprising of students and teachers from different schools (Assam Lingzey, Biraspati Parsai, Deorali, Kabi, Modern and Tadong Senior Secondary Schools) were part of the walk with interpretations carried out by resource persons from World Wide Fund-India, the State Biodiversity Board, Sikkim University, Office of Member of Parliament [Lok Sabha], ECOS and Sartaj Ghuman. Most of the participants were from the Leadership Development Programme under the Education Development Trust of Sikkim (EDTS).

The objective of the nature appreciation walk was mainly to sensitise students to be aware of their surroundings and inculcate a habit of learning through their observation. The focus was therefore more on understanding the shape of the leaves, the



seeds and the flowers, rather than on memorizing the names.

The walk began from MG Marg and ended at the Palace Grounds, where a short ses-

sion on capturing the lessons from the walk was conducted. A talk on the importance of mountains and the theme of this year's International

Mountain Day - Mountains under pressure: climate, hunger and migration was presented to the participants, reads the release.

Health Deptt spent Rs 2.90 cr in 2017-18 for patients referred outside the state

SUMMIT REPORT GANGTOK, 13 DEC:

Department of Health-care, Human Services & Family Welfare has incurred an expenditure of Rs. 290 lakh till 31 Oct 2017 in the financial year 2017-18 towards the treatment of patients referred outside the state. Between 01 Apr 2017 to 31 Oct 2017, 518 patients have been referred and treated at different Super Specialty Hospitals in Delhi, Kolkata, Vellore, etc, as per a press statement issued by the Department today.

Health Department under the auspices of Mukhya Mantri Jeewan Raksha Kosh (MMJRK) has been providing financial assistance to patients for treatment outside the State. In or-

der to avail this scheme the patients must be referred by the State Medical Board and possess Certificate of Identification/Sikkim Subject Certificate, the release informs.

"Since its inception in 2010 multitudes of patients have been successfully treated and benefited under the scheme," reads the release.

The referrals have covered all ages and the medical cases range from various types of cancer, serious heart ailments e.g. (valvular heart disease, RHD), Serious neurological disease e.g. (CVA, vascular malformation), chronic kidney diseases, road traffic accidents involving serious injuries, serious liver and lung diseases.

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Air of expectancy pervades Guj a day ahead of final phase of poll

AHMEDABAD, DEC 13 (PTI):

An air of expectancy pervades Gujarat a day ahead of the second and final phase of Assembly polls after an acrimony-filled campaign for the key western state ended yesterday.

Plumes of dust raised by campaign vehicles have settled down and loudspeakers at election rallies have fallen silent after 49 days of frenzied electioneering by leaders of the ruling BJP and challenger Congress that seeks to reclaim power after being in the opposition for 22 years.

The hustings this time were dominated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who powered the BJP's campaign in his home state, while Congress's president-designate Rahul Gandhi was the party's face in the elections.

"Never before I had seen both Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Congress president-elect Rahul Gandhi com-



ing here so frequently, at times on the same day, to woo voters," said shopkeeper Raju Doshi.

He somewhat misses the hustle and bustle of the high-octane campaign.

"It was hard to miss a single news ever since the campaigning began. It was pretty entertaining," he says.

The lull looks like a break from the routine after the

protracted cut and thrust of high-decibel electoral politics.

"It's a lull before the real storm," says Amit Patel, a student, summing up the mood of the state ahead of the crucial vote that will decide the winner on December 18, the day the ballots are counted.

"The fight is likely to be close given the aggressive campaigning by both the sides," says Patel.

Many poll watchers have predicted a dead heat between the two parties.

From the common man on the street to those in the lobbies of think tanks, there is near unanimity that the contest is too close to call, though the two major contenders to power are confident of their victory.

The tone of the campaign, which began on a somewhat subdued note with the talk of development politics, assumed rare stridency which saw the protagonists in the electoral arena making personal attacks against each other.

The acrimony between political rivals peaked with Congress leader Mani Shankar Aiyar's "neech aadmi" barb at the prime minister, who used it as a stick to beat the rival party with rally after election rally.

The dying moments of electioneering saw a rare row break out after prime minister Modi seemed to suggest

that Pakistan was trying to meddle in the Gujarat elections through his predecessor Manmohan Singh.

Addressing a rally in Palanpur on December 10, Modi claimed that some Pakistani officials and Manmohan Singh met at Congress leader Mani Shankar Aiyar's house over dinner on December 6, a day before Aiyar's "neech" jibe against him.

Shedding his usual taciturnity, Manmohan Singh issued a strongly worded statement against Modi and demanded an apology.

"I sincerely hope that Prime Minister will show the maturity and gravitas expected of the high office he holds instead of concentrating his energy solely on erroneously conceived brownie points.

"I sincerely hope that he will apologize to the nation for his ill thought transgression to restore the dignity of the office he occupies," he

said, adding he was "deeply pained and anguished" by the "falsehood and canards" being spread by the prime minister to score political points in what he said was a "lost cause" in Gujarat.

Gujarati pride remained the only constant in the rapidly changing election rhetoric of the BJP.

The party's campaign began with the 'Gujarat Gaurav Yatra' by the party and Modi repeatedly invoked the issue of injured Gujarati pride as he planned the end game, calling upon the electorate to "avenge" the insult on the 'son of Gujarat' by the Congress.

Whether the sense of Gujarati pride, which Modi appealed to, sways the voters in favour of the BJP, or the prophecy of "zabardast" result by Rahul Gandhi comes true, will be known on December 20, the day the electorate's verdict is announced.

Chief Justice visits North Sikkim

**SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 13 DEC:**

Chief Justice of the High Court of Sikkim, Justice Satish K Agnihotri, and Judge, Justice Bhaskar Raj Pradhan, visited North Sikkim and inspected the Courts of District & Sessions Judge, Chief Judicial Magistrate-cum-Civil Judge and Civil Judge-cum-Judicial Magistrate in Mangon on 11 Dec.

They also inspected the site earmarked for construction of the Court of Civil Judge-cum-Judicial Magistrate at Chungthang, a press release informs.

Justice Agnihotri has directed the District & Sessions Judge, North District at Mangon and the Sub Divisional Magistrate at Chungthang to set up a temporary Court for Civil Judge-cum-Judicial Magistrate at Chungthang within 10 days and submit the report to the registry.

On invitation, Justice Agnihotri accompanied by his wife, Yogmaya Agnihotri, visited the establishment of the Bunker Battalion, 2/4 Gorkha Rifles, RC Post on 12 Dec.

Major AS Anand along with other officers and jawans of 2/4 GR, RC Post welcomed them at the RC Post.

Regimental Medical Officer-2/4 GR, Gaurav Shukla, accompanied them from Gurudongmar Lake to the establishment of the Bunker Battalion situated at the RC Post.

Earlier, Justice Agni-

turn to pg03

Sikkim People's Alliance to usher in new era in politics

**VISHNU NEOPANEY
GANGTOK, 13 DEC:**

A new political party, 'Sikkim People's Alliance', has been formed and was unveiled today headed by MK Subba as its chief convenor. The announcement was made in a brief programme held at Ranipool today.

The party will take a modern nationalist approach towards preserving the distinct identity, culture and ethnicity of Sikkim and its people as enshrined in the Constitution of India through 371F, it is informed.

While addressing the gathering, the chief convenor, Mr Subba said that it has now come upon the first generation of Sikkimese Indians to discard the past and usher in a new political era.

SPA aims to provide positive socialism, create rational and ethical society for moral progress of humanity, create a secular and free thinking



society, he said.

Mr Subba said that there has always been a lack of political will on the part of present and past regimes

to secure the hopes and aspirations of Sikkimese people and Sikkimese identity as a whole.

SPA is for "courage, not compla-

cency and leadership, not salesman-ship", he stated.

SPA president, Bhanu Pratap Rasaily said that SPA's primary objec-

tive is to establish a people's party, and not a party that belongs to handful of sycophants whose sole objective is to rob the state and indulge in dirty caste based politics.

The programme was also addressed by Karan Silwal, a student representative and guest speakers, Biraj Adhikari and T N Dhakal.

The ad-hoc committee of the newly formed political party was also appointed with MK Subba as chief convenor, Bhanu Pratap Rasaily as president, Manish Raj Shrestha as vice president, Pema Leyda Sangderpa as general secretary, Peter Chettri as treasurer, Karan Silwal as convenor student affairs, Karma Yenten Chankapa as youth affairs convenor, Karma Tenga as North District convenor, Dil Hang Subba as West District convenor and Ruben Subba as East District convenor.



Trade license inspection carried out in Ranka

**SAGAR CHETTRI
GANGTOK, 13 DEC:**

A joint inspection of trade licenses under Ranka Block was conducted from Banjhankri Falls to Ranka Senior Secondary School, Zero Point Ranka today

by Block Development Officer Ranka, Bikram Rai, along with Panchayats of Luing, Ranka and Rey Mindu GPUs, staff of all concerned GPUS, Sadar Thana Sub Inspector, Sagar Subba, and Police personnel.

Seventeen trade licenses were found sublet during the inspection and notice has been issued accordingly to all license holders to withdraw their trade license within 15 days. It is informed that notice has also been issued to these shop-

keepers to shut down their shop completely within 15 days.

The trade license holders who have not renewed their licenses have been directed to renew their license immediately along with fine, it is informed.

Ek Bharat, Shrestha Bharat youth contingents from Delhi to visit Sikkim

GANGTOK, 13 DEC [PIB]:

Nehru Yuva Kendra Sangathan, Sikkim is organizing a 15-day Inter-State Youth Exchange Programme under 'Ek Bharat, Shrestha Bharat 2017-18' from 15 Dec. Fifty youth contingents from Delhi are visiting Sikkim as part of this programme aimed at fostering a sense of common identity among the people of different states by understanding each other's rich heritage culture, customs and traditions.

The new initiative by Prime Minister Narendra Modi aims to celebrate the unity in diversity of our nation and to maintain and strengthen the fabric of traditionally existing emotional bonds

between the people of our country.

It also aims to promote the spirit of national integration through a deep and structured engagement between all Indian States and Union Territories through a year-long planned engagement between States. Under this programme, Sikkim has been paired with Delhi.

