



SummitTIMES

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ON TOP OF THE NEWS

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PHEDANGMAS FOR NAMSOONG! Two Phedangmas, Limboo priests, were invited to be part of day-02 of the State Level Tribal Festival/ Namsong celebrations underway at Namprikdang in Dzongu, North Sikkim. People in attendance got the rare opportunity to watch the duo perform rituals and get a peek into the frenzied energy with which they spin away bad luck and ward off the evil eye. **[WANGCHUK BHUTIA]**

LS passes bill for GST cess hike on luxury cars to 25%

NEW DELHI, DEC 27 (PTI): The Lok Sabha today approved a bill to hike cess on luxury vehicles from 15 per cent to 25 per cent with a view to enhance funds to compensate states for revenue loss following the rollout of GST.

The GST (Compensation to States) Amendment Bill, 2017, was passed by the Lower House amid uproar by the opposition over controversial comments made by Union Minister Anant Kumar Hegde on secularism and the Constitution.

The Bill seeks to replace the Ordinance which was issued in September to give effect to the decision of the GST Council. The Ordinance provided for a hike in the GST cess on a range of cars from mid-size to hybrid variants and the luxury ones to 25 per cent.

In reply to a short debate, Finance Minister Arun Jaitley said the funds collected following hike in cess on luxury vehicles will be used to compensate states for revenue loss on account of implementation of the Goods and Services Tax (GST). He said the GST Council, which comprises state finance ministers, meets every month and takes decision on rationalisation of taxes in the backdrop of revenue collection.

Participating in the discussion, members demanded that the GST rate should be reduced on a variety of items including sanitary napkins, agriculture equipments, **turn to pg02**

PM does not question Singh's integrity, Jaitley tells RS to end stalemate

NEW DELHI, DEC 27 (PTI): The government said in Parliament today that Prime Minister Narendra Modi has never questioned Manmohan Singh's integrity and commitment to the nation, ending a deadlock that had paralysed the house for nearly two weeks.

On its part, the Congress party said it does not approve of any remarks made against the prime minister, apparently in a reference to the "neech" remark made by its MP, Mani Shankar Aiyar.

The proceedings of both Houses of Parliament were repeatedly disrupted over the past two weeks over remarks

by Modi during the Gujarat assembly election campaign. He had criticised his predecessor Singh for attending a "secret" dinner with senior Pakistan officials at Aiyar's residence.

The Congress said Modi's remarks implied that Singh and other public figures who attended the dinner were conspiring with Pakistan, and demanded an apology from the prime minister.

In Rajya Sabha, Leader of the House Arun Jaitley said Modi in his statements and speeches, "did not question nor did he mean to question the commitment to this nation either by Dr Manmohan Singh, the former Prime Minister, or Hamid

Ansari, the former vice president."

"Any such perception is completely erroneous. We hold these leaders in high esteem, as also their commitment to this nation," Jaitley said.

Earlier, the Upper House was adjourned in the morning due to protests over Union minister Ananthkumar Hegde's remarks on secularism and changing the Constitution.

Jaitley said many statements had been made on all sides during the Gujarat elections, and added that the government "does not want the stalemate as a result of this to continue".

Responding to his statement, Leader of

Opposition in the Rajya Sabha Ghulam Nabi Azad said: "I want to thank the Leader of the House that he issued a clarification on the issue which was causing the deadlock."

"If during the elections, any member of our party gave such a statement that was against the stature of the prime minister, then our party dissociates itself from any such statement and we would not want any word to be said against the stature of the prime minister," Azad said.

The Congress had suspended Aiyar from its primary membership and slapped a show cause notice on him for calling Modi a "neech ki- **turn to pg03**

SFA begins preparations for Santosh Trophy, shortlists 30 footballers



SAGAR CHETTRI GANGETOK, 27 DEC:

Sikkim Football Association [SFA] is gearing up to prepare the State team for the upcoming 72nd edition of the National Football Championship for Santosh Trophy to be started in January next year. Sikkim has been placed in the East Zone for the first round to be played from 28 January next year at Patna, Bihar. Sikkim has been placed along with West Bengal, Bihar, Odisha, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand and Railways.

Addressing a press conference here today, SFA president, Menla Ethenpa informed that the SFA conducted a three-day long selection trial from 19 to 21 December at Paljor Stadium to select the State team members. The selection trial was attended by more than 70 footballers from different parts of the State and around 30 have been short-listed for the coaching camp.

He informed that around 30 short-listed players from the selection camp will attend a coaching camp.

"This time it is really encouraging that Bhaichung Bhutia Football School [BBFS] and Vector X have come forward with sponsorship for the State team and to support Sikkim football," he said.

Mr Ethenpa informed that BBFS will also be organising an exposure tour for the State team at Delhi before the championship.

Former Indian football team skipper and SFA advisor, Bhaichung Bhutia stated that BBFS was happy to support Sikkim football and would continue in the future as well. He informed that BBFS presently has 21 centres in the country. He also thanked Vector X for supporting Sikkim football.

"We are more serious for upcoming Santosh Trophy this time. Sikkim **turn to pg02**

Nepal rejects India's offer to jointly re-measure Mt Everest

NEW DELHI, DEC 27 (PTI): Nepal has rejected India's offer to jointly re-measure the height of the world's highest peak Mount Everest following the massive earthquake in 2015 and will carry out the exercise on its own, the top official of the Himalayan nation's survey department has said.

Nepal will, however, seek help from India and China for getting crucial data for the exercise, Nepal's Survey Department's Director General Ganesh Bhatta told PTI.

Sources in New Delhi indicated that China could be behind Nepal refusing India's proposal to jointly re-measure Mount Everest as the peak is on the Sino-Nepal border. According to a statement by the Department of Science and Technology which comes under India's Ministry of Science and Technology, after the 2015 "Gorkha earthquake" that jolted

Nepal, various doubts were raised by the scientific community over the height of the peak.

The 7.8 magnitude quake in April 2015 had devastated the Himalayan nation, killing more than 8,000 people and displacing lakhs of others.

The Survey of India, a 250-year-old institute under the DST, proposed re-measuring Mt Everest as an 'Indo-Nepal Joint Scientific Exercise' **turn to pg03**

Bamboo not a tree: Parliament passes bill amending Forest Act

NEW DELHI, DEC 27 (PTI): Parliament today passed a bill to exclude bamboo from the definition of tree under the Indian Forest Act, claiming it would improve the earnings of tribals and dwellers living around forests.

The Indian Forest (Amendment) Bill, which was adopted by the Lok Sabha on December 20, was passed by a voice vote in the Rajya Sabha, amid a walk-out by member of the Congress, Biju Janta Dal and the Samajwadi Party.

The opposition parties protested its passage saying the bill was being passed in a hurry without proper consultations with stakeholders and the states. Besides, they alleged it would favour the industrialists.

Replying to a short debate, Environment, Forest and Climate Change Minister Harsh Vardhan said the bill to



amend the 1927 Indian Forest Act would benefit the tribals, forest dweller and farmers as their income would increase.

The bill permits felling and transit of bamboo grown in non-forest areas. However, bamboo grown on forest lands would continue to be classified as tree and would be guided by the existing legal

restrictions. "I am really shocked to see that you (opposition) can't see the benefit of tribals and poor farmers who are going to benefit after the bill is passed," he told the House amid protest from the opposition members.

Attacking the opposition which repeatedly questioned

the government taking ordinance route, Vardhan said the process to make the bill a reality was going on for a long time and the government could no longer see tribals suffer in the country.

"It took us 90 years to do it. It was long awaited in India. We cannot allow tribals and poor farmers of the country to suffer," he said.

On the opposition charge that states were not consulted, the minister said that 26 states and union territories had responded on the bill while 24 of them had supported it.

Vardhan said the bill would not only increase rural income but also help in increasing green cover across the country.

Bamboo, the minister said, was used extensively in a variety of applications such as furnishing, yarn, pulp and

paper, handicrafts, decoration and musical instruments.

Earlier while moving the bill for passage, Vardhan said the major objective of the amendment was to promote the cultivation of bamboo in non-forest areas and improve farmers' income, keeping in mind the Government's "ambitious" target of doubling farmers' income by 2022.

The Minister observed that after the amendment, all the legal and regulatory hardships faced by the farmers and other individuals will be removed.

Dissatisfied with his reply, Congress, SP and BJD members staged a walkout from the Rajya Sabha.

Participating in the debate, Congress leader Jairam Ramesh had opposed the bill, terming it as "very misleading" and one which would work against the interests of

tribals in the long run.

After the minister's reply, Ramesh, a former Union Environment Minister, said it was most unsatisfactory on all counts and walked out of the House. He was followed by his other party members.

Ramesh questioned the "urgency" of promulgating the ordinance when Parliament was in session, alleging that the government was bringing the amendment to benefit private players and taking away the control of the forest areas from the Gram Sabhas.

The Congress leader alleged that the bill was "trampling upon the rights of the Gram Sabha, which are enshrined in the Indian Forest Act".

Several opposition members including D Raja(CPI), Pradeep Tamta (Congress), Viplove Thakur (Congress) also opposed the bill.

SDF to decide its RS nominee in consultation with MLAs

GANGTOK, DEC 27 (PTI): The ruling Sikkim Democratic Front (SDF) will finalise its candidate for the sole Rajya Sabha seat in the state in consultation with its MLAs, a party leader said today.

SDF president, Chief Minister Pawan Chamling, will convene a meeting with party MLAs soon to finalise the party's nominee on the lone Rajya Sabha seat going to poll on January 16 next, the party's spokesperson KT Gyaltsen told PTI.

Asked about the date on which the party leadership will convene a meeting of the SDF legislature party, he said Chamling, will decide on it.

The SDF, which has 29 MLAs, in the 32-member House is comfortably placed to get its nominee elected to Rajya Sabha.

The tenure of Hishey Lachungpa, the SDF's Rajya Sabha Member of Parliament (MP), comes to an end on February 23, 2018.

LS passes bill for GST cess hike on luxury cars to 25%

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handicrafts, handloom items and sports goods. Some members even suggested that there should be single tax slab instead of four.

The debate over the GST compensation bill continued amid slogan-shouting by Congress and TMC members who demanded resignation of Hegde for his controversial comments.

