



SummitTIMES

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ON TOP OF THE NEWS

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Binay Tamang calls on CM; Differences resolved, Sikkim and Darj to collaborate for progress

ARPAN PRADHAN
GANGTOK, 27 MAR:

"LET'S NOT REPEAT the past, and follow the principle of forgive & forget and work together in the interest of the people of Sikkim and Darjeeling," Chief Minister Pawan Chamlin said during a high level meeting with the Chairman, GTA Board of Administrators, Binoy Tamang, today.

The two met at Mintokgang, the official residence of the Chief Minister.

The nearly 2-hour long meeting discussed various issues related to the Darjeeling Hills and Sikkim.

During the meeting, the CM said that Sikkim and Darjeeling share a long history and need to reestablish a good and cordial relationship.

Issues related to NH10 bandhs, NOC for Sevoke-Rangpo Railway



line, Transport Permit issues, Sikkim-Darjeeling Road and Bridges connectivity issues, State Border issues, tourism-related issues and other developmental issues were discussed.

Addressing the recent point of attrition, the Chief Minister said that he has never interfered in Darjeeling's politics and nor was he interested in meddling there.

"I have been invited to join national politics many times by senior national level politicians but I always refused as I want to focus in my own state and serve my own people," the Chief Minister said.

"After the meeting with the WB Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee things are now moving on a positive direction and it's high time for GTA and us to work together with more developmental ventures and work in public interest," the Chief Minister said.

Mr Tamang started with clarifying that he had never directly accused the Sikkim Chief

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HIMAGIRI HANDS OVER EX GRATIA FOR IMMEDIATE RELIEF FOR EXPLOSION-AFFECTED AT LINGZYA



Area MLA and district officials visited affected area, assure investigation and compensation

SUMMIT REPORT

MANGAN, 27 MAR:

Dzongu MLA, Deputy Speaker Sonam Gyatso Lepcha, along with District Collector, North, Karma R Bonpo, Sub Divisional Magistrate, Dzongu, Tshering Dorjee Bhutia, and the district officials today visited the affected houses damaged by the unexpected explosion at Himagiri Project site which had rocked the area on Saturday night at Lingzya.

Himagiri, the project developer, has a warehouse to store explosives at Lingzya.

Since the construction of the Power Project has been suspended since 2008, they had approached to the Controller of Explosives at Kolkata to dispose the expired explosives stored in the warehouse.

The Controller of Explosives had nominated an expert to destroy the explosives at the warehouse site. While disposing the explosives by the explosive expert on 24 Mar, a blast occurred which led to the damage of property of the public of Linzya.

The Panchayats and public have complained that they were being ignored as no senior officials from Himagiri have turned up and visited the area yet. They further pointed that the project developer has flouted norms and that proper investigation was required.

It was further informed that they have asked for medical relief first as a medical camp is required immediately for patients who have suffered due to the explosion.

The Deputy Speaker inspected each and every house and interacted with the Panchayats and public.

"Whatever damage has been caused will be compensated. I am engaged in some unavoidable circumstances so I was not able to visit the area the very next day," informed Mr Lepcha.

He further urged the District Administration for strict investigation into the matter.

Addressing the gathering of the public at the Gram Prashashan Kendra, the District Collector stated that the District Administration had reached the site immediately and assessed the situation.

He said that the cause of the explosion is being investigated and the SDM

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Pending payments towards welfare schemes will be released within a week, Maneka assures

NITESH R PRADHAN
GANGTOK, 27 MARCH:

Union Minister for Women and Child Development, Maneka Sanjay Gandhi, co-chaired a review meeting with the Minister for Social Justice, Empowerment and Welfare Department, Government of Sikkim, Tulsi Devi Rai, here at Manan Kendra today.

The meeting was aimed at discussing the various schemes and strategies for the promotion of improved gender diversity across various sectors in Sikkim.

Ms Gandhi was all praises for the "good practices" of the State in various fields, including eliminating gender disparity.



She made special mention of the State's Pension Bill" and has advocated for such schemes

to be emulated at the central level as well.

Highlighting the Centre's "Beti Padhao, Beti Bachao" campaign, she said that the Union government is committed to an inclusive society aiming towards gender equality. She added that women's empowerment is one of the prime commitments of the Modi government.

Since cases of trafficking are being increasingly being reported from Sikkim as well, the Union Minister has proposed an Anti Trafficking Bill which will provide justice to the victims and punish the perpetrators

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11 leave for free cleft lip repair surgery

NIRMAL MANGAR
GANGTOK, 27 MAR:

Eleven people from Sikkim in need of cleft lip corrective surgery have left for Saraswat Hospital in Agra to undergo the procedure under an initiative taken up by the Sikkim Viklang Sahayata Samity [SVSS], an NGO working for rehabilitation of differently-abled persons.

"The cleft lip repair will be performed by Dr Satya Saraswat, a well-known plastic and cosmetic surgeon. He doesn't charge any fee. Additionally, he provides free food and accommodation for the people going from Sikkim," informs the founder of SVSS, Droupadi Ghimirey.

It may be mentioned here, Dr Saraswat has repaired cleft lips of more than 500 people from Sikkim till date. The travel and medicine expenses are borne by Smile Train of India.

SUBASH RAI
GANGTOK, 27 MAR:

A preliminary report received by the Joint Director [East], Food Security and Agriculture Development Department, farmers of 14 Gram Panchayat Units of East District have been severely affected by the continuous heavy rainfall, thunderstorms and hailstones since the evening of 22 Mar.

As per the report, crops like buckwheat, maize, mustard, cabbages, peas, potato and green leafy vegetables were razed to the ground in some areas. It is also informed that most of these crops were ready for harvest.

The affected GPUs, as per the report are Central Pendam, Budang Kamarey, Navey Sotak, Tadong Samdur, Sang Martam, Beng Phegyong, Assam Lingzey, Nandok Saramsa, Patuk Singbel, Khamdong, Sirwani Chisopani, Sumin Lingzey, Samdong and Timing.



Speaking to SummitTimes over the phone, KC Nepal, a progressive farmer-cum-general secretary of Farmers Producers Organization of Rakdong Tintek, said, "Most of the crops in villages under Samdong-Kambal GPU are totally damaged and cannot be harvested."

According to him Buckwheat and Mustard fields are totally damaged and vegetables ready for supply to the markets have been destroyed. As per Mr. Nepal, maize seeds were recently sown and they can be sowed again.



He informed that Departmental officials have visited most of the areas and accordingly farmers have placed their grievances before the officials. He further informed that most of the buckwheat and potato fields are insured under Pradhan Mantri Fasal Beema Yojana but vegetable farmers are going to suffer.

"Farmers at present are wholeheartedly dedicated towards organic farming but the losses incurred due to such natural calamities have disheartened them," he said adding that it will be a good step if the government compensated the farmers as soon as possible to encourage them to continue farming.

Meanwhile, there is no data available on the amount of losses incurred by the farmers.

It is to be mentioned here that the ban on the import of several vegetables and crop items is scheduled to come into force soon in the state although no specific date has been provided so far. While most farmers have welcomed the ban, the recent weather conditions have definitely dampened spirits and roused concerns over the feasibility of such a ban.

Pending payments towards welfare schemes will...

Contd from pg01

of such crimes.

She also said that such a Bill will address all concerns of the trafficking victims and extend support to them.

She urged also all women and stakeholders to focus on skill development and promote entrepreneurial skills among women for self reliance.

The Union Minister has assured the State government that all pending payments towards funds allocated for the implementation of welfare schemes in Sikkim will be released within a week.

She also said the Centre will extend all possible support in setting up another Working Women's Hostel in the State.

In her address, the Union Minister commended the Anganwadi workers of the State for their work and also assured all help and cooperation.

The meeting was also attended by senior officials of Social Justice, Empowerment & Welfare Department, and workers involved in the implementation of centrally-sponsored schemes aimed at women and child development, members of NGOs, school children and members of the Press.

The Union Minister has held a series of official engagements with a cross section of Sikkimese, ranging from political leaders, government functionaries, animal rights group, NGOs and AWWs along with various other stakeholders.

Seminar on Quantum Physics and Emptiness in Buddhist Philosophy begins

GANGTOK, 27 MAR [IPR]: An International Seminar on "Quantum Physics and Emptiness in Buddhist Philosophy" by the Namgyal Institute of Tibetology under the auspices of the Government of Sikkim began at Chintan Bhawan today.

The two-day seminar which started today had the presence of Governor Shrinivas Patil, who is also the president of NIT, and Chief Minister Pawan Chamling in the inaugural ceremony.

The Governor in his address said that he is happy the Institute has decided to venture out from its traditional role of being a custodian and researcher of ancient arts, texts and knowledge to delve into the highly contemporary and cerebral field of quantum physics and study its correlation with Buddhist concept of 'emptiness'.

"We should build a society on the foundation of knowledge and that scholars, both of science and spirituality should bring together the two seemingly different compartments of the subject and utilize it for common good of society and mankind," the Governor said.

The Governor also in-



formed about the State government's decision to establish the State's first Buddhist University which was announced by the CM during the 80th birthday celebration of His Holiness the Dalai Lama on 06 Jul, 2015.

The CM, in his inaugural address, welcomed all the scholars

and scientists from overseas as well as from the country.

He said that Social Emotional Learning has drawn incredible attention and popularity in the scientific world, to teach the youngsters the basic human values such as compassion, understanding, gratitude etc.

He said that all religions have sprung from thoughts and wisdom of great men and hoped that today's discussion would throw new insights.

Earlier the programme started with the lighting of lamps and auspicious chanting by the NIT Sowa Rigpa students which was followed

by the welcome address by Director, NIT, Tashi Densapa.

A brief overview of the seminar was presented by Convener, Professor Sisir Roy, who talked about the concepts of modern Physics and modern Philosophy.

The keynote addresses were delivered by Prof Nicolas

Gisin who gave an overview from the Science perspective and by Prof Alan Wallace who gave an insight from the Buddhist perspective.

An address was also delivered by Vice Chancellor, Central Institute of Higher Tibetan Studies [CIHTS], Geshe Ngawang Samten.

SAATHI workshop for SMCs in Singtam

**SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 27 MAR;**

Sikkim Against Addiction Towards Healthy India [SAATHI] conducted a workshop on the multiple aspects of substance abuse and its solutions for School Managing Committees of various schools at Singtam in East Sikkim today.

Deputy Director, Human Resource Development Department, AK Bhandari, attended the programme as chief guest along with 40 teacher coordinators and

SMC members, a press release informs.

Principal of Government Senior Secondary School, Singtam, KB Chettri, who was one of the resource persons for the programme, spoke about how habit is formed due to experimentation and leads to dependency. He expressed hope for the members to understand that the SMC members have a larger role to play because of how they can influence the society to take up the matter of drug abuse as a disease to be treated.