Different events under this youth exchange programme will be held at venues across Sikkim including the Prabin Pragati Sangh, Ranka, Falcon Youth Club, Marchak, Dafe Munal Youth Club, East Sikkim and the Kanchan Jyoti Club, Sumbuk, South Sikkim from 15-29 Dec.



Second coordination meet of Maghey Mela held in Jorethang

JORETHANG, 13 DEC [IPR]: The second coordination meeting for the upcoming State level Jorethang Maghey Mela, 2018 under the chairmanship of Minister for Health and Information and Public Relations, AK Ghatani was held at Garib Uthaan Bhawan in Jorethang, South Sikkim today.

The meeting was also attended by District Collector (South), Raj Yadav, Superintendent of Police (South), Shiva Prasad, Sub Divisional Magistrate [Jorethang], Bimal Rai, Nayabazaar Jorethang Municipal Corporation Chairman, Tika Gurung, Indian Reserved Battalion [Pipalay] Commandant, Pravin Gurung alongside senior officials from various government departments, police personnel, NGO representatives, civil society members and representatives from the Mela Committee.

Addressing the meeting, Chief Patron of the committee and Health Minister, AK Ghatani addressed and updated the gathering about the

previous meeting held in Gangtok with regard to Maghey Mela.

Reiterating the importance of the Mela, the Chief Patron said that the mela will be a calendar event and Tourism Department has been assigned as the nodal Department for organizing the event from this year onwards.

In his address, he called for participation by the concerned officials as well as the public for upholding the grandeur and tradition that characterizes the Jorethang Maghey Sankranti Mela.

Similarly, he spoke on how public and departmental participation with mutual assistance from each other can ensure the regional as well as international success of the Maghey Mela. He also updated the officials present to identify and mobilise the stakeholders from Jorethang and to further enable them to actively and enthusiastically participate in planning the mela celebration. Allocating the roles and responsibilities to respective individuals

and line departments, the Chief Patron emphasised on active participation from each one to ensure success of the cultural festival.

The Minister further highlighted the various aspects of the mela like cultural programs, traditional folk culture, rural tourism, rural sports, Saras Mela, Aarogya CATCH programme, job mela and many more.

On the working mechanism of the department, the Minister urged the concerned officials to expedite work which would support developmental momentum of the government in various dimensions. He also shared the idea of allocating separate funds for organizing Jorethang Maghey Mela in the years to come.

SP South also addressed the gathering wherein he underlined the Do's and Don't's of law and order to be observed during the duration of the Maghey Mela 2018. He also placed his suggestions before the administration and the mela committee relating

to sale of liquor in the mela stalls, barricading of designated spots, installation of CCTV cameras and watch towers to prevent any untoward incident during the course of the mela.

NJMC chairperson, Tika Gurung in his address urged every department to participate with full enthusiasm and support to make this event a grand success. He also spelled out the stringency that will hereon be observed while issuing trade licenses for commercial spaces during the mela.

During the course of the meeting, other issues that were thoroughly deliberated were tentative expenditure for the Maghey Mela, inclusion of budgetary provision in the annual budget of the state, participation of government departments for various activities proposed for the mela, prospect of allocating some amount of fund earmarked for State Winter Festival to Jorethang Mela and provision of uninterrupted water and power supply.

Salghari Sec School tops DISHA district level achievement test in South

**BIKASH CHETTRI
GANGTOK, 13 DEC:**

Salghari Secondary School has topped the DISHA district level achievement test conducted in November for all secondary school students of South district.

South District Administrative Center under the aegis of District Collector (South), Raj Yadav had officially started District Integrated School Help by Administration (DISHA) for providing better and quality education in the district earlier this year.

As a part of various activities chalked out for DISHA, a district level achievement test was conducted in November for all secondary level students.

A committee headed by District Collector [South], Raj Yadav and Deputy Directors of Human Resource Development Department

analyzed the results and have announced the results of the achievement test today.

Salghari Secondary School was selected as the best school based on the performances of students. The school emerged at the top of all eight schools and was adjudged the 'Best Performing School' based on the test.

Cash prize of Rs 10,000 has been awarded to the school.

In the student's category, Lata Rai from Omchu Secondary School topped the test with 74% followed by Sandhya Rai and Jeewan Dahal from Pabong Secondary School and Neh Broom Secondary School respectively.

Eight school toppers from each of the participant schools were also identified by the committee.

From Borong Secondary School, Sushma Chettri topped the

test while Sandhya Rai of Pabong Secondary School was the school topper.

District toppers Lata Rai, Sushma Chettri and Pranita Tamang were declared school toppers from their respective schools.

Muskan Sherpa from Pabong Daring Secondary School topped her school while Smriti Rai was declared the topper of Sumbuk Secondary School.

From the district's best performing school, Salghari Secondary School, Smriti Rai was adjudged the topper.

Based on the performances of the students in each subject, Vernacular teacher from Pabong Secondary School, HD Bhutia and Mathematics teacher from Salghari Secondary School, Anup Kumar Biswas were declared as the

turn to pg03

Tibetan Youth Congress holds rally as part of Bharat Jagaran Yatra 2017

**SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 13 DEC:**

Tibetan Youth Congress [TYC] carried out a rally today in the capital, under Bharat Jagaran Yatra 2017. Central committee members of TYC, members of Tibetan Youth Club, Gangtok and members of the Tibetan community participated in the rally. The rally started from Nam Nang and continued towards Deorali, Pani House and Sisa Golai and concluded in front of Denzong Cinema Hall.

After the rally, a meeting was also held in front of Denzong Cinema Hall,



which was addressed by TYC central committee vice-president, Tamdain Hrichoe, Bharat Tibet Sahayog Manch president, Rudra Poudyal, and others.

Tibetan Youth Club, Gangtok general secretary, Tenzing Chundi,

informed that Bharat Jagaran Yatra 2017 was started on 10 Dec on the occasion of Human Rights Day from Salugara in West Bengal. From Sikkim, Bharat Jagaran Yatra 2017 will move to Kalimpong and then Darjeeling.

He further informed that Bharat Jagaran Yatra will also be conducted at Ravangla in South Sikkim on 16 Dec. He added that the yatra has also started in Dharamsala and Chennai and will cover more than 150 cities of the country.

The main objective of the yatra is to inform people about the cultural and historical relationship between India and Tibet, independence of Tibet and other related issues. It also aims at receiving support of people's representatives, MPs, departmental heads, general public and others for Tibetans, he added.

*Gangtok on
Thursday,
14 Dec*

Temp: 22°C / 06°C
Forecast: Partly
sunny and pleasant
Sunrise: 06:17 AM
Sunset: 4:43 PM

Man assaulted in local pub, bullet recovered from toilet

**SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 13 DEC:**

Police has registered a criminal case against unknown person[s] based on the wound certificate of a resident of Rangpo in East Sikkim, Roshan Chhetrii [32].

According to Police sources, Mr Chhetri was assaulted by unknown person[s] with an unidentified object in a pub located in 5th Mile on the night of 10 Dec.

The victim and his guardian refused to lodge a police complaint when the incident occurred. They were directed by the Police to approach the competent Court since the case was non-cognizable.

Police have also recovered a bullet from the men's toilet of Eros Bistro and Lounge. Police sources informed that Mr Chhetri does not remember who or with what he was assaulted. He has sustained injuries on his face.

The case has been registered at Ranipool police station and investigations are on.

Chief Justice visits North Sikkim

Contd from pg02

hotri also visited Kerang [15 KMS away from Cholanu Lake] to inaugurate one establishment of 11th Battalion ITBP outer post of China Border, the release adds.

Salghari Sec School tops DISHA district level...

contd from pg02

best teachers.

Best Students [Subject-wise] were also selected by the DISHA team in order to generate a spirit of competition among the students namely Jeevan Dahal of Nehbroom SS [English and Science], Sandhya Rai of Pabong SS [Social Studies], Lata Rai from Omchu SS [Maths] and Roshni Koirala from Salghari SS [Vernacular].

It should be noted that the first achievement test in South Sikkim was conducted in August and analyzed similarly.

Head Masters and teachers of all schools have been instructed to ensure admissions of all students in winter coaching camps to improve the result of board examination in March.

The first pre-board examination for the class X and XII students is scheduled to be conducted in February.

SJE&WD clarifies on AWW & AWH honorarium enhancement delay

**SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 13 DEC:**

In light of the recent incident of some Anganwadi Workers [AWW] and Anganwadi Helpers [AWH] gathered in front of Samman Bhawan on 11 Dec seeking an appointment with the Chief Minister with the demand of increasing their monthly honorarium, the Social Justice, Empower-

ment & Welfare Department has issued a press release today placing various clarifications regarding the same.

The release informs that AWWs and AWHs are honorary rural/urban workers who are entrusted with multifarious services under the umbrella ICDS programme. They are not regular government employees but

honorary workers only. At present, barring a few States of South India, the State of Sikkim has been proactive and has been providing monthly honorarium of Rs 2250 and Rs 1500 to the AWWs and the AWHs, respectively, since 2011. The Government of Sikkim is contributing 10% of the State's share in their salary component also.

The SJE&W Department, in the release, has clarified that the Department in appreciation of the selfless services provided by the workers has already processed a proposal for enhancing the honorarium prior to such representations being put forward.

It has further added that the AWWs and the AWHs submitted their representation to the CM

without informing the Department or the officials of the Department which is absolutely unwarranted.

The Department has further called the publishing of the same incident in various local newspapers and social media platforms without proper verification of the facts of the matter irresponsible on the part of the information platforms.



Delhi tech company makes presentation on Onsite Earthquake Warning System device

GANGTOK, 13 DEC [IPR]: On the direction of Chief Minister Pawan Chamling and in view of the recent predictions by Ministry of Earth Sciences, Government of India, a presentation of Earthquake Onsite Early Warning and Security System was made before the authorities of State Disaster Management Authority, Sikkim

National Disaster Management Authority and various scientific institutions have talked about predictions of earthquakes in the Himalayan region in near future. Earthquakes not only pose threat to human lives but affect the National GDP and economy of the states. Bhuj [Gujarat] earthquake brought down the National GDP by 1%, state economy by 40% and slashed literacy level of the state to the lowest level. It was felt that a mechanism needed to be in place to minimize huge losses in the absence of any other solution for the early warning of earthquakes in case of disasters

in future.

