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Summit **TIMES**

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ON TOP OF THE NEWS

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LD Kazi Memorial Gold Cup interschool tourney for girls postponed

**SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 20 MAY:**

The final phase of LD Kazi Memorial Gold Cup interschool football tournament for girls has been postponed.

The tournament for girls was previously scheduled to be held from 23 to 31 May at Soreng in West Sikkim.

The tourney has now been rescheduled to be held from 01 to 15 Aug 'due to ensuing monsoon and other unavoidable circumstances', reads a notice from Sports & Youth Affairs department.

The re-scheduled fixture shall be intimated later, it is informed.

Sixteen schools from all over the State are scheduled to participate in the tournament.

US confirms suspension of trade tariffs against China

WASHINGTON, MAY 20 (AFP): US Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin confirmed today that Washington and Beijing had agreed to back off from imposing tariffs on each other, a day after reaching an accord on slashing the American trade deficit with China.

"We have made very meaningful progress and we agreed on a framework," Mnuchin told Fox News Sunday. "So right now we have agreed to put the tariffs on hold while we try to execute the framework."

China's Vice Premier Liu He, who led a high-level Chinese delegation to the United States this week, earlier announced that both sides had agreed to back off from threatened tariffs.



SINGTAM, 20 MAY: After successfully completing its painting drive at several schools, Krypton Arts Society of Sikkim, today carried out a painting drive at Dongathang Primary School in Khamdong, East Sikkim. This initiative has been very well received by the schools and has helped much with the beautification drives there. [from Yogen Thatal]

West district admn organizes celebration of Organic farming

GYALSHING, 20 MAY [IPR]: The West District administration hosted a special programme today at the Industrial Training Institute 'celebrating organic farming', an initiative conceptualised by the district administration to promote organic farming in the district and the focus was conveyed in the theme: 'practice, preach and promote organic farming'.

DC (West), AB Karki, was present for the event along with representatives from all the government departments under the west district administration who also took active part in a plantation drive carried out in the vacant section of the ITI.

Saplings of several varieties of vegetables were planted by the employees.

While the male employees were tasked to plough and till



the field, the ladies participated in the vegetable plantation drive. The employees had also

contributed cash to procure manure and vegetable seedlings. At the outset, the resource

persons from Agriculture Department spoke on the sustainability **turn to pg02**

Hamro Sikkim Party to be launched by end-May in West Sikkim, Bhaichung confirms

"NO ALLIANCE WITH BJP BEING CONSIDERED"

**REBYNA RANA
GANGTOK, 20 MAY:**

Hamro Sikkim Party founding member, Bhaichung Bhutia, today informed that the party will be formally launched in the State by the end of this month.

About the venue of the launch, all that Mr Bhutia will say for now is that the party will be launched in West Sikkim.

Talking about the hurdles in organizing the event, Mr Bhutia alleged that the State Government is "causing unnecessary difficulties" for the party to acquire event and venue permissions from the administration.

"We don't understand why the State Government is creating hindrances for us to launch HSP. We are a new party and they should not be scared of us," Mr Bhutia said.

"If the government does not disturb or create hurdles, we are expecting 15,000-20,000 people at the launch event," he further informed.

"There has been a lot of positive feedback from the people and people want a change in Sikkim," he adds.

He mentioned that preparations are proceeding very well and that the people are excited to witness the launch of Hamro Sikkim Party.

Asked if any prominent politicians or faces will be joining the HSP during the launch, Mr Bhutia said that there are some surprises in store after the party is officially launched in Sikkim.

"Many SDF supporters will also join HSP after the launch," he added.

Mr Bhutia also informed that he is trying his best to bring one or two Bollywood stars to the launch programme along with the national media.

"We are working hard for the launch programme. I have travelled to some of the most remote places in the State to understand what they need," he further said.

Mr Bhutia informed that he and members of Hamro Sikkim Party are working hard for the launch programme.

"In the last one and half month, I have travelled to the interiors of Sikkim and ten times more than the Chief Minister who is also touring the State," he said.

Asked why he chose to join politics in Sikkim, Mr Bhutia said, "People here think that politics is a dirty game. That is the first response I get when I talk to people here. In fact, politics in Sikkim is becoming dirty. My intention behind joining politics is to motivate the youth and the good people to come forward to join politics. It is not right to just complain about politics being a dirty game."

He further called upon the youth of the State to come forward and change the politics in Sikkim.

"Make sure you have clean principles and do not join politics for personal benefit or for the benefit of your family," he advised.

Regarding the statement of State BJP president, DB Chauhan on a pre-poll alliance with **turn to pg02**

24hours Inspired conducts leader's conclave for school prefects and captains

**SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 20 MAY:**

24hours Inspired held a 2 daylong leadership engagement programme, 'Young Leaders Conclave', for 108 prefects and captains from five senior secondary schools across Gangtok on 19 May, a press release informs.

School prefects and captains from Modern Senior Secondary School, Sir Tashi Namgyal Senior Secondary School, West Point Senior Secondary School, Tadong Senior Secondary School and Deorali Girls Senior Secondary School



attended the conclave.

The conclave aimed at honing the leadership skills of the prefects.

Speaking about the conclave, Chief Learning Officer, 24hours Inspired, Dewaker Basnet, informed the participants that the workshop

aimed to educate the prefects about the responsibilities that come with wearing a badge or

becoming a leader.

"This is the sixth year of the programme, and over the years we believe that we have been able to make some positive difference through this programme," Mr Basnet said.

District Magistrate [East], Kapil Meena, who attended the event as the chief guest, urged the students to strive and become role models for others and also briefed them about the different aspects of the civil services. He further informed them about requirements and shared tips on how

to prepare for competitive examinations.

School captain, Modern Senior Secondary School, Sonam Tshering, offered his feedback on the program and said that it has motivated him to recognize his responsibilities as a leader and promised to spread the idea of leadership among his school mates.

Young Leaders Conclave is the leadership initiative of 24hours Inspired and till date has reached out to 500+ schools across India and abroad.

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Riverfront cleanliness drive reaches Lower Burtuk on Day 05

SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 20 MAY:

Continuing its riverfront cleaning drive, the Forest Department today cleaned the streams and jhoras at Rai Gaon in Lower Burtuk, a press release informs.

The fifth day of the cleanup drive was joined by students and residents of the area and supported by Lower Burtuk Sai Samiti and Remanti Sangeet Academy.

Coordinated by EN-

VIS, Sikkim, a door-to-door awareness rally was also held to generate awareness about World Environment Day coming up on 05 June.

Local shopkeepers near the streams and jhoras were provided

blue dustbins and informed about the ill-effects of littering in public places.

The Forest Department and the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Government of India, have

been carrying out extensive riverfront cleanliness drives along Rani Khola and its adjoining streams since 15 May as a part of the activities leading up to World Environment Day, the release informs.

West district admn organizes celebration of...

contd from pg01

and long-term benefits of organic farming.

They sensitized the employees about different methods to be applied in organic farming and detailed methods and ways of preparing manure for crops and the preparation of organic pesticides and insecticides.

They stressed the need for organic farming to be practiced on a wider scale and participation of people from all sections of society in farming.

The DC-West, in his address, informed that the district administration organized this day-long event on organic farming with the aim to promote organic farming in west Sikkim.

He further informed that spreading awareness among the government employees was another objective of the initiative.

Calling for the larger participations and support of the government employees in the Organic Mission, he stressed that organic agriculture was a vibrant engagement with

substantial scope of sustainability and should be practiced, preached and popularised in a comprehensive way.

"Organic farming should be adopted as a culture and a way of life. We should bring fallow and barren lands under cultivation as such practices will accelerate the growth of agricultural productivity in the state thus making Sikkim self reliant. Farming must be practiced on an extensive scale so that benefits of farming reach a wider section of the society," he stressed.

He added that barren and unused lands around all the government offices of West Sikkim should be utilized to grow vegetables and other crops. He expressed that west Sikkim should lead by example in terms of sustainable growth of agriculture in the state.

He also spoke about the need for price fixation of organic produce in Gyalshing and said that the district administration will work on the matter taking the interest of the farmers and consumers.

Hamro Sikkim Party to be launched by...

contd from pg01

Mr Bhutia also responded to the repeated statements of Chief Minister Pawan Chamling which is the ruling SDF party. The SDF is an alliance of the NDA led by BJP at the Centre and a member of NEDA led by the BJP in the northeastern region. How can any other political party of Sikkim then be an ally with BJP in this scenario? Till the BJP and SDF do not break their alliance, no party including Hamro Sikkim Party can even think of any alliance with BJP."

