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Summit **TIMES**

Vol 03 | Issue 180 | Gangtok | Monday | 09 July 2018

ON TOP OF THE NEWS

RNI No. SIKENG/2016/69420

Pages 8 | ₹ 5

SYSP begins prepping for 38th Foundation Day

JEEWAN SUBBA
THARPU, 08 JUL:

Sirjunga Yakthung Sakthim Phojumbho (SYSP), the Limboo Cultural Society, convened its first meeting in preparation for the 38th foundation of the organization coming up on 23 August. The celebration is scheduled to be hosted at the Limboo Cultural Centre here.

JRDD Deputy Director SB Mangmoo was present as the chief guest for today's meeting accompanied by SYSP president, Sukman Limboo, panchayats, senior citizens and members of the society.

While addressing the gathering, Mr Mangmoo shared the story of the formation of SYSP and delved on its significance



for the community and how it has contributed towards reinforcing the Limboo identity.

He underlined the initiative and contributions of all mem-

bers of society which has kept SYSP robust and relevant.

He also shared that thanks are also due to the State Government for providing good in-

frastructure at Tharpu for the community and further reiterated that Mr Sukman Limboo has made substantial contributions for this society through

his 15 years of serving as president and expressed hope that he continues to serve SYSP and the community in future too.

turn to pg03

DRI seizes 10 kgs gold smuggled into India from Bhutan

NEW DELHI, JUL 8 (PTI): The Directorate of Revenue Intelligence (DRI) has seized ten kilograms of gold, which was smuggled into India from Bhutan, in West Bengal's Siliguri area.

Acting on inputs, the DRI officials intercepted a car at Fulbari in Siliguri yesterday and arrested two persons, a statement issued today by the DRI said.

The officials recovered ten foreign origin gold bars of one kilogram each from them, it said.

The interception took place when the smuggled gold bars were being carried by the duo from Bhutan to Muzaffarpur, Bihar, the DRI said.

Interrogation of the two intercepted persons revealed that they had smuggled the gold bars of foreign origin from Bhutan into India through Jaigaon-Phuentsholing border, it said.

The recovered gold bars were handed over by some Bhutanese origin nationals to the accused persons at a hotel situated in Phuentsholing, Bhutan,

where the same had been concealed stealthily in the carrier vehicle and was supposed to be delivered further down stream in India to others, the DRI said. The total seizure value has arrived at Rs 3.18 crore. Both the apprehended persons have been arrested.

On June 1, the DRI in the same region had effected a seizure of 32 kgs of gold (near Siliguri) which was smuggled from China through the Nathula border.

In the previous financial year (2017-2018), the DRI had seized close to 430 kgs of gold and gold jewellery in the East and North East region collectively valued at more than Rs 110 crore.

In the current financial year, starting from April 1 to till date, in the region spread over West Bengal and the North eastern states, the DRI has seized over 152 kgs of hold and gold jewellery valued at close to Rs 50 crore in the market, smuggled from Bangladesh, Myanmar, Bhutan and even from China.

Swoopna Suman on his maiden visit to Sikkim

YOUNGAN TAMANG
GANGTOK, 08 JUL:

Internet-sensation and a heartthrob of the pop circles, celebrated singer from Nepal, Swoopna Suman, to a packed gathering of fans here at Cafe Live & Loud on 07 July.

He performed his popular originals 'Kasari Bhanu', 'Mo Timro' and 'Coffee Song' along with many covers and Bollywood numbers and his fans lapped it all up.

SummitTimes had a brief conversation with the young sensation from Nepal on his maiden visit to Sikkim and his music. **SummitTimes: First impressions of Sikkim. How had you perceived this small state of India and how did it measure up?**

Swoopna Suman: First of all, I am so glad to have received such a warm welcome from the people of Sikkim. Everyone here was cordial and welcoming. Sikkim is really beautiful and the Sikkimese are so positive towards art, culture and music. Before



I came here, I had heard lot of pleasant things about Sikkim and I found all of them to be real. I had also thought that Gangtok would be a big city, but it's a small town on the hill top and so beautiful, serene and peaceful.

rene and peaceful.

A young musician and so much achievement, but we are sure there must have been a lot of struggles along the way. Were there?

SS: See, art and talent are things that come only with struggle and challenges, but every artist should also come up with dedication, patience and commitment to overcome those situation. So, if I can

face everything and still be here, then anyone else can be as well. I am no super human.

How has been the journey of this young sensation so far?

SS: My journey is all in the public eye. People know how I grew from a simple cover songs singer who uploaded videos

on Youtube and now just a lil popular singer, that's it (laughs).

So young and so much achieved. How would you like to motivate our Sikkimese youth who are also passionate about music and art in every form?

SS: See, you need to

turn to pg02

Moon and Mars: double celestial event coming up this month

SUDIPTO CHOWDHURY

KOLKATA, JUL 8 (PTI): With Mars closer than it has been in 15 years, almost double the brilliance of Jupiter through the naked eye, and the longest total lunar eclipse of the century, space enthusiasts can tune into the skies for a double celestial delight this month.

On the intervening night of July 27-28, the Moon will be totally eclipsed for one hour, 43 minutes. The event can be observed in a large part of the globe, including in India, where it can be seen after 11.54 pm Indian Standard Time on July 27.

According to Dr Debi-prosad Duari, director, Research & Academic, MP

Birla Institute of Fundamental Research, it will be the longest total lunar eclipse of the century.

Four days later, another spectacular celestial event will enthrall millions of people around the world, Duari said.

On July 31, Mars, the fourth planet from the Sun, will be 57.6 million kilometres from Earth, the closest it has been since 2003 when it came within 55.7

million kilometres, which was the nearest in almost 60,000 years.

"The Red Planet will be at its brightest since 2003, when Mars made its closest approach to Earth in almost 60,000 years since September, 24, 57617 BC," Duari told PTI.

Mars will be visible in the night sky after sunset till sunrise from everywhere in India, provided the monsoon clouds don't play spoilsport.

Explaining the celestial phenomenon, the astro physicist said the orbital period increases as the distance of a planet from the Sun increases. That is why Earth takes

a little more than 365 days to go round the Sun and Mars takes 687 days.

Due to the difference of the orbital speed and orbital period, in every 26 months or so, Earth passes between Mars and the Sun, bringing Mars and the Sun on exactly opposite sides of it. This is called Mars at the opposition," Duari said.

turn to pg03

THE BIRDS HAVE LOST THEIR WAY
Essays on Hydropower and Climate Change Issues of Sikkim
EDITED BY
TSHERING EDEN AND PEMA WANGCHUK

Eight essays put the spotlight on the journey coursed by hydel projects in Sikkim and the region, the cost exacted by this "development" and some of the stories it birthed, not all of which have been shared before. Also finding place in this collection is the arrival of Climate Change and its impact on Sikkim and how the State could negotiate with this new disruption.

ESSAYS ON TEESTA, HYDEL AND CLIMATE CHANGE IN SIKKIM

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Swoopna Suman on his maiden...

contd from pg01

be dedicated towards what you are passionate about. If you are true to yourself, and passionate about it, nothing can stop you from turning your dream (s) into reality. All hindrances shall pass by. Please love what you like to do, be true to yourself and I believe nothing can stop you.

How has been the response been like from your fans in Sikkim on your social media handles?

SS: Honestly, before I arrived here I had already been receiving a lot many messages from my fans and well wishers here. They have been very kind and supportive towards my work. I don't actually get time to reply to too many messages, but I always treasure all the messages, concerns and wishes. I love you all. Please keep supporting me and loving my music.

Do you plan to visit Sikkim in future as well?

SS: Of course! I loved this place and the people. I would definitely love to visit in future or may be even sooner.

What would your message to the young people of Sikkim be?

SS: I feel the youth of Sikkim are very high on potential and talent. I want you people to believe in yourself and passionately work on it. It may take time, stay patient and the results will be in your favour soon. God bless you all!

SYSP begins prepping for 38th Foundation Day

contd from pg01

After the meeting, an open discussion was held on the subjects ranging from formation of different committees, felicitations, fund raising and preparation of the foundation day souvenir.

It was also decided that the foundation day will be celebrated over two days – 22 and 23 August.

Chief Minister Pawan Chamling is expected to attend the foundation day celebrations as chief guest. Today's meeting was also addressed by Sukman limboo, PS Limboo and IB Limboo. The next preparatory meeting has been fixed for 29 July, it is informed.

Moon and Mars: double celestial...

contd from pg01

This year, Mars will be at its opposition on July 27, only 51 days before it passes through its perihelion its closest point relative to the Sun in its orbit.

"Since it will be quite close to Earth by that time, it will appear very bright and will be visible roughly after sunset and will remain in the sky till sunrise. The Red Planet will shine very prominently in our night sky it will be easier to see it clearly with telescopes or even with the naked eye," Duari said.

Mars comes close enough for these exceptional viewing occasions only once or twice every 15 or 17 years, he added.

"The next opposition of Mars, when it will look relatively brighter and bigger than the average,

will be on October 6, 2020. But it will be a little further away, around 61.76 million kilometres from Earth and will be looking relatively smaller and less bright than on July 31, 2018."

The next closest approach, though not as close as 2003, will not be until 2035.

"It will come closer to Earth than it was on 2003 only on 2287 (August 29) when possibly there will be nobody alive present on Earth to witness it," Duari said.

Referring to the 2003 Internet hoax that Mars would be as big as the Moon when it came closest to Earth, Duari said the rumour has surfaced every year in August since then. "But we must note that at its closest approach this year, Mars will be only 24.3 arc.

Seconds across and nowhere

close to the size of the Moon, which is 75 times bigger in diameter as it appears," he stated.

It is safe to watch the celestial event through the naked eye. Those hoping to see it more detail can use a telescope with four-inch diameter and above.

The South Polar region and the ice caps on it will be nicely visible from Earth through a moderate size telescope, Duari said.

"Just after the sunset one should look close to the east-south eastern horizon to view this bright planet, appearing 1.8 times brighter than Jupiter," he said.

