



SummitTIMES

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ON TOP OF THE NEWS

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MHA sets up panel to look into 'racial discrimination' faced by NE people

NEW DELHI, JUN 7 (PTI):

The Centre has set up a three-member committee for monitoring and redressal of grievances relating to the alleged racial discrimination faced by the people from the northeastern region residing in different parts of the country.

According to an order issued by the Ministry of Home Affairs, the committee comprises Satyendra Garg, joint secretary (Northeast) in the ministry, Alana Golmei, secretary, Northeast Support Centre, New Delhi and Mizum Nyodu, assistant professor, Law Faculty, Delhi University.

The panel has been constituted for monitoring and redressal of issues/grievances relating to the racial discrimination faced by the northeastern people residing in different parts of the country, the order said.

Any person or group of persons or communities hailing from the Northeast who claim to be victims or have faced any act of racial abuse, racial atrocities, racial violence, racial discrimination in any part of the country, can send their complaints, suggestions or grievances at a designated e-mail: ne.complaints@mha.gov.in

The committee has been established following an order of the Supreme Court after a writ petition was filed in the wake of a series of attacks on people from the Northeast, including the death of a student from Arunachal Pradesh, Nido Tania, in Delhi.

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Women married to non-Sikkimese can now register land in their name

SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 07 JUN:

Sikkimese women married to non-Sikkimese can now get land registered in their name as per a notification issued by Land Revenue and Disaster Management Department today. Earlier, Sikkimese women married to non-Sikkimese only had rights to landed property already reg-

istered in their name prior to marriage.

While this comes as a salve for women married to non-Sikkimese men, they still do not have the right to transfer this property in the name of their offsprings, who derive their identity from their non-Sikkimese father.

The notification states, "notwithstanding para 22 of the Sikkim Registration of Docu-

ments Rules 1930, any document regarding transfer of property which has been presented for registration by a Sikkimese women married to a non-Sikkimese, may ordinarily be registered and the ownership of the property on her demise shall be governed as per the existing rules and regulations prevailing in the state."

The state government in 2008 had also passed the Sikkim Succession Act, 2008, but it is not yet notified. Under this Act, daughters will have an equal right to claim the share of the property of her parent and what is more, even divorced and abandoned wives having Sikkim Subject can claim equal share of her husband's property.

578m tunnel to bypass slide zone inaugurated at Theng

WANGCHUK BHUTIA
MANGAN, 07 JUN:

Minister of State for Defence, Dr Subhash Ramras Bhamre, today inaugurated the Theng Tunnel on the Chungthang-Mangan axis of the North Sikkim Highway. The MoS was hosted by Project Swastik of the Border Roads Organization under whose watch the tunnel has been constructed.

The 578m tunnel, constructed by Aired Engineer Private Company (Turnkey Projects) of Gurgaon, has been built at the cost of Rs 41.87 crores.

The tunnel by-passes the landslide-prone zone and difficult terrain of Theng Bhir, a problematic spot which connects various border posts and tourist destinations like Gurudongmar, Yumthang, Lachen and Lachung.

Dr Bhamre was accompanied



by Director General [BRO] Lieutenant General Harpal Singh, District Collector [North], Karma R

Bonpo and other officials.

The construction was initiated in 2016 and completed in May

2018, Project Swastik informs.

The tunnel was also a turn to pg02

SDF lashes out against opposition, calls Bhaichung 'Shikhandi'

REBYNA RANA/NITESH
R PRADHAN

GANGTOK, 07 JUN:

Sikkim Democratic Front today slammed the opposition for "giving misleading and foolish comments" against the Chief Minister and his government on various issues.

While addressing a

turn to pg02



GMC bags award for efficient waste management and source segregation

SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 07 JUN:

In an assessment report of the performance of 20 'Forum Cities that Segregate' released by the Centre of Science and Environment [CSE] today, Gangtok Municipal Corporation bagged the award for efficient waste management and source segregation. The award was presented at a function held at New Delhi today, a press release informs.

GMC Deputy Commissioner, Sonam Wangchuk Bhutia, and GMC Bazaar Officer, Atish Rai, received the award on behalf of the city.

The CSE 2017-18 assessment report of the performance of 20 Forum Cities assessed performance on parameters which included segregation at source, collection, transportation, waste processing, adoption of decentralised sys-



tems, the inclusion of informal sector and the enforcement of SWM bye-laws and Plastic Waste Management Rules, 2016.

To promote and implement source-segregation and decentralized model of waste management, CSE has been working with cities to advance the work and create a movement in the country on source-segregation.

CSE had launched the 'Forum of Cities that Segregate' on 12 Dec, 2017.

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Low pressure to trigger...

contd from pg01

Odisha from June 9.

It has forecast normal monsoon this year. Its scheduled date of arrival in the Gangetic West Bengal is June 9 and the formation of the low pressure has made conditions favourable for it to keep the date.

Under the influence of the weather system, the southwest Monsoon is likely to advance into some parts of Odisha, West Bengal and Sikkim and most parts of Bay of Bengal from June 9 to June 11, it said.

The weatherman said that rainfall activity will increase over West Bengal from June 8 and isolated heavy to very heavy rain will occur from June 9 in the coastal districts of Gangetic West Bengal and isolated heavy rain in the other districts of West Bengal.

Squally wind with speed reaching 40 to 50 km per hour, gusting to 60 kmph is very likely over north Bay of Bengal along and off West Bengal, Odisha and Bangladesh coasts.

578m tunnel to bypass...

contd from pg01

long-standing demand of the local residents.

Dr Bhamre, in his address, held that the tunnel was a huge asset for the people of North Sikkim and the army personnel posted in the border areas of the district.

"I am happy to dedicate the tunnel to the people of Sikkim," he said.

He maintained that roads in various border areas of the nation are always a matter of great concern for the Central Government. "The government is always working to ease the problems of roads in the nation, especially the ones in border areas," he said.

Speaking to SummitTimes, Dr Bhamre said that the Defense Ministry is working on various infrastructure development projects in the border areas of Sikkim.

"Sikkim is a sensitive State in terms of border security. It is our duty to look after its needs and how to make it strong," he further added.

The BRO Director General, in his address, highlighted the achievements of BRO and said that Project Swastik has been in the forefront of road development activities in Sikkim.

He informed that Project Swastik maintains 806 KMs of strategic roads in Sikkim and is engaged in roads projects in East Sikkim.

The tunnel is fitted with LED lights, fire fighting system, control room and emergency exit.

"The tunnel has been designed for traffic speed of 40 KM per hour and 500 vehicles per day. The tunnel, being located in the high seismic zone is built with all necessary structural elements", the BRO-DG said.

Commander [BRO], Colonel IM Singh, also addressed the function.

The inauguration was also attended by BRO and GREF officials, representatives from the construction company and local residents.

[with inputs from ARPAN PRADHAN]



MOS FOR DEFENCE CALLS ON GOVERNOR

GANGTOK, 07 JUN: Union Minister of State for Defence, Dr Subhash Bhamre, called on Governor Shrinivas Patil at Raj Bhavan today.

He was accompanied by General Officer Commander, 33 Corps, Lieutenant General P.M. Bali and Director General, Border Roads Organization, Lieutenant General Harpal Singh, a press communiqué from Raj Bhavan informs.

This was a courtesy call by the Union Minister after he inaugurated the 578m tunnel at Theng in North Sikkim earlier today.

SDF lashes out against opposition...

contd from pg01

In the capital today, SDF spokesperson, Bhim Dahal, said, "Bhaichung Bhutia has been a legendary footballer, but he is behaving like 'Shikhandi' (a negative character of the epic Mahabharata) by firing from the back of those forces inimical to peace and tranquility in Sikkim."

Mr Dahal responded to various allegations levelled by the former footballer who is now senior vice president of Hamro Sikkim Party.

On Bhaichung's comment on the lack of alternative leadership within SDF, he said that the party has no dearth of leaders but at present, the current leadership is enough.

Accusing Bhaichung of acting as an agent of Delhi with zero ideology and calling out HSP as "feudal", Mr Dahal said, "We are not questioning the professionalism of Bhaichung as a footballer here. He has stopped playing football and now wants to play football with the future of Sikkim and the Sikkimese people."

He further added that the recent remark by SDF rebel and HSP leader, RB Subba, wherein he had said that Limboo Tamang Assembly seats will be provided within three days of HSP forming the government is "foolish".

"The demand for LT seats placed by our State Government is under active discussion and consideration at the Home Affairs Ministry, Government of India and we are hopeful that it will be given before the 2019 elections. This is a Central matter and we can only hope, demand and wait," said Mr Dahal.

He also went on to criticize Sikkim Krantikari Morcha and SKM MLA, Sonam Lama, wherein he said that Mr Lama provides just theatrics.

The conference was also addressed by SDF spokesperson, KT Gyaltsen, who said that Article 371F allows delimitation for Sikkim anytime.

He also questioned the opposition's constant criticism stating that they offer no solution.

Strongly coming down on comments made by Bhaichung Bhutia, he questioned his ideologies and termed Bhaichung as "mentally corrupt". HSP is trying to create a law and order problem in Sikkim and the need of the hour is unity among all Sikkimese, he alleged.