At a function in Karnataka on Sunday, Hegde had reportedly said people should identify themselves by their religions and "those who, without knowing about their parental blood, call themselves secular, they don't have their own identity...They don't know about their parentage."

He had also said "we are here to change the Constitution and we'll change it."

As the opposition forced four adjournments during the day, Parliamentary Affairs Minister Anant Kumar sought to wriggle out of the situation by asserting that Hegde's remarks were being distorted.

Dissatisfied by Kumar's intervention, the Opposition continued to storm the Well shouting slogans.

Meanwhile during the discussion, Bhartruhari Mahtab (BJD) said that the impact of GST roll out on exchequer will be known after January once the implementation of the new indirect tax regime is streamlined.

In last three months the centre has provided over Rs 1,000 crore as compensation to Odisha and Rs 2,000 crore to West Bengal.

TG Venkatesh Babu (AIADMK), Kaushalendra Kumar (JDU), Prem Singh Chandumajhra (SAD) demanded special packages for their states of Tamil Nadu, Bihar and Punjab.

Tribal Fest at Namprikdang enters second day

MANGAN, 27 DEC [IPR]: The second day of the State Level Tribal Festival cum Namsoong-2017 saw colourful cultural programme performed by the different tribal communities of the State. The festival was organised with a view to promote culture, tradition, food habits, etc. of the tribal communities such as Lepcha, Bhutia, Limboo, Tamang and Sherpa. Zilla Adhakshya North, Namday Lepcha, attended today's programme as chief guest accompanied by Chairperson of Transport Department, Pintso Namgyal Lepcha, Zilla and Ward Panchayat members and other dignitaries.

The programme was organised by Tribal Research Institution, Social Justice, Empowerment & Welfare Department, Government of Sikkim



in collaboration with Namprikdang Namsoong celebration committee and funded by Ministry of Tribal Affairs, Government of India.

A marathon was also organised for boys and girls on the theme 'Run for River'. Udenmit Lep-

cha stood first while Gajum Lepcha and Ingmit Lepcha secured second and third positions in girls' category, respectively. In boys' category, Chandula Lepcha secured first position with Udey Subba and Nim Dorjee Lepcha stood second and third,

respectively.

"This is an opportunity for the youth of the different tribal communities to learn about each other's culture and traditions," said Zilla Adhakshya North, Ms Lepcha, while addressing the gathering.

Follow up coordination meet on Jorethang Maghey Mela held

JORETHANG, 27 DEC [IPR]: A follow-up coordination meeting on the upcoming Jorethang Maghey Sakranti Mela 2018 was held at Garib Utthan Bhawan in Jorethang today. The meeting was chaired by Minister-cum-Area MLA, Arjun Kumar Ghatani, who is also the chief patron of Jorethang Maghey Mela Celebration Committee, accompanied by MLA of Daramdin constituency, DN Sherpa.

The meeting was held to discuss and deliberate the progress of work and responsibilities assigned to various line departments in the previous meeting held on 11 Dec at the conference hall of the Chief Secretary in Gangtok.

Mr Ghatani, in his address, elaborated the objectives and purpose of the previous meetings and underlined the roles and responsibilities of various departments to accomplish their allotted task and work in coordination to ensure success of the State level program. Further, he underlined the key role of Tourism Department which has been designated as the nodal department from 2018 onwards for inter-sectoral coordination and conduct of overall supervision of the Jorethang Maghey mela.

He reiterated the need for the concerned departments to organize adventure sports at Zoom Rock Garden followed by other components such as the Job Mela, Arogya Mela, SARAS Mela, CATCH programme and display of culture and traditions. In addition, he also instructed the concerned Block Development Officers to disseminate information amongst public on availability of transport services to aid public ease.

Furthermore, Mr Ghatani



articulated the dire need to promote the mela with attractive cultural programme and musical nights.

He instructed all departments to display programmes, projects and governmental schemes like Chief Minister Startup Scheme and historic achievements of the state government under the leadership of Chief Minister Pawan Chamling.

He also spoke on construction of entry gate, stage, accommodations, bazaar beautification, help desk, display of organic products and floriculture, theme based departmental banners, etc. He thanked every department for their active participation and called for collaborative effort to make this event a grand success.

Chairperson Naya Bazaar Jorethang Municipal Corporation, Tika Gurung, appealed to all the departments to deliver the assigned responsibilities without confusion and con-

straints. He urged concerned officials to be in proper coordination with the organizing committee and to translate instructions into action.

Mr Gurung also stressed upon maintenance of dignity of Maghey Mela and cleanliness of respective venues at the time of closing.

Sub Divisional Magistrate, Jorethang, BC Rai, who is also the president of the celebration committee, coordinated the discussions extensively and cleared all proposed responsibilities before various departments.

Rural Management & Development Department informed that around 120 stalls will be installed to accomplish a major component of SARAS Mela wherein more than 20 States have already given their confirmation of participation as of now.

During the meeting, designated nodal officers and representative officials from various departments including Culture

and Heritage Affairs, Tourism & Civil Aviation, Forest, Roads & Bridges, Human Resource & Development, Urban Development & Housing, Irrigation, Information & Public Relations, Health, Horticulture, Public Health Engineering, Sikkim Police [Law and Order/ Fire], Transport, Animal Husbandry, Science & Technology and others informed the house about their activities in making the state level event successful. They informed the house on the work progress of the assigned responsibilities and urged for allotment of stalls for respective departments.

Sub Divisional Magistrate, Jorethang also informed that components like tambola, Mee-na Bazaar, adventure sports like paragliding, traditional & commercial stalls, departmental stalls, Job Mela, Arogya Mela, CATCH programme, Art and Flower Exhibition have also been included in the designed draft of the mela.



SKM appoints new CLC execs for Namthang Rateypani

SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 27 DEC:

Sikkim Krantikari Morcha organised a Constituency Level Workers meeting of Namthang Rateypani Constituency at Namthang in South Sikkim today. The meet was attended by CLC president, Bimal Kharel, district youth vice convener, Harun Subba, CEC member, Kavita Sapkota, and others.

An SKM press release issued by its press & publicity vice president, Birendra Tamling, informs that the meeting was conducted to induct new executives to Constituency Level Committee and plan out activities for future days.

Ranjit Singh Tamang has been appointed as CLC convener with Ten-

zing Sherpa, Bhim Limboo, Basant Tamang, Adarsh Lepcha and Mohan Rampal as territorial presidents of various Territorial Constituencies under the Namthang Rateypani Constituency.

Senior workers in the meet stressed on the objectives for organizational strengthening and to take its leader, PS Tamang's vision of Mission Change to the grassroots ensuring direct participation of party members including networking and implementation of policies within the organizational level. Further, CLC body has decided to carry out door-to-door visits spreading awareness on the party's policies among common voters, the release adds.

SFA begins preparations for Santosh Trophy, shortlists 30 footballers

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footballers have full potential to do much better in national football and they just need support from all sides. Santosh Trophy is a big and important platform for players to go ahead in professional football," he stated.

Mr Bhutia mentioned that the final 20-member squad from the coaching camp will be representing Sikkim in the tournament. The coaching camp will have Bhaichung Bhutia and other coaches of the State.

"This time our only intension is to win, so we want our players play their best with the target to win in the tournament," he said.

The press conference was also addressed by Vector X country head, Sameer Mehta and SFA general secretary, N Tshering Bhutia.



Beti Bachao run at Kanchendzonga Winter Fest

SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 27 DEC:

The second day of Kanchendzonga Win-

ter Tourism Festival at Pelling in West Sikkim witnessed a short distance marathon on the theme

'Beti Bachao Beti Padhao Abhiyan' to raise awareness on women's empowerment on Tuesday. The

funds raised through the marathon will be contributed to children's homes and destitute homes. The

marathon was flagged off by Social Justice, Empowerment and Welfare Minister, Tulshi Devi Rai.

WRITE US: Readers are invited to comment on, criticise, run down, even appreciate if they like something in this paper. Letters carrying abusive/ indecorous language and personal attacks, except when against people responsible in this newspaper (who are fair game), will have to be ignored. Letters which carry forward a conversation or initiate a dialogue will command immediate attention and receive prominence. Mail us at: letters@summittimes.com

**Gangtok on
Thursday,
28 Dec**

Temp: 21°C / 06°C
Forecast: Pleasant
with plenty of sun-
shine whole day.
Sunrise: 06:24 AM
Sunset: 4:50 PM

**Nepal
quake: 40 pc
reconstruction
work
complete,
says NRA**

KATHMANDU, DEC 27 (PTI): Around 40 per cent reconstruction work of private and public structures in Nepal, devastated in the 2015 earthquake, has been completed and around Nepali Rs 71.52 billion spent, a senior official said here today.

Nearly 9,000 people were killed and 22,000 were injured in the twin earthquake that hit the country on April 25 and May 12, 2015. More than 600,000 houses were damaged due to the tremors, aftershocks of which still occur.

Nepal had set up the National Reconstruction Authority (NRA) in December 2015 to rebuild the private and public structures devastated by the quake.

During a programme organised to mark the NRA's second anniversary, its chief Yuva Raj Bhushal claimed that so far Nepali Rs 71.52 billion was spent in the reconstruction work, of which 40 per cent have been completed.

The quake badly damaged public and private buildings in 14 districts while that in remaining 17 districts were partially hit.

According to officials, out of the 7,553 school buildings damaged in the quake, reconstruction of 2,941 have been completed with private and public initiatives while that of 1,004 others are in progress.

Out of the 753 shrines, reconstruction of 79 has been completed while work is underway on 314 others.

Similarly, out of the 483 damaged government buildings, reconstruction of 177 have been completed while that of 203 others are underway, they said.

**PM does
not question
Singh's
integrity...**

contd from pg01

sam ka aadmi" or a lowly type of person.

After the two statements, Chairman M Venkaiah Naidu thanked all members of the House for their cooperation in resolving the stalemate.

However, Samajwadi Party leader Naresh Agarwal stood up to object, charging that the fate of the proceedings in the House could not be decided based on statements by only two people.

To this, Naidu said, "We discussed it in the morning in the business advisory committee. Every member of the House is important. Let us not sidetrack the issue".

