



SummitTIMES

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ON TOP OF THE NEWS

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Rahul Gandhi becomes Cong president

NEW DELHI, DEC 11 (PTI): Rahul Gandhi has been elected unopposed as Congress president, party's central election authority head Mullappally Ramachandran announced here on Monday.

Rahul Gandhi will collect the certificate formally declaring his ascension to the post on December 16, he told reporters here.

The 47-year-old scion of the Nehru-Gandhi family was the lone candidate in the fray.

Rahul Gandhi succeeds his mother Sonia Gandhi, who remained in the post for 19 years.

The CEA received a total of 89 nomination papers proposing Rahul Gandhi's name for the top post. All the nomination papers were found to be valid, Ramachandran said.

"Since the withdrawal of date/time is over and as there is only one candidate (Rahul), as per Article XVII (d) of the Constitution of Indian National Congress, I hereby declare Shri Rahul Gandhi elected as president of the Indian National Congress," Ramachandran said.

Rahul Gandhi became the vice-president of the party in January 2013.

Winter Carnival to go grand, will unveil AR Rahman as brand ambassador of Sikkim

**SAGAR CHHETRI
GANGTOK, 11 DEC:**

Celebrated musician AR Rahman will be the brand ambassador for Sikkim. The official announcement to this effect will be made during the inauguration of Sikkim Red Panda Winter Carnival here on 08 January 2018.

This was announced by Tourism Minister Ugen T Gyatso Bhutia during a press conference announcing the mega event here this evening. The winter carnival is scheduled to be held from 08 to 18 January 2018 at Gangtok and will feature a series of musical, traditional, cultural and other events.

Speaking at the press conference, the Minister mentioned that AR Rahman has already given his consent to be the brand ambassador of Sikkim and that the official announcement will be made in his presence on the inaugural day of the carnival on 08 January here at Paljor Stadium.

He added that the association with AR Rahman will help the further promotion of Sikkim among national and international



tourists. He informed that AR Rahman will also be conducting a grand concert in the forthcoming months which will feature songs on Sikkim.

The date for the concert will be discussed during his visit to Sikkim during the carnival, it is informed.

"Although the carnival will be held from 08 to 18 January, various tourism-related activities will continue till the end of April throughout the State," the Minister further informed.

He added that Bollywood actress, Priyanka Chopra, will also be visiting Sikkim for the release of her production, 'Pahuna', on 06 April.

"This winter carnival is not only the responsibility of the Tourism Department but belongs to all tourism stakeholders and the people of Sikkim. It is the joint responsibility of everyone to come together for the promotion of Sikkim and its tourism at the national and international levels," he stressed.

He further appealed for active participation of the people to prepare Sikkim for its future generations. He also called on the youth of Sikkim to come forward and take advantage of the immense opportunities in tourism in the State.

Other highlights of the carnival are the Red Panda Inter-

national Beat Contest which will carry a total prize money of Rs 7 lakhs, fashion show, musical presentations by bands and artists from within and outside the State, Riders Meet of international bikers on 14 January, traditional food stalls, adventure sports activities and others.

Talks are on to bring Bollywood singers like Papon, Jonita Gandhi and Nakash Aziz to perform at the carnival, it is informed.

The Minister informed that the tourism related activities will end with the Baishaki festival in a grand manner in April.

"Our Chief Minister Pawan Chamling will become the longest serving CM of the country next year by breaking the record of former CM of West Bengal, the late Jyoti Basu. That will be a proud moment for the people of Sikkim," he added.

Health and IPR Minister, AK Ghatani, also addressed the press conference and stressed that it was the collective responsibility of all departments, stakeholders and lay people of Sikkim to further promote Sikkim on the world map.

Driving licences not to be accepted as address proof for govt benefits anymore

**SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 11 DEC:**

The Home Department has directed all HODs, DCs, SDMs, BDOs, Public Dealing Offices and Panchayats to not consider driving licence as address proof for availing any Government benefits.

In a circular issued by Chief Secretary, AK Shrivastava on 01 Dec, it is stated that the Motor Vehicles Division, Transport Department issues driving licences through Sarathi Software developed by the National Informatics Centre. In this software it is required to enter data like present and permanent address but only the present ad-

dress is printed on the licence. Hence, the address reflected in the driving licence is the present address and there is possibility that the licence holder may be from outside Sikkim.

"It is learnt that driving licences issued by the Motor Vehicles Division is being used as address proof for availing various types of Government benefits which are otherwise meant for those individuals possessing SSC/Col/RC. This practice will deprive the genuine individuals possessing SSC/Col/RC which may lead to far reaching ramifications in future," the circular reads.

Pope enquires about victims of Ockhi cyclone

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, DEC 11 (PTI): Pope Francis has enquired about the hardships and sufferings caused to Kerala's fishermen community in the Ockhi cyclone that ravaged the coastal belt on November 30, the Archbishop of the Latin Catholic Church said here today.

Archbishop Soosai Pakiyam said he received a phone call last Saturday from the Vatican stating that the Pope wanted to know the details of the cyclone that hit the state's coast and a brief to broadcast it through the Vatican radio.

"They also recorded a five minute long message through telephone," the Archbishop said at a march of fishermen, organised by the Latin Catholic Church here.

It was under these circumstances, Pope Francis on Sunday remembered and prayed for the victims of the cyclone, he said.

During his speech, the Archbishop said it was a grave negligence on the part of authorities, whoever they may be, not to take seriously information passed by



central agencies on the impending cyclone and issue proper warning about it.

"I strongly condemn this apathy towards the fishermen community," the Archbishop said.

"Knowingly or unknowingly lapse had occurred. Loss of life and damage could have been less if timely action had been taken," he added.

The Archbishop wanted the state government to review the relief package announced by it, taking the views of the Church also.

The Centre and state governments should come out with a long-term comprehensive development scheme for the coastal people, he said.

The fishermen are demanding a coordinated search operation to trace missing fishermen and a visit by Prime Minister Narendra Modi to the Ockhi-hit areas.

STATE LEVEL SPECIAL OLYMPICS 2017

Children with special needs at par with other children, stresses Minister Subba

GANGTOK, 11 DEC [IPR]: State Level Special Olympics 2017 for Children with Special Needs under Inclusive Education for Disabled at Secondary Stage [IEDSS] for government junior secondary, higher secondary, senior secondary students and monastic students was held here at TNA ground today.

The theme of the Special Olympics was 'My disability has opened my eyes to see my true abilities'. The event was organised by Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan [RMSA] under the aegis of Human Resource Development Department [HRDD], Government of Sikkim.

Minister for HRDD, RB Subba, attended the event as chief guest accompanied by Advisor HRDD, OT Lepcha, and Additional Chief Secre-



tary, GP Upadhyaya, as guests of honour along with SPD RMSA, MT Sherpa, officials from HRDD, Members of Spastics Society, officers from other departments and students at large.

Speaking on the occasion, Minister Subba highlighted on the importance of hosting the special Olympics for chil-

dren with special needs.

"The talent of our children with special needs is at par with other children. You have all the sporting qualities and the spirit to excel so therefore you must keep your sporting spirit alive throughout your life," said the Minister.

The event started with a brief welcome

speech by SPD RMSA followed by word of encouragement by the Additional CS, Mr Upadhyaya.

The main objective of the event has been to provide equitable platform and opportunity to the special children to hone their talents as well as mainstreaming them and bringing awareness on the need to organise

such events among the public.

The event was facilitated by Spastics Society, Special Olympics Bharat, Sikkim Chapter as expert agency along with special educators from IEDSS for organising the games. The said event is being organised for the first time in Sikkim under IEDSS, RMSA to prepare the students for national and international level events in the future.

Various sporting events like Bouncy, short put, athletics, football, etc were conducted during the day.

The event concluded with distribution of certificates and trophies to the winners and participants as well as token of appreciation to the officials and volunteers involved in organising the event.

Second phase of CATCH campaign launched in South Sikkim



**SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 11 DEC:**

The second phase of Comprehensive Annual and Total Check-up for Healthy Sikkim [CATCH] programme was officially launched in South District today in a programme held at Namchi District Hospital wherein Zilla Adhikshya, South, Farwanti Tamang, handed over Health Cards to Ward Panchayat of Bul [Rong Bul GPU], Suk Maya Rai, and others of the Ward, informs a press release received from Health Department, South.

Briefing the gathering, Nodal Officer, Dr Ugen Sherpa, presented the details of CATCH programmes held so far. He stated

that all persons will be provided with bar-coded Health Cards after health check-up during the second phase while highlighting the importance of the Health Cards being issued.

Chief Medical Officer, South, Dr Sharda Rai, informed about the CATCH camps being organised in South district and sought the co-operation of all departments and all Gram Panchayats to make the programme successful.

During her address, Zilla Adhikshya requested the department to inform all Gram Panchayats regarding the CATCH camps including the date and venue for better mobilisation of public. She stressed that CATCH programme,

being the flagship programme of the government, should be implemented properly.

She also requested for highlighting the importance of organic farming and the health benefits of consuming organic products so that people understand the importance of organic farming.

The programme was also attended by Additional District Collector, South, Joint Director, Nutrition, Divisional Engineer, Power Department, Deputy Director, Human Resource Development Department, general secretary of NGO Drishti, officers of Health Department and officials from various line departments.

No more selling veggies near roads in Singtam Bazaar

YOGEN THATAL SINGTAM, 11 DEC:

The sale of vegetables and other products near the road at Singtam Bazaar has been prohibited by Singtam Nagar Panchayat in order to avoid various issues like traffic congestion or accidents.

"Due to unavailability of space, people set up stalls just a few meters from the road. It is a known fact that Singtam has a shortage of parking space which makes people setting up these stalls vulnerable to accidents. We have taken this step to avoid any unwanted casualties," said Municipal Executive Officer, Himmat Rai.

Mr Rai along with Municipal-cum-Sanitation Officer, Birendra Rai, has instructed people today to shift their location to some other place that offers safety.

Two cases of break-in and theft

GANGTOK, 11 DEC:

Some unknown persons vandalized the rented house of one Assistant Professor of Sikkim University at 6th Mile on 10 Dec and made away with her Dell laptop, wrist watch and coin box along with a handloom bag with 'BHUTAN' written on it. Subsequently, a search was conducted wherein one 18-year-old male hailing from the area was found carrying a similar bag with the stolen items. The boy has been arrested and the case is under investigation.