On the State's Sherpa community expressing disappointment over the decision passed by the SDF legislators' meet recently that Sherpa candidates will not be fielded from Bhutia-Lepcha constituency, Mr Dahal clarified that the Sherpa community falls under the Bhutia [B] definition as per the Sikkim ST Order and Representation of Peoples Act 1978 and as such can contest for BL seats.

"There are 12 BL seats and one Sangha seat in the Assembly. The Sherpa community can contest from the BL seats. They must have had a wrong notion on the decision passed by the SDF legislators' meet recently. They are within the BL seats. We had passed the decision to reassure the protection of the minority communities of Sikkim," said Mr Dahal.



STUDENTS SENSITIZED ON HAND WASHING TECHNIQUES AT LINGPI PAIONG

GANGTOK, 07 JUN: Health Club of Lingpi Paiong Secondary School in South Sikkim conducted an awareness programme on diarrhoea control at the school today wherein proper hand washing techniques were demonstrated by health coordinator, Goma Sharma, a press release informs.

Series of new constructions inaugurated in Zoom

GYALSHING, 07 JUN [IPR]: Health Minister Arjun Kumar Ghatani, who is also the area MLA of Salghari Zoom constituency, inaugurated a newly constructed additional eight-roomed school building of Zoom Secondary School at Zoom in West Sikkim this afternoon.

Addressing the gathering, Mr Ghatani expressed his gratitude to land donors, Pawan Rai, Padam K Rai and Madan Rai, for their selfless contribution. He urged the entire school family, School Managing Committee and local community to maintain educational assets with a sense of belonging and ownership.

He advised the school staff to provide quality education to ensure better performance of the students.

Further, he elaborated on various educational facilities being provided by the State Government under the leadership of Chief Minister Pawan Chamling and mentioned the exemplary initiatives like Chief Minister's Meritorious Scholarship Scheme, Dr BR Ambedkar Scholarship Scheme, free education



facilities upto college level, etc.

He also encouraged students to conduct plantation drive and Yoga exercise for the betterment of health and nature.

Speaking in the context of road connectivity, he said that the State Government has started official procedure to address demands placed during ongoing 32-day Jan Samparka - Jana Samman Abhiyan of the CM.

Construction of 35 KMs of roads within Salghari Zoom constituency has already been

SKM's L-T seat reservation awareness car rally covers West on Day 02



SUMMIT REPORT GANGTOK, 07 JUN:

On the second day of its car rally to generate wider awareness on the Limboo-Tamang seat reservation issue, the Sikkim Krantikari Morcha team today covered

Chakung, Khanesherebong, Rumbuk, Sombaring, Tikpur, Anden, Okhrey in West Sikkim and its surrounding areas before halting at Jorethang, South Sikkim.

The team is being led by the party's chief

coordinator, Sangha MLA Sonam Lama, and senior vice president, TN Dhakal, accompanied by around 500 party workers and members, informs an SKM press release.

Farmers training at Lower Samdong



SUMMIT REPORT GANGTOK, 07 JUN:

Mavedir organized a daylong training on organic technologies and soil management and ICS documentation for the farmers of Lowe Samdong in West Sikkim on 06 May, a press release informs.

Ward Panchayat, Pem Choki Bhutia was the chief guest of the programme along with Mavedir supervisors, Jason Nim Sherpa and Sonia Mukherjee as the resource persons.

Mr Sherpa stressed upon the importance of soil management and soil health and demonstrated organic methods to maintain soil health

and enhance the quality of soil friendly organisms. He also informed the farmers about Organic Certification and mandates for ICS such as Aadhaar Card Number and Bank Account of each farmer to be recorded in the documentation.

Ms Mukherjee in the technical session demonstrated the preparation and usage of natural made herbal spray from local plants and cow dung, green chilli, garlic and cow urine.

An interactive Q&A session was also held where the resource persons answered questions related to organic farming and techniques.

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Thursday,
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Temp: 24°C/16°C
Forecast: Morning showers; otherwise, cloudy.
Sunrise: 04:40 AM
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MHA sets up panel to look into 'racial discrimination' faced by NE people

contd from pg01

In its order, the apex court had said the panel would be given powers for ensuring strict action in incidents of racial discrimination, racial atrocities and racial violence, and suggesting measures to curb such hate and racial crimes.

The court had also told the government that the effective monitoring mechanism suggested by the M.P. Bezbaruah Committee in its report should be implemented and "should not like innumerable instances of its ilk, languish in dusty shelves of long forgotten archives".

It was also of the view that the involvement of the law enforcement machinery was alone not sufficient to resolve the problem and stressed that mindsets have to be changed including in universities, colleges and educational institutions, places of work and in society.

The Bezbaruah panel was set up by the home ministry on February 5, 2014, to suggest "suitable remedial measures" which could be taken, in the wake of attacks on the people from the North-east in Delhi and other parts of the country.

GMC bags award...

contd from pg01

The Forum now has 26 members, including cities like Indore, Thiruvananthapuram, Mysuru, Muzaffarpur and some municipal corporations of Delhi NCR (such as SDMC, EDMC and Gurugram).

"Under this Forum, 26 cities from 14 states have come together to ensure that they adopt 100% source segregation and become the pioneers of waste management in the country. Our objective through this assessment is to work with cities and help them perform better and continue to reinvent their waste management systems," said CSE Deputy Director General, Chandra Bhushan.

"Keeping our cities clean by only collecting and disposing wastes is not sufficient. What is required is source-segregation, proper treatment, recycle and reuse of the waste. Zero landfill should be the goal of municipal waste management in India," he added.

Vice President to attend ICFAI convocation, will also visit NRC for Orchids in Pakyong

GANGTOK, 07 JUN [IPR]: Chief Secretary, AK Shrivastava, chaired a coordination meeting today to discuss the detailed agenda of the proposed visit of the Vice President of India, M Venkaiah Naidu, to Sikkim scheduled for 15-16 June.

After a brief introduction and briefing by the Chief Secretary, the minute to minute programme of the visit of the Vice President was discussed and concerned departments were directed to take action as per the requirements.

It was informed that the Vice President in his two-day visit will attend the convocation of ICFAI University, Sikkim, and will also attend an official programme at the National Research Centre for Orchids in Pakyong. The Vice President will be interacting with the Scientists of



the Research Centre.

Mr Shrivastava called upon all the heads of departments and officials from various other agencies to work in proper coordination and cooperation to give out the best

results. He iterated that all the preparations have to be done on war footing.

The meeting had the presence and participation of Additional Chief Secretary cum Home Secretary, SC Gupta, Director

General of Police, SD Negi, Principal Secretaries, Secretaries and other senior officials of various departments of the State Government along with officials from the Army, Vice Chancellor of ICFAI University,

Director of NRC, Pakyong, officials from the Airports Authority of India [Pakyong Airport], officials from National Highways Infrastructure Development Corporation [NHDICL], BSNL, and NIC.

STATE SUPERVISORY BOARD ON PC&PNDT ACT CONVENES REVIEW MEET

Minister suggests Sikkimese-non Sikkimese segregation of data on PC&PNDT-related medical cases

GANGTOK, 07 JUN [IPR]: Health Minister Arjun Kumar Ghatani today chaired the annual review meeting of the State Supervisory Board on Pre-Conception & Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques (PC&PNDT) Act, 1994 at Health Secretariat here today.

The Minister urged board members to convene follow up meetings in regular intervals with the concerned officials in attendance to address issues covered under the PC&PNDT Act.

He further advised the supervisory board to segregate data on PC&PNDT-related medical cases of Sikkimese and non-Sikkimese residing in the State for proper data analysis.

He advised SIEC Bureau to prepare IEC [information, education and communication] material, including videos, on importance and priority given by the State Government to support women's empowerment and their achievements.

He also sought active coordination and cooperation among board members to achieve the common objective of implementing the Act to save every



fetus.

Commissioner-cum-Secretary, Vishal Chauhan, suggested that board members be more pro-active in strengthening and monitoring reported cases for proper data collection.

Further, he advised preparation of a mechanism to match-up data collected by National Family Health Survey and Health Department.

Mr Chauhan also stressed upon initiation of training pro-

gramme and wide publicity for creating awareness among the general public.

During the discussion, Gynecologist and Pediatrician from Sikkim Manipal Institute of Medical Science [SMIMS], Sikkim Women Council, officials from Law, Social Welfare and Health Department came out with invaluable inputs.

Earlier, Additional Director, Dr N. Shenga, gave an overview on PNDT status update 2017-18

with a PowerPoint presentation wherein she highlighted salient feature of the Act, punishment and new provision, enforcement of the Act by the State Government, details of USG clinics and machines in the hospitals, sex ratio, supervision and monitoring on implementation of the act, State Appellate Authority and training rules and Directions of Supreme Court of India on various aspects of implementation of the act.

Streamline public transport for tourists and locals

SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 07 JUN:

As tourism flourishes in the State and the number of visitors continues to rise, pressure on the infrastructure and basic amenities available in Sikkim also increases. Domestic tourist footfall in 2017 was 13, 75, 854, nearly double of 2016 when 7,40,763 domestic tourists visited the State. One of the areas that has felt the most pressure is the public transport system in the capital which basically means taxis, since bus services are not frequent or reliable. Like in the past few years, this year too, the onset of tourist season had locals scrambling for taxis.