"By bridging the gap between parents and children, by creating more parent teacher associations which focuses on listening to the grievances of children and tries to understand the adolescent behavior, a lot of substance use can be prevented. The tell-tale signs of drug use could be apparent and yet may go unnoticed if we are not on constant vigilance," said Mr Chettri.

Chief guest Mr Bhandari, in his address, elaborated on

the importance of school curriculum to encourage communication between teachers and students so as to build a trusting relationship.

Psychiatrist, Singtam Hospital, Dr Satish Rasaily, asserted that the root cause of substance abuse is peer pressure and the ultimate matter of how these cases are handled rests in the hands of the society and family.

"Since different people have different ways of using, they cannot undergo the same treatment. Rehabs are not for

occasional users likewise reprimand cannot work for habitual users. Community has a huge role in understanding how to make sure that users and dependents are not stigmatized but helped," added Dr Rasaily.

School Management Committee member, Rangpo Mining School, Nagendra Sharma, focused on the importance of moral values to be inculcated in school curriculum.

"Moral value system could help children master the art of discrimination and

hence help towards making the right choices," said Mr Sharma.

SAATHI teacher coordinators from Melli SSS, Tashi Lhamu and Deepa Rai, stated that their schools had multiple cases pertaining to use of tobacco products, cannabis, gutka, etc. They further informed that after intervention through SAATHI, they realized that helping young minds find goals and purpose truly propels them to channelize their energies in progressive activities.

Binay Tamang calls on CM; Differences...

Contd from pg01

Minister of interfering in Darjeeling politics.

"I have not accused the Chief Minister in particular; the comment was directed at the Government and since the CM heads the government I had to take his name but there were no other intention," he said.

The Chief Minister, in turn, said that Sikkim and Darjeeling should bury the past and launch a new beginning to the relationship by giving full support and co-operation to each other for the progress and prosperity of Sikkim and the Darjeeling Hills.

The Chief Minister raised concerns over issues of security and safety of NH10 which is essential for the well-being of Sikkim and the Sikkimese people and urged that NH 10 be always kept open.

To this, Mr Tamang responded, "There will be no political disturbances or strikes that will cause NH bandhs any more. No strike, not even for 12 hours will be allowed now in the Darjeeling hills."

Mr Tamang also said that both the states should work together for the overall development and begin afresh with continued support and cooperation.

Both the leaders decided to take up certain pertinent issues jointly with the Central Government such as tribal status for the 11 leftout communities, overhead stations for the upcoming railway line and taking consent for construction of towers of hydel projects.

It was also decided that a meeting regarding reciprocal transport arrangement for taxis through Secretary-level dialogue would take place shortly so that a consensus is reached which would be beneficial to both the states.

It was also decided that a discussion on creation of tourist circuit comprising Sikkim and Darjeeling Hills would also be taken up.

The leaders also decided that surveillance on both sides needs to be strengthened so that no untoward incidents take place and no misinterpretations occur between the two sides.

The Chief Minister also asked the GTA Chairman to give special attention to border areas like Sombaria, Daramdin, Rhenock through which chemical fertilizers are being brought into Sikkim.

[with additional inputs from IPR, Govt of Sikkim]

Entrepreneur Rewaj Chettri featured in Forbes' 30 Under 30 Asia list



**YUGAN TAMANG
GANGTOK, 27 MAR:** Sikkimese entrepreneur, Rewaj Chettri, has been named in this year's Forbes' 30 Under 30 Asia list. In its third year, the annual Forbes' 30 Under 30 Asia list features 300 young innovators and disruptors across 10 categories who are re-inventing their industries

and driving change across this diverse region.

Representing 24 countries across Asia-Pacific - including Azerbaijan and North Korea for the first time - the finalists were selected from thousands of online nominations.

With the highest number of honoree on this year's 30 Under 30 Asia list — 65

in total — young Indians are storming the startup scene, excelling in a diverse array of occupations.

Rewaj is one of the selected honorees under the category of Consumer Technology.

A serial entrepreneur from Turuk, South Sikkim, Rewaj studied forestry in college but went on to launch over 30 en-

terprises.

The 22-year-old is the youngest son of Late Taraman Chettri and Dilu Chettri. He completed his basic schooling from Rockvale Academy, Kalimpong and Senior Secondary from Sadam Senior Secondary School, Sadam. He has completed his B.Sc in Forestry from the North-Eastern Regional Institute

of Science and Technology, Arunachal Pradesh.

Actress Anushka Sharma and Indian badminton star PV Sindhu also feature in the Forbes' list.

It may be mentioned here, Forbes is a global media company, focusing on business, investing, technology, entrepreneurship, leadership, and lifestyle.

Prayer rally and film screening to mark Easter celebration

**SAGAR CHETTRI
GANGTOK, 27 MAR:**

On the occasion of Easter Sunday, the United Christian Welfare Society of Sikkim [UCWSS] is organising Easter Prayer Rally on 01 April in the capital. UCWSS is also organising the special screening of a Hindi feature film 'Back to Dad' as a part of pre Easter celebration on 31 Mar at Manan Kendra.

This was announced by the UCWSS president, Elder Patrus Gurung, in a press conference here today.

He informed that the rally will be starting from Tadong and is scheduled to end at Bethlehem Church in Development Area after walking along



the National Highway with prayers and songs.

"During the rally,

members of different churches will pray together for peace, unity

and well-being of the people of the State and the world," he said. He

added that churches from Ranipool to Gangtok will be participating in the Easter Prayer rally.

Mr Gurung informed that the rally is being organised after a gap of 3 years and appealed to members of different Churches from in and around Gangtok to join the rally.

On the special screening of 'Back to Dad', Mr Gurung informed that it is being organized to celebrate Easter as well as to provide opportunity to local people to watch the movie which mostly has local artists from Sikkim.

The film, presented by Annora Films, is directed by Prabhat Kumar from Mumbai and

produced by Anup Gadal from Siliguri.

Timothy Rai, actor and production manager of the film, informed that the first special screening of the film was organised recently at Mumbai and this is the second special screening at Gangtok before releasing in theatres.

The film has Kalpana Bhattarai from Sikkim in the lead along with other local artists like Robin Gurung, Manju Chettri, Sunita Singh, Sneha Rai, Kishore Dungmal, Sashi Kala Pradhan, Chetan Pradhan, Saroj Gurung, Pushpa Mangar and Samjhana Gurung.

Mr Rai urged the public to watch the movie to encourage local artists.

Gangtok on Wednesday, 28 Mar

Temp: 24°C / 10°C
Forecast: A blend of sun and clouds with a shower or thunderstorm in the area in the afternoon.
Sunrise: 05:31 AM
Sunset: 5:51 PM

Area MLA and district... Contd from pg01

Dzongu has been directed to conduct a detailed inquiry and submit a report.

He stated that all immediate relief to people on account of the damages will be paid by the Power project. He also directed the SDM Dzongu to survey all the damages to the properties and submit a damage compensation statement which will be paid by the Power Project.

He informed that necessary action as per law will be taken by the District Administration after the report is submitted by SDM Dzongu.

The area has been sealed and the remaining 1,570 detonators will be destroyed in consultation with the appointed agency, the DC said.

The DC further informed that the houses damaged by the unexpected explosion will be surveyed from 28 Mar for the process of compensation.

The representative of the Himagiri Power Project stated that all compensation amount to the damaged household, as assessed the District Administration will be immediately paid by the company.

Medical Officer of Passingdang PHC has been directed to send patients immediately to Central Referral Hospital, Gangtok including one pregnant woman. The medical expenses will be borne by the company, it is informed.

The company also disbursed immediate ex-gratia of Rs 5 lakh in cash for immediate relief and medical help to the people along with additional Rs 50,000 to conduct prayers in the area.

Since the said power project was not operational, the company's higher officials are not stationed in the area except a local manager and another staff. The representative of the company has informed that the company CEO will be arriving today.

The public and Panchayat have also placed the application to DC North today stating for proper inquiry of the incident so that no such incident occurs in the future.

Kutse Shegu

The 49th Day Kutse Shegu of **Late Phichi Bhutia** of Linkey Busty, who left for heavenly abode on 10.02.2018 falls on **29.03.2018**. All relatives, friends and well wishers are requested to join us in offering prayers to departed soul at our resident at **Burtuk Helipad, Gangtok**. We offer our sincere gratitude towards those who stood by us in the time of bereavement.

Mrs Karma Doma Bhutia (wife)- 9002372646,
 Ms Karma Doka Bhutia (daughter), Mr Chung Chung Bhutia (brother in law)- 9563337908,
 Mr. Lala Bhutia (brother in law)- 9434710142

Life skills training for trainers at Paljor Stadium

LAKPA SHERPA GANGETOK, 27 MAR:

Indian Institute of Entrepreneurship, Guwahati, under the Ministry of Skill Development & Entrepreneurship, in association with the State National Service Scheme Cell of the Department of Sports & Youth Affairs, is organizing a five-day long training for trainers on Life Skills from 27 to 31 March here at Paljor Stadium. 30 NSS programme officers from different schools are participating in the event.

The inaugural function today had Burtuk MLA, DR Thapa, as chief guest accompanied by Secretary, Sports Department, SD Dhakal, as guest



of honour.

Addressing the gathering, Mr Thapa said, "We should work responsibly and positively for the betterment of a society. Follow this path without any distractions or grudges and it will

lead towards a better and peaceful world. Teachers should impart the best knowledge and positive thinking to assist the nation-building process as they play a very crucial role. Not just academics, but focus should also

be there on skill-based training."

Likewise, guest of honour, Mr Dhakal, said, "Being a trainer you must practice what you preach. Your actions speak louder than words and the students will fol-

low the same."

Managing Director of Indian Skills Academy, Anjan Chowdhary, who was one of the resource persons for the programme, expressed, "Providing training to the trainers is not enough. We need to learn from each other and make learning a two-way process which will benefit both the trainees and the trainers."

It may be mentioned here, the training programme is being sponsored by Rajiv Gandhi National Institute of Youth Development [Ministry of Youth Affairs & Sports, Government of India], Sripurumbudur, Chennai.



Reshmi Chettri returns after refereeing at Sanix Cup Tourney

SUMMIT REPORT GANGETOK, 27 MAR:

Sikkim Football Association's Reshmi Chettri returned from Fukuoka, Japan, on 25 March after conducting a 10-day long Sanix Cup International Youth Soccer Tournament 2018 organised by the Asian Football Confederation.

An SFA press release informs that 16 teams had participated in the tournament with 12 teams from different parts of Japan and one team each from Malaysia, Korea, Russia and Taipei.

Asian Football Confederation had deputed 14 referees from different countries, four women and 10 men. Out of four women, two were from India, Sikkim's Reshmi and West Bengal's Kusum Mandi.