In another incident, some unknown persons broke into the house of one Govind Prasad at Harrabotey in South Sikkim on 10 Dec and stole cash amounting to approximately Rs 35,000. Sources have been deployed to find the miscreants.

One booked for murder

GANGTOK, 11 DEC:

One 30-year-old male hailing from Aneythang in South Sikkim allegedly killed one Phurba Ongdhi Bhutia of Aneythang with a sharp weapon near the house of one Prem Tshering Bhutia at Aneythang. The accused has been arrested by Police. Case is under investigation.

State Tourism Dept appointed nodal dept for Jorethang Maghey Mela

ARPAN PRADHAN

GANGTOK, 11 DEC:

"JORETHANG MAGHEY Mela holds historic importance and should be organised in a grand manner. Every department and stakeholder should come forward to make the State level event a success," said Minister cum Chief Patron of the upcoming State level Jorethang Maghey Mela Organising Committee, AK Ghatani, while addressing a coordination meeting with regard to the Mela today at the conference hall of the Manan Kendra Secretariat.

"Jorethang Mela is not just for the people of Jorethang. It is a festival of every Sikkimese and the first festival of a year that the State celebrates with unity. It needs participation from all," he expressed.

He urged every department to extend all possible help and work in coordination to make the event successful.

Speaking to SummitTimes, Mr Ghatani informed that the Mela in 2018 will also feature a Job Mela for the youth wherein career counseling will be provided. Along with

it, other regular events including Arogya Health Camp, Saras Mela and many more will also be the highlights of the Mela, he added.

The meeting also discussed the inclusion of the State level Jorethang Maghey Mela under a department so that the selected department is appointed as the nodal department for organizing the event following which a resolution was passed appointing the State Tourism Department as the nodal department. The same will be forwarded for cabinet approval,

it is informed.

Issues related to transport, water supply, power supply, event management, security, food & reception, decoration, sports event and sound arrangements were discussed during the meet with the distribution of responsibilities accordingly.

The demand of establishing an FRO office at Jorethang Nayabazar for foreign visitors to enter Sikkim from West Bengal was also placed during the meeting. It is informed that the demand has been placed for attracting foreign

tourists from WB side as it is the shortest way to Sikkim from Darjeeling.

President of the organising committee, BC Rai, who is also the Sub Divisional Magistrate of the area, highlighted on various issues placed in last year's report.

The meet has also decided to conduct a meeting of all nodal officers of various departments in Jorethang on 27 Dec at Garib Utthan Bhawan.

Also present for the meeting were MLAs, KS Lepcha and Sonam Dadul, Chairperson Naya Bazaar Jorethang

Municipal Corporation, Tika Gurung, Secretaries and Principal Secretaries of various departments, General Manager of Nayuma Television, Gajendra Ghaley, and representatives from various line departments.

All the departments assured all possible help along with financial support.

The Jorethang Maghey Mela 2018 will commence from 14 Jan and will span over three days. The first day of the Mela will have Chief Minister Pawan Chamling as chief guest, it is informed.

Gelling-Baiguney Gram Panchayat yet to be formed, public inconvenienced

VISHNU NEOPANEY

GANGTOK, 11 DEC:

One elected Panchayat of Sikkim Krantikari Morcha, Chandra Bir Kami, has slammed the State Rural Management & Development Department for their failure to constitute Gram Panchayat of Gelling-Baiguney GPU even though new Gram Panchayats were elected on 05 Nov.

In Gelling-Baiguney GPU, the ruling Sikkim Democratic Front had won two seats out of five while two seats went to Independent candidates and one to Sikkim Krantikari Morcha.

The SKM Panchayat informed that he along with Independent Panchayats had submitted representation to the



District Collector, West which was forwarded to Secretary of RMDD for appropriate action.

Secretary RMDD, DR Nepal, on 27 Nov had assured to take appropriate action on the representation for reconstitution of Gram Panchayat as SDF

had failed to meet the quorum. The department is sitting on the representation of public representatives and public are being harassed for various pending works since past 45 days, he alleged.

He also alleged that RMDD had published a

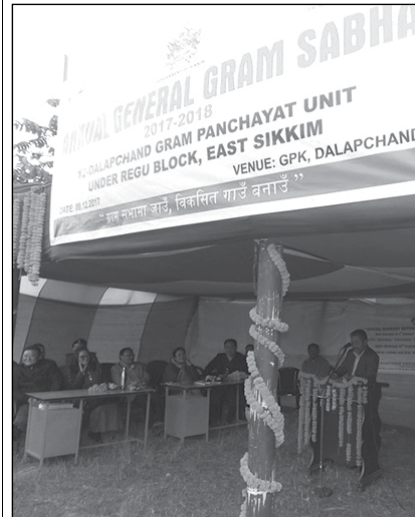
notification a day after the conclusion of the counting on their own whims and fancies to accommodate the SDF candidate for the post of President and Vice President as reserved for State OBC women although they [SDF] had failed to

get majority.

"The very essence of democracy has been murdered by the ruling government," expressed acting president of SKM, Kunga Nima Lepcha.

"The department of RMDD and Panchayat Directorate should have published the roster reservation notification much before the election, if they were impartial," he added.

Appealing to the Department to address the constitution of Gram Panchayat at the earliest to provide justice to public, Mr Lepcha stressed that if the department fails, the elected representatives are bound to take legal recourse challenging the alleged notification of RMDD.



Dalapchand GPU holds its annual Gram Sabha

SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 11 DEC:

Annual General Gram Sabha 2017-18 of Dalapchand GPU under Regu Block in East Sikkim was organized at Dalapchand Gram Prashashan Kendra today. The Sabha was chaired by GPU president, Sachin Rai, accompanied by Panchayat Adhyakshya [East], Samsher Bokhim, Ward Panchayats, line departments of Gangtok, Pakyong and Rongli Sub Division, GPU's Standing Committee, NGOs, SHGs and the general public, a press release informs.

Village Administrative Assistant, Deepak Rai, Panchayat Development Assistant, Parbin Rai, and Panchayat Accounts Assistant, Niti Rai, presented the income and expenditure of various schemes/revenue 2016-17 and plan budget.

Ward members, Hemu Pradhan, Mohan Chettri, Chanda Rai, Ganga Gurung and Sujata Rai, presented various demands and proposals department wise while the GPU President briefed on various activities to be passed in Gram Sabha and read out the names of Standing Committee of the GPU.

Likewise, Panchayat Inspector, Sunil Pradhan, spoke on Gram Samridhi Avam Swachh Pakhwara and Block Development Officer Regu, Sabindra Rai, highlighted on Gram Panchayat Development Plan, Fourteenth Finance Commission, State Finance Commission and Garbage Management.

Standing Committee members, Prashant Rai, Mani K Gurung, Prakash Sagar, and Bikash Rai participated in an open house discussion.

Two supporters from Bimal Gurng faction arrested



SUMMIT REPORT

KALIMPONG, 11 DEC:

Kalimping Police has arrested two young supporters from the Bimal faction of the Gorkha Janmukti Morcha today. They have been arrested in a case of arson in the wine shop below TMC office during the recent agitation. They have also been booked for attacking the police. According to information from police sources, Palden Tamang [32] and Bikash Sarki [32] were arrested from Seedfarm, near Ka-

limpong town.

Palden Tamang has been accused of attacking the Trinamool Congress office located at 10th Mile, burning of the wine shop up and attacking the police. While Bikash Sarki was arrested for attacking the police on 15 Sept while they were dispersing the crowd at Motor stand and for helping the accused to flee after flaming government properties. The two accused will be produced in Kalimpong Court on Tuesday.



Dwarey Ward holds Ward Sabha on MGNREGA & GPDP

SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 11 DEC:

Ward Sabha on Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act [MGNREGA] and Gram Panchayat Development Planning [GPDP], headed by Ward Panchayat, Suchitra Pradhan, was held at Dwarey Ward in Sumbuk, South Sikkim today,

a press release received from Kanchanjyoti Youth Club, Sumbuk informs.

Ms Pradhan addressed various demands placed before her by the people of the Ward during the Sabha.

National Youth Volunteer, Suyog Pradhan, in his address, discussed various activities including the Skill

Up-Gradation Training to commence from 14 Dec, a camp on Mahatma Gandhi Yuva Swachata Abhiyan, Youth Exchange Programme from 25-29 Dec in Delhi, provision of music and dance classes and learning hub/tuition class. He also highlighted on alcohol and plastic free village and Dwareygaon Talent Show.

Meeting summoned for removal of Kpg Municipality Chairman

SUMMIT REPORT

KALIMPONG, 11 DEC: Current Chairperson of Kalimpong Municipality, Suva Pradhan, today sent an official notice for a special meeting to all Ward Commissioners including the 14 who had filed a requisition for holding a vote of confidence meeting on 04 Dec.

Mr Pradhan said that the meeting has been summoned on 14 Dec as no-confidence motion was filed by more than 1/3rd of the existing Councillors of Kalimpong Municipality.

The Chairperson had 15 days' time to call a meeting. It is learnt



that only executive officers will be allowed in the meeting hall.

"Vote of confidence will be held in my leadership and a president will be elected or nominated the same day. The present Councillors will only be allowed to vote and if anyone doesn't turn up, the voting process will not be postponed," said Mr Pradhan in a press confer-

ence today.

People who want the Chairperson to step down allege that Mr Pradhan has not done any genuine work so far for the benefit of the town. However, Mr Pradhan has said that the Municipality could not function for more than three months because of the agitation and shutdown which had begun as soon as the municipality board was formed. Moreover, the death of Councillor Barun Bhujel, who died in judicial custody, also halted the Municipality's work, he added.

Mr Pradhan also said that there

turn to pg03

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Sunset: 4:42 PM

CBSE notifies marking scheme for class 10, 12 examinations

NEW DELHI, DEC 11 (PTI): The Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) today notified the marking scheme for class 10 and 12 examinations scheduled in March.

The board had announced that once again the examination will be mandatory for class 10 students and will be re-introduced in 2018 academic session.