Managing Director, Terra Techcom Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi, Bijender Goel, presented the German technology before the authorities. He informed that there are four types of technologies namely Regional earthquakes early warning [EWS], Onsite early Warning, Real time Warning and seismic switches which are being adopted in the world for minimizing losses from earthquakes.

Mr Goel said that India is still working on development of systems like in Uttarakhand but North Eastern States still lack such plans. Onsite EWS is the only solution for the Indian states to install, maintain for early warning and disseminating it to the public.

He also said that to set up, maintain, review and upgrade the mechanism for early warning and dissemination of proper information to public is a mandatory provision of the National Disaster Management Act 2005

and informed that they have come up with a solution for the people of Sikkim to fight severe earthquakes.

A state-of-the-art German Onsite EWS was also presented before the authorities today. Shutting off gas, power and water supply lines, restarting emergency power generators, open emergency exit gates, park elevators on next floor automatically before the damaging waves of a severe earthquake strikes he said also helps in avoiding panic in case of mild tremors.

"Sikkim has a history of the worst earthquakes in 1839, 1849, 1852, 1897, 1906, 1908, 1918, 1923, 1930, 1931, 1932, 1934, 1950, 1954 and 2011. The State suffered a lot from these earthquakes and may also suffer a lot if earthquakes with huge magnitude strike the region again. This Onsite EWS is the only available solution in India for the safety of people and infrastructure. It can really help the state in minimizing

huge loss of lives. The device has been used in various countries like India, USA, Germany, Chile, Indonesia, Pakistan, Turkey, Iran, China, Mexico and is the only device in the world which can connect to any building management system," added Mr Goel.

Onsite EWS device is capable of shutting down the industries, transports/trains/metro by managing traffic signals and cutting off the power supply, deliver early signals at airports/satellite launch and alert the people at hospitals, educational institutions, industries, multi-story buildings, shopping malls and control further damage by shutting off gas, power, water, open emergency exit gates, etc. Cutting off gas and oil supply from high pressure to low pressure helps gas and oil industry to minimize its losses, he informed.

He also applauded the initiatives of the Chief Minister for the safety of the people of the State.



SKM encourages youth of Sikkim to work for change

**SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 13 DEC:**

Sikkim Krantikari Morcha conducted an interaction programme with the youth of Upper Bhasmey Ward, under Rhenock constituency, today. The interaction session was chaired by vice president [In-charge

East], Bishnu Kumar Khatiwara, and party executives, an SKM press release informs.

Mr Khatiwara highlighted the recently held Jatiya Ekta Sadhbhawana Yatra and congratulated Sangha MLA, Sonam Lama, and JESY team for successfully completing

the Yatra.

"Now the youth of Sikkim should come forward to work together for betterment of tomorrow and fight against the corrupted government headed by Sikkim Democratic Front. SKM is the only strong opposition and voice for the people

in the State and works for making Sikkim better," he added.

He further informed that SKM is an organization that gives equal opportunities to members within the organization and that there is huge scope for youth in SKM who want change.



Do not be the victim of destiny, be the creator of your own destiny: Swami Swaroopanandaji

**SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 13 DEC:**

Global Head of Chinmaya Mission Worldwide, Swami Swaroopanandaji, after successfully completing his Sikkim visit, left for Assam this afternoon, the next leg of his tour to various centres spread over the world, informs a press release issued by general secretary Chinmaya Mission Sikkim Centre, SK Sarda.

Swamiji, on 12 Dec, addressed the youth at Chintan Bhawan in Gangtok on the subject "Shape Your Destiny".

Speaking to more than 400 youths, he called upon them to learn the mechanism of mind and intellect.

"It is the intellect which should rule over mind. Mind always moves towards pleasurable things, but intellect reins over it, controls and channels the nobler direction in which we need to work to shape our destiny," said Swamiji.

He emphasised that daily Japa will help in brightening the intellect and allows it to import values in life.

"Let us be not the victim of destiny, but a creator of destiny. Values strengthen our mind and intelligence and calm down all the structures. We not only should contribute to our growth but be a positive contributor to the society, environment where we live and work," he added.

The meeting was also addressed by Trustee of Chinmaya University, Swami Mitranandaji.

"Chinmaya University was set up as a University for Sanskrit and Indic Traditions. Chinmaya University aims to create an academic platform that bridges Indian Knowledge Traditions [IKT] with current-day applications in every sphere in society. The university will exceed excellence in higher learning and research with the objective of exploring, conserving and sharing the contemporary relevance of Indian cultural heritage and IKT. The university aims to integrate the best practices of modern pedagogical advances with the beauty of traditional Gurukula model of learning and prepare students to address contemporary challenges, inspiring them to leave a positive impact on the world as confident and cultured contributors to society," said Swami Mitranandaji.

Earlier, the programme started with offering of traditional khandas by its president, Ganesh Kumar Pradhan, to Swamiji. Students from Chandmari Shiv Mandir Sanskrit Pathshala performed Ganesh Vanadana and Shanti Path with students from Sikkim Sangeetalaya, Gangtok performing bhajans.

Swamiji also released a bhajan album created by Sikkimese singer, Bimla Pradhan.



Bhavisha Bharat Organization conducts free health camp

SUMMIT REPORT

NAMCHI, 13 DEC: Bhavisha Bharat Organization organized a free health camp for the villagers of

Chisopani and surrounding villages here at South Sikkim today. The camp was sponsored by State Bank of India Foundation.

Around 152 patients were screened and treated during the camp.

Member of the organization, Diwash Gurung

informed that the camp was held under the project Sanjeevani (Clinic on Wheel) supported by SBI Foundation.

He also informed that the camp aims to spread awareness about illnesses and their prevention.

He thanked Dr Deepa Mala Subba of Namchi District Hospital and her team for leading the camp. Along with screening, the patients was also given free medicines.

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**GOVERNMENT OF SIKKIM
URBAN DEVELOPMENT & HOUSING DEPARTMENT
JORETHANG, SOUTH SIKKIM
No. 43/UDHD/NIT/2017**

Date: 13/12/2017

CORRIGENDUM

Reference NIT No. 38/UDHD/JRT dated: 21/11/2017 for the work "Beautification & Upgradation of Soreng Bazaar, West Sikkim", it is hereby notified to all the bidders that last date for submission of bids has been rescheduled to 8/01/2018. As such, the interested bidder may submit their bids to Divisional Engineer, UDHD, Jorethang, South Sikkim on or before 08/01/2018

Sd/-
**SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER(S/W)
UDHD
JORETHANG**

R.O. NO: 463/IPR/PUB/Class/17-18 Date: 13/12/2017

SummitTIMES

Disaster Management in Times of Climate Change

The two realities are best prepared for in tandem

Climate Change and Disaster Risk Management are relatively recent responsibilities shouldered on two departments in Sikkim – Climate Change to the Department of Science & Technology and Disaster Management to Land Revenue Department. The recognition of the two challenges as issues requiring round the year and official attention is welcome and maybe it is even time that the two developments were placed under the charge of a single authority. This would be worthwhile because it is now clear that a majority of the natural disasters in the future will be Climate Change triggered. It would thus make sense to make Climate Change Mitigation a part of disaster management. This, more so in the case of hill states like Sikkim which already flirt too often with natural disasters, the intensity of which will grow as climate begins to change more dramatically.

The impact of climate change is becoming increasingly evident in the polar caps and in the Himalayas. High mountain communities have noted that glaciers are retreating at unprecedented rates. The planet's extremities are canaries in the coal mines - alerting the rest of the world to the extent of the changes that are coming and we, because Sikkim holds that canary, should start getting more involved in the initiatives being undertaken to save the environment because that really is the only cushion to minimise climate change risk.

At the policy level, Sikkim has launched several measures aimed at preserving its environment and understanding where it stands on the climate change risk graph. These, however, remain typically [for Sikkim] top-down affairs and have come as government initiatives thus far. One doesn't see any private participation in drawing focus to the larger picture. Most NGOs and social organisations are involved in almost exclusively local issues like garbage disposal and plantation works. While these are also necessary, Sikkim needs more who communicate in specifics and undertake studies on climate change impact in the State. There has unfortunately not been any concerted effort in Sikkim on this front thus far. While most people are familiar with climate change, very few are aware of how it is manifesting in Sikkim. The closest that the State has come to studying this is aspect is in the committee (or was it as commission?) set up to study the glaciers of Sikkim. It is not clear what came of this study although some glaciers on high melt have been kept under high watch now. Events like an occasional workshop-cum-orientation which announces that it will discuss climate change and disaster management do not really ever get into the specifics of climate change impact on Sikkim. Without making this change directly relevant to the people, efforts towards mitigation or management will remain funds-driven undertakings which, even if they are earnest, will remain superficial.

Climate Change manifests in both, subtle and overt ways, its slower encroachment not being noticed until it is too late and its more dramatic displays like GLOFs coming so suddenly and destructively that rescue and repairs distract from the causative factors. The dots are not connected and hence lessons are never learnt and preparation always compromised. Some years ago, an ambitious workshop-cum-orientation programme was held in Sikkim on "Climate Risk Management through Disaster Preparedness and Mitigation". Followed up in earnest, it could have marked a change in attitudes if it had only succeeded in acquainting stakeholders and line department officials to how climate change has already impacted Sikkim. Then, perhaps management and mitigation plans could have been more than the copy-paste speculative drafts that remain in circulation. The main problem in Sikkim's handling of climate change and even disaster management plans is that most people engaged for it work on generalised blueprints prepared elsewhere. Such blueprints should be seen as suggested frameworks to be filled out with Sikkim-specific data, traditional knowledge base and local know-how to deliver management and mitigation plans which actually deliver.

WRITE US: Readers are invited to comment on, criticise, run down, even appreciate if they like something in this paper. Letters carrying abusive/indecent 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

California fire damage to homes is less 'random' than it seems

FAITH KEARNS
theconversation.com

In the midst of the many wildfire emergencies that have faced California this year, it can often seem that the way houses burn, or don't, is random.

The thing is, though, it's not. Firefighters and researchers alike have a pretty solid understanding of why some houses are more vulnerable to wildfire than others. The real challenge ultimately lies in whether those with the power to act on that knowledge will do so.