Besides the conduction of the tournament, the referees also underwent classes on "Law of the Game" conducted by FIFA expert trainers. SFA had organized a

welcome ceremony today at Gangtok during which Reshmi was felicitated for her achievements in the field of refereeing nationally and internationally.

Speaking on the occasion, SFA president, Menla Ethenpa, lauded her role and congratulated her for gaining so many laurels at this early age.

He mentioned that SFA would like to see her in FIFA Referee Panel which is why he advised her to work with more dedication to achieve the same.

Head of Referees, Chamchuk Lama, also informed that he is working hard to produce more referees from Sikkim and expressed hope for Reshmi to emerge as an idol for other new referees to follow.

Reshmi expressed gratitude to SFA and SFA Referee's Board for giving her the opportunity and exposure and vowed to work harder in days to come to achieve more laurels of the State of Sikkim.

Workshop discusses use of jute geotextiles in road construction

NITESH R PRADHAN GANGETOK, 27 MAR:

Daylong technical workshop on 'Applications of Jute Geotextiles in Sikkim', organised by Indian Jute Industries Research Association [IJIRA], Ministry of Textiles, Government of India, was held in the capital today.

Minister for Roads & Bridges, Government of Sikkim, GM Gurung, attended the programme as chief guest accompanied by Principal Chief Engineer cum Secretary, Roads and Bridges, GT Dhungel, as guest of honour.

It may be mentioned here, jute geotextiles have been extensively used in India for construction of rural roads which are durable and eco friendly. Slope management, protection of river banks and road construction are some of the areas where jute geotextiles can be used.

Mr Gurung, in his ad-



dress, thanked the organisers for inviting him and assured cooperation for the good of the State.

He also highlighted that the State's geographical location amidst the young fold mountains of Himalayas with high seismic activity must be taken into account while exploring ideas.

Adding further, the Minister asked the concerned organisers and stakeholders to identify places in the State where work can be undertaken.

Stating that the State is organic and eco-friendly, he assured that the department is interested in taking up such novel techniques.

In his welcome note, Director, IJIRA, Dr US Sarma, elucidated the benefits of jute particularly as geotextile used in construction which can help a Himalayan State like Sikkim in achieving road longevity.

He also said that IJIRA has been actively working in the North

East region to popularise jute as a geotextile material "which has high comparative strength at low cost". Further, he requested the state government for projects in jute geotextiles.

Speaking on the advantages of jute, he said that it is also a soil saver which acts as an agent of soil conservation. The association, with its head office in Kolkata and regional branch in Guwahati, is making its first foray into the State with

this one-day technical workshop.

Secretary, M Dhungel, while delivering his speech highlighted slope treatment in cutting hills for roads in the State with landslides as a major problem. He laid stress on stabilisation of slopes and jhoras for better roads in which jute geotextiles could come in handy.

In the technical session, various stakeholders discussed important topics related to jute geotextile.

Parmila Chhetri raring to go for Fbb Colors Femina Miss India 2018

SUMMIT REPORT GANGETOK, 27 MAR:

Sikkim girl Parmila Chhetri is currently preparing for the upcoming Fbb Colors Femina Miss India 2018 to be held in Mumbai. She was crowned Fbb Colors Femina Miss India Sikkim 2018 on 22 Mar at Kolkata and will be representing Sikkim in the Miss India contest at Mumbai.

22-year-old Parmila is from Sangkhola in East Sikkim. She has completed her graduation in tourism from Sikkim Government College, Tadong. She was among the top five contestants of Miss Sikkim 2017 and was selected for the North East zonal round along with five other models from the State in the screening of Miss India Sikkim. In the North-East zonal round at Guwahati, she was adjudged Miss India Sikkim 2018.

Speaking to media persons here this afternoon, Parmila expressed her happiness on getting the opportunity to represent Sikkim in Fbb Colors Femina Miss India 2018 contest.

"The competition will be tough and this is a new challenge for me



but I will give my best to make my State proud in this prestigious contest," she said.

To prepare for the pageant, she is grooming herself in speaking skills, fitness and other areas for the competition. She is scheduled to leave for Mumbai after one month.

Parmila shared her desires to be a successful model and an actress in the near future. A Gangtok-based event management firm, Positude has been helping Parmila to prepare for Fbb Colors Femina Miss India 2018. Positude CEO, Gyurmila Bhutia expressed her happiness on another model

from Sikkim making it this far in this prestigious contest.

"Parmila has lots of potential and always tries to learn. With a little grooming and encouragement she can do well in the contest," she said. She also thanked Sang-Martam MLA, Dr Mechung Bhutia and former Minister and social worker, T Lachungpa and designer, Tshering Dolma, for supporting Parmila.

Stating that Positude has always been working to promote local models, she stressed upon the need of more sponsors to help local models excel at the national level.

Entrepreneurs Consultation Hub Centre to open today

YOGAN TAMANG GANGETOK, 27 MAR:

Chief Minister Pawan Chhangling is scheduled to inaugurate an Entrepreneurs Consultation Hub Centre at Samman Bhawan here on Wednesday. The hub will be a first-of-its-kind to be established by any Government in the entire North East.

Keeping in view the Startup Scheme, the State Government has taken up the initiative to help Sikkimese entrepreneurs structure their ideas and benefits by creating a friendly and innovative environment and conve-

nient working spaces with all the allied facilities.

The hub offers an open space for a very flexible period. The space will be shared by the entrepreneurs and aspiring entrepreneurs of Sikkim to discuss shared concerns and issues related to entrepreneurship, schemes and trainings.

The co-workers in the hub centre can interact with each other to project their talents in the hope of leading to improved outcomes. The hub will be based on three values - participation, sharing and open-mindedness.

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ON TOP OF THE NEWS

Westerly Disturbances Pour a Reminder

Water on the streets expose drained initiatives and opportunities

The persistent downpours of the past week and more are serving as timely reminders of everything that remains ignored in the capital. No sooner do the clouds open up that traffic grinds to a halt, roads having become ferocious rapids making one wonder what the capital has learned from the numerous slips and spillovers that descend on Gangtok every monsoon. The storm water drains cannot channel these short bursts of rain caused by westerly disturbances and that makes one wonder what the monsoon, which will be heavy this year if the present prequel is any indication, have in store for the capital.

What use are storm drains if they don't carry away thunderstorm waters? The only reassuring signs after every shower are the UD&HD workers struggling to unclog the drains, again and again and again. At least someone is responding quickly enough. But what continues to fail the capital is the science behind its jhoras and drains. Either the engineering deployed in their training is all wrong or the training itself is suspect because there is no way that one can be led to believe that the storm drains have consumed crores in construction and repairs and corrective works just to look pretty in fresh coats of cement. They are supposed to drain surface run off, not unleash torrents on the roads. When they do the latter, they not only expose the shortsighted planning that went into their training, but also damage and weaken roads ahead of the monsoons. One could also blame the carelessly "dropped" construction material and the occasional pile of overnight garbage for the clogging, but that can be easily remedied.

That said, what the failure of the jhoras and drains also expose is the quick exit civic enlightenment made the moment donor funding was no longer at hand to publicize citizen-initiatives to manage garbage disposal. Every jhora that spills over to the streets and every drain that finds itself blocked whenever water needs to channel through it, disgorge not just rain waters, but also everything that one calls garbage. The jhoras, unfortunately, continue to double as convenient waste bins and the water pipelines continue using these channels as convenient pathways from source to home. Then, of course, there are some sewage lines that still continue to open directly into jhoras greeting many mornings with a stench for everyone unlucky enough to be living near them.

The recent wave of evening downpours is welcome. They washed the dry hills and beat down the dust. Unfortunately, they might have come a little late for the farmers and the hail did not help either, but, if it reminds the Gangtokians [private and public] of all the responsibilities they continue to ignore, it can still be considered timely enough.

60 years in orbit for 'grapefruit satellite' – the oldest human object in space

ALICE GORMAN
theconversation.com

Sixty years ago, a grapefruit-sized aluminium sphere with six antennas and some tiny solar cells was launched into Earth orbit. The Vanguard 1 satellite is still up there and is the oldest human-made object in space. It's our first piece of space archaeology.

Other early satellites – such as Sputnik 1, the first satellite to leave Earth in 1957, and Explorer 1, the first US satellite – have long since re-entered the atmosphere and burnt up.

Vanguard 1's legacy, as we enter the seventh decade of space travel, is a new generation of small satellites changing the way we interact with space.

MAKING THE FIRST ROAD MAP FOR SPACE

By the early 1950s, the second world war's rocket technology had developed to the point where the first satellite launch was imminent.

The global scientific community had been working towards a massive cooperative effort to study the Earth, called the International Geophysical Year (IGY), to take place in 1957-58. What could be better than measuring the Earth from the outside?

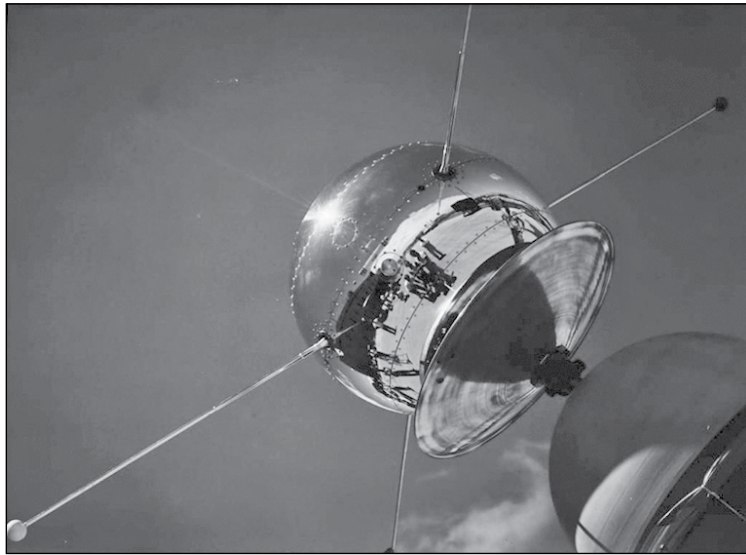
Everything we knew about the space environment we had learned from inside the envelope of the atmosphere. The first satellite could change everything.

The IGY committee decided to add a satellite launch to the program, and the "space race" suddenly became real.

Six nations were predicted to have the capability to launch a satellite. They were the United States, the Soviet Union, the United Kingdom, France, Japan and Australia.

This was before NASA existed. The United Nations space treaties had not yet been written. The IGY was effectively building the first road map for using space.

WAGING PEACE IN THE COLD WAR
Vanguard 1 was intended to make the US the first nation in space – hence its name, meaning "leading the way". The term also refers to the advance



troops of a military attack.

Space exploration was not just about science. It was also about winning hearts and minds. These first satellites were ideological weapons to demonstrate the technological superiority of capitalism – or communism.