"The students can check the marking scheme on the website. The schedule of the examination will be notified soon," a senior official said.

The subjects for which the marking scheme has been notified for class 10 are Mathematics, Science, Social Science, English (Communications) and English (Language and Literature).

For class 12, the marking scheme has been notified for subjects including Accountancy, Biology, Business Studies, Chemistry, Economics, English, Hindi, Mathematics and Physics.

Over 18,000 schools across the country are affiliated to the CBSE. As many as 10,98,891 candidates 6,38,865 boys and 4,60,026 girls from 10,678 schools registered for the CBSE Class 12 examinations this year.

There was a 2.82 per cent increase in registration for the 2017 edition of the examinations, as compared to the previous year. Around 10,67,900 students - 6,21,259 boys and 4,46,641 girls - had taken it then.

Meeting summoned for...

contd from pg02

are new developments coming to the town for which survey works are going on. The process is being hampered by the chaos that is going on, he added.

"The CFL street lights are domestic lights. We are looking for LED weather-proof lights. We had asked quotations from the dealers already. This too cannot be taken to the next level and we can't deprive people of such facilities because of the problem that is going on in the Municipality. That is the reason why I called the special meeting as soon as possible," said Mr Pradhan.

"We had lost in 17 wards out of 23 in 2016 and after one year in the same municipality election, we won 19 wards. Now the Councillors of those 19 wards will decide whether to save or remove their Chairman," said Mr Pradhan.



State Income and Related Aggregates Workshop starts in Gangtok

GANGTOK, 11 DEC [IPR]: Five-day Training cum Workshop on State Income and Related Aggregates, organised by Central Statistics Office, Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, Government of India, in collaboration with Department of Economics, Statistics, Monitoring & Evaluation (DESME), Government of Sikkim, commenced today in the State capital.

The workshop has participation from North

Eastern States of Manipur, Mizoram, Meghalaya, Arunachal Pradesh, Tripura, Nagaland and host State Sikkim, and two Union Territories namely Puducherry and Andaman & Nicobar Islands.

The inaugural session had Secretary Planning, Government of Sikkim, Sonam Y Lepcha, as chief guest accompanied by Directors DESME, Sikkim, Madhu Pradhan and Irene O Chankapa, and Directors CSO, Ministry

of Statistics and Programme Implementation, Rajesh Bhatia, Brindraj Singh and S Sahoo, as key resource persons for the workshop.

The programme aims to provide source data, methods and general guidelines to be adopted by the compilers for preparing the State Domestic Product estimates and District Domestic Product estimates. The workshop will also train the participants on ways to tackle the emerging

challenges of data collection, analysis and dissemination required for evidence based policy making as also for planning, monitoring and evaluation.

The National Accounts Division, CSO, provides technical guidance and support to the DESME of States and Union Territories on compilation and release of State Accounts, including estimates of State Domestic Product.

Secretary Planning,

Mr Lepcha, emphasized on the importance of such a workshop especially with regard to updating the States and UTs about the latest guidelines and methods. He thanked NAD, CSO for choosing Sikkim to host the regional level workshop.

The inaugural session was also addressed by Director DESME, Sikkim, Ms Pradhan, and Director CSO, MSPI, Government of India, Mr Bhatia.

Auditions for Mayal Lyang Lepcha Idol kicks off in Gangtok

NITESH R PRADHAN GANGTOK, 11 DEC:

Mayal Lyang Lepcha Idol, organised by the Sikkim Indigenous Lepcha Tribal Association (SILTA), held its audition today in the capital.

There were 100 enthusiastic singers from the Lepcha community participating in the auditions.

Welcoming the good response, president SILTA, Mayalmit Lepcha, held that the competition is being organised by the association to instill confidence in the youth particularly from the Lepcha community who are waiting for a good platform.

She further informed that the participants are not only from Sikkim but also the neighbouring Darjeeling hills and also from the National capital and Chennai.

One such participant from



Delhi, Dawa Tshering Lepcha, said, "I wanted to sing and present my talent in my mother tongue and when I saw this on-

line, I had to come for auditions."

The organisers further informed that interested singers were asked to send a demo online

to be shortlisted for auditions.

"This first-of-its-kind singing competition in the Lepcha language will not only showcase the rich music of the community but also encourage many kids and youth to sing in their mother tongue," expressed another participant, Passangmit Lepcha.

Another singer and musician from Mirik, Birla Lepcha, said that such programmes will highlight not just the talent but also its vibrant music.

The auditions had the presence of three noted singers namely Mikmar Tshering Lepcha, Samrit Lepcha and Ongyal Tshering Lepcha as its judges.

The judges have unanimously thanked the organisers for taking such initiative for the community and culture.

With no age bar, the auditions had an eclectic mix of singers from adults to children.

Here to give some Freestyle lessons, says DID S5 winner, Proneeta Swargiary

REBYNA RANA GANGTOK, 11 DEC:

Dance India Dance (DID) Season 5 winner, Proneeta Swargiary, is in Gangtok as the lead dance instructor for a workshop being organised at Mount Zion Kidzee School in Tadong from 11-14 Dec.

The workshop is being organised by senior dance instructor, Nisha Rasaily, and Zumba instructor, Gagan Diyali. The trio will be imparting dance lessons for dance enthusiasts of Gangtok.

Speaking to media, Ms Swargiary said that it was her first visit to Sikkim and she got this opportunity through her friend, Ms Rasaily.

"The first thing I noticed is that the city of Gangtok is very clean and I want to spend



some time here," she expressed.

"I am a versatile dancer and I want to

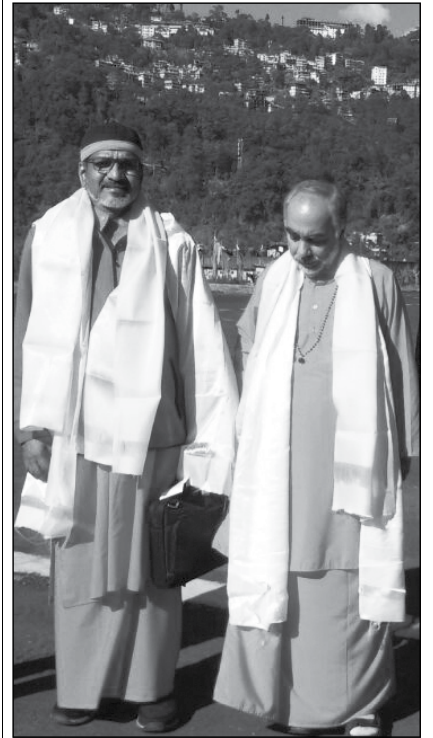
teach freestyle dance at this workshop. Free-

style is a mix of many dance forms ranging from Bollywood to hip hop to folk. It basically empowers a person to develop whatever dance form they want to do," she added.

Ms Rasaily, who has earlier worked as a senior dance instructor in Delhi for five and half years, said, "The workshop is being organised to give dance lovers here a new and fresh experience. We want to share and teach various styles of dance common in Mumbai, Delhi and other big cities. We want to offer something new and of quality to people."

Mr Diyali is a trained Zumba instructor and owns Zumba institute in Gangtok. He is in charge of the Zumba classes for the workshop.

Chinmaya Mission's Swami Swaroopanandaji arrives in Gangtok



SUMMIT REPORT GANGTOK, 11 DEC:

Global Head of Chinmaya Mission Worldwide, Swami Swaroopanandaji, arrived in Gangtok today and was welcomed at Burtuk Helipad in Gangtok by president and members of Chinmaya Mission and a large number of spiritual seekers, a press release informs.

It may be mentioned here, Swamiiji is on a Global tour after taking over as the Global Head of Chinmaya Mission Worldwide this year. Recently, Swamiiji was in Singapore, Hongkong, Australia, New Zealand and Far East. He is cur-

rently on a tour of Kolkata, Orissa, Sikkim and the North East.

After attending Bhajan Sandhya organised in his honour today, Swamiiji will be meeting the youth of Sikkim on 12 Dec at Chintan Bhawan and address them on 'Shape Your Destiny' to empower them to grow positively in their life and be a positive contributor to the Sikkimese society.

Trustee of Chinmaya University, Swami Mitranandaji, will also be accompanying Swamiiji in his tour of the North East. They will be heading to Assam on 13 Dec, the release adds.



GTA stands for persons with disabilities

SUMMIT REPORT KALIMPONG, 11 DEC:

Gorkhaland Territorial Administration Chairperson, Binay Tamang, announced a number of benefits for persons with disabilities in Kalimpong at a programme organized by the Parwatiya Apang Kalyan Sangathan on the occasion of International Day for Persons with Disabilities on 10 Dec at Mela Ground here.

Mr Tamang, who attended the programme as chief guest, said, "We recently received a memorandum from the Sangathan and we have decided to construct 10-room hostel provided we get land from the organisation."

He also announced that

from 2018 onwards, GTA will provide scholarship to five meritorious students of handicapped parents along with employment opportunities for persons with disabilities.

"We have heard about DM, SDO, BDO not taking matters related to such persons seriously and that they have deferred such decisions many times. They are also an integral part of our society and I appeal to the DM, SDO and all BDOs to look into their matters with priority, failing which we will take out orders," Mr Tamang added.

Later in the afternoon, Mr Tamang inaugurated the Pine Tree Spa and Resort at Upper Cart Road in Kalimpong.

SummitTIMES

ON TOP OF THE NEWS

How Did We Come to This?

The normalization of hate is disgusting

A Muslim labourer is lynched, his brutal murder filmed and shared on social media because some saffron-tinted dementia is convinced that “love jihad” is somehow a bad thing. While this mad person in proud Rajasthan beats a person to death and then sets him on fire, he gets his nephew, still a minor, to shoot the brutality. A section of the media ignores the story altogether, preferring to focus instead on a comment made by a has-been Congressman on the currently all-powerful Sanghi. They probably took their cue from the Pradhan Mantri himself as he somehow managed to ignore the murder in Rajasthan to remind the people about the possible interpretations of the comment thrown at him by the Congressman. We have arrived at a sad place when hate crimes, if not inspired by then at least emboldened by the normalization of hate and distrust by the dispensation in power in the Centre, occur and play out without either shocking us enough or receiving spontaneous and unanimous condemnation from all sides. But that is not happening any time soon because every time the alt-Right feels cornered, it pulls out the boogeyman. So, the PM warns people of Pakistani designs on Gujarat by suggesting that the “padosi mulk” wants a certain Muslim Gujarati as the next CM. The suggestion is offensive in its communalism. He also invokes the Mughals while referring to the Opposition; a tasteless reference during days when the country should have been collectively mourning the 25th anniversary of the pulling down of Babri Masjid in Ayodhya. Or maybe the reference was intentionally timed this way by a party which found it fastest-selling hate in place of worship named after the first Mughal. We are increasingly allowing ourselves to become a country of easy hate and quick fearfulness; a country which does not even cringe any more when pointless deaths in the hands of the hateful few are somehow sought to be justified by false leaders.

