

SummitTIMES

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ON TOP OF THE NEWS

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Pharma units fair poorly in environmental compliance, but still allowed to operate

NOW, HIGH COURT WANTS TO KNOW WHY AND HOW

**SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 20 APR:**

Public complaints about slackness at pharmaceutical units operating in the State have been voiced frequently. Occasionally, some government officials also make inspection rounds and press releases arrive about orders issued and directions passed. Rarely has the actual non-performance of these units, when it comes to manufacturing with responsibility, been as clearly exposed as it was revealed in the High Court on 18 April when it came to light that even by official yardsticks, almost all such units in the State rate between “very poor” to “poor” when it comes to compliance with environmental norms.

And the High Court has not taken lightly to this situation where these

units are allowed to continue operations despite air and water pollution in the area.

Hearing a Public Interest Litigation on “Discharge of effluents by Pharma Companies situated at Singtam,” the High Court Division Bench of Chief Justice Satish Kumar Agnihotri and Justice Bhaskar Raj Pradhan, on receipt of “Consolidated Statement for Status of Compliance” submitted by the State Pollution Control Board wondered how it was being contended that the industries have full compliance with mandatory requirements when they clearly don’t.

It is apparent that these Pharmaceutical companies operating in and around Singtam are in gross contravention of the Environmental Protection Act, 1986 and Hazardous & Other Wastes Management Rules along with guidelines laid down by the Supreme Court which are mandated for necessary compliance.

The “consolidated statement”

submitted by the SPCB as an affidavit in the High Court led the Division Bench to remark that none of the pharmaceutical companies in Sikkim has a 100% compliance score, and yet it is claimed that they have full compliance.

In fact, the status of compliance report of the SPCB for 16 pharma companies located in the stretch from Ranipool to Rorathang reveals their compliance score varies rates from poor to very poor. The score for such units across the State varies from 8% to 69.2 %, none meeting the 100% compliance which, one would expect to be a mandatory requirement.

There are around 54 Pharmaceutical units established in Sikkim, of which nine are yet to begin operations.

The environment assessment report also came to fore only after the PIL was taken up by the High Court.

While taking serious note on the

situation, the High Court division bench has granted the State Government one week time to file a detailed affidavit justifying as to how companies not complying with the condition of 100% compliance score are permitted to operate causing air and water pollution in the area.

Amongst the very poorly performing Pharmaceutical companies are STP Pharmaceuticals, Sangkhola, which has a compliance score of only 8%, followed by SBL Pvt Ltd, Majhitar, with 8.7% as of 10 March 2018.

Lupin Ltd, situated at Bhasmey in the East Sikkim, followed by Golden Cross Pharma Pvt Ltd at Rorathang East and Cipla whose Unit- I situated at Kumrek, and Unit-II at Taza near Rorathang in East Sikkim have compliance of 69%, 66%, 64% and 60 percent and the rest have not crossed even 45%.

The SPCB has, however, accorded clearance to operate all these Pharmaceutical units.



SU students stage dharna, get written assurance on campus construction by 2021

**SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 20 APR:**

Raising slogans of ‘We Want Campus, Hamari Mangey Poori Karo, Campus Hamro Adhikar, Permanent VC Chahiye’, students of Sikkim University today marched from Cauveri Hostel in 5th Mile Tadong till the main administrative block of the university situated at 6th Mile Tadong and then sat on a dharna in the administrative block premises.

The students had launched a pen-down protest ‘Mission Campus’ on Friday demanding that the construction of the permanent campus at Yangang be completed at the earliest, appointment of a permanent Vice Chancellor and other demands related to the University.

The rally today was led by Sikkim University Student’s Association [SUSA] which is spearheading the protest.

SUSA president, Lalit Pokhrel Sharma mentioned that their main demand is a permanent campus for the university. He added that students do not want any more excuses from the authorities and will shut down the administrative block until the concerned authority arrives at a proper decision.

“We are neither against nor in favour of anyone. We will not move until we get a written as-

urance from the authorities,” he said.

SUSA general secretary, Sonam Dorjee Bhutia stated the students also want the appointment of a Vice Chancellor for the university.

“We do have an officiating VC but he does not hold much power. We also do not have a permanent librarian here in Sikkim University. So, we want answers,” he stated.

In response, Dean of student’s welfare, S Manivannan said that the matter could be discussed in a meeting with SUSA president and general secretary at around noon but the students rejected the proposal.

On behalf of the student fraternity, the executive members of SUSA submitted a memorandum to the acting VC, Dr JP Tamang with demands like details of the funds related to the construction of the campus, duration taken for its completion, appointment of permanent VC within a week, appointment of permanent librarian and increase in the number of hostels.

The memorandum also demanded that the university authorities shift the campus to Yangang within a year and complete construction within three years.

“If the administration is not capable of bringing in funds for the construction

turn to pg03



Butterfly enthusiasts record new altitude for Peacock Pansy Junonia almana butterfly

**SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 20 APR:**

Naturalist Nosang M Limboo and his team have come up with a new altitudinal record for the Peacock Pansy Junonia almana butterfly species. Peacock Pansy is a common species of Nymphalid butterfly found in forests and grasslands of Southern Asia.

It has been recorded in India, Pakistan, Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh, Myanmar and Sri Lanka. Peacock Pansy is active almost throughout the year [January-December] and it has been recorded at elevations upto 2,100 meter. The caterpillar of the butterfly feeds on Acanthus, Barleria and Gloxinia.

A specimen of Peacock Pansy was photographed at Chipchihey, a small glade at 3,289 meter in extreme western part of Sikkim towards Singalila Range on 04 Apr, according to Nosang. The remote location is under Barsey Rhododendron Sanctuary in Uttarey.

“A single species was observed basking in the grass patch in the mid-

turn to pg02

West Bengal based PEPL to helm Temi Tourism Project

REBYNA RANA

GANGTOK, 20 APR:

Priya Entertainments Private Limited [PEPL] with support from Sikkim Government has announced plans to helm the Temi Tourism Project.

It is the first ever public-private partnership initiative in Sikkim with a non-Sikkimese partner in the sector, informs Temi Tea Estate Managing Director, Mrinalini Shrivastava.

As per the agreement, PEPL has become the exclusive tea tourism player in Sikkim.

The project was announced by PEPL managing director, Arjit Dutta, Temi Tea Estate MD, Mrinalini Shrivastava and consultant, Rahul Banerjee today.

The Temi logo was also unveiled on the occasion.

Temi Tea Estate is



located in South Sikkim and lies between Damthang and Temi Bazaar. It spreads over an area of 376 hectares.

The Bada Bungalow is the epicenter of the Temi Tourism Project.

The bungalow shall continue to be called as

the Bada Bungalow [Temi] and shall be furnished with erstwhile era’s heritage fittings to serve 4-5 rooms and additional cottages for accommodation.

“While at Temi not only would you get an opportunity to relax and unwind in the timeless bun-

galow and its surroundings but also soak in the beauty of the garden and enjoy plucking tea leaves and make your own tea,” said Ms Shrivastava.

Some of the major attractions are paragliding facility in Temi, the hot water thermal springs and

the cherry trees which blossoms in November which has galvanized Temi authorities to organize Cherry Blossom festival or Autumn Festival.

The Temi project will also bring on the table PEPL’s knowledge and experience gained from the path breaking and hugely successful Eco Adventure Resort at Khairabera, Purulia in West Bengal and present a cocktail of heady and adventurous hill eco adventure tourist attraction as well as entertainment in the form of a planned casino for the tourists.

“The project shall open a complete new vista for hill and tea tourism and hopefully set trends and change the dynamics of the tourism industry of the East and Northeast India,” said the tea estate MD.

in SummitTimes next Tuesday

“...but the rain failed us”

spotlight
STORIES THAT MATTER
Features on Hydropower and Climate Change issues

CLIMATE CHANGE IS GETTING REAL FOR SIKKIM'S FARMERS

There is the data, and then there are the realities on ground. In Sikkim’s case, both point towards a perceptible change in weather patterns which are being felt most acutely in the farms and fields. In the sixth instalment of the Spotlight series, **TSHERING EDEN** delves into how climate change is changing the haats in Sikkim...

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Scribes stage violent protest against BJP politico's F'book post

CHENNAI, APR 20 (PTI): Chanting slogans and hurling stones, journalists today staged a protest at the residence of actor-turned-BJP politician SV Shekher after he shared a post that contained derogatory references to media and women scribes.

A senior police official said journalists attacked Shekher's Mandaveli house here during the protest, following which 30 of them were taken into custody.

Nobody was injured in the incident, the official said.

Shekher was reportedly not present in the house when it was attacked. Some posters put up at the house were, however, damaged.

Earlier, an outraged journalist fraternity denounced the actor-politician over the post, forcing the former MLA to tender an apology.

Shekher was AIADMK MLA of Mylapore in 2006-11.

Earlier, members of various media organisations turned to pg03



Sikkim's international athletes join hands to support emerging talent

SUMMIT REPORT GANGTOK, 20 APR:

International sportspersons from Sikkim have come together to form All Sikkim International Athletes Association [ASIAA] to encourage and help young athletes of the State fulfill their aspirations to represent the country in international events.

The official announcement of the formation of ASIAA and introduction of its executive committee members

was made in a press conference here today.

