

SummitTIMES

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ON TOP OF THE NEWS

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Central projects in NE & Sikkim to receive 100% funding from Delhi

New Delhi, Feb 17 (PTI): The Narendra Modi government has decided to fully fund various central projects being implemented in the Northeast, instead of the existing practice of sharing 90 per cent of the cost, Union Minister of State for DoNER Jitendra Singh said today.

Addressing a press conference here, Singh said ever since the Narendra Modi dispensation assumed office, the North-eastern region has been given the utmost attention. "A historic decision has been taken. There will be 100 per cent funding by the central government for projects in the region, which were earlier being undertaken on the basis of centre-state sharing in the ratio of 90:10," he said.



He said the government's "Act East Policy" has enhanced the importance of the region in engaging with South East Asian neighbours.

Highlighting the steps taken for the development of the Northeast in the last four years, Singh said the 90-year-old Indian Forest Act of 1927, which was a legacy of the British Raj, was amended

through a decision of the Union Cabinet.

"As a result, bamboo, which was defined as a 'tree' under the Indian Forest Act of 1927, was changed, thereby doing away with the requirement of obtaining a permit for cutting of bamboo on non-forest land for economic use," he said.

This, Singh said, is going to be a game-changer

for generations to come, by opening new avenues of job generation and entrepreneurship by allowing bamboo cultivation and bamboo use by non-farmers on non-forest land.

The Union Minister for Development of North Eastern Region (DoNER) said that under the central government's Bharatmala Pariyojna, as

many as 5,301-km roads in the region have been taken up for improvement. Out of this, 3,246-km roads have been marked for development of economic corridor in the Northeast. Also, bidding process for the India-Myanmar-Thailand Trilateral Highway has begun, he said.

Singh said the government has created an

exclusive forum at the NITI Aayog for preparing plans for the region, which will be co-chaired by its vice-chairman and the DoNER secretary.

The minister said the forum would look into various proposals both at central and state levels and prepare plans for the speedy development of the Northeast.

He said the railways gauge conversion has been completed, thereby all operational medium gauge sections in the Northeast have been converted to broad gauge.

Agartala-Akhaura (Bangladesh) rail link supported by the DoNER is at tendering stage, he said.

In civil aviation, Singh said, the construction of an airport at Pakyong (Gangtok, Sikkim) is complete.



Passport Seva Kendra inaugurated in Slg

**SMRITA KHAWAS
SILIGURI, 17 FEB:**

Darjeeling MP, SS Ahluwalia inaugurated the Passport Seva Kendra in Siliguri today in the presence of Siliguri Mayor, Ashok Bhattacharya and other dignitaries from adjoining areas. This Passport Seva Kendra has been set up for the public of the Hills and surrounding areas.

Mayor of Siliguri, Mr Bhattacharya said, "As we can see, many things in the name of development are going on in Siliguri but they are mostly superficial. We don't want cosmetic development we want sustainable development in Siliguri which will make public satisfied. And all the developments made in the previous years are made by us. We have been demanding for metro railway for a long time but till now nothing has been done. We would be thankful if that will be

worked out soon. Today, a Passport Seva Kendra has been inaugurated. This is a positive point for Siliguri."

MP, Mr Ahluwalia addressing the press added, "Today we inaugurated the Passport Seva Kendra in Siliguri for the public of the Hills and surrounding areas so that they don't have to go far for this facility. Many of the dignitaries were invited but some of them didn't attend. We would have been pleased if they would have attended the function because maybe we all are from different political parties but our motives are the same, to develop a better future. And I am happy for what we have done for public today because I have fulfilled the promise that I had made. For the Hills we are planning to set up a Post office Seva Kendra and for that I will be visiting Hills after the budget session."

Arunachal website to seek people's input to prepare budget

ITANAGAR, FEB 17 (PTI): Arunachal Pradesh Chief Minister Pema Khandu today launched a website to seek inputs from the people for preparation of the state budget, and said there would be cash rewards for the three best suggestions.

The website, www.arunachalbudget.in, presents some economic data about the state to help the people put forward their suggestions for the budget to be presented in the Assembly next month.

"For the first time in the history of Arunachal Pradesh, a common citizen is being given an opportunity to shape and write the annual budget for the state," Khandu said after launching the website.

To encourage people's participation, the government announced cash prizes of Rs 50,000, Rs 30,000 and Rs 20,000 for the three best suggestions.

Khandu urged all, especially those with experience and knowledge, to submit their suggestions in the website.

During the day, Deputy Chief Minister Chowna Mein, who also holds the finance and planning portfolios, also held a meeting with Khandu on the budget for 2018-19.

The budget session of the state Assembly is scheduled to be held from March 9 to 16.



CM calls on Modi and Rajnath Singh, raises pending issues

**SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 17 FEB:**

Chief Minister Pawan Chamling called on Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Home Minister Rajnath Singh on Saturday evening at their residences respectively. The Chief Minister apprised both the Prime Minister and Home Minister about the prevailing situation in Sikkim, a press release informs.

He impressed upon the importance

and urgency of granting Assembly seats to Limboo and Tamang communities at the earliest in view of the Assembly election next year.

He also impressed upon the Prime Minister and Home Minister to allow the 17th Gyalwa Karmapa, Ogyen Trinley Dorje to visit Sikkim. Both the Prime Minister and Home Minister gave positive response to the requests, the release informs.

The still closeted LGBTQ of Sikkim

**NITESH R PRADHAN
GANGTOK, 17 FEB:**

Sexual orientation or identity remains something that cannot be openly discussed here in Sikkim. Heterosexuality is the only kind of preference that is recognized with others like homosexuality, bisexuality being brushed under the carpet or simply just mocked.

However, with an ever growing movement of the Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender and Queer [LGBTQ] community, voices are being raised for one's right to have preferences other than what is considered 'normal'.

"One can change identities like religion or even caste through marriage or other social customs but sexuality is permanent," says Namrata [name changed], in her mid 30s, a lesbian by orientation and a resident

of the capital.

She adds that the only way the community can connect is through various same-sex social networking mobile applications.

"We can't come out openly yet," she adds.

Although still a difficult topic to broach, homosexuality is being discussed more in social circles nowadays. There are a few who have mustered the courage to come out to those close to them if not the world.

Pramila [name changed] is in a steady relationship with another girl and both their parents are aware of it.

However, sometimes a casual remark on homosexuality by a colleague can spoil her day. She doesn't react to such comments though.

Eventually she wants to open up to the world about her sexuality.

"Not now. Definitely not!" she remarks.

Her hesitation comes from the fact that there is no legal security blanket that can protect her.

Initially she thought her feelings for the same sex was a "passing phase" but learnt that this was not the case from all the information she came across online.

Life as a 'lesbian' in a small town is difficult and lonely so she dreams of escaping to bigger and more accepting cities like Mumbai or Delhi.

Favourable statements made by the Chief Minister on sexual minorities in his speeches in the past and most recently in the 23rd anniversary of his government formation, have helped such repressed voices draw some comfort.

A student in a university located in the capital, Tashi [name changed], is unaware of such comments made by the CM.

When informed, however, he

says that such "progressive and forward looking" statements are a "first for any CM of the country".

He further adds that such comments from the CM can catapult the image of the State globally as a welcoming and progressive society.

Tashi wants to settle down with the man he loves. Both are planning to leave the country in a few years and move to a place where "an individual has the freedom of choice".

Many countries including India still criminalize homosexuality but there are others that have now recognized same sex marriages as legal including the recent yes vote for same sex marriages in Australia.

India awaits the final Supreme Court verdict on decriminalizing homosexuality early next year.

The Supreme Court in its recent ruling on right to privacy has also mentioned the right to sexual ori-

entation as essential part of right to privacy.

In Sikkim too, many are waiting for this final verdict which can change the narrative for this often ignored but important section of society.

"Like in Nepal where due to the change in legal status of the LGBTQ community, they now enjoy legal security from the State if not full societal acceptance," adds another student from the same university, Bishal [name changed] who is bisexual.

When asked what a favourable ruling from the Supreme Court would mean, he promptly replies that such a change will encourage more to come out of the closet which can have a positive impact in terms of awareness and rights of all sexual minorities.

"Let's wait and watch till then," he says.

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MP police announce reward for untraceable Congress MLA

BHOPAL, FEB 17 (PTI):

The Madhya Pradesh police have announced a reward of Rs 10,000 for information on Congress MLA Hemant Katare who, police said, was not appearing before them in connection with a case of rape and abduction despite being served summons.

"We announced a reward of Rs 10,000 against Katare last night as he is absconding and is not appearing before the police despite summons," Bhopal Superintendent of Police (SP-South) Rahul Kumar Lodha said today.

Police have also announced a reward for Vikramjit Singh, an aide of the complainant in Katare's case, officials said. Singh is untraceable since January 24 when a 21-year-old journalism student was arrested for allegedly trying to extort money from Katare after threatening to file a rape case against the MLA.

The student, while in jail, had complained against Katare alleging that he had raped her several times following which police took a case of rape and abduction against the Congress MLA on February 2.

Police had also constituted a nine-member special investigation team (SIT) to probe the allegations against the MLA.

Katare, in his defence, had earlier said that the journalism student had met him a couple of times and, along with her aide Singh, had tried to extort money.

Police had arrested the woman when she came to collect Rs 5 lakh as part of a "settlement" with the MLA. She was granted bail on February 5, officials said.

AFFIDAVIT

I, Suren Mohra, son of Ran Bdr. Darjee, R/o Ramabong, South Sikkim hereby declare that my name is recorded as Suren Darjee in my voter card, birth certificate and school certificates till B.A. So I declare that both the names i.e Suren Mohra and Suren Darjee is the same person.

After PNB, City Union Bank hit by fraud

NEW DELHI, FEB 17 (PTI): Days after the Rs 11,400 crore fraud at PNB shook the country, private sector City Union Bank today said it suffered three fraudulent remittances of nearly USD 2 million (about Rs 12.8 crore).

Just like the fraud at Punjab National Bank (PNB), no entries of remittances were made in the ledgers of City Union Bank and transfers were pushed through the SWIFT financial platform.

"During our reconciliation process on February 7, it was found out that 3 fraudulent remittances had gone through our SWIFT system to our correspondent banks which were not initiated from our bank's end. We immediately alerted the correspondent banks to recall the funds," City Union Bank said in a regulatory filing on stock exchanges.

Of the 3 fraudulent remittance, one remittance was made through Standard Chartered Bank, New York, to a Dubai based bank for USD

5,00,000 which was blocked immediately and was returned to City Union Bank, it said. Chennai-based City Union Bank said the transfers had been made through correspondent banks even though it had not requested the transfers.

A second transfer of 300,000 euros (USD 372,150) was routed through a Standard Chartered Bank account in Frankfurt to a Turkish account, while a third totalling USD 1 million was sent through a Bank of America account in New York to a China-based bank.

The bank said it was working with the Ministry of External Affairs and officials in Turkey and China to repatriate the funds.

"With the help of Ministry of External Affairs through Consulate General of Shanghai and Istanbul and office of the National Cyber Security Council (PMO) all possible efforts through diplomatic and legal channels are being taken to repatriate the money," it said.

The recent episode raises question mark on the efficiency of the SWIFT network as how secure it is.