The problem was that the IGY was a civilian scientific program, but the rocket programs were military.

Project Vanguard was run by the US Naval Research Laboratory. Public perception was important, and they tried to give the satellite a civilian spin to present the US's intentions in space as peaceful.

This meant the launch rocket should not be a missile, but a scientific rocket, made for research purposes. Such "sounding rockets" were, however, part of the military programs too – their purpose was to gather information about the little-known upper atmosphere for weapons development.

KEEP WATCHING THE SKIES!

The astronomer Fred Whipple, from the Smithsonian Astrophysical Observatory, had an idea for the IGY satellite program that would help Project Vanguard present the right image and contribute to the scientific outcomes.

It was all well and good to launch a satellite, but you also had to know where it was in space so that you

could collect its data. In the 1950s, the technology to do this was still in its infancy.

And in the words of science fiction author Douglas Adams, space is big. Really big. When something the size of a grapefruit is launched, you can predict where it should end up, but you don't know if it's there until you've seen it. Someone has to look for it.

This was the purpose of Whipple's Project Moonwatch. Volunteers – nowadays we would call them citizen scientists – across the globe watched for the satellite using binoculars and telescopes supplied by the Smithsonian. But their first satellite sighting was not Vanguard 1. The Soviet satellite Sputnik 1 became the first human artefact in orbit on October 4, 1957.

VANGUARD 1'S DESCENDANTS

Six months later, on March 17, 1958, the little polished sphere was lofted up to a minimum height of around 600km above the Earth, and there it has stayed, long after its batteries died. Technically, Vanguard 1 is space junk; but it doesn't pose a great collision risk to other satellites. It has survived so long simply because its orbit is higher than the other early satellites.

The historians Constance Green and Milton Lomask say that Vanguard 1 is the "the progenitor of all American space exploration today". It wasn't just the satellite, it was the

support systems too, such as the tracking network hosted by multiple nations.

It was Soviet leader Nikita Krushchev who called Vanguard 1 the "grapefruit satellite", and he didn't mean it as a compliment. But funnily enough, after satellites weighing thousands of kilograms and the size of double-decker buses, the current trend is back to small satellites.

Rather than fruit, these satellites are likened to loaves of bread or washing machines. They're cheap to build, with off-the-shelf components, and cheap to launch. They're not meant to stay in orbit for centuries. They'll do their job for a few months or years, and then self-immolate in the atmosphere.

There has been a long tradition of amateur satellites, but now space is more accessible than ever before. Students and space start-ups can get into orbit at a fraction of the cost it used to take. It's revitalising the space economy and allowing a greater number of people to participate.

For example, QB50 is an international collaboration to launch 50 cubesats to explore the lower thermosphere. So far, 36 have been launched, including three from Australia last year.

Elon Musk's SpaceX company is planning to launch a network of more than 7,500 small satellites over the next few years, to deliver broadband internet. (There are major concerns about how they will contribute to the space junk problem, however).

When Vanguard 1 was launched, its only companions were Explorer 1 and Sputnik 2. Soon it may have thousands of descendants swarming around it.

The little satellite meant to represent the peaceful uses of outer space is a physical reminder of the competition to imprint space with meaning in the early years of the Space Age. Now, 60 years on, it seems we are on the cusp of a new age in space.

[the writer is Senior Lecturer in archaeology and space studies, Flinders University]

Is Sikh extremism really active in Canada?

JASJIT SINGH
theconversation.com

Both the Liberals and New Democrats have recently been forced to deal with an issue that usually isn't part of the political agenda in Canada – Sikh extremism.

Justin Trudeau went on the defensive when it was discovered that Jaspal Atwal, convicted of the attempted murder of an Indian politician in 1986, was invited to a reception at the Canadian High Commission during the prime minister's recent visit to India. The prime minister subsequently stated his government supports a united India and condemned those who used violence in their campaign for an independent Sikh state, Khalistan.

Meanwhile, Jagmeet Singh, the first Sikh to be chosen to head a major Canadian political party, has also faced questions about his position on Khalistan. The new NDP leader said he condemns "all acts of terrorism in every part of the world, regardless of who the perpetrators are or who the victims are."

Canada is not the first western democracy to be accused of harbouring Sikh extremists. In the buildup to Trudeau's visit, reports in Indian media proclaimed that such "radicals" had "taken over most gurdwaras in Canada, the U.S. and the U.K., and organize events where the themes of Khalistan and persecution of Sikhs in 1984 are a running refrain."

A PARALLEL HISTORY? SIKHS IN BRITAIN

Indeed, similar reports about "Sikh radicalisation" in Britain in 2015 led me to conduct research on the issue. I analyzed media reports about Sikhs, interviewed Sikh activists and held a series of community consultations to ascertain the main issues and narratives.

By mapping historical events, I found that Sikh activities in Britain fundamentally changed in 1984 following two events: The storming of Harmandir Sahib (also known as the Golden Temple) during the Indian government's Operation Bluestar in June 1984 and the violence that took place against Sikhs across India in November 1984 following the assassination

of the Indian prime minister by her Sikh bodyguards. In April 2017, this anti-Sikh violence was recognized as genocide by the Ontario legislature.

Before '84, Sikhs in Britain had focused on campaigning for the right to wear turbans in the workplace and on motorbikes and in schools. Some even raised funds to support India in the 1971 Indo-Pakistan war. However, the immediate aftermath of Operation Bluestar saw Sikhs in Britain lashing out at the Indian state for the "dishonour" caused to the community with the storming of Harmandir Sahib, regarded by Sikhs as their most significant and precious institution.

In Britain, the immediate response to Bluestar saw Sikhs protesting in huge numbers at Hyde Park London in June 1984, a protest held annually ever since. This period also saw plots against Indian state officials, including an assassination attempt on Rajiv Gandhi, then the prime minister.

The reaction to Bluestar also saw increased support for the idea of Khalistan. In Britain, individuals seen to be speaking out against Khalistan or to be aligning themselves closely with India became fatal victims of violence at this time, including the journalist Tarsem Singh Toor in 1986 and Darshan Das in 1987.

SIKHS IN CANADA

I found a similar chronology of events in Canada where, according to national census data, approximately 460,000 people identify as Sikh.

Canadian authorities were clearly unprepared for the emotional impact of the storming of Harmandir Sahib on Sikhs in Canada. Bob Burgoyne, who worked for the Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS) at the time, noted how "it was our lack of understanding of Sikhs and how very emotional (they were) and how this single issue is what propelled us into what was a very tumultuous year."

As in Britain, the immediate aftermath of Operation Bluestar saw a number of peaceful protests across Canada against the Indian state.

Some violent attacks also occurred that were related

to Khalistan issues, including the 1985 attack on former B.C. premier Ujjal Dosanjh and the murder of Canadian journalist Tara Singh Hayer. There were also plots and protests against Indian state officials including the 1986 assassination attempt on Malkiat Singh Sidhu.

In 1985, the Air India bombing took place, Canada's worst mass murder to date. This deplorable act, widely condemned by Sikhs at the time, remains the only act of terrorism outside India to have led to the conviction of a Sikh.

Although a number of violent incidents occurred involving Sikhs throughout the 1990s, the majority of these appear to be internal Sikh issues relating to gurdwara governance, the contested nature of religious authority and local factional politics.

#ASKCANADIANSIKHS: THE IMPACT OF SIKH ACTIVISM

My research in Britain found five different types of Sikh activity beyond the simplistic labels of "fundamentalist," "extremist" or "radical." These include: Social justice and humanitarian relief; diasporic nationalism around Khalistan; "enforcing" Sikh practices; "defending" the Sikh community against a variety of perceived "external threats;" and personal/factional disputes.

Of these, Sikh activism around social justice and humanitarian relief is the most publicly prominent category in Canada. This includes the Seva Food Bank in Toronto, Calgary Sikh Youth's Walk Away Hunger programme, the Seva food truck in Edmonton and B.C. Sikhs who delivered \$1 million worth of donations for Fort McMurray evacuees. Those participating in this activism use the Sikh concepts of sewa (selfless service) and langar (community kitchen) in a contemporary contexts.

Sikhs have responded to the recent public discourse and allegations of extremism and terrorism through the hashtag #AskCanadianSikhs, which emerged in response to the lack of Sikhs invited to participate in media discussions about Sikh issues. A key point being made is that many of the events being

referenced happened over 30 years ago.

In my research, I made use of Sophia Moskalenko and Clark McCauley's distinction between radicalism and activism where "radicalism" is a "readiness to engage in illegal and violent political action" while activism is a "readiness to engage in legal and non-violent political action."

Given these definitions, it's clear that although the events in India in 1984 saw an immediate "radical" reaction from Sikhs around the world, much of the contemporary political activity being labelled "Sikh extremism" or "radicalism" is in fact activism focused on social justice.

In my research, I found no threat to the West or to the wider public from Sikh activism as highlighted in the 2017 public report on the terrorist threat to Canada which makes no mention of any terrorist threats by Sikhs in Canada.

In terms of the threat to India, the roles of the nine alleged Canada-based Khalistani operatives who were included in a list presented by the Punjab Chief Minister Amarinder Singh to Prime Minister Trudeau in February 2018 remain to be seen.

Given the parallels between the U.K. and Canada, it's worth noting that a key driver in contemporary Sikh activism are the events of 1984. Whether this is protesting against the "dishonour" caused to the community with the storming of Harmandir Sahib, seeking justice for human rights abuses around the events of June and November 1984, publicly articulating the need for Khalistan as an act of resistance against the Indian state or simply raising awareness of what occurred, the feeling that the events of 1984 remain unresolved remains an important issue for many Sikhs.

It will take open and honest discussions about crimes committed across the board in the leadup, during and following the events of 1984 for the communities affected to feel they can finally move on.

[the writer is Research fellow, University of Leeds]

Smoke in Howrah-bound Shatabdi Express

BARDHAMAN (WB), MAR 27 (PTI): A coach of 12042 down New Jalpaiguri-Howrah Shatabdi Express had to be separated after smoke billowed from it near Jamalpur Station in Purba Bardhaman district, spreading panic among passengers.

As the train was about to enter the station, smoke could be seen from the C-1 coach, following which it was evacuated, Bardhaman Station Manager Swapan Adhikari said.

Brake binding in the coach is thought to be the reason behind the emission of smoke, Adhikari said, adding, it had to be segregated.

The passengers of C-1 coach were accommodated in other compartments of the train, which started its journey for Howrah after about two-and-a-half hours, he said.

4 minor girls missing for 6 days in Arunachal

ITANAGAR, MAR 27 (PTI): In a suspected child trafficking case, four minor girls from Wakro area of Lohit district were missing for the past six days, police said today.

It was not yet clear whether they had been together when they had gone missing on March 21 evening.

Their family members feared that the girls in the age group of 12 to 16 could be victims of human trafficking, police said.