He also expressed the hope that a large dust storm engulfing Mars, spotted by astronomers, will subside by July 31 and the Red Planet can be viewed at its closest approach in its full glory.

SKM intensifies Ghar Dailo Abhiyan

SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 08 JUL:

Sikkim Krantikari Morcha today carried out a flag-hoisting and door-to-door visit at Nangeything under Khamdong constituency in the presence of Zone 1 in-charge Anand Lama, general secretary Neelu Chettri, working president Navin Karki, vice president (labour front) PR Subba and a team of CLC executives, a press communiqué received from SKM general secretary (Press and Publicity), Bikash Basnet, informs.

The release goes on to state that the team received a cordial welcome in the area and shared the party's policies and vision.

The team has returned with the observation that the area has remained "deprived of primary developments" with basic facilities like proper water supply or accessible footpaths and faced discrimination in distribution of government benefits.

Meanwhile, constituency-level workers of Shyari constituency held a coordination meeting at Pabuk- Naitam as well



today.

The meeting was attended by SKM acting president Kunga Nima Lepcha and chief coordinator Sonam Lama. During the meeting, 11 youth from Shyari constituency joined the SKM, it is informed.

Elsewhere in East Sikkim, a CLC team led by Bishnu Kumar Khatiwada, VP in-charge Zone

2, conducted a survey of Bagey Khola Ward under the party's 'Ghar Dailo Abhiyan'.

In Chujachen constituency, SKM convened a coordination meeting at the Rongli party office under the chairmanship of CLC president Nirpath Gurung.

Booth Level Committee formation for Sangadorjee and Tirkuthang

Booths was carried out by the CLC team of Rinchenpong Constituency, West Sikkim and 21 members (at Sangadorjee) and 32 members from Tirkuthang booth were inducted in the BLCs at the meeting chaired by SKM vice president Pema Kinzang Bhutia.

Meanwhile, a door to door campaign was also

carried out at Zuluk and Kubuk under Gnathang Machong Constituency.

A Ward Level Committee was formed at Lungchuk under Sombaria Daramdin constituency and flag hoisting and door to door campaign was conducted in Singling Ward under Soreng Constituency by party youth workers of the constituency.

Geyzing League Open Tourney to kick off 15 July



SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 08 JUL:

The 14th Geyzing League Open Football Tournament is scheduled to kick off on 15 July at Kyongsa Ground with a handsome lineup of twenty teams. The tournament is organised every year by Young Boys Football Society, Geyzing.

A meeting was held

today at Kyongsa ground with representatives of the participating teams to coordinate efforts to ensure a good tournament.

"We organise the tournament annually to promote the footballing talent of West Sikkim and also provide a platform to young upcoming players," YBFS coach, Namgyal Bhutia, informs.

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CBI looks for banking, tax experts to help probe into multi-crore scams

NEW DELHI, JUL 8 (PTI): The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI), which is probing the over Rs 13,000 crore Punjab National Bank scam as well as other financial frauds, has sought deputation of banking and tax experts from other ministries with an offer of good monetary incentives.

According to an official communiqué sent by the CBI to finance and other key ministries, the agency has asked for officers on deputation as advisor (banking), senior advisor (foreign trade or foreign exchange), deputy advisor (foreign trade or foreign exchange) and senior advisor (taxation) on deputation.

Those selected will initially be given short-term contract with the premier investigation agency, it said.

These posts are to provide technical assistance and expertise in probing cases involving banking, foreign trade and foreign exchange, taxation and to supervise the work of other techni-

cal officer working in the agency, the letter routed to various ministries said.

"It may be noted that the officers coming on deputation to CBI are entitled for a special security allowance at the rate of 20 per cent on the pay," it said.

The communiqué, however, said the candidates who apply for the post will not be allowed to withdraw their candidature subsequently.

The CBI is looking into various big-ticket fraud cases in banks besides other complex cases related to foreign trade and taxation.

Among the prominent ones is the over Rs 13,000-crore fraud in the PNB allegedly committed by jeweller Nirav Modi and his uncle Mehul Choksi, the promoter of Gitanjali Gems.

The CBI had some time back also booked top officials of two public sector banks, a former CMD of the IDBI Bank, former Aircel promoter C Sivasankaran, his son and

companies controlled by him in connection with a Rs 600-crore loan fraud in the IDBI.

The CBI had on Friday arrested two senior retired officers of the Bank of India in connection with alleged loan fraud of Rs 2,654 crore by Vadodara-based Diamond Power Infrastructure Ltd. (DPIL) in the bank.

Some former top RBI officials are also under the scanner of the CBI for alleged financial frauds.

The induction of financial expert in the agency will help in expediting probe in financial crime cases, they said.

During 2017, the CBI had registered 939 regular cases and 137 preliminary enquiries. As many as 9,383 cases were pending in various courts at the end of the year.

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Roti Bank- where leftover food satiates hunger of the poor

MUMBAI, JUL 8 (PTI): In a country where millions of people go hungry every day, a retired IPS officer has come up with an initiative to feed the needy.

The initiative, called 'Roti Bank', collects leftovers from restaurants, clubs and parties in Mumbai, stores it in vans and distributes it to the poor before the food gets stale.

Launched by Maharashtra's former Director General of Police D Sivanandan in December last year in collaboration with the Mumbai's famous tiffin carriers 'Dabbawalas', the 'Roti Bank' claims to be getting a good response.

A Mumbai-born and

London-based business professional, Nitin Khanapurkar, had also chipped in to support the cause by launching a round-the-clock helpline number for it.

Nearly 1.8 lakh tonnes of food is wasted every day in India and around 20 crore people, of whom a big number is in Mumbai, go hungry, Sivanandan told PTI.

"Since legal issues restrict eateries from distributing the leftover food to outsiders, we thought of channelising it through our NGO, and I am happy to say that our initiative of 'Roti Bank' has received an unprecedented response from various quarters," he said.

"We are a food rescue organisation. We collect the leftover food from hotels and cafeterias and distribute it to the hungry people. It is a simple concept," he said.

As part of the initiative, two GPRS-equipped vans make rounds of streets near hospitals and slums to provide food to the needy people, he said.

"We have reached out to nearly 75,000 needy people in the city so far. Wherever the van passes by, it brings hope among the hungry people and their feeling after getting food is undefinable," the top cop-turned-philanthropist said.

The NGO mainly collects leftover food sta-

bles like rotis (chapati or wheat-made flat bread), rice, vegetables and dal to be distributed within 60 to 90 minutes.

"Our basic idea is to mitigate hunger of the needy people," said Sivanandan, 67, who served as the Mumbai Police Commissioner before being appointed the DGP.

He retired in 2011. To bring about a sense of benevolence among the rich class, Sivanandan encourages children from affluent families to "come and witness the joy of sharing (food)," he said, adding that mitigating hunger of the street children would help them abstain from committing crime.

SummitTIMES
ON TOP OF THE NEWS

informed, inquisitive, relevant

Gangtok on Monday, 09 July

Temp: 26°C/19°C
Forecast: Cloudy, a thundershower in spots; not as warm.
Sunrise: 04:47 AM
Sunset: 6:34 PM

Anyone raising issues of Lankan Tamils seen as LTTE sympathiser: ex-minister

COLOMBO, JUL 8 (PTI): Sri Lanka's lone Tamil woman minister who resigned last week, has alleged that anyone raising issues of the minority Tamil community is branded as an LTTE sympathiser, days after her controversial remarks seeking revival of the separatist militant outfit led to an uproar in Parliament and forced her to step down.

Vijeyakala Maheswaran, 45, was the state minister of child affairs from the northern Tamil region representing the ruling United National Party (UNP) led by Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe.

Maheswaran resigned following her remarks at a public gathering in Jaffna on Monday where she had said that due to the deteriorating law and order situation and rising crime, people in the northern province were wishing for the LTTE's revival and return.

The premier had sought an inquiry into her comments that led to an uproar in Parliament as well as in the Sinhala-majority south. UNP leaders had also demanded her sacking.

Maheswaran later stepped down following talks with her party leader Wickremesinghe.

Her speech has now been referred to the attorney general to probe if she had violated the Constitution by publicly promoting the separatist cause of the LTTE.

She has claimed that she was quoted out of context.

In her first public reaction since her resignation, Maheswaran told a meeting in the north yesterday that when you talk of the problems of the Tamil people, the south looks at you as Tigers (LTTE). I will fight to deliver justice to the people despite opposition to my efforts. I resigned my post for the sake of the people.

The LTTE had run an armed movement for a separate Tamil homeland in the northern and eastern provinces of the island nation for nearly 30 years before its defeat in 2009 by the Sri Lankan army.

Maheswaran said the present condition of Sri Lankan Tamils was still better than during the rule of former president Mahinda Rajapaksa under whose tenure the LTTE was crushed.

Sathya Sai Seva Org carries out cleanliness drive at STNM Hospital

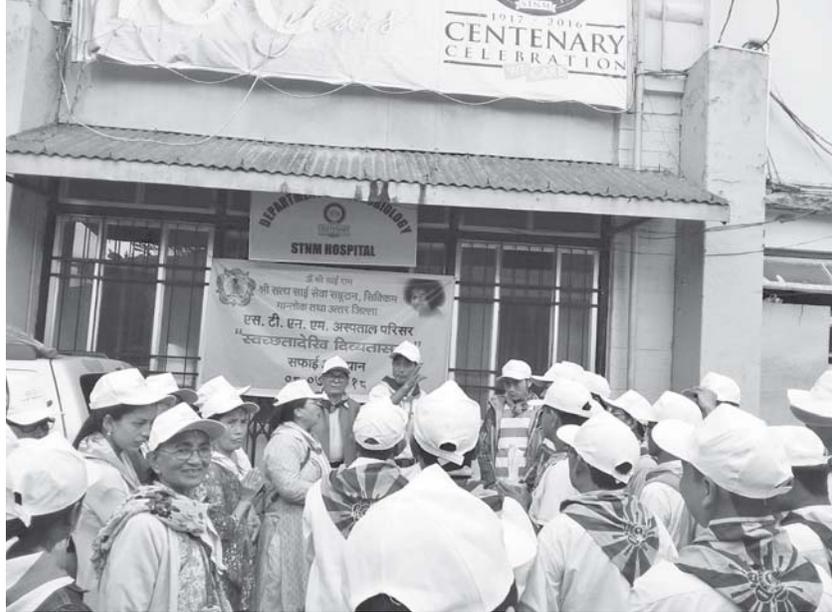
ARPAN PRADHAN GANGTOK, 08 JUL: The Sathya Sai Seva Organisation, Sikkim, Gangtok & North District, organised a daylong cleanliness drive here at the STNM Hospital premises today.