Chamgchup Chorten consecrated by Rongnyek Rinpoche



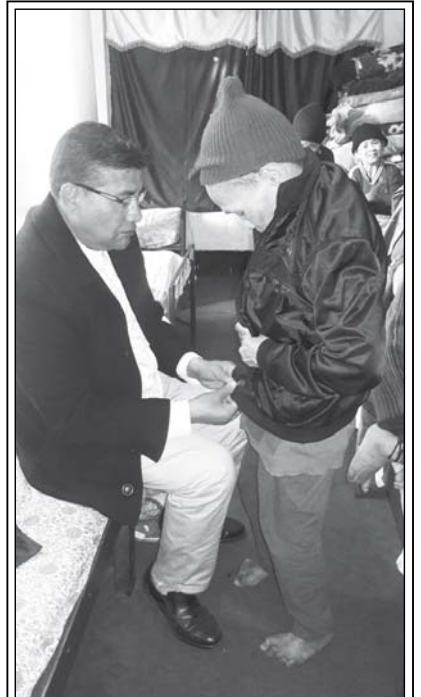
REBYNA RANA
GANGTOK, 27 DEC:
Rongnyek Rinpoche [Lachung Rinpoche] consecrated the newly constructed Chamgchup

Chorten [65 ft] at Rongnyek Manilhakhang, near Gangtok on 26 Dec. Three-day long puja is also being organized at the monastery complex

in Mane Dara, Rongnyek which will conclude on 28 Dec.

The construction works of the Chorten had started on 11 Dec, 2016 after it suffered slight damages caused by the 2011 earthquake. It was Tsampo Pema Dorjee from Rongnyek Manilhakhang who initiated the Chamgchup Chorten project.

It is informed that the relics along with 56 miniature statues of Lord Buddha brought from Benares have been stored in the Manilhakhang.



MLA SPREADS CHRISTMAS CHEER AT DESTITUTE HOME: MLA of Upper Burtuk Constituency, DR Thapa, distributed winter clothing including jackets and sweaters to 36 inmates of Mayalmu destitute home at Tadong on the occasion of Christmas on 25 Dec. [Vishnu Neopaney]

Governor Patil felicitates biker couple from Maharashtra



SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 27 DEC:
Governor Shrinivas Patil today felicitated biker couple from Pune, Maharashtra, Omkar Kukade and Kalpita Kshirsagar, on their arrival at Raj Bhavan in the afternoon.

A press communiqué received from Raj Bhavan informs that the

couple had embarked on the cross country bike expedition with the theme 'Ek Bharat Shresth Bharat' on 17 Dec from Pune and will cover a distance of 6000 KMS in 31 days. They have reached Sikkim after covering a distance of 2700 kilometres through various States on the way, interacting with the locals about the country and how

it should progress. The couple will be visiting Nathula on 28 Dec and will leave for Northeast the day after.

The Governor lauded their effort and expressed that the mission will definitely bear positive result. He also extended best wishes for the success of their expedition.

UCWSS shares joyous spirit of Christmas at Mayalmu Sangh

SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 27 DEC:
United Christian Welfare Society of Sikkim [UCWSS] celebrated Christmas with twenty inmates of Mayalmu Sangh, a destitute home for the mentally unsound, located at Tadong in Gangtok on 26 Dec, a UCWSS press release informs.

The programme started with presentation of Christmas songs followed by dances, instrumental songs and cake cutting ceremony.

Messages of love and importance of Christmas were shared by UCWSS president, Elder Patrus



Gurung, while the concluding prayer was delivered by its general

secretary, Reverend Peter Samsher. Christmas gifts were

also distributed to the inmates to keep them warm in winter.

Nepal rejects India's offer to jointly re-measure Mt Everest

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with Nepal's survey department.

"They have not responded to our proposal. Now they are saying that they are not involving either India or China. They will be re-measuring Mt Everest on their own," Major Gen Girish Kumar, the Surveyor General of India, told PTI.

Kumar said that a representative from India attended a meeting convened in Kathmandu, where surveyors and scientists from different countries including China were also present.

"There was a proposal

from India to help us measure Mt Everest, but we are doing it on our own," Bhatta, who is in Nepal, told PTI over phone.

When asked whether China had also given a proposal to re-measure Nepal, he replied in the negative.

He noted that China had measured Mt Everest in 1975 and 2005 while Indian surveyors had carried out a similar mission in 1956. The SGI had also measured the Everest during the British era.

"India was the first country under Sir George Everest's leadership as the Surveyor General of

India to have declared the height of Mount Everest and establish it as the highest peak in the world in the year 1855," the Department of Science and Technology's website states.

Bhatta said preparatory work has already begun on the project and they are gathering preliminary data crucial for this survey.

The massive earthquake has "shook" even the basic parameters of Nepal, so data from other countries will be crucial, he said.

India is being requested to provide the

levelling data while China has been asked to provide the gravity data. The data will be very important to determine the height of Mt Everest, Bhatta said.

"We won't be crossing over into the Chinese territory for measurements. The work of summiting Everest will take place in 2019," he said.

Kusalaraj, a scientist at the Centre for Earth Science at the Indian Institute of Science, Bengaluru, said minor change in the height of Mt Everest may not have a direct impact on the lives of people immediately.



Swachch Bharat Mission making Singtam lazy

YOGEN THATAL

SINGTAM, 27 DEC:

Although Singtam Nagar Panchayat has been working towards Swachh Bharat Mission with dedication by providing various facilities and safai karmacharis along with allocating waste bins at different areas in Singtam, the lack of participation of the public on the same has been raising concerns with regard to cleanliness and sanitation in the town.

Here, people have developed a notion that Swachh Mission applies only in and around their houses. When caught littering in public spaces they are ready and happy to pay fines.

Twelve safai karmacharis have been deployed at five wards of Singtam Bazaar under Singtam Nagar Panchayat who have been diligently performing their duties on scheduled time as per the instructions of the Sanitation Inspector.

"Every day tons of garbage and waste are produced in Singtam Bazaar and despite providing helping hands, residents often criticize the management of SNP. The safai karmacharis not only sweep the town, they also sweep the surroundings and private properties of residents. This has only made people lazy and dependent on these safai karmacharis," mentioned Municipal-cum-Sanitation Inspector, SNP, Birendra Rai.

**GOVERNMENT OF SIKKIM
HEALTH CARE HUMAN RESOURCE SERVICES
& FAMILY WELFARE DEPARTMENT
GANGTOK**

NOTICE INVITING TENDER

The HC, HS&FW Department invites e-tender from Class II B enlisted contractors [SPWD] for participating in the tender for the work "Construction of Drug Testing Laboratory at Chuwater, Singtam, East Sikkim". For further details kindly visit the website www.sikkim-tenders.gov.in. Date of uploading of bidding documents in e-procurement portal will be on 15/12/2017.

Sd/-

**SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER,
HC, HS&FW DEPARTMENT**

R.O. No. 464/IPR/PUB/ClassII/17-18 Dt. 13/12/17

SummitTIMES

In Pursuit of Happiness

...no, not mercenary materialism

And no, this is not a moral science lesson. It will however begin with reference to an international conference the State Government had organized several years back on "Science, Spirituality and Education" with the Dalai Lama as a special guest and speaker. The conference was motivated by a felt need to work on school curriculums in a way that would tease out more empathy and deeper engagements from students and deliver Sikkim the much-needed involved citizenry for the future.

The Dalai Lama had charmed the audience with his ready wit and open mind and set the conference on course by suggesting that the participants deliberate over how common sense, and not necessarily religious regimen, if harnessed with conscious empathy could deliver an education which inculcated moral ethics. Individual moral ethics, he stressed would link together to deliver genuine social empathy which would in turn manifest in more compassionate societies peopled with citizens with a stronger sense of universal responsibility and calmer dispositions. Strife and an unbridled pursuit of material acquisitions, whether at the individual or the nation-state level, have come to define the 21st century which has now almost made a virtue out of mercenary materialism. Proof of this faulty prioritization is apparent in how "happiness" is now increasingly being sought in acquisitions and not so much in the satisfaction derived from contributing to the world. While the former results in competition and hence conflict, the latter is a more personal experience which is not in competition with anyone else and hence does not lead to strife. Also, as societies get more and more obsessive with acquiring more to be happy, they can also slip into depression when they cannot gather enough 'benefits'. Sikkim should understand this phenomenon well because it has to be accepted that apathy - that listless lack of interest and refusal to get excited or engage - underlines social response and engagement here.

This apathy does not necessarily stem from denial or oppression, but is born from an inferred sense of loss over not having acquired enough. Even as this manifests in listlessness in outward behaviour, internally, the mind is agitated and it is perhaps in this internal disquiet that Sikkim can find the reasons to explain the high suicide rates, addiction and other social challenges, including corruption and even the universal inurement towards dishonesty. Obviously, what has happened in Sikkim, as in societies across the world, is that the pursuit has been for a warped interpretation of happiness, one that is incomplete.

Sikkim requires to seek out answers on how to address the paradox of so many social ills haunting a land of such few material worries. Expecting solutions to be provided and executed by someone else or the government would doom the possible solutions to failure because social course-corrections require social engagement, not governmental or even divine interventions. To return to what the Dalai Lama has often said, Change depends on individual action. Divine intervention, he stresses, is fine so long as it was for individual consolation, but for change and betterment, it was individual action that is needed. This proactive engagement needs to be internalised by Sikkim at the individual, then community and governance levels. A generation groomed with a stronger sense of universal responsibility will also be one with a clearer sense of self and more importantly, with more respect for the aspirations and needs of others. That is the kind of generation which Sikkim needs to reach out for and chalk up as resolution for the New Year...

WRITE US: Readers are invited to comment on, criticise, run down, even appreciate if they like something in this paper. Letters carrying abusive/indecent language and personal attacks, except when against people responsible in this newspaper (who are fair game), will have to be ignored. Letters which carry forward a conversation or initiate a dialogue will command immediate attention and receive prominence.

Mail us at: letters@summittimes.com

Structuring thought and imagination brick by brick, Lego is more than child's play

SONDRA BACHARACH
theconversation.com

You might think Lego is just a kids' toy - one you played with as a child and now step on as you walk through the house as a parent.

These days, however, the bricks are showing up in all sorts of unexpected places - on display in museums, in street art, in home renovations and at work. Those playing with Lego are unexpected too, including artists like Ai Weiwei, corporate business people facilitating a work function or engineers designing sophisticated robotics.

Our recent book, LEGO and Philosophy, offers a new perspective. These brightly coloured bricks are not mere child's play. They raise important and challenging questions about creativity and play, conformity and autonomy, identity and culture.