The PNB fraud pertains to issuance of fake Letters of Understanding (LoUs) to companies associated with billionaire jeweller Nirav Modi by errant PNB employees which enabled these companies to raise buyers credit from international branches of other Indian lenders.

Last week, PNB had lodged an FIR with CBI stating that fraudulent LoUs worth Rs 280.7 crore were first issued on January 16. At the time, PNB had said it was digging into records to examine the magnitude of the fraud.

In the complaint, PNB had named three diamond firms -- Diamonds R Us, Solar Exports and Stellar Diamonds -- saying they had approached it on January 16 with a request for buyers credit for making payment to overseas suppliers.

Press Club of Sikkim team interacts with Pune journalists



SUMMIT REPORT GANGTOK, 17 FEB:

As a part of ongoing exposure trip of Press Club of Sikkim (PCS) executive members today visited the office of the Pune Union for Working Journalists (PUWJ). During the visit PCS members interacted with the president and other executive members of the PUWJ, a press release from PCS informs.

During the visit, executive members of PCS were exposed to the daily workings and basic functioning of the Pune Union for Working Journalists and the initiative taken by the PUWJ for working journalists was also discussed.

This is the second such exposure tour organized by Press Club of Sikkim with support from Governor of Sikkim, Shrinivas Patil since 2015, the release mentions.

President, Press Club of Sikkim, Joseph Lepcha believes that the exposure trips like this will empower the vision and dedication of young working journalists of the state and will enrich and enhance their experience and broaden their knowledge of journalism.

"In order to bring a state like Sikkim in the mainstream one must understand the state and should interact with its people and keeping this in mind we are ready for any kind of interaction in the

near future and we are also ready to provide any kind of assistance in order to develop journalism in the state of Sikkim," said President PUWJ, Sailesh Kale. There should not be any communication gap between journalists of both the states, he added.

Earlier in the morning, the 11-member executive team of PCS were felicitated and welcomed by founder chairperson, Dr. Vishwanath D. Karad at Raj Kapoor Memorial who is also president, World Peace Centre (Alandi), MAEER's Maharashtra Institute of Technology.

On the occasion, both the bodies also exchanged mementos and gifts.

Ghatani sends off another batch of youth for job-oriented trng

GYALSHING, 17 FEB [IPR]: Minister for Health, IPR and Printing Department, Arjun Kumar Ghatani extended his best wishes to the unemployed youth selected under career counseling programme/Job Mela organized during Jorethang Maghey Sakranti Mela 2018, in a flagging off ceremony organised at Gyalshing, West Sikkim, today.

Altogether 30 unemployed candidates were selected for job oriented training programme in Civil Aviation and Hotel Management, modern Office Management and waste plastic management under Central Institute of Plastic Engineering and Technology (CIPEP).

Minister Mr. Ghatani offered khadas and congratulated all thirty youths who were selected for the placement guaranteed training programme. Around 800 youths had registered for the career fair.

In his brief address, Mr. Ghatani shed light on youth oriented programmes of the state government for unemployed youth as envisioned by Chief Minister Pawan Chamling who dedicated NERLP in 2013 under RMD Department for the development of youth in the state of Sikkim.

He advised selected candidates to stay updated to boost confidence level and skills in various aspects. He motivated

the youth to undergo assigned training programme properly and to take maximum benefits from the programme.

Earlier, District Project Manager Chung Chugla Bhutia gave an overview on NERLP and thanked Mr. Ghatani for his effort and concept to add job mela as one of the components in Jorethang Maghey Mela since last year. A large number of youth from rural parts of West district have been benefited, it was added.

Selected students and parents have expressed their heartfelt gratitude to the state government for providing life changing opportunity during Jorethang Maghey Mela.



Indian Banks Association discusses PNB fraud

MUMBAI, FEB 17 (PTI): The apex body of bankers today met here to discuss the Rs 11,400-crore scam at Punjab National Bank allegedly caused by the absconding diamond trader Nirav Modi and a clutch of his family-run companies.

The meeting of the Indian Banks Association (IBA) was attended by senior officials of public and private sector lenders, sources said this evening.

Interestingly, the meeting, earlier scheduled to be held at the IBA headquarters in Cuffe Parade, south Mumbai, was changed at the last moment to the SBI headquarters at Nariman Point, apparently to avoid the media.

Among those present were Allahabad Bank managing director and chief executive and also

IBA chairperson Usha Ananthasubramanian, Bank of India managing director and chief executive Dinabandhu Mohapatra, ICICI Bank chief financial officer N S Kannan and IBA deputy chief executive B Rajkumar.

"The discussion centred around how to recover the money (from those involved in the fraud)," said a banker without disclosing the details.

State-owned PNB has been rocked by a USD 1.77 billion scam where billionaire jeweller Nirav Modi allegedly acquired fraudulent letters of undertakings (LoUs) from the Brady House branch in south Mumbai to secure overseas credit from other lenders.

The other banks which have or have had

exposure to the fraud include State Bank of India (over USD 221 million), Allahabad Bank and Axis Bank among others. Some overseas lenders are also believed to have had exposure to the fraud.

Law enforcement agencies are on the lookout for Nirav Modi and his family and also his uncle Mehul Choksi who heads the Gitanjali Group.

The ED claims to have recovered over Rs 5,400 crore worth of diamonds and bullion from the raids on Modi's enterprises since the scam came to light earlier this week.

Modi and his family members left the country in early January and are believed to be in New York.

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New Year Offer

Gangtok on Sunday, 18 Feb

Temp: 19°C / 06°C
Forecast: A blend of sun and clouds with spotty showers in the afternoon.
Sunrise: 06:11AM
Sunset: 5:28 PM

Lemon fetches Rs 7600 at auction in Erode temple

ERODE (TN), FEB 17 (PTI): A lemon has fetched Rs 7,600 at an auction held as part of a temple fest in the district.

The lemon was put up for auction yesterday by the authorities of 'Pazhathinni Karupannan' temple after performing pooja in connection with 'Mahashivarathri' festival that took place a few days back.

As per practice, all the items used for the pooja would be auctioned and the proceeds would be used for the temple's administration, the authorities said.

Coconuts, fruits, silver vessels and other items were also auctioned and sold to the highest bidders.

One Shanmugam of Olapalayam village near Sivagiri bought the lemon.

Telangana Prisons Dept, IOC join hands to give jobs to ex-convict women

HYDERABAD, FEB 17 (PTI): The Telangana Prisons Department today said it has entered into an agreement with Indian Oil Corporation to provide employment to former women convicts or under-trial women at petrol pumps in the state.

Apart from ex-convicts (who have served their prison term) and those who are facing trial and are out on bail, the initiative also aims to cover other needy women by providing them employment.

"We request all women ex-convicts and UT (under-trial) prisoners, single women or widows or destitute women to approach the jail superintendents in their districts for employment at petrol pumps in the same district for salary of Rs 9,000 and above," said V K Singh, Director General of Prisons and Correctional Services, in a press release.

The Prisons Department aims to provide employment to as many as 2,000 women including ex-convicts in various industries this year, Singh said.

The objective is to curb crime by providing employment to poor women, he added.

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SUMMIT REPORT GANGTOK, 17 FEB:

Winter chill coupled with power cut in many areas of the capital has made life inconvenient for the residents.

For 21-year-old Arjun Rai, who works in a private firm, the cold spell and lack of electricity has made his mornings difficult. The chill in the water has resulted in a bad cough and cold, he says.

The absence of electricity has also cut communications as

mobile handsets have gone dead with no power to charge batteries.

"My phone has been off since past two or three days", says Anee Tamang.

Some businesses have also complained of suffering losses due to the power cut mostly car wash centres, laundry services and electronics shops which are heavily dependent on electricity.

"We are not able to do many kinds of work due to absence of electricity," said, Ahmed, a me-

chanic with a garage in the outskirts of the capital.

On the flip side, the power cut has also made people realize the 'overdependence on technology' as Krishna Bhandari, a lawyer, puts it.

"It's a necessary evil but can we resist it?" he asks.

For many Gangtokians, the absence of 'light' has meant 'a break' from gadgets and devices particularly smartphones. Power cut has also forced people to

actually engage in one-on-one conversations.

"With my phone going dead, I went over to my cousin's place to have a chat since I was so bored," says Passang.

Some people have been travelling to different locations to recharge their batteries in order to bring their phones back to life.

Government employee, Minu Rai, travelled to Ranipool to charge her phone.

Sikkim shares its Dhara Vikas initiative at Bhujal Manthan

NAGPUR, 17 FEB (IPR): The Dhara Vikas initiative of the Rural Management & Development Department, Government of Sikkim was widely appreciated at the 'Bhujal Manthan', a two-day convention on ground water conservation, held at Kavivarya Suresh Bhat Auditorium of Nagpur. The Convention was inaugurated on Friday by Union Minister for Water Resources and Ganga Rejuvenation, Nitin Gadkari.

In his inaugural address, the Minister lauded the Dhara Vikas initiative of Sikkim as a model for other States to follow, and appraised the gathering that he had specially invited the state of Sikkim to showcase and explain its Dhara Vikas programme.

On behalf of the State of Sikkim, Additional Secretary cum PD MGNREGA, RMDD, Government of Sikkim, Sarika Pradhan shared the Dhara Vikas program of the State with the Convention today. Sikkim was also represented in the convention



by Dr. Subhash Dhakal [OSD, RMDD].

While the officials and scientists of the different Water Resources Departments of the

country got together to brainstorm on the increasingly scarce resource that ground water is becoming, the convention was also attended by three Union

Ministers of State (MoS) and two Members of Parliament.

The two-day Convention came to a conclusion today.

PNB fraud: ED continues raids, seizure value rises to Rs 5674 crore

MUMBAI/NEW DELHI, FEB 17 (PTI): Raids by the ED in connection with its money laundering probe against diamond czar Nirav Modi and others in the alleged

Rs 11,400-crore bank fraud continued for the third day today with the agency saying it seized Rs 25 crore worth diamonds and jewellery, taking the total seizure value to Rs 5,674 crore, the agency said.

"The ED conducted further searches at 21 locations across India in Nirav Modi case and seized diamonds, gold, precious stones/metals and jewellery worth Rs 25 crore (book value). The total seizure till now is Rs 5,674 crore," it said in a statement.

The agency had earlier said it had arrived

at the value of the assets seized based on the stock value at showrooms and stores, which was also the price at which the company purchased the goods.

It was also conducting an "independent valuation" of these assets.

The Enforcement Directorate had yesterday summoned Nirav Modi and his business partner and jewellery chain promoter Mehul Choksi in this case. They have been asked to appear before the Investigating Officer of the case at the ED office in Mumbai on February 23.

According to the Central Bureau of Investigation, Nirav Modi and Choksi left the country in January, before an FIR was registered in the Punjab National Bank

fraud case.

The raids that began on February 15 are expected to continue tomorrow, ED officials said. ED sleuths are also in touch with a former government-nominated director of a state-owned bank, who was a reported whistleblower in this case, as part of its investigation, they said.

The agency also filed a fresh money laundering case yesterday, taking cognisance of a new CBI FIR against Choksi and his companies.

The ED had first registered a PMLA case against the two, besides others, on February 14

based on a CBI FIR, on the basis of a Punjab National Bank complaint.

The agency is probing if the allegedly defrauded bank funds were laundered and these proceeds of crime subsequently used by the accused to create illegal assets and black money.