"The State BJP president should be aware of this and I don't understand why he speaks of alliance with other parties in Sikkim," he said.

"We must understand that SDF is in the NDA and NEDA also. They are also having relationship with parties outside the State. People of Sikkim are not fools; they know who the outsiders in Sikkim are," he responded.

"Hamro Sikkim Party is not an outside party. Also, Sikkim is a part of India. What is the Chief Minister trying to say by outsider party? Are the other political parties in Sikkim from India or from other countries?" he queried.



RAMMAN HEP ORGANIZES WALKATHON TO SPREAD SWACHTHA MESSAGE

GANGTOK, 20 MAY: Rammam Hydro Electric Project, Jorethang, South Sikkim, as a part of its 15-day long Swachhta Pakhwada organized an awareness walkathon on 19 May. The walkathon was flagged off by Head, Rammam HEP, Praveen Kumar Yadav. The fortnight had kicked off on 16 May and is scheduled to wrap up on 31 May. [YUGAN TAMANG]

Tripura governor stands by his K'taka counterpart

AGARTALA, MAY 20

(PTI): Tripura Governor Tathagata Roy voiced support to his Karnataka counterpart Vajubhai Vala for inviting B S Yeddyurappa of the BJP to form the government in the southern state, saying he had "acted in his best conscience".

Yeddyurappa quit after just three days in office, without facing the floor test in the Assembly today.

Asked about his take on Vala's role, Roy told reporters, "The Karnataka governor acted in his best conscience. That matter, as far as I understand, was left to the dis-



cretion of the governor, subject to correction by the Supreme Court."

He was speaking on the sidelines of the inaugural session of Tripura NAYACON 2018, which has been organised by the state AYUSH mission. Vala had asked Yed-

dyurappa to take the floor test within 15 days of his swearing-in on May 17, but the Congress and the JD(S) had moved the Supreme Court, which directed the BJP leader to take the test today.

The May 12 polls to

SKM forms CLC at Sumik-Aritar

SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 20 MAY:

A meeting of the Sikkim Krantikari Morcha was held at Sumik-Aritar block under Khadong-Singtam constituency on Sunday chaired by SKM chief coordinator and Sangha MLA, Sonam Lama.

During the meeting, a 50-member constituency level committee of the party's youth wing was formed and press, publicity and social media wing

was also extended in the constituency, informs an SKM press release.

The release further informs that senior vice-president, TN Dhakal, in his address, alleged that the Sikkim Democratic Front government 'has always made false promises to the people' and assured that SKM party would work sincerely and responsibly for the State and the people.

Likewise, former MP, Nakul Das Rai, said that

many communities in the State were not secure in the present government.

The release adds that party chief coordinator stated that the main objective of the formation of the SKM was to improve the future of the youth of Sikkim. He further alleged that despite of several major projects in the State, local people have not benefitted from it.

He also urged the people to stay alert and not to get divided.



NSS volunteers leave for Youth Empowerment Program in Pune

SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 20 MAY:

Thirty-three National Service Scheme (NSS) volunteers from the State under the Department of Sports and Youth Affairs, along with program officers Karma

Denzongpa and Tshering Choden Bhutia hit the road today to attend Youth Empowerment Programme scheduled to be held from 20 to 31 May at Pune.

Among the volunteers, 25 were selected

from Government Law College and the remaining from different parts of the State.

The volunteers were sent-off by NSS Assistant Director, Pincho Bhutia and NSS staff members from Paljor Stadium today.

Tourism Ministry proposes lifting restrictions on foreigners travelling to Northeast

NEW DELHI, MAY 20

(PTI): The Tourism Ministry has proposed lifting restrictions on foreigners travelling to Arunachal Pradesh and parts of Sikkim, Minister K J Alphons said.

Foreigners now need special permits such as a Protected Areas Permit (PAP) and Restricted Areas Permit (RAP) to be able to travel in these areas.

"The ministry has proposed opening up the Northeast for tourists. In the last six months the government has opened up many restricted areas and if the plan in the Northeast works, then many more border areas can be opened up," Alphons told PTI.

The ministry pro-

posed this on May 17 at a meeting with senior Home Affairs and Defence Ministry officials.

Any change would be subject to the approval of the ministries because the issue related to India's security, he said.

"The states too need to be consulted and as of now we cannot give a deadline for this. However, over the past six months we have been working very fast on this," Alphons said.

The Tourism Ministry, he added, was also planning to propose that travel restrictions be removed from border areas in Rajasthan, Uttarakhand, Jammu and Kashmir and Himachal Pradesh.

Wholesale prices of onions as low as 50 paise per kg in MP

BHOPAL, MAY 20 (PTI): Onion prices crashed to between 50 paise and Rs 5 per kilogram, depending on their quality, at state-run wholesale markets across Madhya Pradesh, farmers and merchants said today.

"Yesterday, we purchased onion at 50 paise to Rs 5 per kg from farmers depending on the quality of the produce," Neemuch Onion Mandi merchant Sameer Choudhary told PTI today.

Bhopal Krishi Upaj Mandi Samiti secretary Vinay Prakash Pateria informed that onion was be-

ing bought at the wholesale market here at prices ranging from Rs 2 to Rs 6 per kilogram.

He added that more stocks of onions, thanks to a bumper harvest across the state, was expected to make their way to the wholesale markets.

"A lot of supply has come in the last two days and more is expected. By the close of this season, about 20,000 to 25,000 quintals of onions is expected to reach the Bhopal Mandi," he informed.

"A lot of the produce coming in is of poor quality.

Cultivators are selling better quality onions in the open wholesale market," Pateria said.

The retail price of onions in several parts of the state was currently about Rs 10 per kilogram, farmers said.

An agitation by farmers on June 6 last year, demanding fair prices for their produce and waiver of farm loans, had resulted in the death of six protesters in police firing in the state's Mandsaur district.

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Gangtok on Monday, 21 May

Temp: 25°C / 15°C
Forecast: Intervals of clouds and sunshine, a passing shower in the afternoon.
Sunrise: 04:44 AM
Sunset: 6:20 PM

JB Darnal represents Sikkim-BJP at NEDA meet

SUMMIT REPORT GANGTOK, 20 MAY: Bharatiya Janata Party's Sikkim unit vice-president and spokesperson, JB Darnal, represented the state unit at the third anniversary of the North East Democratic Alliance held in Guwahati on Sunday. He submitted a memorandum on different issues of Sikkim to the BJP national president, Amit Shah, on the occasion, informs a BJP press release.

The release further informs that former Prime Minister, Atal Bihari Vajpayee had sanctioned mini All India Institute of Medical Sciences [AIIMS] to be built in every Northeastern States of the country including Sikkim which he says is still awaited. "All the other NE states have fully functional mini AIIMS but Sikkim's mini AIIMS is in pathetic condition," he states.

The release adds that Mr Darnal placed various issues related to connectivity in the meeting.



Mamata concerned over rise in petrol, diesel prices

KOLKATA, MAY 20 (PTI): West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee today expressed deep concern over the sharp rise in petrol and diesel prices, saying it will affect common people.

"We are very concerned about the rising prices of petrol and diesel. This will certainly affect prices all around. Common people, farmers and many will suffer," Banerjee said on her official Twitter handle.

Petrol price today increased by 33 paise a litre in Delhi -- the highest since the daily price revision came into force in mid-June 2017, and diesel by 26 paise, according to price notification issued by state-owned oil firms.

Petrol costs Rs 78.91 per litre and diesel Rs 70.12 in Kolkata, the notification said.

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

Sanjay Agarwal to be conferred Ram Patro Memorial Award for Excellence in Journalism

SUMMIT REPORT GANGTOK, 20 MAY: Freelance journalist based out of Rangpo, East Sikkim, Sanjay Agarwal, has been named for the Ram Patro Memorial Award for Excellence in Journalism, a press release from Ram Patro Memorial Award Committee informs.

Since 2005, the Ram Patro Memorial Award Committee has been conferring the Award to the most promising journalist of the State in the memory of Ram Patro, the founding editor of Sikkim Express.

14 journalists working in Sikkim have been awarded the Ram Patro Memorial 'Most Promising Journalist' award so far, informs the release.

The selection committee in 2017 decided to extend its ambit to the neighboring regions of Siliguri, Darjeeling, Kalimpong and Kurseong. Accordingly, the name of the award was also changed to 'Ram Patro Memorial Award for Excellence in Journalism'.

