



**BB-BP WEEK KICKS OFF
IN NORTH SIKKIM**
pg 02

**THEIR FAILURE IN BASIC TASKS
SNOWBALLS INTO ACROSS
THE BOARD DEFICIENCIES**
04

**10 SELECTED FOR PENDAM
FOOTBALL ACADEMY AFTER
WINTER COACHING CAMP**
pg 03



SummitTIMES

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ON TOP OF THE NEWS

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Pages 8 | ₹ 5

Passang Sherpa condemns violation of Rule 4/4 in appointment of OSD to the CM

**SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 20 JAN:**

Passang Sherpa, in his capacity as the Co-ordinator, I Am 371F Campaign, today condemned the appointment of Sunil Saraogi as an OSD to the Chief Minister.

In a press release issued today, Mr Sherpa argues that Mr Saraogi's appointment, given that is presumably a "non-local," was in violation of Rule 4/4 of the Sikkim Government Establishment Rules of 1974 which reserves government jobs exclusively for locals.

He has regretted that the SKM Government has gone back on its pre-poll commitment to local protection and old laws so quickly and so frequently.

"Starting with the appointment of Mahendra P Lama as an Economic Advisor violating Rule 4/4, inability to exempt Sikkim from the preview of Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA), the implementation of Motor Vehicle Act 2019 without a single discussion in the State Assembly though state government had all the power to revisit the Act. The situation got further deteriorated as SKM government chooses to remain silent on the issue of National Population Register (NPR), a prerequisite of National Register of Citizens (NRC)," he writes.

The latest appointment "has proved that SKM party and the state government has no concern about the rights and interests of Sikkimese people," he adds.

It is surprising that many senior leaders proclaiming themselves to be the guardian of Article 371F and now holding the senior most posts in the party and government has remained silent throughout, he rues further.

He continues with his condemnation of the SKM Government by pointing out that the focus should have been at providing solutions to the long pending demands of Sikkimese people. SKM government, however, "is hell-bent on diluting the special provisions of Article 371F, as such we condemn such moves of SKM government and appeal the senior and Sikkim centric leaders within SKM party to raise their voice against such arbitrary decisions of the state government in larger interests of Sikkim and its people," he adds.

Weightlifter Pemba opens Sikkim's account at Youth Games



SAGAR CHETTRI

GANGTOK, 20 JAN:

Sikkim won its first-ever medal at Khelo India Youth Games today when weightlifter Pemba Tshering Sherpa clinched a bronze medal for the State in U-21 years 81 kg weight category at Guwahati on Monday.

The Sikkim contingent comprises of six boxers, four athletes and one weight lifter and is being led by Sports & Youth Affairs Department Assistant Director, Dilip Chettri.

Swapan Sadhan Bose named president of Mohun Bagan

KOLKATA, JAN 20 (PTI): Noted businessman Swapan Sadhan (Tutu) Bose on Monday was named president of Mohun Bagan club, a position which lay vacant after eminent lawyer Gitanath Ganguly's demise.

"The club lost its president Ganguly in December 2019 and subsequently the executive committee members in today's meeting unanimously decided to select Swapan Sadhan Bose as the new president of the club," the Mariners stated in a release. Consequently, there was a re-shuffle in the Mohun Bagan executive committee as Bose's son, Srinjoy Bose, now was made the general secretary, while Satyajit Chatterjee, who was treasurer, became the assistant general secretary.

Uttam Saha, previously ground secretary, will now be the treasurer, while Mahesh Tekriwal and Sandipan Banerjee were elected unopposed as ground secretary and hockey secretary respectively.

Mohun Bagan have made a landmark move announcing their merger with ATK from June, paving the way for the oldest football club of the country to compete in the top tier Indian Super League from next season.

Nirbhaya case: SC rejects death row convict's plea claiming juvenility

NEW DELHI, JAN 20 (PTI): The Supreme Court Monday rejected the plea of a death row convict in the Nirbhaya gang rape and murder case challenging the Delhi High Court order which had dismissed his claim of being a juvenile at the time of commission of offence.

A bench comprising Justices R Banumathi, Ashok Bushan and A S Bopanna dismissed the plea of the death row convict, Pawan Kumar Gupta, and upheld the Delhi High Court verdict.

The apex court said there was

no ground to interfere with the high court order that rejected Pawan's plea and his claim was rightly rejected by the trial court as also the high court.