The cleanliness drive was conducted by 175 seva dal members of the organization and scrubbed different locations in the STNM Hospital including cleaning of the various wards.

The seva dal team included 115 female and 60 male volunteers led by the State Service Co-ordinator of the organization, Punam Pradhan.

The drive also had the participation of 15 students from Kendriya Vidyalaya, Gangtok.

The drive was part of a regular programme under which seva dal carried out cleanliness programmes at different locations throughout the year, it is informed.



"Sathya Sai Seva Organisation is a service-based under which we volunteer different services to people whether it be through cleanliness drives or awareness camps or other service we can extend," explains the state youth coordinator of the SSSO, Gangtok & North District, CP Gurung. "We carry out a cleanliness drive at STNM Hospital once every year and that's a service to the society from the SAI Sangathan," he adds.

Assam flood situation improves, Lakhimpur district worst affected

GUWAHATI, JUL 8 (PTI): The overall flood situation in Assam improved today, although about 24,000 people are still reeling under the deluge in four districts, an official report said.

According to Assam State Disaster Management Authority (ASDMA), over 23,600 people were affected by the flood in Dhemaji, Lakhimpur, Biswanath and Nagaon districts, as against 41,000 people in five districts of the state yesterday.

The report issued today stated that Lakhimpur is the worst affected district, with over 21,200 people affected, followed by Dhemaji where around 1,200 people were reeling under the deluge.

Currently, 29 villages are inundated and 959 hectares of crop areas have been damaged, the ASDMA said.

The total number of people losing their lives in the first wave of flood this year in different parts of the state stands at 33, including three in landslides. ASDMA said authorities are running six relief camps and distribution centres, where 2,019 people have taken shelter.

The Brahmaputra river is flowing above the danger mark at Nimatighat in Jorhat.

Flood waters have damaged embankments, roads and other infrastructure in Biswanath and Barpeta districts, where heavy erosion have taken place, ASDMA said.



A TAP, IGNORED

Singtam, 04 Jul: This tap outside Thakurbari Mandir in Singtam has been serving the thirsty for decades. Unfortunately, no one appears to have cared for it enough, leaving it in this desperate need for maintenance and repairs. [from YOGEN THATAL]

Memorial Service

Romans 14:8 "If we live, we live for the Lord; and if we die, we die for the Lord. So, whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord."



(JANUARY 17, 1936 TO JULY 3, 2018)

Celebrating the beautiful life of Senior Elder Andrew Rai.

Your kind presence is requested at his Memorial Service at the

Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Sikkim (EPCS).

Church Road, Gangtok. On Wednesday, July 11, 2018 at 02.00 p.m.

Turkey sacks 18,500 state employees in new decree

ANKARA, JUL 8 (AFP): Turkish authorities ordered the dismissal of more than 18,500 state employees including police officers, soldiers and academics, in a decree published today.

The Official Gazette said 18,632 people had been sacked including 8,998 police officers in the emergency decree over suspected links to terror organisations and groups that "act against national security".

Some 3,077 army soldiers were also dismissed as well as 1,949 air force personnel and 1,126 from the naval forces.

Another 1,052 civil servants from the justice ministry and linked institutions have been fired as well as 649 from the gendarmerie and 192 from the coast guard.

Authorities also sacked 199 academics, according to the new decree, while 148 state employees from the military and ministries were reinstated.

Turkey has been under a state of emergency since the July 2016 attempted overthrow of President Recep Tayyip Erdogan.



Turkish media dubbed the decree as the "last" with officials indicating the state of emergency could end as early as Monday.

The emergency has been renewed seven times and the latest period is officially due to end on July 19.

Over 110,000 public sector employees have been removed previously from their jobs via emergency decrees since July 2016 while tens of thousands more have been suspended in a crackdown criticised by Ankara's Western allies.

Turkey accuses US-based Muslim preacher Fethullah Gulen of orchestrating the attempted coup. The majority of those fired under the emergency are accused

of links to Gulen.

The government refers to the movement as the "Fethullah Terrorist Organisation". Gulen strongly denies any coup links and insists his movement is a peaceful organisation.

Today's decree shut down 12 associations across the country as well as three newspapers and a television channel.

Human rights defenders including Amnesty International have lambasted the purges as arbitrary but Turkey says they are necessary to remove the Gulen movement's infiltration of state bodies.

Earlier this year, the government said more than 77,000 people had been arrested over alleged links to Gulen.



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NOTICE

The date for conducting the written examinations for the post of Live Stock Assistant as published vide Advertisement No: 08/SPSC/EXAM/2018 DATED:14/05/2018 in the Sikkim State Sub-ordinate Para Veterinary Service AH,LF & VS Department, Government of Sikkim through Direct Recruitment is hereby fixed as per details given below:-

Papers	Mode of Examination	Date	Time	Venue
Paper - I	MCQ	05.08.2018	10:00 am to 12:00 noon	Will be intimated in the ADMIT CARD
Paper - II	MCQ	06.08.2018	10:00 pm to 1:00 pm	

The eligible candidates may download their admit cards from **24.07.2018(after noon) to 02.08.2018(midnight)** from the official website of Sikkim Public Service Commission i.e. www.spscskm.gov.in.

Admission to all the stages of examination for which candidates are admitted by the Commission viz: Written Examination and Viva-Voce will be purely provisional, subject to their satisfying the prescribed eligibility conditions. If on verification at any point of time before or after the Written Examination and Viva-Voce, it is found that the candidates do not fulfil any of the eligibility conditions; their candidature for the examination/post will be cancelled by the Commission.

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SummitTIMES

ON TOP OF THE SIXT

Promoting Tourism

Visitors arrive in cycles, but Sikkim needs to attract more consistently

The Cabinet recently endorsed the Tourism Draft Policy for the State prepared by WWF and ECOSS. This policy has been long awaited, because while tourist arrivals have been growing, the State itself had no blueprint on what to do with its increasing appeal among travelers or how to plan ahead with any coherence. Hopefully, the draft policy addresses these issues and recommends an intelligently laid out path for the policy makers and the executive to pursue when it comes to tourism. Once this document arrives in the public domain, one will be able to comment more on how detailed, practical and implementable it is and what potential it holds. Till then, some comments on tourism in Sikkim as things stand.

Tourism, like any other commercial product in the market, is as much about the hard-sell as it is about the quality of the product itself. There is little more that Sikkim can do to enhance the product that it has to offer in the tourism market. Apart from improving on the infrastructure and paring down on the paperwork involved in visiting different places, the State's more than handsome natural endowments are enough to attract interest. Sikkim is undoubtedly the most peaceful state in the country, can guarantee a view of the third highest Himalayan peak from just about every nook, has the tallest statue of Guru Rinpoche, a magnificent Buddha Park, a grand Char-Dhaam, an international border outpost open for visitors, the nation's highest lake, a cold desert, wondrous trekking options etc.

All that the State desperately required was a consistent and coherent tourism policy and clear targets. It also needs to talk more about its potential, and with it, secure assistance for promotion. It needs to tie-in the right packaging and exposure in the right places to pack in the dollars that everyone in the travel industry eyes.

Yes, the numbers suggest that tourist inflow has been increasing phenomenally save the September 2011 hiccup and the Aandolan revisit in the neighbouring Hills last year. Yes, the crowds during "season" are impressive and business brisk, but the sector, despite having more associations than it did a decade back, is still largely disorganized and uncoordinated. No one expects the tourism sector to be uniform and regimented, but the stakeholders need to synchronise their promotion of Sikkim as a tourist destination. Tourist arrivals to Sikkim might be multiplying handsomely when counted in percentage format, but in sheer numbers, the State is still dealing in slivers of what the nation's other 'destinations' attract. This means that the kitty for promotional activities is that much tighter and hence requires that the budget is deployed well. This requires better collaboration and clearer planning. The policy makers and the stakeholders need to ask themselves how well they have promoted Sikkim as a destination. Nepal, for instance, with its troubles and infrastructural collapses, should have lost its prospective guests to Sikkim since the State offers itself as the obvious choice for tourists given the fact that it offers similar attractions here. The in-bound numbers do not suggest such a development.

To secure these visitors, Sikkim needs to perhaps start publicity campaigns in Bangkok which is recognized as the gateway to the East. Most western tourists land in Bangkok and then plan their foray into the rest of Southeast Asia. Timing a Sikkim info gala in Bangkok with the tourist arrivals there should reap more profits than what is spent on the exercise. Sikkim has been attending tourism and travel fairs across the country and abroad quite consistently, but it should now do more than just book a stall at these events. Stalls, even travel agencies can book, but when it comes to a State, it should invest more. The Department should host dinners for the big names from the travel industry at such events, book halls for audiovisual presentations on the State. In short, do everything that will impress with Sikkim's professionalism on the people who direct tourist traffic in the country and the world.

Meanwhile, tourist festivals are still held in Sikkim in disorganized and unplanned fits and starts. If the Department is serious about making such festivals about tourists and developing them as attractive tourism events, it needs to start preparing more in advance. Last minute announcements, which are currently the norm, will not do because such events require a year's promotion in the least and then positive word of mouth and then consistency. Whenever, and that is always, the department waits till the last minute to finalise tourist fests, it, at best, manages to entertain the locals and the tourists who are already here. Tourist festivals should achieve more than that. They should attract people who decide on Sikkim after learning about the event.