"It happens every season and every season, the vehicle shortage is increasing despite new taxis coming on the roads every year. The number of tourists is increasing in a huge manner and getting enough taxis is both for tourists and local people would be a huge problem in coming years," says Gopal Chettri, a travel agent. Accompanying this

shortage of taxis, are complaints about overcharging. While local taxi drivers maintain that they do not overcharge their passengers, there are frequent complaints from tourists. Overcharging is not limited to taxis, hotels too overcharge their clients during peak season.

Owner of The Nettle & Fern Hotel and Gangtok Groove, Naresh Raj Shrestha, says that hotels in Gangtok are running packed as of now and admits that some hotels do overcharge clients.

"This should be stopped and strict action should be taken against them," he adds.

Meanwhile, Tourism Secretary, CP Dhakal has requested tourists to file a complaint in writing so that the department can initiate action against those who take undue advantage of tourists.

According to the Tourism Department, Sikkim has received 2,48, 825 tourists till March this year with 2,22,459 being domestic tourists and 26,366 international tourists.

Nepal Army Chief meets Sitharaman, discusses defence ties

NEW DELHI, JUN 7 (PTI): Nepal Army Chief General Rajendra Chhetri today called on Defence Minister Nirmala Sitharaman and discussed ways to deepen defence and security cooperation between the two countries.

Official sources said issues related to bilateral defence cooperation figured prominently during the meeting.

The Nepal Army Chief's visit comes nearly a month after Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to that country during which both countries had decided to bolster defence and security cooperation.

Indo-Nepal border is open, porous and thickly populated. The movement of people across the border is governed by Indo-Nepal Treaty of Peace and Friendship, 1950, which provides for free movement of citizens of both the countries across the border.

BEFORE THE LEARNED OATH COMMISSIONER OF SIKKIM AT GANGTOK AFFIDAVIT

Whereas, I Saran Das Kami @ Kalikotey, son of late Chhabilal Kami, aged about 24 years, by faith Hindu, by occupation a Government employee, a permanent resident of Namim Busty, P.O. Ranipool, P.S. Ranipool, East Sikkim, having come to Gangtok, East Sikkim to swear this affidavit on oath, do hereby solemnly affirm an declare on oath as follows:-

1. That my actual name is Saran Das Kami which has been correctly recorded in my all relevant documents viz: School Certificate, Birth Certificate, Employment Identity Card (L), Schedule Caste Certificate, B.A. Pass Certificate, Certificate of Identification & Certificate of other testimonials also.
2. That my name has been recorded as Saran Das Kalikotey in Service Book under the department where I am presently serving.
3. That Kami is our Caste and Kalikotey is our title(surname).
4. That both the names, such as Saran Das Kami and Saran Das Kalikotey belongs to one and same person and that is myself.
5. That henceforth and by virtue of this affidavit, my title (surname) and name shall be corrected and recorded as Saran Das Kalikotey in my all the relevant documents and papers including my Service Book under the department where I am presently holding my job.
6. That this affidavit is made bonafide and for amking necessary correction and declaration in respect of my title(surname).
7. That the statement made herein above paragraph 1 to 6 are all true to the best of my personal knowledge and belief and I sign this affidavit on this the 03rd day of October, 1997 at Gangtok, East Sikkim

sd/- SARAN DAS KALIKOTEY
DEPONENT.

Singtam police books two under SADA

**SUMMIT REPORT
SINGTAM, 07 JUN:**

Two persons were booked and arrested under Sikkim Anti Drugs Act, 2006 for allegedly possessing contraband substances.

According to Sub-Inspector, Singtam Police Station the accused were intercepted during an inspection conducted by the police officials.

During the inspection conducted in front of Singtam Nagar Panchayat councillor and witnesses the police recovered 29 bottles of cough syrup along with 81 spasmoproxyvon tablets, leading to the arrest.

Indian farmer in UAE sets world record of distributing saplings

DUBAI, JUN 7 (PTI): An Indian farmer in the UAE has set a Guinness World Record by distributing the largest number of curry tree saplings in Sharjah, according to a media report today.

S u d h e e s h Guruvayoor from Kerala on Tuesday distributed 4,914 saplings of the organic curry tree and broke the record set by the Guru Nanak Darbar Gurudwara in Dubai who had distributed 2,083 saplings of three varieties of trees to students of Delhi Private School in March, Gulf News reported.

Guruvayoor, who had hit headlines with his enthusiasm and accomplishments in farming in the UAE, achieved the new feat as part of the World Environment Day celebrations in the country.

The saplings from his own farm in Sharjah were distributed to the students of two campuses of the Sharjah Indian

High School.

Guruvayoor said the initiative was his attempt to support the green vision of the Father of the Nation, Shaikh Zayed Bin Sultan Al Nahyan, in the Year of Zayed.

With five Limca Book of Records and other awards in his kitty, he said he had been growing curry tree saplings at his farm for almost three months for this dream project.

He said he chose curry tree from India since curry leaves are an essential ingredient in the cuisine.

Curry leaves from India were earlier banned in the UAE due to high levels of pesticides. Through this initiative, Guruvayoor said, families of these students can grow pesticide-free curry leaves at home.

Curry leaves are used for the aroma and flavour in the cuisine of various states in India, especially in the south.

8 MP forest officials arrested for killing man, burning his body

SEONI (MP), JUN 7 (PTI): Eight forest department personnel, including a deputy ranger, were today arrested for allegedly beating a villager to death and then burning his body to destroy evidence, a police official said.

"The incident occurred on Tuesday when a villager Roopchand Sonwane (40) went to the forest to collect firewood near Gangpur village under Bahrai forest circle," said Barghat Police Station in charge Khemendra Jaitwar.

He said that deputy ranger Santosh Uike and other forest employees caught him on suspicion that he was cutting teak trees.

Some villagers saw the forest department personnel taking away Sonwane, he added.

The official said that Sonwane was brought to Uike's residence and the latter assured his family members, when they

came looking for the villager, that he would be let off soon.

"When Sonwane did not return in the night, the family members contacted Uike again who told them that he had been released. However the man did not return till Wednesday evening," Jaitwar said.

After the deceased's family members threatened Uike with a police complaint, the forest deputy ranger came to the police station and revealed the sequence of events, Jaitwar said.

Jaitwar said that Uike, along with the other forest employees, beat up Sonwane, and in the process ended up killing him.

Uike told police that they had burnt Sonwane's body in the Padnala area of the forest to destroy evidence, Jaitwar said, adding that a forensic team had collected samples from the charred body for further investigation.

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Politicking Arrives

The gloves are off. Now deliver ideas and vision as well

Unless the Centre experiments with another disruptive adventure, the next parliamentary elections are barely eleven months away. The idea that policy-makers in Delhi are toying with – simultaneous elections – has been routine for Sikkim for the past four elections, so the State too has barely that much time for the more important Assembly elections here. Now, factor in the imposition of model code of conduct and the campaigning that will become more frenetic once election dates are announced and election fever becomes barely nine and a half months in the future. One would think that with the elections so close, the ruling front and the Opposition would invest more energy on getting their respective houses in order before the rough and tumble of campaigning takes over. If only Sikkim was so lucky. Politics, even though it is exclusively electioneering in Sikkim, receives no real preparation beyond jingoism, the volume of which increases about a year, year and a half before people walk into polling stations. The consistency of public outreach and people-to-people contact that one expects of personalities wishing to become people's elected representatives is yet to debut in the State. This leaves the electorate here with an explosion of claims, name-calling, allegations and mud-slinging once the reality of elections comes home. This makes for a lot of entertaining noise and sensational headlines, but does not leave the masses any wiser about how one dispensation differs from the other. Ideologies and positions on issues are not fleshed out beyond the rhetoric of one-upmanship and then plays out the routine of discomfiting calumny and shallow hatchet jobs. Even if one were to accept such digressions as part of desperate politics, it should not be accepted as the highlight of political engagement in an election year. Surely, the people deserve better.

It is important for the political players to respect the intelligence of the people more. Take the last elections in Sikkim for instance which built up as a major face-off and the vote-share also reflected the keenness of the contest. But the benefit of hindsight reveals that the two main contestants focused almost exclusively on areas they saw as their strongholds and 2014 was not campaign which had a consistent pan-Sikkim footprint. That year, the strong presence of young, first time voters and the disruptive power of Social Media also played a major role in upping the ante, and there was unprecedented (for Sikkim) violence as well. All of these factors and the insecurities of leaders made the last election more contesting than what the groundwork by the parties deserved. These factors have lost some of their potency in the past four years, so parties will need to rely on more this time around. And that is good for the electorate, because now the battle will be for the undecided, and it is unlikely that they will decide solely on impressions, claims and projections. And when the undecided demand more conviction from leaders and their outfits, those seeking their endorsement will need to do their homework beyond coining new catchphrases or put downs.

It, however, appears that political parties in Sikkim have not yet begun working this angle. Each is still speaking to the already converted, focused more on consolidating their base and reassuring supporters of their relevance. But that pie has already been divvied up, and if anything, should have been nurtured through the four years since the last elections. Now should have been the time to reach out to the fence-sitters, the first-timers and the disinterested. There is still time though since Sikkim has a small electorate and the last elections did reveal that waves do not take too long to create. It would however be unfortunate if parties decided to replay 2014 and not go the extra mile to reach out to the people with ideas and visions instead of resorting to the usual fall-backs of fear-mongering and insularity.