The committee has Olympian Tarundeep Rai and Ganesh Subba as advisors, Amar Subba as president, Pema Dorjee Bhutia and Sushmita Rai as vice-presidents, Arun Gurung as general secretary, Bhim Subba as treasurer, Phurba Sherpa as assistant treasurer, Navin Kumar Pradhan as organising secretary and Prakash Basnet as assistant organising secretary.

Addressing the press

conference, ASIAA general secretary, Arun Gurung informed that the first meeting between international athletes of the State was held on 10 Dec last year, which discussed various issues and decided to come together to form ASIAA.

"We have struggled a lot in our respective fields while representing the country in several international competitions. Our primary objective is to provide financial and moral support to athletes

who qualify for international competitions in future," ASIAA president, Amar Subba said.

He further added that the ASIAA will also work to guide and motivate young athletes of the State.

"We hope to use our experiences and exposures to guide and motivate young generation to move ahead with their passion," Mr Subba said.

ASIAA vice-president, Sushmita Rai mentioned that athletes

need financial support while representing the country in international platforms.

"Many promising athletes have stepped down due to financial problems," she added.

She further informed that ASIAA would work to convince private companies in the State to come forward and support local sportspersons in fulfilling their aspirations to represent India in international platforms.

Techno-India willing to invest in GTA



SUMMIT REPORT SILIGURI, 20 APR:

Gorkha Territorial Administration chief, Binay Tamang, today convened a meeting with Managing Director, Techno India Group, Satyam Roy Choudhary. After the meeting, it was in-

formed that Techno India Group was ready to invest in a Nursing College in Darjeeling, Hotel Management College at Sailabas, Darjeeling, Information Technology College in Takdah and Multi Disciplinary College in Mungpo.

Butterfly enthusiasts record new altitude for...

Contd from pg01

dle of Rhododendron forest. The butterfly was observed for more than 30 minutes. The butterfly seemed to have needed the warmth to raise its temperature for flight. During the encounter both the upper side and underside were clearly photographed to confirm the identity of the butterfly. The Junonia almana has a distinct difference from other Pansys in coloration and pattern. No other butterflies were on the wing at that time," said Nosang M Limboo.

Nosang M Limboo said the Peacock Pansy butterfly has not been recorded at such altitudes before. The previous elevation where the butterfly has been recorded was at 2,100 meter.

According to Nosang, with this sighting the known altitudinal distribution of the butterfly has now been extend-

ed up to 3,289 meter in India. It is normally active at lower elevations [2,100 meter] and was not recorded at this altitude before.

"It will be a huge contribution to the scientific study of this butterfly species. Now it is recorded that the butterfly is found at higher altitudes also," he added.

"The Himalayas have herbaceous plants which might have attracted the butterfly," he informed.

However Nosang said that it needs to be confirmed whether the butterfly breeds in the area, or whether it was migrating or whether it was merely a straggler blown unwillingly to that elevation.

He thanked all his trekking team members consisting of Manisha, Sikha, Gunjan, Shivangi, Shamim, Natasha, Bharati, Ramya, Jyoti, N.B. Chettri, Kinzong Bhutia, Piran Elavia.



Rhenock Govt College organises blood donation camp

SUMMIT REPORT GANGTOK, 20 APR:

Government College Rhenock organised a blood donation camp at the college premises today. A team of medical

experts headed by STNM Hospital doctor, CM Sharma and staff collaborated in conducting the camp, informs a press release.

During the campaign,

65 units of blood were donated by students, the release mentions. Along with college students, students from Rhenock Senior Secondary School also participated and

contributed during the campaign.

The camp was organised by NSS Unit, NCC Unit, Red Ribbon Club supported by Student Representative Council.

SU students stage dharna, get written assurance on campus construction by 2021

Contd from pg01

tion, the students demand resignations from those in the administrative section," the statement read. The statement was signed by all nine SUSA executive members.

After conducting a meeting with the university's concerned authorities, the VC [officiating] addressed the gathering. The university fully respects and endorses the demands placed by the students as the demands are legitimate, he said further adding that the university was established as per an Act of the Parliament and came into existence in 2007. All funds are passed by the Central Government and the procedure is lengthy, he

stated.

Dr Tamang further said that the proposal for campus construction was made in 2016 and the construction work started last year. He explained that an amount of Rs 1600 crore for phase 1 and phase 2 were proposed but the university only received Rs 110 crore.

"From 2017-18, only the structure of the administrative block, academic block and library has been completed. The remaining amount has not been sanctioned after that," he explained.

He added, "On behalf of the university, I have officially met with the UGC members regarding the issue. Although the demand is not a concern

of the state government, I have also requested Chief Minister Pawan Chamling and Governor cum SU Rector Shrinivas Patil to place the demand before the Central Government and they have given their assurance."

Regarding the appointment of a permanent VC, Dr Tamang explained that he was appointed as the officiating VC as he was the senior most in the university.

"The procedure for the appointment of VCs is happening in 42 universities right now. The procedure is lengthy. He/she is appointed by MHRD and is finally elected by the President of India. It is not in the hands of the university," he in-

formed. Dr Tamang assured to look into the demands regarding hostel facilities and further informed that the university has issued tenders for buildings to create more hostels.

Teaching and non-teaching staff of the university also showed their support for the students' demands.

Later at around 6 30 in the evening, in a letter addressed to the SUSA president, the Sikkim University authorities assured that the construction of the campus would be completed within three years. The letter has been signed by VC [officiating], Prof JP Tamang, Registrar, TK Kaul and Finance Officer, Debasish Pal of SU.

Timburbong Secondary School celebrates Platinum Jubilee



SUMMIT REPORT GANGTOK, 20 APR:

Timburbong Secondary School in West Sikkim kicked off its three-day Platinum Jubilee celebration on 19 Apr with Minister for Human Resource Development Department, RB Subba as the chief guest, a press release informs.

Timburbong School was established in 1942 and was affiliated and approved by the State Government as a Government Primary School in 1955.

Addressing the programme, Mr Subba congratulated the school fraternity and the gathered students for completing 75+ years and educating young minds of the area. He assured the School Management Committee of constructing a good playground at the school premises.

"The school has produced many successful officers, doctors, engineers, teachers, politicians, authors, artists, sportspersons and achievers," Mr Subba said.

The Minister said that the state government has always worked towards providing better education opportunities for children of the State.

"The government has appointed able teachers, principals and headmasters for promoting quality education," Mr Subba added.

He further announced that a National university is on the verge of its establishment in Sikkim, the bill for which has already been passed in the cabinet.

"In order to enhance

life oriented education the school and the society must inculcate in students the qualities of optimism, creativity and innovation," said the HRDD Minister.

He also urged the students to take studies seriously and be clear about what they want to do with their lives.

"Sikkim has always been an example to other States in imparting quality education," he proclaimed.

The school also honored its ex-headmasters and headmistresses along with ex staff members with mementos and gifts for their contributions and services to the school.

A primary level quiz competition among different schools of the area was also conducted during the programme.

Thongling School, Karthok School, Timburbong School and Lower Timburbong School participated in the quiz competition.

Furthermore, a debate competition was also held in which Green Valley Academy came in first beating Chakung Senior Secondary School.

The opening day of the Platinum Jubilee celebration wrapped up with prize distribution ceremony by the chief guest.

The programme was also attended by Sikkim Democratic Front health advisor, Dr AD Subba, Youth Development Board president, Khem Prasad Dahal, department officials, SMC members, ex-students, ex-staff members, school alumni and the public.

**Gangtok on
Saturday,
21 Apr**

Temp: 26°C / 12°C
Forecast: Rather
cloudy with occas-
sional rain and a
thunderstorm in
the afternoon.
Sunrise: 05:06 AM
Sunset: 6:03 PM

Calcutta HC asks WB election commission to reschedule panchayat poll

KOLKATA, APR 20 (PTI): The Calcutta High Court today quashed the State Election Commission's order cancelling the notification for extension of deadline for filing nomination for panchayat polls in West Bengal and directed it to allow nominations by issuing a fresh notification.

Justice Subrata Talukdar held that that petitions, filed by the BJP, CPI(M) and other opposition parties, challenging the cancellation of notification are maintainable and asked the poll panel to issue fresh notification extending the date for filing nominations.

The court directed the commission to reschedule the dates for panchayat election process and accordingly conduct the polls.

The panchayat elections in West Bengal were to be held in three phases from May 1 to May 5 and the counting of votes was scheduled on May 8. The nomination process for the panchayat polls ended on April 9, but it was extended by a day by the SEC the same evening following a Supreme Court court order on petitions alleging that candidates backed by opposition parties were being prevented from filing nominations.

The West Bengal government and ruling Trinamool Congress had objected to the extension by the SEC, which had cited a Supreme Court direction to "allay apprehensions of intending candidates" in its notification extending the nomination process by a day.

The notification, which referred to the apex court order, was withdrawn by the SEC on April 10 morning. The BJP again moved the Supreme Court on April 11 and was directed to approach the high court with its grievances over the deadline for filing nominations. The BJP moved the high court challenging the election process on April 12.

Apart from the BJP, the CPI(M), PDS and the Congress too have moved the high court separately challenging the SEC's decision.

The Commission and the ruling Trinamool Congress opposed the petitions claiming that these were not maintainable since the election process had started.

First ever Sikkim Red Carpet Social Award to be held on 22 Apr

**SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 20 APR:**

Arcko Motion Pictures and ABN TV in association with Mumbai based production house, Find Studioz is organizing the first ever Sikkim Red Carpet Social Awards 2018 to felicitate the unsung heroes and highlight the talents of Sikkimese in sports, entertainment, art and culture, education and literature, a press release informs.