Diamantaire Modi, 46, a regular feature on the lists of rich and famous Indians since 2013, was booked by the CBI, along with wife, brother and Choksi on January 31, for allegedly cheating the state-run PNB to the tune of Rs 280 crore.

The bank subsequently sent two more

complaints to the CBI on Tuesday, saying the scam was worth more than Rs 11,400 crore.

The jewellery designer is understood to be a citizen of the country but his brother Nishal and wife Ami are not Indian nationals. They all left India between January 1 and 6, the CBI had said.

Sanitation officials give final warning to erring shops

YOGEN THATAL SINGTAM, 17 FEB:

Municipal-cum-Sanitation Officer, Birendra Rai accompanied by Sanitation Supervisor, Raju Barde-wa of Singtam Nagar Panchayat acting on complaints from locals made a surprise visit to Singtam bazaar today. Local residents had complained that many people were flouting rules regarding maintenance of cleanliness and space for pedestrians to walk in the bazaar.

Many shops located behind the bazaar have been instructed to maintain cleanliness and leave enough space in front of their shops for people to walk. However, locals complained that some of these shops hang their wares in front of the shop occupying a lot of space causing inconvenience for people walking on this route.

The Sanitation Officer and Supervisor have given the shops a final warning to follow the instructions failing which their license will be revoked.

Inquiry ordered after cop slaps woman during press briefing

HYDERABAD, FEB 17 (PTI): Police started an inquiry against an Assistant Commissioner of Police here after he slapped a woman accused at a press conference. A video of the incident had gone viral on social media platforms.

S Ranga Rao, Assistant Commissioner of Police Begumpet, slapped B Manga alias Padma, who police claimed was a habitual offender, during a media briefing. Rao slapped the woman after she started protesting during the press conference that she had not committed any crime and that she had been falsely booked by the police.

B Sumathi, Deputy Commissioner of Police (North Zone) said that an inquiry had been instituted into the slapping incident on the instructions of the police commissioner. "We have initiated an inquiry against him (ACP Rao).

He should not have done that. It is unbecoming of a police officer. We have sought an explanation from him, based on which the future course of action will be decided," Sumathi told PTI.

She added that Manga was a habitual offender and she along with three other women were involved in a number of crimes committed after diverting the attention of the victims.



Ghewa Ceremony

We are highly indebted to all our near and dear ones for being with us during the sad demise of our beloved Nana **Jamuna Ghising**, (84), whose **Ghewa Ceremony** is scheduled to be solemnised on the **19th of February, 2018**, at our residence, **Phul-Chandra Niwas, Development Area, Gangtok**. All our relatives, friends, and well wishers are respectfully requested to join us in our prayers to the departed soul on the aforementioned day.

Sincerely,
B. S. Lama
G. S. Lama
Mandeep Lama
R.B. Gurung

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SummitTIMES

ON TOP OF THE NEWS

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SIKKIM CRICKET ASSOCIATION

This is to inform all the members of SCA that AGM and Election of Executive Body will be held at Hotel Sonam Delek, Tibet Road, Gangtok on **25th February 2018 at 11.00 AM** sharp.

MR. SONAM PALDEN BHUTIA,
 GENERAL SECRETARY,
 SIKKIM CRICKET ASSOCIATION.

Tobacco, the Ignored Challenge

We speak of teenage smoking here

A new academic session has begun, and the time is right to initiate some discussion on issues concerning students. We speak of tobacco use in the present instance.

The Global Youth Tobacco Survey [GYTS] conducted a survey among students in the 13 to 15 years age-group in Sikkim in the year 2001 covering students from grade VIII to X. Yes, the statistics are now 17 years old, but it would be safe to venture that not much has changed on ground because let's also accept, Sikkim has not really done much to address the situation beyond pushing smoking away from public places. Further, the age-group we are speaking of here was not really smoking in public to begin with any way. The survey was a first of its kind for India and maybe it is time for another round of such a data collection exercise. But that would have required Sikkim to have done benefitted from the statistics collated back in 2001. Did it? The findings should have scared every parent, invoked institutions to address the situation and convinced policy-makers to get real about the task of arresting the trend. Nearly two decades since and a follow-up survey later, tobacco use among the barely teens in Sikkim does not even figure significantly in the social or health sector interventions here. The dis-interest is inexcusable because the data is disturbing.

The GYTS survey of 2001 revealed that 55% of students in the 13 to 15 age-group consumed some form of tobacco; while 18% smoked cigarettes, 38% used other forms of tobacco like Gutka. A huge prospective bank of chemically dependent is being groomed, and worryingly, there is no concerted effort underway to wean the young away from tobacco and nothing effective on the field to prevent more to enter their teens with a taste for tobacco. Agreed, the sale of Gutka and even paan masalas is banned, but it's no secret that these can still be procured. There are laws against smoking in public places or selling tobacco products to minors, but save some select public spaces, the former is lightly monitored and no one has really bothered with the latter provision with any consistency. With this data, the worrying absence of social involvement and people's initiatives in Sikkim gets reinforced. Tobacco use among the young is not a challenge that governments can surmount, this, like most other aspects of social conduct, this needs the initiative and involvement of the people and people's groups.

Why are so many of the young turning to tobacco?

An obvious reason is because they are in an age when they experiment and are trying out tobacco because they can do so easily. Then there is peer pressure which converts still more and from there on it's a snowball effect. The GYTS data reveals that 70% of the tobacco users among the surveyed teens lived in homes where others smoked. It can thus be safely vouched that they also ran errands for the smokers in the family like fetching cigarettes from the neighbourhood doka. It was only a matter of time before they siphon away one stick for themselves. There are two things wrong in this picture- one, it suggests that smoking is okay since children can be sent to buy cigarettes, and two, despite a standing law against selling cigarettes to minors, parents and elders themselves compromise its implementation. National statistics reveal that 56.2% of the minors who bought cigarettes from a shop were not refused purchase because of their age. This number would be even higher in Sikkim where one has never seen a teen being turned away. What is also worrying is that one in four smokers in the 13 to 15 years age-band wants to quit, but doesn't know how and don't know where to access help. The national data reveals that 95% of the smokers never received help to quit smoking even though 67% of the teen smokers want to quit and 67% actually tried on their own! More than 70% of these young smokers know the harmful effects of smoking, and yet, as the data reveals, most remain hooked. We are messing up too much with very young minds with our indifference.

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

Zuma Era Lessons: How democracies can be held hostage by party machinations

VISHNU PADAYACHEE, JANNIE ROSSOUW & MASHUPYE HERBERT MASERUMULE
theconversation.com

Jacob Zuma's late night announcement that he would step down as president of South Africa followed days of tense negotiations within the governing African National Congress (ANC). The Conversation Africa asked academics what lessons can be learnt, and how the ANC can redeem itself in the post-Zuma era.

Is this the biggest political crisis that South Africa has faced since democracy?

Vishnu Padayachee, the University of the Witwatersrand: Its equivalent to the recall of President Thabo Mbeki in 2008. For the people of South Africa to have been forced to suffer through this is hard to believe. The crises have lost the country much ground, locally and internationally.

Jannie Rossouw, the University of the Witwatersrand: This will surely go down as one of the biggest political crises faced by South Africa in the post apartheid era. The situation became highly slippery as Zuma appeared to be defying calls by his party to resign. International experiences tell us that a stand off like that could easily develop into raging conflict.

Zuma's expressions during the interview he had with the national broadcaster hours before he finally resigned did not help the situation. In addition to claiming that he did nothing wrong, he seemed to be making veiled threats.

Mashupye Maserumule, Tshwane University of Technology: The steps to remove Zuma plunged the country into a political crisis. It exposed the dissonance between political processes of the African National Congress (ANC) as the governing party and those of the state, particularly around the party's succession battle.

This has been a neglected lacuna, which started to show when Mbeki was recalled. At that time the big question was: what are the implications of the ANC's concept of "recall" on South Africa's constitutional democracy? This is because the recall wasn't congruous with the provisions of the country's constitution to remove a president. But it was never adequately debated and Zuma's removal brought back these unresolved issues.

Can the ANC salvage itself?

Vishnu Padayachee, the University of the Witwatersrand: For the ANC to salvage itself, a renewal is needed. It has to develop a new culture of inclusive and democratic politics at all levels. To do this, it will have to pay more attention to political education instead of regurgitating the political ed-

ucation of the camps. This is totally inappropriate for the 21st Century.

It must attack corruption with greater vigour and visible energy than it has done in the past.

But it must also attend to the critical tasks of re-igniting growth, creating employment, reducing the income and wealth inequality in addition to prioritising service delivery. For this, the Cyril Ramaphosa-led ANC needs a new progressive macroeconomic policy framework. This must be state led in the first phase to "crowd in" domestic and foreign investment through the opportunities created by rising growth and effective demand.

Jannie Rossouw, the University of the Witwatersrand: To salvage itself, the ANC must eradicate corruption and replace corrupt and incompetent cabinet ministers. It must be clear after the re-



placement of Zuma that the ANC puts the people of South Africa first, rather than the interests of politicians.

Mashupye Maserumule, Tshwane University of Technology: Firstly, a governing party in a constitutional democracy needs to have exemplary leadership.

There are several other lessons the ANC must learn for it to emerge from this fiasco.

The first is that its internal political processes have implications on the administration of the state. These should be synchronised with those prescribed in the country's Constitution.

Secondly, it shouldn't compromise in its fight against corruption, and should pursue ethical leadership on all levels in the organisation from its branches to its regions, provinces and its national leaders.

Thirdly, the ANC's integrity commission must start to bite, without fear or favour. It should be well-resourced. In addition, the ANC should invest more in the political education of its cadres.

But lastly, it should also outgrow the nostalgic streak of being a liberation movement and embrace the reality that it is a governing party in a constitutional democracy.

What does this mean for democracy in South Africa?

Vishnu Padayachee, the University of the Witwatersrand: South Africa's hard won democracy has simply become a charade. If democracy is to be strengthened there are several things that have to change: how the President of the republic is elected; how members of parliament are elected and held accountable and how officers of parliament are elected. South Africa also has to find ways of creating new mechanisms for citizen to participate in the democracy between elections.

After 1994 South Africa simply re-positioned itself in the flawed structures of democracy that it inherited. The country should have taken time to re-think its position to ensure a more effective and functioning democracy where the people would come first. **Jannie Rossouw, the University of the Witwatersrand:** Democracy in South Africa will be stronger. Zuma's resignation shows that it is possible to remove a corrupt president through constitutional measures.

The problem was that Zuma confused support he had as a result of being in power as personal popularity. This is a mistake many powerful people in politics, government and private business make. It is therefore not surprising that his support in the ANC Parliamentary Caucus slipped quickly once it became clear that his grip on power started slipping.

But the constitutional drama raises questions about the conduct of the ruling party to have kept Zuma in power so long after his corrupt conduct. For this, the ANC owes all South Africans an apology.

Mashupye Maserumule, Tshwane University of Technology: The developments show that South Africa's democracy is vulnerable to manipulation by party political processes. The processes of the leadership succession in the ANC ran roughshod over the supremacy of the Constitution of the country.

But in the end, Zuma was a disaster and the ANC's decision to ask him to step down was the correct one. Even if Zuma was a good state president who had lost the presidency of his party, he would still have been coerced to resign, as it happened with Thabo Mbeki.