A case has been registered at Tezu police station under IPC sections 363 (kidnapping) and 367 (kidnapping to subject person to grievous hurt, slavery) and investigation was lodged.

"We request the investigating team to probe every possible angle in their effort to trace out the whereabouts of the missing girls to ensure their safe return to their respective homes," the Cultural and Literary Society of Mishmi (CAL-SOM), a prominent social organization of the Mishmi community, said in a statement.

GUWAHATI, MAR 27 (PTI): As the Assam Women's University student's indefinite strike for a permanent vice-chancellor entered its 23rd day today, state Education Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma told the assembly that there is no mention of the post in the Assam Women's University Act, 2013.

The state government has not violated the act as there is no mention of the post of vice-chancellor in it and regular teachers were not appointed as no advertisements were given for the purpose, he said.

Abdul Khaleq of Congress had raised the issue in the assembly and questioned why a permanent VC had not been appointed though about five years had passed since the University, the only one of its kind in the north east, began classes.

He also said that the government is trying to close down the university when Sarma himself as education minister in the erstwhile Tarun Gogoi-led Congress government had passed the Assam Women's University Bill in 2013.

Sarma in his reply said, "The state government has not violated the Assam Women's University Act as there is no mention of the post of vice-chancellor in the Act.



"Tarun Gogoi was the Chief of the University as per the Act (which states chief minister is the head of the institution). Why did Gogoi not appoint a VC then?"

Stating there are no professors but assistant professors only on contractual and ad-hoc basis in the university, Sarma said no advertisements were given for appointment to the regular posts.

He said Assam Agricultural Uni-

versity Vice-chancellor and registrar have been functioning as the Women's University's mentor and registrar respectively.

There are 74 teachers in the University, besides 15 non teaching staff on contractual and ad-hoc basis, Sarma said adding they do not receive UGC scale salaries.

The University has been witnessing indefinite stir by its students since March 5 for a permanent VC

and against downgrading it to a technical institute. The students had also held a 36-hour hunger strike from March 19.

Speaker Hiten Goswami addressing a press meet in the Assembly premises appealed to the media to have a positive outlook on the subject "so that a negative message does not go out".

Constructive discussion should be held on the issue in the House,

he said adding the students of the University should withdraw their agitation.

According to AWU Students' Forum President Chinmoyee Gogoi, the students want a written undertaking from the government on the appointment of a permanent VC and transforming the institute into a full-fledged university.

On March 23 former Tarun Gogoi visited the campus and lent his support to the agitation.

After his visit Gogoi had tweeted: "Assam Women's University was one of my dream project for empowering the women."

It is not only a pride of Assam but of the whole country. Assam BJP Govt's decision on AWU exposes the hollow promises of flagship program 'Beti Bachao Beti Padhao'."

Protests had been held across upper Assam in support of the AWU students. Effigies of Chief Minister Sarbananda Sonowal and Sarma were burnt and nearly 175 colleges under Dibrugarh University organised satyagraha marches.

The agitation has garnered support from students and teachers of JNU, TISS, BHU, NEHU, IIT-Kharagpur, Jadavpur University and Sikkim University among others.

Time for BJP to pack up and go: Mamata

NEW DELHI, MAR 27 (PTI): Coming down heavily on the NDA-led Centre, West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee today said issues like demonetisation and bank frauds have affected people at the grassroot level and that it was time for the BJP to "pack up and go".

She asserted that all opposition parties should work together to oust the saffron party.

Reacting on the leaked election dates of Karnataka Assembly polls, Banerjee said all institutions were becoming BJP institutions as the saffron party was "using and misusing" multiple agencies.

BJP's IT cell chief Amit Malviya earlier today tweeted the date of the Karnataka Assembly polls before the Election Commission announced it, prompting the panel to describe the leak as a "very serious issue" that merited a probe and stringent action.

The TMC supremo told reporters here, "We want all opposition parties to work together. We



should help the strongest opposition party in state to fight the BJP. It should be one fight".

Banerjee, who is in the national capital, also met NCP chief Sharad Pawar along with other political leaders from TDP, TRS and Shiv Sena.

"People are against the BJP. I have travelled to all the states. I know the mood of the people. Issues like demonetisation, GST, bank fraud have affected people even at the grassroot level. The time has come for this BJP to pack up and go," she said.

The West Bengal chief minister will also meet rebel BJP leaders Shastrughan Sinha, Yashwant Sinha and former Union minister Arun Shourie tomorrow.

PM urged for housing assistance to ex-MNF militants

AIZAWL, MAR 27 (PTI): The Peace Accord Review Committee has appealed to Prime Minister Narendra Modi to provide special housing assistance for members of the erstwhile underground Mizo National Front (MNF), who had returned to the main stream after the Mizo Accord was signed in 1986.

Chief Minister Lal Thanhawla today said this in a written reply to a query from Lalruatkima of the MNF in the state Assembly.



Lal Thanhawla said several demands of the former MNF personnel were taken into consideration by the Committee and had been considering absorbing family members of the former

militants in the state government service.

He said that the Peace Accord Review Committee was set up on August 13, 2015 under the chairmanship of state chief secretary but it was dis-

solved and reconstituted under the chairmanship of the chief minister on May 2, 2017.

The committee had held five meetings till date and a sub-committee was formed to send proposals for housing assistance and ex-gratia payment to the Government of India for the MNF returnees, he added.

The MNF and the Centre had signed the Mizo Accord on June 30, 1986, after 20 years of insurgency in Mizoram.



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Mizoram yet to receive Rs 24.7 cr from Centre for setting up medical college

AIZAWL, MAR 27 (PTI): The Centre had sanctioned Rs 126.72 crore for setting up the first and only medical college in Mizoram but the state was yet to receive the entire amount, state health minister Lal Thanzara informed the assembly today.

Replying to a question from Dr K. Beichhua of the opposition Mizo National Front (MNF), Lal Thanzara said that of the sanctioned amount, the state government was yet to receive an allocation to the tune of Rs 24.7 crore.

He said that the expenditure incurred for establishment of the medical college, to be named as Mizoram Institute of Medical Education and Research (MIMER), till date was Rs 18.06 crore.

The MIMER was being established at Falkawn, near Aizawl and 90 per cent of the civil work such as construction of the building and approach roads, had been completed, he said.

Australia PM calls for end to cricket sledging

SYDNEY, MAR 27 (AFP): Australia's prime minister called for an end to sledging in cricket today, saying it was "right out of control" as he urged the sport to clean up its image amid a ball-tampering scandal.

Malcolm Turnbull described the cheating crisis in which captain Steve Smith admitted to masterminding a plot to change the ball's condition during the third Test against South Africa on Saturday as a "shocking affront to Australia".

He demanded Cricket Australia act decisively in investigating the incident. The governing body is expected to provide an update tomorrow.

Turnbull added that authorities needed to crack down on sledging -- verbal abuse involving players on both sides -- if it wanted cricket to "once again (be) held up as a role model".

"I think there has to be the strongest action taken against this practice of sledging," he told reporters in Canberra. "It has got right out of control ... it should have no place (in cricket)."

"The game of cricket ... should be one that once again is held up as a role model."

The Test series between South Africa and Australia was ill-tempered even before Saturday's explosive admissions.

The first Test in Durban earlier this month was plagued by an ugly row between vice-captain David Warner and South Africa's Quinton de Kock.

CCTV footage showed Warner being restrained by team-mates as he appeared to lose his temper during a confrontation on a staircase as the players walked to their dressing rooms.

The incident was reportedly over a jibe about Warner's wife Candice, with the Australian describing the remark as "vile and disgusting".

Argentina have a 'debt' to settle at World Cup: Messi

BUENOS AIRES, MAR 27 (AFP): Argentina captain Lionel Messi admitted Monday that his generation has a score to settle at the World Cup in Russia after a series of agonising near misses in major tournaments.

"The debt we owe is to ourselves, not to the people. We always give our all, we reached three finals. We haven't been far off," Messi said in an interview with Fox Sports.

Argentina lost the 2014 World Cup final to Germany 1-0 after extra time and then finished runners-up at successive Copa America tournaments, losing to Chile on penalties in both 2015 and 2016.

"We always take each World



Cup as a big opportunity, and now more than ever because an important generation will move on, several players will change," Messi said, ahead of Tuesday's friendly against Spain in Madrid. Vice-captain Javier

Mascherano has already announced he will retire from international duty after the World Cup, while Sergio Aguero, Angel Di Maria and Gonzalo Higuain will all be 30 come the finals.

Messi will turn 31 during the competition. He has yet to make a decision on his Argentina future but would be 35 by the time of the 2022 World Cup in Qatar.

"(In Russia) it will be a good opportunity. Argentina is always a candidate for the title because of its image, its history. But this year, we are not favourites," Messi added.

"Spain, Brazil, Germany and France are above us."

Argentina, who beat Italy 2-0 in Manchester last Friday, will play Iceland, Croatia and Nigeria in Group D at the World Cup.

The country last lifted the trophy in 1986 when Diego Maradona was named player of the tournament.



Matt Renshaw to join Test squad in Joburg as Warner replacement

MELBOURNE, MAR 27 (PTI): Opener Matthew Ranshow is set to be rushed to South Africa as a possible replacement for David Warner, who is staring at the possibility of a lengthy ban for his role in the ball-tampering scandal that has left the Australian cricket team red-faced.

According to cricket.com.au: "Renshaw will fly to Johannesburg this evening to join the under-siege tourists ahead of Friday's final Test against South Africa in the wake of the Cape Town ball-tampering crisis."

The ICC has suspended Test captain Steve Smith for the fourth Test and opener Cameron Bancroft has been handed three demerit points along with a penalty of 75 per cent of his match fee.

There could be harsher sanctions in place after Cricket Australia com-

pletes its investigations led by Iain Roy, board's head of integrity.

Smith and vice-captain Warner were removed from their leadership roles before the start of the fourth day's play of the third Test.

According to board's website, Renshaw was kept in the loop about being a possible replacement and could be flown to South Africa on SOS basis.

Renshaw has been in good form, having bounced back from the lean patch that saw him replaced by the now-maligned Bancroft for the Ashes. He has earned the call-up after scoring three hundreds in the Sheffield Shield, taking Queensland into the finals.

The left-hander last played for Australia in September last year, in the second Test against Bangladesh, in Chittagong.

Romeo Fernandes extends stay with Delhi Dynamos



NEW DELHI, MAR 27 (PTI): Winger Romeo Fernandes today signed a two-year contract extension with Indian Super League (ISL) outfit Delhi Dynamos that will see him stay at the club till the end of the 2019-2020 season.

The 25-year old joins a host of Dynamos players who are on a long-term deal as the club looks to keep hold of the core from last season.

Following a slow start to the season, Romeo steadily established himself as one of the mainstays in the playing XI following his impressive work rate from the right wing.