If we had been better, then at least this week we would not have seen so much malevolence. 06 December, after all marked the 25th anniversary of that shameful winter day of 1992 in Ayodhya when an unresolved issue, older than Independent India, snowballed into the tragic demolition of Babri Masjid and pulled the entire nation into a vortex of communal violence. In the communal riots which came in its wake, at least 2,000 lives, mostly Muslims, were lost. The downward spiral continues and throws up no victors, leaving behind only victims. The episode, irrespective of what it achieved for political ambitions, left the nation scarred. It's now two and a half decades since a 1.5 lakh strong mob stormed the mosque and pulled it down. The first title suit over the disputed land [a 47 acre tract] was filed in the Allahabad High Court way back in 1950. Several other suits and petitions followed and it was only in September 2010, sixty years later, that a verdict was delivered. Closure, even if it is only legal and not emotional, however continues to evade this issue and the verdict has since been stayed by the Supreme Court. The lesson is clear - matters of faith, even when packaged in dry legalese as a title suit, are best left out of the courts. These should be left for the believers to resolve, but that again is easier said than done because when it comes to matters of faith and belief, politics monopolises the divisions and does not allow resolutions. The Babri Masjid was constructed in 1528 CE; the first officially recorded communal riots over it were in the 1850's, when, after seven years of such violence, the British fenced the area to divide the places of worship of the two faiths in question. The issue conflated again in 1949, when idols of Ram, Sita and Laxman were smuggled into the Babri Masjid and placed there. With the horrors of the Partition violence still fresh in everyone's minds, the Government sealed off the area. Since then, the issue has surfaced often and confrontation peaked in 1992 when the Babri Masjid structure was demolished by a mob. The destruction was a huge blow to our country's secular credentials and an oft-quoted incident used to fan passions and communal hatred by both sides. This is not an issue likely to be resolved any time soon and the latest political wind in the BJP sails appears to be to revisit different aspects inspired by the jingoistic nationalism that worked so well in 1992.

The lead up to the Babri Masjid normalized hate speech in public discourse. 25 years since, hate crimes have also become routine and commonplace. If we do not draw the line and make a stand, fear what we shall be talking about in another 25...

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

China's growing footprint on the globe threatens to trample the natural world

BILL LAURANCE
theconversation.com

Many observers of China's escalating global program of foreign investment and infrastructure development are crossing their fingers and hoping for the best. In an ideal world, China's unbridled ambitions will improve economic growth, food security and social development in many poor nations, as well as enriching itself.

Such hopes are certainly timely, given the isolationism of the US Trump administration, which has created an international leadership vacuum that China is eager to fill.

But a close look reveals that China's international agenda is far more exploitative than many realise, especially for the global environment. And the Chinese leadership's claims to be embracing “green development” are in many cases more propaganda than fact.

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But even before China's ban has taken full force, a black market for ivory is developing in neighbouring Laos. There, Chinese entrepreneurs are churning out great quantities of carved ivory products, specifically designed for Chinese tastes and openly sold to Chinese visitors.

China is also the world's biggest



A Chinese road-building corporation felling rainforest in the Congo Basin.

importer of illegal timber, a trade that imperils forests while defrauding developing nations of billions of dollars each year in timber royalties.

China claims to be working to reduce its illegal timber imports, but its efforts are half-hearted at best, judging by the amount of illegal timber still flowing across its border with Myanmar.

INFRASTRUCTURE TSUNAMI

More damaging still are China's plans for infrastructure expansion that will irreparably degrade much of the natural world.

China's One Belt One Road initiative alone will carve massive arrays of new roads, railroads, ports, and extractive industries such as mining, logging, and oil and gas projects into at least 70 nations across Asia, Europe, and Africa.

Chinese President Xi Jinping promises that the Belt and Road initiative will be “green, low-carbon, circular and sustainable”, but such a claim is profoundly divorced from reality.

As my colleagues and I recently argued in *Science and Current Biology*, the modern infrastructure tsunami that is largely being driven by China will open a Pandora's box of environmental crises, including large-scale deforestation, habitat fragmentation, wildlife poaching, water pollution and greenhouse gas emissions.

China's pursuit of natural resources is also escalating across Latin America. In the Amazon, for example, big mining

projects – many of which are feeding Chinese industries – don't just cause serious local degradation, but also promote widespread deforestation from the networks of roads bulldozed into remote areas to access the mines.

Overall, China is the most aggressive consumer of minerals on the planet, and the biggest driver of tropical deforestation.

Beyond this, China is pushing to build a 5,000km railroad across South America, to make it cheaper for China to import timber, minerals, soy and other natural resources from ports along South America's Pacific coast. If it proceeds, the number of critical ecosystems that would be impacted by this project is staggering.

A World Bank study of more than 3,000 overseas projects funded or operated by China revealed how it often treats poor nations as “pollution havens” – transferring its own environmental degradation to developing nations that are desperate for foreign investment.

Finally, much has been made of the fact that China is beginning to temper its appetite for domestic fossil-fuelled energy. It is now a leading investor in solar and wind energy, and recently delayed construction of more than 150 coal-fired electricity plants in China.

These are unquestionably pluses, but they need to be seen in their broad context. In terms of greenhouse-gas emissions, China has exploded past every other nation. It now produces

more than twice the carbon emissions of the United States, the second-biggest polluter, following the greatest building spree of coal, nuclear, and large-scale hydro projects in human history.

Despite its new post-Trump role as the world's de facto climate leader, China's overall agenda could scarcely be described as green.

ICEBERG AHEAD

Some would say it's unfair to criticise China like this. They would argue that China is merely following a well-trodden path of exploitative development previously forged by other nations and colonial powers.

But China is not the same as any other nation. The astounding growth and size of its economy, its dangerously single-minded vision for exploiting natural resources and land internationally, its intolerance of internal and external criticism, and its increasingly closed media and official myopia all combine to make it unique.

President Xi admits that many Chinese corporations, investors and lenders operating overseas have often acted aggressively and even illegally. But he says his government is powerless to do much about it. The most notable government response to date is a series of “green papers” containing guidelines that sound good in theory but are almost universally ignored by Chinese interests overseas.

Are Xi's assertions of powerlessness believable? He increasingly rules China with an iron hand. Is it really impossible for China to guide and control its overseas industries, or are they simply so profitable that the government doesn't want to?

Of course, China's huge international ambitions will have some positive effects, and could even be economically transformative for certain nations. But many other elements will benefit China while profoundly damaging our planet.

[the writer is Distinguished Research Professor and Australian Laureate, James Cook University]

Why aren't Hollywood films more diverse? The international box office might be to blame

ROBERTO PEDACE
theconversation.com

In 2014, a hacker group leaked confidential information from Sony Pictures Entertainment, including a controversial email written by an unnamed producer.

In the email, which went viral, the producer questioned the decision to cast Denzel Washington as the lead in “The Equalizer”:

“I believe that the international motion-picture audience is racist – in general, pictures with an African-American lead don't play well overseas... But Sony sometimes seems to disregard that a picture must work well internationally to both maximize returns and reduce risk, especially pictures with decent-size budgets.”

Many actors, activists and newspapers have raised concerns related to diversity in Hollywood films. Several organizations, including blackfilm.com and the Geena Davis Institute, now actively monitor and promote diversity in media.

But was the Sony producer onto something in raising concerns about the biases of moviegoers abroad? Is it possible that the lack of nonwhite and female lead characters in Hollywood films is driven, in part, by economic concerns from movie studios? Our analysis of more than 800 films sampled between 2005 and 2012 suggests the answer is “yes.”

WHO'S IN THE MOVIES

Research suggests that films suffer from demographic disparities.

In one study, researchers at the USC Annenberg School for Communication and Journalism analyzed the demographic characteristics of over 11,000 speaking characters in hundreds of films and television series released in 2014. Approximately 75 percent of all actors involved were white. Meanwhile, 12 percent were black, 6 percent Asian, 5 percent Hispanic/Latino and 3 percent were identified as Middle Eastern or “other.”

We looked at the top-grossing films each year from 2005 to 2012, using information from Box Office Mojo, IMDb, The New York Times movie reviews and Rotten Tomatoes. Our data include the 150 top films each year that were distributed domestically and abroad, excluding G-rated and ani-



Actress Viola Davis focused her speech at the 2015 Emmy Awards on diversity, saying ‘The only thing that separates women of color from anyone else is opportunity.’

mated films.

Just 28 percent of movies in our sample had a female first lead character. Only 19 percent had a nonwhite first lead character.

These figures are in stark contrast to the demographics of the U.S. population. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, approximately 51 percent of the U.S. is female and 35 percent is nonwhite or Hispanic.

CONSUMER TASTES

Recently, film studios have faced more intense competition from independent filmmakers, increased globalization and streaming video sources. In this environment, film studios may be inclined to supply movies with characteristics that appeal to more consumers and increase profits.

Since international box office revenue is now more than twice as large as domestic revenue, the economic incentive for studios to cater to the preferences of international audiences is larger than ever. The top five international box office markets are China, Japan, the U.K., France and India.

Does consumer discrimination in these markets explain the underrepresentation of female and nonwhite actors in Hollywood films?

We analyzed the potential gender and racial biases from the consumer side through their influence on box office revenue, both domestically and internationally. We looked at the relationship between cast demographics and theater audiences, controlling for other factors that may affect a movie's success, such as production budgets, release timing, genre, critic ratings and star power.