What properly directed advance publicity also achieves is that it creates a buzz around a place, gives the impression that the place is "happening," and that is an impression that every tourist destination wants to create. Why shouldn't Sikkim?

How do Americans really feel about interracial couples?

ALLISON SKINNER
theconversation.com

According to the most recent U.S. census, approximately 15 percent of all newlywed couples are interracial. More interracial relationships are also appearing in the media – on television, in film and in advertising.

These trends suggest that great strides have been made in the roughly 50 years since the Supreme Court struck down anti-miscegenation laws.

But as a psychologist who studies racial attitudes, I suspected that attitudes toward interracial couples may not be as positive as they seem. My previous work had provided some evidence of bias against interracial couples. But I wanted to know how widespread that bias really is.

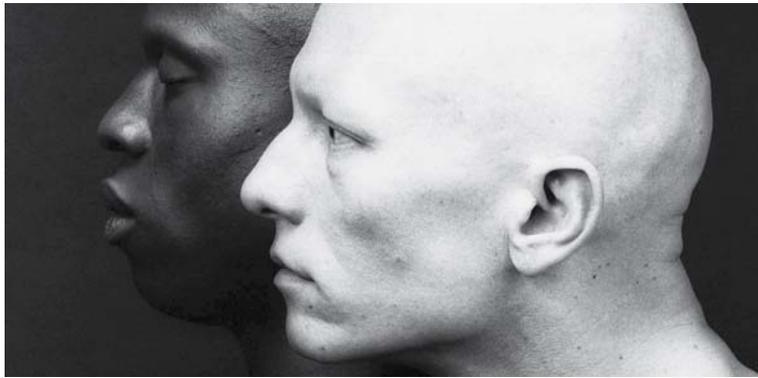
WHAT DOES EACH RACE THINK? To answer this question, my collaborator James Rae and I recruited participants from throughout the U.S. to examine implicit and explicit attitudes toward black-white interracial couples.

Psychologists typically differentiate between explicit biases – which are controlled and deliberate – and implicit biases, which are automatically activated and tend to be difficult to control.

So someone who plainly states that people of different races shouldn't be together would be demonstrating evidence of explicit bias. But someone who reflexively thinks that interracial couples would be less responsible tenants or more likely to default on a loan would be showing evidence of implicit bias.

In this case, we assessed explicit biases by simply asking participants how they felt about same-race and interracial couples.

We assessed implicit biases using something called the implicit association test, which requires participants to quickly categorize same-race and interracial couples with positive words, like "happiness" and "love," and negative words, like "pain" and "war." If it takes participants longer



to categorize interracial couples with positive words, it's evidence that they likely possess implicit biases against interracial couples.

In total, we recruited approximately 1,200 white people, over 250 black people and over 250 multiracial people to report their attitudes. We found that overall, white and black participants from across the U.S. showed statistically significant biases against interracial couples on both the implicit measure and the explicit measure.

In contrast, participants who identified as multiracial showed no evidence of bias against interracial couples on either measure.

The figure below shows the results from the implicit association test. The lines indicate the average discrepancy in the length of time it took participants to associate interracial couples with positive words, when compared to associating same-race couples with positive words. Notice that for multiracial participants, this average discrepancy overlaps with zero, which indicates a lack of bias.

Next is a figure detailing the results from the explicit bias test, with lines measuring average levels of explicit bias against interracial couples. Positive values indicate bias against interracial couples, while negative values indicate bias in favor of interracial couples. Note that multiracial participants actually show a bias in favor of interracial couples.

Although we cannot know for sure from our data, we believe that

the lack of bias observed among multiracial participants may stem from the fact that they're the product of an interracial relationship. Then there's the reality of their own romantic relationships. Multiracial people have few romantic options that would not constitute an interracial relationship: Over 87 percent of multiracial participants in our sample reported having dated interracial.

PREDICTING BIAS

We also wanted to know what might predict bias against interracial couples.

We anticipated that those who had previously been in an interracial romantic relationship – or were currently involved in one – would hold more positive attitudes.

For both white and black participants, this is precisely what we found. There was one catch: Black participants who had previously been in an interracial relationship were just as likely to harbor explicit biases as those who hadn't been in one.

Next, we wanted to test whether having close contact – in other words, spending quality time with interracial couples – was associated with positive attitudes toward interracial couples. Psychological evidence has shown that contact with members of other groups tends to reduce intergroup biases.

To get at this, we asked participants questions about how many interracial couples they knew and how much time they spent with them. We found that across all three racial groups, more interpersonal contact with interracial couples meant more

positive implicit and explicit attitudes toward interracial couples.

Finally, we examined whether just being exposed to interracial couples – such as seeing them around in your community – would be associated with more positive attitudes toward interracial couples. Some have argued that exposure to interracial and other "mixed status" couples can serve as a catalyst to reduce biases.

Our results, however, showed no evidence of this.

In general, participants who reported more exposure to interracial couples in their local community reported no less bias than those who reported very little exposure to interracial couples. In fact, among multiracial participants, those who reported more exposure to interracial couples in their local community actually reported more explicit bias against interracial couples than those with less exposure.

THE OUTLOOK FOR THE FUTURE According to polling data, only a small percentage of people in the U.S. – 9 percent – say that the rise in interracial marriage is a bad thing.

Yet our findings indicate that most in the U.S. harbor both implicit and explicit biases against interracial couples. These biases were quite robust, showing up among those who had had close personal contact with interracial couples and even some who had once been involved in interracial romantic relationships.

The only ones who didn't show biases against interracial couples were multiracial people.

Nonetheless, in 2015, 14 percent of all babies born nationwide were mixed race or mixed ethnicity – nearly triple the rate in 1980. In Hawaii, the rate is 44 percent. So despite the persistence of bias against interracial couples, the number of multiracial people in the U.S. will only continue to grow – which bodes well for interracial couples.

[the writer is Psychology Researcher, Northwestern University]

How suppliers of everyday devices make you vulnerable to cyber attack – and what to do about it

RICHARD MATTHEWS & NICK FALKNER
theconversation.com

If you run a business, you're probably concerned about IT security. Maybe you invest in antivirus software, firewalls and regular system updates.

Unfortunately, these measures might not protect you from malicious attacks that enter your systems through everyday devices.

On the evening of Friday the 24th of October 2008 Richard C. Schaeffer Jr, the NSA's top computer systems protection officer was in a briefing with US President George W. Bush when an aide passed him a note. The note was brief and to the point. They had been hacked.

How did it happen? The culprit was a simple USB.

USB SUPPLY CHAIN ATTACKS

The attack was unexpected because classified military systems are not connected to outside networks. The source was isolated to a worm loaded onto a USB key that had been carefully set up and left in large numbers to be purchased from a local internet kiosk.

This is an example of a supply chain attack, which focuses on the least secure elements in an organisation's supply chain.

The US military immediately moved to ban USB drives in the field. Some years later, the US would use the same tactic to breach and disrupt Iran's nuclear weapons program in an attack that has now been dubbed Stuxnet.

The lesson is clear: if you are plugging USB drives into your systems, you need to be very sure where they came from and what's on them.

If a supplier can get a secret payload onto a USB stick, then there is no safe period in which a USB is a good choice. For example, you can currently buy a USB stick that is secretly a small computer, and it will,



play the Death Star march.

This is just one kind of supply chain attack. What are the other kinds?

NETWORK SUPPLY CHAIN ATTACKS

Computer users have an increasing tendency to store all their information on a network, concentrating their assets in one place. In this scenario, if one computer is compromised then the entire system is open to an attacker.

Consider a conference phone used in your organisation. Suppose this network-enabled phone had a built in fault that would allow attackers to listen in on any conversations in the vicinity. This was the reality in 2012 when more than 16 versions of Cisco's popular IP phone were affected. Cisco released a patch for their phones, which could be installed by most companies' IT security departments.

In 2017, a similar issue arose when a brand of hospital grade dishwasher was affected by a built-in insecure web server. In the case of a hospital, there is a great deal of private data and specialist equipment that could be compromised by such a vulnerability. While a patch was eventually released, it required a specialised service technician to upload it.

Supply chain attacks have recently been implicated in the disastrous failure rate of the North Korean missile program. David Kennedy, in a video for The Insider, discusses how the US has previously disrupted nuclear programs using cyber. If

they still possess this capability, it's possible they would wish to keep it covert. Should this be the case, it's conceivable one of the numerous North Korean failures could have been a test of such a cyber weapon.

FIVE WAYS COMPANIES CAN PROTECT THEMSELVES

To protect yourself against all of this you need to set up basic cyber hygiene processes that can help keep your business free from infection.

1. Purchase and install good anti-virus software and run it in protective mode, where it scans everything on your machine. Yes, even Macs get viruses
2. monitor who is on your network, avoid using untrusted devices such as USBs and have your administrators block autorun as a system-wide policy
3. segregate your networks. Have critical plant infrastructure? Don't have it on the same network as your day to day, public-facing or guest access networks
4. update regularly. Don't worry about the latest and greatest issues, patch the known vulnerabilities in your systems – especially that one from 1980
5. pay for your software and labour. If you're not paying for the product, then someone is paying for you as the product.

CYBER AWARENESS IS CRUCIAL

Finally, you can maximise cyber resilience by training everyone in your organisation to learn new skills. But it's vital to test whether your training is working. Use actual exercises – in conjunction with security professionals – to examine your organisation, practice those skills, and work out where you need to make improvements.

The price of any connection to the internet is that it's vulnerable to attack. But as we've shown, not even standalone systems are safe. Deliberate practice and thoughtful approaches to security can increase the protection of your business or workplace.