AVAILABLE SCIENCE

It is commonly thought that it takes direct flame to spread a fire, but this isn't always the case. Small embers are instead often the culprits that begin house fires during wildfires. These small bits of burning debris can be lofted long distances by the wind. They can then end up igniting landscaping materials like combustible mulch, or enter homes through vulnerable spots – gutters teeming with debris, unscreened attic vents, open or broken windows, old roofs with missing shingles. Once there, the embers smolder and can ultimately catch a house on fire.

In California, iconic winds work to create ideal ember-driven ignition conditions. The Santa Ana winds in Southern California – known as the Diablo winds in northern part of the state – have generally followed fairly predictable seasonal and spatial patterns. "Red flag" fire warnings are often issued on dry days when the winds will be particularly fierce.

While humans can't really control as much as we'd like to believe when it comes to disasters, we do have the ability to control where and how we



build. For decades, most wildfire education and enforcement campaigns have focused on creating so-called defensible space where landscaping vegetation is carefully selected and located on the property, as well as routinely maintained.

This is not enough, however. Officials in California – as in other fire-prone states – need to help homeowners, local governments and builders to understand there are also specific, science-based steps that can be taken to make structures themselves less vulnerable to fire.

Researchers recommend what is known as a "coupled approach" to home and building survival. This means the development and maintenance of an effective defensible space, as well as the careful selection of construction materials and correct installation to ensure that, for example, there are not gaps in siding or roofing that would allow embers to penetrate.

Decision-makers also need to be willing to take on the most taboo topic of them all: recognizing that there are places houses simply shouldn't be built, or rebuilt, at all.

(NOT) TOO URBAN TO BURN

Earlier this year, California had the first strong winter rains after many years of drought. Now, after a typically dry summer, the state is experiencing a dry start to the rainy season, particularly in the south. At the same time, people have continued to build into places known to burn regularly. The result of this confluence of events has been fires deeply affecting many thousands of people up and down the state.

California residents are largely aware that not all fire is bad, and that many of our ecosystems thrive on regular fire. It's not something that we should, or ever could, hope to fully contain. Our only chance is learning, really and truly and finally learning,

to live with it.

In that vein, the state must look long and hard at some of the steps that have been the hardest to take – not building in places that are particularly fire-prone and matching building codes with a modern understanding of wildfire risk – if there is to be any hope of alleviating the human suffering these fires cause.

We are being invited to free ourselves from the notion that wildfire destruction is random and unpredictable, and that therefore there is nothing to be done about it. As the fire season in California gets longer, the winds worsen and wildfires move into areas once deemed too urbanized to burn, maybe the knowledge about what makes houses burn can finally be put to good use.

[The writer is Academic Coordinator, California Institute for Water Resources, University of California, Division of Agriculture and Natural Resources]

Will artificial intelligence become conscious?

SUBHASH KAK
theconversation.com

Forget about today's modest incremental advances in artificial intelligence, such as the increasing abilities of cars to drive themselves. Waiting in the wings might be a groundbreaking development: a machine that is aware of itself and its surroundings, and that could take in and process massive amounts of data in real time. It could be sent on dangerous missions, into space or combat. In addition to driving people around, it might be able to cook, clean, do laundry – and even keep humans company when other people aren't nearby.

A particularly advanced set of machines could replace humans at literally all jobs. That would save humanity from workaday drudgery, but it would also shake many societal foundations. A life of no work and only play may turn out to be a dystopia.

Conscious machines would also raise troubling legal and ethical problems. Would a conscious machine be a "person" under law and be liable if its actions hurt someone, or if something goes wrong? To think of a more frightening scenario, might these machines rebel against humans and wish to eliminate us altogether? If yes, they represent the culmination of evolution.

As a professor of electrical engineering and computer science who works in machine learning and quantum theory, I can say that researchers are divided on whether these sorts of hyperaware machines will ever exist. There's also debate about whether machines could or should be called "conscious" in the way we think of humans, and even some animals, as conscious. Some of the questions have to do with technology; others have to do with what consciousness actually is.

IS AWARENESS ENOUGH?

Most computer scientists think that consciousness is a characteristic that will emerge as technology develops. Some believe that consciousness involves accepting new information, storing and retrieving old information and cognitive processing of it all into perceptions and actions. If that's right, then one day machines will indeed be the ultimate consciousness. They'll be able to gather more information than a human, store more than many libraries, access vast databases in milliseconds and compute all of it into decisions more complex, and yet more logical, than any person ever could.

On the other hand, there are physicists and philosophers who say there's something more about human behavior that cannot be computed by a machine. Creativity, for example, and the sense of freedom people possess don't appear to come from logic or calculations.



Yet these are not the only views of what consciousness is, or whether machines could ever achieve it.

QUANTUM VIEWS

Another viewpoint on consciousness comes from quantum theory, which is the deepest theory of physics. According to the orthodox Copenhagen Interpretation, consciousness and the physical world are complementary aspects of the same reality. When a person observes, or experiments on, some aspect of the physical world, that person's conscious interaction causes discernible change. Since it takes consciousness as a given and no attempt is made to derive it from physics, the Copenhagen Interpretation may be called the "big-C" view of consciousness, where it is a thing that exists by itself – although it requires brains to become real. This view was popular with the pioneers of quantum theory such as Niels Bohr, Werner Heisenberg and Erwin Schrödinger.

The interaction between consciousness and matter leads to paradoxes that remain unresolved after 80 years of debate. A well-known example of this is the paradox of Schrödinger's cat, in which a cat is placed in a situation that results in it being equally likely to survive or die – and the act of observation itself is what makes the outcome certain.

The opposing view is that consciousness emerges from biology, just as biology itself emerges from chemistry which, in turn, emerges from physics. We call this less expansive concept of consciousness "little-C." It agrees with the neuroscientists' view that the processes of the mind are identical to states and processes of the brain. It also agrees with a more recent interpretation of quantum theory motivated by an attempt to rid it of paradoxes, the Many Worlds Interpretation, in which observers are a part of the mathematics of physics.

Philosophers of science believe that these modern quantum physics views of consciousness have parallels in ancient philosophy. Big-C is like the

theory of mind in Vedanta – in which consciousness is the fundamental basis of reality, on par with the physical universe.

Little-C, in contrast, is quite similar to Buddhism. Although the Buddha chose not to address the question of the nature of consciousness, his followers declared that mind and consciousness arise out of emptiness or nothingness.

BIG-C AND SCIENTIFIC DISCOVERY

Scientists are also exploring whether consciousness is always a computational process. Some scholars have argued that the creative moment is not at the end of a deliberate computation. For instance, dreams or visions are supposed to have inspired Elias Howe's 1845 design of the modern sewing machine, and August Kekulé's discovery of the structure of benzene in 1862.

A dramatic piece of evidence in favor of big-C consciousness existing all on its own is the life of self-taught Indian mathematician Srinivasa Ramanujan, who died in 1920 at the age of 32. His notebook, which was lost and forgotten for about 50 years and published only in 1988, contains several thousand formulas, without proof in different areas of mathematics, that were well ahead of their time. Furthermore, the methods by which he found the formulas remain elusive. He himself claimed that they were revealed to him by a goddess while he was asleep.

The concept of big-C consciousness raises the questions of how it is related to matter, and how matter and mind mutually influence each other. Consciousness alone cannot make physical changes to the world, but perhaps it can change the probabilities in the evolution of quantum processes. The act of observation can freeze and even influence atoms' movements, as Cornell physicists proved in 2015. This may very well be an explanation of how matter and mind interact.

MIND AND SELF-ORGANIZING SYSTEMS

It is possible that the phenomenon of consciousness requires a self-organizing system, like the brain's physical structure. If so, then current machines will come up short.

Scholars don't know if adaptive self-organizing machines can be designed to be as sophisticated as the human brain; we lack a mathematical theory of computation for systems like that. Perhaps it's true that only biological machines can be sufficiently creative and flexible. But then that suggests people should – or soon will – start working on engineering new biological structures that are, or could be, conscious.

[The writer is Regents Professor of Electrical and Computer Engineering, Oklahoma State University]

Kalimpong midfielder eagerly awaits his time to shine in professional football

SAURABH RAI

KALIMPONG, 13 DEC:

Many talented footballers from our region have disappeared from the scene over the years. Of the many problems which we have, the lack of professional clubs is one major reason for this grim reality.

Players from the hills of Sikkim and Darjeeling need to work extra hard to get themselves noticed by bigger clubs across the country. For some the wait is a never ending process. They keep on playing in the dusty fields of the hills and with time compromise with the fact that the next step is impossible for them.

23-year-old Dewasis George Rai is one talented midfielder who is currently playing in Tripura League for Jewels Association. He is one such example of a player from the hills waiting for his chance. Every person who follows football in Kalimpong will agree that Dewasis is an exceptional player.

Born in Algarah, near Kalimpong, to Milan Rai and Deborah Rai, Dewasis started playing football at an early age. He started schooling from St George School where he started honing his football skills. Dewasis then moved to SUMI in Kalimpong and completed his class XII. During his time at the school known for its

football, he participated in many tournaments along with the Subroto Mukherjee Bengal Region where they reached the finals.

Dewasis has also played for many clubs in Kalimpong including Share FC with whom he won the Sukna Gold Cup in 2014. He was awarded the Player of the Tournament Trophy as well.

This youngster from Algarah also had a good campaign with Todo FC in the Arunachal Pradesh Super League. Dewasis moved to Kolkata and played a season with Police AC in the League there. He has also played in the prestigious Santosh Trophy

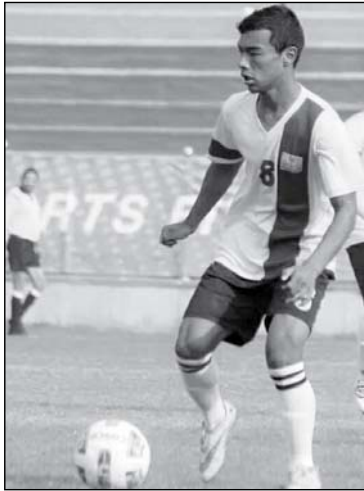
representing Tripura along with ONGC Cup and North East Tomchon Football Tournament.

In the opening edition of the Siliguri Premier League held this year in May, Dewasis was declared the Highest Scorer. He also helped his team Madhur Milan Sangh to win the League.

"I have always worked hard and played football to the best of ability but sometimes it gets frustrating as I have not been able to take that step into professional football. Soon I will have to think about other options as time is running out but for now I will keep on trying," says Dewasis.