[Vishnu Padayachee is Distinguished Professor and Derek Schrier and Cecily Cameron Chair in Development Economics, School of Economics and Business Sciences, University of the Witwatersrand; Jannie Rossouw is Head of School of Economic & Business Sciences, University of the Witwatersrand; Mashupye Herbert Maserumule is Professor of Public Affairs, Tshwane University of Technology]

Child soldiers put adult troops in a painful moral dilemma

MICHELLE JONES
theconversation.com

Today's wars and conflicts are increasingly fought among and alongside civilian populations. This means that professional soldiers are ever more likely to encounter children during military operations. Despite international efforts to eradicate the use of children in conflict zones, it is estimated that 300,000 child soldiers continue to fight in modern war zones. Armed groups such as Boko Haram and the so-called Islamic State dominate headlines about the use of children in contemporary conflicts: both have had children deliver suicide bombs and carry out executions.

While the plight of the child soldier is an urgent problem, what's often overlooked is the impact that encountering child fighters can have on professional soldiers.

Children appear in theatres of conflict in many ways. They can participate directly in hostilities by fighting, suicide bombing, or laying improvised explosive devices. They may be used in support roles to carry items through check points or spy on enemy forces; they might simply be deployed as distractions. Armed groups sometimes use children as human shields, conspicuously placing them in front of firing positions or locations of strategic importance to deter their enemy from returning fire or mounting an attack.

Facing a child can force a profes-

sional soldier into a moral dilemma: whether to protect him or herself and their comrades, or to risk harming the child who poses a threat. As journalist and scholar Robert Tynes explains:

"In the Western tradition, children are considered civilians. So, when soldiers are faced with the problem of having to choose between firing on 12- or 13-year-old boys or girls or holding back and potentially being shot, their effectiveness as a soldier is severely diminished. Again, the question is, what do you do? The problem or dilemma arises when you cannot do both of these actions. You have to pick!"

Either action can result in implications for the soldier and the operation. In Colonel Charles Borchini's words: "A 14-year-old with an AK-47 is just as deadly as a 40-year-old with an AK-47."



IN THE LINE OF FIRE

Harming a child can cause an adult soldier serious psychological damage. Most cultures consider children innocents who deserve protection, and for soldiers in most armies around the world, harming a child comes with guilt, shock and shame. But failing to react to a threat, even if it comes from a child, could be deadly for the soldier and their comrades.

The sight of children (combatants or not) killed by adult forces can also be disastrous for relations with local populations. This can be devastating for missions that depend on winning the goodwill of civilians. Knowing this, adversaries may deliberately put children in harm's way to generate "black propaganda" – grisly images and negative publicity that damage their opponent's moral reputation.

If professional soldiers know

child soldiers are present, they may choose not to engage in hostilities at all. In 2003, German forces refused to enter regions of the Democratic Republic of the Congo where they knew children might be fighting. And in places where children are known to be used as human shields, armed forces can change their tactics or refuse to return fire.

In his book *A Million Bullets*: The real story of the British Army in Afghanistan, James Fergusson recalls the following story:

"Two British soldiers were under fire from a machine gun nest about hundred yards to port. The side-gunner tried to return fire but stopped in horror when he realised that there were women and children in his sights. The gunmen had pushed them out in front of their positions for cover – a Taliban tactic the crewmen had heard of but never seen used before."

The presence of children on the battlefield should not be normalised, and every effort needs to be made to remove them from conflict zones. But it's also important to recognise the moral dilemmas they pose to adult soldiers who encounter them in conflict situations. Armed groups recognise the tactical advantage children offer; they will keep using them in conflict to disrupt and distress their opponents to their own benefit.

[the writer is Post Doctoral Research Assistant, Anglia Ruskin University]

Bhabani Pathak temple gutted in Jalpaiguri

JALPAIGURI (WB), FEB 17 (PTI): A major fire gutted the famous Bhabani Pathak Kali temple at Sikarpur here, fire brigade sources said today.

The 300-year-old temple caught fire last night and locals tried hard to douse the flame before fire engines reached the spot.

The fire brigade sources said that they were yet to ascertain the cause of the fire.

WB govt announces sale of 10-year securities

KOLKATA, FEB 16 (PTI): The West Bengal government has announced the sale of its 10-year-tenure securities for an aggregate amount Rs 2,000 crore, a state finance department official said today.

The department has issued a notification to make the announcement in this regard, the official said. The loan would be used for developmental expenditure, the notification said.

The state government's stock would be sold in an auction through the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), it said, adding that the Centre had approved the sale.

The auction would be held on February 20 and successful bidders are required to make payments the next day.

As per the notification, the loan needs to be repaid at par on February 21, 2028.

BJP to work for women if voted to power in Meghalaya: Irani

DALU (MEGHALAYA), FEB 17 (PTI): Union minister Smriti Irani, campaigning for the February 27 Meghalaya Assembly polls, today said the BJP would work to empower the women in the north-eastern state if voted to power.

Irani's rallies, part of the saffron party's high-voltage campaign for the upcoming polls, were held a day after BJP president Amit Shah promised that Meghalaya would be a model state in five years.

Irani addressed two rallies -- one here and one at Zikzak -- in support of the BJP candidates for the Dalu and Salmanpara seats.

Meghalaya has a unique culture and tradition and the confidence of its women and children is fascinating. Our party believes in empowering women and we will be able to drive the agenda in Meghalaya to further their cause, the Union information and broadcasting minister said.

She claimed that crimes against women had gone up in the state, despite its matrilineal system, and promised that a dedicated women police force would be set up to ensure women's security if the BJP was voted to power.

The pride of women has to be restored and we will ensure that the

women in Meghalaya feel safe, secure and independent, Irani said.

She took a jibe at Chief Minister Mukul Sangma for allegedly shielding the state home minister, in connection with a 14-year-old girl's alleged rape by an MLA at a guest house owned by the home minister's son in December, 2016.

"The job of a home minister is to protect the women and children, but in Meghalaya, it is the opposite. It is sad and shocking that such an incident took place in Meghalaya where women are held in high esteem. This incident has shamed the state," Irani said.

She also accused the

Congress government in the state of creating "hindrances" to the smooth implementation of central schemes and promised an uninterrupted power supply and jobs for the youth, as envisaged in the BJP's poll manifesto.

Alleging that the Congress had failed to carry out its responsibilities for 50 years, the Union minister claimed that the Narendra Modi government had made it possible in just three-and-a-half years.

Promising free gas connections to poor rural women, she said, "Modiji has decided to give gas cylinders to the poor women to ease their problems."

Ahluwalia a 'seasonal bird', says Gautam Deb SUMMIT REPORT SILIGURI, 17 FEB:

West Bengal Tourism Minister, Gautam Deb condemned the statement of Darjeeling MP, S.S Ahluwalia where he alleged that some agencies were making attempts to eliminate Gorkha Jan Mukti Morcha leader, Bimal Gurung.

Terming Mr Ahluwalia as a 'seasonal bird', Gautam Deb today said, "Mr Ahluwalia is further attempting to gain the confidence of the people in the Hills and trying to protect his seat for the upcoming 17th Lok Sabha elections in 2019."

When asked about his absence during the inauguration of Passport Seva Kendra (PSK) in Siliguri today Mr Deb said, "Family business kept me busy today. However, I had taken the initiative to build the infrastructure for opening a PSK in Siliguri."

BSNL to launch 4G services in Arunachal soon

ITANAGAR, FEB 17 (PTI): BSNL has already started a number of wi-fi hotspots in the border state of Arunachal Pradesh and would launch 4G services shortly, according to senior telecom officials.

BSNL general manager Dilip Siram and assistant general manager Arung Siram told a Telecom Advisory Committee (TAC) meeting here yesterday that the public telecom service provider has launched wi-fi hotspots at Itanagar, Naharlagun, Bordumsa, Chowkhram, Dimwe, Kharsang and Likabali Army telephone exchanges.

They also said that BSNL would launch the 4G services shortly in Itanagar and Naharlagun area.

Congress MP from Arunachal East constituency Ninong Ering, who attended the meeting, stressed the need for extra efforts to push telecom network to every nook and corner of the landlocked Himalayan state, a release said.

Ering emphasised that the provision of mobile service to 1893 villages under the Comprehensive Telecom Development Plan for North Eastern Region needs to be expedited, the release added.

The meeting was also attended by TAC members Songtung Lowang Bangsia, Tungri Effa and Taki Mibang.

Naqvi flags concern over high dropout rate among Muslim girls

Mumbai, Feb 17 (PTI): The school drop-out rate among Muslim girls, which is more than 72 per cent, is a matter of concern for the government, Union minister Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi said today.

The minority affairs minister was addressing a training programme for women here, organised by the Maharashtra BJP Minority Morcha.

"The school drop-out rate among Muslim girls, which is more than 72 per cent, is a matter of concern. To change the situation, the (Narendra) Modi government has focused on educational empowerment of Muslim girls. This has created awareness among the minorities regarding better education," Naqvi said.

Taking a dig at the Congress, he said the "champions of corruption" are unable to digest the atmosphere of trust and development.

"The Congress is leading such people who are trying to disturb the atmosphere of progress and prosperity created by the Modi government," he alleged.

Naqvi also said that the literacy rate among

minorities, especially Muslims, is much below than the national average literacy rate, which is also a matter of concern.

"Our government has started a strong campaign for educational empowerment of minorities to fill this gap. Socio-economic-educational empowerment of minority women, especially girls, is our priority," the minister said.

Naqvi claimed that due to the Modi government's policy of "Empowerment without Appeasement" and "Development with Dignity", the poor, weaker sections and minorities are also becoming equal partners of the development process.

"During the last three years, about 2.42 crore minority students have been provided various scholarships. This year, more than 1.5 crore students have applied for pre-matric, post-matric, merit-cum-means and other various scholarships given by the Ministry of Minority Affairs."

"More than three lakh applications have been received for Begum Hazrat Mahal Girls Scholarship," he added.

Mumbai Court remands PNB scam accused to CBI custody

MUMBAI, FEB 17 (PTI): A special court in Mumbai today remanded three persons arrested in the Punjab National Bank scam in 14-day custody of the Central Bureau of Investigation.

The scam has "consequences for the economy of the nation", said special CBI judge S R Tamboli, remanding them in the central agency's custody till March 3.

The CBI today arrested Gokulnath Shetty, then deputy manager (now retired) of PNB; Manoj Kharat, a single window operator of PNB, and Hemant Bhat, authorised signatory of the Nirav Modi group of firms. "It's a very serious offence," the judge observed.

While the CBI lawyer sought the maximum possible custody for the accused, the defence lawyers opposed it, contending that the arrested men were not the beneficiaries of the scam and the

real beneficiaries were somewhere else.

On January 31, the CBI registered an FIR against billionaire diamond trader Nirav Modi, his companies and uncle Mehul Choksi. The three accused were arrested in connection with the same case, the CBI said today.

The FIR listed eight fraudulent transactions worth over Rs 280 crore but based on further complaints from the bank the CBI now says the amount investigated in the first FIR is over Rs 6,498 crore, involving 150 Letters of Understanding allegedly fraudulently issued by Shetty and Kharat.

The remaining 150 fraudulent LOUs worth over Rs 4,886 crore issued for Gitanjali group of companies are part of the second FIR registered yesterday by the agency against Choksi and his companies Gitanjali Gems, Nakshatra Brands and Gili, they said.