Special Correspondent of The Telegraph based in Darjeeling, Vivek Chhetri was the first

recipient of the Ram Patro Memorial Award for Excellence in Journalism.

The committee has further announced to award the 'Best Working Journalist in Sikkim Express and Himali Bela for 2017-18' to Sub-Editor, Himali Bela, Arjun Piyush.

The award will be conferred to the winners in a function scheduled to be held on 24 May. Tourism and Civil Aviation Minister, Ugen T. Gyatso Bhutia is set to attend the function as chief guest with Political Editor, Hindustan Times, Vinod Sharma as

guest of honour.

"We are pleased to have Sanjay Agarwal as the first recipient of the Ram Patro Memorial Award for Excellence in Journalism. He is a prominent journalist of the State. He has displayed versatility in reporting for English, Hindi and Nepali newspapers published from both Sikkim and Siliguri. He has also shown that a journalist is not limited by his area and one can be prolific in news generation even from a small place," said chairman of the Ram Patro Memorial Award Committee, CD Rai.



Two tourists injured in geyser blast

SUMMIT REPORT GANGTOK, 20 MAY: Two tourists from Nagpur were injured when an electric geyser exploded at Hotel Sonam in Lal Bazaar today.

According to sources, the tourists had arrived in Gangtok yesterday at 10 p.m. after which they held a kitchen party with six other people [also tourists] at the same hotel.

After the party wrapped up, they reportedly went to bed. Sources say that the geyser, which had been kept on for a long time, exploded after they went

to bed. Two tourists were injured in the blast. One of the injured has reportedly fractured a leg while the other has fractured his nose.

Give up citizenship Bill, it's a threat: AGP to Amit Shah

GUWAHATI, MAY 20 (PTI): Asom Gana Parishad (AGP) today registered its protest against the Citizenship Amendment Bill, 2016 before BJP president Amit Shah and urged the Centre not to go ahead with the Bill as it is a threat to the indigenous people and violates the clauses of Assam Accord.

The AGP is an ally of the BJP government in Assam.

AGP president and Agriculture Minister Atul Bora urged the BJP president at the third meet of the North East Democratic Alliance (NEDA) here to take the sentiments of the local people into consideration and ensure the Bill is not passed.

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6th Mile youth conduct blood donation camp

GANGTOK, 20 MAY: Youth of "Cha Mile United" organized a blood donation camp near Entel Motors on 19 May. The blood donation camp was held under the supervision of STNM Hospital Blood Bank Officer, Dr CN Sharma. 50 units of blood were collected and donated to the Blood Bank, a press release informs. Organizing member, Amir Dewan said that the blood donation camp was organized to send the message of positive well-being.

Nepal to shut India's field office, says Prime Minister Oli

KATHMANDU, MAY 20 (PTI): Nepal will close the Indian Embassy's field office in the near future as it has "outlived its purpose", Prime Minister K P Sharma Oli has said.

India was permitted to set up the temporary field office in 2008 to issue passes to vehicles for plying on Indian roads in the bordering regions after Koshi floods severely damaged a 17-km stretch of the east-west highway.

Initially set up in the eastern Sunsari district, it was later shifted to the nearby Biratnagar city, about 375 kms from here, along the Koshi Highway.

Speaking at the first parliamentary party meeting of the newly-formed Nepal Communist Party here, party's co-chairman Oli said the office would be removed as it had "outlived its purpose".

After repair of the damaged portion of the highway, Nepal had asked India to shut down the camp office but the Indian side did not comply.

The Indian flag was hoisted on the office building while India started distributing scholarships and got involved in various social



activities using the facility, the Kathmandu Post reported.

India in 2014 sought the government's permission to establish a Consulate General Office in Biratnagar by upgrading the field office, the report said.

The Nepali government had tried to remove the field office six years ago when then Maoist leader Narayan Kaji Shrestha was the foreign minister.

In 2011, then Baburam Bhattarai-led government issued two diplomatic notes to New Delhi seeking removal of the office, according to officials.

"The prime minister's statement suggests that there is no need for such field offices in a small country," Communist Party of Nepal leader Janardan Sharma was quoted as saying by the Post.

Petrol, diesel touch all time highs as oil companies hike rates

NEW DELHI, MAY 20 (PTI): Petrol price today touched a record high of Rs 76.24 per litre and diesel climbed to its highest ever level of Rs 67.57 as the oil PSUs passed on four weeks of relentless rise in international oil prices to consumers.

Petrol price today increased by 33 paise a litre in Delhi -- the highest since the daily price revision came into force in mid-June 2017, and diesel by 26 paise, according to price notification issued by state-owned oil firms.

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

With this increase, petrol has touched an all time-high, breaching the previous high of Rs 76.06 touched in Delhi on September 14, 2013. Diesel rates are also at the all-time high level.

This is the seventh straight day of price increase since oil PSUs on May 14 resumed daily price revision after a 19-day pre-Karnataka poll hiatus. In all, petrol price has been raised by Rs 1.61 a litre and diesel by 1.64 in last one week.

In India, petrol is the costliest in Mumbai where high local taxes has led a price of Rs 84.07 per litre. Petrol has breached Rs 80 mark in Bhopal (Rs 81.83 a litre), Patna (Rs 81.73), Hyderabad (Rs 80.76) and Srinagar (Rs 80.35), according to the price notification. Petrol in Kolkata costs Rs 78.91 per litre while it is priced at Rs 79.13 in Chennai.

The cheapest petrol is available in Panjim

where a litre comes for Rs 70.26.

Diesel is the costliest in Hyderabad where it is priced at Rs 73.45 a litre due to high local taxes. It is priced at Rs 73.34 in Trivandrum. Other cities where diesel rates have crossed Rs 70 mark are Raipur (Rs 72.96 a litre), Gandhinagar (Rs 72.63), Bhubhaneswar (Rs 72.43), Patna (Rs 72.24), Jaipur (Rs 71.97), Ranchi (Rs 71.53), Bhopal (Rs 71.12) and Srinagar (Rs 70.96)

A litre of diesel costs Rs 71.94 in Mumbai, Rs 70.12 in Kolkata and Rs 71.32 in Chennai, the notification said.

Diesel is the cheapest in Port Blair where it is priced at Rs 63.35.

On Friday, Economic Affairs Secretary Subhash Chandra Garg refused to say if the government will cut excise duty on auto fuel to ease the burden on consumers.

The government is watching the situation developing from oil prices hitting USD 80 a barrel -- the highest since November 2014, and adequate steps will be taken, is all he said without elaborating.

Asked if the government would cut excise duty on petrol and diesel, he had stated that he has nothing to say on that front. "Just watch."

The BJP-led government had raised excise duty nine times -- totaling Rs 11.77 per litre on petrol and Rs 13.47 on diesel -- between November 2014 and January 2016 to shore up finances as global oil prices fell, but then cut the tax just once in October last year by Rs 2 a litre.



OBITUARY

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

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

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

It has therefore been decided that her last rites and funeral service will be conducted on 21st May (Monday) at her residence at PRAURMILA COTTAGE, MAJHIGOAN JORETHANG. Thereafter, a Memorial service in her name will be held on 24th May (Thursday) in the same location.

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

For further details, you may contact:
• 94340 57367/96098 95767 - Tika Gurung
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SummitTIMES

ON TOP OF THE NEWS

Allow Girls Their Real Due

Before we can become gender-neutral we will have to become pro-women

A recent research in the UK has revealed that brighter than average girls, especially if they hail from financially underprivileged families, are more susceptible to depression in their teens than their peers. The same does not, however, apply to the boys, in whose case, they have been found to grow more confident as the years progress. That says a lot about how disadvantaged girls are even in "progressive" societies, and if one were to look with the same prism at the environment we have created around us, the picture would be rather dismal because we have internalized instincts which must leave our daughters look at intelligence and ambition as character flaws. Okay, character flaw appears to be too strong a word, but let's accept it, too many women must be feeling frustrated with having to constantly recalibrate their potential to lower aspirations even as they watch mediocre men receive opportunities which had much better contenders.

Take the board exam results for instance, all of which will be released soon, and while policy changes are being proposed on how students are graded at this watershed evaluation of their learning, what will probably not change is the fact that girls will continue to outshine boys in the overall results. The board exam results replay a data which everyone who has been through school has experienced - girls outperforming boys. In all probability, Sikkim will also mimic this national pattern. It is important, however, that these statistics are not taken to suggest that gender equality is somehow approaching closer, and it should definitely not be plugged as a success of the Beti-Padha, Beti-Bachao tokenism. If anything, such data only goes on to confirm that equality remains a distant goal.