The award function is being organized to encourage local talents and also aims to recognize



the work of social activists and entrepreneurs of the State.

The motto of the

award function is 'Youth Has No Age'. The event is supported by Roosh Production which is also the

official outdoor partner of the event.

The first and only female film producer from

Nagaland, Rebecca Changkija Seema, currently based in Mumbai, is in town to promote the event.

Bollywood star Zeenat Aman is scheduled to attend the occasion as the celebrity guest along with various filmmakers from Bollywood.

Nepali actor and filmmaker, Bhuwan KC along with renowned producer/filmmaker, Santosh Sen are also scheduled to attend the event as special guests.

The inaugural event will be held on 22 Apr at Manan Kendra.

Phalidara JHS conducts awareness prog on environment

**SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 20 APR:**

eco Club of Phalidara Junior High School, South Sikkim, organized a daylong awareness cum sensitization programme on 'environment' today at its school premises, a press release informs.

School Management Committee chairperson, Phuti Tamang attended the programme as the chief guest with panchayat members, Dev Kumar Mangar, Nir Maya Pradhan and Naren Kumar Thapa as guest of honors.

School Headmaster, Suresh K Subba talked about the responsibility of every individual to save mother earth. He also highlighted the factors responsible for environment degradation.

Ms Tamang in her address



suggested that the students should maintain clean environment and plant trees.

Essay and drawing contests on environment were also organized by the school.

The programme was attended by SMC members, teachers and students.

SAATHI - working towards tackling substance abuse in schools

**NIRMAL MANGAR
GANGTOK, 20 APR:**

Sikkim against Addiction towards Healthy India (SAATHI) is a project which deals with the issue of substance abuse mainly in the schools.

"SAATHI model uses the human resources available in the schools. The model and support is provided to the principals, teachers and students enabling them to take effective action to tackle the issue of substance abuse," said board member of SAATHI, Satyadeep Chettri.

It is a project under Chief Minister's Youth Empowerment and Self Reliant Mission.

He added that the teacher coordinators of all the schools are trained to create a system of self-management and the student peer educators are equipped with skills to help their fellow students cope with challenges of substance use.

"The schools are encouraged to carry the message of SAATHI into the community. It also ties up with the people



and organizations working towards the same goal to have a more consolidated approach at tackling substance use," reads the mission statement of SAATHI.

The project was launched on 16 May 2013 with Deorali Girls

Senior Secondary School and Tadong Senior Secondary Schools chosen as pilot projects.

In 2016- 17, SAATHI had its presence in 30 schools and now it aims to reach out to 70 schools in its final phase. The

project is expected to impact 100 government schools across the state of Sikkim.

First intervention, Teacher Training and Support, off Site training camp, Parental counselling and community outreach are

the components of the SAATHI initiative.

Choden Denzongpa, a teacher coordinator said, "There is a student who is clean for three years now. I can proudly and rightly say that the student will never take drugs again."

Witnesses turning hostile, retraction of confession led to Mecca Masjid acquittal: Prosecutor

HYDERABAD, APR 20 (PTI): The NIA prosecutor "in the Mecca Masjid blast case" said today witnesses turning hostile and retraction of confessional statement by Hindu preacher Swami Aseem-anand may have led to the acquittal of the five accused.

His comments come in the wake of an anti-terror court acquitting the accused belonging to right-wing organisations in the 2007 blast case. The court, while setting them free, held that the prosecution had failed to prove "even a single allegation" against them.

The prosecutor, N Harinath, said he was yet to receive a copy of the order from the court and a clear picture would emerge only after he gets it.

Harinath, who came under attack from opposition parties following the judgement over his past association with the ABVP, the RSS' student outfit, said his former links to the Hindu right organisation had got nothing to do with his current profession and the duties he was supposed to discharge.

"Out of 226 witnesses (in the case) more than 66 witnesses turned hostile in the court. They said they were never examined by police and never stated anything before police."

"So a witness, who has given evidence in favour the prosecution at the time of filing of the

charge sheet, comes to the court and says that he has never given the statement... what can a prosecutor do and what can prosecution do?" Harinath told PTI.

He also said Aseem-anand, who had made a confessional statement under CrPC section 164 (to a magistrate), retracted it later in a Delhi court. Under the section, any confession or statement can be made before a magistrate in the course of an investigation. A massive blast had ripped through the over four centuries-old Mecca Masjid on May 18, 2007, during the Friday prayers, killing nine people and wounding 58.

Harinath also claimed the authorities of the mosque washed the premises a day after the blast which might have led to destruction of some crucial forensic evidence. Harinath said he was associated with the ABVP when he was studying law in 1990.

"That is only a students' organisation, and once the student life is over and we get in to active practice, we don't really bother about student politics," he said.

When asked whether an appeal would be filed against the verdict in a higher court, he said, it was up to the NIA, the country's premier agency that probes terror-related cases, to take a decision on the issue.

Scribes stage violent protest against BJP..

Contd from pg02

sations staged a protest near the state BJP headquarters demanding action against Shekher.

The slogan-shouting journalists held placards including those that said "vitriol" against media should stop.

"No more vitriol. #BoycottShekher," one placard read, while another urged women in the BJP to "speak up."

In the line of media fire, Shekher earlier said he had forwarded a friend's post "without reading" the content, and tendered an apology.

The message was forwarded "without reading the content, by mistake... was unintentional. When it was pointed out by a friend that the content was abusive, it was removed immediately," he said.

"I come from a family that respects women and women journalists. If I had hurt anyone in the very few minutes of (sharing) that post... it was not on purpose and (I express) my heartfelt apologies," he said.

However, the apology did not smooth the ruffled feathers of journalists who decided to protest.

The Facebook post was reportedly shared yesterday, but was found

removed later.

The post also made insinuations against the media and women journalists following the "patgate" row involving Tamil Nadu Governor Banwarilal Purohit.

The 78-year-old governor had patted a woman journalist on the cheek earlier this week, apparently seeking to avoid answering a question she asked.

The incident had triggered a furore with Lakshmi Subramanian, the journalist, remonstrating with the governor, and political parties, including the main opposition DMK, demanding his recall.

Purohit later apologised to the woman journalist.

Shekher's post also had some caustic references to Subramanian that drew condemnation from journalists.

The actor-politician said he did not endorse the views expressed in the post he shared.

The Chennai Union of Journalists denounced Shekher over the post, with many of its members taking to Twitter and Facebook to express their anger.

Meanwhile, some people have also filed a police complaint against Shekher.

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SummitTIMES

ON TOP OF THE NEWS

Lose Hope and Then There is Nothing Left

Nothing worse than pessimism

Given how desperate things can get in our country, it remains a miracle that it still holds together. And the miracle comes by way of hope, the inexplicable optimism which sees a future despite the travails of the present. Take that away and everything will collapse. And the surest way to kill hope is by infecting the society with pessimism.

As pessimism sinks in, suspicions grow, and before one even realizes, it's misanthropy all around. Not only do people stop trusting, they also start hating. It is then no longer about being pragmatic, but an obsession with remaining defeatist. That is one condition that even democracy cannot assail. Demoralise a people to a nadir from where they can spy no silver lining and from thereon, democracy can be subverted at will. Fear can also help in the subversion, but fear is difficult to instill and even more difficult to sustain whereas pessimism is an instinctive trait in the present times of frequent dejections and thus easier to contaminate with. When the pollution is complete, the people become dejected, see no hope and refuse to get involved. The public domain is then occupied by "vested interests" who smother in more paranoia with one hand to keep people dispirited and "negotiate" favours for themselves with the other. The people are too distracted by their dejections to notice or even care and when they are so indisposed, surrender power that was theirs. Take away faith, dismember hope and then there are no solutions possible, not even a future to aspire for.

A society so disinclined then lives in an environment where there are no meaningful debates, because loaded with pessimism minds speak only to themselves and refuse to engage other voices. There are worrying trends all across the country which suggest that we are becoming people who are losing hope and hence clinging to straws as weak as projected nationalism and hollow strength, not because things are bad, but because we refuse to see the positives, refuse to engage and make things better. This is a worrying trend which has encroached into Sikkim as well. There is too much of leader speaking/ arguing with leader and not enough of people speaking to leaders or among themselves. Because of this there is too much claiming and complaining in the public domain and not enough solution-finding. This trend has to be stemmed. People have to get involved more. Without involvement, there is no sense of achievement, no sense of belonging; what is democracy then? Perhaps we speak too soon here, both, for India and for Sikkim. But what if we are speaking up too late?

How does a city get to be 'smart'? This is how Tel Aviv did it

CHRISTINE STEINMETZ
theconversation.com

Smart cities, digital cities, virtual cities, connected cities. Are these just trendy buzzwords? Perhaps. But these types of cities are supported by infrastructure that is more than bricks and mortar.

These cities are smart (thoughtful, people-centric), digital (driven by data acquisition, measured, analysed and sometimes exchanged) and virtual (experiential). And, as a result, they are connected, creating more potential interactions between people and their place.

Tel Aviv is one of these cities. Undoubtedly the 2009 book Start-Up Nation: The Story of Israel's Economic Miracle contributed to its reputation as a "non-stop city" with innovation clusters teeming with companies at the cutting edge of technology.