Odisha places demands before Niti Aayog

Bhubaneswar, Feb 17 (PTI): The Odisha government today informed the Niti Aayog that the state wanted restoration of central assistance for special KBK plan, IAP and BRGF districts, hike of the Centre's share in the State Disaster Response Fund (SDRF) and revision of coal royalty besides the special category status, official sources said.

The state's requirement and the demands were placed before Niti Aayog when its vice-chairman Rajiv Kumar met Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik at the state secretariat here.

Apart from demanding revision of coal royal-

ty, Patnaik sought opening of bank branches in 4376 unbanked gram panchayats in the state. He also reiterated Odisha's demand for special category status, the sources said.

During the discussion, Patnaik urged Rajiv Kumar to expand mobile network in 11,200 villages and broadband connectivity in the left wing extremism-hit districts of the state.

Patnaik said the NDA II government at the Centre has stopped central assistance for special plan for poverty stricken KBK (Kalahandi-Bolangir-Koraput) region and there was no allocation under integrated

action plan (IAP) and backward region grant fund (BRGF) districts thought the Centre was earlier funding such schemes.

He also demanded a hike in the Centre's share in the State Disaster Response Fund (SDRF) from 75 per cent to 90 per cent with effect from July 1, 2017, the sources said.

Patnaik said that there is a need to relax norms under Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana for 38 LWE-hit blocks in the state and demanded adequate funds for development and maintenance of national highways in the state.

The chief minister

also told Rajiv Kumar that the Railways should speed up the execution of its projects in the state.

"The Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana, modeled on the lines of Odisha's flagship MAMTA scheme, needs certain modifications for wider coverage of beneficiaries," the sources quoted Patnaik as suggesting.

Patnaik said the Amritsar-Kolkata industrial corridor may be extended up to Visakhapatnam to connect it to deep water ports. It would also facilitate strategic link between various industrial corridors of the country and there should be advance

intimation of the annual allocation for the central sponsored scheme.

Later speaking to reporters, the Niti Aayog vice-chairman said the objective of the meeting was to convince the chief minister to make the Aayog their medium of communication with the Centre so that the state's problems are properly addressed.

Stating that there are 9-10 important issues, Kumar said some related to Odisha and the Centre and there were some others like the coal royalty, which concerns some other states. It would be looked into separately.

Tripura goes to polls Sunday, BJP the main challenger

Agartala, Feb 17 (PTI): Tripura would go to polls tomorrow with the BJP emerging as the main challenger to the ruling Left Front, which has been in power in the state for the last 25 years.

Polling would be held in 59 of the total 60 seats. Voting in Charilam Assembly constituency would be held on March 12 due to the death of the CPI(M) candidate for the seat, Ramendra Narayan Deb Barma, five days ago.

Twenty seats have been reserved for the scheduled tribes.

The BJP held a high-voltage campaign with Prime Minister Narendra Modi addressing as many as four rallies in the state.

Other heavyweight lead-

ers of the saffron party to take part in the campaign were its national president Amit Shah, Union ministers Rajnath Singh, Arun Jaitley, Nitin Gadkari and Smriti Irani and Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath.

Manik Sarkar, who is running for his fifth term as the chief minister, led the CPI(M)'s campaign addressing around 50 rallies in the state. Other Left leaders like Sitaram Yechury and Brinda Karat lent support to the party's campaign.

The Congress' campaign was somewhat subdued with party president Rahul Gandhi addressing a rally at Kailashahar in Unakoti district, about 180 kms from Agartala, on the

last day of campaigning.

Altogether, 307 candidates are in the fray.

The CPI(M) is contesting in 57 seats and while the other Left Front constituents, the RSP, Forward Bloc and CPI, in one seat each.

The BJP, which has forged an alliance with tribal outfit Indigenous Peoples Front of Tripura (IPFT) has fielded 51 candidates. IPFT will contest in the remaining nine seats.

The Congress is going it alone in Tripura this time and will contest in 59 seats. The party has not fielded any candidate for Kakrabon constituency in Gomati district.

There are 25,73,413 elec-

torate, of whom 13,05,375 are males and 12,68,027 women while the number of third gender voters is 11. There are 47,803 new voters this time.

Voting would be held between 7 am and 4 pm tomorrow at 3,214 polling stations of which 47 would be managed by women, election office sources said.

Tripura chief electoral officer Sriram Taranikanti said the Election Commission has appointed police observers, general observers and expenditure observers to ensure free and fair polls.

He said, Director General of Indo Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) RK Pachnanda has been

appointed as a special observer to coordinate the security forces deployed in the state.

State Director General of Police Akhil Kumar Shukla said tight security measures are in place across Tripura for free and fair elections.

Three hundred companies of central armed forces have been deployed across the state along with state armed personnel and the police, he said, adding the BSF is keeping keep close vigil along the 856 km long Indo-Bangladesh border in the state.

Counting of votes would be take place on March 3, Additional Chief Electoral Officer Debashish Modok said.

Visva-Bharati desperately needs full-time VC, says officiating VC

KOLKATA, FEB 17 (PTI): Officiating Vice-Chancellor of Visva-Bharati university Prof Sabujkalyan Sen today said the institution, which had been functioning with Acting VCs for the past two years, badly needed a full-time one.

After Vice-Chancellor Sushanta Dattagupta was dismissed from the central university in February 2016, Prof Swapan Kumar Dutta became the officiating VC and Sen assumed the same charge on February 3 after his retirement.

"Visva-Bharati has been functioning under acting VCs for two years. It badly needs a full-time VC," Sen, also the seniormost director of the university, told PTI.

She said her job as the officiating VC is to ensure that the full time VC, whenever he or she is appointed, does not face a huge backlog of work.

"My term is not for long," she said without elaborating.

Sen, who was in the city to attend an Executive Council meeting of the university, said the meeting was held during the day to discuss ways to implement the 7th Pay Commission recommendations by March and the economic demands of casual employees.

The Director of Studies Educational Innovations and Rural Reconstruction of the university took over as the officiating VC on February 3 after the Ministry of Human Resource Development directed the authorities in this regard.

To a question if she would agree to become full-time VC, Sen said she had come to Visva-Bharati as a student in 1971 and "I am ready to do whatever I am asked to do."

Air Odisha begins flights under UDAN

AHMEDABAD, FEB 17 (PTI): Air Odisha today launched its maiden flight under the Centre's UDAN scheme, linking Mundra with Ahmedabad in Gujarat.

Chief Minister Vijay Rupani launched the inaugural flight of the Bhubaneswar-based airline.

Air Odisha, which started services as a non-scheduled operator in November 2012, was granted the flying permit by the DGCA to launch flights under the Ude Desh Ka Aam Nagrik (UDAN), the Centre's regional connectivity scheme (RCS), on last Tuesday. It has bagged 50 routes under the RCS.

Air Odisha is starting services from Ahmedabad to Jamnagar, Mundra and Diu in the first phase of its operation under the UDAN scheme.

Of these, the Mundra-Ahmedabad service took off today.

Mundra, in Kutch district, houses a mega private port.

"It is the realisation of the dream of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. UDAN aims to provide air facility to the common man through regional connectivity."

these cities will be connected to Ahmedabad also (as part of Air Odisha's Gujarat network plan)," Rupani told reporters on the sidelines of the event.

The airline has deployed a 19-seater Beechcraft 1900D on the Ahmedabad-Mundra-Jamnagar route.



Ahmedabad-based firms GSEC Aviation and Monarch Networth Capital have made investments in Air Odisha and Air Deccan, whose founder GR Gopinath was also present on the occasion.

An Air Deccan official said the Prime Minister is likely to inaugurate Air Odisha's flight connecting Ahmedabad and Diu on February 25.

Air Odisha will also provide connectivity from Ahmedabad to Bhavnagar and Bhavnagar to Surat

in coming days, the official said.

Speaking at the event, founder of Air Deccan GR Gopinath, said it was a "dream come true" moment for him to see the venture taking off.

Gopinath said his air charter company had sought permission to fly on this route in 2013 but the then UPA government did not give him the go-ahead due to political reasons.

Modi, who was then Gujarat Chief Minister, was scheduled to inaugurate the flight, said the pioneer of low-cost flying in India.

"We made announcement and hoardings were put up. Mr Modi was supposed to inaugurate it...Two days before inauguration, the aircraft (bought for this) were stopped by the then (UPA) government (in Dubai)."

"There were political consideration not to allow the service to take off," alleged Gopinath.

"It dashed our dream and we lost a lot of money. I then told Mr Modi that 'I will come back to Gujarat when you become the prime minister,'" he said.

Under the UDAN scheme, Air Odisha plans to connect cities like Bhubaneswar, Utkela, Raipur, Ranchi, Gwalior, Lucknow, Kanpur, Varanasi, Ahmedabad, Surat, Bhavnagar and Selam, among others.

Can learn lot by just watching Kohli: Aiden Markram

CHETAN NARULA

CENTURION, FEB 17 (PTI): The desperation to singlehandedly take his team over the line, condemning himself for mistakes are some of the aspects of Virat Kohli's leadership that South African captain Aiden Markram wants to inculcate after witnessing the Indian skipper maul his side into submission during their 1-5 ODI series defeat.

Kohli finished the series with a staggering 558 runs, which includes three hundreds and a half-century.

Kohli's desperation to win games for his side is massive. And that's why he condemns himself (on mistakes) like he does. It's all from a competitive point of view and it's nothing malicious. That desperation shows when he bats - he doesn't just get his side close to the line, he gets them over it," Markram said during the media interaction.

"So there are a lot of things I can learn from him (Kohli). There are a lot of things I can learn from their team as a whole, and from us as a whole. I am taking little pieces from here and there, the young Proteas captain said.

He had no hesitation in admitting that Kohli was the massive difference between both the sides.

He made a massive difference. He is obviously in incredible touch and showing it. His hunger for runs and desperation to finish games is up there with the very best, and that's why he is one of the best players in the world. He has been one of the differences and their spinners have also played a massive role. But he's had a great series and credit must be given where it is due, said Markram.

Asked if he is embarrassed with the margin of series defeat, Markram felt that the choice of word was too harsh.

Embarrassed is quite a harsh word (in terms of series result). Obviously, we were not up to the standard we would have liked



to be. We are really disappointed as a squad. I wouldn't want to say we're embarrassed.

"We put a lot of hard work in behind the scenes and we do give our absolute best. We fight for the player next to us and that's a crucial thing. Results-wise it could look embarrassing so I understand the question, but we're more disappointed than anything else, he added.

But he was quick to point out that they had always felt that the ODI series would be tough against a world class Indian side.

It was always going to be tough. It was something I was looking forward to and a challenge that I enjoy. I can still say that sitting here having lost a series 5-1, it was a responsibility that I enjoy. I learnt a lot and at this stage of my career and that's not a bad thing.

"Going forward, I am going to take the lessons I did learn. The experience of dealing with other pressures will help me grow as a player."

The skipper also admitted that his own form had been patchy in the series with only

127 runs in six games.

As an individual, I set high standards for myself, and not having done well, this series there was that form of pressure as well. So there are various forms of pressure - captaincy is just one of them. But like I mentioned, it is a pressure I enjoy and I would like to enjoy it more in the future, he added.