There's significant evidence that a film cast's racial diversity negatively affects international box office performance. By our estimates, a 10 percentage point increase in racial cast diversity leads to 17 percent less international revenue, even after controlling for key film characteristics. This effect disappears in the domestic market.

Similarly, adding just one nonwhite lead actor led to a 40 percent decrease in international revenue.

However, we did not find any link between gender diversity and movie revenue. Productions with a female lead character fared as well economically outside the U.S. as those with a male lead.

INTERNATIONAL AUDIENCES

The results provide convincing evidence that studio executives have legitimate concerns about the relationship between diversity and revenue.

The negative effects of nonwhite characters on profits could explain the racial disparity observed in Hollywood films. In that case, it could be argued that consumer prejudice leads to roles that favor white actors more, because the increased revenue is attractive to studio executives.

Most movies make a lot more foreign revenue than domestic revenue, but movies with diverse casts can struggle abroad, even if they are incredibly successful domestically. For example, 2012's “Think Like a Man” made US\$91.5 million in the domestic market but just \$4.5 million in the international market. “The Help,” a 2011 Academy Award-winning period drama, made \$169.7 million in the domestic market compared to \$46.9 million in the international market.

This doesn't mean that preferences of studio executives are not at all responsible for the demographic disparity, but it does suggest that market forces are at least partly responsible.

Consumer tastes are a likely factor driving studios' preference of nonwhite underrepresentation in movies. The revenue implications of international audience preferences are simply too large for studios to ignore.

[the writer is Professor of Economics, Scripps College]

Start-up Chai Break receives Rs 5 cr angel funding

KOLKATA, DEC 11 (PTI): City-based F&B start-up Chai Break has received Rs 5 crore angel funding from Venture Catalysts of Mumbai which would be used for expansion of the outlets of its chains, mostly in Tier II cities.

Chai Break, founded by ALP Retail, is a bootstrapped start-up which presently has 11 outlets across Kolkata and Bhubaneswar, each with an annual turnover of Rs 1.5 crore.

Co-founder of Chai Break Anirudh Poddar told reporters here today that the company plans to open outlets in Tier II cities like Patna and Ranchi.

"We plan to reach 10 more cities in the next 2-3 years with special focus on Tier II locations and aiming at a turnover of Rs 50 crore," Poddar.

The other co-founder Siddarth Ladsariya said that a part of the proceeds of the funding would be utilised to set up a central kitchen at a cost of Rs 70-80 lakh, adding that their venture has been making profits since inception.

He said that so far, all the outlets are owned and operated by the company. "Now, we want to follow the FOCO model (franchise owned and company operated)," he said.

Presently, the company employs 300 people, which is expected to go up to 1,000 post-expansion.

There are also plans to set up outlets overseas in 7-8 years, Poddar said.

Quake of 4.7 magnitude hits Meghalaya

SHILLONG, DEC 11 (PTI): A moderate intensity quake measuring 4.7 on the Richter Scale today shook Meghalaya but there was no report of any casualty.

Officials at the Regional Seismological Centre here said the epicentre was at a depth of 60 km in remote East Garo Hills district.

The quake, that lasted for a few seconds, occurred at around 9.05 am.

Meghalaya and the seven other north eastern states fall in Zone 5 of the country's earthquake zoning map.

According to the zoning map, Zone 5 is associated with the highest level of seismicity.

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Nagaland's Hornbill festival attracts record 2.43 L visitors

KOHEMA, DEC 11 (PTI): The Hornbill Festival of Nagaland attracted a record 2,43,214 visitors this year, a sharp climb compared to the previous years, a government official said.

Tourist Officer of the Department of Tourism, Toka E Tuccumi said a total of 2,43,214 visitors, including 2,401 foreign tourists, 38,700 domestic and 2,02,113 locals enjoyed the festival during the 10 days.

This year, the number of visitors was higher by 1,30,610 compared to last year's total of 1,12,604 visitors, he said.

The 10-day festival, which



is the annual showpiece tourism event of the state, was inaugurated on December 1 coinciding with the 54th Statehood Day celebrations by President Ram Nath Kovind.

The festival concluded at the picturesque Naga Heri-

tage Village, Kisama, yesterday amid mega bonfires and the tunes of Naga war cry and beats of traditional log drums reverberating in the background.

The massive turnout at the festival provided the visitors ample opportunity to take prized photos and getting a lowdown on some of the Naga cultural dances during the "Unity Dance" performed by the 17 tribes of the state.

Nagaland Governor, P B Acharya said, "Hornbill Festival is designed in such a manner that it coincides with Statehood Day Celebration which gives an opportunity to all the Naga tribes to converge

at one location to showcase the best of their tribal costumes, songs and dance."

People from different walks of life gathered at the latest edition of the festival which is a remarkable achievement for the Tourism Department, he said.

Parliamentary Secretary for Tourism, Apok Jamir in his speech thanked President Ramnath Kovind for gracing the inaugural day of the Hornbill Festival 2017.

He expressed hope that the 10-day celebration of the Hornbill festival has given the opportunity for the tourists to peep into the rich cultural heritage and traditions of the

sixteen naga tribes.

Chief Minister TR Zeliang said the festival gained popularity despite the remoteness and lack of proper infrastructure. He said this has been possible due to the collective effort of all the stakeholders in making the festival a grand success.

Union Home Minister Rajnath Singh, Governor of Odisha SC Jamir, Governor of Arunachal Pradesh Brig (retd) B D Mishra, Manipur CM N Biren Singh, Arunachal CM Pema Khandu and Director General of Assam Rifles Lt Gen Shokin Chauhan were among the several dignitaries gracing the festival.

Coaches for disabled placed at end of trains not justified: HC

NEW DELHI, DEC 11 (PTI): The Delhi High Court today pulled up the Railways for placing coaches for the disabled at both ends of the train, saying there could be no justification for such a move but for "commercial interests".

The court was also annoyed with the Railways for not implementing the recommendations of a committee appointed by it to provide equal opportunity to persons with disabilities to travel by trains.

A bench of Acting Chief Justice Gita Mittal and Justice C Hari Shankar said the matter was adjourned last time for implementation of the report but nothing has been done.

"There can be no justification other than commercial interest of railways for placing one coach each at the beginning and end of a train for disabled persons," it said.

"Unfortunately no timeline is placed and the counsel for railways is unable to tell when the

recommendations will be implemented. The Committee has made important recommendations for giving equal opportunity to persons with disabilities to travel by railways. The response is unacceptable," it said.

The observations came on a PIL initiated by the bench itself on the issue of a visually-impaired man missing his M.Phil entrance exam as he could not board a reserved compartment of a train since it was locked from inside.

The court had appointed former General Manager of Indian Railways Sarabjit Arjan Singh an amicus curiae (friend of the court) to assist it as he had written an article giving suggestions to make railways a disabled-friendly network.

The court granted the last opportunity to the railways to place a timeline for implementation of the recommendations and also asked it to form a helpline for disabled persons.

"It was due to such behaviour by the rail-

ways that the incident of blind student who was unable to board the train happened," the bench said and added that the assessment of placement of coaches for disabled was required to be done.

The court said in most of the stations, these two coaches will be at the end of the platform which completely lack accessibility.

It sought the presence of an officer of the rank of executive director of railways before it on December 21.

The bench had earlier said that despite constitutional guarantee of equality before law, the harsh reality was that disabled persons do not have any substantive equality.

It had said that the Delhi University also cannot isolate itself from taking measures to secure the man's rights and will have to grant him a chance to participate in the entrance exam for M.Phil (Sanskrit) course for the academic year 2017-18 like all other candidates.

Ex-PM Manmohan hits back at Modi over conspiracy with Pak remark, demands apology

NEW DELHI, DEC 11 (PTI): In a sharp counter-offensive on Prime Minister Narendra Modi over his 'conspiracy with Pakistan' remark, former premier Manmohan Singh today said he was setting a "dangerous precedent" with his "ill-thought transgression" and asked him to apologise to the nation.

In a strongly-worded statement, Singh rejected as "innuendos and falsehoods" Modi's comments, saying he did not discuss the Gujarat Assembly elections with anyone at the dinner hosted by Mani Shankar Aiyar for Pakistan's former foreign minister Kurshid Kasuri here.

"I sincerely hope that Prime Minister will show the maturity and gravitas expected of the high office he holds instead of concentrating his energy solely on erroneously conceived brownie points.

"I sincerely hope that he will apologize to the Nation for his ill thought transgression to restore the dignity of the office he occupies," he said.

Singh said he was "deeply pained and anguished" by the "falsehood and canards" being spread to score political points by the prime minister in what he said was a "lost cause" in Gujarat.

"Fearing imminent defeat in Gujarat, desperation of Prime Minister to hurl every abuse and latch on to every straw is palpable. Sadly and regrettably, Sh. Modi is setting a dangerous precedent by his insatiable desire to tarnish every constitutional office, including that of a former Prime Minister and Army Chief," he alleged.

Addressing an election rally in Palanpur in Gujarat yesterday, Modi suggested that Pakistan was trying

to influence the assembly polls in the state.

He claimed that some Pakistani officials and Manmohan Singh met at Congress leader Mani Shankar Aiyar's house over dinner on December 6. This was a day before Aiyar's "neech" jibe against Modi that led to his suspension.

The Congress Party, Singh said, needs no sermons on "nationalism" from a party and prime minister, whose "compromised" track record on fighting terrorism is well known, while reminding Modi of his "uninvited" visit to Pakistan after terrorist attacks in Udhampur and Gurdaspur.

"Let him also tell the country the reason for inviting the infamous ISI of Pakistan to our strategic Air Base in Pathankot to investigate a terror attack that emanated from Pakistan," he said.

Claiming that his track record of public service to the country over the last five decades is known to all, he said no one, including Modi, can "lamely question it to gain lost political ground".

Singh said the Gujarat issue was never raised by anyone present at the dinner and the discussion was confined to India-Pakistan relations.

He said besides himself and former vice president Hamid Ansari, others present at Aiyar's dinner hosted for Kasuri, were the Pakistan High Commissioner, Natwar Singh, K S Bajpai, Ajai Shukla, Sharad Sabharwal, Gen Deepak Kapoor, TCA Raghavan, Satinder K Lambah, MK Bhadrakumar, CR Gharekhan, Prem Shankar Jha, Salman Haider and Rahul Khushwant Singh.