The Goan midfielder made 12 appearances

for the Lions under Head Coach Miguel Angel Portugal last season and contributed one assist.

I am delighted to extend my stay with Delhi Dynamos for another two years. I improved a lot as a player last year and I am happy that the club believes in me as well. We want to improve from last season and I want to make sure that I win the Championship with Delhi, Romeo said.

Delhi Dynamos Director Rohan Sharma said: "Our idea was to keep hold of the core of the squad, because our Indian players did really well, and I am delighted that Romeo has agreed to stay on with us.

Next no perms? Chinese football fans slam tattoo 'ban'

SHANGHAI, MAR 27 (AFP): Disillusioned Chinese fans blamed the country's football authorities for the national side's latest heavy defeats amid reports that the players have been banned from displaying tattoos.

Several players in the 6-0 thrashing by Wales last week and in Monday's 4-1 defeat to the Czech Republic wore bandages or long sleeves on their arms, seemingly to hide tattoos.

Media reports said the players had been told to cover up while playing for China, who are coached by the Italian World Cup winner Marcello Lippi.

China's most heavily inked player, central defender Zhang Linpeng, did not feature in either of the two heavy home defeats in the China Cup despite normally being a first choice.

He was officially left out because of injury, but some fans suggested he had been dropped because of numerous tattoos on his arms and on his neck.

Chinese footballers are not generally as heavily tattooed as their international counterparts, but the growing trend has caught the government's attention as it cracks down on what it sees as behaviour contrary to the ruling Communist Party's "values and morals".

In Monday's defeat by the



Czech Republic, midfielder Cai Huikang wore long sleeves that covered up his tattoos and fellow substitute Wei Shihao had a bandage that masked the ink on one bicep.

There has been no official ban from the Chinese Football Association (CFA), but reports in local media say a ruling is imminent and it could be part of a larger move against Chinese sportsmen with tattoos.

Lin Dan, regarded as the best badminton player of all time, is among the Chinese stars who would have to cover up.

China have improved since

the 69-year-old Lippi took over in October 2016, but he was unable to get them to this summer's World Cup and they have now suffered two heavy losses in five days in front of their own fans.

Lippi apologised after the latest mauling.

"The game truly reflected the gap between Chinese football and European football," the Italian, who guided his country to World Cup glory in 2006, said.

"Not only compared with European first-class teams like France, Spain and Germany, but also European teams like Wales

and the Czech Republic, the gap is all-round," The Paper quoted him as saying.

Chinese fans though pointed the finger at the CFA and said the governing body should be more concerned with the state of the national team than the players' tattoos.

"CFA finally found the problem of Chinese football! The next step should be controls on perms, smoking and haircuts," one mocked on Weibo, China's equivalent of Twitter.

Another wrote: "They play like crap and don't reflect why, but try to control tattoos..."

Bhaker-Anmol wins air pistol mixed gold

SYDNEY, MAR 27 (PTI): The duo of Manu Bhaker and Anmol secured India's seventh gold medal in the ISSF junior World Cup by winning the mixed 10m air pistol event with a qualification world record here on Tuesday.

Genemat Sekhon bagged an individual bronze medal in the junior women's skeet, shooting a 36 in the final.

In the mixed 10m air rifle event, 17-year-old Shreya Agrawal and 19-year-old Arjun

Babuta completed the podium in third place, finishing with 432.8 points, while their country-mates Elavenil Valarivan Elavenil (18) and Tejas Krishna Prasad (20) finished fourth with 389.1.

Bhaker and Anmol dominated the event from the very start and enter the final with the highest qualification score and a new junior qualification world record.

They finished with a 5.6 advantage on their closest rivals,

China's Liu Jinyao and Li Xue.

The two Indian youngsters dominated the final match since its very first series, progressively building a gap between them and their closest rivals. They eventually finished with 478.9 points, just 1.8 points away from the current world record.

Previously, Anmol and Bhaker also set a new Junior Qualification World Record with 770 points.

The silver and bronze medals

were both awarded to China, as Liu Jinyao (20) and Li Xue (18) finished in second position with 473.3 points, while Wang Zhehao (19) and Xiao Jiaruixuan (15) took third place with 410.7.

A second Indian team, comprising 18-year-old Gaurav Rana and 19-year-old Mahima Turhi Agrawal, finished at the feet of the podium, leaving the final at the 38th-shot mark with 370.2 points and fourth position.

Finishing 11.2 points away from the fifth place because of a dry-fire shot and also suffering a 1.0-point reduction Australia's Hans Ben Hummer (18) and Sascha Kroopin (16) took the sixth place with a final score of 320.9.

Overall, India occupied the second place with 18 medals, including seven gold, while China continued to lead the tally with 22 podium finishes, including eight gold medals.

Viv Richards says World Cup place will boost Windies cricket

KARACHI, MAR 27 (AFP): Legendary batsman Viv Richards says West Indian cricket will benefit from qualifying for the World Cup, and that it would have been a huge blow had they not made it to England in 2019.

The West Indies -- whose fortunes have plummeted in recent years -- were in danger of missing out after the International Cricket Council (ICC) reduced the number of teams in next year's 50-over global showpiece from 14 to 10.

The top eight teams in the ICC rankings qualified automatically, leaving the ninth-ranked West Indies having to come through a tournament against nine other na-



tions in Zimbabwe for the final two places.

The West Indies finally squeaked through when they beat Scotland last week in a controversial rain-af-

fected showdown in Harare.

"I won't say I am relieved because I felt that they had a strong enough team in order for them to win and qualify," Richards told AFP

in Karachi at the weekend, where he was attending the final of the Pakistan Super League.

The Antigua, one of the greatest batsmen of all time, was part of the West Indies World Cup-winning teams in 1975 and 1979.

"West Indies have a World Cup pedigree and that makes all of us proud in the Caribbean," said the man who was also in 1983 team that lost the final to India and captained his country in the 1987 edition.

But the 66-year-old warned that the team must improve their batting if they are to compete next year after they lost to Afghanistan in the Harare final on Sunday.

"There were a few matches that I believe that they came up short in terms of runs. But at the end of the day they had the bowlers to defend whatever they scored," Richards said.

"But in the big league they will need to score more runs."

It is sound advice from a man who stroked 138 not out against England in the 1979 World Cup final at Lord's.

Richards, who was in Karachi as mentor to Pakistan Super League team Quetta Gladiators, believed Caribbean cricket will benefit from World Cup qualification after failing to make the Champions Trophy last year.

"That should be encouraging and help the team as you need to compete against the best to improve," he said.

"It would have been a huge loss had we not qualified.

"It would have been like Manchester United or Liverpool not being in football's Champions League."

And he called on the ICC to rethink the decision to reduce the size of the World Cup to 10 teams.

"You've got to try everything that is possible to improve the teams and the standard of play," he said.

"More participants will be good for international cricket.

Putin blames Russia mall fire on ‘criminal negligence’

MOSCOW, MAR 27 [AFP]: Russian President Vladimir Putin today blamed the mall fire that killed at least 64 people in the Siberian city of Kemerovo on “criminal negligence” as he visited the site two days after the tragedy.

At least 64 people, many of them children, died when a blaze raged through the busy shopping centre in the industrial city on Sunday, one of the deadliest fires recorded in Russia over the past century.

Putin flew to Kemerovo Tuesday as questions swirled about the Kremlin’s handling of the country’s latest man-made disaster.

“What is happen-



ing here? These are not armed hostilities. This is not an unexpected release of methane. People, children came to relax,” Putin told officials in Ke-

merovo after laying flowers at a makeshift memorial of flowers, stuffed children’s toys and balloons near the gutted mall’s facade.

“We are talking about demographics but are losing so many people. Because of what? Because of some criminal negligence, slovenliness,”

Putin said in comments released by the Kremlin.

“The first feelings when they speak about the number of victims and the number of dead children... one feels like wailing -- not crying,” Putin said in televised remarks.

The Kemerovo region declared three days of mourning beginning today.

But many critics wondered why the Kremlin did not call a nationwide day of mourning and said national television channels did not pull entertainment programmes from their schedule fast enough.

Some Muscovites are planing a vigil in the city

centre today evening and several Russian cities declared a period of mourning in solidarity with Kemerovo.

Investigators and witnesses said many people -- including children - were burned alive because emergency exits were locked, notably at a multiplex cinema where children were watching cartoons.

The Investigative Committee said a criminal probe has been opened and that five people have been arrested including an official of the mall’s security firm who is suspected of deactivating the public address system when the fire broke out.

North Korean leader Kim visits China: Reports

BEIJING, MAR 27 [PTI]: Speculation is rife that Kim Jong Un made a surprise visit to China after media reports that a special train believed to be carrying the North Korean dictator arrived here.

Chinese foreign ministry spokeswoman Hua Chunying, however, said at a media briefing that she had “no information for the moment” about reports that Kim visited China. “The information will be published in due course,” she said.

If confirmed, it would be Kim’s first overseas trip since he took over power in 2011 after his father’s death.

Japan’s Kyodo news agency, citing unidentified sources, reported that a high-ranking North Korean official had arrived in the Chinese capital on Monday afternoon.

Japanese broadcaster Nippon TV showed footage of a train -- similar to the one used for foreign visits by Kim’s late father Kim Jong Il -- at a Beijing station. There were also reports about heavy security on the China-North Korea border and later at a guesthouse where prominent North Koreans have stayed in the past.

Hong Kong-based ‘South China Morning Post’ reported that while it is yet to be confirmed if the person is Kim himself, the security arrangements suggest it is someone of great significance.

Historically, the visits of North Korean leaders to China, the country’s neighbour and closest ally, were always shrouded in secrecy. Kim’s late father Kim Jong-il too used to visit China secretly.

Tensions temporarily abated in the Korean Peninsula recently over North Korea’s nuclear programme after US President Donald Trump agreed for a summit meeting with Kim.



A wheelchair-bound Australian who reached Everest base camp under his own power today said he was “humbled” to be the first paraplegic to make the gruelling journey mostly unaided. Scott Doolan, 28, took ten days to reach the foot of the world’s highest peak. Doolan reached the camp, 5,364 metres above sea level, on Sunday, taking barely longer than many able-bodied trekkers. Doolan- who has been confined to a wheelchair since he broke his spine in a motorbike accident aged 17- spent eight months training for the trek. He did daily cardiovascular and strength training to build upper body strength. Doolan was airlifted from base camp on Sunday to Kathmandu, where he was admitted to hospital. X-rays revealed he had a stress fracture in his tailbone but he is expected to make a full recovery. Doolan is now mulling his next adventure- and also wants to swim for Australia in the 2020 Tokyo Paralympics.