[Richard Matthews is PhD Candidate, University of Adelaide; Nick Falkner is Associate Professor and Director of the Australian Smart Cities Consortium, University of Adelaide]

Two Indian teenagers arrested in Nepal for stealing

KATHMANDU, JUL 8 (PTI): Two Indian teenagers have been arrested in Nepal for forming a gang to carry out thefts, a media report said today. Karan Podhar, 19, of Motihari and Suraj Podhar, 17, of Mahadilgarthan Samastipur, were arrested by Metropolitan Crime division here.

The two, according to Myrepublica newspaper, used to work as ragpickers.

According to SP Narendra Upreti, they were arrested with NRs 70,000, USD 1135, 55 Canadian dollar, two diamond rings, other gold ornaments, three stone necklaces and some drugs.

They had plans to carry out thefts by breaking windows of the houses which they had short-listed while collecting garbage, Upreti said.

Rs 35 crore water supply scheme for Tura town

SHILLONG, JUL 8 (PTI): Meghalaya Chief Minister Conrad K Sangma has announced a new water supply scheme that will benefit nearly two lakh residents of Tura in West Garo Hills district.

The estimated Rs 35 crore project is being funded by North East Special Infrastructure Development Scheme (NESIDS), under the Ministry of DoNER, Government of India.

The project, which is set to be completed by March 2020 would balance the works of augmentation of Tura Phase I and Phase II Water Supply Scheme and would also initiate a major work for replacement of old leakage of water.

The announcement was made in presence of PHE Minister Samlin Maligniang last evening at the Circuit House Tura.

On completion of



the project, 23.42 million litre per day (MLD) drinking water would be available for Tura town, which would take care of around 1.80 lakh population of the town. The project was proposed by former Union Minister and South Tura MLA Agatha K Sangma as Tura town had to face continuous water scarcity.

The project was taken up the PHE department

as there was an urgent need to ensure water availability in Tura town, said Conrad Sangma.

Due to paucity of funds, such projects cannot be taken up all at once for different parts of the state but in a phased manner, projects would be taken up in other parts of the state as well. Sangma added.

He also said that under the NESIDS, the Cen-

tre has sanctioned Rs 190 crore to Meghalaya, of which Rs 60 crore has been accorded for PHE department, Rs 50 crore each for PWD and Power department and Rs 20 crore for health department.

Sangma said that the decade-old Rymbai water supply scheme in East Jaintia Hills would be taken up on a priority basis.

Vishnu idol worth crores of rupees recovered in Bangladesh

DHAKA, JUL 8 (PTI): A 70-kg touchstone idol of Hindu god Vishnu, worth crores of rupees, has been recovered in northern Bangladesh, a media report said today.

The idol was recovered last night from a house at Paschim Haghuria village in Natore district, 203-km from the capital, the Dhaka Tribune reported, citing officials.

A team of Natore district administration raided the house following a tip-off, NDC Anindya Kumar said.

The idol weighed about 70-kg and was worth several crores of Bangladeshi takas, the official added.

Natore Deputy Commissioner Shahina Khatun said the idol would be handed over to the treasury.

105-yr-old historic engine installed at Darbhanga station

DARBHANGA, JUL 8 (PTI): An England-made steam rail engine of 1913 vintage, said to be the first locomotive that was brought here for haulage work at a sugar mill, was installed today in front of the Darbhanga railway station and will soon be refurbished, a senior official said.

The metre-gauge engine, bearing No.253, which had been lying decrepit at Lohat Sugar Mill, owned by the Bihar sugarcane industries department in the district, was brought to the station premises late last night.

"This is a made-in-England steam engine that lay in a state of decay at the sugar mill. After campaign by a group of heritage activists, we had written to the Bihar government to shift the engine, which then gave the permission. The proposal was cleared by the state Cabinet in March," DRM, Samastipur Division, R K Jain said.

The engine is very historic as it is said to be the "first locomotive" brought to Dar-

bhanga for use at a sugar mill, he added.

"The engine has been kept on rails in front of the station. It needs a lot of work, as it is in decrepit state. Our experts will work on it to refurbish and paint it. We will display it proudly," he told PTI.

From rotting in a corner of a mill to finding a pride of place in the city, the engine may have reached its marked destination, but its journey yesterday had almost got derailed.

A group of people had gathered around the truck when the engine was loaded on its transportation, and protested the shifting of the engine, sources said.

"Some people, with motivated intensions had protested its shifting. The authorities then told them that the engine was being shifted to the station only and persuaded them to cooperate," a source said.

Jain said the engine, made for a narrow-gauge track, is card a 'captive engine' as it was kept at one place for usage, as in the

sugar mill.

Photographer and local heritage activist Santosh Kumar, who was among the few people who had approached the railways, seeking rescuing of this rail heritage, said all the struggle has paid off.

"This step will encourage heritage preservation in Darbhanga. There are four old engines at another sugar mill in the district, they should also be rescued and displayed in front of other stations," he said.

Railways in Darbhanga came in 1874 and rulers of Darbhanga Raj had their own royal trains and saloons.

Railways in the regions were known by different names in different periods, and also as Tirhut Railway. Darbhanga currently falls under Railway's Samastipur Division.

"We already have two heritage engines installed in Samastipur, one in front of the Samastipur Division and other at the premises of the Samastipur Division headquarters," Jain said.

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Dhule lynching: Victim community a peaceful tribe, says police

MURTUZA MERCHANT

DHULE (MAHA), JUL 8 (PTI): The nomadic Nath Gosavi community, whose five members were lynched here on suspicion of child-lifting, is a peaceful tribe with no criminal record, according to a senior official of the Maharashtra Police.

The community members generally travel from place to place in search of work and food and make ends meet by begging and performing acrobatics.

"These people talk sweetly and respectfully to everyone as they need favours," Dhule's Superintendent of Police M Ramkumar told PTI here.

He is puzzled why the five community members were attacked and killed by a mob in Dhule's Rainpada village on July 1.

"They keep coming here and the local villagers know it. But why suddenly they came under attack from the mob is not clear, especially when these people (nomads) have never indulged in violence earlier and have no criminal record," Ramkumar said.

The lynching in Rainpada, about 100 km from the Dhule district headquarters, is believed to have been triggered by rumours that the nomads were child-lifters who sold kidneys of their captives.

In the videos which went viral, the victims, belonging to the Nath Gosavi community, were seen being thrashed with sticks and chappals and stoned after one of them apparently tried to speak to a six-year-old girl.

The nomads generally visit villages on weekly market days, festivals and fairs and set up make-shift houses outside villages.



Upon arrival in any village, they first inform the local police and that is what the Dhule lynching victims were about to do when they were attacked, according to the police and locals.

The police have arrested 24 people so far in connection with the incident and identified 22 more accused.

Laxman Mane, a Marathi writer and social activist who has authored several books on nomadic and denotified tribes, said no formal survey has ever been conducted on the Nath Gosavi community.

These people have no documents required for voting, nor any facilities from the Centre and state governments, he said, adding that if incidents like the

Dhule lynching increase, these communities will become extinct.

The nomadic tribes are mainly found in western Maharashtra, including Satara, Sangli, Solapur and Kolhapur districts, said Mane, who was a member of the Maharashtra Legislative Council from 1990 to 1996.

"There are 28 nomadic and 13 denotified tribes. Their total population in Maharashtra does not exceed 3.5 per cent and barely 0.6 per cent of these people gain any formal education," the Padma Shri and Sahitya Akademi awardee said.

To provide stability to the lives of tribals, the government should allot

them land in Baramati, Ahmednagar, Kolhapur, Satara and Solapur to reside and for farming, he suggested.

"Giving land to these landless labourers is the only way to save them from getting extinct," said Mane, who himself belongs to 'Kaikadi', a denotified tribe.

Describing an interesting custom of the Nath Gosavi community members, Mane said they ask for food from people everyday and do not eat leftovers.

"Even when they have food left, they do not eat it the next day, but dig a hole in the ground and bury the food. When I asked them the reason for doing so, they said they do it as a tradition," he said.



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Reference No: 38/EXAM/SPSC/2018 Date: 05/07/2018

NOTICE

On the basis of the marks obtained in the Written Examination and Viva-Voce/ Interview as Advertisement vide no: 01/SPSC/EXAM/2018 DATED : 16/01/2018 & subsequent Notice no: 25/SPSC/EXAM/18 dt: 15/05/2018 for recruitment to the post of General Duty Medical Officer (Junior Grade) on temporary regular basis under the Sikkim State Health Service, through Direct Recruitment, the candidates bearing the following Roll Numbers are hereby declared qualified in order of merit and the names are recommended for appointment.

Sl. No.	ROLL NO	CANDIDATE NAME
1.	128	Dr. Bishal Gurung
2.	98	Dr. Suman Gurung
3.	89	Dr. Nirmal Kumar Gurung.
4.	49	Dr. Tsewang Donka Bhutia
5.	187	Dr. Shetal Chettri.
6.	156	Dr. Tsephel Eden Bhutia.
7.	62	Dr. Rojesh Kumar Gurung
8.	74	Dr. Sachika Rai.
9.	6	Dr. Deepak Dahal.
10	126	Dr. Balkrishna Chauhan.
11.	63	Dr. Shyamaldip Gurung.
12.	52	Dr. Suraj Adhikari.
13.	82	Dr. Anita Gurung.
14	85	Dr. Udit Pradhan.
15	45	Dr. Bidhya Sharma.
16	27	Dr. Pranay Kishore Chhetri.
17	124	Dr. Hari Krishna Rai.
18.	48	Dr. Dichen Doma Bhutia
19	73	Dr. Prabriti Rai.
20	184	Dr. Sanjay Rai
21.	117	Dr. Chita Subba
22.	112	Dr. Subarna Khatiwara
23	84	Dr. Uma Adhakari
24	55	Dr. Kanupriya Rai.
25.	18	Dr. Raju Singh.
26.	14	Dr. Srijana Subba
27	174	Dr. Meenakshi Dahal.
28	21	Dr. Prasana Rai.
29	15	Dr. Nima Dolma Sherpa
30	94	Dr. Rinzing Ongmu Bhutia
31.	186	Dr. Sherry Rinzin Phen-chungpa
32.	30	Dr. Prashant Rasaily Kami.
33.	7	Dr. Prabhat Moktan.
34.	25	Dr. Deepika Gurung.
35.	106	Dr. Tenzing Yanghcen
36.	65	Dr. Taneesha Subba.
37	2	Dr. Dichen Ongmu Bhutia.
38.	17	Dr. Lok Bahadur Limboo.
39	64	Dr. Kunzang Ongmoo Bhutia
40	185	Dr. Mingyur Dicky Lassopa.
41.	88	Dr. Bunu Pakimo Lepcha.
42.	158	Dr. Rojana Tamang.
43.	107	Dr. Chedup Lepcha
44.	36	Dr. Salina Tamang.
45.	19	Dr. Kanchan Gurung.
46.	32	Dr. Pallavi Pariyar.
47	22	Dr. Mayel Pandi Lepcha.