An Introduction to Young Adult Literature

SHRISHTI RANDEEP RAI

The genre, Young Adult literature (hereinafter YA) has always been a debatable topic. Many critics regard this genre as being insignificant for studies in literature. YA to be considered as a serious genre in literature can be quite tricky because of its simple language and also because of the target audience (adolescents).

The writer Steven VanderStaay defines YA literature in his article titled "Young-Adult Literature: A writer strikes the genre" (1992) as:

Young Adult literature is literature wherein the protagonist is either a teenager or one who approaches problems from a teenage perspective. Such novels are generally of moderate length and told from the first person. Typically they describe initiation into the adult world, or the surmounting of a contemporary problem forced upon the protagonist(s) by the adult world. Though generally written for a teenage reader, such novels - like all fine literature - address the entire spectrum of life. (1)

There are various definitions of YA and also various arguments as to why it should or should not matter to readers young and old. We can trace the history of YA to Mary MacLane, a controversial Canadian born American writer. Mary MacLane finding life, "in the 1890's era, too tedious for her intellectual sensibilities, the nineteen year old sent a manuscript (titled I Await The Devils Coming) to Chicago Publisher George H. Doran, who would not publish it, though he called it the most astounding and revealing piece of realism." (Loretta 4). Another Chicago publisher, Herbert S. Stone and Co., published MacLane's Manuscript in 1902 after changing its title to The story of Mary MacLane (1902). Public reaction to the story of MacLane was uproarious. Critics were both appalled and mesmerized by the spectacle of a teenage female writer confessing her most intimate thoughts. Loretta in her famous book Young Adult Literature, Libraries and Conservative Activism (2017) says, "It is true that to call MacLane's work YA Literature would be ahistorical, for no such category of literature existed in the publishing world at the turn of the last century." (4). A simple way to define YA is a book that is "published or designated for reader's ages twelve to eighteen". (Loretta, 4). On the other hand if we define YA "as whatever teens like to read, then the YA universe expands to include nearly any text and leaves out the significant fan base that YA has with adult readers." (04).

During Mary MacLane's time there was no such thing as YA Literature but at the same time there was no such thing as a 'young adult' or even a 'teenager', but we can categorize her work as belonging to the genre of YA literature. It was only in the 1920's that YA literature as a separate genre came into being and the world recognized that the young were a separate generation. 'Young Adult Fiction' as a term became official in 1957 with the establishment of 'Young Adult Library Services Association' (YALSA) in America.

YA, through the years has been criticized for being a 'light read' but now it is gaining momentum and recognition. According to an article by Erin Blakemore titled "A Brief History of Young Adult Fiction" (2015):

By 1980, critics were already looking for some kind of canon of young adult novels. Noting that the genre had begun to tackle "subjects of real depth," By comparing young adult novels to books by classic authors like Faulkner and Dickens, Bachelder helped legitimize books for young readers. Today, young adult fiction is a force to be reckoned with—books for children and young adults gained 22.4% in sales in 2014, and a whopping 55 percent of YA novels are now purchased by adults. (11)

In the last decade YA has grown extensively, more authors are engaging with this

genre as it gives them the opportunity to create something new and different. This genre tends to challenge the traditional, chronological and single-voiced nature of narrative fiction.

YA, albeit being a current and fresh genre, has had an enormous impact on readers as well as on the politics of reading and publishing. Over the years, YA books have made a place for themselves and can be equated with adult fiction. It has definitely triumphed as a literature in its own right. YA has often been condemned for being too childish and immature but many defenders and supporters of YA claim that it is mature and powerful which is apparent because of the fact that it has survived in the publishing industry for so long, its increasing popularity and also because of the fact that it deals with relevant issues and topics that engages all age groups.

As stated in an article named "New Study 55% YA books Bought by Adults" by "Publishers Weekly" (2012):

More than half the consumers of books classified for young adults aren't all that young. According to a new study, fully 55% of buyers of works that publishers designate for kids aged 12 to 17 - known as YA books - are 18 or older, with the largest segment aged 30 to 44, a group that alone accounted for 28% of YA sales. And adults aren't just purchasing for others -- when asked about the intended recipient, they report that 78% of the time they are purchasing books for their own reading. (12)

YA literature has also been a great inspiration in the production of movies, there are many book adaptations that have been made and are still being made. The authors of this genre are more open to writing about problems that adolescents are faced with, naming a few- peer pressure, dating, eating disorders, violence and suicide. It has been rightly said by Loretta in her book about Young Adult Fiction (2017) that:

YA literature is a powerful force for a better understanding of the world. For those who believe that literature should transmit the values of the adult world to youth, YA literature may pose a direct threat to an increasingly therapeutic approach to adolescence in our culture. With stakes this high, it is no wonder that YA literature provides a cultural nexus for both professionals and members of the public. (8)

She further argues to justify her idea when she says, "Though some critics consider YA flimsy and an undemanding reading, YA literature enjoys significant scholarly attention and critical acclaim" (2). It provides a new ground for experimentations and variations as well as new creations.

It is however, quite difficult to understand the underlying meanings represented in YA literature:

Examining YA literature for its literary quality and its ideological stance can be a bit tricky. At times the seemingly simple vocabulary and its popularity among young readers blur the complexity of the texts before critics can closely examine its possibilities. (Hill, 9).

The novel We Were Liars by Emily Lockhart can be easily read by the adolescent age group or children belonging to younger age groups, it masquerades as a simple book; in reality it is much more complex. The novel's interwoven plot lines jump back and forth through time; the novel also suggests the existence of a parallel universe, a split reality, psychological problems and substance dependency which are all complex issues.

The authors of this genre are always experimenting with new issues in their books; they are also actively engaged with topics relevant and important to readers of all ages.

The authors in this collection do not shy away from complex readings; instead they forge new ground. They demonstrate deep theoretical un-

derstanding and analytical skills that will help the scholarship of YA literature reach new levels of maturity. (Hill, 9)

Even though YA is quite a recent arrival in the literary scene, it can be measured by observing on the following lines:

It has had a profound impact on readers, libraries and the politics of reading. Over the years, waves of YA's defenders have argued that YA literature has finally come of age, not only holding its own with adult books but also succeeding as a literature in its own right. A metaphor of maturity is especially appropriate for a literature so often damned as simplistic and childish, for when we say that someone has come of age, we mean that they have left childhood behind to arrive at adulthood. Accordingly, supporters argue that YA literature has put away childish things, reaching maturity. (Gaffney, 1)

YA literature according to Loretta M. Gaffney may be written either in the past or the present tense, "but usually takes place in what I call the eternal present of YA literature." (12). YA's teenage protagonists do not look back on youth; they live it in the heat of the moment. "Appreciating the eternal present of YA literature means granting that a teen- eyed view of the world has advantages of perspectives that adult views do not." (Gaffney, 6).

When we demonstrate the strength of YA literature as literature through a range of critical lenses, we will be able to open more windows and doors for readers.

When professors of literature acknowledge the critical merit of YA literature to their students. The assumption that YA literature is juvenile will begin to dissolve... YA literature is now brimming with compelling, masterfully written novels worthy of study. It can help teenage readers better understand themselves in a fast, turbulent world, at the same time offering teachers and parents a lens through which to observe the joys, and travails of shaping one's identity in the twenty first century. (Hill, 14)

YA literature is about coming of age and in reality we are all still coming of age. We are all on a journey of progressing towards maturity no matter what age and therefore it is appealing to all age groups. A good story is a good story regardless of the target audience. The language used in YA fiction "always comes up in the face of pain", as John Green (author of world renowned YA books) puts it.

YA literature has been popular for quite some time but in the present time it has gotten even bigger, mainly because it directly engages with up-to-the-minute social issues. Emily Temple in her article titled "If fiction changes the world, it's going to be YA" (2017) states:

"In trying times like these, the notion of a novel as a form of activism seems only natural: everyone must respond to the current political, social and emotional moment in their own way, and for writers that way is on the page." (11).

Emily Temple also states in the same article that:

"Whether in explicit protest novels, fiction as resistance or simply by loudly representing under-represented voices, it's YA that has the best chance to jump on that wave of popular energy and lead us all to a better world." (12)

YA authors have always tackled matters of consequence, such as addiction, family dynamics as well as gender. The genre has welcomed new perspectives, specifically from those who have been historically marginalized. YA authors have the ability to use new forms and technologies to engage readers in diversity, culture and communication, YA as a genre is prepared to withstand the winds of change. YA literature is the future.

[The writer is pursuing Master of Arts in English, Final Semester, Sikkim University]

Should I kill spiders in my home? An entomologist explains why not to

MATT BERTONE

theconversation.com

I know it may be hard to convince you, but let me try: Don't kill the next spider you see in your home.

Why? Because spiders are an important part of nature and our indoor ecosystem – as well as being fellow organisms in their own right.

People like to think of their dwellings as safely insulated from the outside world, but many types of spiders can be found inside. Some are accidentally trapped, while others are short-term visitors. Some species even enjoy the great indoors, where they happily live out their lives and make more spiders. These arachnids are usually secretive, and almost all you meet are neither aggressive nor dangerous. And they may be providing services like eating pests – some even eat other spiders.