Saudi-led coalition threatens retaliation against Iran over missiles

RIYADH, MAR 27 [AFP]: A military coalition led by Saudi Arabia has threatened retaliation against arch-foe Iran, accusing the Shiite power of being behind a barrage of Yemeni rebel missile attacks on the kingdom.

Saudi forces said they intercepted seven missiles on Sunday, including over the capital Riyadh, in a deadly escalation that coincided with the third anniversary of the coalition’s intervention in Yemen.

Displaying wreckage at a news conference in Riyadh of what it said were fragments of those ballistic missiles, the coalition claimed forensic analysis showed they were supplied to Huthi rebels by their ally Iran.

“The missiles launched against Saudi territory were smuggled from Iran,” coalition spokesman Turki al-Malki told reporters yesterday.

We “reserve the right to respond against Iran at the right time and right place”, he added.

The missile strikes resulted in the first reported fatality from Huthi fire in the Saudi capital.

Egyptian national Abdul-Moteleb Ahmed, 38, died instantly in his bed when what appeared to be burning shrapnel struck his ramshackle room in Riyadh’s Um al-Hammam district, leaving a gaping hole in the roof, witnesses told by AFP at the site.

Three other Egyptian labourers in the same room were wounded and hospitalised, they said. The Iran-aligned Huthis said on their Al-Masirah television that Riyadh’s King Khalid International Airport was among the targets.

Malki alleged the rebels in Sanaa were using the airport there to launch missiles on Saudi territory, adding the coalition had seized a number of smug-

gled weapons.

Iran has repeatedly denied arming the Huthis in Yemen, despite claims by the United States and Saudi Arabia that the evidence of an arms connection is irrefutable.

A Saudi-led military coalition intervened in Yemen on March 26, 2015 to try to restore the government of President Abedrabbo Mansour Hadi after the Shiite Huthis and their allies took over large parts of the country, including the capital Sanaa.

Hours after the missile attacks on Saudi Arabia, hundreds of thousands of Huthi rebel supporters flooded the streets of Yemen’s capital yesterday to mark three years of war.

Sanaa’s Sabaaen Square was a sea of Yemeni flags as rebel authorities ordered all schools and government offices shut for the anniversary.

Huthi supporters carried portraits of rebel chief Abdulmalik al-Huthi and speakers blasted out a fiery speech by Hassan Nasrallah, leader of Lebanon’s powerful Hezbollah Shiite movement, praising the “steadfastness” of the Yemeni people.

War songs, poems and speeches condemning the United States, the main arms supplier for the Saudi-led coalition, echoed across the square.

“No one can speak on behalf of the Yemeni people. The people taking to the streets today are the real voice,” Ibtisam al-Mutawakel, head of a Huthi cultural committee, told AFP.

About 10,000 Yemenis have been killed and 53,000 wounded since the start of the coalition intervention in Yemen, which triggered what the United Nations has called the world’s worst humanitarian crisis.

Sri Lanka sinks bullet proof vehicles, LTTE ship

COLOMBO, MAR 27 [PTI]: Sri Lankan Navy today dumped in sea several bullet proof vehicles, including an LTTE ship, used by former presidents during the three-decade long civil war to prevent them from falling into “wrong hands”.

The vehicles, including one used by Vinayagamurthi Muralitharan, the former LTTE deputy leader who later became a politician, were dumped in the deep sea area off the western coast and destroyed last morning, the Navy said.

It said the vehicles used by Presidents JR Jayawardene, Ranasinghe Premadasa, Chandrika Kumaratunga and Mahinda Rajapaksa were sunk after dismantling their communication equipment.

retinue due to LTTE’s feared suicide squads. They allegedly assassinated several top leaders through suicide attacks, including Premadasa who was President between 1989 to 1993.

Kumaratunga, the President between 1994 and 2005, survived an assassination attempt carried out by the suicide squad while suffering severe eye injuries.

The Navy had also sunk an LTTE ship used to transport their arms supplies from Indonesia, the Navy said.

The ship, which belonged to the LTTE fleet previously, was taken control of by the Navy in Malaysia and brought back to Colombo.

According to the government figures, around 20,000 people are missing due to various conflicts including the 30-year- long separatist war with Lankan Tamils in the north and east which claimed at least 100,000 lives.

The move was to prevent them from falling into “wrong hands” if they were disposed of through public auctions, it added.

Armored vehicles became part of politicians’

MIZORAM STATE LOTTERIES
LABHLAXMI TAURUS

Draw No:8 DrawDate on:27/03/18
1st Prize Rs.10,000/- 4325
2nd Prize Rs.1,000/- 4195 3rd Prize Rs.500/- 3074
4th Prize Rs.300/- 3009 5th Prize Rs. 201/- 6822
6th Prize Rs.100/-
1001 1112 1142 1168 1203 1213 1225 1228 1236 1243
1265 1275 1303 1330 1335 1339 1391 1421 1470 1495
1516 1517 1586 1587 1592 1623 1651 1657 1738 1759
1790 1811 1865 1891 1921 1928 1962 1970 1978 1989
2008 2025 2062 2118 2126 2156 2162 2169 2178 2217
2248 2251 2260 2265 2267 2323 2346 2364 2371 2381
2382 2419 2442 2487 2517 2536 2572 2593 2600 2621
2626 2636 2661 2688 2709 2756 2779 2792 2797 2810
2815 2903 2955 2959 2960 3026 3043 3080 3082 3110
3117 3118 3130 3161 3185 3208 3213 3249 3280 3319
3341 3356 3400 3428 3443 3449 3532 3578 3687 3715
3845 3854 3908 3914 3985 4040 4046 4051 4061 4097
4135 4148 4237 4243 4256 4356 4359 4385 4396 4418
4433 4443 4449 4467 4478 4480 4483 4485 4486 4543
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6015 6047 6119 6139 6147 6171 6181 6184 6187 6243
6249 6251 6258 6310 6336 6353 6382 6397 6399 6462
6506 6508 6541 6590 6615 6619 6630 6666 6676 6740
6743 6754 6781 6784 6852 6855 6858 6868 6942 6960

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MUMBAILAXMI LAXMAN

Draw No:8 DrawDate on:27/03/18
1st Prize Rs.10,000/- 5532 2nd Prize Rs.2,000/- 2969
3rd Prize Rs.1,000/- 2857 4th Prize Rs. 501/- 3901
5th Prize Rs.200/-
1017 1058 1096 1101 1109 1115 1199 1212 1216 1286
1302 1335 1340 1430 1455 1507 1518 1610 1618 1620
1667 1819 1832 2078 2115 2118 2258 2325 2443 2496
2653 2717 2827 2856 2903 2951 3035 3098 3122 3127
3223 3317 3443 3482 3491 3525 3578 3659 3662 3756
3789 3817 3859 3887 3940 3969 4046 4075 4183 4193
4195 4251 4269 4273 4302 4311 4320 4410 4536 4625
4666 4680 4729 4758 4797 4891 4911 4929 4945 4982
4998 5013 5027 5253 5286 5292 5293 5326 5331 5457
5466 5518 5546 5549 5597 5750 5781 5836 5893 5917
6th Prize Rs.100/-
1050 1059 1078 1083 1095 1111 1138 1162 1168 1200
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2087 2117 2125 2131 2133 2137 2139 2140 2144 2150
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3230 3298 3314 3324 3326 3370 3390 3434 3437 3457
3465 3483 3618 3629 3717 3809 3853 3856 3896 3899
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5766 5769 5773 5789 5818 5922 5934 5951 5972 5993

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3rd Prize Rs.500/- 0194 0764 1365 1702 2201 3271 4314 7581 8735 9918 4th Prize Rs.250/- 0068 0878 2343 3027 3415 3915 4897 6611 7115 7676 5th Prize Rs.120/- 0162 0182 0302 0321 0367 0394 0657 0780 0837 0932 1092 1165 1167 1236 1242 1333 1497 1502 1842 1952 1982 2315 2318 2438 2544 2630 2671 2732 2759 2988 3089 3114 3123 3203 3299 3414 3486 3533 3554 3799 3804 3822 3952 4071 4216 4752 5022 5144 5243 5312 5394 5564 5575 5656 5701 5760 5762 6048 6105 6346 6389 6447 6530 6545 6745 6900 6970 6998 7047 7118 7131 7150 7153 7697 7713 7971 8066 8214 8248 8272 8304 8359 8475 8498 8767 8787 8805 8909 8943 8951 9000 9047 9055 9165 9325 9412 9693 9803 9993 9999		3rd Prize Rs.500/- 2611 3685 3925 5799 8223 8762 9436 9563 9748 9979 4th Prize Rs.250/- 0262 2831 2951 3491 3760 4481 4872 6141 7486 8565 5th Prize Rs.120/- 0067 0147 0198 0257 0324 0475 0518 0555 0710 0786 0798 0974 1080 1100 1197 1410 1426 1533 1615 1889 1966 2026 2066 2142 2228 2273 2311 2336 2358 2467 2471 2572 2576 2648 2734 2911 3013 3268 3280 3396 3451 3462 3472 3569 3576 3726 3745 4103 4389 4464 4527 4738 4804 4867 4984 5014 5393 5397 5429 5522 5784 5915 5931 6192 6237 6269 6485 6541 6628 6860 7011 7017 7046 7177 7190 7288 7292 7360 7591 7624 7692 7795 7804 7870 8289 8353 8357 8376 8645 8692 8741 8934 8939 9152 9319 9376 9539 9642 9702 9797		3rd Prize Rs.500/- 1716 2579 5019 6213 6888 7308 7583 8370 8832 9851 4th Prize Rs.250/- 0118 0464 1309 1915 3940 4493 5801 5911 7384 7657 5th Prize Rs.120/- 0034 0225 0317 0414 0482 0502 0537 0659 0662 0694 0709 0776 0799 1008 1150 1305 1307 1341 1377 1459 1614 1674 1836 1907 1926 1962 2040 2545 2566 2704 2786 2831 3137 3146 3355 3631 3787 3796 3891 3910 4021 4036 4250 4617 4932 5197 5438 5694 5769 5796 5915 5984 6004 6229 6274 6276 6279 6332 6335 6340 6386 6547 6554 6558 6633 6729 6828 6968 7090 7229 7297 7455 7595 7753 8344 8384 8390 8469 8516 8569 8594 8599 8655 8755 8939 9018 9046 9153 9199 9256 9281 9346 9357 9369 9400 9501 9517 9549 9626 9823	
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A DRESS FIT FOR A KING! Actress/model, Jaime King [38], dazzled in a blue princess gown at the premiere of Steven Spielberg's latest movie Ready Player One at the Dolby Theatre in Hollywood, California.

Love Actually star says he “hated” his craft for years...

Bill Nighy has revealed he has considered quitting acting numerous times, because he “hated” it for years.

In an honest interview with the Radio Times, the 68-year-old admitted he was ‘so unhappy’ he was driven to give up filming altogether, but could not think of another career path to pursue.