The candidature of the candidates as shown in the list of provisional, subject to the police verification, medical fitness and verification of all required documents by the State Government.

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Story of 25 eventful years of NHRC, now told through documentary

NEW DELHI, JUL 8 (PTI):

In a first, the story of the 25 eventful years of the National Human Rights Commission will be told in a documentary that seeks to educate and enlighten people about an institution that has served a "watchdog of democracy".

Titled "NHRC: 25 years, Billion Hopes", the documentary has been made by the Films Division as part of the silver jubilee celebrations of the Commission, and is likely to be launched soon.

"The film captures the journey of the NHRC from its humble beginning in 1993 to its present stature, references some of the landmark cases in which NHRC's intervention had made significant impact and the back story of how the redressal system works," a senior official said.

Currently, housed in a modern high-rise building complex -- Manav Adhikar Bhawan -- in south Delhi, it has received "over 17.5 lakh grievances" from people across the country since its inception, an the most from Uttar Pradesh.

"The documentary commissioned by the NHRC, features interviews of Noble laureate and champion of child rights Kailash Satyarthi, Ramon Magasasay award winner, Bezwada Wilson, who has been fighting for the rights of manual scavengers for the last few decades, and NHRC chairperson justice (ret'd) H L Dattu," the official told PTI. "As part of the silver jubilee celebrations, a host of other activities are also in the pipeline, including, conclaves, panel discussions, silver jubilee lectures. Tomorrow, we are launching our jubilee logo and slogan-tagline," the official said.

Fans cheer for Russia at stadium in war-torn Ukraine

DONETSK (UKRAINE), JULY 8 (AFP): Scores of Russia-supporting fans gathered in a cafe inside the disused Donbass Arena in conflict-stricken eastern Ukraine to watch their favoured team play Croatia in the World Cup.

Some came with Russian flags in support of the country which they consider to be their homeland, jumping up and applauding until Croatia finally prevailed on penalties.

It is six years since the arena hosted stars such as Cristiano Ronaldo and Andres Iniesta during Euro 2012, and four years since the outbreak of a deadly conflict in this eastern part of Ukraine.

The war has left the arena in disrepair and locals are subject to a curfew.

But for a few nights at least, the curfew has been relaxed and fans have been able to enjoy broadcast games here.

Three weeks after the World Cup kicked-off in mid-June, the pro-Russian separatist authorities finally fulfilled their promise to open a cafe at the stadium.

"All the tables are booked for the Russia-Croatia game," Julia, the 27-year-old cafe administrator, told AFP ahead of the match.

"The interest in this match is very big." About a hundred fans packed



into the cafe for the game.

But after Croatia sealed victory with the final kick of a penalty shootout in Sochi, the Donbass fans went quietly home, some in tears.

A group of about 20 stayed on in the cafe, yelling "Russ-i-a!" - RUSSIA IN THE HEART -

The mere fact that football had returned -- albeit in a small way -- to the stadium was a miracle for many.

It is not only the cafe that has come back to life during the World Cup. Tours are being run of the stadium's football museum, locker rooms,

stadium bowl and football field.

It was 2014 when Sergei Serdyuk, a 26-year-old chef, last visited the stadium. He came back as part of a tour group ahead of Saturday's match.

"It is like a dream," he told AFP. He said he was following the World Cup and supported Russia "with all his heart".

"I think it is common for all the Donetsk citizens to support the Russian national team," Serdyuk said, speaking before Russia came up agonisingly short on Saturday.

Boxing's national observer Akhil Kumar enrolls for coaching course at NIS

NEW DELHI, JUL 8 (PTI): Indian boxing's national observer Akhil Kumar is all set to foray into coaching and has enrolled for a one-year diploma course at the National Institute of Sports in Patiala.

The 2006 Commonwealth Games gold-medallist, who has also tried his hand at professional boxing some months back, will start the course on July 11. He is also a serving DSP in the Haryana Police but has been granted permission to pursue the one-year course.

"Even when I was an active boxer, I had mentored some juniors and by completing this course, I would be certified. I am grateful to Haryana Police DGP Baljit Singh Sandhu for permission to undertake this course," Akhil told PTI.

The 37-year-old Akhil has been among India's top performers in the ring, having won medals at the Asian and Commonwealth championships besides making the quarterfinals of the 2008 Beijing Olympics after a memorable



win over the then world champion Sergey Vodopyanov.

The maverick boxer enjoyed a rockstar image in his amateur days thanks largely to a perilously low guard and is currently the national observer for the sport, tasked with the job of giving progress reports and monitoring selections.

The boxers he has mentored while being an active competitor include Olympic quarterfinalist and Asian bronze-medallist Jitender Kumar, and Commonwealth Games silver-medallist Mandeep Jangra among others.

"Akhil bhai has loads of experience to offer. He has been such an avid student of the game and he gets deeply involved when it comes to mentoring. It will be nice to have a proven Indian performer as a coach," said former CWG gold-medallist Suranjoy Singh.

Suranjoy had been roped in as an assistant coach in the national camp but left the stint due to personal reasons.

"It's important to have a strong Indian presence in the coaching circuit. And who better than Akhil bhai," added another boxer.

Dipa wins gold in Gymnastics World Cup



NEW DELHI, JUL 8 (PTI):

Returning to action after a long lay-off of nearly two years due to injury, India's premier gymnast Dipa Karmakar clinched the gold medal in the vault event of FIG Artistic Gymnastics World Challenge Cup at Mersin, Turkey today.

The 24-year-old from Tripura, who had finished fourth in vault event in the 2016 Rio Olympics, scored 14.150

to win gold today. She had topped the qualification also with a score of 13.400.

This is Dipa's first medal in a World Challenge Cup.

Dipa, who is being accompanied by her coach Bisheshwar Nandi, has also qualified in balance beam finals by finishing third in the qualification with a score of 11.850.

Dipa had suffered an Anetrior Cruciate Liga-

ment (ACL) injury after Rio Olympics and had undergone surgery. She was initially confident of making a comeback at the Commonwealth Games but rehabilitation took more time than expected and she missed the Gold Coast event.

She has been included in the 10-member Indian gymnastics team for the upcoming Asian Games.

NCAP will be 'ineffectual' without time bound emission, sectoral targets: Experts

NEW DELHI, JUL 8 (PTI): With the Centre likely to notify the ambitious national clean air programme (NCAP) by the month-end, environment experts have suggested time-bound emission and sectoral targets, innovative financing mechanism and a regional approach among other things for the scheme to be effective.

The Environment Ministry has prepared a draft NCAP with an objective to come up with a comprehensive plan for prevention, control and abatement of air pollution, and to augment the air quality monitoring network across the country. Various green groups have submitted their recommendations to the ministry on the draft.

Union Environment Secretary C K Mishra had said that the notification of NCAP "should be done soon, say, by the end of this month".

While one of the experts said the NCAP process will also require rigorous assessment of all city plans to judge their level of stringency and scale of action to achieve the reduction targets, another stressed that the draft NCAP had missed to include many polluted cities across the country and that should be included.

Anumita Roychowdhury, executive director (research and advocacy) and head of CSE's air pollution programme, told PTI there is a long impatient wait for NCAP



to get notified while there is also a deep suspense about its level of ambition to meet clean air targets and also how it is likely to respond to the public comments gathered so far.

"The current draft needs several revisions to be robust. Even though NCAP aims 'to meet the prescribed annual average ambient air quality standards at all locations in the country' and reduce air pollution by '35 per cent within next three years and 50 per cent in the next 5 years' it has not included any mechanism for compliance.

"Targets do not work without compliance framework. This is

clearly evident from the fact that even though national ambient air quality standards are notified under the Air (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1981, there is no mechanism to make it obligatory for cities to meet them," she said.

She added that earlier the 12th Five-Year Plan had also recommended cities to meet air quality norms by the end of the plan period but that never happened as it had not defined the compliance mechanism.

In February, Union Environment Minister Harsh Vardhan had said that the ministry hoped to bring down air pollution in around

100 non-attainment cities by 50 percent in the next five years under the NCAP. Non-attainment cities are areas with air quality worse than the National Ambient Air Quality (NAAQ) Standards.

According to Roychowdhury, it is important to learn from the recent initiative of Delhi and NCR to notify both Graded Response Action Plan and Comprehensive City Action Plan under section 3 and 5 Environment Protection Act 1986, to make these plans legally enforceable.

"These plans have also fixed responsibility on agencies with time line for implementation. NCAP will

not work if all cities do not notify the plans and adopt strong oversight, monitoring and deterrence system," she said.

The key components of the NCAP include city-specific air pollution abatement action plan for 100 polluting cities of the country increasing the number of monitoring stations, data dissemination, public participation on planning and implementation.

The other components include setting up of air information centre for data analysis, resource apportionment studies, national inventory and rural monitoring stations, besides guidelines for indoor air pollution.

"The NCAP process will also require rigorous assessment of all city plans to judge their level of stringency and scale of action to achieve the reduction targets. NCAP must also shed its skepticism about existing health studies and adopt health cost benefit indicators to prevent escalation in health risk.