Advocate A P Singh, appearing for Pawan, said that as per his school leaving certificate he was a minor at the time of the offence and none of the courts, including trial court and high court, ever considered his documents.

Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, appearing for Delhi police, said that his claim of juvenility was consid-

ered at each and every judicial forum and it will be a travesty of justice if the convict is allowed to raise the clam of juvenility repeatedly and at this point of time.

He said the convict was 19 years old at the time of offence and there is a certified copy of his birth certificate as well as school leaving certificate which was taken on record by each and every judicial forum.

Pawan had moved the apex court on Friday. He has also sought a direction restraining the author-

ities from executing the death penalty, scheduled for February 1.

A Delhi court on Friday issued fresh death warrants for February 1 against the four convicts -- Vinay Sharma (26), Akshay Kumar Singh (31), Mukesh Kumar Singh (32) and Pawan (25) -- in the case.

A 23-year-old paramedic student, referred to as Nirbhaya, was gang-raped and brutally assaulted on the intervening night of December 16-17, 2012, in a moving bus in south Delhi by six people before she was thrown out on the road.

Taking earnest attempt to decriminalise Companies Law:FM



CHENNAI, JAN 20 (PTI): Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman has said the government's earnest attempt was to decriminalise everything that has to do with Companies Law or related acts as part of initiatives towards a USD 5 trillion economy.

She said the government does not want a law that could treat every business house with suspicion.

Delivering the Nani Palkhiwala Memorial lecture on Sunday evening here, Sitharaman said she was impressed with the comments made by TATA Sons Ltd Chairman N Chandrashekharan who remarked that the government should trust people and its own citizens.

"My first attempt and also an earnest attempt which continues today is to decriminalise everything to do with Companies law or related laws. The very point Prime Minister (Narendra Modi) keeps talking," she said.

Sitharaman said in Companies Law, there are a number of sections leading to a criminal approach and penalties of even jail terms.

"I had gone through this with a tooth comb.

Decriminalising Companies Law ensuring no other act of Government whether it is Income Tax

or your PMLA (Prevention of Money Laundering Act) will have such an impact.

We are making sure that aspect will be addressed," she said.

Elaborating, she said "we do not want a law which is going to treat every business house with suspicion. That is not the intent of this government at all".

She said it was one of the initiatives the government had planned as part of steps towards taking the country to a USD 5 trillion economy, ensuring trust between the government and businesses.

Earlier, to a query posed by a member of the audience that the government was pumping money into banks which had huge non-performing assets, she said banks are required to perform critical functions in an economy.

Sitharaman said once PA was around Rs 10 lakh crore.

"It has come down to Rs 8 lakh crore, it has further come down now. when we are talking about NPA and when money is given to banks, it is not that the banks need to take that money and happy with that...go after those who failed the bank by not paying dues. Get the money back..." she said.

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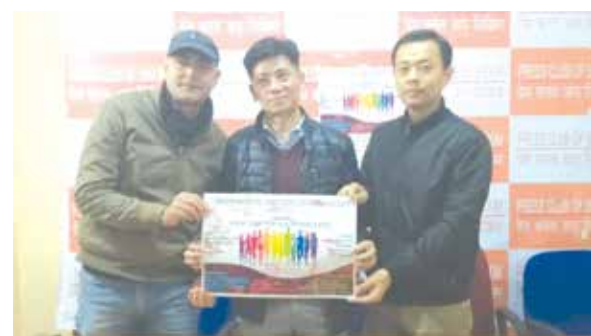
Run with SMIT on 02 Feb

**SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 20 JAN:**

Sikkim Manipal Institute of Technology [SMIT] is organizing a run on the theme 'Run with SMIT for Healthy Mind & Body' on 02 February at its campus in Majhitar.

The main objective of the run is to create wider awareness about the need to keep a healthy mind and body through sports and productive activities.

Addressing a press conference here today, a core member of the organizing committee, Dr Gopal Thapa, informed that SMIT faculty members and students have come together to organize this event to provide another platform for runners and sports enthusiasts.



He mentioned that this was the first edition of the run and will continue as an annual event of the institute from now onwards.

The run will include a competitive category of 14 KM and a non-competitive category of 5 KM.