NOT JUST FOR KIDS

Interest in Lego has recently extended beyond simple child's play. Sociologists, psychologists and economists have studied the use of Lego bricks as tools for achieving certain ends via Lego-based therapy and similar activities.

Tools are for using, building, working, thinking, teaching, imagining, playing and much else. In fact, tools can be for anything. As soon as we realise Lego is a tool, its uses beyond mere play are obvious. Indeed, it is a universal tool that can be used to make anything we can imagine.

The company Lego Group is well aware of the bricks' role as a universal tool for the imagination: one of its most successful advertisement campaigns carried the minimal tagline "imagine".

STRUCTURED THOUGHT, BRICK BY BRICK

This is also where we need to be more reflective, more critical and perhaps even wary of the largest toy company selling the primary tool for children's minds. Do we really want a for-profit company, whose commercial and financial interests are front and centre, governing what our children think and directing how our children imagine? Here are some of the highlights from our book, and areas of improvement, for Lego in its role as a tool for thinking.

Lego's tagline, "imagine", implies that one's own imagination is the only limit to what you can build. Of course, that's not quite right. One of the book chapters explores the ways in which Lego comes with some inbuilt constraints, and how those limits actually help inspire sophisticated Lego builders.

Some of those limits lie in the nature of the bricks. With each set, we can build a world of our own creation, both literally and metaphysically. Another chapter explores the similarities between Lego worlds and our own world, constructing a metaphysics of the bricks.

Instructions constitute another set of limits for Lego creations - assuming, at least, that you're the kind of player who follows the rules. And here we come to a divide in Lego users between those who follow the rules dogmatically, and those who ditch



them altogether, in favour of free play. The Lego Movie mocks these two kinds of Lego users in exaggerated characters.

Lego sets, complete with a metaphysics and rules, profoundly shape the world in which we live. Sometimes Lego does this well, but not always.

IS LEGO CONSTRUCTING YOUR WORLD?

The problem of Lego shaping what and how we think has come to the fore recently with the company's increased gender-based marketing, as Rhianon Grant and Ruth Wainman worry in their book chapter.

"When Lego produces materials for children that assume girls are more interested in characters, stories and emotions, and boys are more interested in building, cars and explosions, they are both playing into a dominant cultural narrative that tells children how they should be, and helping to create a world in which children are shaped to fulfil those expectations."

This explains why so many objected in 2012 to the pink-and-purple Lego Friends, designed to appeal to girls' feminine desire to care for animals or play house. As Rebecca Gutwald reminds us:

"... the problem with Friends is that they seem to be presented as the only options for girls in this Lego world and in the world in general."

The fact that Lego Friend characters are not designed to be attached to the regular blocks creates a literal gender divide during playtime.

Of course, there is some good news: not long af-

ter Lego Friends were introduced, Ellen Kooijman's all-female research institute set (above) was allowed to go into production. But it was quickly retired and it nevertheless buys into a gender-based conception of girls' play.

"Apart from building the equipment and figures, no engineering or scientific skills are embedded in playing with the set."

BREAKING DOWN RACIAL STEREOTYPES

That said, Lego has had more success with the issues around race and ethnicity. Its original all-yellow minifigures may seem to embody an idealistically well intentioned, racial neutrality, but Lego's representation of race has tracked the changes in society's own assumptions about race. The bricks and figures are tools for showing us how we think, and for encouraging us to change how we think about race.

This is an opportunity for Lego. If it is a tool for building anything, then it also is a tool for constructing new paradigms through which to think about race, gender and social justice. As Tyler Shores highlights in his chapter, Lego has the power to challenge the status quo, to encourage critical thinking and deep reflection about the world and to help children and adults alike to rethink the way we should inhabit this planet.

Now that would make the popular bricks a truly innovative and creative tool for the future.

[the writer is Associate Professor in Philosophy, Victoria University of Wellington]

Survival Diet for Sikkim's Approaching Organic Age

SD TSHERING

History bears witness to numerous revolutions being started due to shortage of food and starvation. A classic case is the French Revolution where, when the people went to the king to protest against food shortage, they were told by Marie Antoinette, the queen, to go and eat cake if they didn't have bread. This remark led to the revolution which overthrew the monarchy. A similar case is brewing in Sikkim where people are being told to eat organic food which is short in supply.

The recent decision of the cabinet to ban vegetables and fruits from outside the state is a revival of ancient sumptuary law controlling consumption of certain foods and beverages, a diktat which does not have a place in modern democracy. Many politicians and self-appointed nutrition experts see Sikkimese as incapable of making decisions about a basic necessity of life: eating. Therefore, they feel that government at all levels must try to control their diets. This control means trying to direct people to eat a certain way or expressly prohibiting or banning the consumption of certain other foods. Such intervention is a restriction of citizen freedom.

Ban on vegetables and fruits will increase the price of these items since organic variety grown in the state will not be enough to meet the demand. Past experience has shown that prices increase by a minimum of 30% when vegetables were blocked from Siliguri.

Since citizens of Sikkim are by nature docile and meek, the only way they can survive in a high food cost situation is by changing their diets to meet the high costs. The following Dal-Bhaat-Tarkari menu is suggested

Prices in December in Rs per Kg

	Potato	Tomato	Onion	Beans	Cabbage	Peas	Cauliflower	Milk	Brinjal
Siliguri	20	30	50	60	20	50	20		20
Gangtok	35	40	55	80	50	120	40		

Break-up of monthly per capita consumer expenditure (MRP) for 30 days for Sikkim. Value in Rs.

SI NO	ITEMS	RURAL	URBAN
1	Cereal	151.16	210.52
2	Gram	0.70	2.06
3	Cereal Substitutes	0.55	00
4	Pulses And Pulse Products	29.45	30.93
5	Milk And Milk Products	137.29	151.15
6	Sugar	11.79	17.25
7	Salt	2.36	2.14
8	Edible Oil	61.68	57.82
9	Egg, Fish & Meat	78.97	96.52
10	Vegetables	93.47	132.88
11	Fruit Fresh	10.53	28.44
12	Fruit Dry	0.57	4.20
14	Spices	19.91	30.26
14	Beverages' And Refreshments	118.71	291.65

Source: CSO, NSS 68th Round.GOI

for the citizens to be able to survive the Organic Age in Sikkim. The diet plan has been prepared without taking into consideration the nutritional value or calorie requirement, the diet is for survival purpose only.

BREAKFAST: Black Tea (due to shortage of milk) with Chiuura (choice of Dhaan or Makai ko chiuura).

RICE: Preferably LS from BPL ration quota or ghar ma banako makai ko chaamal

DAL: Only masoor dal to be prepared in watery manner or to be avoided. Jhol of vegetable or meat tarkari to be consumed.

MENU FOR NON VEGETARIANS

1. Beef or Buff meat with Alu ko jhol
2. Beef or Buff meat with Iskush ko Jhol
3. Beef or Buff meat soup with small meat pieces.
4. Beef of Buff meat mixed with the cheapest vegetable available in dry or soup form.

VEGETARIAN MENU

1. Sisno Ko Jhol (sisno ahfailay teepayko)
2. Sim Rayo ko Jhol (sim rayo ahfailay teepayko)
3. Gundruk ko Jhol (Gundruk ghar-mar banako)
4. Rayo Saag ko Jhol
5. Keneema dried fried or Jhol

6. Farsi fried or Jhol.

7. Alu fried or Jhol

8. Ningro fried

Ingredients for preparing sabzi:

1. Tomato and Onion and other ingredients to be avoided or bare minimum used
2. Except for salt all spices to be used bare minimum
3. Oil for cooking restricted to one table spoon

EXCEPTION FOR SPECIAL OCCASIONS:

Non vegetarians may eat other meats restricted to two pieces for each person. Vegetarians may consume Kaalo daal or Churpi ko jhol. Pesayko aachaar may be used to help consume your food. To add adventure to the vegetable shortage groups can be formed to go for foraging in the forest for ban-tarul, bamboo shoots and other edible forest plants.

The present government needs to get off this path to food bans and for politicians at all levels of government to start respecting the private choices of individuals and to respect individual freedom. There are some lines the government should never cross. This certainly includes seeking to control what people eat. In a free society, people are entitled to live as they deem fit, especially in their personal lives without interference from the government. If the government can control what the public eats, it is difficult to imagine what it could not do.

[The writer is former Secretary, Department of Economics, Statistics, Monitoring and Evaluation, Government of Sikkim]

CBI software programmer arrested for Tatkal tickets scam

NEW DELHI, DEC 27 (PTI): The CBI today arrested its software programmer for developing an illicit software to subvert the railways Tatkal reservation system, allowing hundreds of tickets to be booked in one go.

Ajay Garg, an assistant programmer with CBI, worked with IRCTC (Indian Railway Catering and Tourism Corporation Ltd) for four years between 2007-11 where he learnt the vulnerabilities of the railway ticketing system, sources said.

Garg has been arrested along with close aide Anil Gupta, a private person who distributed the software to agents for a price. Besides, 10 agents -- seven in Jaunpur and three in Mumbai -- have been identified, the sources said.

Garg, who joined CBI in 2012, exploited the vulnerabilities to develop the illegal software, which allowed agents to book hundreds of tickets in one go, leaving genuine passengers in the lurch, they said.

"The vulnerabilities of the IRCTC system still exist," an official said.

A postgraduate in computer applications, Garg allegedly sold the software through Gupta.

to book advertisements in SummitTimes call 03592-208698 9734152541 9647102692 advertise@summittimes.com

Ganga Sagar should be treated at par with Kumbh Mela: Mamata

SAGAR ISLAND (WB), DEC 27 (PTI): West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee today said that the annual Ganga Sagar Mela should be treated at par with Kumbh Mela and turned into a 'pilgrimage of solidarity' (Sanghati Tirtha).

Ganga Sagar Mela is no less important than Kumbh Mela, she said to buttress her point while speaking at the Krishak Bazar at Rudrapur in South 24 Parganas district.

"I do not understand why the Gangasagar Mela will not be given the status of the Kumbh Mela. This mela is being held for ages and pilgrims throng this place in huge numbers for many many years. I think Ganga Sagar Mela must be turned into a pilgrimage of solidarity (Sanhati Tirtha). People from all communities, caste and creed from



various corners of the world can come here. Nobody has ever thought of this," she said.