He also accepted coach Ottis Gibson's criticism that he did not play his natural game.

He's (Gibson) got full right to say that just by watching with the naked eye. I wasn't playing the usual game I do play, and whether that was due to various pressure or not being in the zone or in the moment is probably the reason. He's spot-on with what he says, we did chat about it and today when I was batting I felt in a more comfortable space.

"I felt I was structuring my innings how I would if I was batting in a franchise game. It's very late in the series but it's a positive that I was able to overcome that obstacle. It's moving in the right direction I suppose," he concluded.

Veteran Rumeli to replace injured pacer Jhulan

NEW DELHI, FEB 17

(PTI): Veteran all-rounder Rumeli Dhar today returned to the Indian women's cricket team for the remaining three T20 Internationals against South Africa in place of an injured Jhulan Goswami, ending a six-year hiatus.

The women's selection committee was forced to make this change after pace spearhead Goswami suffered an injury to her heel ahead of the first T20 International.

The pacer recently became the first female cricketer to take 200 ODI wickets in the second match against South Af-



rica, which India won by 178 runs at Kimberley.

Goswami, an ICC Women Cricketer of the Year in 2007, had earlier broken Australian Cathryn Fitzpatrick's record

of highest wickets in women ODIs.

Indian women registered a comprehensive nine-wicket win in the second match yesterday and lead the T20I series 2-0.

Indian women gear up for twin glory

JOHANNESBURG, FEB 17 (PTI): The Indian women are on the cusp of setting a rare benchmark for their male counterparts as they eye a maiden double series win on South African soil when they take on the hosts in the third Twenty20 International here tomorrow.

Having won the three-match ODI series 2-1, India are currently leading the five-match T20 series 2-0.

A victory tomorrow will not only ensure an unassailable lead 3-0 lead but also make Harmanpreet Kaur's team first among equals to have won two series on a single tour of South Africa.

A win will also mean that the women's team have now won T20 series in both Australia and South Africa.

With the men's team also starting their T20 campaign at the same venue after the women's match, the onus will be on the Smriti Mandhanas and Mithali Raj's to set the bar high for Virat Kohli's team.

The added incentive is that the series will be telecast live before the men's matches.

The women have so far put up a

near flawless show in both the T20 encounters, winning by seven and nine wickets respectively.

Veteran Raj, who no longer leads the side in the shortest format, has displayed her wealth of experience with successive half-centuries -- 54 no off 48 balls and 76 no off 61 balls -- bagging 'Player of the Match' on both occasions.

Left-handed batter Mandhana, after a fantastic one day series, also played her part in the second game, scoring 57 off 42 balls that had three huge sixes.

The bowling unit has also performed admirably with Shikha Pandey leading the charge in the absence of an injured Jhulan Goswami. She has received able support from leg-spinner Poonam Yadav, off-break bowler Anuja Patil and all-rounder Deepti Sharma.

It will be interesting to see whether the Indian team management -- coach Tushar Arothe, skipper Harmanpreet and senior most player Mithali -- decide on playing veteran Rumeli Dhar, who will be donning national colours after a gap of six years.

CBI arrests 2 PNB officials, authorised signatory of Nirav Modi company

NEW DELHI, FEB 17 (PTI):

The CBI has arrested two officials of Punjab National Bank, including a now retired deputy manager, and an authorised signatory of billionaire Nirav Modi's company in connection with alleged fraudulent transactions of Rs 11,400 crore, officials said.

Gokulnath Shetty, then deputy manager (now retired), Manoj Kharat, a single window operator of PNB, and Hemant Bhat were taken into custody by the agency in connection with its FIR registered on January 31 against Modi, his companies and uncle Mehul Choksi, they said.

The FIR has listed eight fraudulent transactions worth over Rs 280 crore but based on further complaints from the bank the CBI now says the amount investigated in the first FIR is over Rs 6,498 crore, involving 150 Letters of Understanding allegedly fraudulently issued by Shetty and Kharat.

The remaining 150 fraudulent LOUs worth over Rs 4,886 crore issued for Gitanjali group of companies are part of the second FIR registered yesterday

Pak serial killer gets death sentence for raping, murdering 7-year-old girl

M ZULQERNAIN

LAHORE, FEB 17 (PTI):

An anti-terrorism court in Pakistan today sentenced to death a serial killer for the brutal rape and murder of a seven-year-old girl that sparked national outrage, the first ever trial in the country's history that concluded in shortest period of four days.

Announcing the verdict at the Kot Lakhpat Jail here at in-camera trial amid high security, ATC judge Sajjad Hussain handed down the death sentence to 23-year-old Imran Ali on four grounds - murdering a child, kidnapping a child, rape of a minor, and committing an unnatural act with a minor.

Imran has also been sentenced to seven years in jail with a fine of Rs 1 million for desecrating the body of a minor.

He was arrested in January, two weeks after he raped and killed the 7-year-old girl and threw her body into a garbage dump in Kasur city, some 50 kilometres from Lahore.

The brutal rape and murder of the child had sparked outrage and protests across the country. Her case was the twelfth such incident to occur within a 10 kilometre radius in Kasur city over a 12-month period.

The arrest brought to light eight more such killings and many Pakistanis have demanded he be publicly executed.

Prosecutor General Ehtesham Qadir, who spoke to media after

the sentencing, said the accused had been given ample chance to defend himself, but he chose to confess his crimes.

He said the prosecution had presented at least 56 witnesses against him in addition to forensic evidence, including the DNA and polygraph tests.

"It was a fair trial in which the suspect was given a chance to defend himself," Qadir said, adding the ATC has awarded the sentence to the accused only in the case of the seven-year-old girl.

"The suspect had also confessed to the killing of eight other girls. He will be tried in these cases separately, he said, adding this was the first ever trial in the history of Pakistan that concluded in four days.

The girl's father Muhammad Amin expressed satisfaction over the verdict, saying: "We are satisfied on the verdict but we wanted him to be hanged publicly."

The girl's mother said, "We want that the suspect should be stoned to death for his crime as hanging in jail is a punishment which is given to other criminals but this beast deserves either public hanging or stoned to death."

Imran will now have 15 days to approach the court to file an appeal.

However, the prosecutor general said he had confessed to his crime and was not interested in challenging the ATC verdict in higher court.

"He regrets for his act. He says

he became a pervert after having an addiction of watching child pornography on Internet," Qadir said.

Advocate Mehar Shakeel Multani, the private counsel for the suspect, had withdrawn his power of attorney after the suspect made confession before the trial court.

The lawyer claimed his conscience did not allow him to defend a serial killer. Later, the court provided the suspect with state counsel to complete the trial proceedings.

Showing concerns about the fairness of the trial inside jail, rights activist and senior lawyer Asad Jamal said the trial could not be held in a free and fair manner unless the suspect was given an ample opportunity to defend himself through a counsel of his choice.

He said the trial had been conducted in camera without access to independent observers, members of the bar and independent legal counsel for the suspect.

He said the prosecution could not propose or nominate a lawyer to defend a suspect, as done in the case, because there had always been a clear conflict of interest.

He said it was against the principles of due process of fair trial guaranteed under Article 10-A of the Constitution.

Advocate Jamal said he had also filed an application with the jail authorities, seeking permission to meet the accused to consult him in private.

Public toilets for transgenders to be built in Nagpur

NAGPUR, FEB 17 (PTI): The district administration has decided to construct two public toilets in the city for members of the transgender community.

The move comes after representatives of the Sarathi Trust, which works for the community, met District Collector Sachin Kurve and demanded separate public toilets for transgenders.

"We have decided to set up two (public) toilets for the transgender community in Pachpaoli and Sitabuli areas.

The sites were suggested by the trust," Kurve told PTI. Nikunj Joshi, CEO of Sarathi Trust, said there were about 1,200 transgenders in the city.

"We apprised the collector and deans and civil surgeons (of government hospitals) about health concerns of transgender community, and the discrimination they sometimes face.

"We requested for separate (public) toilets as well as separate medical wards for transgenders," he added.

Sex ratio at birth dips in 17 of 21 large states, Guj records 53 points fall

NEW DELHI, FEB 17

(PTI): The sex ratio at birth (SRB) saw a decline in 17 out of 21 large states of the country, with Gujarat recording an alarming dip of 53 points, a report released by the Niti Aayog stated and stressed on the need to check sex-selective abortion.

According to the report, among the 17 states which recorded substantial drop of 10 points or more, in Gujarat the SRB fell to 854 females from 907 females per 1,000 males born registering a drop of 53 points from

2012-14 (base year) to 2013-15 (reference year) in this indicator.

Gujarat is followed by Haryana, which registered a drop of 35 points, Rajasthan (32 points), Uttarakhand (27 points), Maharashtra (18 points), Himachal Pradesh (14 points), Chhattisgarh (drop of 12 points), and Karnataka (11 points), the 'Healthy States, Progressive India' report states.

"There is a clear need for states to effectively implement the Pre-Conception and Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques

(PCPNDT) Act, 1994 and take appropriate measures to promote the value of the girl child," the report stated.

According to the report, improvement in SRB was witnessed in Punjab, which registered a rise of 19 points, followed by Uttar Pradesh (10 points) and Bihar (9 points).

Sex ratio at birth is an important indicator and reflects the extent to which there is reduction in number of girl children born by sex-selective abortions, the report added.

Thodi confident ahead of Ntl Race Walking C'ship

NEW DELHI, FEB 17

(PTI): India's number one race walker Irfan Kolo-thun Thodi today exuded confidence ahead of the 5th National Race Walking Championship to be held here tomorrow.

"I am well prepared for the Nationals. This year competition will be tough as it is an important year with two big competitions- CWG and Asian Games," said Thodi, who will be representing Kerala in the competition.

"I am in good shape. At World Championships in London in August 2017, my timing was 1:21.46. This year I am looking forward to 1:21.00 or less."

Thodi, who is currently training for the National Championship in Bengaluru, is also mindful of the prevailing weather in the National capital.

"Training is going good in Bengaluru. I think temperature in Delhi will be a little cooler than Bengaluru and we will have good competition, added Thodi, who had achieved his best mark in 20 kilometres race walk at 2012 Lon-



don Olympics clocking 1:20:21.

Apart from Thodi, 80 of India's best race-walkers in both men's and women's categories will vie for honours in the 20 kilometre race, which will act as a qualification for both Commonwealth and Asian Games.

The Commonwealth Games is scheduled to be staged from April 4-15 at Gold Coast in Australia, while the Asiad will be held from August 18 to September 2 in the Indonesian capital of Jakarta.

The qualification benchmark for the Commonwealth Games has been pegged at 1:22:00 for Men, while for women it is set at 1:35:00. The

qualification benchmark for the Asiad has been set at 1:22:00 for Men, while for women it is fixed at 1:34:54.

The Athletics Federation of India (AFI) selection committee will announce the Indian team for the Asian 20km Race Walking Championship to be held in Nomi, Japan on March 18 at the back of this event.

Besides Thodi, Manish Rawat has confirmed his participation among men, while Khushbir Kaur, Soumya B, Priyanka Kumari, Ravina, Shanty Kumary and Deepmala Devi will be seen in action among the women participants during the Rs 2 lakhs event.