The competitive event will have open [Men & Women] and veterans' [45 years and above] category while the non-competitive category is open for all. It

has been informed that T-shirts, medals and certificates will be provided to all finishers and winners in the competitive categories will also be provided cash prizes.

The run is scheduled to be flagged-off at 7 PM on 02 February from SMIT campus.

Participants in the 14 KM run will have to reach upto Bardang and return to the starting point while the 5 KM run will return to the starting

point from Nimdao Motors.

Interested runners from Gangtok, Ranipool and Singtam can also avail the facilities of two SMIT buses to reach the campus. The organizers will also make available hostel facilities to runners at very nominal prices.

Dr Thapa mentioned that registrations for the run have already opened. While last-minute entries are also allowed, only those participants who register by 25 January will get bib numbers with their names.

The press conference was also addressed by other core members of the organizing committee, Nirmal Rai, Prakash Chandra Khanal and Dipendra Dhakal.

Students protest at Mandi House against CAA, NRC

NEW DELHI, JAN 20 (PTI): Hundreds of students marched from Mandi House to Jantar Mantar on Monday to protest against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act and the National Register for Citizens.

Students, belonging to different universities, raised slogans demanding "azaadi" from the new citizenship law and carried posters which read "We stand united against CAA, 'Agar tum decent hote toh dissent ko samajhte' (If you were decent, you would have understood dissent), 'Secularism up, Communalism down down'.

They marched through Lutyens Delhi escorted by police while raising slogans.

The students also lauded protesters at Shaheen Bagh and Jamia Millia Islamia, who have been on a sit-in against the CAA for a month.

The march led by the Young India Coordination Committee was joined by several student organisations and coordination committee of Jamia and Shaheen Bagh.

Dinesh Kumar, research scholar at Ambedkar University,



said, "The centre is being selective on which minority communities they will be giving citizenship to. Why is there a selective approach? Why is citizenship linked to religion here? What about atheists?"

Citing economic crisis, Anushree Joshi, a student of Lady Shri Ram College said the Centre does not have resources for their own citizens and with implementation of CAA, how will the government provide resources to them with such economic slowdown?

"Besides, the very basis of allotment of citizenship is religion which goes against the secular fabric of our country," she said.

Former Jawaharlal Nehru Students' Union President N Sai Balaji led the march along

with former JNU student Umar Khalid and student leader Kawalpreet Kaur.

"We urge the Supreme Court to scrap the unconstitutional CAA. We are protesting to save the Constitution," Balaji said.

Miraj, a member of Shaheen Bagh Coordination Committee said the women at their protesting site have set an example for the rest of the country by sitting peacefully for the last 35 days to protect the Constitution.

"When Delhi was shivering under extreme cold, the grandmothers at Shaheen Bagh were out on the streets to save the Constitution. The protest that was triggered due to violence at Jamia has now set an example for the entire nation and

there is a Shaheen Bagh springing up at every other place," he said.

Shahdosh Aalam, a member of the Jamia Coordination Committee said they will not step down unless the Centre rolls back CAA and challenged the Home Minister to visit Shaheen Bagh, speak to students of Jamia and address the protesting students and public.

"I was witness to the police brutality that was unleashed at Jamia Millia Islamia. We were lathicharged and attacked. I challenge the government. They may call the police or use tear gas but none of these can stop our sentiments against CAA. The nationwide protests show that the Centre is wrong and their intentions are wrong," he said.

BB-BP Week kicks off in North Sikkim



MANGAN, 20 JAN [IPR]: Beti Bachao Beti Padhao Week kicked off in North Sikkim today. Additional District Magistrate Surat Gurung announced the calendar of events for the week at a District Task Force meeting held at the DAC conference hall.

A district task force and block task force meeting, signature campaign, Beti Bachao-Beti

Padhao pledge ceremony was organized at the district administrative centre and all the blocks.

After this, a door-to-door joint campaign with AWW and ASHA, pasting of Beti Bachao-Beti Padhao stickers on all visited houses, public buildings, panchayat offices, etc. will be organized on 21 January.

Drawing, painting and essay-writing com-

petitions will be organised in schools on 22 January.

Sensitization programmes on the value of girl child and social meetings will be held on 23 January. On the same day, CDPOs will identify local champions and engage them in awareness programmes.

National Girl Child Day will be celebrated at Zilla Bhawan on 24

January.