However, Tel Aviv's standing is not only built on commercial success — it has an internationally recognised local government. Winning first place in the 2014 World Smart City Awards not only boosted its profile on the international stage, but Tel Avivians, well, they actually have positive things to say about their local government.

A CITY THAT DECIDED TO CHANGE

This was not always the case. Municipal leaders had to do something to change how the community perceived them.

In 2011, the municipality organised focus groups with residents, heard their complaints and listened to what they said they needed. The municipality realised it needed to change the way it engaged with citizens. A cultural shift was needed, an internal one, to deliver an intelligent and active municipality.

Tel Aviv, like Detroit, is an urban laboratory; a test-bed for city projects that combine public and private efforts, startups and university centres. As Israel's leading business centre, its main priorities are supporting high-tech companies and startups. Located in a geopolitically contentious region, challenges faced by Tel Aviv residents over the years have also driven a new wave of urban administration — emphasising transparency, trust and local



government led by residents.

A key smart city initiative is the DigiTel Residents Club. DigiTel card holders have access to a personalised web and mobile platform that provides residents with individually tailored, location-specific services delivered via email, text messages and personal resident accounts.

It's the brainchild of Zohar Sharon, chief knowledge officer of Tel Aviv Municipality. In a recent interview, he told me: "As a result of what we learned from the focus groups and unique knowledge-management processes in the municipality, we now have over 200 municipality staff from different departments, called knowledge champions, who feed data into the DigiTel platform."

Daily updates inform residents about: road closures in their area, registering for school, local events, development or heritage conservation proposals requiring feedback, community greening initiatives, recycling, and invitations to public surveys. The card also gives residents access to discounted rentals of beach equipment, theatre and movie tickets, car-share rentals, and a variety of other services.

DigiTel isn't just one-way communication. Users tell the municipality what is happening in their area. They can feed back information about, for example, broken city signage or playground fixtures needing attention.

The municipality sees the community members as having "wisdom": they are the most informed

about what is happening in their local area.

Since starting as a pilot in 2013 the DigiTel Residents Club has spread citywide. It has almost 200,000 registered users (who must be aged 13 or older) – over 60% of the eligible population.

Sharon says:

"We must understand that when we are talking about 'smart cities' we must think first about the city's residents and how we can use smart tools to improve their quality of life. The local municipality must adopt a citizens-centric approach and deliver by push-tailored information and services to citizens, implementing a holistic approach, breaking silos and thinking about citizens' actual needs."

Today, because of our practice, we can see a tremendous change in the participation of residents in various community activities, greater involvement in city life and greater satisfaction from Tel Aviv municipal services."

The platform has expanded to include Digi-Dog for dog owners and Digi-Tuf (tuf meaning young children in Hebrew) for parents of children up to the age of three.

In India, Thane – one of the cities included in the Smart City Mission announced by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in 2015 – has launched DigiThane, with help from Sharon.

WHAT CAN OTHER CITIES LEARN FROM THIS? To be a smart city is to know your people, know what they want, and know what they need. And you know what they need because they told you.

Many councils throughout Australia are under pressure to have a smart city strategy. Perhaps the way to become smart is to start small. This may not require reinventing the wheel, but really just sitting down and listening to what people need and figuring out how to deliver in the most economical and sustainable way.

As Sharon says: "We didn't create the technology — it was already being used by the commercial sector — we just adapted the technology to make it work for the public sector."

[the writer is Senior Lecturer in Built Environment, UNSW]

Emerging infectious diseases in India: the scourge that could boost urban development

OLIVIER TELLE
theconversation.com

Human societies have seen a significant decrease in mortality from infectious diseases over the past century. However, we must still struggle with ongoing pathologies we once thought were under control (cholera, tuberculosis, plague, etc.) as well as the new ones that have emerged over the last 30 years (HIV/AIDS, Ebola, dengue, West Nile virus, H1N1, etc.). The vast scale of the global epidemics provoked by these viruses forces us to look more closely at the territories where they emerge.

In India, there has been an accelerated spread of dengue and chikungunya, both transmitted by the Aedes mosquito, which is particularly well adapted to urbanised areas. For example, the annual number of new dengue cases is estimated at more than 30 million, while the number of chikungunya cases is believed to have increased by 390% over the last three years. Recent estimates indicate that India is the country with the highest prevalence of these two diseases.

CITIES, AND DISEASE, ON THE RISE

The rise of these infectious diseases is often described in terms of biological processes, but they cannot be reduced to just this dimension. A range of factors play a role, in particular increasing urbanisation and human mobility. The trains connecting Mumbai to its periphery move more than 7 million travellers a day, and New Delhi's metro system caters to 2.5 million daily commuters.

The growing attention paid to the epidemiology of these viruses can hence be clearly seen as a direct result of the urban transition taking place in India over the last 30 years.

Collaborative studies conducted by the CNRS, the Institut Pasteur and the National Institute of Malaria Research show that nearly 40% of the population of New Delhi have been infected by the dengue virus at



least once in their lifetime. In addition, we were able to highlight an epidemiology of the virus. Because all parts of the city are now hyper-connected, emerging diseases such as dengue affect both privileged and more deprived areas, be they in the centre or peripheral or rural zones.

The social and spatial ubiquity of the disease demands a reevaluation of the geographical models that we use to understand public health problems, as no one knows how, or even where, to counter these diseases that affect not just countries such as India, but the entire planet.

While urban development is the matrix for emerging infectious diseases, one also expects these territories to be resilient to these new viruses, with better communication, sanitation and health care, among other attributes. But they do not seem to have been able to adapt: not only do the pathogens continue to spread, but they also emerge and spread more quickly.

HOW TO TACKLE AN INVISIBLE DISEASE

The problem of managing these diseases

arises along with the practices that have led to this lack of resilience. What we mainly find is an inequality in disease management, particularly in large cities and the zones between them.

In New Delhi, more than 35 hospitals record the number of patients suffering from dengue or chikungunya. Based on the data compiled, New Delhi is officially the most affected city in India due to higher numbers of hospitals that register the diseases. Because of the careful record-keeping, the numbers are seven times higher than in Mumbai or Chennai, which – officially at least – are little affected.

New Delhi's monitoring network functions most efficiently at the city's core, and thus infectious diseases are far better managed there than in peripheral municipalities, which are nonetheless an integral part of the metropolitan fabric. Despite the fact that 40% of the urban population lives in towns with fewer than 100,000 inhabitants, small- and medium-size towns are excluded from this monitoring system.

Territories and infectious diseases are

thus caught in a sort of "local globalisation" that requires us to question the concepts of borders, mobility and a spread of the specific urban model.

This process works against an effective management of epidemics: the more widespread diseases become, the more fragmented their management, and the greater their dependence on national, regional and urban health policies.

ADAPTABILITY AND A REDUCTION OF INEQUALITIES

At present, the question of the management of infectious diseases is relatively absent in health/urban studies, all the more so when they are approached from a municipal perspective.

While local municipalities are at the forefront of efforts to contain the spread of infectious diseases, they are largely ignored by scientists and international organisations when it comes to adopting effective solutions.

While the emergence of these new diseases is the result of complex phenomena – including the rise in local and international mobility, accelerating climate change and the emergence of new viruses – the resilience of the territories lies precisely in their ability to maintain a measure of spatial and social equity.

Indeed, dispersed management efforts inexorably lead to these viruses spreading locally, regionally and internationally, even in what should be less-vulnerable spaces. The main challenge for India, and all the countries that face these risks, is thus to make the diseases that are currently invisible more visible where they exist. At the international level, the only way to do this is through sustainable cooperation.

INNOVATING WITH THE CITIES

The other challenge is scientific. After having studied all the factors that affect the disease – from a pluridisciplinary perspective, necessarily – methods to contain them need to be developed that take

into account the complexity of the cities. In particular, it is impossible to act everywhere in megalopolises.

In India, an emerging project associating virologists, entomologists, geographers and political scientists, supported by the CNRS, the Centre for Policy Research and NIMR proposes a twofold action plan.

First, suggest and develop innovative methods to control mosquitoes that can be implemented by municipalities.

Second, using big data, analyse the mobility patterns of millions of citizens and comparing them with the spread of viruses, and thus identify the spaces that need to be monitored. By closely targeting such systems, they may well have an impact beyond the local level. Nonetheless, containment only seems viable in the short term.

To control these diseases in a more sustainable manner, the health of the inhabitants has to become a key factor of urban development. This involves reforming the management of diseases, and hence of urban centres, developing more equitable urban infrastructures, and most of all, developing inclusive cities. In short, investments are required. However, if the task is important, new approaches and new programmes – for example, smart cities or sustainable towns – may be a means of better containing these epidemics.

It is essential to ensure that these programmes do not remain concentrated in the most privileged areas, as they will have only a limited impact. These epidemics are a scourge, but also an opportunity: in a context where these infectious diseases do not recognise administrative frontiers, much less social ones, they may finally have a positive impact on urban development and encourage the development of more inclusive cities.

[the writer is Research scientist at CSH, Centre national de la recherche scientifique (CNRS)]

Rail blockade at Chengail on Kathua rape case

HOWRAH (WB), APR 20 (PTI): A large number of people today blocked Chengail railway station, about 30 km from here, demanding justice to the victim of the Kathua rape case.

The blockade began at about 7.30 am and has been continuing disrupting train services, railway sources said.

South eastern railway officials have been persuading the agitators to lift the blockade.

Meanwhile, a road blockade on the same demand on the National highway-6 near Nimdihi was also put up at about 6 am.