"Longer term real change is possible if NCAP also adopts innovative financing mechanism to rake in the moolah to back up the intent. Given the magnitude of disease burden due to air pollution in India, NCAP cannot degenerate to be a minimalist and business as usual programme," Roychowdhury said.

Greenpeace India's Sunil Da-

hiya said that NCAP should be the ultimate framework to "ensure compliance to our commitment towards tackling air pollution from all the source and without time bound emission and sectoral target, it will be ineffectual".

"One of the concerns that is most likely to be unresolved was NCAP draft was in one language that has restricted the impacted geographies to be a part of the process for even commenting on the draft. We anticipate that ministry had taken a cognisance and factored in the concerns of local civil society organisations," said Dahiya, senior campaigner at Greenpeace India.

He said the NCAP draft by the ministry had missed out on articulating interim milestones for completing source apportionment studies to reduce 35 per cent and 50 per cent pollution in three and five years respectively. He pointed out that NCAP also needs to have clear interim milestones for all the activities its proposing like city wise action plans.

"For the NCAP to be effective, it has to take a regional approach and emissions from industry and power sectors have high impact at the regional level and not at a city level. To tackle long ranging pollutants, it will be crucial to have detailed plan on sectors outside city limits," Dahiya said.

Pompeo brushes off N Korea 'gangster' tag, says sanctions to stay

TOKYO, JUL 8 (AFP): US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo today shrugged off North Korean accusations of "gangster-like" behaviour and said sanctions on Pyongyang would only be lifted with "final" denuclearisation.

Speaking in Tokyo after two days of intense discussions in Pyongyang, Pompeo insisted the talks were making progress and were being conducted in "good faith." In stark contrast, Pyongyang's take was overwhelmingly negative, with the North warning that the future of the peace process was being jeopardised by overbearing US demands for its unilateral nuclear disarmament.

Speaking privately, US officials suggested the harshly-worded North Korean reaction was a negotiating tactic. But after two days of theatrical amity in Pyongyang it illustrated the gulf that remains between the two sides.

In Tokyo, Pompeo briefed his Japanese and South Korean counterparts on the talks, and sought to reassure them that the dialogue with North Korea would continue.

His trip to Pyongyang had been aimed at fleshing out denuclearisation commitments made during last month's historic summit between President Donald

Trump and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un. North Korea has long trumpeted a denuclearisation goal, but one that it sees as a lengthy process of undefined multilateral disarmament on the entire Korean peninsula, rather than a unilateral dismantlement of its nuclear arsenal.

Speaking in Tokyo, Pompeo said his efforts to push the North on disarmament had the backing of the entire international community.

"If those requests were gangster-like, the world is a gangster, because there was a unanimous decision at the UN Security Council about what needs to be achieved," he said.

Rescue efforts for boys trapped in Thai cave begin

MAE SAI (THAILAND), JUL 8 (AFP): Rescue efforts have begun for 12 boys and their football coach who have been trapped in a cave in northern Thailand for more than two weeks, the head of the mission said today.

The "Wild Boars" team has been confined in a cramped chamber several kilometres (miles) inside the Tham Luang cave complex since June 23, when they went in after football practice and were hemmed in by monsoon floods.

Their plight has transfixed Thailand and the rest of the world, as authorities have struggled to devise a plan to extract the boys and their coach through twisting, narrow and jagged passageways that in some places are completely flooded. "Today is the D-day. The boys are ready to face any challenges," rescue chief Narongsak Osottanakorn told reporters near the cave site as the threat loomed of monsoon rains causing more flooding in the cave and blocking off a rescue bid.

Narongsak said the first boy was expected to be brought out of the cave by around 9:00 pm (1400 GMT), meaning the trip would take around 11 hours.

Authorities had earlier Sunday told the more than 1,000 journalists



who had converged near the cave site's entrance to clear the area in preparation for the rescue operation.

"Everyone who is not involved with the operations has to get out of the area immediately," police announced via loudspeaker.

The boys, aged from 11 to 16, and their 25-year-old coach were found by British cave diving specialists nine days after they ventured in, dishevelled and hungry, on a ledge sev-

eral kilometres inside the cave. But with some of them unable to swim and having no scuba experience,

Narongsak had previously dubbed the rescue effort "Mission Impossible".

The death of a former Thai Navy Seal diver who ran out of oxygen in the cave on Friday underscored the danger of the journey even for adept professionals.

After a short deluge of rain on

Saturday night and with more bad weather forecast later on Sunday, Narongsak said authorities had to act immediately.

"There is no other day that we are more ready than today," he said. "Otherwise we will lose the opportunity." Sustained heavy rains could make the water rise to the shelf where the children were sitting, reducing the area to "less than 10 square meters", Narongsak had said

on Saturday.

Initial euphoria over finding the boys alive quickly turned into deep anxiety as rescuers struggled to find a way to get them out.

Rescuers had fed a kilometres-long air pipe into the cave to restore oxygen levels in the chamber where the team was sheltering with medics and expert divers.

More than 100 exploratory holes had also been bored -- some shallow, but the longest 400 metres deep -- into the mountainside in an attempt to open a second evacuation route and avoid forcing the boys into a dangerous dive through submerged tunnels.

On Saturday, Thai Navy SEALs published touching notes scrawled by the trapped footballers to their families, who had been waiting for them agonisingly close by outside the cave entrance.

The boys urged relatives "not to worry" and asked for their favourite food once they were safely evacuated, in notes handed to divers.

In one, Pheerapat, nicknamed "Night", whose 16th birthday the group were celebrating in the cave when they became stuck on June 23, said: "I love you, Dad, Mum and my sister. You don't need to be worried about me."



BEERS AND CHEERS AS ENGLAND FANS GO WILD OVER WIN: Fans back home erupted in celebration and the beer went flying as England reached the World Cup semi-finals for the first time in 28 years on Saturday. At Flat Iron Square in London, where 650 people crammed in to watch on a giant screen, the party began with beer showers and chants of "Football's coming home" after the 2-0 win over Sweden in Russia. Friends leapt on one another's shoulders to belt out the song from the 1996 European Championships, an uplifting Britpop anthem of maintaining hope against precedent.

Tens of thousands return home after south Syria ceasefire deal

BEIRUT, JUL 8 (AFP): Tens of thousands have returned to their homes in southern Syria since a ceasefire deal between regime ally Russia and rebels to end more than two weeks of deadly bombardment, a monitor said today.

The deal was largely holding despite air strikes on two areas that killed four civilians, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights monitoring group said, as rebel evacuations under the deal were postponed.

President's Bashar al-Assad regime is determined to retake control of the key southern prov-

ince of Daraa bordering Jordan and the Israeli-occupied Golan Heights, seven years after protests there sparked Syria's civil war.

Since June 19, a deadly regime bombardment campaign on the province had caused more than 320,000 people to flee their homes, according to the United Nations, many to the sealed border with Jordan.

On Friday, rebels and the regime announced a ceasefire deal, providing for opposition fighters to hand over their heavy weapons and paving the way for a regime takeover of the province.

Death toll climbs to 76 as heavy rains hammer southern Japan

TOKYO, JUL 8 (AP): Heavy rainfall hammered southern Japan for the third day, prompting new disaster warnings on Kyushu and Shikoku islands today, as the government put the death toll at 48 with 28 others presumed dead.

Japanese government spokesman Yoshihide Suga said the whereabouts of 92 people are unknown, mostly in the southern area of Hiroshima prefecture.

More than 100 reports of casualties had been received, such as cars being swept away, he said. Some 40 helicopters were out on rescue missions.

"Rescue efforts are a battle with time," Prime Minister Shinzo Abe told reporters. "The rescue teams are doing their utmost." The Japan Meteorological Agency said three hours of rainfall in one area in Kochi prefecture reached an accumulated 26.3 centimeters (10.4 inches), the highest since such records started in 1976.



The assessment of casualties has been difficult because of the widespread area affected by the rainfall, flooding and landslides. Authorities warned landslides could strike even after rain subsides as the calamity shaped up to be potentially the worst in decades.

Kochi prefecture, on Shikoku, issued landslide warnings almost over the entire island. Public broadcaster NHK

TV showed overturned cars on roads covered with mud. A convenience store worker, who had fled to a nearby rooftop, said water had reached as high as his head.

The Japanese government set up an emergency office, designed for crises such as major earthquakes.

A residential area in Okayama prefecture, on the main island of Honshu, was seeped

in brown water spreading like a huge lake. Some people fled to rooftops and balconies and waved furiously at hovering rescue helicopters. Military paddle boats were also being used to take people to dry land.

Okayama prefecture said three people had died, six others were missing and seven were injured, one of them seriously. Six homes were de-

stroyed, while nearly 500 were flooded. Evacuation orders or advisories were issued to more than 910,000 people, the prefecture said in a statement.

Kyodo news service reported several deaths in a landslide in Hiroshima and more bodies were retrieved from collapsed housing in the ancient capital of Kyoto, both areas where the rainfall was heavy in the past few days.

Throughout the hard hit areas, rivers swelled and parked cars sat in pools of water. Japan has sent troops, firefighters, police and other disaster relief. People have also taken to social media to plead for help.

In Ehime prefecture, a woman was found dead on the second floor of a home buried by a landslide, Kyodo said. Also in Ehime, two elementary schoolgirls and their mother who got sucked into a mudslide were pulled out but could not be revived, it said.

~ SummitTIMES ~ CLASSIFIEDS

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BROADWAY-STYLE ALADDIN BRINGS ALIVE CHILDHOOD MEMORIES

NEW DELHI, JUL 8 (PTI): The lights are dimmed and an entourage of dancers enter the stage in harem pants crooning about a "faraway place, where the caravan camels roam", and where the "heat is intense" but they love it for "it's home".

The Jawaharlal Nehru indoor stadium reverberated with high notes of the "Arabian Nights", the opening song of the 1992 Aladdin movie, but this time it was sung live by actors for Disney's latest theatrical adaptation of the film.