When it comes to education, one could safely argue that girls in our country are short-changed when it comes to accessing it since only the more academically consistent of them or those hailing from financially stable families reach the class X and XII levels and hence a higher percentage of them get through. This would however also be a superficial reading of the situation because girls outperforming boys has been a trend which has been consistent for a while now. What has not been consistent though is the access this academically more perseverant section receives in later years. In less than half a decade since the girls trump boys in class X and XII exams, they start fading away in the years when their education should be in its strongest expression and they should be reinforcing their presence in careers and research.

Centuries of societal discomfort with a women-on-top scenario starts manifesting more strongly in these years and discourage women away from ambition. The society suffers as a result, because the section which has consistently been more responsible [like learning well when in school] is pressured away from the responsibilities of policy-making and programme delivery. Male domination of these sectors has been instituted by the historic oppression of women in our country. Our major religions, Hinduism and Islam, are in scriptural and practical terms deeply inhospitable to the emancipation of women. They fool us with the celebration of women as the mother and the homemaker, a dodge which they then leverage to prescribe strongly against individualism and independent women. In Sikkim's case, the experience with Buddhism has not been much better because at heart even this faith is not as gender-neutral as some might suggest it to be and this is made obvious by the preponderance of male reincarnates against the extremely few women who return as Rinpoches.

Returning to the theme of education and the better performance of girls and how this is subconsciously suppressed when it comes to professional positions, sample this - the first person from Sikkim to clear the UPSC exams and become an IAS officer in Sikkim was a woman. She was probably representative of the better respect for education among women, and yet, it was nearly four decades after Sikkim had an organized administrative service that a woman became the Chief Secretary here. The delay was clearly because when it comes to careers and professions, the brightest lot is expected to step aside and make way for the second rung.

There is a staggering baggage of historic oppression and its attendant prejudices that women have to negotiate in our country, which is why their outshining males in education [for long dominated by men] should be celebrated every time it happens, even if it has become routine. After that, more attention needs to be paid to ensure that they remain in careers they are best suited for and ambition among them is respected. In fact, if the country is to become gender-neutral some day, it has to first consciously become pro-women.

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Bangladeshi rappers wield rhymes as a weapon, with Tupac as their guide

MUBASHAR HASAN
theconversation.com

Bangladesh, which became independent from Pakistan in 1971, is a young country. Only 7 percent of the 160 million people in this South Asian country - which is home to more Muslims than Iran, Afghanistan and Saudi Arabia combined - are over the age of 60, according to a 2016 United Nations Development Program report.

It is young, but not hopeful. Youth unemployment is high in Bangladesh, especially among those with only a primary school education. According to a recent survey, 82 percent of young people are not optimistic about getting a job.

One consequence of this youthful unrest is religious radicalization. Once lauded for its secularism, Bangladesh is now seeing young people increasingly adopt more conservative Islamic values. Though many conservative Muslims denounce violence in the name of Islam, religiously motivated crimes are on the rise. Since 2013, at least 30 secular bloggers, authors, intellectuals and publishers have been murdered.

But there is another story about youthful anger in this Muslim nation, too. And it contradicts that all-too-familiar narrative about radicalization. It's the story of hip-hop.

TUPAC, EMINEM AND YOUNG RAGE

Over the past 15 years or so, a new kind of musical activism has emerged in Bangladesh, one inspired by American rappers like Tupac Shakur, Eminem, NWA and Public Enemy.

The old school hip-hop icon Tupac Shakur - who was murdered in Las Vegas in 1996 - holds particular significance for Bangladeshi MCs. Like Shakur, who spoke of police brutality and racism in the U.S., Bangladesh's young rappers want to use their music to criticize their country's political dysfunction, democratic erosion and gaping inequality.

Hip-hop was born as protest music in the United States. The genre emerged in the late 1970s, as black Americans raised their voices against the poverty, police brutality and violence taking place in black communities.

Songs like "Fight the Power" by Public Enemy and NWA's "F*ck the Police" underpinned the black struggle for black freedom and freedom of speech in America. This trend continues today, with hip-hop fueling the social movement Black Lives Matter.

BREAKING THE CULTURE OF SILENCE

Over the past 12 months, I have listened to about 50 tracks by some two dozen Bangladeshi hip-hop



artists. With this project, which grew out of my research on political Islam in Bangladesh, I hope to understand how this emerging underground genre reflects the youthful unrest that drives violence and radicalization in the country.

Though many Bangladeshi rappers rhyme about love, money and romance, there are several recurring political themes. One is the culture of silence around inequality.

"Everyone is silent ... nobody is talking," observes rapper Skib Khan in "Shob Chup." The elite need inequality, he says, because "otherwise how will the rich get servants to serve their families?"

In Bangladesh, more than 60 million people - nearly a third of the population - live below the poverty line of US\$1.90 per day. Twenty percent of Bangladeshis hold 41 percent of all wealth in the country.

Inequality is visible everyday in the slums of the capital Dhaka, arguably the world's most crowded city. But it is ignored in the nation's political debate.

"Shob Chup," which translates to "everyone is silent," frames the country's inequality and disenfranchisement as a betrayal of the inclusive, secular and democratic ideals behind Bangladesh's 1971 revolution.

RAPPING FOR FREEDOM OF SPEECH

Bangladeshi hip-hop, which is celebrated with an annual festival in Dhaka, is also a defense of free speech in a country where that right is rapidly eroding.

In 2013, the government amended the Information and Communication Technology Act to mandate a jail sentence of seven up to 14 years for online speech deemed "offensive" by the courts. Since then, 1,271 Bangladeshi journalists and activists have been charged with cyber defamation, according to the international nongovernmental organization Human Rights Watch.

A proposed new digital security law would impose even stricter regulation of speech.

In his track "Bidrohi," or "rebel," rapper Tow-

fique Ahmed sees these crackdowns as a violation of Bangladesh's founding ideals.

"I haven't seen the war but I heard of it. I don't know how to do revolution but my blood is on fire," he raps. "Don't take me as someone who is stupid because of my silence."

Another group Cypher Project raps about the high-profile 2014 murder case in which security forces abducted and killed seven people in the Bangladeshi city of Narayanganj.

DYSFUNCTIONAL POLITICS

Bangladesh's politics is bloody. By virtually any measure - political equality, freedom of speech, human rights, religious tolerance, press freedom - this is a country struggling with the most basic tenets of democracy.

Rappers' criticism of Bangladeshi politics can be fierce.

One group, Uptown Lokolz has declared elections, which are held every five years, pointless. The "country's situation changes in every five years," they rap. Yet "whoever comes in the power ... everything is lost under the curtains of self-interest."

Rappers also indict self-serving politicians for the rise in religious violence in Bangladesh. In "White Democracy," the rapper Matheon wonders "for how long religion would be subject of big politics ... maybe I am a Christian but I understand your corruption."

Research confirms that mainstream parties in Bangladesh have embraced religious zealotry for political gain, giving Islamic extremists more power. Religious radicalization is not a marginal phenomenon in Bangladesh: Studies have found that many who support terrorism in the name of religion come from a middle-class background.

The U.S.-based Bangladeshi rapper Lal Miah condemns politicians who foment religious zealotry as "frauds who are betraying the secular spirit of 1971."

Towfique Ahmed has perhaps the most pointed critique. Bangladeshi politicians corrupting society for their own benefit, he says, are waging "false Jihad."

Speaking truth to power in a time and place where that habit is strongly discouraged sends a powerful political message. Hip-hop in Bangladesh, as in the U.S., becomes protest music simply by unflinchingly portraying the harsh reality that too many young people live everyday.

[The writer is Postdoctoral fellow, Department of Culture Studies and Oriental Languages, University of Oslo]

How Britain's colonial legacy still affects LGBT politics around the world

ENZE HAN & JOSEPH O'MAHONEY
theconversation.com

At the recent Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in London, the British prime minister, Theresa May, urged Commonwealth nations to reform existing anti-gay legislation held over from British colonial rule. And while stopping short of a formal apology, she used her speech to explicitly acknowledge Britain's responsibility: "As the United Kingdom's prime minister, I deeply regret both the fact that such laws were introduced and the legacy of discrimination, violence and death that persists today."

Her speech came in the aftermath of a recent court decision by Trinidad and Tobago to decriminalise homosexuality. On April 12 2018, Justice Devindra Rampersand of the High Court of Trinidad and Tobago ruled that sections 13 and 16 of the Sexual Offences Act are "unconstitutional, illegal, null, void, invalid and of no effect to the extent that these laws criminalise any acts constituting consensual sexual conduct between adults".