When asked about singing being the other option as he has a very good voice, Dewasis shrugs it off and says, "I sing just for fun but football is what I live for and will be the happiest if I can make it as a professional footballer some day."

As mentioned earlier, there are many like Dewasis across the Darjeeling hills and Sikkim who are talented but have limited options to look forward to. It is hard for them but the passion these boys have for football triumphs over everything else and they keep playing the beautiful game.



Rs 305-cr central aid for calamity-hit Manipur, Kerala, Mizoram

NEW DELHI, DEC 13

(PTI): A total of Rs 305.14 crore has been sanctioned as central assistance to Manipur, Kerala and Mizoram, which faced various natural calamities in 2016-17, the home ministry said.

A decision to grant the amount was taken at a high-level meeting chaired by Home Minister Rajnath Singh and attended by Finance Minister Arun Jaitley, Agriculture Minister Radha Mohan Singh and Union Home Secretary Rajiv Gauba among others.

The central assistance has been approved to Ma-

nipur and Mizoram affected floods and landslides, and drought-hit Kerala, according to a home ministry statement.

The committee approved an assistance of Rs 130.65 crore from the National Disaster Relief Fund (NDRF) to Manipur.

The committee approved Rs 125.47 crore to Kerala -- Rs 112.05 crore from the NDRF and Rs 13.42 crore from the National Rural Drinking Water Programme (NRDWP).

It also approved Rs 49.02 crore for Mizoram -- Rs 42.77 crore from the NDRF and Rs 6.25 crore from the NRDWP.

WB, Centre deny tapping Roy's phones, HC disposes of his plea

NEW DELHI, DEC 13

(PTI): The Delhi High Court today said there was no material to accept the claim of BJP politician Mukul Roy that his mobile phones were being tapped by the police of West Bengal, as the state and the Centre have denied the charge.

Justice Vibhu Bakhru arrived at the finding after perusing the affidavits filed by the Centre and West Bengal government which have "unequivocally" denied any interception of the mobile numbers of Roy, who recently joined the BJP leaving the Trinamool Congress.



The Centre and state government's affidavits contained letters of the Union Home Ministry, DGP and IG of West Bengal, Kolkata Police Commissioner and CID of Kolkata stating that no such action has been authorised or taken.

"In view of the unequivocal stand of the respondents (Centre and West Bengal), the court finds no material to accept that mobile numbers of the petitioner (Roy) were being monitored," the court said.

It, however, granted

him liberty to approach it again if he gets any evidence to substantiate his apprehension that his phones were being tapped.

Roy had sought a CBI probe into the alleged tapping and surveillance of his mobile numbers by the state police.

After perusing the affidavits which were filed in sealed covers in response to the plea, the court said since there was no secret information in them, they will be taken on record.

Roy had alleged in his plea that while he was in West Bengal, he always found that the local police were monitoring his movements.

The plea had claimed that similar apprehensions were put on record by several other persons including Union minister and BJP leader Babul Supriyo.



Training for livestock farmers of Arunachal Pradesh at ICAR

SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 13 DEC:

ICAR-National Organic Farming Research Institute [NOFRI], Tadong in collaboration with Animal Husbandry & Veterinary Department, Government of Arunachal Pradesh conducted a daylong field training for livestock farmers of Lohit district, Arunachal Pradesh today at ICAR-NOFRI in Tadong.

Twenty-two livestock farmers led by Senior Veterinary Officer, Lohit District, Arunachal Pradesh attended the field training.

Senior Scientist, ICAR-NOFRI, Dr Rafiqul Islam, who was also the coordinator of the training program, welcomed Joint Director, Dr RK Avasthe, Scientists and livestock farmers from Lohit District, Arunachal Pradesh and briefed about the aim of the training programme.

Dr Avasthe congratulated the participants for getting the opportunity to be a part of the training programme. He highlighted the role of organic agriculture in general and organic animal husbandry in particular in maintaining human health, generating livelihood opportunities,

reducing environmental pollutions and conservation of soil health for sustainable societal development by adopting organic package of practices in their farming.

He also enlightened the House about the role of farm yard manure for enriching soil nutrients and stressed upon the farmers to go for backyard poultry and piggery farming for strengthening the rural economy.

Senior Scientist, Animal Reproduction, Dr Rafiqul Islam, Senior Scientist, Horticulture, Dr Ashish Yadav, Scientist-Agroforestry, Dr Matbar Singh, Scientist, Soil Science, Shaon Kumar Das, Scientist, Plant Pathology, Dr Shweta Singh and Scientist, Plant Pathology, Dr Chandramani Raj also addressed the house.

Senior Veterinary Officer, Lohit District, Arunachal Pradesh, Dr Anthoni Pertin, proposed the vote of thanks to the Joint Director and team of Scientists at ICAR-NOFRI, Sikkim for the successful conduct of the field training on organic farming. He reiterated that all measures will be taken to convey the technologies learnt to other farmers of nearby areas in Lohit District.

When Aiyar's 'neech' taunt reaches a Gujarat village

SOURAV ROY BARMAN

CHHAPI (GUJARAT), DEC 13 (PTI):

A winter afternoon in Chhapi has all the components that go into the making of an idyllic countryside.

The gentle warmth of the sun, a maze of alleys, women running household errands, men throwing furrowed looks at restless children and five young men staring blankly into the distance.

The buzz of the assembly elections only a day away seems distant.

The occasional goods train cuts through the somnolence only for the hush to descend again.

A young man idly takes out a newspaper, others peer into it.

"Modi is a low caste: Mani Shankar Aiyar", screams the headline of the leading Gujarati language daily.

"See what this leader said. Ye theek nahi hai (this is not right)," says Bhavesh Kumar, carelessly folding the newspaper and throwing it on a heap of cartons.

The other four men nod, quite uncaring of the twist the paper has given to the Congress leader's statement by linking it to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's caste.

Away from prime time news and its fulminating anchors, news that Aiyar called Modi a 'neech aadmi' (low life) has finally reached Chhapi, which falls in Vadgam constituency of north Gujarat's Banaskantha district.

The constituency votes tomorrow in the second and final phase of the assembly elections.

The young men laugh on hearing that the comment occupied prime time slots across TV channels, prompting the Congress to suspend the senior politician.

Then, an element of seriousness sets in, the ennuï giving way to searching questions and worries about the future.

"If only this much time was spent discussing the lack of jobs even for qualified people like us," Bhawesh laments.



Bhawesh, a Dalit, is the son of a government school teacher. He runs a mobile repairing shop in the Chhapi village market, abutting the local railway station.

The 29-year-old has completed MA (Master of Arts) as well as B.Ed. (Bachelor of Education).

"I had scored over 80 per cent in the Class 12 board exam. Subsequently, I also completed the Primary Teachers Certificate (PTC) course. But then the government made TET (Teachers Eligibility Test) compulsory and my PTC course had no value anymore," he says.

TET was made mandatory for recruitment of teachers in many states after the enactment of the Right to Education Act.

"I have taken the test thrice but missed out for a few points. I don't like it here (running a shop) anymore," Bhawesh says, frustration writ large on his face.

After paying a rent of Rs 1,500 and other establishment costs, he is left with just Rs 8,000-9,000 every month.

He says the growing popularity of 4G high-speed mobile services has robbed him off a major source of income as people don't flock to him anymore to get songs or movies downloaded.

Kaushik Rawat, Bhawesh's friend, seconds him.

Rawat's bloodshot eyes are a clear giveaway that he is inebriated,

not very surprising in a dry state with a flourishing black market.

Rawats are classified as a Scheduled Caste community in Gujarat.

"Look at you, you are 29 and single. But alcohol has turned you into a 40-year-old. Who will marry you now?" Bhawesh and Sanjay Thakore playfully admonish their friend, who works at one of the many diamond polishing units in Vadgam for a paltry pay.

The much-touted Gujarat model of development seem to have skipped this part of Gujarat completely, the youths say.

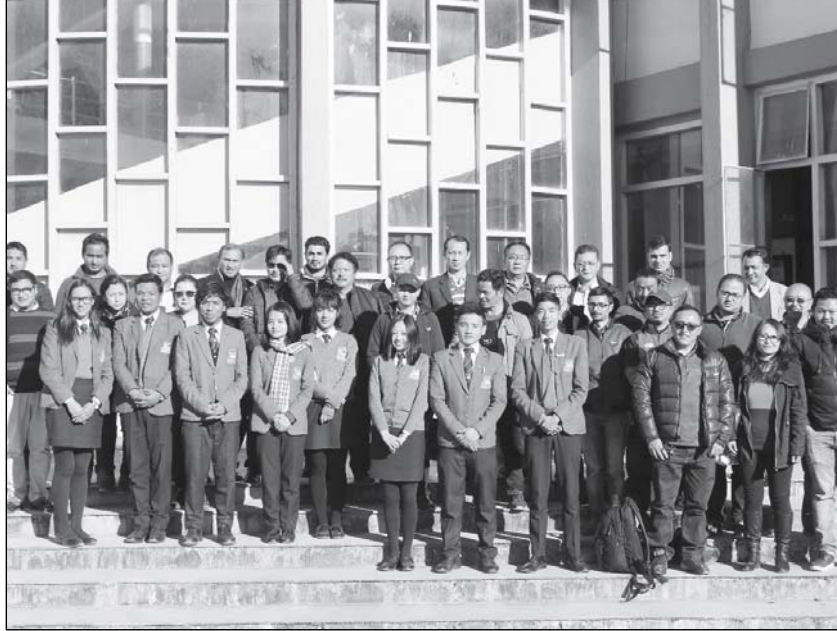
"In dry state Gujarat, it's not alcohol, but jobs that seem to have dried up," quips Bhawesh.

They are not first-time voters and elections do not excite them anymore. Asked about their voting choices, the Dalits in the group say in a matter-of-fact tone that they choose Congress while Thakore says he supports the BJP, "knowing well" that in this Dalit-Muslim dominated area its prospects are not that bright.

The constituency is witnessing a fight between Congress-backed independent candidate Jignesh Mevani and BJP's Vijay Chakravarti.

Congress' Manibhai Vaghela won the last election but has withdrawn this time following the party's decision to back Mevani.

The results for the December 9 and 14 election will be announced on December 18.