Lauding the preparations for the Ganga Sagar Mela scheduled to be held next month, Banerjee today said that development work in the area has changed it altogether.

"I had paid a visit to the Sagar Island earlier and given sugges-

tions for development here. This time I am here to review the development work here. So much good work has been done. The ghats have been developed, tourist lodge and new parking lots have been developed," she said.

At the Krishak Bazar the chief minister gave away cheques of Rs 10,000 to farmers whose families were affected by

the recent floods in the state.

She said that financial compensation were given to around 33,000 flood-hit farmers in the district and Rs 1,200 crore was spent for the purpose by the state government.

Around 30 lakh farmers were affected by the recent floods. "The Centre has not paid a single paise to the state to help the farmers. We decided to do so ourselves as I believe that farmers are our assets. They are the backbone of our society," she added.

Banerjee paid a visit to the Bharat Sevaashram Sangha complex here and the Mela beach for an on-the-spot survey ahead of the Mela. She also asked Chief Secretary Moloy Dey, who was accompanying her, to chalk out a plan to boost tourism in the Sagar Island.

Genuine Indians to get chance to include names in NRC: Sonowal

NEW DELHI, DEC 27 (PTI): With Assam on the edge ahead of the publication of the draft NRC, Chief Minister Sarbananda Sonowal today sought to dispel apprehensions and said "genuine" Indians missing from the citizenship register would get enough opportunities to incorporate their names.

Massive preparations are in place to ensure peace and no one will be allowed to take law in their hands after publication of the first draft of the National Register of Citizens, a list of the state's citizens, on December 31, the chief minister said.

"No one should have any apprehensions. If the name of a genuine Indian citizen is missing in the part draft of the NRC, he or she will get proper chance to incorporate it," Sonowal told PTI here.

The chief minister also made it clear that the government would tolerate no violence.



"We have received central forces and they are being deployed across the state to ensure peace. No untoward incident will be allowed to take place," he said.

A massive exercise to update the NRC is being carried out in Assam following a directive of the Supreme Court in 2005.

However, the exercise started as late as 2015 under the Congress regime. It got a major push only after the BJP came to power with illegal immigration from Bangladesh as a poll plank.

The apex court had

ordered that the first draft of the NRC be published by December 31 after completing the scrutiny of over two crore claims along with that of around 38 lakh people whose documents were suspect.

Sonowal said 40,000 government officials, including deputy commissioners of the districts, sub divisional officers and circle officers, are involved in the massive exercise which has been going on in 6,500 NRC centres.

"The district administrations have been

holding regular meetings with various socio-cultural, students organisations, senior citizens and writers seeking their help in peaceful publication of the part draft of the NRC. We hope the process will be completed smoothly," he said.

Union Home Secretary Rajiv Gauba spent two days in the state last week, reviewing preparations for the publication of the part draft of the NRC and security arrangements, as ensuring peace in the state is a top priority for the Centre and the state governments, officials said.

Of the 3.28 crore applications submitted, there was confusion over the inclusion of 29 lakh people who had submitted certificates issued by 'gram panchayats' as proof of identity, after a Gauhati High Court order in February had deemed 'panchayat' certificates invalid, the officials said.

The Supreme Court

set aside the high court order and upheld the validity of the certificates as identity proof if they were followed up with proper verification.

The apex court also asked authorities to stick to the original deadline for the publication of the draft NRC and include names of those whose claims were verified.

The NRC was last updated in Assam way back in 1951. Then, it had recorded 80 lakh citizens in the state. Since then, the process of identification of illegal immigrants in Assam has been debated and become a contentious issue in the state's politics.

A six-year agitation demanding identification and deportation of illegal immigrants was launched by the All Assam Students' Union (AASU) in 1979. It culminated with the signing of the Assam Accord on August 15, 1985 in the presence of then prime minister Rajiv Gandhi.

A walk to remember: Artist paints his sojourns in forest

NEW DELHI, DEC 27 (PTI): Inspiration can strike anytime.

For city-based artist Vimal Chand, it was the time spent walking through south Delhi's Jahanpanah City Forest as a boy which left an indelible mark on his intrinsic artistic soul.

The intimacy he developed with nature during his childhood days has found its way into his latest collection of artworks that is now on display at an exhibition -- "Green Ambience" at the Visual Arts Gallery here.

Executed in masterful brush strokes, Chand's visibly impressionistic works which capture all natural elements, invite viewers to relive his sojourns in the forest.

In acrylic on canvas, the artist brings to life scenes from the forest using a multitude of soft colours against strong and warm tones.

With the skillful application of impasto technique, the artist's

landscapes allow one to stroll through the wilderness and feel the rough thorny-textured surface of the trees.

"I want my paintings to make the onlookers feel as if they are literally standing in the woods, surrounded by the colours of nature. This is what all artists want -- for the people to experience what they do," Chand said.

Some of his paintings investigate the shifting facets of light and shadows that hint at his sfumato expertise.

His perception of soft colours establish him as a pastelist too.

"All artists inspire me. I welcome any technique that helps to express the curative power of nature. Nature inspires me. And I want my paintings to encourage people to commune with nature," Vimal said.

The exhibition, inaugurated by Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia here yesterday, will continue till December 30.

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India-Nepal relations back on track in 2017

SHIRISH B PRADHAN

KATHMANDU, DEC 27 (PTI): India-Nepal relations were back on track in 2017 with the high-level bilateral exchanges but their future ties would depend mainly on the approach adopted by the pro-China Left alliance which came to power in the recently concluded parliamentary polls.

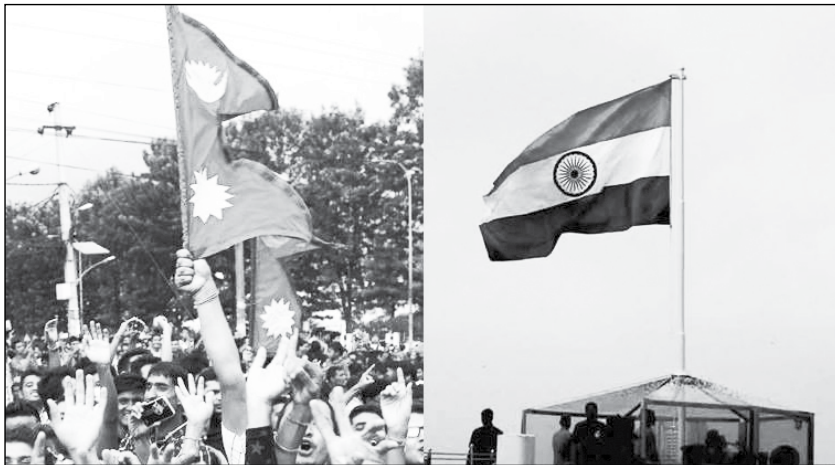
The Himalayan nation, sandwiched between India and China, saw enhanced military ties with them in 2017, with Indian Army chief Gen Bipin Rawat and Chinese Defence Minister Gen Chang Wanquan visiting Nepal to strengthen security cooperation.

In April, President Bidhya Devi Bhandari made her first abroad trip to New Delhi after assuming office in 2015, highlighting the significance of the ties with India.

During the visit, Bhandari met President Pranab Mukherjee and Prime Minister Narendra Modi, and discussed all aspects of bilateral ties.

Her visit was "fruitful in enhancing the relations and goodwill between the two countries", after a period of unease in bilateral ties following the violent agitation in 2015 by Madhesi, mostly of Indian-origin, who blocked Indo-Nepal border demanding more representation in Parliament and redrawing of provincial boundaries.

Prior to the Nepalese president's visit to India, Finance Min-



ister Arun Jaitley was here to attend the Nepal Investment Summit during which he reiterated India's commitment to support its landlocked neighbour in infrastructure needs.

India had pledged Rs 44 million to its neighbour for construction of the building of technical institutions.

In June, Nepal witnessed change of guard when 70-year-old Nepali Congress president Sher Bahadur Deuba was elected as the prime minister of Nepal for the record fourth term, after Prachanda handed over the reign to the veteran leader under a power sharing

deal.

In the later part of the year, Deuba, who is considered close to India, made a state visit to New Delhi after becoming the premier. He met top leaders including Prime Minister Modi.

Deuba discussed about completing the detailed project report of Pancheshwer Multipurpose Project with Indian officials. He also sought from India more economic development assistance and investments in Nepal.

He termed his visit as successful in laying foundation for further strengthening Nepal-India ties.

Ahead of Deuba's visit, Exter-

nal Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj was here in July to attend the meeting of BIMSTEC (The Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation). She held talks with Nepalese leaders on the sidelines of the meet and both sides expressed their commitment to deepen the friendly bilateral relations.

Also, India's then railway minister Suresh Prabhu visited Nepal to discuss issues related to connecting the country with Delhi and Kolkata through rail network. The rail connectivity is important for the landlocked nation as its major exports or imports takes place

through Indian ports.

The year saw Nepal's growing inclination towards China after the country became part of its ambitious "One Belt One Region" (OBOR) initiative, which is viewed by India with suspicion.

Nepal's then prime minister Prachanda, who is also the head of the Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist Centre, visited China to take part in the Boao Conference in March. He also met Chinese President Xi Jinping and other senior leaders.

Another example of growing China-Nepal relations was the first 10-day joint military drill 'Sagar-matha Friendship-2017 in which Chinese People's Liberation Army squad took part in the counter-terrorism and disaster response.

In May, along with Pakistan and Sri Lanka, Nepal officially became part of Beijing's ambitious OBOR initiative, which aims to invest in infrastructural projects to revive the famous Silk Road trade routes.

Nepal's Foreign Secretary Shanker Das Bairagi and Chinese Envoy to Nepal Yu Hong inked a Memorandum of Understanding on the framework agreement on the OBOR.

The growing Chinese interest in Nepal was also evident with the establishment of Hongshi Shivam Cement Company, set up with USD 360 million Chinese investment in South West Nepal, with initial

daily production capacity of 6,000 tonnes.

It was the year of elections in Nepal.

After 20 years, Nepalese voted in three phased elections to the local bodies, which was followed by elections for provincial assemblies and the lower house of Parliament.

In parliament elections held recently, a Left alliance of the CPN-UML and CPN-Maoist Centre won 116 out of 165 seats under the first-past-the-post system and is likely to form a Left government under former prime minister K P Sharma Oli, who is considered close to China.