The drama came later during an interview with BBC Radio 4's Today programme, when Trinidadian Anglican Bishop Victor Gill called comments made by May a form of "neo-colonialism" when he denounced the ruling - without noticing the irony that it was British colonial administrators who introduced the anti-gay law in the first place.

As we show in our newly published book, British Colonialism and the Criminalisation of Homosexuality, many laws that make homosexuality a crime today were imposed during



rule by the British Empire.

BRITAIN CRACKS DOWN

From 1860 onwards, the empire spread a specific set of legal codes and common law throughout its colonies, among them laws proscribing male-to-male sexual relations. The British Empire drafted these penal codes with a moral, religious mission in mind. The intention was to protect local Christians from "corruption" and correct and Christianise "native" custom. Two particularly prominent examples are the colonial criminal codes of India and Queensland, both of which specifically criminalised male-to-male sexual relations - though they both set a penalty of long-term imprisonment rather than death.

In contrast with the British experience, the other major colonial powers did not leave such an institutional legacy on criminalisation of homosexual conduct. This is why former British colonies are far more likely to

still have these laws in place than the former colonies of other European states or other states in general. Of the 72 countries with such a law still on the books in 2018, at least 38 of them were once subject to some sort of British colonial rule.

Although these laws are superficially similar, they were drafted very differently and specified penalties of varying severity. Compare for instance Ghana and other African countries with a British colonial legacy. Ghana's criminal code currently classifies "unnatural carnal knowledge" as a misdemeanour, with a potential prison sentence of up to three years. By contrast, Kenya, Nigeria, and Gambia treat gay sex as a felony, with a penalty of up to 14 years' imprisonment. And in Uganda and Zambia, the maximum penalty is life.

So why the difference?

The spread of criminalisation during the British colonial period

was not centrally co-ordinated. Instead, a number of variables - including in several cases the fact that a colonial administrator happened to have dealt with the introduction of a criminal code in their previous posting - seem to have been relevant to why a particular criminal code was introduced into a territory, or why one was introduced at all. This is why colonial Ghana, then called the Gold Coast, received a completely different colonial-era criminal code from British administrators from the other colonies.

AN UNEVEN LANDSCAPE

There's plenty else to unpick in this strange, complicated history. For example, we also investigated whether former British colonies are less likely or slower to decriminalise on average than the former colonies of other European imperialists.

We compared several former British colonies such as Singapore, Uganda and India, that still criminalise homosexual sex with another group of former colonies that have made significant strides toward greater social inclusion of their sexual minorities - among them South Africa, Belize, and Fiji. To test the still quite prevalent idea that British imperialism "poisoned" societies against homosexuality, we looked in some detail not just at the historical origins of these countries' anti-homosexuality laws, but of the contemporary political processes that have so far prevented some of them from scrapping the laws.

Based on our research, we argue that the evidence in favour of the claim is inconclusive at best. Among

turn to 05

Nadal beats Djokovic, sets up Zverev clash in Rome final

ROME, MAY 20 (AFP): Rafael Nadal closed in on an eighth Rome Masters title as he dismissed old rival Novak Djokovic 7-6 (7/4) 6-3 to reach the final for a record-extending 10th time.

The Spanish top seed will meet second-seeded holder Alexander Zverev, a 7-6 (15/13) 7-5 winner over Australian Open finalist Marin Cilic yesterday.

His impressive win over Djokovic will give Nadal added confidence ahead of the French Open, where he has won a record 10 titles.

Nadal, still unbeaten in semi-finals at the Foro Italo, unleashed a trademark clay-court attack after winning a tight first set lasting well over an hour in his 51st meeting with old rival Djokovic.

"I need to be able to play my best tomorrow," Nadal said of his Sunday final.

"I'm very happy with my game. It all worked for me, the tactics, the shots."

"To play against Novak you always have to play at the limit of your game with a high intensity and understand well the tactics you want to play."

The 31-year-old world number two cut the deficit in his head-to-head series with Djokovic to 26-25 since they first faced off in 2006.

But the Serb complained afterwards about poor scheduling which affected his preparation, playing a late-afternoon quarter-final on Friday before returning to court on yesterday mid-afternoon.

"I don't want to seem like I'm complaining about losing the match because of the schedule. But having to end at night and coming back to play early in the day affects a lot," he said.

"Nobody has ever, ever reached me in my entire career to ask me about what I think would be the best scheduling. I don't think that is fair, we will address it in the next players' council."

Djokovic has rediscovered his form this week after months of elbow injury problems, including an operation earlier this year.

He can also feel his confidence increasing.

"I don't think there was that much of a difference, which is great news for me. Winning the tie-break was for him a great wind in his back."

"Rafa was just better in the important moments, played the better shots. He deserved to win. I haven't had many breaks in the last period, so I'm pleased by how I've played in the last days. I hope Roland Garros can be the continuation."

Nadal now stands 10-8 over Djokovic in semi-finals, with the pair having played each other at all four Grand Slam tournaments, the ATP Finals, Davis Cup, the Olympic Games along with eight of the nine Masters 1000 events.

Nadal took 73 minutes to win the opening set after leading 5-2.

Ronaldo and Bale score in Real draw as Zinedine's son makes debut

MADRID, MAY 20 (AFP): Real Madrid's final Champions League rehearsal was running perfectly until Cristiano Ronaldo was substituted and Villarreal scored twice to snatch a 2-2 draw.

Gareth Bale and Ronaldo put Real in cruise control at the Estadio de la Ceramica yesterday but the Portuguese, along with Luka Modric, was taken off shortly after the hour and Villarreal came surging back.

It was two substitutes that did it, Roger Martinez unleashing a stunning strike into the top corner before Samu Castillejo struck the equaliser five minutes from time.

Castillejo took advantage of some hesitation from Luca Zidane, Zinedine Zidane's 20-year-old son, who was making his debut for Real in goal.

"I am happy for his debut, it is an important day for him and his coach," Zidane senior said afterwards.

"For his father, we will see what he says at home." The draw means any hopes Real had of snatching La Liga's runner-up spot off city rivals Atletico are ended but their attention will quickly turn to



Liverpool and next weekend's showdown in Kiev. Villarreal jump above Real Betis into fifth.

If Liverpool boss Jurgen Klopp had been spying for signs of weakness he would have found few in the opening hour, when Real looked slick, clinical and set for a comfortable victory.

But, defensive frailties

were exposed again and perhaps this result underlines that if Ronaldo can be neutralised, this is still a team that is far from unbeatable.

"We are ready," Zidane said. "We have not had any injuries today and we are ready to play our last match and our final."

Ronaldo was withdrawn after 61 minutes, the 33-year-

old showing no sign of discomfort in what was his first outing since spraining his ankle against Barcelona a fortnight ago.

Bale too will hope his smart turn and finish could yet earn him a starting spot against Liverpool, even if Zidane has shown propensity for ignoring the Welshman's league form in the past.

After scoring twice against Celta Vigo last weekend, Bale was excellent again here and he at least heads to Ukraine knowing he could not have done much more. He has now scored 17 goals in 19 matches this year when playing more than 60 minutes.

"Gareth has never lowered his level," Zidane said. "I am happy with his role, for what he does, he has not changed anything." - Zidane names strong side -

Liverpool will have played only one match in 20 days by next weekend and Zidane opted for rhythm over rest, picking a strong team that could be close to his line-up in seven days' time.

The Frenchman, however, has tended towards caution in Europe and it would be a surprise if Bale and Isco both started ahead of Lucas Vazquez, and even Marco Asensio, next weekend.

There was a debut in goal for Zidane's son Luca, who joined Real's academy when Zidane was playing for the club in 2004 and has been a regular presence in the squad this season.

Luca was born in May 1998, a month before his fa-

ther inspired France to win the World Cup.

Bale opened the scoring in the 10th minute with a goal largely of his own making as he fooled Daniele Bonera by running over Modric's pass, before driving into the bottom corner.

Ronaldo doubled the advantage before half-time, nodding home a nonchalant Marcelo cross from the outside of the Brazilian's foot as Real strolled into the interval.

But Ronaldo and Modric trundled off and the game turned on a brilliant shot from Martinez, who jinked inside from the left and found the far top corner.

If Luca Zidane could have done little to stop that one, he might have done better with the equaliser as he rushed out to intercept a clipped ball over the top but failed to claim.

Castillejo touched it round his flailing opponent and clipped a sharp finish into the empty net.