My colleagues and I conducted a visual survey of 50 North Carolina homes to inventory just which arthropods live under our roofs. Every single house we visited was home to spiders. The most common species we encountered were cobweb spiders and

cellar spiders.

Both build webs where they lie in wait for prey to get caught. Cellar spiders sometimes leave their webs to hunt other spiders on their turf, mimicking prey to catch their cousins for dinner.



Mizoram to get its first cyber police station soon: DIG

AIZAWL, JUN 07 (PTI): The Mizoram government will soon set up its first cyber crime police station here, a senior police official said today.

This will be done by elevating the present cyber crime cell under the CID, DIG (northern range) Lalbiakthanga Kiangte said.

Bank fraud through information technology and abuse of social media have been steadily increasing in the state, he said adding that women and children had mostly become victims of the cyber crime.

The state government is also planning to set up a cyber forensic laboratory and cyber training centre with central fund, he said.

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New flower species named after former Arunchal CM

ITANAGAR, JUN 7 (PTI): An Arunachalee scientist has dedicated a new species of flower that he discovered last year to former chief minister Dorjee Khandu, an official statement said.

Krishna Chowlu, a scientist with Botanical Survey of India (BSI), discovered the wild flower, which is white at the base and violet on the top, at a forest in Zemithang area of Tawang in September 2017.

Calling on Chief Minister Pema Khandu at his office yesterday, Chowlu said the flower of Balsaminaceae family - Impatiens dorjeekhandui - was named after the former CM and his father to honour his contributions for the development of the state, the statement said.

Any person who studies Balsaminaceae family will study Impatiens dorjeekhandui, Chowlu asserted.

Apart from Chowlu, scientists Rajib Gogoi, SS Dash and Souravjyoti Borah of BSI had contributed in publishing a paper on the new species in a BSI journal.

Khandu lauded Chowlu and her team of scientists for the discovery, the statement said, adding that Deputy Chief Minister Chowna Mein and Parliamentary Secretary for Planning Zingnu Namchoom were also present at the CM's office on the occasion.

Centre serious about Act East policy: Kovind

UDAIPUR (TRIPURA), JUN 7 (PTI): The Centre is "serious" about the implementation of its Act East policy, President Ram Nath Kovind said today, after dedicating to the people the revamped national highway connecting the Tripurasundari temple in Gomati district and Sabroom in South Tripura district.

The 73.71 km-long highway, which was a single-lane stretch so far, was recently widened for two-way traffic.

Kovind, who arrived here this morning on a two-day visit to the state, said the road would im-

prove the connectivity between South Tripura district and the Chittagong port in Bangladesh.

"The road would lead to an under-construction bridge on river Feni in Sabroom (along the India-Bangladesh border). Once the bridge is functional, Tripura would be connected with Chittagong," he said in his address to the people here.

The Centre is making sincere efforts to develop the state as well as the entire northeastern region, the president stated.

"The NDA government is keen on initiating development projects in

the northeast. In Tripura alone, roads spanning 500km are being constructed at a cost of Rs 6,000 crore," Kovind said.

Asserting that the road projects would bring people "closer", he recalled that the distance between Agartala and Kolkata, which was around 500km via Bangladesh, became 1,700 km after partition in 1947.

The president also lauded the Tripura government's welfare initiatives in the state.

"Without the development of backward communities, a country

cannot make progress," he claimed.

The tribal community in Tripura has produced many athletes who have made India proud with their achievements, Kovind said.

"Ace tennis player Somdev Debbarman, Indian idol Souravi Debbarman, national women football player Laxita Debbarma, gymnast Dipa Karmakar have earned laurels for the country," he added.

Chief Minister Biplab Deb and Governor Tathagata Roy also addressed people at the programme today.

Curfew relaxed for 7 hrs in 'vulnerable' areas of Shillong

SHILLONG, JUN 7 (PTI): Curfew was relaxed for seven hours today in the 14 "vulnerable" areas of Shillong as no incident of violence was reported from any part of the city in the past 24 hours, a senior district official said.

District authorities would also examine the possibility of relaxing night curfew imposed on the entire state capital, he said.

"The clampdown on the 14 affected areas, under Lumdingjiri police station and Cantonment Beat House, has been relaxed from 7 am till 2 pm today," East Khasi Hills district Deputy Commissioner P S Dkhar told PTI.

Mobile internet and messaging services, however, continue to remain under suspension as a precautionary measure, Dkhar said.

Yesterday, too, the authorities had briefly lifted the curfew in the "vulnerable" areas of the Meghalaya capital. Governor Ganga Prasad had urged people to maintain peace.

Shillong had been in the grip of violence since May 29 following a fight between Sikh residents



in city's Punjabi Lane area, also known as the Sweeper Colony, and the Khasi drivers of state-run buses.

Heavy security was deployed across the city in view of the clashes that injured over 10 people, including policemen and CRPF personnel.

A high-level committee was also formed by BJP-backed Meghalaya Democratic Alliance government to find a permanent solution to the issue of relocation of the Sweeper Colony, inhabited by the Punjabis.

Deputy Chief Minister Prestone Tynsong, who heads the committee, said yesterday that the panel would recommend a feasible and permanent solu-

tion to the state government for the relocation of the colony, which has been a long pending issue.

The situation in the state capital has shown signs of improvement over the past three days, said another district official.

"Barring the 14 vulnerable areas, life has returned to normal to a large extent in the state capital," he said.

Taxis are plying normally on the streets and shopkeepers were seen doing brisk business at the Bara Bazaar and Police Bazaar areas this morning, the official stated.

"Tourists were also seen taking pictures and loitering around the Golf Course and Ward's Lake," he added.

Bengal BJP workers taking shelter in other states: Ghosh

MALDA (WB), JUN 7 (PTI): BJP's West Bengal unit president Dilip Ghosh today said his party workers were taking shelter in neighbouring states following continuous violence allegedly unleashed by the ruling Trinamool Congress.

"The violence witnessed before the panchayat elections has been continuing even after the polls are over in rural Bengal. The Trinamool



Congress workers have created an atmosphere of terror and fear," Ghosh told reporters here.

Under this circumstances, he said, BJP workers were moving out of Bengal and taking shelter in adjacent states.

Ghosh said ministers and leaders were openly called for opposition-free West Bengal.

"In my opinion, It is not healthy in a democracy," he said.

Ghosh has come here to felicitate the party winners in panchayat elections.

Situation further eases in Shillong

SHILLONG, JUN 7 (PTI): Curfew was relaxed for seven hours today in the 14 "vulnerable" areas while prohibitory orders were lifted in rest of Shillong during day time, following improvement in situation in the violence-hit city, officials said.

"No incident of violence was reported from any part of the city in the past 24 hours," East Khasi Hills district Deputy Commissioner P S Dkhar said. The Meghalaya capital had been in the grip of violence since May 29 following clashes between local tribals and Punjabi residents.

With the situation easing, many holidayers were again seen flocking favourite spots in the city popularly known as "Scotland of the East."

The curfew in the 14 affected areas, under Lumdingjiri police station and Cantonment Beat House, was relaxed from 7 am till 2 pm today, Dkhar told PTI. These areas faced the brunt of violence and have been under curfew since June 1.

In rest of the city, there were no prohibitory order from 5 am to 6 pm when the night curfew was reimposed as preventive measure, he



added.

Mobile internet and messaging services, however, continued to remain suspended as a precautionary measure, Dkhar said.

After a meeting of senior officials, the authorities decided to further enhance the time for relaxation of curfew in the "vulnerable areas" as well in the rest of the city by two hours tomorrow, official sources said.

There would be no curfew in the 14 "vulnerable areas" from 7 am till 4 pm tomorrow, the sources said, adding

likewise in rest of the city night curfew would be in effect from 8 pm instead of 6 pm.

The trouble had started with a fight between Sikh residents in city's Punjabi Lane area, also known as the Sweeper Colony, and the Khasi drivers of state-run buses.

There was heavy security across the city in view of clashes that injured over 10 people, including policemen and CRPF personnel.

Though normalcy is returning, authorities are not taking any chance

and have kept the army and para-military on standby.

Taxis were seen plying on the streets and shopkeepers did brisk business at Bara Bazaar and Police Bazaar areas during the day.

A good number of tourists were seen at famous spots like Golf Course, Ward's Lake, museum and cathedral.

Several hotels told PTI that room occupancy has increased over the past two days after it dipped substantially in view of the disturbance.





SHSC and Sikkim Boys Club progress further in the SFA C-Div tourney

SUMMIT REPORT
Gangtok, 07 Jun:
Sikkim Himalayan Sporting Club and Sikkim Boys Football Club each registered victories today in the ongoing Sikkim Foot-

ball Association C-Division Football Tournament underway here at Paljor Stadium.
In the first match of the day, Ranipool Football Club went down to

Sikkim Himalayan SC 01-03, while in the second match Sikkim Boys FC thrashed Nimitar Football Club 09-01.
On Friday, Young Boys, Gyalshing will

take on Chujachen Sports Academy in the first match, which will be followed by another match between Sasosians Football Club and Young Orchid.



USFC players leave for Nepal

SAGAR CHETTRI
GANGTOK, 07 JUN:

An 18-member squad of the United Sikkim Football Club left today to participate in the International Lalbandi Gold Cup Football Tournament at Lalbandi, Sar-

lahi, in Nepal. The team is being accompanied by Mayal Dok Lepcha as team coach.