"None of them could be accused of indulging in any anti-national activities," he said.

CHANDIGARH, DEC 11 (PTI): Over 1.2 million Indian tourists visited Thailand during January-September this year, registering a steep 16 per cent increase over the same period of 2016, a senior official of Tourism Authority of Thailand said here today.

The South Asian country, which is mainly known for its tropical beaches and cuisines, is expecting this figure to further go up by the close of this year.

"...from January-September 2017, we have already received 1.2 million tourists from India, which is 16 per cent increase. And by the end of this year, the figure will further increase," Isra Stapanaseth, Director, Tourism Authority of Thailand, New Delhi, told reporters at the Chandigarh international airport here.

A little over one million Indian

tourists had visited Thailand in 2016.

He was interacting on the sidelines after Chandigarh today got air connectivity with Bangkok, with Air India launching a direct flight to the famous south-east Asian tourist destination.

Stapanaseth said his country was a popular destination for the Indian tourists and he hoped with the addition of this flight, more and more people, especially from Punjab region, can save on time and be able to travel conveniently.

"This flight will help people travelling (to Thailand) from cities like Jalandhar, Ludhiana, Amritsar, Manali, Shimla, Dehradun. It will make travelling more convenient for people from these cities to catch a flight from here," he said.

"We are hoping that with the addition of this direct flight from

here, it will facilitate people who travel for pleasure, for wedding celebrations, corporates and other travellers, who can reach Bangkok in less than five hours," he said.

He said Thailand has much to offer for the Indian tourists and packages can be worked for budget tourists to high-end tourists.

"You get value for money for quality destination. Thailand also has much to offer to people who are planning grand wedding celebrations and it is also popular among the honeymooners as well.

For budget tourists, a week's stay can cost him anywhere between Rs 50,000 to Rs 60,000, he said.

"Besides Bangkok and Phuket, tourists can explore Pattaya, then there is Chiang Mai, famous destination in north of Thailand and on the east coast you have Elephant Island," he said.



Magicians to hold convention in Thane on December 15

MUMBAI, DEC 11 (PTI):

Magicians from across the country will converge on December 15 for a day-long convention, where they will push for the status of an "art" for their skills and discuss welfare steps for those active in this profession.

The meet, "Jaddu Utsav", will be held at the Kashinath Ghanekar Auditorium in adjoining Thane district under the banner of Association of Illusionists and Magicians (AIM).

Over 250 magicians across the country as well as some from overseas will take part in the convention, Atul Patil, president of AIM, said.

Talking to PTI, Patil said, "Jaddu (magic) is actually an art. However, governments across the country have been shying away from according it the status of an art. This is why magic, which used to be most popular in the past, is losing its popularity very fast."

"We have collectively decided to protect and popularise this art. This is why we are holding the convention to chalk out a strategy not only to give a boost to this art, but also to work for welfare of illusionists and magicians across the globe," he said.

An art status for magic will enable governments to promote this form of entertainment, said Patil, who is in the profession for the last 29 years.

Patil said shows from renowned magicians will form a part of the meet, where, he said, they will mesmerise the audience with their skills.

"We will have magic lectures and shows by renowned magicians," Patil said.

A free medical check-up for participating magicians will also be organised.

Afghanistan to play their first ever Test in India

NEW DELHI, DEC 11 (PTI):

The BCCI today rolled out the red carpet for war-ravaged Afghanistan by agreeing to host the country's maiden Test match but chose to cold-shoulder a cricket-starved Pakistan in its latest Future Tours Programme (FTP).

Afghanistan, a team that has made rapid strides in international cricket despite the constant troubles back home, will play its first ever Test against India in 2019-2020, the final schedule for which will be worked out later.

On the other hand, Pakistan, which has been demanding bilateral cricket with India, was ignored at the Special General Meeting which resolved to play more against the likes of Australia, South Africa and England. India and Pakistan have not played bilateral cricket since 2012 due to political tensions between the two neighbours.

When asked why the new FTP does not say anything about playing Pakistan, BCCI acting secretary Amitabh Chaudhary replied, "It's a



question not embedded only to cricket and the BCCI but everybody. So, it's futile attempting to answer the question."

Afghanistan earned the Test status, alongside Ireland this June, realising their five-day cricket dream after

impressive performances in ODIs and T20 Internationals.

"Afghans were scheduled to play their first Test in 2019 versus Australia but considering the historic relationship between India and Afghanistan, we decided to host their first Test," said BCCI acting

secretary Amitabh Chaudhary after the Special General Meeting here today.

Atif Mashal, Afghanistan Cricket Board (ACB) chairman, was quick to thank the BCCI for the gesture.

"@ACBofficials and @BCCI have agreed that Afghanistan

will play its first Test against India. The exact date and venue of the match will be shared in a joint press conference in due course. I personally thank BCCI board for the decision," Mashal tweeted.

Afghanistan and Ireland were made full members

of the International Cricket Council (ICC) in June, becoming the sport's 11th and 12th Test-playing nations.

Besides welcoming them into five-day cricket, the BCCI has extended a helping hand to Afghanistan on a number of occasions.

The team from the war-ravaged nation has hosted its home games in India, most recently the series against Ireland in Greater Noida.

Rashid Khan and Mohammed Nabi became the first two Afghanistan cricketers to be bought at the IPL auction earlier this year.

Afghanistan have come a long way since making its World T20 debut in 2010. They are ranked ninth in the shortest format and 11th in the 50-over format.

After featuring regularly in the World T20, the Afghans made the 50-over World Cup debut in 2015.

They played six games in the tournament co-hosted by Australia and New Zealand with their sole win coming against Scotland.

Sindhu wants to end season with a title at Dubai Finals

NEW DELHI, DEC 11 (PTI): Olympic silver-medallist P V Sindhu is satisfied with what she has achieved so far this year but wants to cap a successful season with yet another title at the USD 1000,000 Dubai World Super Series Final starting on Wednesday.

After the high of Rio Olympics last year, Sindhu continued her ram-paging run this season clinching the India Open Super Series and Korea Open Super Series, besides bagging the silver at Glasgow World Championship and finishing as runners-up at Hong Kong Open last month.

"It has been a good year for me and I'm very happy with my performance. I won two Super Series and a runners-up and also a silver at World Championship. I have no regrets because I did pretty well this season. Now I really hope the year ends on a good note, that is at the Dubai Super Series Finals, I hope I do well there," Sindhu told PTI.

"It is not going to be easy as all the top players will be playing in this event. Each match from the first round itself will be very tough. So I will have to be prepared from the



start to do well in Dubai," added the Hyderabad, who had reached the semifinals at Dubai event last year.

Asked which matches impacted her most this season, Sindhu said: "Each match was comparatively different and in the starting it was Sindhu-Marin and then it was Sindhu-Okuhara at the World Champion-

ship and also there were other good matches.

"I think each player has a different style of play and every match is different. Well, not one in particular but I think the World Championship final impacted me the most."

The 22-year-old Indian has played all the 12 Super Series tour-

naments this season and she credited her training sessions which helped her to manage the workload.

"Training was going well and I had to be prepared for every match. Every month we had tournaments and I am happy the way I have managed the workload. It worked out fine for me," said Sindhu, who played five back-to-back tournaments in October-November.

Badminton World Federation (BWF) has revamped the international circuit and made it mandatory for the top 15 players to play at least 12 tournaments next year.

Asked about the schedule next year, Sindhu said: "I think it would be a hectic schedule next year and we have to plan it out accordingly and play tournaments because each event will be important and also we have other important tournaments such as Commonwealth Games and Asian Games.

"It's just that we have to be prepared. I will have to sit with my coach and plan accordingly. The scheduling will depend on the training sessions, how fit I am and how I am playing and also it's my coach's decision, so I

will sort it out with him which tournaments to play," she added.

Sindhu, who finished runners-up at the Senior National Championship in Nagpur, said it would be difficult to figure out a window for the domestic tournament next year.

"It depends on the schedule as 2018 would be very hectic.

It would be difficult to figure out which month or which date it would be. It would not be easy for me or other players. It depends on the scheduling of the tournaments which I play and I will decide accordingly," she said.

BWF has decided to trial a new kind of service rule next year starting at the 2018 All England Open Championships and Sindhu said they would have to practice it during training before playing at the tournaments.

"I heard about the new service rule. I think we all have to be really conscious about it, it would be implemented from the All England and we have to really practice it before we play in the tournaments but I think it would be good for everybody," said Sindhu.

Suarez, Messi maintain Barca's La Liga lead

MADRID, DEC 11 (AFP): Barcelona restored their lead at the top of La Liga to five points as Luis Suarez and Lionel Messi struck in the final 20 minutes to edge out 10-man Villarreal 2-0.

Daniel Raba's red card on the hour mark for a wild lunge on Sergio Busquets handed Barca the initiative.

And their pressure told when Suarez rounded off a fine team move before Messi blasted home a second to get the Catalans back to winning ways after successive draws with Valencia and Celta Vigo.

"In the second half after the sending-off we had more chances to win the game," Suarez told Movistar TV.

"They played a very good game tactically and we weren't precise enough, but in the second half we came out with a different mentality to take the three points."

Valencia remain Barca's closest challengers five points back, but Atletico Madrid also maintained their title charge with a 1-0 win at Real Betis to stay six points off the top.

Real Madrid are eight points behind in fourth and Barca will have the chance to go into El Clasico away at Real in two weeks' time with an 11-point lead over their rivals.

Barca host Deportivo la Coruna next weekend, whilst Madrid are in action at the Club World Cup in Abu Dhabi.

"I will be calm when the season is over and we have won everything," said coach Ernesto Valverde of Barca's commanding lead.

"There is a long way to go, but winning at places like this is important."

Indeed, Barca had drawn on their pre-



vious two La Liga visits to the Ceramic Stadium, but nearly had the perfect start when Gerard Pique's header came off the bar just four minutes in.

However, Barca dominance of possession was largely stale before the break as Villarreal posed the greater threat on the counter-attack.

Nicola Sansone had the hosts' best effort that forced Marc-Andre ter Stegen

into a stunning one-handed stop high to his left.

Messi orchestrated the visitors' attacking threat after the break as he constantly freed Jordi Alba down Barca's left.