Earlier in the day, Sevilla maintained their strong end to the season with a 1-0 win over Alaves. They finish seventh, below Real Betis, who slipped to a surprise 3-2 defeat at Leganes.

India lose to France in Thomas Cup Final

BANGKOK, MAY 20 (PTI):

Young Indian male shuttlers made a disastrous start to their campaign at the Thomas Cup Final as they suffered a 1-4 loss to France in a group A opening match to jeopardise their chances of qualifying for the knockout stage, here today.

World no 18 B Sai Praneeth gave India a positive start, defeating France's Brice Leverdez 21-7 21-18 to take a 1-0 lead but none of the other players could step up when it mattered.

In the second match, world no 38 Arjun MR and Ramchandran Shlok wilted under pressure, losing 13-21 16-21 to Bastian Kersaudy and Julien Maio, ranked 47th.

Swiss Open champion Sameer Verma, ranked 21, was then handed the responsibility of bringing India back in the contest but he went down 18-



21 22-20 18-21 to Lucas Corvee, ranked 43rd, in the second singles as France grabbed a 2-1 lead.

World no 70 Arun George and Sanyam

Shukla then took the field in the second doubles match but they were no match for 103 ranked Thom Gicquel and Ronan Labar, losing 10-21 12-21 in a 28-minute duel.

Lakshya Sen then fought hard before losing 20-22 21-19 19-21 to Toma Junior Popov in the third singles.

India will next face Australia tomorrow.

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ITBP hosts cricket match with Army

SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 20 MAY:

Indo Tibetan Border Police and Army personnel posted at Chungtang competed in a friendly cricket match organized under the directions of ITBP commandant, Rajesh Kumar Tomar, today, a press release informs.

Team ITBP won the match by 105 runs. They had scored 177 runs in

12 overs.

Commandant Tomar in his address announced plans to conduct more friendly matches between the two formations in the future.

He thanked the players for participating in the game and encouraged the jawans to engage in more physical activities to stay fit and healthy.

India fail to defend women's ACT crown, lose 0-1 to Korea

DONGHAEE CITY (KOREA), MAY 20 (PTI):

India failed to defend its crown at the fifth women's Asian Champions Trophy after it lost 0-1 to hosts South Korea in the summit clash here today.

South Korea ket a resolute defence and score the only goal of the match in the 24th minute when Youngsil Lee found the back of the net from a field effort.

India's defence was tested in the early stages as South Korea started the game well, winning possession in the midfield and putting pressure on the opposition.

However, India defended their lines well and tried to surprise the Koreans on counters.

South Korea had better chances in the first period but the opening 15 minutes ended goal-less as both the teams failed to find an opening.

But the Koreans dominated the second quarter and won three penalty corners in a span of two minutes, but Indian goalkeeper Savita made some good reflex saves to deny the hosts.

The Koreans tasted success in the 24th minute when they caught Indian defence on a counter-attack.

Mi Hyun Park made a darting run



towards the baseline on the right flank and passed the ball across the Indian goal, which was deflected into the back of the net by Lee to give her team the lead.

India struggled to build momentum after going behind as the hosts took their one-goal lead into the

half-time break.

Trailing, the onus was on India to find the equaliser. But South Korea didn't let the Indian attackers find space inside their striking circle.

The hosts sat back in their own half for rest of the match, and looked to hit India on the counters.

The Koreans came close to scoring again in the 43rd minute when Mi Hyun Park found herself in one-on-one with situation an Indian defender inside the striking circle, but her shot was saved by Savita.

Korea had another chance to extend their lead in the 44th minute as

they won their fourth penalty corner, but Savita's heroics continued as she parried away the shot to keep India in the match.

It was down to the Indian team to take the initiative in the last quarter as Korea sat deep in their own half and invited India to play long balls.

It was a move that favoured the Koreans as they defended their flanks well, and did not allow the Indian attackers to find possession in their striking circle.

It was a tense final few minutes for both the sides as India went hard in search of the equaliser and replaced their goalkeeper Savita with an outfield player. But the Koreans' tight marking in the midfield made sure that they kept their lead intact as India failed to create a goal-scoring opportunity.

South Korea lifted the title for the third time after having won it in 2010 and 2011. India, on the other hand, finished second best for the second time after having lost in the final of the 2013 edition to Japan.

Indian striker Vandana Katariya was declared player of the tournament while youngster Lalremsiami was named as the upcoming player of the tournament.

First IS fighters evacuate south Damascus: monitor

BEIRUT, MAY 20 (AFP): A first batch of Islamic State group fighters left their final stronghold in Syria's capital early today under a deal struck after weeks of fierce combat, a monitor said.

"At dawn, six buses of IS fighters and their relatives left the Yarmuk Palestinian refugee camp and adjacent district of Tadamun," said Rami Abdel Rahman, head of the Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights. Abdel Rahman said the buses headed east for Syria's vast desert, where IS still controls some territory.

He had no details on how many people were aboard the vehicles, but said a majority of them were relatives of jihadists and not armed.

The evacuations came a day after an apparent deal was reached to put an end to a ferocious month-long offensive to oust IS from its last positions in southern Damascus. Pro-regime forces, specifically Palestinian militias, had been fighting since April 19 to recapture Yarmuk, Tadamun, and the nearby districts of Qadam and Hajar al-Aswad from IS.

The assault had killed more than 250 pro-regime forces and another 233 IS fighters, according to the Observatory. Fighting died down around midday on Saturday amid reports that an evacuation deal could be reached.

Syrian state media on Sunday denied evacuations were taking place in Hajar al-Aswad, but did not mention departures from Yarmuk or Tadamun.



Twenty priests were among 110 people who died in the Cuba plane crash, it has emerged. President Miguel Diaz-Canel said an investigation had been launched into the crash on Friday of the almost 40-year-old Boeing 737. It was leased to the national carrier Cubana de Aviacion by a Mexican company. One of the plane's black boxes has been retrieved, officials said. Three women were pulled alive from the wreckage and are the only known survivors. Details of some of the victims have emerged, including the Cuban Council of Churches saying that 20 priests from an evangelical church are among those who died in the crash.

Trump, Moon discuss NKorea's threat to scrap summit

SEOUL, MAY 20 (AFP): US President Donald Trump and South Korean President Moon Jae-in today discussed North Korea's recent threats to cancel its unprecedented summit with Washington, Seoul's presidential office said.

After weeks of warm words and diplomatic backslapping, Pyongyang abruptly threatened to pull out of the planned summit next month because of US demands for "unilateral nuclear abandonment", according to the North's official KCNA news agency.

North Korea also cancelled at the last minute a high-level meeting with the South, protesting joint military



drills between Seoul and Washington.

In a phone conversation on Sunday, Trump and Moon "exchanged views on various actions taken by North Korea recently", Moon's office said in a statement.

The two leaders agreed to "work closely" for the success of the landmark summit in Singapore on June 12, which would be the first meeting between a sitting US President and a North Korean leader.

They are due to meet in Washington on Tuesday.

North Korea's sudden shift in attitude followed a weeks-long charm offensive that has seen leader Kim Jong Un hold a historic summit with Moon and meet twice

with Chinese President Xi Jinping.

At a dramatic summit last month in the Demilitarised Zone dividing their two countries, Kim and Moon pledged to pursue nuclear disarmament and a peace treaty.

Pyongyang also raised hopes ahead of the US summit by announcing it will destroy its nuclear testing site next week.

But the promise is open to interpretation on both sides and the North has spent decades developing its atomic arsenal, culminating last year in its sixth nuclear test -- by far its biggest to date -- and the launch of missiles capable of reaching the US.

UNSC must end selectivity in implementing resolutions on disputes: Pak

UNITED NATIONS, MAY 20 (PTI): Pakistan has said that the UN Security Council must end "selectivity" in implementing its resolutions, especially long-standing "disputes" such as Jammu and Kashmir and Palestine.

Pakistan's Ambassador to the UN Maleeha Lodhi made the remarks during a Security Council debate here last week on 'upholding international law within the context of the maintenance of international peace and security'.

"The Council needs to be more consistent and unbiased in its actions. Selectivity in implementation of its resolutions and decisions, especially on long-standing disputes, notably Jammu and Kashmir and Palestine must end. There can, after all, be no peace without justice," Lodhi said.

Lodhi and the Pakistani delegation consistently rakes up the Kashmir issue in various UN platforms.

Earlier this month, Pakistan's delegate Masood Anwar, addressing a session of Committee on Information, raised the issue of Kashmir saying that alleged human rights violations

are taking place against the people of Kashmir.