On the basis of its past performances, USFC has been placed directly in the pre-quarterfinal round of the said tournament.

The team, led by its captain, Sanjay Chettri, will take on Nepal APF in the pre-quarterfinal round on 08 June.

"All players are in good form at present and fit due to continuous practice sessions for the

upcoming Sikkim Premier Division. So we hope that the team will perform better to go ahead in the tournament," an USFC official said.

A total of ten teams are reportedly participating in the tournament.

Morgan warms up for Australia series with Middlesex ton

LONDON, JUNE 7 (AFP):
England captain Eoin Morgan was in the runs ahead of the forthcoming limited-overs series against Australia with a century for Middlesex against Gloucestershire in county cricket's One-Day Cup.

Morgan struck seven fours and five sixes in a 69-ball innings of exactly 100 in Bristol before he holed out in the deep off the bowling of Benny Howell.

Fellow Irishman Paul Stirling batted through the innings for 127 not out, with Hilton Cartwright making a quick-fire unbeaten 60 in a Middlesex total of 322 for three.

Gloucestershire could only manage 289 all out in reply, with New Zealand's James Franklin taking three for 42.

But a 33-run victory for the visitors was not enough to take them into the knockout stages of this 50 overs per side competition, with results elsewhere in the South Group going against Middlesex.

England face Scotland in a stand-alone one-day international in Edinburgh on Sunday before a five-match series against old rivals Australia gets underway at The Oval on Wednesday, June 13.



Salah's Iraqi lookalike dreams of football glory

BAGHDAD, JUNE 7 (AFP): With his black beard, curly hair and football shirt, Iraqi striker Hussein Ali is often mistaken for one of the world's top players: Egypt's Mohamed Salah.

In the Iraqi capital Baghdad, 20-year-old Ali is frequently stopped in his working-class Hurriya neighbourhood by people wanting a photograph with their idol.

Although he is himself a striker, for the Al-Zawraa club, it is Ali's likeness to Salah which piques Iraqis' interest.

"At the first training session, he introduced himself as 'Hussein Ali'. I replied, 'No, no, you are Mohamed Salah,'" said Ali's coach Adnan Mohammad.

Back when Salah was playing for AS Roma, Ali was aware of the resemblance but took the comments as "a joke".

But when the Egyptian shot to global fame in the Premier League -- becoming "the number one footballer for all Arabs" according to Ali -- his Iraqi doppelganger started to seriously work on his image.

Since then, he has started wearing the red shirt of Salah's club Liverpool.

"It's the real shirt, bought from an official supplier," he said proudly from his small house, where the shutters are closed against the Baghdad heat during the long hours of electricity cuts.

Ali said he paid 40 for the shirt, which he takes carefully from its hang-

er, while working every day to support his large family and without a wage from playing football.

Lately, the "Mohamed Salah of Iraq" can't leave his house without being stopped for photographs or approached by football fans who mistake him for the Egyptian star.

"The day before yesterday I was in a mall; the security guards, the shop workers and the clients, everyone wanted to take a photo with me... even the girls!" said Ali.

He attracts similar attention at his own football matches: "When I played against the Lebanese club Al-Ahed, people were taking photos with me for an hour and a half."

Last month Ali joined a group of supporters in the city centre to watch Salah's Liverpool take on Real Madrid in the Champions League final.

"When Mohamed Salah was injured, there were some who came to see me as if it was me who was suffering," he said.

"In my neighbourhood, over a number of days, people who passed me would say 'Get well soon,'" he remembered, laughing.

While such confusion amuses him, Ali's similarity to Salah has prompted him to rethink his own life.

Passionate about football since he was little, Ali made it onto the B team of Al-Zawraa, Iraq's most decorated club.



BRUSSELS, JUNE 7 (AFP): Eden Hazard scored once and assisted another goal in a 3-0 pre-World Cup friendly win over Egypt that gave worried Belgium fans hope of a promising World Cup campaign.

Drawn in Group G containing England, Tunisia and tournament debutants Panama, Belgium are expected to cruise into the second round of the June 14-July 15 showpiece.

However embattled coach Roberto Martinez has yet to win over fans, and is sweating over the fitness of key defenders Thomas Vermaelen (thigh) and Vincent Kompany (groin), both injured.

Chelsea star Hazard, who survived a kick to his knee in the opening minute, forcing him off at half-time, said it was a performance Belgium would have to repeat in Russia if they want to progress.

"I came off at half-time because I took a knock to my knee, but

there's nothing to worry about, it will be better tomorrow," he said.

"It was nice to add some rhythm to the match, to create some movement and score as well.

"If we want to go far in the World Cup, we'll have to be as solid as we were tonight and keep our energy."

Facing an Egypt side shorn of Liverpool star Mohamed Salah, recovering from a shoulder injury suffered in a 3-1 Champions League final defeat to Real Madrid, Belgium were given a chance to patch over some recent difficulties during their preparation period.

Belgium struggled to a scoreless draw last week against a Portugal side missing striker Cristiano Ronaldo and Martinez, who has sidelined Roma star Radja Nainggolan, has faced plenty of criticism in the Belgian media.

Missing Salah, Europe's Golden

Boot winner last season, Egypt's goalscoring chances were automatically decimated.

But even a characteristically strong defensive display by the Pharaohs wasn't enough to contain Hazard, who played only the opening half, and the visitors at times appeared well below par.

A superb ball from the Chelsea midfielder star found Romelu Lukaku in space on 27 minutes and the Manchester United striker promptly scored his 34th goal for the national side.

Seven minutes before the interval Yannick Carrasco turned provider for Hazard to hit his 22nd goal for Belgium in 80 appearances.

In the final seconds another Premier League player, Manchester United forward Marouane Fellaini, hit Belgium's third to cap what was a far more encouraging performance from Belgium.

Kamila Shamsie reimagining of 'Antigone' fetches her Women's Prize

LONDON, JUN 7 (PTI): British-Pakistani writer Kamila Shamsie has been named the winner of this year's Women's Prize for Fiction for her novel "Home Fire", which is a contemporary reimagining of Sophocles' "Antigone".

At an awards ceremony hosted in Bedford Square Gardens here by novelist and Women's Prize Founder Director Kate Mosse, chair of judges Sarah Sands presented the author with the prize money of 30,000 pounds and the "Bessie", a limited edition bronze figurine.

Sands said "Home Fire", published by Bloomsbury Circus, was chosen as it "spoke for our times". The book is billed as a contemporary reimagining of Antigone and tells a fiercely compelling story of loyalties torn apart when love and politics collide.

"The book 'Home Fire' is about identi-



ty, conflicting loyalties, love and politics. And it sustains mastery of its themes and

its form. It is a remarkable book which we passionately recommend," she said.

The five other shortlisted novels were "Sight" (Jessie Greengrass), "The Mermaid and Mrs Hancock" (Imogen Hermes Gowar), "The Idiot" (Elif Batuman), "Sing, Unburied, Sing" (Jesmyn Ward), and "When I Hit You" (Meena Kandasamy).

According to Sands, the shortlist was dazzling, it had depth and richness and variety.

"We were forcibly struck by the quality of the prose. Each book had its champions. We loved the originality of mermaids and courtesans, we were awed by the lyrical truth of an American road trip which serves as a commentary of the history of race in America, we discussed into the night the fine and dignified treatment of a woman's domestic abuse, we laughed over a student's rite of passage and we experienced the truth of losing a parent and loving a child," she said.

In "Home Fire", Isma is free. After years spent raising her twin siblings in the wake of their mother's death, she is finally studying in the US, resuming a dream long deferred.

But she can't stop worrying about Aneeka, her beautiful, headstrong sister back in London - or their brother, Parvaiz, who's disappeared in pursuit of his own dream: to prove himself to the dark legacy of the jihadist father he never knew.

Then Eamonn enters the sisters' lives. Handsome and privileged, he inhabits a London world away from theirs.

As the son of a powerful British Muslim politician, Eamonn has his own birthright to live up to - or defy.

Two families' fates are inextricably, devastatingly entwined in the searing novel that asks: what sacrifices will we make in the name of love?

US diplomats hit by mystery illness in China called home for further evaluation

WASHINGTON, JUN 7 (PTI): The US is bringing back a group of diplomats from China for further medical evaluation over concerns they were suffering from a mysterious illness similar to those reported by its personnel in Cuba, an official said today.

The move comes after the State Department recently received medical confirmation that one of the US government employees had suffered a medical incident in China that was consistent with what an American personnel in Havana, Cuba had experienced.

Thereafter, the US State Department deployed a medical team to Guangzhou, China to conduct a medical screening of all US government employees and family members who requested it. The medical screenings are ongoing for any personnel who have noted concerning symptoms or wanted baseline screening, State Department Spokesperson Heather Nauert said.

"As a result of the screening process so far, the Department has sent a number of individuals for further evaluation and a comprehensive assessment of their symptoms and findings in the United States," she said.

"The US medical professionals will continue to conduct full evaluations to determine the cause of the reported symptoms and whether the findings are consistent with those noted in previously affected government personnel or possibly completely unrelated," Nauert said.

Recently, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo announced the formation of the Health Incidents Task Force, which serves as the coordinating body for the State Department and other US government agencies.