"We seek cooperation and help from both India and China for our development, but we will not tolerate any interference in our affairs, from either side," said CPN-UML politburo member Bhim Rawal, who has been elected to the Parliament.

The elections are said to be a step forward in cementing the democracy and providing political stability to Nepal, which has seen 10 prime ministers in as many years.

Prime Minister Modi congratulated Oli, Deuba and Prachanda on the successful conduct of elections.

Also this year, Indian Ambassador to Nepal Ranjit Rae, who had completed his three and a half year term in Nepal, handed over the charge to Manjeev Singh Puri.

2nd Siliguri Premier League to offer extravagant prizes for best players

SAURABH RAI
SILIGURI, 27 DEC:

The commencement of the 2nd edition of the Siliguri Premier League [SPL] in the second week of Feb next year, immediately after the Sukna Gold Cup concludes, brings good news for football fans and players from this region.

"Some new teams will also be included in the tournament. Last year there were five teams. Teams from Hills and Doorga will also be participating. A date will be announced shortly," informed SPL general secretary, Suren Pradhan.

He further added that during the first edition of SPL, best players were awarded with Android phones and phone certificates while Man of SPL was awarded a laptop.

Likewise, the 2nd edition will offer attractive prizes for the best players along with an increase in cash incentives.

Jalpaiguri team wins Bengal leg of ECI quiz

KOLKATA, DEC 27 (PTI): The Bengal leg of the 'Election Commission's India National Quiz 2017', aimed at assessing the knowledge of the younger generation on electoral matters, drew to a close with the Jalpaiguri team emerging as the winner among 24 districts, an EC release said here today.

Teams from six electoral districts - Nadia, Purbo Bardhaman, Coochbehar, Malda and Kalimpong - had qualified for the state-level final round of the quiz on December 23.

Team Jalpaiguri's Riya Sarkar and Dipa Jha (Fatapukur Saradamoyee Vidyalaya) will now represent West Bengal at the national level in January, the release said.

Each team consisted of two students aged between 14 and 17 years.

The final round was preceded by quiz contests at the block/sub-divisional levels on November 23 in all the 24 electoral districts of the state, the release said.

The School Education Department and Doordarshan had collaborated with the ECI for organising the quiz contest, it added.

NE United enters finals of Dzongu MLA Football Challenge Cup '17

WANGCHUK BHUTIA
MANGAN, 27 DEC:

North East United defeated Chandey Boys 4-1 in the first semi final match of Dzongu MLA Football Challenge Cup '17 played today at Namprikdang ground in Upper Dzongu, North Sikkim.

The second semi final match will be played between Dzongu Football Federation and Kazor United on 28 Dec.

The tournament which had commenced on 15 Dec had the participation of 22 teams from various football clubs.



The final match of the tournament is scheduled to be held on 30 Dec.

The winner of the tournament will be awarded with cash prize of Rs

1,05,000 along with the champion's trophy while the runner-up team will

be awarded with cash prize of Rs 55,000 and trophy.

Kane sets Premier League goal record

LONDON, DEC 26 (AFP): Harry Kane set a new record for the most Premier League goals in a year and will finish as Europe's leading scorer for 2017 after the Tottenham Hotspur forward bagged a brace against Southampton today.

Kane's 22nd-minute header at Wembley was his 37th goal of the year, moving him past Alan Shearer's previous Premier League record, which was set when he played for Blackburn Rovers in 1995.

But Kane wasn't happy to settle for that milestone and scored again with a close-range finish in the 39th minute.

His second goal took him to 55 for club and country in 2017 -- lifting him above Barcelona's Lionel Messi to become Europe's top-scorer over the last 12 months in the five major countries (England, Spain, Italy, Germany and France).

Messi, who has 54 goals this year, can't catch Kane as Barcelona don't play again until 2018.

Kane admitted he was keen to break Shearer's record after he moved level with the former



England star with a hat-trick in Tottenham's win at Burnley on Saturday.

The 24-year-old reached his landmark 37th goal in 36 league appearances, while Shearer played 42 times when he set the old record with 36 goals.

Shearer was quick to congratulate Kane, tweeting: "You've had a magnificent 2017 @HKane. You deserve to hold the record of most @premier-

league goals in a calendar year. Well done and keep up the good work."

Kane scored 21 league goals from January to May last season and has 16 this term.

He netted 18 times in home games and 19 in away fixtures, while May was his highest scoring month with eight goals.

The England international now has 22 goals for Tottenham in all competitions this

season.

Other high-scoring Premier League stars over a calendar year include Robin van Persie, who notched 35 for Arsenal in 2011, and Thierry Henry, who struck 34 times for Arsenal in 2004.

Ruud van Nistelrooy scored 30 for Manchester United in 2003 and Les Ferdinand hit the same tally for QPR and Newcastle United in 1995.

Tibet earthquake caused Brahmaputra's turbidity: China

BEIJING, DEC 27 (PTI): China today said a 6.9-magnitude earthquake in Tibet in mid-November had caused turbidity in the Brahmaputra waters, which had sparked concerns in India.

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Hua Chunying also said the recent tests showed that the water quality met the standards of Class III water.

Class III is generally regarded as good for fish regeneration and wildlife.

Earlier, media reports spoke of heavy pollution in the Brahmaputra river known as Siang river in Arunachal Pradesh.

Some media outlets quoted reports of formation of barrier lakes in Tibet close to Arunachal Pradesh which has sparked concerns of a possible deluge in the downstream.

"We have noted that Indian media recently made a series of reports on this issue. They said China was conducting water con-

servancy project or exploiting a mine previously whereas now claim there is a barrier lake upstream," Hua said.

"I could tell you responsibly that none of these speculations is true according to the results of the investigation by the relevant Chinese authorities," she told PTI in response to a question.

She said the 6.9-magnitude earthquake in mid-November hit the area near Mainling County in Tibet, "which might have lead to the turbidity in the middle and lower reaches of the river for a certain period of time".

"After the earthquake, we monitored the water quality of the Yarlung Zangbo (Chinese name for Brahmaputra) River and the results showed that it met the standards of Class III water," she said.

At the same time, she stressed that the investigation done by China is "utterly for humanitarian considerations and does not

affect its stance on the border issue."

China claims Arunachal Pradesh as Southern Tibet.

Hua yesterday said that China will maintain communication with India to deal with massive lakes formed by landslides on the Brahmaputra river in Tibet following the earthquake, which caused concerns of a sudden flooding on the Indian side.

She said verification by the relevant Chinese authorities revealed that the lake is to the "eastern section of the India-China boundary".

"It is caused by natural factors. It is not a manmade accident. I noticed that Indian professional authorities have made an analysis and clarified," she said, referring to reports that the lakes were formed by the landslides.

China hopes that the Indian media will not make a groundless speculation on this, she added.

Ghalib's couplets subject of new book

NEW DELHI, DEC 27 (PTI): A new book on Mirza Ghalib seeks to present the intellectual evolution of the celebrated poet through an interpretation of his couplets.

One of the most oft-quoted poets of the 19th century, the works of Ghalib, born on December 27, 1797, are imbued with timelessness and universality.

In "The Evolution of Ghalib" author Hasan Abdullah describes Ghalib's life history and brings out his persona and situates his work in time and space.

He briefly discusses the Urdu language and ghazal as a literary form and familiarises the reader with the words, symbols and concepts crucial for understanding Ghalib's poetry.

Based on a chronological reading of Ghalib's Urdu ghazals, Abdullah identifies the different stages and phases of the poet's development and from each of these phases, selects and interprets verses, including those that differ from the dominant trend, in order to reveal Ghalib's intellectual evolution.

Although the quantum of Ghalib's poetry in Urdu is much less than in Persian but he has become 'Ghalib' (predominant) for posterity be-

cause of his Urdu ghazals.

"Ghalib's Urdu ghazals attract a highly diverse set of people rich and poor, literary and scientific, uneducated and erudite layperson and polymath, lover and beloved, men and women, young and old, even the oppressor and the oppressed, those sunk into the past and reactionary, as well as those who are forward-looking and progressive," the author says.

"The plausible reasons appear to be that his couplets, which are expressed in the most exquisite language using devices such as word-play, hyperbole, irony and paradox, reflect diverse situations, depict a range of human emotions and provide deep insights into man's life and relationship with nature," he writes.

Abdullah felt that a chronological study of Ghalib's Urdu ghazals would help in better appreciation of his poetry and shed some light on what are, or appear to be, radically divergent views.

"The result of my research is this book wherein I have interpreted selected couplets that are chronologically arranged, thereby revealing Ghalib's evolution of thought," he says in the book, published by Rupa.

Association of Indian Football Coaches launched

MUMBAI, DEC 27 (PTI): With the game of football growing fast in the country, the Association of Indian Football Coaches was today launched here, with the recognition of the All India Football Association, to provide a platform and for the welfare of the coaches.

"We are starting this to help the coaches with the support of AIFF. It's not a union and we will work with AIFF," said one of its directors and AFC A license coach Dinesh Nair at the media conference to announce the launch of the AIFC.

Nair is also the head of the Youth and Grassroots development wing of the ISL outfit, Mumbai City FC.

"It's important for everyone to work together as we want to develop many more coaches. Our aim was to develop 6,500 coaches from the 2014 level of 1,200. Now in the next five years we want to make it 65,000 coaches as football is growing rapidly in India," AIFFs COO Kishor Taid said.

Apart from Nair, the

board of directors of the newly floated coaches body comprises former India captain I M Vijayan, former international player Derrick Pereira, Sanjoy Sen and Thangboi Singto. The AIFC is supported by SportingLions Foundation.

Singto, the assistant coach and technical director of Kerala Blasters, said while a lot of progress has been made in developing football coaches in the country, it is also a fact that "we need to do a lot more."

Former international and AIFF's head of coach education, Savio Medeira, described it as a "great initiative" and wished the new body success "for long and healthy association with all Indian coaches."

The aim of AIFC, it was emphasised, was also to work with the AIFF and "assist them in conducting AFC coaching license courses, refresher courses and work for coach education which will help in players' development in various leagues and grassroots tournaments.

Book on forbidden stories from inside North Korea



NEW DELHI, DEC 27 (PTI): An anonymous North Korean writer, who is still living in the country, has come out with a collection of heart-wrenching stories which has been smuggled out and translated into 18 languages and published in 17 countries.