Paco Alcacer was denied by Sergio Asenjo from Alba's low cross before the left-back teed up Messi for a cushioned effort that drifted inches wide.

Villarreal had to survive the final half

hour a man light when Raba was dismissed for connecting with his studs on Busquets' ankle as the Spanish international cleared.

Another Alba cross was turned onto the post by Suarez on the stretch.

However, the Uruguayan finally broke Villarreal's resistance after exchanging a neat one-two with Alcacer to round Asenjo and net his seventh goal of the season.

And Messi secured all three points sev-

en minutes from time as he was played in by Busquets to smash past the helpless Asenjo.

ATLETICO BOUNCE BACK

Earlier, Atletico bounced back from the disappointment of being dumped out of the Champions League in midweek to keep their title challenge afloat at Betis.

The hosts dominated possession throughout but were made to pay for their lack of cutting edge, as well as some fine goalkeeping by Jan Oblak.

By contrast, Atletico were clinical even in the absence of the injured Antoine Griezmann as Saul Niguez slid in at the back post to turn home Sime Vrsaljko's cross with their first serious attack on the half-hour mark.

"They played some spectacular football today, but we took advantage of the chance we had," Atletico midfielder Koke told BeIN Sports Spain.

Betis posed more of a goal threat after the break but were denied by Oblak, who produced a wonder save to turn Cristian Tello's sweetly struck half-volley behind for a corner.

"One team had the ball, which was Betis, and they tried many different ways to damage us, but the team was very strong defensively," said Atletico boss Diego Simeone.

At the other end of the table, Malaga and Athletic Bilbao secured big away wins to ease their relegation fears.

Malaga remain in the drop zone but moved off the foot of the table with a 2-0 victory at Real Sociedad.

Athletic, meanwhile, bagged their first league win in nearly two months 2-1 at Levante to move up to 13th.

US, S Korea, Japan start missile-tracking drill

SEOUL, DEC 11 (AFP):

The US, South Korea and Japan started joint exercises today to track missiles from North Korea, Seoul's military said, following the nuclear-armed Pyongyang's longest-range test launch to date.

The trilateral drill comes less than two weeks after Pyongyang test-fired a new inter-continental ballistic missile (ICBM) and declared it had achieved nuclear statehood, escalating global alarm over its weapons push.

The two-day exercise -- the sixth since June last year -- kicked off in waters near the Korean peninsula and Japan, Seoul's defence ministry said.

"During the drill, Aegis warships from each country will simulate detecting and tracking down potential ballistic missiles from the North and sharing information," it said in a statement.

Two US ships are taking part, with one each from the two Asian countries.

Both South Korea and Japan have security alliances with the US, although their own relationship is marred by disputes over history and territory.

Washington and Seoul started their biggest-ever joint air drill last week in a show of force against Pyongyang, which is subject to multiple sets of UN sanctions over its ballistic missile and nuclear weapons programmes.

Tension flared anew in the flashpoint peninsula after the November 29 launch of the Hwasong-15 ICBM, which the North claimed could deliver a "super-large heavy warhead" anywhere on the US mainland.

Many analysts suggest that the rocket is capable of reaching the US mainland but voiced scepticism that Pyongyang has mastered the advanced technology needed to allow the rocket to survive re-entry to the Earth's atmosphere.

Last month's launch was the first test of any kind since September 15, and quashed hopes that the North may have held back in order to open the door to a negotiated solution to the nuclear standoff.

The North's leader Kim Jong-Un has traded threats of war and personal insults with US President Donald Trump, heightening fears of another war on the peninsula once devastated by the 1950-53 Korean War.

The South condemned the launch and today imposed new unilateral sanctions on its neighbour.

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Court declares Pak Finance Minister Ishaq Dar 'absconder'

ISLAMABAD, DEC 11 (PTI): An anti-corruption court here today declared embattled Finance Minister Ishaq Dar an "absconder" after he repeatedly failed to appear before it in a graft case linking to the Panama Papers scandal.

The court also ordered Dar, currently seeking medical treatment in London, to submit surety bonds within three days and warned that if he fails to do so, then authorities would freeze his assets.

Dar, 67, was indicted in October in a graft case in which he is accused of making assets that were "disproportionate to his known sources of income".

The case was filed against him



by the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) in the light of the Supreme Court order of July 28 that

disqualified Nawaz Sharif as prime minister in the Panama Papers scandal.



South Korea says it has added several North Korean groups and individuals to its sanctions list as part of efforts to cut off funding for the North weapons programs. South Korea's government says the sanctions on 20 North Korean groups and 12 individuals took effect from today. Seoul is among the first to respond to North Korea's November 29 missile launch with fresh sanctions. The government says it hopes its move will prompt the international community to do likewise. Separately, South Korea, the United States and Japan started their two-day missile tracking drills today.

China handled Indian troops' 'trespass' into Dokalam with 'restraint': Wang Yi

BEIJING, DEC 11 (PTI): Foreign Minister Wang Yi has said that China handled the Indian troops' "trespass" into Dokalam area with "restraint" and through diplomacy, demonstrating the "value and emphasis" Beijing attaches to its ties with India.

Ahead of his visit to India, Wang said China always values the good-neighbourliness and friendship with India "as we are each other's big neighbours and ancient civilisations."

"In the meantime, China is also firm in upholding its sovereign rights and interests and territorial integrity," Wang told a symposium here on Saturday.

"We handled the Indian border troops' trespass into China's Dong Lang (Dokalam) area in our national interest, on just grounds and with restraint," Wang was quoted as saying by the Foreign Ministry which posted an English version of his speech on its website.

"Through diplomatic



means, we engaged with the Indian side and it withdrew its equipment and personnel," Wang said for the first-time outlining China's approach to ties with India following the Dokalam standoff as well as Beijing's policy in the second tenure of President Xi Jinping.

"This demonstrates not only the value and emphasis we put on relations with India but also our sincerity and sense of responsibility in maintaining regional peace and stability," he said.

While Wang claimed Indian troops withdrew from the area on August 28, the Ministry of External Affairs had said both the countries agreed to an "expeditious disengage-

ment" at the face-off site in Dokalam following diplomatic communications.

"We believe that as long as we continue to engage in in-depth strategic communication and promptly dispel strategic misgivings, the strategic value of China-India cooperation will speak for itself, and there will be a prospect of 'the Dragon and the Elephant Dancing Together' and '1+1=11' effect as expected by our leaders," Wang said.

Wang is in New Delhi to attend the Russia, India and China Foreign Ministers' meeting today.

His visit to New Delhi is the first by a top Chinese official to India after the 73-day Dokalam standoff and after the

commencement of the second five-year term of President Xi.

The Dokalam standoff ended on August 28 after Chinese troops stopped building a road close to India's 'Chicken Neck' corridor. India had objected to the construction highlighting its security concerns. The road was being built by China in an area also claimed by Bhutan.

Wang's visit is expected to be followed by top Chinese diplomat Yang Jiechi's trip later this month to attend the 20th round of China-India boundary talks.

Yang and National Security Adviser (NSA) Ajit Doval are the designated special representatives for the border talks.

Both officials are also mandated to discuss the state of entire gamut of bilateral ties.

Both being big developing countries, "China and India have far greater shared strategic interests than concrete differences, and far greater needs

The NAB had registered three cases of corruption and money laundering against Sharif, his family members and one against Finance Minister Dar in the Islamabad Accountability Court, weeks after the Supreme Court order ousted the premier.

In its case against Dar, the NAB has alleged that the accused has acquired assets and pecuniary interests/resources in his own name and/or in the name of his dependants of an approximate amount of Rs 831.678 million.

Dar is in London since October and has been seeking treatment of an undefined heart complication at a Harley Street hospital.

The former minister's counsel submitted Dar's new medical reports in the court and pleaded not to declare his client a proclaimed absconder.

NAB special prosecutor Imran Shafique opposed the plea saying that the reports presented before the court differ from each other.

Judge Mohammad Bashir, who had reserved the order last week, refused to accept Dar's new report and declared him as an "absconder".

The court then adjourned the hearing till December 14.

Dar was relieved of his duties last month after he requested leave for three months.



Putin orders partial Russia troop withdrawal from Syria

MOSCOW, DEC 11 (AFP): President Vladimir Putin today ordered the partial withdrawal of Russian troops from Syria during a surprise visit to the war-torn country.

Russia first intervened in the conflict in 2015, staging air strikes in support of its ally Damascus targeting both the Islamic State group and other jihadists as well as rebels fighting government troops.

"I order the defence minister and the chief of general staff to start withdrawing the Russian group of troops to their permanent bases," Putin said in a televised speech as he visited Russia's Hmeimim airbase in Syria.

"I have taken a decision: a significant part of the Russian troop contingent located in Syria is returning home to Russia."

Putin, who was welcomed by Syrian President Bashar al- Assad,

said the troops had helped the Syrian army crush the "most battle-ready group of international terrorists," apparently referring to the Islamic State group.

"Our homeland thanks you, my friends," Putin said. "Have a safe trip. I thank you for your service."

Putin and Assad were pictured smiling and shaking hands.

Putin made the stop-over at the base in Latakia province, a regime stronghold, on his way to Egypt where he arrived later today.

Putin said last month that efforts to end the war were entering a "new stage" as the focus shifted from military intervention to political reform.

More than 340,000 people have been killed since the conflict broke out in March 2011 with protests against Assad's rule that sparked a brutal crackdown.