The task force will continue to address the unexplained health incidents that have affected US government personnel and their family members stationed overseas, Nauert said.

Last month, the State Department issued a travel warning after a US employee in China reported "subtle and vague, but abnormal, sensations of sound and pressure".

This was consistent with symptoms experienced by some US personnel in Cuba.

Gandhi, Mandela gave hope to people facing discrimination: Swaraj

PIETERMARITZBURG, JUN 7 (PTI): Mahatma Gandhi and Nelson Mandela gave hope to those facing injustice and discrimination, External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj said here today, as she recalled India's role at international forums to help South African people in their fight against apartheid.

Swaraj was the keynote speaker at a banquet at the City Hall here marking the 125th anniversary of the day when on June 7, 1893, Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, a young lawyer then, was thrown off a train compartment reserved for whites only.

She said the two leaders gave hope to the enslaved people of this world, whether under colonialism or apartheid.

"It was in Pietermaritzburg that hope was redefined by two of the greatest leaders of our times. They gave hope to the developing countries, especially India and African



nations, by finally freeing them from the yoke of colonialism.

"They gave hope to generations to come, by ensuring that our values and principles, which we hold sacred, are forever enshrined in our psyche and in our Constitutions," Swaraj said.

She quoted Mandela when he

officially unveiled a statue of Gandhi here 25 years ago, "In his speech, Mandela said 'now more than ever is the time when we have to pay heed to the lessons of Mahatma Gandhi'."

Swaraj lauded the role of Indian-origin South Africans in the struggle for freedom.

"The history of South Africa is full of tales of individuals who gave up their today for a better tomorrow.

"The story of the people of Indian-origin is a story of undaunted determination and courage, as they made sacrifices in South Africa's long struggle against colonialism and apartheid," she said.

Swaraj recalled the support that India provided to South Africa at international forums during its struggle against apartheid.

"India was the first country to sever trade relations with the apartheid government in 1946, and subsequently imposed a complete diplomatic, commercial, cultural and sports embargo on South Africa.

"The African National Congress maintained a Representative Office in New Delhi from the 1960 onwards. And at the end of apartheid, India immediately re-established relations with South Africa in 1993.

Since then there have been a steady consolidation of our close and friendly ties with South Africa, both bilaterally and through BRICS, IBSA and other regional and multilateral fora," she said.

Swaraj also highlighted the participation by South African youth in various programmes run by India.

"Youth are our emissaries for the future. I am happy to learn that in 2017-18, 28 young men and women from South Africa visited India through the Know India Programme. Last year, 48 South African went on the ITEC and ICCR African scholarship programmes to India," the minister said.

Swaraj said India and South Africa are marching hand-in-hand towards peace, prosperity and development.

"The world is a better place because of us. The world has much to gain from us. The world looks up to us to provide leadership," she asserted.



Time is running out for emergency services trying to find survivors from the volcanic eruption in Guatemala, with 99 people confirmed dead and nearly 200 still missing. On Wednesday, more bodies were recovered from what remained of villages devastated by the Volcano of Fire. Thousands of people displaced by disaster have been forced to move into shelters, and many of them have loved ones who have died or are unaccounted for. Firefighters say the chance of finding anyone alive is practically non-existent 72 hours after Sunday's volcanic explosion.

Trump hosts Japan PM, five days before summit with Kim

WASHINGTON, JUN 7 (AFP): With less than a week to go before meeting North Korean leader Kim Jong Un, US President Donald Trump plays host today to Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, who wants his voice heard ahead of the unprecedented talks.

Trump and Abe will hold a joint press conference at the White House in the early afternoon, before heading to Canada for what promises to be a tense Group of Seven summit clouded by the US leader's aggressive trade policies.

Since the first inkling that a Trump-Kim summit could be on the cards, Japan has repeatedly insisted that Washington be mindful not to let its guard down with the nuclear-armed regime in Pyongyang.

And by coming to Washington to see Trump for the second time in less than two months, Abe wants to be sure to get his point across to the US president, amid the intense diplomatic flurry over the future of the Korean peninsula.

Before leaving Tokyo, the Japanese leader emphasized that during his lightning visit to Washington, he hoped to "closely coordinate and agree" with Trump on an approach to the North Korea issue.

And he clearly outlined what would need to happen for the June

12 summit in Singapore to be a success: tangible progress on curbing the North's nuclear and ballistic missiles programs, as well as answers about Japanese nationals kidnapped by Pyongyang in the 1970s and 1980s.

At their last meeting at Trump's Florida retreat in April, the US president promised Abe to raise the politically sensitive abductions issue in any talks with Pyongyang.

But the subject is hardly a priority for the businessman-turned-president, whose strategy appears to be in constant flux.

Above all, Trump seems most enthused by the notion of being the first sitting US leader to hold direct talks with a scion of the ruling Kim dynasty.

The intensifying diplomacy on North Korea has so far left Abe as the odd man out: Trump is preparing to meet Kim, while Chinese President Xi Jinping and South Korea's Moon Jae-in have each already seen the North's leader twice.

For Richard Armitage, a former senior diplomat during the administration of George W. Bush, Tokyo runs a very real risk of finding itself out in the cold after the Trump-Kim talks.

"We should absolutely prevent decoupling -- decoupling Japanese and US security," he told AFP.

Iraq parliament orders full election recount

BAGHDAD, JUN 7 (AFP): Iraq's parliament yesterday ordered a manual recount of the May 12 legislative elections and sacked the commission which oversaw the polls that resulted in a surprise victory for a populist Shiite cleric.

After several failed attempts because of a lack of quorum, outgoing MPs met to order a recount at all polling stations, covering almost 11 million votes, in response to charges of electoral fraud. The nine-member independent commission was dismissed and is to be replaced by judges.

Confusion has gripped Iraq since the vote won by Shiite cleric Moqtada Sadr's electoral al-

liance with communists, even with negotiations to form a new government underway. Since last month's victory of anti-establishment electoral lists for a four-year mandate, long-time political figures pushed out by Iraqi voters hoping for change have been calling for a recount.

According to intelligence services, tests of electronic voting machines -- used for the first time in Iraqi elections -- produced varied results, appearing to give credence to the fraud claims.

Parliament already decided last week to annul the ballots of displaced Iraqis and those living abroad, although they accounted for only a small fraction of the overall vote.

The election saw a record number of abstentions as Iraqis snubbed the corruption-tainted elite that has dominated the country since the 2003 US-led invasion that toppled Saddam Hussein.

Many of Iraq's longtime political figures -- seemingly irremovable since the dictator's fall -- were pushed out of their seats by new faces. It is their voices -- with parliament speaker Salim al-Juburi leading the charge -- that have been the loudest in challenging the poll results. Once the first results came in, the United States and Iran, the two major political players in Iraq.

Trump hosts first iftar dinner at WH, seeks co-operation from Muslim world

WASHINGTON, JUN 7 (PTI): US President Donald Trump hosted his first Iftar dinner at the White House during which he sought co-operation from the Muslim world to achieve a future of security and prosperity for all, a move that surprised many in the community after he skipped hosting such a party last year.

Last year, Trump broke with decades of precedent by not hosting the annual Iftar dinner a bipartisan tradition that formally began with Bill Clinton in the 1990s but has conceptual roots tracing as far back as under Thomas Jefferson in 1805.

Trump, who has frequently engaged in anti-Muslim rhetoric, wished Muslims around the world a "Ramadan Mubarak" - a blessed holiday and sought co-operation from them to achieve a future of security and prosperity for all.

"Only by working together can we achieve a future of security and prosperity for all," Trump told a gathering of diplomats and officials at the iftar dinner last evening.

"For this reason, I was proud to



make my first foreign trip as President to the heart of the Muslim world, where I addressed an assembly of more than 50 leaders of Muslim-majority countries. That was something," he said.

"The partnership and solidarity that we established over the past year has only deepened with time. So many friendships. So many meetings, even in the Oval Office. And we've made a lot of progress, I

think, a lot of tremendous progress," Trump said.

After delivering his remarks, Trump sat on the head table which among others included Saudi Ambassador Prince Khalid Bin Salman and Jordanian envoy Dina Kavar. The Indonesian Ambassadors was also seated on the same table.

Envoys from several Muslim countries including the UAE, Egypt, Tunisia, Qatar, Bahrain, Morocco,

Algeria, Libya, Kuwait, Gambia, Ethiopia, Iraq, and Bosnia were invited.

"A very warm welcome to all of the ambassadors here tonight representing Muslim-majority nations. We're greatly honoured by your presence, and thank you very much for being here. Some very good friends. To each of you and to the Muslims around the world: Ramadan Mubarak," Trump said.

Vice President Mike Pence and several of his Cabinet members, including Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin and Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross attended the Iftar dinner.

"Tonight, as we enjoy a magnificent dinner at the White House, let us strive to embody the grace and goodwill that mark the Ramadan season. Let us pray for peace and justice, and let us resolve that these values will guide us as we work together to build a bright and prosperous future that does honour and glory to God," Trump said.

"In gathering together this evening, we honour a sacred tradition

of one of the world's great religions," he said.

Meanwhile, members of the some of the Muslim groups held their own Iftar outside the White House in protest against the alleged anti-Muslim rhetoric of the Trump administration.