India had strongly rejected Anwar's reference to Kashmir, saying his remarks are irrelevant to the work of the Committee.

"We have seen another attempt here today to make reference to issues extraneous to the agenda of the Committee. We completely reject these remarks as they have no relevance to the work of the Committee," Srinivas Prasad, Minister in the Indian Mission to the UN, had said.

The two sides agreed on meaningful increases in United States agriculture and energy exports. The United States will send a team to China to work out the details, said the joint statement at the conclusion of the trade delegation level talks between the two countries.

The two nations attach great importance to the protection of intellectual property rights and agreed to strengthen cooperation. China will advance relevant amendments to its laws and regulations in this area, including the Patent Law, the joint statement said.

The two trade delegations also agreed to encourage two-way investment and to strive to create a fair, level playing field for competition.

"Both sides agreed to continue to engage at high levels on these issues and to seek to resolve their economic and trade concerns in a proactive manner," the statement said. Liu told state-run China Daily in an interview that the trade talks are "quite successful, very meaningful and very fruitful".

Asked about what will be followed up in the coming months, Liu said that the two sides will see where "we have reached the consensus", and that they have already established some working groups, including the agricultural group, for consultations on concrete areas.

"Maybe some ministers from the US government will lead the groups to Beijing and will meet our colleagues to have deeper discussions with us and try to make concrete deals," he said.

China, US avert trade war: Beijing agrees to import more from America



WASHINGTON/BEIJING, MAY 20 (PTI): Averting a trade war, China and the US today struck a deal under which Beijing will "significantly increase" its purchases of American goods and services to reduce the whopping USD 375 billion trade deficit with Washington.

After lengthy second round of talks in Washington, the two sides issued a joint statement early today vowing not to launch a trade war against each other.

"There was a consensus on taking effective measures to substantially reduce the US trade deficit in goods with China," the joint statement said.

"To meet the growing consumption needs of the Chinese people and the need for high-quality economic development, China will significantly increase purchases of United States goods and services," it added.

This will help support growth and employment in the United States.

US President Donald Trump has threatened punitive measures against Chinese goods if Beijing does not cut down the trade deficit by USD 100 billion in a month and USD 200 billion by 2020.

US says it has USD 375 billion trade deficit in USD 636 billion total trade last year. China says the trade deficit is around USD 200 billion.

China too threatened a tit-for-tat retaliation but blinked in the end with a categorical undertaking to import more goods from US.

The two sides agreed on meaningful increases in United States agriculture and energy exports.

The United States will send a team to China to work out the details, said the joint statement at the conclusion of the trade delegation level talks between the two countries.

Cuba in mourning after deadliest air crash in nearly 30 years

HAVANA, MAY 20 (AFP): Cuba observed a weekend of national mourning for victims of its worst crash in nearly three decades that killed 110 passengers and crew.

An investigation has been launched into Friday's crash of the nearly 40-year-old Boeing 737-200 leased to the national carrier Cubana de Aviacion by a Mexican company.

Three women pulled alive from the mangled wreckage and in hospital in critical condition were the only survivors. One of them was conscious and asked for something to drink, the hospital treating them said.

The Boeing crashed shortly after taking off from Havana, coming down in a field near the airport and sending a thick column of acrid smoke into the air.

The circumstances echoed those of Cubana de Aviacion's worst air disaster nearly 30 years ago, in September 1989, when an Ilyushin 62 plane crashed on takeoff from Havana as it was headed to Italy. That disaster killed all 126 people on the plane, mainly Italian tourists, as well as around 45 people on the ground.

In Friday's crash, the plane was on a domestic flight from Havana to the east-



ern city of Holguin. Most of the 104 passengers were Cuban, with five foreigners, including two Argentines, among them.

The plane was almost completely destroyed in the crash and subsequent fire. What appeared to be one of the aircraft's wings was wedged among scorched tree trunks, but almost nothing remained of the main fuselage.

Cuba's Transport Minister Adel Yzquierdo told reporters one of the plane's two black boxes had been recovered in "good condition," and the other was likely to be

found within hours. Their data will be key to determining what happened.

Among the dead were 99 Cubans, six Mexican crewmembers, and five foreign tourists: two from Western Sahara, a Mexican tourist and an Argentine couple. A previous toll counted three survivors out of 110 passengers.

Built in 1979, the plane was leased from a small Mexican company, Global Air, also known as Aerolineas Damojh.

Mexico said it was sending two civil aviation specialists to help in the

investigation.

Boeing said a "technical team stands ready to assist" and it offered condolences to friends and relatives of the victims.

The mourning period was set to last until midnight on Sunday (0400 GMT Monday), the Communist Party leader and former president Raul Castro said. Flags were flown at half-mast throughout the country.

Diaz-Canel, who succeeded Castro as the communist island's leader only last month, appeared aghast as he surveyed the recovery efforts, wearing a short-sleeved shirt and surrounded by officials.

He visited the capital's morgue where the bodies were taken for identification, and met relatives who were being put up in a city hotel. He also visited the three survivors in hospital.

Castro sent his condolences to families bereaved in the "catastrophic accident," a statement read, as Russian President Vladimir Putin and a string of Latin American leaders also expressed sympathy.

Pope Francis asked the church in Cuba to convey condolences to families "who mourn the unexpected disappearance of loved ones."

The plane took off from Havana at 12:08 pm (1608 GMT) Friday heading for Holguin, 670 kilometers (415 miles) to the east. At the capital's morgue, Ignacio Ramirez, 46, told of how he lost his 22-year-old cousin, Carlos Santos, in the crash.

"He had come to Havana to get a girlfriend who had arrived from Mexico, and was returning to Holguin," he said.

Santos's mother, who lives in the US, was traveling to Cuba to give a DNA sample to confirm her son's identity.

In Mexico City, anguished relatives and colleagues of the crew gathered outside the company's offices demanding information -- some of them hugging and crying.

"I was friends with the captain, with the co-pilot, with the head flight attendant," said a former Global Air employee, 44-year-old Ana Marlene Covarrubias.

"When I heard the news on the phone, I thought it was one of those jokes people play," she told AFP.

Global Air had the necessary permits to lease it, and had passed inspections in November last year, according to the company. The crashed aircraft was one of its fleet of three Boeing 737s.



ACTION! Keanu Reeves films scenes for John Wick 3 in New York.

FAST & FURIOUS SPOFF IS A HOBBS & SHAW 'BUDDY MOVIE'

Fast and Furious spinnoff director David Leitch says the upcoming Hobbs and Shaw film will be an '80s-style buddy movie. After 8 movies and \$5.1 billion in worldwide grosses, the Fast and Furious franchise will get a bit of a shakeup. With Fast and Furious 9 not coming until 2020 at the earliest, the next film in the series will be a spinnoff featuring Luke Hobbs and Deckard Shaw, the characters played by Dwayne Johnson and Jason Statham, respectively.

Although not much is known about the project, Leitch is confirmed to be directing. A stunt coordinator originally, Leitch earned his directing wings on 2014's John Wick, which he co-helmed with Chad Stahelski. Leitch then went on to orchestrate last year's spy movie Atomic Blonde with Charlize Theron. The director's latest, Deadpool 2, is currently headed for a potential \$350 million worldwide opening weekend.

David Leitch while discussing his upcoming Fast and Furious spinnoff project talked about his inspirations for the film, particularly the '80s and '90s buddy movies that got him fired up about film in the first place. Leitch said:

"There are these buddy movies from the 80s and 90s like Lethal Weapon and 48 hours that really speak to me as a filmmaker. They're ones that made me want to be a filmmaker in the first place. So to see the chemistry they (Johnson and Statham) had in the last Fast,

and to see the potential that they could be... it was hard not to say yes, and say, let's go do this."

The '80s truly were the golden era of the buddy movie. The basic formula: take a pair of mismatched characters, throw them into a life-threatening situation, and watch them bond. Of course, Hobbs and Shaw have already gone through the bonding part in the original line of Fast and Furious movies. So, their movie won't be like the original Lethal Weapon or 48 Hours; it will be more like Lethal Weapon 3 or Another 48 Hours.

Of course, the key to any truly great buddy movie is the chemistry between the two stars. Leitch seems to think Johnson and Statham have the kind of magic rapport that, for instance, Mel Gibson and Danny Glover shared in the Lethal Weapon films. Leitch himself is better-known for orchestrating action than dealing with character, though he got to demonstrate his ability to handle comedy in Deadpool 2, which should come in handy. In addition to Hobbs and Shaw, Leitch will also direct The Division, a video game adaptation starring Jessica Chastain and Jake Gyllenhaal.