After police intervention the blockade was lifted, the police said.

Mamata urges people to exercise caution on fake news

KOLKATA, APR 20 (PTI): West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee today asked the people to exercise caution on news items being circulated on the social media as in many cases they are fake.

Speaking at a gathering of cable TV operators here, Banerjee asked them to stay vigilant and urged them not to beam news items involving communal violence that can fuel trouble and unrest elsewhere.

She requested the operators to felicitate government messages to be broadcast via cable TV to control such situations.

"Fake news is circulating in a big way. Fake news incite people leading to unrest. People should be aware of these and stay cautious," Banerjee said. Quality should be maintained in serials where negativity is rampant causing social degradation, she said.

On Tuesday's nor'wester that left 18 dead and scores injured, Banerjee said, "We don't have any control on natural calamities. But at least, we should not create man-made disasters."

The cable operators told her that their financial condition worsened after digital system was introduced replacing the analog system and the 25,000 odd cable operators in the state are in a sorry state of affairs.

The chief minister today set up a committee to solve their problems.

The committee includes Urban Development Minister Firhad Hakim, Labour Minister Malay Ghatak, Youth and Sports Minister Arup Biswas, the Commissioner of Police, and representatives of broadcasters and cable operators. The state government will try to get a tripartite agreement to protect the interests of all, she said.

Will stop Assam from building roads in Meghalaya dist: Sangma

SHILLONG, APRIL 20 (PTI): The Meghalaya government will take necessary steps to stop Assam from constructing roads "unitarily" in the rural areas of the state's Ri-Bhoi district, Chief Minister Conrad Sangma said today.

The neighbouring state is building two roads - Umsohbar to Belakhowa and Bakhlapara to Jimbarigaon - in Jirang area of the district, Sangma told the Assembly today, quoting official reports he received three days ago.

"The government of Assam has unitarily decided to start construction of roads in areas that fall in Meghalaya.

The government of Meghalaya will take all necessary steps



to stop the road construction work," he said, while replying to a call attention notice by local MLA S Sohtun.

The alignment of the two roads, currently being undertaken by the Assam authorities, will overlap with the infrastructure

development work of Meghalaya, he said.

"The Jimbarigaon, Belakhowa and Ranibari areas have been included in the core network of the state and the road department prepared detailed project reports (DPRs), which has been approved by the Union Ministry of Rural Development," the CM said.

The metalling work for three stretches - Bakhlapara to Junbarigaon, Junbarigaon to Belakhowa and Pahamshru to Ranibari - have been sanctioned for Rs 222.16 lakh, Rs 875.68 lakh and Rs 686.81 lakh respectively, the CM said, adding that the tendering process for the project is underway.

Malaysian plane skids off runway in Nepal; close shave for 139 on board

KATHMANDU, APR 20 (PTI): All 139 people on board a Malaysian passenger plane had a miraculous escape when the Kuala Lumpur-bound flight skidded off the runway and got stuck in mud while attempting to take off from Nepal's only international airport here, officials said.

Tribhuvan International Airport (TIA) was forced to halt all international flights after the incident involving Malindo Air jet late last night, The Kathmandu Post reported.

TIA today resumed international flight operations after a suspension of over 12 hours, the report said.

At least a dozen of international flights were cancelled after the incident.

There were 139 people, including four crew members, on board the aircraft, Boeing 737-



900, registration 9M-LNJ. No casualty has been reported, the report said.

"The flight captain aborted take off at the final moment after he saw an error at the monitor inside the cockpit," TIA general manager Raj Kumar Chhetri said quoting the captain.

The aircraft apparently

could not stop because of the take off speed and load at the final moment and overran 50 metre south from the runway threshold and rested in a grassland at around 22:08 PM (local time), Chhetri said.

The runway was closed following the incident. However, the aircraft has not suffered any

damage but the front tyre has been stuck in the mud.

Chhetri said the aircraft was towed away from the grassland to the runway and kept at the parking area.

He further informed that the airport runway did not suffer any damage during the incident and all international flights have resumed.

The latest incident is one of the many plane accidents that Nepal's TIA has witnessed in recent years.

Last month, a Dhaka to Kathmandu US-Bangla Airlines flight, with 67 passengers and four crew members on board, caught fire after it careened off the runway and ploughed into a football ground near TIA, killing 51 people.

In 2015, a Turkish Airlines plane also suffered a runway excursion during landing, closing the airport for four days, creating chaos among travellers.



Mamata supports Chandrababu Naidu's fast for "justice"

KOLKATA, APR 20 (PTI): West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee today extended support to the hunger strike undertaken by her Andhra Pradesh counterpart N Chandrababu Naidu demanding "justice" for the state from the Centre.

"We extend support to Andhra Pradesh CM, Chandrababu Naidu @ncbn, for his one-day Hunger Strike for the 5 crore people of AP #CB-NFast4Justice", she said

in a tweet.

Naidu today launched the "Dharma Porata Deeksha", a 12-hour hunger strike, demanding "justice" for the state from the Centre, including the special category status.

The chief minister, who turned 69 today, chose not to celebrate his birthday and sat on a fast instead to protest against the alleged injustice meted out to the state due to the "non-implementation" of the Andhra Pradesh Reorganisation Act, 2014.

Medical college to come up soon at Tura: Meghalaya minister

SHILLONG, APR 20 (PTI): The construction work for the much-awaited medical college in Tura area of West Garo Hills District will start soon, Health Minister AL Hek told the Assembly today.

A proposal for the project, estimated to cost Rs 234.89 crore, has been sent to the finance department for necessary sanctions, Hek said in his reply to a query by Leader of Opposition Mukul Sangma during the Question Hour.

The cost will be shared by the state and the Centre on the basis of 90:10 ratio and the Min-

istry of Health & Family Welfare has already sanctioned Rs 51 crore, he added.

The leader of opposition had sought an explanation from the government for the delay in according approvals to the project.

Adding to Hek's reply, Chief Minister Conrad K Sangma said the state elections have delayed the process and the government is reviewing the matter.

The estimate for the project had also shot up from Rs 189 crore to Rs 234.89 crore in the past few months, he said.



Tripura's Puspavanta Palace that housed Raj Bhavan to turn into museum

AGARTALA, APR 20 (PTI): Tripura's century-old 'Puspavanta Palace', the official residence of 16 state Governors since 1972, is set to be transformed into a museum and research centre dedicated to Nobel laureate Rabindranath Tagore.

Governor Tathagata Roy has shifted to a new Raj Bhavan building, which he inaugurated on April 18 at the capital complex here.

"The palace was built by British architecture

company Martin and Burn 101 years ago, and with the shifting of the Raj Bhavan, it would now be turned into a museum and a tourist spot," Samarjit Bhowmick, the Governor's Secretary said.

Pannalal Roy, who conducted a research on the relation of Tagore with the Manikya kings of Tripura, said the bard visited the state seven times, and had stayed at the palace in 1925 as the guest of Bir Bikram Kishore Manikya Bahadur, the last Manikya king.

Tripura was elevated to the status of a full-fledged state in 1972, and since then, the palace, built on 1.76 hectares of land, became the Raj Bhavan or the Governor's house.

"This has been identified as a heritage building not only because of its association with royalty, but also because poet Rabindranath Tagore and other great personalities had stayed in Puspavanta palace as royal guests," Bhowmick added.



Dropping shooting from 2022 CWG huge setback for India: Bindra

NEW DELHI, APR 20 (PTI): Dropping shooting from 2022 Commonwealth Games will be a huge setback for India, especially for its young shooters, said the country's only individual Olympic gold medalist Abhinav Bindra.

"No doubt, it will be a huge setback for the country and our shooters. It will hit hard on the up and coming shooters," Bindra said at the sidelines of a felicitation ceremony of India's Olympic medallists by the visiting International Olympic Committee chief Thomas Bach.

The event was organised by the Indian Olympic Association at a city hotel last night.

"Shooting is an optional sport and they (Birmingham organisers) say they don't have the facilities to host shooting events. Had Durban (South Africa) hosted the 2022 CWG, shooting would have been there," he added.

Durban was to originally host the 2022 CWG but it later expressed its inability to host the Games due to financial problems. The Commonwealth Games Federation later awarded the 2022 CWG to Birmingham.

The Birmingham Organising Committee has decided to exclude shooting from the 2022 Games, citing logistical issues.

India won a bagful of shooting medals at the Games. The shooting squad, at the recently concluded Gold Coast Games, bagged as many as 16 medals, seven of them gold.

Shooting, though an optional sport at the CWG, has been played in every edition since Kingston 1966, except once in Edinburgh in 1970.



REBYNA RANA
GANGTOK, 20 APR:

On the second day of the ongoing 02nd Mahendra Karki Memorial Invitational Football Tournament 2018 being played here at Paljor Stadium today, State Sports Academy thrashed Kumar Sporting Club 8-0. Sanjay Rai scored a hattrick and Milan Chettri scored two goals for SSA. Other goals scorers for the team were Yazoar D. Lepcha, Chyodhak and Taten Lepcha. In the next match, SDFA, Namchi is set to take on Apex FC, Kalimpong on Saturday from 02 p.m.

India to bid for 2026 Youth Olympics, receives appreciation from IOC chief

NEW DELHI, APR 20 (PTI): The Indian Olympic Association yesterday decided to bid for the 2026 Youth Olympics as well as the 2032 Summer Olympics, receiving appreciation from the visiting International Olympic Committee President Thomas Bach.