Several Muslim civil rights groups pushed back, organising a "NOT Trump's Iftar" protest at a park across from the White House. The groups say Trump's heated rhetoric has contributed to an increase in bullying and discrimination against Muslim Americans.

The Iftar dinner was completely opposite from the inflammatory rhetoric Trump used during his campaign, when he called for a "complete and total shutdown" of Muslims entering the country, compared Syrian refugees fleeing civil war to a deadly snake and declared.

He has also imposed a travel ban, targeting travellers from five countries with overwhelmingly Muslim populations - Iran, Libya, Somalia, Syria and Yemen.



RAINBOW BRITE DOWN RIGHT: Supermodel and Keeping Up With The Kardashians star Kendall Jenner flaunted her petite frame in a rainbow colored Ralph Lauren dress on a cloudy day in New York City.

DISNEY'S LIVE-ACTION MULAN CASTS MULAN'S LOVE INTEREST

Yoson An will play Mulan's love interest in Disney's live-action take on the Chinese legend. The Mouse House previously adapted Mulan as an animated film back in 1998, with Agents of S.H.I.E.L.D.'s Ming-Na Wen voicing the titular character. Liu Yifei will play the role in the live-action version, which re-tells the story of how young Mulan, fearing for her ailing father's life, disguises herself as a man and takes her father's place in China's army. Niki Caro, who previously joined forces with Disney on the true story-based sports drama McFarland, USA, is calling the shots this time around.

With Caro aiming to begin production in New Zealand and China this year, there have been several casting updates for Mulan over the past month. Among those now set to appear in the film are Rogue One's Donnie Yen as Commander Tung, Mulan's mentor in the military; Gong Li as the movie's villain, a powerful witch; and Jet Li as China's seasoned Emperor.



Other cast members include Utkarsh Ambudkar and Ron Yuan in supporting roles as, respectively, a con man named Skath and the Imperial Regiment's second in command, Sergeant Qiang.

THR is further reporting that An will play Chen Honghui, a "confident and ambi-

tious" member of Commander Tung's unit who becomes Mulan's ally before evolving into her love interest. The animated Mulan, as its fans are no doubt aware, features a different love interest for the movie's namesake; specifically Li Shang, the army captain whose speaking voice was provided by BD Wong (with Donnie Osmond performing Shang's very catchy song in the film, "I'll Make a Man Out of You"). By the sound of it though, Chen's role in the live-action Mulan will be largely identical to Shang's in the Mouse House's 2D animated movie.

ANDROID P BETA 2 INCLUDES 157 NEW EMOJI AND HAS GENDER-NEUTRAL OPTIONS

Today, Google announced a new beta for its upcoming Android P release that shows the new emoji updates coming later this year, including new items like a skateboard and lobster, support for redheads, and a gender-neutral option for the family and couple emojis.

These emojis already existed in the Unicode Standard, and Google is now following the guideline stating, as Emojipedia says, that "if a gender isn't mentioned, then a gender-neutral or gender-inclusive display



should be used." So, the default emoji for family and couple will be gender ambiguous, and in the sub-menu for each, specific combina-

tions of gender can be selected.

This could be an indication that Google will move toward a gender-neutral option as the default for other emojis in the future. Last year, Apple announced some separate, gender-neutral emoji of its own.

Outside of the gender-neutral shift, there are many other changes coming for the next set of Android emojis. Some are just getting tweaked — like the salad emoji no longer containing egg as an ingredient in order to make

ly involved, don't be surprised if someone new and exciting enters your life.

SCORPIO: Scorpio, your working life and income are likely to be enhanced today through the influence of people who live in distant states or foreign countries. The desire for knowledge is probably strong, and you might seek to develop some new skills. Your romantic life is also likely to be thriving since you feel passionate and project that feeling to others. Expect some surprises from a current or potential romantic partner.

SAGITTARIUS: Romance is front and center today, Sagittarius, as you're probably feeling especially passionate. This is a great day to plan an intimate evening with a lover. Make use of candles, muted lights, and soft music.

You're apt to be feeling especially passionate about your other interests, whether they're intellectual, creative, or business oriented. You can expect to spend a lot of time pursuing your passions, no matter what they are.

CAPRICORN: You're likely to be feeling especially romantic today, Capricorn. If you're currently involved, plan an intimate evening at home with your lover. If you aren't involved, anything goes. Don't be surprised if someone new and exciting comes into your life. Your imagination is high, so you might decide to put your energy into creative projects. Take whatever time you need. Don't let the day pass you by.

AQUARIUS: You're likely to be feeling especially romantic today, Capricorn. If you're currently in-

involved, plan an intimate evening at home with your lover. If you aren't involved, anything goes. Don't be surprised if someone new and exciting comes into your life. Your imagination is high, so you might decide to put your energy into creative projects. Take whatever time you need. Don't let the day pass you by.

PISCES: Business and money matters may seem too good to be true, Pisces. Success and good fortune in these departments are definitely indicated for you today. If you've been trying to get a break in a creative or artistic field, it may finally manifest. The present looks profitable and the future bright. In the evening, celebrate by scheduling a romantic encounter with your lover. You should find it especially gratifying now.

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BRADLEY COOPER AND LADY GAGA'S 'A STAR IS BORN' TRAILER DROPS

Bradley Cooper falls in love with Lady Gaga in Warner Bros.' first trailer for its remake of "A Star Is Born."

Cooper, who also directed, stars as veteran singer Jackson Maine. The footage opens with him standing before a massive audience, singing a ballad that includes the lyric "Maybe it's time to let the old ways down."

He then discovers Gaga's character, a struggling artist named Ally who's short on confidence. "I don't sing my own songs," she tells Cooper. "I just don't feel comfortable. Almost every single person has told me that they liked the way I sounded, but they didn't like the way I looked."

A clearly smitten Cooper replies, "I think you're beautiful."

The new trailer offers a brief sample of Cooper and Gaga singing together. The film co-stars Sam Elliott, comedian Dave Chappelle, and Andrew Dice Clay.

It's the third remake of 1937's "A Star Is Born," for which Janet Gaynor won the Academy Award for her role as an aspiring actress dealing with a fading star, played by Fredric March. It was rebooted in 1954 with Judy Garland and



James Mason, and in 1976 with Barbra Streisand and Kris Kristofferson.

To add to the authenticity, Cooper and Gaga performed at Coachella and at Glastonbury, where they shared the same stage as Kristofferson.

The trailer bills the singer as Lady Gaga, not as Stefani Germanotta. Initial publicity materials for the film listed Gaga by her given name.

Cooper came on as director following his work with Clint Eastwood on "American Sniper." Eastwood attempted

to get the film made for years, with Cooper in the role of the fading star and Beyonce as his co-star, then suggested that Cooper direct.

The film is produced by Bill Gerber, Jon Peters, Todd Phillips, Lynette Howell Taylor, and Cooper, while Basil Iwanyk and Ravi Mehta are serving as executive producers. Cooper, Will Fetters, and Eric Roth wrote the screenplay, based on the 1937 story by William A. Wellman and Robert Carson.

The film hits theaters on Oct. 5.

LAST SURVIVING MUNCHKIN FROM THE WIZARD OF OZ, JERRY MAREN, DIES AGED 99

Jerry Maren, the last surviving munchkin from The Wizard of Oz, has died aged 99.

Boasting an entertainment career that spanned more than 70 years, Maren died at a nursing home in San Diego.

In one of his most well-known roles, the 4ft 3in actor welcomed Dorothy to Munchkin Land in the classic 1939 film.

He also played The Ham-burglar and Mayor McCheese in McDonald's commercials, as well as appearing in scores of films and TV shows.

Maren was fond of his role as one of the Lollipop Kids in The Wizard Of Oz, and regularly appeared at film conventions and other events honouring the cast over the years.

"I've done so many things in showbusiness, but people say: 'You were in The Wizard of Oz?' It takes people's breath away," he said in an interview in 2011.

"But then I realised geez, it must have been a hell of a picture, because everyone remembers it everywhere I go."

Maren was one of more than 100 people recruited to



play munchkins in the movie.

He stood out after ad-libbing a move handing an oversized lollipop to Dorothy, played by Judy Garland.

Maren said the director liked it so much he told him to keep doing it.

"He was a very sweet person and he was very approachable if you were a fan," his niece said on Wednesday. "He was the kind of person who would always take time to talk to you."

Born Gerald Marengi in Boston on 24 January 1919, Maren was singing and dancing at a show at a Connecticut

hotel in 1938 when MGM talent scouts saw the teenager actor and invited him to Hollywood to join the munchkin cast.

Having dreamed since childhood of a being a Hollywood film actor, he accepted and reportedly earned \$50 a week for the role, twice what his father was making.

Maren went to appear in dozens of other films, TV show and commercials, including Seinfeld and The Twilight Zone.

In 2014, fellow munchkin actor Ruth Robinson Duccini died and Maren became the group's final survivor.

He and other munchkins attended the unveiling of a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame honouring them in 2007.

Six years later, he placed his handprints in cement outside Hollywood's Chinese Theatre to promote the release of The Wizard Of Oz in 3D.

"It means everything to me," he said at the time. "It shows that it could happen to any one of us, you know, if you get lucky breaks."

Maren was preceded in death by his wife Elizabeth. The couple had no children.