Darjeeling Himalaya Initiative organises conversation on Int'l Mountain Day

SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 13 DEC:

Darjeeling Himalaya Initiative along with St. Joseph's College, NP, Darjeeling organized a conversation on International Mountain Day, a press release informs.

DHI president Praful Rai presented IMI and DHI to the house of 32 academics, civil servants and civil society representatives along with an equal number of college students of St Joseph's College highlighting the IMI vision and

activities and the role DHI has played.

ATREE which is an institutional member of IMI simultaneously held a farmers conclave in Sukhiapokhri with more than 70 marginal mountain farmers from Darjeeling District where they discussed issues and coping strategies in the backdrop of changes that we see happening in the region.

Development Initiative for Sustainable Advancement (DISA), Tri-

pura IMI chapter held special lectures by eminent speakers on the IMD theme for this year.

IMI Himachal Chapter was celebrated jointly with the Himalayan Forest research Institute based in Shimla, Dr Tej Pratap Singh was the key speaker. IMI Uttarakhand held the RS Tolia (IMI Founder Chairman) memorial lecture delivered by Chand Prasad Bhatt on "Himalaya - Sensitivity, Current Threats and Challenges".

Mohun Bagan not taking Shillong Lajong lightly

KOLKATA, DEC 13 (PTI): Plagued by injuries, former champions Mohun Bagan will look to continue their winning run when they face Shillong Lajong FC in a fourth round encounter at the Salt Lake Stadium, here tomorrow.

Having held by Minerva by a last-minute equaliser in the season opener, Mohun Bagan have bounced back in style with a derby win followed by a 5-0 thrashing of Churchill Brothers at Barasat.

But their big win saw four players sustain injuries on the artificial turf of Barasat.

Japanese Yuta Kinowaki (collarbone) has been ruled out for about a month with Arijit Bagui also on the injured list.

Sony Norde and Ansumana Kromah still have hopes of making it into the squad despite training through pain on the eve of the game.

"It is a very important match for us. It is not a major injury (that I have). I believe in myself. With the treatment, I feel much better. I believe I can play tomorrow. I watched Lajong's game. They have a good team. They run a lot," Kromah, who scored and assisted a goal in the last game, said.

The opposition in its rank has Kromah's Liberian countryman Lawrence Doe.

"Lawrence (Doe) is my senior player. When he started playing I was small. He left the country as his style was not liked by national coach. He is an idol," Kromah commented on his fellow Liberian.

Gurjinder Kumar and Shilton D'Silva will look to reprise their roles as Nikhil Kadam has been kept as standby to Norde.



After opening his Mohun Bagan account with a brace, the spotlight will be on Aser Pierrick Dipanda Dicka who welcomes his old side as he steps out onto the pitch to play against the team he won the Golden Boot last season with 11 goals for the Reds.

On the other hand, Shillong Lajong stayed back in Kolkata after their 1-5 defeat at the hands of East Bengal, looking to make amends.

"It was just a bad day in the office for Lajong last game. They had collected six points from first two matches.

They are dangerous from set pieces. They are a well-balanced side."

Praise for the young team came from the opposition camp through Sen who said:"Lajong's 1-5 defeat is not an advantage for us. We need to be cautious and look for three points."

Lajong head coach Bobby Nongbet felt the pressure riding on his head.

"It's a bit of pressure for us against Mohun Bagan considering how they played against Churchill. In the last match, we conceded two early goals in first and second half which

made difficult to come back.

"East Bengal played well. But if Sony Norde and Kromah don't play, it is an advantage for us," the coach said.

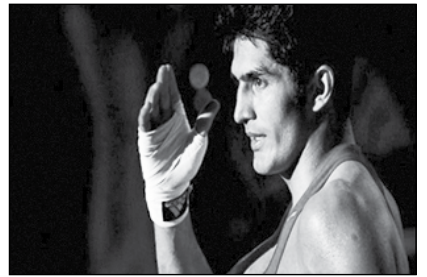
Aiman Al-Hagri is back fit but Abdoulaye Koffi is unavailable for selection as the onus will be on the Lajong defence to keep the star-studded Mohun Bagan attack quiet. Lawrence, who spoke on the eve of the game returned the compliments by Kromah and also praised the 2015 Hero I-League champions.

"For me, Kromah is the most dangerous player. But all are good; they are a very good

side. I respect Sony too -- he is a very good player. For me, no team is different. They are a big team. They are very good we respect them," he said.

Only one point separates the two teams and it will be the Mariners who will be licking their lips to jump back into pole position by securing three points from the matchup.

Action will shift from Barasat back to Salt Lake Stadium and Sen said: "For us, every ground is challenging. Our record in Barasat is good. We are always prepared wherever we play. We have to be consistent."



Will not rush things for world title: Vijender

JAIPUR, DEC 13 (PTI): Just over two years old in the professional circuit, Indian boxing star Vijender Singh says he is quite content with the two belts he has won so far and will not rush things in his quest for a world title next year.

Vijender has fought nine bouts so far, winning all of them, and has collected the WBO Asia Pacific and Oriental Super Middleweight titles.

The 32-year-old will be fighting his 10th bout come December 23 here against Ghana's Ernest Amuzu, putting both his title on the line.

Amuzu has competed in 25 bouts, winning 23 of them -- 21 of them being knockouts.

"He is a good boxer with a record of 23 wins till now. It would be his first fight in Asia and he would be eager to win here. I am excited for this fight as I have sweet memories of the Pink city where I spent a few months as a TC in Rail-

ways," Vijender recalled.

"I am training hard in the ring for my 10th professional fight. I am going to beat him, of course Singh is the King," he quipped.

As for the season ahead, Vijender said he is taking things slow.

"I am in no hurry and want to move ahead slow and steady.

Every bout and every round for me is like a final and hopefully I would be able to have a go at the world title in the next year.

"I want to fight at the right time so that I am able to fulfill my aspirations," said Vijender.

Asked which has been the toughest bout of his professional career, Vijender said the debut was the hardest.

"I had to win it to prove that my decision of turning professional was right. There are always hardships in the beginning but soon I starting anticipating well," he said.

ADB slashes India growth forecast for 2017-18 to 6.7%

NEW DELHI, DEC 13 (PTI): The Asian Development Bank (ADB) today lowered India's economic growth forecast for the current fiscal to 6.7 per cent from 7 per cent, citing lingering effect of demonetisation, transitory challenges to GST and weather-related risks to agriculture.

For 2018-19, India's GDP is projected to grow by 7.3 per cent, slower than ADB's previous estimate of 7.4 per cent.

The downgrade in projection comes weeks after Indian economy reversed a five-quarter slide in GDP growth to clock a 6.3 per cent expansion in July-September.

In its Asian Development Outlook Supplement, ADB said growth is expected to pick up in the remaining two quarters of the fiscal ending March 31, 2018, as "the

government implements measures to ease firms' compliance with the new goods and services tax (GST)".

Growth would also be supported by government efforts to improve balance-sheets of state-owned banks, in part through an augmented bank-recapitalisation programme and a supportive global environment.

"However, owing to tepid growth in the first half of 2017-18, the lingering effects of demonetisation in November 2016, transitory challenges of a new tax system, and some risks to agriculture stemming from a spotty monsoon in 2017", the economic growth forecast has been lowered, it said.

For the next fiscal, the projections have been revised down "mainly because a fast-

er recovery in crude oil prices likely in 2018 will add fiscal pressure, and because private investment growth is expected to remain soft", it said.

ADB said inflation in India remained subdued in the first seven months of 2017-18, averaging 2.7 per cent, with low food prices and demand still not out of the woods because of demonetisation.

"However, inflation has picked up since July 2017 on a price uptick for food, especially pulses and vegetables. Fuel prices also inched up in response to rising global crude oil prices," it said.

The prices, ADB said, are expected to increase further in the remaining months of the fiscal. Inflation is now projected to average 3.7 per cent in 2017-18, some-

what below the 4 per cent earlier forecast.

Prior to ADB, the World Bank reduced India's GDP growth forecast to 7 per cent for 2017-18, from 7.2 per cent estimated earlier, blaming disruptions caused by demonetisation and the implementation of GST, while maintaining at the same time that the economy would claw back to grow at 7.4 per cent by 2019-20.

The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) has also cut its growth projections for India to 6.7 per cent for 2017-18.

Fitch Ratings on December 4 lowered its forecast for India's growth for the current fiscal to 6.7 per cent from the earlier projected 6.9 per cent, saying the rebound was weaker than

expected.

It also cut GDP growth forecast for 2018-19 to 7.3 per cent from 7.4 per cent predicted in its September Global Economic Outlook (GEO).

Moody's last month projected India's real GDP growth to moderate to 6.7 per cent in the current fiscal, from 7.1 per cent last year.

While GST and demonetisation have undermined growth over the near term, real GDP growth will rise to 7.5 per cent in 2018-19 as disruption fades, according to Moody's.

According to Standard & Poor's, India's growth is among the fastest of all investment-grade sovereigns and projected real GDP expansion to average 7.6 per cent over 2017-20.

'Darkness before dawn': nukes, Russia ban leave Olympics reeling

SEOUL, DEC 13 (AFP): Holding the Winter Olympics in a little-known corner of South Korea was never an easy proposition, but a ban on Russia and the latent threat of nuclear war have left the hosts hoping that things can only get better.

With less than two months to go, a flurry of problems beyond their control have created a perfect storm for Pyeongchang Olympics organisers as they gear up for the Games at their mountainside HQ.

Not only has Russia, the top medal-winner at the 2014 Sochi Games, been barred over a major drugs scandal, but North Korea has staged a series of nuclear and missile tests while trading threats of war with the United States.

The Games have also been shorn of stars from the National Hockey League (NHL), which is snubbing the event after the International Olympic Committee refused to pay costs such as travel and insurance.

"Dark clouds are hanging over the 2018 Pyeongchang Winter Olympics," the South's own JoongAng Daily said in an editorial this week.

Public enthusiasm appears limited in the host country, where Unification Minister Cho Myoung-Gyon warned that another North Korean military provocation could deliver a "fatal blow" to the Games.

But as the problems mount, organisers remain defiant. Lee Hee-Beom, president of the organising committee, told AFP: "Minister Cho has gone beyond his brief. I find it regrettable. Sport must be separated from politics."