Talk shows on health & nutrition, PC &PNDT Act, CSR and Child Protection will be organised on 25 January and felicitations held for local champions, best girl friendly panchayats, best SMC, best frontline workers, supervisor, CDPOs, best girl achievers in sports, academics, culture etc will be organised on 26 January.

Agri Minister underlines Govt's commitment to farms and farmers



NAMCHI, 20 JAN (IPR): An awareness programme on Agriculture, Horticulture, Animal Husbandry and Veterinary Services was held at Krishi Vigyan Kendra, Namthang, today.

Agriculture Minister Lok Nath Sharma was present as the chief guest accompanied by the area MLA, Transport Minister Sanjeet Kharel as the guest of honour.

During the programme, the e-Voucher benefit distribution programme under the Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchai Yojana (PMKSY) Scheme was officially launched by the Minister. He handed over tokens of various facilities, including construction of GENAP tanks, Green Houses, Cold Storage Units, Vegetable Collection Centres, Vermicompost Units.

Farmers also received water tanks and polypipes, carnation, gerbera and maize seeds, Soil Health Card and Hampshire piglets, cowpea (Bodi), Kharif Fodder Seed, Backyard Poultry, Chaff Cutter, Rearing of Lactating Jersey Cow and Intensive Carp Fish Farming and subsidized loan.

In his address, the Agriculture Minister highlighted that the State Government was dedi-

cated and committed to uplift Sikkimese people, from the consumers to the producers.

Encouraging farmers towards vegetable production and dairy, he informed that the State Government will provide financial incentives for vegetable growers and milk producers from the next financial year onwards.

The State Government has left no stone unturned to ensure progress and prosperity of the farmers as envisioned by the Chief Minister, he said while directing the concerned department to develop every VLW centre as a model farming centre.

He also announced to establish a Stockmen Centre and a Milk Collection Centre at Niz-Ramyang GPU.

The Minister assured to introduce new technology in the state to encourage fisheries and increase vegetable production in the year 2020.

The state government is formulating an effective strategy to protect farms from wildlife damage and reopen Gaucharans, he added.

Minister-cum-Area MLA, Sanjeet Kharel marked the event as a historic day for the farmers as the state govern-

ment has distributed facilities of more than Rupees One Crore for Namthang Rateypani Constituency. The present state government has given top priority to Agriculture, Health and Education sector. He also motivated unemployed youths to adopt agriculture as a source of livelihood and also advised to initiate dairy and goat farming.

Pr Secretary Agriculture and Horticulture, R Telang encouraged farmers towards agricultural profession and drew lights on sustainability and income generations through this profession. He also underlined advanced technology emerged in the agriculture farming sector and incentivise the farmers to sell their agricultural produces after proper processing and packaging. He also touched upon planning of urban cluster for vegetables and contract farming.

Secretary Horticulture, MT Sherpa threw lights on ongoing schemes and programmes of Horticulture Department while the Secretary Agriculture, Rinzing C Bhutia highlighted various schemes and programmes of Agriculture Department.

He also informed that the department will distribute Soil Health Card to a total of sixty six thousand people in the state, which began from Namthang today.

Director Animal Husbandry and Veterinary Services, NB Chettri elaborated existing schemes and programmes of various sections implemented under the department. Managing Director, Sikkim Milk Union, Dr AB Karki spoke on various activities recently taken up by the Milk Union and encouraged farmers for surplus production of milk.

At the onset, Minister Sharma along with the officials visited vegetable farm, demonstration unit of German Angora Rabbit, Goattery, Poultry, low cost Mushroom Unit, Technology Demonstration Unit within the premises of KVK.

The Minister also interacted with the staff and took details of various activities and further advised them to develop KVK as a model in all types of activities to encourage and support the villagers.

The dignitaries and the farmers also saw technical demonstrations based on Zero Budget: Natural Farming/ No dig farming in the field.

SSB organizes Pulse Polio vaccination drive



GANGTOK, 19 JAN [PIB]: Following the Pluse Polio immunisation campaign of Government of India to eliminate poliomyelitis in India Sector Hqrs Sashastra Seema Bal Marchak (Gangtok) orga-

nized a polio vaccination drive at its campus on 19 Jan, 2020.