In a press conference addressed with Bach here, IOA President Narinder Batra said, "We are bidding for three events, 2026 Youth Olympics, 2030 Asian Games and 2032 Olympics. We don't know whether they will come to India or not. Let us see how fierce the competition is."

Bach, who is on a two-day visit to the country, said India has the capability to host big Olympic events but advised the IOA to wait for the bidding process to start.

"We have taken note with great appreciation of the intention of IOA to host future Youth Olympics and Summer Olympics. It would be fantastic for Indian athletes to have their Olympics at their home country. It will give a boost to sports in India and develop interest in many young people to take up sports," Bach, who was last here in 2015, said.

"But it's not the time to discuss in detail about future candidates as no procedure is currently open neither for Olympic Games nor for Youth Olympics. The next available slot for Youth Olympics is 2026 but we are even yet to decide on 2022



edition host city, the process is underway. Only after we finalise 2022 Youth Olympics hosts, we will start the procedure for 2026," said Bach.

The IOC chief also had a meeting with Sports Minister Rajyavardhan Rathore during the day.

The bidding process for the 2026 Youth Olympics is likely to start in early part of 2020. Besides India, Thailand has also expressed interest to host the 2026 Youth Olympics.

Regarding the IOA's intention to bid for 2032 Olympics, Bach said, "There is a lot of time left till we open bidding procedure for 2032 Olympics. We have to wait till that."

A decision on the 2032 Summer Olympics host city will only be taken in 2025 and the bidding process

is expected to start sometime before that.

Germany -- which has proposed a 13-city bid -- and Australia (likely to be Brisbane) have expressed their desire to bid for 2032 Olympics and more countries are expected to join the fray later on.

Just after taking charge as IOA chief in December last, Batra had said that India should think of hosting big-ticket events like the Asian Games and Olympics.

Bach also revealed that a four-party working group comprising the IOC, IOA, Olympic Council of Asia and the sports ministry has been constituted "to devise a road map on how the most hopeful Indian athletes can be best prepared for

2020 Olympics".

"We discussed (with the sports minister) about sports science, coaching, sports for all and role of sports in society. The IOC can assist and put its expertise in all these matters. We can see some initiatives which will be beneficial for Indian athletes so that they can excel in 2020 Olympics," said the IOC chief who was here with the OCA chief Sheikh Ahmad Al-Sabah.

There has been tensions in recent times between the IOA and the sports ministry regarding transparency and good governance on one hand and autonomy of sports bodies on the other.

"We will ensure that there is good governance in the IOA and the NSFs but at the same time our autonomy will also have to be respected. So we have decided to form a working group to address these issues," said Batra, who recently has directed the NSFs and state olympic units not to be associated with Khelo India initiative of the sports ministry.

"We are happy that the IOA has given a firm commitment that good governance will be a priority. The Sports Minister also said that the government recognises the autonomy of sports bodies. Both have to go together," Bach said.

Asked if he saw any 'crossing of line' by either the ministry or the IOA on these issues, Bach said,

"Unfortunately, we had seen it a couple of years ago (when IOA was suspended). We need clear rules and principles to have good governance on one side and respect of autonomy on the other in order to prevent crossing of lines by either.

"We are putting experts on good governance and autonomy issues at the disposal of the minister and the IOA to establish these principles and draft the regulations in line with Olympic Charter and IOC guidelines. We made this offer and the minister and IOA have accepted it."

Asked about India's shameful record regarding doping violations, Bach said, "We have received a very clear and firm commitment from the minister that fair sports and clean sports is the first priority for the government. We are confident this issue will be addressed properly with the help of WADA."

Batra said that the IOA will ask the ministry to adopt the "No Needle" policy in the the national camps also.

"Every athlete should get used to the 'No Needle' policy," he said while mentioning the incident of two Indian athletes being sent back from the Gold Coast CWG for violating the "No Needle" policy.

He also promised Bach that the gender imbalance in the IOA and its units will be addressed.

World Cup of tennis in one week is horrible idea: Anand Amritraj

AMANPREET SINGH

NEW DELHI, APR 20 (PTI): The proposed World Cup of tennis in one week is a "horrible idea" since it will take away the charm of home and away ties which allows countries like India to host players such as Rafael Nadal, contends former India captain Anand Amritraj.

The ITF Board of Directors unanimously endorsed the proposal to create a season-ending World Cup of Tennis finals featuring 18 nations. The matches will be played over a week at a single venue in the traditional week of Davis Cup final in November.

The idea will be put to vote at ITF AGM in August in Orlando and needs two-third majority to become a reality.

The revamp idea has come after the ITF struck a deal with investment group Kosmos, founded and run by Spanish international and FC Barcelona footballer Gerard Pique. It is expected to generate revenue to the tune of USD 3 billion in a 25-year period.

"The World Cup of Tennis in the proposed one week format is a horrible idea. If this is being floated by ITF President Dave Haggerty to keep the top players happy, as well as for some financial gain, that's even worse," Amritraj told PTI.

The Finals will feature a round-robin format followed by a quarterfinal knock-



out stage. Each tie will consist of two singles and one doubles over best-of-three sets.

The 16 World Group nations will automatically qualify for the Finals, and a further two countries will be selected.

The top players have been complaining of crammed schedule and have skipped ties for their respective nations and the proposed format is expected to bring them

to the prestigious tournament.

Among active international stars, Lleyton Hewitt has criticised the idea by saying that the ITF is trying to "kill off" home and away ties, five-set tennis and the "unbelievable atmosphere" the event generates.

However, according to ITF president Haggerty, top players such as Nadal, Roger Federer, Novak Djokovic and Andy Murray have supported their idea.

Anand, who was part of the Indian Davis Cup team that reached the final in 1974, said the tournament is bigger than players and should not be diluted.

"The Davis Cup, and tennis in general, is much bigger than a few legends, who, like the greats before them, will soon be gone. To change a 118-year-old format so drastically is such a bad move.

"The whole charm of the Davis Cup is the home and away matches. In an away tie, you had to contend with adverse conditions, such as extreme cold or searing heat, noisy and sometimes hostile crowds, bands playing and 5 set matches over 3 days. You had to fight hard and keep your cool, and somehow try to find a way to win.

"I did it for 20 years, sometimes under terrible conditions, so I do know what it takes. In home ties, the opposing team sends their best players to make sure of a win.

"That's why, over the years, the Indian public has been able to see top players like Goran Ivanisevic and John Alexander, and more recently, (Rafael) Nadal and (David) Ferrer. This would certainly not happen if the Davis Cup was played over 1 week in some far away city," Amritraj said.

The 66-year-old, who along with his brother Vijay, reached the Wimbledon semifinals, said the one-week format has

been tried in the past in Germany, but it should not be implemented in Davis Cup.

So what are the alternatives to keep the tournament, established in 1900, relevant?

"Let's go back to the 1970s, when the world was divided into 4 zones, the Asian Zone, the American Zone and European Zones A and B. All countries would play in their respective zones, with the 4 winners playing in the semifinal, followed by the final. That way, the players would not have to travel far, each playing in their own continent, with the top stars possibly coming out only for the semis and final.

"They would only have to give up 2 weekends for Davis Cup in their busy calendar. This format worked well for 74 years, and was then changed, partly due to the fact that only the 4 Grand Slam nations had won the Davis Cup.

"Since then, at least 8 other countries, mostly European ones, have taken home the coveted trophy. In my proposal, the home and away ties would be preserved and all nations, big and small, would be part of one competition," Amritraj said.

Haggerty was recently in Bangkok to attend SportsAccord summit and said the idea was a "game changer" because "with the USD 22 million a year that goes back to the nations, it's really able to fund the development of tennis".



Zimbabwe parliament summons Mugabe on May 9: lawmaker

HARARE, APR 20 (AP): A Zimbabwean parliamentary committee is summoning former leader Robert Mugabe to appear before it over alleged diamond looting during his rule.

Mugabe, who resigned in November following a military intervention, has said USD 15 billion worth of diamonds were looted from fields in the country's east. He later said he had no basis for that figure.

But parliamentary committee chairman Temba Mliswa tells The Associated Press the 94-year-old still should appear on May 9 to explain his statements.

This is the first time a public institution has summoned Mugabe to account for the alleged looting. Zimbabwe security agencies were involved in the mining with Chinese firms until the government cancelled all diamond mining licenses there in 2016.

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LALIT K JHA

WASHINGTON, APR 20 (PTI): A series of explosive memos prepared by former FBI director James Comey a lurid intelligence dossier detailing US President Donald Trump's alleged efforts to influence the bureau's expanding investigation into Russia's meddling in the 2016 elections have been submitted to Congress.

The memos cover Trump's concerns about a lurid intelligence dossier and also go into his relationship with the then National Security Advisor, Michael Flynn.

Trump claimed vindication after the release of memos and said they "show clearly that there was NO COLLUSION and NO OBSTRUCTION."

"WOW! Will the Witch Hunt continue? he asked.

The redacted and declassified memos running 15 pages in total -- had previously been provided to Justice Department special counsel Robert Mueller to assist his investigation into Trump's possible attempts to obstruct the probe of Russia's interference in the 2016 elections.



They give details of the telephonic conversations and meetings that Comey has had with Trump before he was fired by the president last May.

They detail the president's alleged demands for loyalty from the former director and his requests for Comey to shut down its investigation into Flynn.