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NAGALAND STATE LOTTERIES	
DEAR FLOWING EVENING	
Draw Time: 08:00 pm onwards Draw No:20 DrawDate on:11/12/17 1st Prize Rs.26 Lakhs/- 76A 17815 (Including Super Prize Amt)	
Cons. Prize Rs.9494/- 17832 (REMAINING ALL SERIALS) 2nd Prize Rs.9000/- 47500 61456 65576 77916 83377 3rd Prize Rs.500/- 0635 1021 3759 4244 4757 6194 6277 7148 8620 9395 4th Prize Rs.250/- 0525 1284 1444 1718 4511 5118 5753 6561 8348 9878 5th Prize Rs.120/- 0349 0583 0584 0598 0617 0683 0718 0953 0969 0971 0987 1132 1209 1214 1249 1339 1380 1488 1634 1645 1668 1810 1873 1943 2009 2172 2225 2322 2390 2428 2460 2509 2676 2695 2858 2863 3247 3342 3365 3417 3430 3484 3691 3960 4045 4402 4527 4779 4786 4791 4812 4970 5133 5134 5175 5374 5445 5463 5482 5488 5668 5689 5871 5944 6022 6027 6216 6465 6669 6840 6915 7125 7261 7263 7439 7589 7622 7929 8004 8173 8273 8283 8304 8396 8462 8512 8553 8719 8735 8856 8946 9091 9221 9228 9262 9274 9386 9393 9718 9953	
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THE JINGLE BELL BALL! The Script members, Glen Power, Danny O'Donoghue and Mark Sheehan, attend the Capital FM Jingle Bell Ball with Coca-Cola at The O2 Arena in London, England.

JB's mom gushes over Selena: 'We have a special bond'

If mother knows best, then Justin Bieber is on the right track.

The "Sorry" singer's mom, Pattie Mallette, has given the full stamp of approval to her son's on-and-off again (but currently on) girlfriend, Selena Gomez.

"I don't know so much about their personal relationship because he doesn't share a whole lot, but I love her. I support anything (he does), if he loves her I love her, and I've met her and we have a special bond so I think she's precious," Mallette gushed to People. "I can't really speak on their relationship, that's between them."

Bieber, 23, and Gomez, 25, recently rekindled their relationship, which saw its ups and downs from 2011 to 2015, when they first called it quits. Selena Gomez's friends hope she's 'cautious' about Bieber

Mallette has previously expressed her love for Gomez, like in 2012, when she told Ellen DeGeneres, "Seriously, how can you not like her? She's good for him and they're great together."

She even wished Gomez a



happy birthday on Twitter in 2016, long after she and Bieber had parted ways.

In recent months, the couple has been spotted at hockey games, riding bikes and going to church.

"Justin was Selena's first

love. He will always have a special place in her heart," a source told People. "They have learned from past mistakes and are not putting any pressure on each other. Things are much different and more mature."

DID JACQUELINE JUST CONFIRM ANUSHKA-VIRAT'S WEDDING?

In her excitement, actor Jacqueline Fernandez has, perhaps, helped solve the biggest mystery of entertainment world in the country – whether or not actor Anushka Sharma is getting married to Indian cricket captain Virat Kohli this week.

Ever since the media reports of the couple tying the knot on December 12 in Italy surfaced last week, there has been speculation one after the other about Anushka's bridal wear, the guest-list, the supposed Mumbai reception on December 22 among other things. But interestingly, there has been no official confirmation from the couple's end. It's just the pictures of Anushka and her family at the Mumbai international airport, leaving for Italy, that suggested that indeed she was getting married.

Due to lack of confirmation, there has been no congratulatory message from any of her colleague on any social media site too. And similarly at the red carpet of Lux Golden Rose Awards on Sunday evening, these Bollywood stars showed reluctance to give any wish for the couple as most of them even asked mediapersons, "If it's really happening."

Anushka Sharma wedding Anushka Sharma was spotted at Mumbai airport reportedly leaving for Italy.

But it was Jacqueline, who gave away the news without quite realising it herself. When asked how she would like to congratulate Anushka and Virat, Jacqueline couldn't contain her excitement and after a small 'happy' dance, she replied, "I am so so excited. I think it is an amazing news. I am really happy for Anushka and Virat. I can't wait for it."

When a journalist asked her if she indeed has in a way confirmed the wedding rumours, the actor realised she said more than what she

should have. Thereon, she did not answer any question asked by the mediapersons about the wedding and left for the awards ceremony.

In a contrast, actor Katrina Kaif, who is considered among Anushka's friends in Bollywood, blushed and avoided answering the question. When quizzed about it, the Tiger Zinda Hai actor said, "So, we have come to that part of the night. This part of the night, this is what I do," before twirling in her long flowy dress and leaving for the function.

Actor Kareena Kapoor Khan also refused to speak about it, while Madhuri said that if and when Anushka and Virat personally inform her about their wedding, she will congratulate them.

When asked to give her wishes for the couple, actor Bhumi Pednekar smiled and said, "Well, I am a little confused, what's happening? Are they? (laughs)," before adding, "Well if it is true, then congratulations. They are quite a power couple. They are amazing individually and together."

In a cheeky reply, actor Shant Singh Rajput "thanked" the mediapersons present at the red carpet for informing him about the apparent wedding. "I don't know (laughs). This is a really good news. Thank you for informing me. I want to congratulate them. One is among my favourite actors and the other is one of my favourite cricketers. So, for me, it is double joy."

Actor Taapsee Pannu took the opportunity to take the case of mediapersons, of course lightly. When asked how she would congratulate Anushka and Virat, the actor said, "Let's first get it confirmed that it is happening. Why are you guys after their lives? Let them get married in peace, and if at all they are getting married, just let them be!"



THIS DAY IN HISTORY

12TH DEC

WORLD HISTORY

1901: Italian physicist and radio pioneer Marconi sends the first Atlantic wireless message.

1913: The Mona Lisa is recovered two years after being stolen from the Louvre.

1937: Benito Mussolini withdraws Italy from the League of Nations.

1946: The millionaire benefactor John D. Rockefeller Jr. offers the United Nations a six-block tract of Manhattan real estate for the site of U.N. headquarters.

1963: Kenya gains its independence from Britain.

1967: Rolling Stones guitarist Brian Jones has a nine-month jail sentence overturned at the Court of Appeal in London

for the use of drugs.

1969: Simultaneous bomb explosions in Milan and Rome leave at least 27 people dead, and 100 injured.

1975: A six-day siege in Balcombe Street ends peacefully in London after four IRA gunmen free their two hostages and give themselves up to police.

1988: Up to 35 people die and 100 others are injured, after three trains are involved in a collision during morning rush hour in Clapham, South London.

INDIAN HISTORY

1950: Rajinikanth, Indian actor and superstar, was born.

1981: Yuvraj Singh, Indian cricketer, was born.

2005: Ramanand Sagar, Indian film and television director, passed away.

LOCKHORNS

- HOEST & REINER



Kim Kardashian West 'frustrated' over third pregnancy

Kim Kardashian West finds it 'frustrating' that she cannot carry her and husband Kanye West's third child, but is 'really thankful' for their surrogate.

The 37-year-old star and her husband Kanye West - who have two kids, North, four, and two-year-old Saint - are expecting their third child via a surrogate, and the Keeping Up With the Kardashians star has tried to refrain from coming across as "controlling" to the woman carrying their baby.

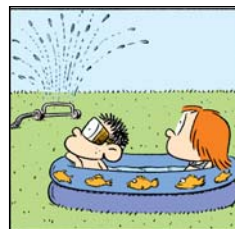
She said: "It is frustrating like to not be able to do it on your own. It is a weird dynamic. I go to all the doctor's appointments and I try to be really present, but when you're not carrying it yourself it is such a fine balance of how much you're going to be in their lives."

ARCTIC CIRCLE



BABY BLUES

- KIRKMAN & SCOTT



ARIES: The current astral configuration could be described as a crisis phase, although today's events won't be unhappy. Communication proves difficult for you. For a long time you've been banking on others noticing and appreciating your talent, but you're beginning to feel like a sucker for being so patient. This would be a good day to confront the powers that stand in your way.

TAURUS: You have a pleasant day ahead. Optimism and creativity prevail. You can avail yourself of all the freedom necessary to encounter happiness. Indeed, that newfound happiness may come in the form of a new

person who makes your heart beat faster. Don't fall in love too quickly! There are plenty of opportunities now. A deep and fulfilling commitment will take time to build.

GEMINI: The current astral configuration could be described as a crisis phase, although today's events won't be unhappy. Communication proves difficult for you. For a long time you've been banking on others noticing and appreciating your talent, but you're beginning to feel like a sucker for being so patient. This would be a good day to confront the powers that stand in your way.

CANCER: Try to imagine that

you're in your creative workshop and you've given up using all your usual tools in order to find new ways to give form to your inspiration. Another completely different creative style will emerge. Your admirers may be surprised, but no one will be more astonished than you.

LEO: Your private life is probably in the throes of great change. This change is likely related to profound transformations that are taking place in your behavior, in particular your nervousness. If your daily or family life seems stifling to you, there's no need to take your frustrations out on loved ones. Look for answers inside.

VIRGO: It wouldn't be surprising if you enrolled in a class that's very different from your normal activities. For example, a surfer may get a sudden urge to learn about computers, or a technology guru might take up flower arranging. Those who think they have you all figured out will be taken off guard by your new spontaneity and sense of adventure.

LIBRA: Some of the planetary movements are currently helping you understand that the best place to discover treasure isn't always where other people tell you to look. If people are urging you to get interested in activities that don't interest most people,

including you, pay them no heed. You'll discover treasure all on your own provided you follow your own calling.

SCORPIO: Try to imagine that you're in your creative workshop and you've given up using all your usual tools in order to find new ways to give form to your inspiration. Another completely different creative style will emerge. Your admirers may be surprised, but no one will be more astonished than you.

SAGITTARIUS: You couldn't be in a better position in your personal life. The time is ripe to thumb your nose at your demons for the last time. Complexes, guilt, and fears of all kinds are

gone. It could even be that the radical "housecleaning" you'll undertake will affect your professional career as you become aware of how much you've been underestimating yourself.

CAPRICORN: Today's forecast is excellent for you. The celestial bodies can't help but smile on the tempestuous energy of your character. You would be advised to act on your strong intuition. But be prudent in the execution of your actions lest your impulsive spirit stop you from taking recommended precautions.

AQUARIUS: Devote your energies to human psychology today. It's a good day to try to sell your ideas. Concentrate your efforts

on those whose help you need. If you have faith in your originality, your sales efforts are likely to pay off. In fact, there is some chance you'll meet an especially dynamic person who can lead you into some fascinating, unexplored territory.

PISCES: There is some likelihood that you'll have an electrifying emotional encounter today. Some of life's more mundane details may trigger arguments that, although violent, are cathartic and short. You've been thinking that it's time for more intensity in your life. Whether you know it or not, you're rethinking all manner of human relationships.