South Korean President Moon Jae-In lamented that cross-border tensions were "higher than ever" before the Games -- but hoped it was like "the darkness before dawn". "It will be resolved in the end and this is only a matter of time," he added according to Yonhap news agency.

PERSONAL INSULTS



Russia's team was barred by the IOC over a "systematic" doping conspiracy culminating at the Sochi Games, where officials are accused of secretly switching urine samples through a "mousehole" in the laboratory wall.

President Vladimir Putin protested the ban as "political" but said he had no intention of calling a boycott, leaving clean Russian athletes free to compete under the Olympic flag.

Meanwhile, the North's weapons tests and bellicose, sometimes personal, insults between Pyongyang and Washington have sent tensions soaring on the peninsula and the wider region.

North Korea -- just 80 kilometres (50 miles) away from the venues across a heavily armed border -- boycotted the 1988 Seoul Summer Games and is yet to confirm its participation in Pyeongchang.

It has not helped efforts to characterise the Games as a "Peace Olympics".

"The double whammy -- North Korea and the IOC ban on Russia -- dealt telling blows to our efforts to make the Games a success. But these are beyond our control," said Yoo Jong-Sang, a professor of sports studies at Nambu University in Gwangju.

"As to these outside factors, we have nothing to do

but cross our fingers," he added.

At least the bad news stories have meant increased attention for Pyeongchang, which was previously so obscure that it was unfamiliar even to many Koreans.

Its name can also be confused with Pyongyang, so much so that a Kenyan delegate to a 2014 UN conference in Pyeongchang mistakenly flew to the North's capital, where he was interrogated for five hours before being released.

KEEP CALM AND FOCUS

According to Marcus Luer, CEO of Malaysia-based sports marketing agency Total Sports Asia, "No publicity is the only bad publicity" for Pyeongchang.

Any major sporting event usually has "some controversial thing going on prior to it", he added.

"It comes with the territory. These events are so large, a lot of money is at stake, the world is watching... Once the Games are happening, assuming nothing crazy happens, the focus will be on the Games."

Organisers are also upbeat about ticket sales, which have improved since the Olympic torch relay began traversing South Korea in November.

As of Sunday, 586,300 tickets out of a total 1.18 million had been sold in South Korea and abroad, organisers said, or 49.7 percent.

About half of all Olympic tickets are normally sold in the last two months and during the Games, said POCOG spokeswoman Lee Jie-Hye, so "we don't expect any problems with meeting the target".

Luer advised POCOG to focus on the job at hand, and not be distracted by events swirling around the Games.

"At the moment, they just have to stay calm, focus on what they need to be doing and that is running the perfect Games. That is all they can do," he said.

"What happens prior to that around the world is really out of their control," Luer added. "Their job is to host the Games, their job is not to worry about politics."

North Korea tells UN envoy it wants to prevent war

UNITED NATIONS, DEC 13 (AFP): A senior UN official returning from Pyongyang has said that North Korean officials had told him it was important to prevent war but offered no concrete proposal for talks.

"They agreed that it was important to prevent war," Jeffrey Feltman, the UN's political affairs chief, told reporters after briefing the Security Council on his trip.

Feltman met with North Korea's Foreign Minister Ri Yong- Ho and Vice Foreign Minister Pak Myong-Kuk during his visit to Pyongyang over the weekend -- the first by a high-ranking UN official since 2011.

No followup meeting was agreed during the talks, but Feltman said he told the North Koreans that his visit should be seen as "only the beginning" of a new exchange.

"They listened seriously to our arguments," said Feltman, though acknowledging that "they did not offer any type of commitment to us at that point."

"I think they have to reflect on what we said with their own leadership," he added.

The UN under secretary-general for political affairs said he urged Pyongyang to "signal that it was prepared to consider engagement" with world powers and that the United Nations could help.

"Time will tell what was the impact of our discussions, but I think we've left the door ajar," he said.

WASHINGTON, DEC 13 (PTI): Terming it a "momentous step", President Donald Trump signed a USD 692 billion defence budget which will give legislative authority to implement his South Asia strategy and authorise critical missile capabilities to confront North Korea's threats.

Trump signed the budget at the White House yesterday while noting that the National Defence Authorisation Act (NDAA) could not have come at a more opportune or important time.

The NDAA authorises USD 626 billion of the base budget resources for the Department of



Defence and the national security programmes of the Department of Energy, providing an additional USD 66 billion for Overseas Contingency Operations.

It approves USD 26.2

billion for shipbuilding, including multi-year procurements of Virginia class submarines, USD 10.1 billion to procure 90 Joint Strike Fighter aircraft and USD 2.2 billion for Army ground combat vehicles.

The budget would give legislative authority to implement his South Asia strategy and authorises critical missile capabilities to confront threats posed by North Korea.

Trump had sought a major role for India in bringing peace in Afghanistan and ruled out a hasty withdrawal of troops from the war-torn nation while announcing his new Afghanistan and South Asia policy in August.

"This legislation represents a momentous step toward rebuilding our military and securing the future for our children," he said.

He rued that the military had undergone a series of deep budget cuts in recent years that have severely impacted its readiness, shrunk capabilities, and placed substantial burdens on warfighters.

"Today, with the signing of this defence bill, we accelerate the process of fully restoring America's military might," he said, adding that this legislation will enhance readiness, expand and modernise forces and help provide service members with the tools that they need to fight and to win.

"We will fight and win. But hopefully, with this, we won't have to fight because people will not be wanting to fight with us. It authorises funding for our continued campaign to obliterate the Islamic State. As you know, we've won in Syria, we've won in Iraq. But they spread to other areas and we're

getting them as fast as they spread," Trump said.

"We've had more success with the ISIS in the last eight months than the entire previous administration has had during its entire term," Trump said.

NDAA-2018 approves missile defence capabilities to create maximum pressure on the vile dictatorship in North Korea, he said.

"It upgrades our Ground Combat Vehicles, allows for the purchase of new Joint Strike Fighter aircraft, and paves the way for beautiful new Virginia-class submarines - the finest in the world," Trump said.



US national security adviser HR McMaster has said the international community is facing its "last best chance" to avoid military confrontation over North Korea's nuclear ambitions. Donald Trump's top security aide was appearing on stage in Washington DC alongside his British counterpart, Theresa May's national security adviser Mark Sedwill. It was the first time the countries' national security advisers have spoken in public together. Despite tensions between London and Washington over Trump's Britain First tweets and his decision to recognise Jerusalem as the capital of Israel, the two stressed the strength of the relationship.

US ready for talks with N Korea without preconditions: Tillerson

WASHINGTON, DEC 13 (PTI): The US is ready to talk to North Korea over its nuclear disarmament without preconditions, Secretary of State Rex Tillerson has said amid North Korean leader Kim Jong-un's assertion to make his country the "world's strongest nuclear power".

The offer to North Korea comes amid crippling sanctions on the country and just two weeks after another provocative intercontinental ballistic missile test by the reclusive nation.

It also marks a shift from Tillerson's own previous comments that the US would not negotiate with North Korea and that it would only talk once the regime was ready to address its denuclearisation.

"We've said from the diplomatic side we're ready to talk anytime North Korea would like to talk, and we're ready to have the first meeting without precondition. Let's just meet," Tillerson said.

He was speaking on 'Meeting the Foreign Policy Challenges of 2017 and Beyond' organised by the 2017 Atlantic Council- Korea Foundation Forum.

"And then we can begin to lay out a map, a roadmap of what we might be willing to work towards," he said.

The offer stands in contrast to President Donald Trump's warnings that talks have failed and that Tillerson was wasting his time.

Tillerson said it was not workable to demand that North Korea give up its weapons before talks begin.

"It's not realistic to say we're only going to talk if you come to the table ready to give up your program. They have too much invested in it. And the President is very realistic about that as well," he said, in response to a question after delivering his

remarks.

Tillerson's comments came as North Korean leader Kim vowed to make North Korea the "world's strongest nuclear power".

However, the White House was quick to assert that there had been no change in the views of the president on North Korea.

"The President's views on North Korea have not changed.

North Korea is acting in an unsafe way not only toward Japan, China, and South Korea, but the entire world. North Korea's actions are not good for anyone and certainly not good for North Korea," White House Press Secretary Sarah Sanders said in a statement to the press.

The secretary of state made clear that full North Korean nuclear disarmament would be the ultimate goal of substantive negotiations.

He argued that containment was not an option, as an impoverished North Korea would seek to earn money by selling its nuclear weapons on the black market.

"Because we're dealing with a new leader in North Korea that no one's ever engaged with. And he clearly is not like his father nor is he like his grandfather, and we don't know a whole lot about what it will be like to engage with him," he said.

"I have to understand how do they process, how do they think. Because getting to an agreement, as all of us know, in negotiations means a willingness to talk about a lot of things," he said.

However, he then laid down one condition and said there should be a "period of quiet" in which such preliminary talks could take place.

"If there was any condition at all to this, it's that, look, it's going to be tough to talk if in the middle of our talks, you decide to test another device. It's going to be difficult to talk if in the middle of our talks, you decide to fire another one off. So I think they clearly understand that if we're going to talk, we have to have a period of quiet," Tillerson said.

North Korea, he noted, can't be treated like other nuclear weapons states.

"Many people have asked the question of, well, why can't you live with a containment strategy? You lived with it with Russia; you lived with it with China; you lived with it with others," he said.

"The difference is that the past behaviour of North Korea, it's clear to us that they would not just use the possession of nuclear weapons as a deterrent. This would become a commercial activity for them. Because we already see elements of it in the commercial marketplace. And in a world we live in today where our greatest threats are non-state actors, we simply cannot accept that," Tillerson said.

North Korea this year increased the pace of its missile programme. Since February, Pyongyang has fired off 23 missiles.

On November 29, the North Korean leader said that his country had achieved full nuclear statehood after what he said was the successful test of a new missile capable of striking anywhere in the United States.

Fears of a catastrophic conflict between the US and North Korea spiked as the leaders of the two nations taunted each other, with the US President calling Kim "Rocket Man."

Democrat wrests Alabama Senate seat, outcome seen as setback for Prez Trump

WASHINGTON, DEC 13 (PTI): Doug Jones today became the first Democrat in 25 years to win a Senate seat from the staunchly Republican state of Alabama, defeating President Donald Trump-backed candidate Roy Moore, whose campaign was dogged by allegations that he had sexually abused teenagers.