Flynn later pleaded guilty to lying to the FBI about his pre-inaugural contacts with Russia ambassador Sergey Kislyak. Flynn is now cooperating with Mueller's investigators.

Among the disclosures in the memos is a February 8, 2017, en-

counter in which Trump confronted Comey about the contents of a dossier prepared by a former British intelligence agent purportedly describing Trump's involvement with prostitutes during a 2013 visit in Moscow. In the January 7 memo, according to CNN,

Comey writes that Trump interjected, "there were no prostitutes; there were never prostitutes" about his 2013 trip to Moscow.

Trump, according to the memos, repeatedly denied the allegations and prodded Comey to help disprove them, while also recalling being told by Russian President Vladimir Putin that Russia has the most beautiful prostitutes, it said.

According to The Hill, the memos detail Comey's account of several now-famous incidents: one in which Trump allegedly demanded his per-

sonal loyalty; one in which he asked him to investigate allegations in the dossier that he had paid Russian prostitutes to urinate on a hotel bed once slept in by former President Barack Obama; and the request that Comey "let go" of the Flynn probe.

Expressing frustration over the leaks, in one of the memos Trump is suggesting jailing reporters to find out what they know.

Comey, told Trump that he was "eager to find leakers and would like to nail one to the door as a message," but explained that prosecuting reporters was "tricky".

"I said something about the value of putting a head on a pike as a message," Comey wrote.

"(Trump) replied by saying it may involve putting reporters in jail. They spend a couple days in jail, make a new friend, and they are ready to talk' I laughed as I walked to the door Reince Priebus had opened," Comey wrote.

"I was a fan of pursuing leaks aggressively but that going after reporters was tricky, for legal reasons and because (the Justice Depart-

ment) tends to approach it conservatively. He replied by telling me to talk to (Attorney General Jeff) Sessions and see what we can do about being more aggressive," Comey wrote.

In a joint statement, House Judiciary Committee Chairman Bob Goodlatte, House Oversight and Government Reform Committee Chairman Trey Gowdy, and House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence Chairman Devin Nunes said these memos are significant for both what is in them and what is not.

"Former Director Comey's memos show the President made clear he wanted allegations of collusion, coordination, and conspiracy between his campaign and Russia fully investigated.

"The memos also made clear the 'cloud' President Trump wanted lifted was not the Russian interference in the 2016 election cloud, rather it was the salacious, unsubstantiated allegations related to personal conduct leveled in the dossier," the three Republican lawmakers said.

The memos also show Comey never wrote that he felt obstructed or threatened, they said.



Russia has revealed it warned the US about "red lines" it should not cross before it launched airstrikes on Syria. Foreign minister Sergei Lavrov is reported to have said that officials in Washington were contacted before last weekend's strikes by the US, UK and France. Mr Lavrov said: "There were military leadership contacts, between generals, between our representatives and the coalition leadership. "They were informed about where our red lines are, including red lines on the ground, geographically. And the results show that they did not cross these red lines."

India demands legal action against flag desecration in UK

LONDON, APR 20 (PTI): India has demanded legal action against those behind the desecration of the Indian flag at Parliament Square here during Prime Minister Narendra Modi's UK visit.

The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said the matter had been taken up with the UK government and had been regretted at the highest level.

"We are deeply anguished with the incident involving our national flag at Parliament Square. The matter was taken up promptly and strongly with the UK side, and it has been regretted at highest level," Ministry of External Affairs spokesperson Raveesh Kumar told reporters yesterday.

"We expect action, including legal action, against the people involved in the incident and also people responsible for instigating the incident," he said.

Prime Minister Modi after his arrival in the

country was greeted by some groups protesting against atrocities in India.

On Wednesday, during the bilateral leg of Modi's visit to the UK, some protesters at Parliament Square turned aggressive during which the Indian tricolour was torn down from one of the official flagpoles set up for all 53 Commonwealth countries to mark the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) and ripped up by some protesters.

The perpetrators, caught on camera, were pro-Khalistani demonstrators brought together

with Kashmiri separatist groups under the banner of the so-called 'Minorities Against Modi' group, led by Pakistani-origin peer Lord Ahmed.

There is growing pressure on the UK government to act against Ahmed, who is seen as repeatedly "instigating" violence against India on UK soil.

A UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) spokesperson said the UK government had been in touch with the Indian High Commission soon after the incident.

"While people have the right to hold peaceful protests, we are disappointed with the action

taken by a small minority in Parliament Square and contacted High Commissioner Yashvardhan Kumar Sinha as soon as we were made aware," a spokesperson said.

Scotland Yard also issued a statement following the protests and confirmed that it is investigating the incident involving the Indian tricolour being pulled down.

"Police are investigating after an Indian flag in Parliament Square was pulled down at 1500 [UK time] on Wednesday, 18 April. The flag has been replaced. There have been no arrests. Enquiries continue," a Metropolitan Police statement

said.

A senior broadcast journalist from one of the leading Indian media channels covering the protests, who was caught up in the scrum, has now also registered a formal police complaint with the Met Police.

"To my shock, the protesters while raising anti-India slogans brought the Indian flag down, tore it with scissors until it was completely destroyed...Without seconds, I was pushed, abused and intimidated," Loveena Tandon, who represents Aaj Tak news channel in the UK, said in a statement.

"A message must be

sent to all those out there that we journalists make people aware of what is going on in the world. Shutting us up or being violent towards us defeats their own purpose of being heard," she said.

The incident also went viral on social media, with people expressing their shock and support to the journalist who was caught up in the incident.

The groups involved were seen with "Free Jaggi" posters and T-shirts, calling for the release of Jagtar Singh Johal who is lodged in a Punjab jail over his alleged involvement in the targeted killings in the state.

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LABHLAXMI LEO

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1st Prize Rs.10,000/- 5602
2nd Prize Rs.1,000/- 4359 3rd Prize Rs.500/- 2912
4th Prize Rs.300/- 2058 5th Prize Rs. 204/- 5325
6th Prize Rs.100/-
1015 1032 1048 1061 1073 1075 1160 1163 1170 1190
1209 1254 1255 1286 1336 1341 1362 1394 1422 1446
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2332 2390 2391 2396 2403 2433 2460 2470 2529 2531
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3717 3739 3758 3885 3886 3900 3901 3985 3998 4000
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6802 6823 6824 6845 6882 6886 6894 6919 6944 6979

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MUMBALAXMI SURAJ

Draw No:11 DrawDate on:20/04/18
1st Prize Rs.10,000/- 1441 2nd Prize Rs.2,000/- 3439
3rd Prize Rs. 1,000/- 4053 4th Prize Rs. 504/- 3296
5th Prize Rs.200/-
1019 1023 1072 1125 1203 1229 1274 1327 1341 1374
1508 1558 1805 1815 1853 1866 1911 1920 1936 2092
2109 2132 2201 2269 2413 2442 2455 2490 2522 2542
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2767 2772 2897 2986 2995 3115 3122 3174 3292 3374
3592 3628 3630 3634 3703 3773 3794 3860 3867 3998
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6th Prize Rs.100/-
1003 1008 1014 1052 1054 1066 1082 1105 1193 1233
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SPIDEY SELFIE Spider-Man: Homecoming actor Tom Holland takes a photo in front of fans at a red carpet event for Avengers: Infinity War in Shanghai, China.

DEEPIKA PADUKONE IN TIMES 100 MOST INFLUENTIAL PEOPLE LIST

Actor Deepika Padukone is the only Indian actor to feature in Time magazine's list of 100 most influential people.

With a profile by her "xXx: Return of Xander Cage" co-star Vin Diesel, Padukone's name features in the artists list which has names such as Nicole Kidman, Ryan Coogler, Gal Gadot, Sterling K Brown, Hugh Jackman and others.

Diesel calls Padukone "not just a star" but an "actors actor" and someone who represents the world, not just India.

"When Deepika Padukone came in to read for one of the Fast and the Furious films, I knew instantly I was in the presence of someone very special. As soon as she entered the room, there was a synchronicity, a synergy, a chemistry - it promised great things to come. Her schedule didn't work for that movie, but I never gave up. She was the first role we cast in xXx: Return of Xander Cage. She said, I want to do this movie, but if I do, you have to come to India. Thank God I made that deal," Diesel wrote.

"Making that movie, Deepika took committed to a whole other level. That's who she is as a performer. She wants the whole movie to shine, which is a rare thing. Anyone could



talk about how beautiful she is, and anyone could tell you about her unmatched comedic timing. But she isn't just a star. She's an actor's actor, dedicated to the craft," he added.

"So often in the entertainment industry we deal in stereotypes, and people get stuck in certain markets. Deepika is the best Earth has to offer. She's not just here to represent India; she's here to represent the world," he said.

The list, now in its fifteenth year, recognizes the activism, innovation and achievement of the world's most influential individuals.

Padukone, who is also the most followed Asian Woman on Twitter, is currently riding on the success of her historical film "Padmaavat", which has crossed over Rs 300 crores at the box office.

AVENGERS: INFINITY WAR IS SECOND MOST-EXPENSIVE FILM EVER

The reported production budget for Avengers: Infinity War would make it the second most-expensive film ever made, unadjusted for inflation. Modern tent poles are never cheap endeavors, but even Marvel was going to have to break the bank a bit to cover the costs of their epic crossover event. A massive undertaking that looks to wrap up 10 years of storytelling across 18 films, just the sheer size of the ensemble cast meant the studio was going to be looking at a pricey bill. Fortunately, the MCU is a \$14 billion enterprise that's produced hit after hit, so money is no real object to Marvel.