The Broadway-style musical production brought to life the tale of how Aladdin, a "diamond in the rough", became the successor to the sultan of the fabled city of Agrabah.

Shruti Sharma, the director of the show, told PTI that she made some tweaks here and there to surprise the audience, but the script essentially remained the same to retain its nostalgic value.

Genie is still doing his goofy tricks, the sultan is the same jolly little fellow worried about his rebellious daughter Jasmine, and Aladdin is still the street rat who wants to be rich.

But, for its shows in India, the production that is being staged in various parts of the world since 2011, has brought in local elements to make it more relevant for the audience.

While the rest of the characters speak in English, Aladdin and Genie can be seen conversing in Hindi.

"That's kind of our code lan-



guage," Siddharth Menon, who plays the titular role, said.

From pulling off the difficult notes of familiar songs like "Friend Like Me", "A Whole New World" and "Prince Ali" to belting out a new Aladdin solo number "Proud of Your Boy", the playlist

is reminiscent of the faraway land.

The performers were tutored by vocal trainer Suzanne D'Mello.

Menon, who jumped off roofs and performed acrobatics to showcase Aladdin's "street rat" character, said the singing and the

dancing were the most challenging yet satisfactory parts of performing the musical.

"We did separate sessions with the choreographers and trainers for a month and a half. Then later we did it as a team," he said.

For Puranjit Dasgupta, better

known as Mantra, to transform into Genie was difficult, particularly because he had to match up to the singing of Academy award winning actor Robin Williams, who voiced the blue, potbellied magical character.

"Robin Williams sang these

songs in the movie. People remember them by heart... You can't goof up with them," he said.

The television actor reimagines the role of the wish-granting blue spirit with his identifiable satire and comic timing.

"Now when people will see Genie they will say Mantra. I have made the character my own," he said.

Jasmine, played by Kira Narayanan, comes back almost three decades later as a fiercer, more outspoken princess.

She is an ultimate 21st century woman, says Narayanan, who feels it was necessary to portray strong female characters.

"She has a clear idea of what she wants, what she believes in, and she is not afraid to speak her mind. These are such important qualities to lay in front of the audience, because that's what they expect of their female characters," she says.

After a spectacular show in Mumbai that saw an overwhelming attendance of over 30,000 people, Sharma, who was part of Disney's "Beauty and the Beast" musical in 2015, said the Indian audience was gradually taking a liking for theatrical musical productions.

"We received some great responses on 'Beauty and the Beast', and 'Mughal-e-Azam' has also been doing very well. I do think the Indian audience is ready... it is a little bit about reaching out to them," she says.

The show that premiered here on July 6 will continue till July 15, and is set to go to Hyderabad next.



Once you have the costume on, you become the character: Jennifer Lawrence

NEW YORK, JUL 8 (PTI): Jennifer Lawrence says does not identify as a method actor and said she becomes the character as soon as she puts on her costume.

The 27-year-old actor, who was last seen playing a Russian ballerina-turned-operative in "Red Sparrow", said the film's director, Francis Lawrence asked her to talk to her friends in an accent to stay in character - a suggestion she refused.

"For two weeks before the movie, Francis would say, 'You should talk in the accent at home. Stay in the accent and talk to your friends in the accent.' I said, 'Francis, I don't have those kinds of friends. They would never call me again,' Lawrence told Star magazine.

She added she spent several months getting the accent right and it was tough as it was the first time she was playing a foreigner.

"... So I spent four months before the movie figuring out what kind of dialect she would have. Once you get there and you have the costume on, you become the character and it's easier," the actor added.

Give Morgan Freeman a break: Diane Warren on #MeToo



LOS ANGELES, JUL 8 (PTI): Songwriter Diane Warren has defended Morgan Freeman, who has been accused of sexual harassment and inappropriate behaviour by multiple women, saying the people need to understand the difference between flirting and sexual assault.

According to a CNN report, a total of 16 people spoke to the news outlet about Morgan's alleged acts which range from sexually charged verbal harassment to touching.

Warren, who experienced harassment and misconduct when she was younger, penned the #MeToo movement anthem "Til It Happens to You".

When questioned about the momentum of the campaign, the musician came for-

ward in the Oscar-winning actor's support saying he was brought up in "a different time".

"It's hard to say it's (#MeToo movement) gone too far, but there's a couple of people that I know personally that I feel bad for and, with the Morgan Freeman thing, you go, 'Really? If somebody says, 'Nice legs' or 'You're really cute...' if someone said that to me, I wouldn't treat it as assault," she told WENN.

"I mean he's (Freeman) 80 years old (sic), it's a different time. It's like when George (H. W.) Bush pinched a girl on her a** - he's 90 years old (sic). Give him a break... They came up at a different time.

"Morgan Freeman said, 'You're really cute, I like those legs...' You can't put that in

the same thing as sexual assault, but some people are so militant about it, like, 'It's all the same! It's not the same!' Warren added.

Morgan, one of the latest and most powerful Hollywood personalities to be accused of misconduct, later issued a brief statement of apology hours after the allegations were reported. His lawyer later demanded an immediate retraction of the CNN story and an apology from the network.

Numerous allegations of sexual harassment, misconduct and even rape levelled against disgraced movie producer Harvey Weinstein sparked off #MeToo, a campaign which encouraged women from all walks of life to come forward.

Ryan Fleck confirms wrapping 'Captain Marvel' shoot



LOS ANGELES, JUL 8 (PTI): "Captain Marvel" co-director Ryan Fleck has confirmed that the shooting of the Brie Larson-fronted film is complete.

Fleck, who is helming the superhero movie with directing-writing partner Anna Boden, teased the news on Instagram.

He posted a picture of a shooting schedule, with the page stating "Day 75 of 75", which suggests that the film has just finished-up production.

Fleck captioned the photo: "We got next..."

"Captain Marvel", which

is set to release on March 8, 2019, is a first Marvel Studios project to be fronted by a female superhero.

Larson portrays the character of Carol Danvers / Captain Marvel, a US Air Force pilot whose DNA is fused with that of an alien during an accident, which imbues her with the powers of superhuman strength, energy projection, and flight.

The film also features Samuel L Jackson, Ben Mendelsohn, Djimon Hounsou, Lee Pace, Lashana Lynch, Gemma Chan, Algenis Perez Soto and Jude Law, among others.

ARIES: You might come across strong opposition today from someone who seems to want to cut straight through to your heart, Aries. In reality, this is a message reminding you to think about things in terms of the collective - the oneness of us all. Be aware of a greater perspective in which you see more than just your side of the issue. Talk to people you trust before making any major decisions.

TAURUS: Act on your instincts today, Taurus, and you won't go wrong. You may need to give up a bit of control and put logical thinking aside for the day. Let the wind take you where it wants you to go. Explore your mind and its interactions with others. You'll find that it will be just about impossible to solidify any plans. You're better off exploring options and comparing notes with others. Don't pigeonhole yourself into one way of thinking.

GEMINI: Today you'll find that you're the missing puzzle piece that people need in every situation, Gemini. Engage in light conversation in social arenas and feel free to turn your charm up full blast. You have the ability to make favorable impressions on just about everyone, so get the day off on the right foot. Get out of bed earlier than normal and get your blood pumping with a brisk walk or workout.

CANCER: You may find that people want to do a great deal of talking but not a great deal of feeling today. Cancer. Go ahead and put your emotions on the back burner and let your mind take over. Deal with facts and make sure your emotions don't interfere with the information you receive. Things can get clouded if you don't stay true to the communication that's taking place. Be conscious of your words.

LEO: You should be able to evaluate your emotions from a very neutral, detached perspective today, Leo. Use this opportunity to take action based on what you feel. Make sure your actions aren't reactionary and that you aren't simply acting rashly in response to someone else's hasty maneuvers. Think before you make any sudden moves. You'll be amazed at what incredible things can develop if you simply use your head a bit first.

VIRGO: If you're talking about another person today, Virgo, make sure you aren't saying anything that would be upsetting if they were standing right there. Gossip may be running rampant, but that's no excuse for you to contribute to it. Be aware that what you say has a strong impact on the people around you and is likely to reach many more ears than you may think.

LIBRA: It's important for you to take action on a day like today, Libra. Trust yourself and your instincts. Oftentimes you'll have the perfect advice for every situation and every other person except yourself. Remember that you might have to consult others in order to find the best counsel for yourself. Talk things out and take definitive action. Hesitation causes delay. You have all the facts you need.

SCORPIO: You might find yourself a bit unfocused and confused about which way to go, Scorpio. The baffled look on your face isn't helping anyone else figure out how to help you. Don't feel obliged to remain in an unhealthy situation. It may be time to let go and break some ties to things that no longer work for you. Feel good about extricating yourself from old habits that no longer serve you.

SAGITTARIUS: It's important for you to get outside and feel the wind blowing, Sagittarius. Reconnect with nature and be aware of the four elements. Take deep breaths and fill your lungs with this energizing life force. Imagine yourself on a mountaintop looking over a vast ocean below. Expand your awareness so that nothing escapes your attention. Keep your head clear of clutter and be open to new adventures.

CAPRICORN: Make practical use of the thoughts you have synthesized over the last few days, Capricorn. Stretch your boundaries and extend your wisdom to the people around you. This is a day to take action. Connect with your heart and move forward with your plans. We normally think of our hearts as being soft, tender, and vulnerable. Today think of your heart as being tough, strong, and adventurous.

AQUARIUS: This is an important day for you to make valuable connections with others, Aquarius. You'll find yourself engaged in fast-paced, witty conversations and debates from which you can learn a great deal. You're good at seeing both sides of an issue, but the problem is that this can lead to indecisiveness and an inability to commit to anything. Choose a path today and stick to it.

PISCES: It could be hard for you to get a handle on things today, Pisces, as your focus seems to jump from one subject to the next without finding resolution for any. This isn't a day to find solutions. You're better off researching, asking questions, and gathering facts. Keep the channels of communication open, and don't try to pin anyone down for a solid answer. You'll accomplish a great deal by keeping things active and light.