The star, best known for his work in Love Actually and the Underworld franchise, explained that while working on screen is ‘not unpleasant’, it is never fulfilling - and led him to feel incredibly self-conscious.

Revealing the perks that kept him going through his career struggle, he went on: “It’s not unpleasant all the time, and you work with great people and I am proud of some of the things I’ve done. You get a degree of satisfaction when it’s over, but the actual process is never satisfactory.”

Bill first rose to prominence as Mark Carleton in BBC’s The Men’s Room back in 1991, but shot to the



heights of fame after playing ageing rock star Billy Mack in Love Actually twelve years later.

Despite portraying one of the best known characters in the rom-com world, the actor also revealed he can’t bear to watch himself in anything on-screen.

He recalled the first and only time he did so: “I tried when I was young and less

complicated to look at, and it was bloody awful. I was third bank robber in Softly, Softly. I was staying in digs with some people – they were all crowded in the front room, and then I came on TV. I walked out, it was so terrible. I had a phoney accent, which was just not committed enough, and my hair, obviously. Oh!”

However, the State of Play star admitted he stuck his acting career out as he “couldn’t think of anything else to do” - and enjoyed the sense of pride after making a successful film.

“I flunked school – not that that would prevent you from doing anything in life – but I didn’t have any other ideas. I was deeply self-conscious, which you are supposed to be. Every actor is self-conscious,” he added.

The BAFTA winner has now been acting for more than 40 years, and is currently embarking on a completely new project - a live-action movie, Detective Pikachu.

Bill was spotted on set in London earlier this month,

but his role in the Pokemon flick has been kept tightly under wraps by producers.

According to The Hollywood Reporter, Bill will join a whole galaxy of stars for the movie including: Justice Smith, Ryan Reynolds, Big Little Lies’ Kathryn Newton, Rita Ora and Suki Waterhouse.

It will chart the story of teenager Tim Goodman [Smith] who joins forces with Detective Pikachu [Reynolds] to hunt down his kidnapped dad.

The unconventional action role is no doubt a welcome part for Bill, who recently confessed the difficulties of portraying romance to an audience.

He said last year: “It’s always a good day when you don’t have to be romantic. Even when I was young and eligible for such parts I used to hate doing them. As someone who didn’t feel attractive or at all charming, I just felt exposed. I used to hate having to be the object of desire.”

whenever you go out!

VIRGO: Money earned through involvement in the arts, perhaps those combining creativity with computer technology, could come your way, Virgo. Financially, you should be doing fairly well, so you might channel what you receive right back into this business. This is an excellent time to do this, as all signs indicate that this sort of activity could be very profitable over the next few years. Go for the gold, and enjoy yourself.

LIBRA: Have love matters been causing you excessive strain for a while, Libra? If so, you can expect that to end now. Someone you love deeply reciprocates your feelings, and is very anxious to resolve any differences between you and look toward the future. This relationship will probably

HUGH GRANT, 57, WELCOMES HIS FIFTH CHILD!

And Hugh Grant certainly looked to be enjoying new parenthood as he made his first public appearance since the arrival on Monday evening at the BFI Flare: London LGBTQ+ Film Festival screening of Maurice at BFI Southbank in London.

The esteemed actor, who plays Clive Durham in the groundbreaking 1987 period drama, looked incredibly handsome while beaming at the bash just three weeks after his ex-girlfriend Elizabeth Hurley broke his baby news on Andy Cohen’s show.

During his appearance at the event, Hugh certainly seemed in his element following the delightful news that his girlfriend Anna Eberstein, 35, was said to have welcomed their baby late last month - according to Elizabeth. Looking typically dashing, Hugh went for smart-casual look as he wore jeans with a white shirt tucked in, a battered brown belt and a sharp velvet blazer over the top.

Within the event, he posed alongside Tricia Tuttle, the director of BFI Flare, and his Maurice co-star James Wilby, who plays the titular character and Hugh’s love interest in the three-decade old movie. While he was certainly chipper, Hugh showed no signs of being a weary new dad as he joyously beamed at the event following the news



broken by his ex.

Appearing on Watch What Happens Live earlier this month, Elizabeth was asked if she was surprised by the amount of kids Hugh has - and responded: “He had another one last week. He has five. He was over 50 when he spawned them all.”

Andy asked Elizabeth if she was shocked by it and she delightfully responded: “No, he’s an enchanting dad. Really, really sweet.”

The actress then cheekily cracked up her fellow guest on the chat show, David Oyelowo when she spoke of Hugh’s foray into fatherhood. She said: “Having these kids has transformed him from a very miserable person into a fairly miserable person. It’s improved him. He’s gone up the scale.”

The Notting Hill star went from having no children to being a father of four in just four years.

Christina Aguilera as you’ve never seen her before!

Christina Aguilera has always gone heavy on the makeup during her 20 year career in show business. But for the May cover of Paper magazine, the Genie In A Bottle hitmaker had on not one bit of paint as she was seen in extreme closeup.

The siren, 37, was almost unrecognizable as she held a manicured hand up to her naked lips, flashing not a diamond ring but a band that said MOM on it.

The cover line read Transformation and inside the photos by Zoey Grossman showed more of the same, though in some frames she was heavily made up. In the makeup-free shots, Aguilera interestingly has freckles which fans have not seen before as they are always covered up.

The Stripped hitmaker also had her blonde hair worn naturally in one set up as little wisps surrounded her face.

“I’ve always been someone that obviously loves to experiment, loves theatrics, loves to create a storyline and play a character in a video or through stage,” the Dirty singer told the magazine.

“I’m a performer, that’s



who I am by nature. But I’m at the place, even musically, where it’s a liberating feeling to be able to strip it all back and appreciate who you are and your raw beauty,” remarked the Lotus singer.

But she says she will be back to her heavily painted look very soon as she still loves makeup.

“I mean, I’m a girl that likes a beat face, let’s not get it twisted,” she explained with a laugh.

In another set up, the Lady Marmalade singer had her hair in a short style with very short bangs, and again she had no makeup on. The Beautiful singer’s skin looked flawless.

Another setup saw her with curly short hair as she modeled a Burberry plaid shirt that fell off her shoulders. And then there were plenty of shots where she was fully made up, but her makeup was messy as if she had been partying or crying or both.

A dramatic set of pictures saw her with red eye makeup and red lipstick on as false eyelashes washed down her face. The cover girl also wore a see-through plastic raincoat that showed off her figure.

Also in her interview, the Grammy favorite talked about growing up with abuse.

“I watched my mom have to be submissive, watch her Ps and Qs or she’s gonna get beat up. You can either be, unfortunately, so damaged by it that you take a turn for the worse, or you can feel empowered by it and make choices to never go down that route,” said the star.

It taught her to understand that some women cannot get out. “I hate when people say, ‘Why doesn’t she just leave?’ There’s psychological damage and mental abuse that comes with being in a situation like that.

ARIES: Social events today could put you in touch with people in the arts, Aries, particularly ones such as film, television, recording, and computer graphics that combine creativity with modern technology. If you’re single, one might even be a potential romantic partner. If nothing else, these people could provide you with valuable insights and contacts so you can advance your own career, particularly if it’s artistic in nature. Be attentive, and enjoy your evening.

TAURUS: You could spend much of your day advancing the interests of an organization dedicated to a cause that means a lot to you, Taurus, perhaps in animal or children’s rights. You tend to be service oriented by nature, and today something you learn, perhaps from TV or the

Internet, could excite your desire to make a difference to those you wish to serve. Expect to derive a lot of satisfaction from this. You’re making a difference!

GEMINI: If you’re single, Gemini, a new love could appear right there in your neighborhood. The person should be attractive, intelligent, free spirited, and very much attracted to you! You could meet this person in an unusual way and end up spending time together and making plans to spend more. Take care not to move too quickly. You won’t want this new relationship to be like a meteor, burning out as quickly as it appeared.

CANCER: Today you could hold a group meeting of some kind in your home, Cancer. The guests will probably include people in such interesting

fields as astrology, metaphysics, environmentalism, and the arts. A love partner could also be present. Some fascinating discussions could take place, supplying you with enough food for thought to last for days. By the time everyone leaves, you could feel bonded far more strongly than when the party began. Enjoy!

LEO: Have you been reading romantic novels or watching romantic films lately, Leo? This is probably because love is very much on your mind now. You may be involved in a passionate relationship or hoping for one. If it’s the latter, don’t expect to remain alone for very long. All signs indicate that romance is going to become a top priority for you for a while, starting now. Make sure you look your best

whenever you go out!

VIRGO: Money earned through involvement in the arts, perhaps those combining creativity with computer technology, could come your way, Virgo. Financially, you should be doing fairly well, so you might channel what you receive right back into this business. This is an excellent time to do this, as all signs indicate that this sort of activity could be very profitable over the next few years. Go for the gold, and enjoy yourself.

LIBRA: Have love matters been causing you excessive strain for a while, Libra? If so, you can expect that to end now. Someone you love deeply reciprocates your feelings, and is very anxious to resolve any differences between you and look toward the future. This relationship will probably

succeed if you go in with eyes wide open. Don’t have unrealistic expectations of your partner. Learn to love human flaws as much as perfection.

SCORPIO: If you’re single and looking for love, Scorpio, you may find it today in an ephemeral way. You could find yourself falling hard for the proverbial stranger across the crowded room. That might pose a problem if the room is actually a crowded subway, but faith is called for here. If the person appears to share your attraction, you’ll manage to find each other. You have a lot to look forward to. Enjoy your day.

SAGITTARIUS: Love certainly seems to make the world go round today, Sagittarius. Is everyone around you deeply involved in a new or revitalized romance? You may be smitten

with a very exciting person, perhaps from a foreign country or in the field of law, education, or publishing. Don’t fight it, and don’t worry about getting hurt. Relax and let yourself be loved. If nothing else, you should have a wonderful day!

CAPRICORN: Has the perfect career suddenly materialized out of nowhere, Capricorn? If so, don’t write it off as being too good to be true. It’s very, very real! Take a few days to consider all your options and all possible contingencies. Talk to people who know the ins and outs of the field. If everything seems favorable, go for it. Such an opportunity may not come around again for a long time.

AQUARIUS: A website or TV documentary could put you in touch with a promising educational

or spiritual organization whose goals and aims seem to jibe perfectly with your own, Aquarius. This could capture your interest and cause you to want to learn more. A friend may also want to explore this territory. Attend a class or workshop together and experience the programs directly. You may want to get actively involved.

PISCES: You could have some strange, mystical dreams tonight, Pisces, possibly involving angels or other spiritual beings. Their messages could well shed light on a romantic relationship that you might not understand well. Keep a notebook by your bed so you can write down the details of the dreams as soon as you awaken. You’ll want to consider them very carefully to see if you can figure out what’s going on.