Moore's defeat marks a major political blow to Trump, who endorsed the Alabama Republican and held a rally on his behalf. Although most national Republicans rushed to distance themselves from Moore following the allegations against him, Trump reaffirmed his support to the firebrand conservative through tweets and public statements.

With all counties reporting, the Alabama Secretary of State John Merrill reported Jones with 49.92 per cent of the vote, and Moore with 48.38 per cent of the vote.

"Thank You Alabama!" Jones, 63, tweeted.

But Moore has so far refused to concede.

"When the vote is this close ... it's not over," the 70-year-old told supporters after Jones declared victory in a special election.



porters after Jones declared victory in a special election.

The margin of victory is well above the half a percentage point which would have triggered a recount.

The new Senator would be sworn in next year.

This is for the first time in a quarter century that a Democrat has won a Senate seat in a Republican stronghold of Alabama.

The unexpected victory of Jones also narrows the Republican majority in the 100-member Senate to 51-49.

During the brutal campaign, Moore faced allegations that he had molested or pursued relationships with teenage girls in the 1970s when he was in his 30s and an assistant district attorney.

Trump congratulated Jones for his "hard fought" victory.

"Congratulations to Doug Jones on a hard-fought victory," Trump tweeted.

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BTS TO BID US FANS 'HAPPY NEW YEAR' ON 'DICK CLARK'

BTs will celebrate New Year's Eve by making a guest appearance at the annual US television special "Dick Clark's New Year's Rockin' Eve."

Big Hit Entertainment on Wednesday confirmed the boy band's appearance on the show via its official SNS pages. The show, created by the legendary television personality Dick Clark, is broadcast live from New York City's Times Square, and prominently covers the annual dropping of the Times Square Ball.

The show also features live and pre-recorded performances by popular musicians, one of which this year will be by BTS. The group's segment was recorded during its US visit last month, when it became the first K-pop group to perform at the Ameri-



can Music Awards.

BTS' performance at the annu-

al show will be the first appearance by a Korean artist since Psy in 2012,

when he performed the wildly popular "Gangnam Style." Among other musicians to be featured this year are Ciara, Sugarland, Nick Jonas and Camila Cabello.

Having risen to global stardom in 2017, BTS recently became the first Korean artist to rank in the top 10 of Billboard's annual year-end top artist list.

A bit of glamour was added to the boy band's personal life as well, as local media on Wednesday reported that its agency has moved BTS from its current living quarters to Hannam The Hill in Yongsan-gu, Seoul.

The apartment complex is widely referred to as "the most expensive apartment in Seoul," with various business moguls and celebrities making a home there.



THIS DAY IN HISTORY

14TH DECEMBER

1962: The Mariner 2 space probe becomes the first spacecraft to fly by Venus (the probe itself is just over 3ft wide and 12ft long with 16 1/2 feet x 2 1/2 feet solar panels).

1972: Harrison Schmitt and Eugene Cernan become the last men to walk on the moon during the Apollo 17 mission.

1976: President Jimmy Carter refuses to ship India twelve tons of uranium. India claimed that the nuclear fuel was for peaceful purposes - only to generate electricity. However, the U.S. was concerned that India was stockpiling spent nuclear fuel to make plutonium which could be used in nuclear bombs. India tested a nuclear bomb in 1974.

2005: Twenty Chinese died after protesters demonstrated against the building of a power plant. However, Beijing worked hard to suppress the

news in newspapers and even on the Internet, so the Chinese public did not know about it. The official government version that came out four days later was that 300 armed villagers attacked the police in Dongzhou.

2006: Ban Ki-moon is sworn in as the U.N. secretary general at a ceremony in New York. He will be taking up his post as the eighth secretary general on January 1st, 2007. He told ambassadors he would be a 'bridge-builder,' leading by example as he sought to restore trust in a U.N. that needed to be "dynamic and courageous."

2008: Iraqi journalist, Muntadhar al-Zaidi, threw shoes at President Bush during a news conference on Sunday evening in Baghdad, where Bush was making a farewell visit. Al-Zaidi missed the President, screamed in Arabic: "This is a farewell ... you dog!" and "You killed the Iraqis!" He was pinned on the ground by security personnel and dragged away.

KENDRICK LAMAR EXPLAINS WHAT IT WAS LIKE WORKING WITH TAYLOR SWIFT



Lamar provided a guest verse for 2015's 'Bad Blood'

Kendrick Lamar has described what it was like collaborating with Taylor Swift on 'Bad Blood'.

Lamar contributed a guest verse to Swift's '1989' single in 2015 and spoke about the team-up this week on a radio show.

"You gotta have great business mind and integrity and a great team," Lamar said of the artists he'd be open to collaborating with.

"The number one thing we talk about is how does the music sound, how far... in the pop world is the sound. So the first thing is, let's hear the music because the music is going to dictate the idea and the concept of where can we take this idea." Speaking about working with Swift on 'Bad Blood', Lamar said: "We both was in LA, so I came to her studio session. She had

the music up and I started writing and jumped in the booth and we laid it down."

"With this particular record, it was me just vibing and catching her lyrics," Lamar added. "I didn't want to get into her head too crazy. I just wanted to have my own inspiration and see where it took it... Fortunately, the vibe was right and it didn't take too many takes and we was really locked in on the chemistry and we really felt what was going on when I was in the booth."

Meanwhile, U2 frontman Bono recently spoke about working with Kendrick Lamar, describing the rapper as "righteous".



BROTHERLY SUPPORT: Joe Jonas showed up at the premiere of Brother Nick Jonas's film Jumanji: Welcome to the Jungle in Hollywood.

PRIYANKA CHOPRA RECEIVES THE MOTHER TERESA MEMORIAL AWARD FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE

Global star Priyanka Chopra has been honored with this year's Mother Teresa Memorial award for social justice. The phenomenal star received the award for her contribution towards lending her support to social causes. Her recent visit to Syria, where she met and interacted with refugee children is just proof of the effort that she puts in to make a difference. The actor, who is UNICEF's Goodwill Ambassador and is known for supporting various benevolent activities.

Her mother, Madhu Chopra, received the award on her behalf saying, "I humbly accept the award on her behalf. As a



mother, I am immensely proud to have a child who is so compassionate and has so much kindness in her. She exemplifies the fact the more you give the more you get. Even as a child, she was influ-

enced by Mother Teresa and has been supporting Prem Niwas in Bareilly."

Madhu Chopra added, "It is justifiable for her to receive this honorable award and I am immensely proud of her. I'm thankful and I'm sure she is humbled that her efforts have been recognized by the foundation that believes in helping the needy and supporting the deprived and raising funds for those who are impoverished."

In the past, famous personalities such as Kiran Bedi, Anna Hazare, Oscar Fernandes, Malala Yousafzai, Sushmita Sen and more have been honored with the award.

THE DAY AHEAD

ARIES: Communication with family members and the special person in your life could be frustrating today. Either you aren't in accord or you keep missing each other. Don't be frustrated. It's the planetary energy running a little interference. By tomorrow this aspect will have passed and you'll once again find yourselves on common ground.

TAURUS: Plans for travel or advancing your education could be on your mind. Your excitement might keep you from focusing on whatever tasks you have to do. Don't worry about it. Your steadfastness will enable you to get your tasks completed in spite of anything that may distract you.

Either that, or the people around you will keep reminding you of your responsibilities!

GEMINI: Thoughts of romance and dreams of a wonderful evening with that special someone are foiled by work that needs to be done right away. This might concern finances. It could involve a lot of deep thought on subjects that don't particularly interest you. Don't let this get you down. Get through the chores and then plan your evening. It won't be too late to have fun.

CANCER: You might be planning to attend a social event today. You're looking forward to it. Paperwork could take up so much of your time today that you

wonder if you can make it. The paperwork doesn't seem to be that urgent. Do as much as you can and then take off and go to your party. You deserve it.

LEO: Frantic communications involving a project or family affairs could have you feeling scattered and unfocused. Too many important concerns have hit you at once. It can be confusing, but take them one at a time and don't be tempted to try to accomplish everything at once. Your mind is steady and analytical today. Go with the flow and all will get done.

VIRGO: Good news about money could fill you with ideas about how to spend it, particularly on

your home. Maybe you need new furniture or have been thinking about painting or redecorating. This is a great time to do it as long as you're careful and not to let your exuberance get the better of you. You don't want to have to repaint or take unwanted furniture back to the store.

LIBRA: Your mind is sharp and ready to take on anything thrown your way. Family members or friends could pick up on this pretty quickly, so don't be surprised if they come to you for help and advice. You'll probably give a lot of it today, so be prepared. Paperwork might be a bit overwhelming. As long as you take it one step at a time, you'll

get it all done.

SCORPIO: Books and magazines on psychic, spiritual, or metaphysical matters could take up a lot of your attention today. Your inclination could be to let your routine tasks go in favor of continuing to read calling all your friends to tell them what you've learned. Save it for this evening. You're too conscientious to let your work slide, and you'd feel derelict in your duty if you did.

SAGITTARIUS: A fairly recent goal that you've set for yourself might seem a bit overwhelming. You might wonder if you'll get it done. Though you could easily become distracted, you can focus

when you try, and this is what you should do now. Finances may need attention, and possibly paperwork, but this is only routine work.

CAPRICORN: Today you should feel especially optimistic and enthusiastic about life. You'll have a lot of great ideas about what to do with your day, but unfortunately, your ability to put these plans into motion will probably be curtailed by other responsibilities. This could have you champing at the bit all day, but what the heck? Tonight you can do whatever you want!

AQUARIUS: Discussions about religion could come up during your day. A recent rush of intu-

itive revelations could cause you to want to expound on your beliefs, but this could backfire. This isn't the day to try to convince others of anything. This also isn't a good day to think in terms of getting away for a while. Kick around a few ideas, but make definite plans later.

PISCES: Friends or a group with which you're affiliated might run into financial difficulties and ask for your advice. It wouldn't be a good idea to give it, at least not today. Your thoughts aren't as focused as they should be. You might use a little intuition to guide you. Your ability to see under the surface is good now.

LOCKHORNS

- HOEST & REINER



ARCTIC CIRCLE

- HULLATT



BABY BLUES

- KIRKMAN & SCOTT