"The Accusation: Forbidden Stories from Inside North Korea" was written in 2014, by the dissident known only by the pseudonym Bandi.

The book has been translated by Deborah Smith.

Smuggled out of North Korea, the work of fiction paints a powerful and unflinching portrait of life under the rule of Kim Il-sung and Kim Jong-il.

"The Accusation" is first and foremost a reminder that humanity can sustain hope even in the most desperate of circumstances and that the courage of free thought has a power far

beyond those who seek to suppress it, according to Hachette, which has published the book in India.

"All we know about Bandi (meaning firefly in Korean) is that he risked his life to enlighten the world of the slavery and tyranny in North Korea. He belonged to the Korean Writers' Alliance, a government-controlled

organ dedicated to producing censored literature for state-run periodicals of the North, it said.

The stories were written in pencil on 743 sheets of paper and dated between 1989 and 1997.

"Bandi took upon himself the role of a spokesperson denouncing the misery inflicted on the North Korean people by North Korean-style socialism, a system riddled with internal contradictions in which individuals were classified ac-

cording to a social standing determined at birth and could be condemned as guilty by association," says Kim Seong-dong, writer for the Monthly Chosun, in the afterword.

"These stories each described and denounced a real situation, which can be difficult to combine with literary excellence; but Bandi considered it his duty as a writer to produce work whose literariness would, in a sense, live up to the reality of the events he described," Kim wrote.

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Will use code lang to update Facebook: IAS officer on JK govt's gag order

SRINAGAR, DEC 27 (PTI):

Reacting to the Jammu and Kashmir government's gag order on the use of social media for its employees, IAS officer Shah Faesal today said he would now use code language to update his Facebook account.

"Heard that government employees will be subjected to foot whipping for operating Facebook (account). From now on I will use coded language to update," Faesal, first Kashmiri to top the civil services examination in 2009, wrote on his Facebook page hours after the government issued the gag order.

The state government had in the order yesterday barred its employees from using their social media accounts for any political activity by amending the conduct rules for them.

According to the regulatory order (SRO), no government employee shall engage in any criminal, dishonest, immoral or notoriously disgraceful conduct on social media which may be prejudicial to the state.

While the gag order was widely condemned on the social media, many users "warned" Faesal that the order might land him in trouble.

Seven hours later, the IAS officer wrote another post in which he called on government employees to observe a certain code of conduct while using social media.

"Jokes apart, government employees must observe a certain code of conduct while using social media. I mean good behaviour, nothing more.

"I have seen some teachers hurling invective, doctors abusing with freedom, officers getting into unsavoury arguments and engineers sharing indecent content, much to everyone's embarrassment. This is not acceptable. Even criticism has to be worded politely," the civil servant said.

United Nations cuts budget by USD 286 mn; US claims credit

UNITED NATIONS, DEC 27 [PTI]: The UN has approved a USD 286 million cut in its annual budget for the next year, a five per cent "historic reduction in spending" that the US said it had negotiated.

The General Assembly on Sunday approved the regular budget of USD 5.397 billion for 2018-2019, the UN said in a statement yesterday.

The amount sets the budget level around USD 286 million [or five per cent] below the final approved level for 2016-2017, and USD 193 million below the initially proposed budget level for 2018-2019, including all "add-ons".

The additional reductions come mainly from across-the-board cuts in non-post resources for most Departments and Offices, including the Special Political Missions, the UN said in a statement.

Taking credit for the budget cut, America's Indian-origin Ambassador to the UN Nikki Haley said that she negotiated a reduction of over USD 285 million off the 2016-2017 final

budget.

"In addition to these significant cost savings, we reduced the UN's bloated management and support functions, bolstered support for key US priorities throughout the world, and instilled more discipline and accountability throughout the UN system," she said in a statement.

"The inefficiency and overspending of the United Nations are well known. We will no longer let the generosity of the American people be taken advantage of or remain unchecked.

"This historic reduction in spending, in addition to many other moves toward a more efficient and accountable UN, is a big step in the right direction," Haley said.

She said that while "we are pleased with the results of this year's budget negotiations, you can be sure we will continue to look at ways to increase the UN's efficiency while protecting our interests".

According to the UN statement, the General Assembly approved resources in the amount

of USD 88 million for the establishment and maintenance of the United Nations Mission for Justice Support in Haiti [MINUJUSTH] for the period from October 16, 2017 to June 30, 2018.

It approved resources in the amount of USD 911 million for the maintenance of the United Nations-African Union Mission in Darfur [UNAMID] for the period from July 1, 2017 to June 30, 2018.

This brings the total overall approved resources for peacekeeping operations for the 2017/18 period to USD 7.316 billion, which compares to approved resources for the 2016/17 period of USD 7.909 billion, a reduction of USD 593 million or 7.5 per cent.

The General Assembly granted a one-year commitment authority for the International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals, it said.

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres welcomed the General Assembly's support to his management reform proposal aimed at en-

hancing delivery of all mandates and the performance of the Secretariat.

The General Assembly also provided guidance on the comprehensive proposals, including on the restructuring of the Departments of Field Support and of Management to be submitted by mid-2018.

In particular, the General Assembly endorsed the proposal to move from a biennial planning and budgeting period to annual programme budget on a trial basis, as of 2020.

This signals one of the most significant shifts in the programme planning and budgeting process of the Organisation since the 1970s, the UN said.

The General Assembly also requested the Secretary-General to undertake an assessment of the mechanisms and levels of discretionary managerial authorities that may be required in order to address unanticipated programmatic needs and to report in the 73rd Session, the UN statement added.

Musharraf treason case behind Sharif's ouster: Maryam

M ZULQERNAIN

LAHORE, DEC 27 [PTI]:

Nawaz Sharif's daughter has claimed that her father was removed from the prime minister's office because he had ordered registration of a treason case against former military dictator Pervez Musharraf.

A five-member bench of the Supreme Court had disqualified 67-year-old Sharif from the office of prime minister on July 28 in the Panama Papers scandal.

"When he [Sharif] got registered a treason case against Musharraf for abrogating the Constitution, sit-ins began in Islamabad [in 2014] against him. Then came the Dawn Leaks and Panama Papers case and finally he was disqualified on having 'Iqama' [work permit of UAE]," Sharif's daughter Maryam Nawaz told the social media team of the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz while explaining reasons behind her father's ouster.

She further said this happened to her father because he did not bow and never took decision.



"It was easy for him to choose an easy path [cutting a deal with the establishment] but he didn't. Nawaz Sharif always chose a right path which is a difficult one. When you are on such a path, you have to pay a price," Maryam added.

She termed an attack on the prime minister as "an attack on the people who have voted for him."

Sharif, who was also present during the interaction, demanded action against Musharraf for abrogating the Constitution and committing treason. He asked would any court dare to bring Musharraf to justice. "Will we see any court in Pakistan hold Musharraf accountable for his

crimes?" Sharif asked.

Musharraf is facing treason charges in Pakistan for imposing emergency rule in November 2007, arresting judges and limiting their powers. He could face the death penalty if convicted.

Musharraf, 74, who came to power in a bloodless coup in 1999, has been living in Dubai since last year when he was allowed to leave Pakistan on the pretext of medical treatment.

The former military dictator who had promised to return to face the cases against him later said former army chief Gen Raheel Sharif had used his influence to get him a relief.

CPEC's extension to Af not directed against India: China

BEIJING, DEC 27 [PTI]: China today said that its ambitious China-Pakistan Economic Corridor is not directed against India and the project should not be influenced or disturbed by any third country, a day after Beijing offered to extend the USD 50 billion project to Afghanistan.

At the first trilateral meeting of Foreign Ministers of China, Pakistan and Afghanistan here yesterday, China offered to extend CPEC to Afghanistan as the three sides pledged to step-up counter terrorism cooperation and not to allow any country, group or individual to use their soils for terrorism.

Besides Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi, his counterparts from Pakistan and Afghanistan Khawaja Asif and Salahuddin Rabbani respectively attended the meeting.

When asked about reports that China's plans to extend the CPEC to Afghanistan sparked concerns in India, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Hua Chunying said the project extension is not directed at any third country. She said the project serves the common interests of the three countries.

"This cooperation is not directed at any country and not directly. The dialogue and cooperation should not be influenced or disturbed by any country," she said.

Though Hua did not directly name India, she was responding to a question on reports about India's concerns about CPEC, which passes through Pakistan-occupied Kashmir.

"We stressed many times, CPEC is not directed at any third party and we hope it can bring benefits for third country," Hua said, referring to India's concerns.

The CPEC, a flagship project of China's prestigious One Belt One Road, links its restive Xinjiang region with Pakistan's Balochistan province.

"It is an economic cooperation programme and it should not be politicised and has nothing to do with territorial dispute," she said, adding that the project will bring the benefit to the third party and the whole region.

"Afghanistan is a common neighbour of China and Pakistan.

They have strong desire to develop economy and improve livelihood. They are willing to integrate into the regional connectivity process and willing to integrate into CPEC," she said.

The three sides have agreed to promote connectivity under Belt and Road Initiative framework and follow the principle of starting from easy and smaller projects step by step to identify cooperation projects for common develop-

ment, she said.

During the trilateral meeting, a consensus has been reached on eight point plan to bring peace between Afghanistan and Pakistan. The consensus included a security mechanism to enhance counter-terrorism cooperation to fight all forms of terrorist organisations and terrorists, she added.

She said Afghanistan and Pakistan will promote the exchanges between their clerics and avoid the spread of religious extremism.

Under the trilateral framework of the dialogue, the countries should follow the principle of mutual benefit and equal consultation, she said.

She said the three sides have agreed to stay committed to the four goals - support Afghanistan's peaceful reconstruction and reconciliation peace process, help Afghanistan and Pakistan to improve and develop ties, promote joint security of the region, promote regional connectivity, and BRI.

The three sides reaffirmed their commitment to an Afghan-led and Afghan-owned Afghan peace process. Afghanistan and Pakistan have agreed to align their development strategies to BRI and actively explore the trilateral cooperation under it.

Fukushima operator wins first safety approval since disaster

TOKYO, DEC 27 [AFP]:

Japan's nuclear watchdog today gave a formal green light to the operator of the crippled Fukushima nuclear plant to restart two reactors, the first since the 2011 atomic crisis.