Unsurprisingly, the franchise's team-up films rank as their most costly in terms of production budget. Avengers: Age of Ultron came in at \$279.8 million, while Captain America: Civil War was made for an even \$250 million. Not many films have gone beyond those figures, but Infinity War will be one of them. This isn't just the most expensive Marvel movie, it is one of the most expensive films of all-time.

In an article in the Wall Street Journal, it's said the Infinity War production bud-



get is in the range of \$300 million. This would tie Justice League and Pirates of the Caribbean: At World's End for the second-highest production budget. Only 2011's On Stranger Tides cost more at \$378.5 million. Since next year's untitled Avengers 4 was filmed back-to-back with Infinity War, the entire project probably cost even a little more when it's all said and done.

There's no denying that's an eye-popping number, but there are absolutely no concerns about Marvel not making this money back. Infinity War is a legitimate challenger for The Force Awakens' U.S. opening weekend box office record, and it's all but

assured to become the latest member of the ever-growing \$1 billion club worldwide. Even on the off chance Infinity War ends Marvel's impressive streak of Certified Fresh blockbusters, this film is the textbook definition of critic proof due to the fervent anticipation surrounding it. Fans have waited a decade for Infinity War, and they're going to show up in full force to support it. Not only that, Earth's Mightiest should have strong legs commercially, seeing that it won't have any real competition until Deadpool 2 opens on May 18 - three weeks after Infinity War premieres.

It's possible the final budget is a little less than \$300

million, but that nevertheless appears to be the ballpark we're looking at. It says a lot about the franchise's standing that they were comfortable dedicating that many resources for a single movie. The original Avengers (budgeted at \$220 million) was a major risk that could have derailed the entire plan if it fell short. But now that the MCU is one of the leading properties in all of Hollywood, there's a confidence that they can go as big as they need and still come out on top. Besides, this is a special situation. Ant-Man and the Wasp should be considerably more cost-effective by comparison, so the scope of the film will dictate its budget.

MASTERS OF THE UNIVERSE MOVIE FINDS ITS NEW DIRECTORS

Sony Pictures and Mattel have tapped indie filmmakers The Nee Brothers to direct their Masters of the Universe adaptation. He-Man and the Masters of the Universe was an enormously popular animated series in the 1980s, which is what gave rise to the phrase, "By the power of Grayskull." With those magic words, Prince Adam would transform himself into muscle-bound hero He-Man, once again ready to do battle with the evil Skeletor. Of course, the He-Man TV show was merely a means of marketing the Mattel He-Man toy line. The Filmation animated series ran for 130 episodes, along the way spawning a female-centered spinoff, She-Ra, Princess of Power.

Then, in 1987, B-movie studio Canon Films took advantage of whatever He-Man hype existed by releasing a live-action Masters of the Universe, starring muscle-man Dolph Lundgren as He-Man and renowned stage and screen actor Frank Langella as his arch-enemy Skeletor. Due to various reasons, including budget limitations, Masters of the Universe turned out even worse than expected and flopped at the box office (though the film has retained its fair share of



fans over the decades). For years, Sony Pictures has endeavored to revisit Masters of the Universe by getting a new movie version off the ground, presumably with a bigger budget and a more charismatic leading man - and it seems they are finally on their way to doing so.

Sony and Mattel have reportedly hired Aaron and Adam Nee (aka The Nee Brothers) to direct their Masters of the Universe movie. Screenwriter David S. Goyer had been in talks for the top gig at one time, but he ultimately passed on directing Masters of the Universe due to a scheduling conflict. Back when Goyer was still eyeing the director's chair, the film was reportedly set to begin shooting in spring 2018. No casting announcements have been made as of yet.

Brother directing team Aaron and Adam Nee have just two feature film directing credits to their names, the 2006 comedy-drama

The Last Romantic and the 2015 crime comedy Band of Robbers. The latter film, a fantasy that re-imagined Tom Sawyer and Huckleberry Finn as grown men living in the present day, earned a measure of critical praise and set the brothers up for bigger projects in the future.

Before he passed on directing, David Goyer teased a few details about the upcoming Masters of the Universe film, including some art featuring the character Teela. Goyer wrote the script for the upcoming reboot and will still remain heavily involved in its production as an executive producer. Unfortunately, his prior engagements just didn't allow enough time to helm the film as a director. With Masters of the Universe slated to hit theaters in December 2019, production will need to get underway sometime this summer or at least early fall, which means casting should begin relatively soon.

TEASER OF RANBIR KAPOOR'S DUTT BIOPIIC TO BE LAUNCHED DURING AN IPL MATCH

The IPL has graced our television screens yet again and fans of cricket couldn't be happier. Stadiums are packed, fans are charged up and the excitement is through the roof. And what better than an IPL match to launch the teaser for one of the most awaited movies of 2018, The Dutt Biopic?

Ranbir Kapoor instantaneously won our hearts when his look from the movie was leaked, where he was indistinguishable from Sanjay Dutt. The filmmakers seem to have picked the perfect date to extend the reach of the trailer to people across the country and are planning to launch the trailer on a channel that airs the cricket match. According to a source, the makers want to launch the trailer amidst the spectators at Wankhede Stadium in Mumbai during the Sunrisers Hyderabad vs Mumbai Indians match on 24th April 2018.

Ranbir Kapoor, Sanjay Dutt and Rajkumar Hirani are also expected at the stadium. The makers have planned for a 30-minute talk show where the trio will discuss the challenges faced during filming. It will be interesting to watch as Ranbir and Sanjay share their experiences. And to hear Rajkumar Hirani explain how difficult it was to put together this script as Sanjay's life was extensively covered by the media. The film's sneak peek is also expected to be attached to Avengers: Infinity War.

ARIES: Are you having problems with the lighting or heating in your home, Aries? If so, you might not be able to get a professional out today. There could be problems in the entire neighborhood. You might have to get out the candles and flashlights to get you through the evening. Don't let this throw you. It's a minor inconvenience that will be fixed soon. Think of it as an adventure! **TAURUS:** A friend or neighbor you need to contact could be in and out all day, Taurus, and so you could have trouble reaching him or her. Phone or email probably won't work, since your friend could be too busy to check messages. The best way to make contact might be to hop in the car and drive to wherever they might

be. Take the side streets, however. The main roads are probably clogged with traffic! **GEMINI:** This probably isn't a good day to do work that concerns money, Gemini. Your mind may not be in the right space. You could make errors that cause problems. If possible, also avoid working on any kind of creative project, since your mind might not be very clear and you probably won't be happy with the results. However, this is a great day for routine work that doesn't require much concentration.

CANCER: A lost object could have all the members of your household going through every room trying to find it, Cancer - probably without success. Visitors could pitch in as well and help with

the search. The item is probably in a fairly large room that everybody uses, probably among other objects. If no one locates it, however, let it go for now. It could reappear later as if by magic.

LEO: This could be a very busy day in your community, Leo. Some kind of rally, protest, or other public gathering might take place. If you attend, you may not hear much because of all the noise, and the event could seem disorganized at best. It could also render traffic impossible! If you can, stay home today. Going out could be more trouble than it's worth. Protest with your vote or your wallet instead.

VIRGO: A future course of action that you may or may not take could depend on information you

might receive today, Virgo. However, don't be surprised if the information is vague and needs to be clarified. On top of it all, you might not be able to reach the person who can clear it up for you! Hang in there. You'll want to make up your mind as soon as possible.

LIBRA: Are you unhappy or uncertain about your current profession, Libra? Are you thinking of making a change? News could reach you today of possible avenues to explore, but you shouldn't make any decision today. Your mind isn't as objective as it should be to think through everything. Think about it, by all means, but wait a day or two before giving serious consideration to anything vital.

SCORPIO: Your natural psychic or intuitive abilities could be short-circuited today, Scorpio. Interference from the minds of other people could cloud issues, and this won't do you any good. Your imaginative faculties could be rather garbled as well. The best possible advice would be to take the day for your own needs. You can go back to your usual routine tomorrow.

SAGITTARIUS: The atmosphere around you could seem somewhat unreal today. If you get a weird vibe from someone, Sagittarius, take everything this person says with a grain of salt. He or she has an agenda and isn't above distorting the truth to achieve it. If what they say doesn't affect you, don't worry

about it. If it does, take pains to learn the facts before acting on it. You'll be glad you did.

CAPRICORN: Communication could take some extra effort today, Capricorn. A business or romantic partner could seem like they're keeping things from you. You might get some uneasy vibes and wonder if there's trouble with your partnership. Don't be afraid to ask. Your friend probably won't tell you what the problem is, but will reassure you that it has nothing to do with you. If so, it isn't your business. Let it go.

AQUARIUS: Messages from a distant state or foreign country, possibly through fax, email, or website, might not be totally accurate, Aquarius. If any informa-

tion presented in this fashion sets off an alarm bell in your head, be sure to do some research on your own and check out the facts. Don't accept any news at face value today. The lines of human and technical communication are definitely out of whack today.

PISCES: Staying in touch with a love partner could be difficult today, Pisces, almost to the point of causing a minor panic. Don't jump to any unwarranted conclusions about possible problems in the relationship. What's causing the silence is probably beyond your friend's control, and could well be related to sudden and unexpected crises, or possibly something as mundane as a computer breakdown. Be patient and hang in there.