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‘Pak troops sent to Saudi after defining rules of engagement’

SAJJAD HUSSAIN
Islamabad, Feb 17 (PTI): Pakistan today said the decision to send its troops to Saudi Arabia was taken after clarifying the “rules of engagement” for which negotiations were ongoing for some time.

Defence Minister Khurram Dastgir Khan said the role of Pakistani troops was limited to advisory and training to Saudi forces.

“Negotiations were ongoing regarding the rules of engagement and once we attained clarity on the issue that the troops will be on training and advisory mission to strengthen the ground defence of Saudi Arabia, the troops were sent,” he told Geo News last night.

He ruled out any involvement in the Yemen civil war but said that Pakistan will not provide any air defence against missiles by Houthi rebels.

“We only want to train their forces and better advise them. The areas bordering Yemen are mountainous, and as Pakistan’s army is highly trained in mountain warfare, we will train and advise them,” he said.

In a major policy shift, Pakistan decided to deploy troops in Saudi Arabia under an existing bilateral security cooperation agreement with its close ally which is involved in a civil war in neighbouring Yemen.

The Pakistan Army announced the decision to send troops on a training and advise mission to Saudi Arabia after a meeting between Army Chief General Qamar Javed Bajwa and Saudi ambassador to Pakistan Nawaf Saeed Al-Maliki at the army headquarters in Rawalpindi on Thursday.

Separately, the Express Tribune reported that the deployment of troops was sanctioned by Prime Minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi as part of a longstanding defence cooperation between Islamabad and Riyadh.

Currently, there are 1,379 Pakistani troops deployed in Saudi Arabia, most of whom are from Pakistan Army, along with air force and navy officials, according to security sources.

The exact number of troops being sent is not known, but the fresh deployment is said to be slightly over 1,000 soldiers, according to the newspaper.

Security sources also clarified that there is nothing new about the deployment of Pakistani troop in the oil-rich kingdom, as defence cooperation with Saudi Arabia is based on a 1982 bilateral protocol for training and advisory roles.

The report said defence cooperation in the Persian Gulf is not limited to Riyadh, as there is currently a deployment of 627 Pakistani troops in Qatar, including 165 from the army and 462 from the navy and air force.

Islamabad also maintains a similar working relationship with Iran, which currently has 10 pilots in training with the Pakistan military.

The Iranians will be sending five more pilots “some-time in April” and even “more in subsequent years,” sources said. Pakistan has stayed away from the conflict in Yemen where Iran strongly opposes the involvement of the Saudi-led military coalition.

In November last year, army chief General Qamar Javed Bajwa visited Tehran where he met top Iranian civil and military leaders, including President Hassan Rouhani.

LALIT K JHA

WASHINGTON, FEB 17 (PTI): Top Al-Qaeda operative Ibrahim Suleiman Adnan Adam Harun has been sentenced to life for multiple terrorism offences, including conspiracy to kill American military personnel in Afghanistan and bomb the US embassy in Nigeria, the Department of Justice said today.

Commissioner James P O’Neill of the New York Police Department said Harun was a dedicated and early soldier in Bin Laden’s al-Qaeda, joining just weeks before the September 11 attacks.

“The evidence presented at trial established that the defendant and other jihadists attacked a US military patrol in Afghanistan, resulting in the death of two American soldiers and the serious injury of others,” Acting Assistant Attorney General James O’Callaghan said.

“Harun will rightfully spend the rest of his life behind bars. This department - with our partners in law enforcement - remains deeply committed to combating terrorism

from New York to Nigeria - and everywhere in between,” he said.

The sentencing comes following his conviction by a jury on multiple terrorism offences, including conspiracy to murder American military personnel in Afghanistan and bomb the US embassy in Nigeria. He was convicted on March 16, 2017.

As proven at trial, Harun travelled from Saudi Arabia to Afghanistan weeks before September 11, 2001, where he joined al-Qaeda, trained at al-Qaeda training camps, and eventually swore allegiance to Osama bin Laden.

Harun, 47, also known by the nom de guerre “Spin Ghul,” a Pashto name meaning “White Rose,” then travelled with other al-Qaeda jihadists to the Federally Administered Tribal Areas of Pakistan, where he operated under Abdul Hadi al-Iraqi, one of bin Laden’s deputies and a senior al-Qaeda military commander.

On April 25, 2003, Harun and fellow al-Qaeda jihadists ambushed a

US military patrol near the Afghan-Pakistan border. Harun fired machine gun rounds and threw grenades at American soldiers and allied Afghan Militia Forces.

Two US servicemen were killed in the attack - Private First Class Jerod Dennis, 19, of Oklahoma, and Airman First Class Raymond Losano, 24, of Texas - and several other soldiers were seriously wounded.

After the ambush, Harun met with senior al-Qaeda officials - including Abu Faraj al-Libi, then al-Qaeda’s external operations chief - to express his desire to commit acts of terror against US interests outside Afghanistan.

He specifically sought to carry out attacks similar to the 1998 al-Qaeda bombings of the US Embassies in Kenya and Tanzania, which resulted in more than 200 deaths and 4,000 injuries, federal prosecutors said.

In the summer of 2003, senior al-Qaeda leaders dispatched Harun from Pakistan to Nigeria to bomb the US Embassy in Abuja.

Harun’s al-Qaeda han-

dler directed him to obtain one ton of explosives for the bombing operation and to target Americans - whom he described as “the head of the snake” - at embassies, hotels and other “places where they gather for fun.”

Upon arriving in Nigeria, Harun recruited accomplices, scouted the Embassy and other potential Western targets, and sent an accomplice to find explosives.

He also met with local terrorist leaders to expand al-Qaeda’s terrorist network in West Africa.

In 2004, Harun directed a co-conspirator to courier information and materials from Nigeria to al-Qaeda leaders in Pakistan.

After learning that the co-conspirator had been arrested in Pakistan, Harun fled Nigeria to Libya, from where he planned to enter Europe to carry out terrorist attacks against Western interests.

In early 2005, however, Harun was arrested by Libyan authorities and held in custody until his release in June 2011.

Harun was arrested

in June 2011 by Italian authorities.

He was indicted on terrorism charges in the

US in February 2012 and extradited from Italy later that year, the Department of Justice said.

Al-Qaeda operative gets life term in US for terror offences

Suicide blasts kill 19 in northeast Nigeria

Kano (Nigeria), Feb 17 (AFP): Three suicide bombers killed 19 people at a fish market in Kon-duga, northeast Nigeria, civilian militia leaders said today, in an attack blamed on Boko Haram jihadists.

Babakura Kolo, from the Civilian Joint Task Force said the attack happened at about 8:30 pm (1930 GMT) yesterday.



India, Iran ink 9 pacts after ‘substantive’ talks between Modi and Rouhani

NEW DELHI, FEB 17 (PTI): Prime Minister Narendra Modi today held “substantive” talks with Iranian President Hassan Rouhani to boost cooperation in key areas of security, trade and energy, after which the two sides inked nine pacts, including one on double taxation avoidance.

The two leaders also deliberated on regional situations during their wide-ranging talks.

“Both leaders held substantive & productive discussion on co-operation in trade & investment, energy, connectivity, defence & security & regional issues,” External Affairs Spokesperson Raveesh Kumar tweeted.

Addressing a joint press event with Rouhani, Modi said the visit by the Iranian president shows how the two sides want to deepen cooperation in key areas, including connectivity.

Giving details of their comprehensive talks, Modi said they discussed threats posed by terrorism, drug trafficking and other challenges.

On his part, Rouhani said, “We



are determined to combat terrorism and extremism.”

The Iranian leader also said that regional conflicts must be resolved through diplomacy and political initiatives.

PM Modi also appreciated the way the Iranian leader provided leadership in developing strategically-important Chabahar Port.

Apart from tax pact, the two sides also exchanged instrument to ratify the extradition treaty as well as to simplify visa process.

Earlier, Rouhani was given a ceremonial welcome at Rashtapatti Bhavan. In the morning, External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj called on Rouhani and discussed various issues with him.

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1339 1349 1436 1483 1543 1553 1576 1682 1734 1758
1785 1808 1839 1844 1851 1858 1860 1863 1865 1880
1886 1919 1957 1961 1966 1983 2025 2044 2048 2050
2054 2069 2079 2101 2121 2124 2186 2192 2195 2208
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2590 2643 2662 2689 2692 2796 2829 2877 2925 2934
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3466 3481 3482 3487 3497 3500 3524 3539 3551 3560
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3792 3796 3798 3808 3840 3853 3864 3867 3884 3917
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5446 5462 5495 5564 5614 5628 5641 5680 5683 5694
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2nd Prize Rs.9000/-
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78101 80633 85614 93871 94830
3rd Prize Rs.500/- 0671 0985 0989 1796 1995 3686 4793 5307 6107 8793
4th Prize Rs.250/- 2339 2602 2660 2915 3092 3376 6408 6475 7354 7529
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0055 0083 0164 0543 0772 0875 0932 1023 1124 1143
1653 1795 1959 2287 2577 2604 2617 2702 2721 2867
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4717 4955 5071 5092 5119 5128 5182 5250 5626 5739
5886 5895 5975 6199 6208 6241 6274 6281 6376 6413
6420 6422 6485 6586 6821 6985 7179 7249 7257 7393
7406 7506 7563 7628 7798 7807 7860 7913 8005 8141
8173 8437 8446 8466 8638 8650 8880 9027 9029 9112
9156 9185 9199 9238 9344 9462 9472 9597 9761 9823
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Draw Time : 04:00 pm onward
Draw No:11 DrawDate on:17/02/18
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Cons. Prize Rs.9499/- 70700 (REMAINING ALL SERIALS)
2nd Prize Rs.9000/-
19588 19809 29023 55284 58328
72154 74063 76610 79609 95019
3rd Prize Rs.500/- 0261 1675 5489 5610 5768 5794 6074 6139 7627 7751
4th Prize Rs.250/- 2973 3126 4949 5103 6084 6999 8437 8551 8610 9670
5th Prize Rs.120/-
0140 0150 0208 0252 0265 0355 0535 0640 0803 1015
1037 1273 1379 1480 1583 1718 1723 1730 1790 1986
2000 2006 2044 2100 2288 2312 2369 2599 2727 2959
3215 3289 3441 3556 3704 3801 3939 3979 4055 4104
4123 4166 4189 4348 4396 4641 4690 4697 4931 4958
4961 5036 5086 5145 5158 5401 5423 5457 5467 5554
5596 5620 5720 5762 6033 6187 6277 6321 6350 6529
6542 6938 6979 6985 7009 7073 7149 7233 7370 7381
7416 7599 7767 7820 7826 7928 8215 8387 9053 9118
9176 9393 9399 9462 9696 9712 9757 9841 9926 9932
DEAR OSTRICH EVENING
Draw Time : 08:00 pm onward
Draw No:29 DrawDate on:17/02/18
1st Prize Rs.26 Lakhs/- 904 96398 (Including Super Prize Amt)
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25317 40409 52191 56171 58442
60677 63591 69267 72865 96051
3rd Prize Rs.500/- 0091 0203 1937 2598 2741 3146 5226 6134 6643 8505
4th Prize Rs.250/- 0438 0720 1572 4931 6958 7523 8588 9327 9503 9725
5th Prize Rs.120/-
0029 0032 0041 0125 0148 0153 0374 0452 0772 0822
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5264 5274 5296 5340 5436 5451 5576 5897 5899 5928
5931 5960 6200 6251 6277 6386 6426 6427 6483 6522
6617 6642 6897 7192 7262 7610 7626 7680 7741 7814
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0228 0232 0236 0237 0267 0270 0275 0276 0282 0303
0304 0329 0330 0341 0389 0403 0415 0453 0455 0476
0489 0503 0504 0524 0540 0549 0550 0552 0579 0627
0630 0632 0680 0706 0761 0769 0780 0794 0800 0840
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MUMBAILAXMI RAJA
Draw No:2 DrawDate on:17/02/18
1st Prize Rs.10,000/- 1504 2nd Prize Rs.2,000/- 5392
3rd Prize Rs.1,000/- 5916 4th Prize Rs. 505/- 5269
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SUIT UPI Wrapping up in militaristic double breasted black Christian Dior suit jacket, the London native, Robert Pattinson, rocked a sophisticated black shirt with matching tailored trousers at the Berlin Film Festival.