The Nuclear Regulation Authority handed its approval to the Tokyo Electric Power Co following a month of public hearings, judging that the two reactors met the stricter safety standards introduced after the disaster, an NRA official told AFP.

The two reactors are situated at the Kashiwazaki-Kariwa nuclear plant, one of the world's



biggest and the largest in Japan.

Like many other nuclear power plants in the country, the plant in central Japan has been idle since the 2011 meltdown triggered by a tsunami after a 9.0-magnitude earthquake.

The tsunami overwhelmed reactor cooling systems at the Fukushima Daiichi plant in northeastern Japan, causing meltdowns and

releasing radiation in the most dangerous nuclear disaster since Chernobyl in 1986.

TEPCO still needs to get local consent to bring the reactors online, which could take years.

Niigata Governor Ryuichi Yoneyama, who won the local election in 2016 for a four-year term, is known to be cautious about restarting Kashiwazaki-Kariwa.

"We will continue explaining to residents" to address their concerns, TEPCO spokesman Shinichi Nakakuki told AFP.

The company "ultimately" hopes to win approval from local authorities, Nakakuki added.

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Francia Raisa Debuts New Romance in Sweet Christmas Photo

Aw! Francia Raisa, 29, took to social media to post holiday-themed pics of herself with her boyfriend Chris Adkins over the weekend and they couldn't be more adorable! Chris works as a cinematographer on the television series, *black-ish*. This is the first time Francia showed off her man in any public post so their relationship must be getting pretty serious!

One of the photos from Instagram shows Chris holding the brunette beauty while the two of them sit posing in matching red and white long-sleeved Christmas shirts with big smiles on their faces.

"Happy Holidays," she captioned the post. The other photo to is one Francia posted on her Snapchat and it's from a video of the couple outside in Indianapolis, Indiana.

Chris is kissing Francia's cheek in the sweet pic while Francia smiles at the camera.



her when she encountered a com-

It's great seeing Francia truly happy in the photos after the rough but tough year she's had with BFF Selena Gomez, 25. The Grown-ish star saved Selena's life this past summer after donating one of her kidneys to

plication from battling lupus. The two have seemed inseparable since then and have shared their incredible story through on-air interviews and at awards shows. Selena lovingly thanked Francia after being named Woman of the Year at Billboard's 2017 Women in Music awards and even commented that she thinks she should have won the honor instead.

Francia's posts sure prove the actress is feeling grateful for an incredible year and it's certainly heartwarming. We can't wait to see her share more amazing snapshots of her life in the new year!



THIS DAY IN HISTORY

28TH DECEMBER
WORLD HISTORY

1849: M Jolly-Bellin discovers dry-cleaning, he accidentally upset lamp containing turpentine & oil on his clothing & sees cleaning effect.

1895: Filmmakers the Lumiere brothers, hold the first commercial film screening at Salon Indien du Grand Café, Paris.

1921: The beginning of the Rand Rebellion in Southern Africa; the rebellion started as a strike by white mineworkers on and became an open armed rebellion against the state.

1981: 1st American test-tube baby, Elizabeth Jordan Carr is born in Norfolk, Virginia.

2010: Remains of a human that lived 400,000 years ago are discovered in Israel, challenging the theory that humans originated in Africa.

2011: If Western nations impose more sanctions,

Iran threatens to close down the key oil route of the Strait of Hormuz.

2012: At 115 years old and 266 days, Jiroemon Kimura of Japan becomes the world's oldest living person.

2014: The United States and allied forces end the combat mission in Afghanistan, which began in 2001 after the 9/11 terrorist attacks on the U.S.; about 13,000 troops will stay to train Afghan police and military forces in their fight against the Taliban.

INDIAN HISTORY

1883: The Indian Association, started by Surendranath Banerjee, organized the National Conference as Bharat Sabha.

1885: The first session of the Indian National Congress was held in Bombay.

1932: Dhirubhai Ambani, Indian business tycoon and founder of Reliance Industries, was born.

1937: Ratan Tata, businessperson who led the Tata Group, was born.

Anushka Sharma declared as a PETA's Person of the Year!



Newly-wed actress Anushka Sharma has been named PETA's Person of the Year by animal rights organisation People for Ethical Treatment of Animals [PETA]. Known for movies like "PK", "Jab Tak Hai Jaan" and "Ae Dil Hai Mushkil", Anushka is a vegetarian, has nabbed the title for helping to protect dogs from fireworks by advocating for horses who are forced to pull carriages in Mumbai.

"Anushka Sharma is a proud animal rights proponent whose kindness and initiative know no bounds," PETA Associate Director Sachin Bangera said in a statement. "PETA is calling on everyone to follow her lead by eating healthy plant-based meals, helping community animals by speaking up when they are

suffering, and always keeping an eye out for new ways to help animals," Bangera added.

Anushka, who married cricket star Virat Kohli earlier this month, was in 2015 named PETA's Hottest Vegetarian Celebrity. Some of her recent efforts to protect animals include launching her cruelty-free NUSH clothing line, visiting an animal shelter and promoting its work on her social media platforms, launching a campaign called PAWSitive to raise awareness of the suffering fireworks cause to animals, and taking to Twitter to demand a ban on cruel carriage rides in Mumbai.

She also has an adopted dog named Dude.



INCOGNITO! The mother of three, Kourtney Kardashian, is out and about in LA the day after Christmas.

John Abraham becomes the poster boy for a Mexican gay cruise!

He is fit, charming and dishy to another level. While millions of girls have drooled over John Abraham's six packs which he has flaunted so often in films and magazine covers, nothing beats his iconic yellow swimming trunks look from Dostana [2008]. The sight of a perfectly sculpted John giving us a sneak peek of his derriere raising temperatures like nothing else.

Now, that picture is being used to promote a gay cruise in Mexico. The cruise called Wet and Wild Gay Cruise has featured the picture of John on its poster. Of course, we feel that John is unaware of



this. In fact, it came to the fore only after Twitter user and author Nia Levy pointed it out.

"Super curious if John

Abraham knows they are using his image to promote gay cruises in Mexico. #Dostana" Nia tweeted.

We can see that it is clearly an ad with the poster listing out the cruise activities. As we know, in the film Dostana, John played the role of a straight guy who pretends to be a gay to stay in a rented apartment. Abhishek Bachchan played his gay partner in the hilarious comedy that also starred Priyanka Chopra, Bobby Deol and Kirron Kher. The dialogue Phoolo Phalo was a rage. Fans have commented on the pic saying that John will not take offence as he is a very chilled out guy.

It was not only John but also Priyanka's gold one-piece swimsuit that made a lot of news. Later, the production house Dharma decided to auction the swimsuits to raise money for charity. The director Tarun Mansukhani had confirmed the news saying, "It is true that the trunks worn by John and Priyanka's gold swimming costume in Dostana are going to be auctioned. The logistics of the auction are still being worked upon and we will be making an official announcement about it very soon." All that we can say is that those briefs have come to good use – even in 2017!

THE DAY AHEAD

ARIES: You're having a difficult time connecting with your emotions today. Things will run more smoothly if you don't try to force yourself to act cheerful if you aren't. Be honest about your emotions. If you're feeling restless or negative, keep it to yourself. Go for a walk, preferably near water, and indulge in a good healthy meal.

TAURUS: Take some emotional time off today if you feel you deserve it. You're getting so wrapped up in other people's dramas that you're feeling drained when it comes to your own concerns. Calm down and relax physically and mentally.

Getting too stressed about a certain issue isn't healthy. You may end up foiling the situation much more than if you left it alone. Come back to it later.

GEMINI: You may get more emotional than usual when it comes to work. Do your best to keep your emotional life separate from daily responsibilities. If you feel overwhelmed by a certain job to the point where you can no longer do it effectively, it may be a sign that you need to make some changes. This is a time of heightened sensitivity. Do your best to stay afloat.

CANCER: People are hesitant to deal with deep emotional is-

ssues today. They're erecting protective barriers so the things they hear, see, and feel don't hurt them. Respect these boundaries. Do your best to stay rooted in your inner sanctuary. Try to keep a positive attitude even though the prevailing mood may be somber.

LEO: You're having a difficult time getting started today. Don't get discouraged if things don't seem to be working. Your expectations may be too high, and your perfectionism is making it difficult for anyone to live up to your standards. Don't get worked up over every little detail. Perfection isn't demanded of you.

VIRGO: Be polite and try your best not to impose on other people today. It's important to behave civilly in all circumstances. People may feel like they've been cheated. Although you may not be the source of their discontent, you may feel the consequences. Keep other people's issues separate from yours, and don't let their discomfort seep into your world.

LIBRA: Don't blame everything on others today. It's important to be adult enough to take responsibility for your actions. Understand that things aren't always going to happen the way you want. Realize that sometimes

you have to take the good with the bad. There's a somber mood to the day that might overwhelm your normal attitude. Try to stay focused and disciplined.

SCORPIO: You might need to adopt a stern attitude today in order to be as effective as you'd like to be. When dealing with others, don't make assumptions for which you don't have solid backing. Other people are easily touched off, so keep things limited to the facts. Try not to stir up heavy emotions.

SAGITTARIUS: You may not feel like your engine is working today. For some reason, it seems like you're using the wrong fuel. Don't

be surprised if it's a bit harder to get in touch with your emotional state. Your feelings are playing tricks on you. Do your best not to be thrown off balance by this energy. It gets easier from here.

CAPRICORN: You might find your emotions stifled today. You have a great deal to say, but for some reason there's a bit of hesitation when it comes to saying it. Don't be surprised if you feel anxious in such a way that makes it difficult to communicate. Much of today's talk may be filled with fluff and not much substance.

AQUARIUS: You might not feel especially motivated today. Nonetheless, whether you want to or

not, it's important that you attack the mountain of tasks. Understand and respect the constraints of the ticking clock. As long as you're disciplined about accomplishing one small task at a time, you won't have a problem reducing the mountain to a small pile.

PISCES: You may be very busy today. This is a good time to get things done. There's a feeling of discipline that's helping you stay focused. Emotions are stifled, which may work to your advantage. Keep everything limited to the facts at hand, and work can proceed much more efficiently than if simple issues become big soap operas.

LOCKHORNS

- HOEST & REINER



ARCTIC CIRCLE

- HALLATT



BABY BLUES

- KIRKMAN & SCOTT