As for the Fast and Furious franchise overall, plans are still in place for two more main series films, with the last coming in 2021. Netflix also has an animated Fast and Furious series on the docket, which should be interesting to see develop.



1.9 BN PEOPLE WATCHED ROYAL WEDDING: REPORT

LONDON, MAY 20 (PTI): An estimated 1.9 billion people tuned in to watch Prince Harry and Meghan Markle's star-studded royal wedding at the iconic St George's Chapel in Windsor Castle, according to a media report.

Prince Harry, 33, and Meghan, 36, exchanged vows at the Chapel yesterday in presence of 600 guests, including the Queen.

"Meghan Markle and Prince Harry joined hands and exchanged vows in front of the archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby, and an estimated 1.9 billion people watching the royal wedding on television around the world," the 'Daily Express' reported.

An estimated 100,000 people turned out to see the couple, the new Duke and Duchess of Sussex, as they sat in an open-top Ascot Landau for



a carriage procession through Windsor.

"2,640 people were invited from charities close to the couple, as well as 1,200 people who were nominated by their Lord Lieutenants," the royal family tweeted.

"Thank you to everyone who came to

Windsor and those who followed from around the UK, the Commonwealth, and the world today. Congratulations once again to the newly-married Duke and Duchess of Sussex. #royalwedding," it said.

Guests at the wedding included celebri-

ties such as talk show host Oprah Winfrey, tennis star Serena Williams, actor George Clooney and his wife Amal, footballer David Beckham and his wife Victoria and singer Elton John, who later performed at the luncheon reception.

The celebrations

culminated in a black-tie wedding dinner staged at Frogmore House.

The couple will live in Nottingham Cottage at Kensington Palace, where their neighbours will be Prince William and Kate - Duke and Duchess of Cambridge.

FORTNITE IS COMING TO ANDROID THIS SUMMER



Epic Games' massively popular battle royale game Fortnite is coming to Android phones this summer, the company announced in a developer blog post recently. The post, titled "The State of Mobile," broke down a number of new features the game's mobile team has been working on. Those include a customizable HUD, which launched earlier this week, and a new voice chat function exclusively for mobile.

"We know that communication is key when you're squadding up for that Victory Royale, so we're working to bring voice chat to mobile. On top of that, you'll be able to chat with your teammates regardless of platform," the blog post reads. Epic is also working on strong opt-in options and muting features to make sure voice chat is not abused. "We're also looking to make it really easy to mute yourself, other players, or open up all communications with

a simple tap. There will be a button on the screen that lets you mute yourself, mute everyone in your party, or go back to open-microphone."

In addition to an Android release this summer and voice chat sometime in the foreseeable future, Epic is also working on game-play features like firing and auto-run, improving performance and introducing a battery-saving mode, and making sure players can access on-game statistics.

Fortnite has been available on iOS since the middle of March, where it's rocketed to the top of the App Store's free charts. Mobile analytics firm estimated the company made \$15 million in in-app purchases in the first three weeks it was live on the App Store. That means an Android launch may drastically increase the game's revenue-generating potential.



SELENA GOMEZ SHARES HEARTFELT MESSAGE TO 'BEST FRIEND' TAYLOR SWIFT

Taylor Swift shared the stage with BFF Selena Gomez on 19 May at the Rose Bowl Stadium in Pasadena, Calif.

The 25-year-old singer stopped by the 28-year-old entertainer's show for a duet of her song "Hands to Myself" during the Reputation Tour show.

After their performance, Selena had some of the sweetest things ever to say about Taylor.

"The reason why she has been one of my best friends is because this person has never, ever judge a single decision I've made," Selena said before addressing the fans. "But honestly thank you from the bottom of my heart for supporting someone that I know that is the most beautiful, strong, independent woman I've ever met. So thank you for supporting my best friend."

Earlier in the show, Troye Sivan stopped by for a surprise performance with Taylor!

During the show, Troye rocked one of the shirts from Taylor's merchandise collection while he and Taylor performed his new single "My

My My!"

At the concert, Troye had another surprise for fans - he announced that his new album Bloom will be released on August 31!

Shortly after the performance, Taylor took to Instagram to thank Selena for joining her onstage: "To the person I could call at any time of day, who has been there no matter what... you absolutely KILLED IT tonight and everyone was so excited to see you. I love you, and 60,000 people at the Rose Bowl loved you too. @selenagomez"

The Reputation Stadium Tour kicked off earlier this month in Arizona, and is set to conclude in Japan in November.

The pair last performed together to conclude Taylor's spectacular 85-date world tour in August 2015, where they performed Selena's chart-topping Good For You single.

Proving to be a fan favourite, the Bad Blood singer was joined by Spencer and Heidi Pratt's son Gunner, seven months, as well as Amber Rose and Wiz Khalifa's child Sebastian, five.

ARIES: Chances are that there will be an emotional bite to the day that might put something of a hostile tone on anything you encounter, Aries. The key is to not get so fixed in your ways that you turn away from new experiences. You'll find that interaction with others is exactly what's needed in order to keep things in balance. The masculine and feminine sides of your being are coming together quite nicely.

TAURUS: Your mood should be quite good today, Taurus, and you'll be well supported by the people around you. The key is to bring intense feelings directly to the table as you experience them. You'll find that other people share similar emotions at this time. The combination of ener-

gies between you and those close to you is simply magical. Join together with others on elaborate projects and special events.

GEMINI: Remember that it's OK to have a little downtime, Gemini. Don't feel like you have to always be up and on stage. Take some time to be mellow and quiet. Today is one of those intense days in which you feel overpowered by the energy around you. Don't resist this feeling. Sink into your emotions and experience them for the power that they can bring to your overall psyche.

CANCER: This is your day to shine, Cancer. Everyone else may be squirming under the prevailing energy of the day, but you should be perfectly equipped to deal with any

events that come your way. Despite the intense fluctuations in your general mood, things are on the upswing. You'll find that matters will eventually come around your way. All the hard work you've put in lately is starting to pay off.

LEO: Give thanks to the people who are most precious to you, Leo. You'll find that words cut to the core issues much more easily. Stabilize your strong emotions and use them as fuel for your endeavors. The key today is to remember those who have helped you along the way. Everyone is a sensitive and loving individual, so treat them as such. Have fun with the people all around you.

VIRGO: Connect with the sta-

bilizing force of the day, Virgo. It's important for you to keep at least one foot on the ground, as powerful and intense emotions are likely to try to take over the scene. This is a good time to do things with passion. Don't hold back. Whatever you do today, you need to give it all or nothing. There is no room for any half-hearted attempts.

LIBRA: Your strong opinions might come into conflict with strong emotions today, Libra. Be aware that fountains of intensity are likely to spring from you as if you were a bottomless well. Realize that you might need pay less attention to your logic today and concentrate on your heart. It could be hard to reason with people. If your heart doesn't

support what you say, you might as well not say it.

SCORPIO: Consciously, realize that you're someone unique and special, Scorpio. Remember this through the day and let your actions reflect this affirmation. There's a rather distinct intensity to the day that might cause others to be on edge. Don't be disrupted if there are people freaking out in your world. The good news is that you should be able to handle this intense blast of emotion easily. Emotions are your forte!

SAGITTARIUS: The intensity of the day could work for you in one of two ways, Sagittarius. You can either be depressed and weighed down by the intense emotionalism that's likely to well up, or you can take this incredible intensity

and put it to good use. The choice is yours. Realize that any action you take is going to be highly charged with feelings. Likewise, others will be extra sensitive about any move you make.

CAPRICORN: Combine today's grounding force with a bit of emotional intensity from your heart to create a powerful combination of spirit that will surely make an impact on whatever you contact, Capricorn. The key is to not take yourself too seriously. If you do, there might be incidents that jump up to give you a thump on the head, reminding you that you're just as human as the rest of us.

AQUARIUS: Your lighthearted social demeanor could find a hard time fitting in with the gen-

eral mood of the crowd today, Aquarius. You might find that you're better off simply locating a quiet place and retreating from the group for a little while. Read a good book or magazine. Plan for the days ahead and let your mind prepare for the things you have in store.

PISCES: You should be able to put on your famous smile this morning and keep it on all day, Pisces. Advertise your beautiful soul to the world. If other people are sad, it's fine to sympathize, but don't bear their ailments for them. Keep up a bit of a shield to protect yourself from this energy. At the same time, you want to keep a window open so other people can see you from the inside.