Sara Ali Khan's Kedarnath controversy intensifies!

All's clearly not going well when it comes to Sara Ali Khan's debut film, Kedarnath. It started as a disagreement between the director and producers over the release dates of the film. The disagreement then led to a legal battle between the two. Reports of KriArj Entertainment then backing out of the film started doing rounds. KriArj then issued a statement saying that Guy In The Sky productions, which is owned by Abhishek Kapoor, tried to wriggle its way out of a binding agreement. The film is also been backed by T-Series and Balaji Telefilms. KriArj claims that Kapoor tried to cheat them and T-Series after they heavily invested in a film.

KriArj now plans to let the court take matters into its hands. In a new statement, the production house states, "In response to the various bogus statements and slanderous/defamatory material being circulated in the media by GITS against KriArj it may be noted that all such statements/articles are absolutely baseless, bogus, frivolous and without any merit or semblance of truth whatsoever and are hereby totally denied and stand rejected. There is enough material to show that KriArj has complied with all its commitments as per their understanding with AK / GITS."

It continues, "As I understand there have been several serious defaults by GITS of its duties and obligations towards KriArj including there being severe delays in the production of the film which was completely in a mess right from the start of the film for reasons solely attributable to GITS. In spite of



the above KriArj provided its unconditional support to GITS and continued to make huge investments in the film till it was realised that the amounts were not being used for the right purposes. KriArj has tried to salvage the situation with GITS several times including making multiple efforts to resolve issues to no avail. KriArj, T-Series and Balaji are the rightful owners of the Film as its co producers and therefore GITS has no rights to oust KriArj out of the Film and out of its legal rights as producers and owners of the film."

"We will be moving the Bombay High Court for enforcing our rights on the Film by early next week and we hope to secure the necessary reliefs from the Hon'ble Court," the statement concludes.

'Black Panther' mints Rs 7.18 crores in India on day one

MUMBAI, FEB 17 (PTI): Marvel's "Black Panther", first to be fronted by a person of colour and featuring a virtually all black cast, has opened well in India minting over 7 crores on day one.

The film stars Chadwick Boseman in the titular role and also feature actors Michael B Jordan, Lupita Nyong'o, Danai Gurira, Andy Serkis among others. It has been directed by "Creed" helmer Ryan Coogler.

The film's net box office collections stood at Rs 5.6 crore, including Rs 35 lakhs from previous day paid pre-view shows, while gross box office collection was Rs 7.18 crores, including paid pre-



views.

The opening day figure is the highest for any Hollywood solo superhero debut movie and the highest for any Hollywood film this year.

"Black Panther" is Marvel's first superhero entry this year and the studio is eagerly awaiting the release of "Avengers: Infinity War", in May this year, boasting a big-

ger cast than any of its earlier editions.

The studio also has "Ant-Man and the Wasp" that is scheduled to release in July.

Francia Raisa opens up about kidney transplant that helped save Selena Gomez's life!

The Grown-ish actress sat down with Harry Connick Jr. for an interview that will air this upcoming Monday, February 19 on Harry and talked about giving her BFF her kidney.

"Well, so our surgery was in June, our fans didn't find out about it until September," Francia told Harry [via Just Jared]. "We wanted that privacy. It was a big surgery. She felt bad about even having me do that because we are just friends, I am not her family or anything. Well, I am now. She has my blood."

Francia continued, "She felt bad. We just wanted our families around and it was cool because now I have a big family. I lost my grandparents when I was younger...Her grandparents are my grandparents now and so I have this extension of a family and it's been really amazing."

Selena and Francia revealed the transplant news in September last year, sharing a picture from the hospital on Instagram.

"So I found out I needed to get a kidney transplant due to my Lupus and was recovering. It was what I needed to do for my overall health," Selena wrote to her fans. "There aren't words to describe how I can possibly thank my beautiful friend Francia Raisa. She gave me the ultimate gift and sacrifice by donating her kidney to me. I am incredibly blessed."



Talking about the recovery process on Harry, Francia shared, "It's harder as the donor because we are losing something our body didn't need to lose, so trying to recover from that and she's gaining something her body needed. So she's up and at it immediately and I had a hard time."

She went on to discuss the surgery and her post-surgery scars.

"I basically have four scars," she told the host. "It was laparoscopic, those mothers out there who had C-sections, I feel you. I don't know how you take care of a child afterwards. It is crazy! I couldn't get up without having someone help me. That was very humbling."

I couldn't take a shower by myself, I had to have someone help me because I couldn't move."

She continued, "I'm a very, very active person, so the fact that my doctor said I couldn't move for two months. Two months, I couldn't do anything active. All I could do was walk. That was very hard for me and I have a dog and every day the thing I look forward to is drinking my coffee and walking and I couldn't do that. It was really, really hard."

Since the surgery, Francia has proudly displayed her scars on Instagram and on the red carpet.

Kendall Jenner's relationship with Blake Griffin 'taken a toll'!

The KUWTK star's relationship with Blake Griffin has been impacted after she was dragged into his palimony suit filed by his ex, according to a new report. The basketball star, 28, is being sued by his ex Brynn Cameron, 31, who specifically named the model, 22, in her lawsuit.

'Being traded from Los Angeles to Detroit so abruptly was just a total shock for Blake, and now this lawsuit Cameron filed, well, it's taking a toll on his relationship with Kendall,' a source told Us Magazine. The insider claimed Blake knew the palimony suit was going to be filed about a week ago, but



didn't know the exact date and warned Kendall ahead of time.

The source claimed the

KUWTK star is bewildered as to why she is involved at all. 'Kendall just doesn't understand the need to drag her into a dispute between two people that absolutely had nothing to do with her,' the insider said.

'She got involved with Blake after he had already dumped Brynn. Brynn and Blake had been off and on for years, [so] to portray Kendall as some sort of homewrecker is just out of bounds.'

The source added: 'It's incredibly disappointing for Blake that a private family matter is now out in the public' and that "he is foremost concerned about his children."

Cameron tore into the NBA star in a lawsuit filed on Valentine's Day, claiming that he abandoned his family for a romance with Jenner. Brynn Cameron is taking the former Los Angeles Clippers player to court, claiming he is refusing to provide financial support for her and their children.

Cameron goes a step further and claims Griffin is a heartless cad who is 'cruelly embarrassing his family with his public fawning over Kendall Jenner.' Although the exact amount Cameron is suing for is unclear, no doubt she'll want a chunk of Griffin's fortune, as he inked a \$173 million contract in June.

ARIES: You can count on a very idyllic and romantic day today, Aries. You're feeling especially warm and sensual, and you tend to view the partner in your life through rose-colored glasses. He or she is very likely to regard you in the same way. If you've been longing for a dinner for two, complete with champagne, candlelight, and red roses, this is the day to go for it. And don't forget the violin music!

TAURUS: Someone who is a student of natural healing may come to visit you and share some ideas today. You tend to be interested in matters concerning health, and you might want to learn not only about herbs and nutrition but also spiritual healing. This is a good time to train your own healing abilities, Taurus, as

your sensitivity is high and you're more able than usual to tune in to the healing energies.

GEMINI: Books and movies may inspire you to get involved in artistic activities. Your aesthetic sense is very high today, Gemini, and you may be drawing your inspiration from the higher realms. You might want to stroll through an art gallery or museum and try to sense the feelings of those from the past. A warm and loving letter or phone call could come from a romantic partner, elevating your mood even more. It's a very emotionally gratifying day.

CANCER: You could be feeling a bit flush today, Cancer, and therefore you might decide to do a little work on your house. This is more likely to be redecorating than any major repairs, as you're

more into beauty right now than practical matters. Your aesthetic sense is very high, inspired from the higher realms, and therefore decorating decisions you make today are likely to be beautiful. Go to it!

LEO: You're feeling especially psychically and mystically inclined today, Leo. You might want to read about such matters or attend a lecture or workshop given by someone in the field. Telepathic communications are coming your way. Don't be surprised if more than once during the course of the day you and another say the same thing at the same time. You might also experience a powerful kinship with people from the past.

VIRGO: You're usually a very practical and down-to-Earth person, but today you may be

more inclined than usual toward mysticism. Spiritual matters seem extremely appealing, and you could find yourself gravitating toward metaphysical bookstores or seeking discussions with people who are well versed in such matters. You also find your imagination working overtime. Indulge in a few flights of fancy, Virgo. We all need to escape from time to time!

LIBRA: Group activities involving meditation, psychic or spiritual topics, or artistic pursuits are probably very appealing to you right now, Libra. This is the perfect day to start a class or attend a lecture on such subjects. You could meet some interesting people who become close friends. You're likely to feel a psychic bond with anyone you meet today,

and you're likely to get the feeling that your life has changed for the better. Enjoy!

SCORPIO: You're normally a very intuitive person, and today you may experience clairvoyance that could rival Jeane Dixon's. You could be feeling especially attuned to other planes, and your dreams are likely to be powerful and vivid. Use the messages you receive to inspire creative pursuits. Try your hand at painting, music, or poetry. You might not only be amazed by the results but learn even more from the work itself.

SAGITTARIUS: Your imagination is flying high today, Sagittarius. Your interest in mystical and metaphysical matters is at an all-time high, and you could find yourself strolling through New Age bookstores. Travel to

distant places may seem especially appealing, and you might dream of flying to India, Israel, Egypt, or Ireland. This is all wonderful as long as you stay grounded. Plan a trip if you can. Join a meditation group. Go with the flow!

CAPRICORN: Some wonderful news concerning money and career matters could come your way today, Capricorn. Your natural kindness and sympathy for others has led you to make some good friends who are also valuable business contacts. This is definitely paying off. Your aesthetic sense is at an all-time high, so this is a great day to start any creative projects that you have in mind. Success is definitely coming your way!

AQUARIUS: A minor conflict with a romantic partner in the morning is likely to end with

a tearful reunion and much reassurance by mid-afternoon. The end of the day could find the two of you planning a romantic trip abroad, even down to the restaurants you want to try! Discussions of spiritual or psychic matters could also bring you closer together. All in all, it's a tumultuous but romantic day.

PISCES: Your intuition, imagination, and insight have served you well on the job, and should pay off soon. A raise, commission, or perhaps a chance to invest in the company could be offered to you. Your self-esteem will definitely receive a boost! You might also find that you're growing even more intuitive than usual, and people are looking up to you because of it. Give yourself a pat on the back. You deserve it.