A Booth was established at Sector Hqrs SSB Marchak Camp for this vaccination drive. In this drive vaccination was

provided to children by medical team of Sector Hqrs SSB Marchak & Staff of Singtam Govt. Hospital. SSB Officials started an awareness about vaccination among the people of surrounding

area. Approximately 80 children of less than five years were given Pulse polio drop of Marchak, Ranipool, 8th Mile & 9th Mile area to sustain polio eradication from the country.

Serena 'concerned' over Australian Open pollution after past lung problems

MELBOURNE, JAN 20 (AFP): Serena Williams voiced concern over pollution from bushfire smoke at the Australian Open on Monday, saying that lung problems in the past could make her more vulnerable.

The 38-year-old American, who is pursuing a record-equalling 24th Grand Slam title, said it was a waiting game to see how conditions develop over the next fortnight.

The poor air that disrupted qualifying eased by Monday -- when Williams made a winning start against Anastasia Potapova -- and instead gave way to spells of heavy rain.

"I definitely was concerned, and am," said Williams, who suffered a lung blood clot during labour while giving birth to daughter Olympia in 2017 -- the second time she has needed emergency treatment for the problem.



"That (haze) is still a concern for, I think, pretty much everyone."

Many players have hit out at organisers for ploughing ahead last week with qualifying matches, despite pollution levels hitting some of the worst on the planet in Melbourne.

Asked if she feared she might be more sensitive to the pollution because of her past prob-

lems, Williams replied: "It definitely crossed my mind."

"I'm, like, 'Oh no, I'm already playing a little down than most people.'"

But Williams, who gave her USD 43,000 Auckland winners' cheque to a bushfire relief fund last week, said she felt no particular problem in her opening victory against Russian teenager Anastasia Pota-

pova.

The American said tournament organisers had been keeping the players informed of the latest conditions each day.

"That's been really good to see that the Australian Open take that stance on that," she said.

"So it's literally every day, we are just waiting every day to see how the air quality would be.

for the construction of a Ram temple at the site where the Babri mosque was demolished.

He said the issue of population explosion was also discussed during the meeting.

We will support any proposal of the Union government to check population explosion and spread awareness regarding this, he said.

Yechury attacks govt on slowdown in economy

NEW DELHI, JAN 20 (PTI): CPI(M) general secretary Sitaram Yechury on Monday slammed the government over the slowdown in economy and said that this was not just "mismanagement" but "destruction of lives".

Reacting to reports that the government's tax collection is likely to fall short of its estimate by Rs 2.5 lakh crore or

1.2 per cent of GDP in 2019-20, Yechury said that the Centre will be made accountable.

"This is not mere mismanagement of the economy. It is the destruction of lives and livelihoods of millions of Indians, while Modi's rich cronies continue to benefit and fund the BJP. The people on the streets have taken note, accountability will be fixed," he tweeted.

22 IAS officials transferred in Chhattisgarh

RAIPUR, JAN 20 (PTI): The Chhattisgarh government on Monday transferred 22 Indian Administrative Service officials, the state General Administration Department informed.

Alok Shukla, a 1986 batch IAS official, , presently posted as Principal Secretary Planning, Economic and Statistics and also in charge of some other departments was made Principal Secretary School Education with additional charge of Chairman, Chhattisgarh Board of Secondary Education and Chairman Chhattisgarh Professional Examination Board.

Secretary (Labour) Subodh Kumar Singh, a 1997 batch IAS, was relieved of a few departments and given additional charge of Secretary Public Health Engineering (PHE). Secretary PHE,

Devi Dayal Singh was transferred in the same rank as secretary GAD, and will have additional charge of Scheduled Tribe, Scheduled Caste, Other Backward Caste and Minorities Development Department and Public Relations.

Rita Shandilya has been made Secretary Revenue and Disaster Management while Pardeshi Siddhartha Komal was made secretary, Public Works Department.

Anbalagan P, secretary, Mining Resources department has been given additional charge of the Culture department.

Prasana R was given the post of secretary Co-operatives department, while Joint Chief Election Officer, Chhattisgarh, Sameer Vishnoi was made Chief Executive Officer Chhattisgarh Infotech Promotion Society (CHiPS).

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GENERAL LAND FOR SALE

Roadside plots for sale at Adampool, Ranipool-Rumtek highway.

For details contact: 9083826462

FLAT FOR RENT/LEASE

Fully furnished 3BHK flat available for rent/lease at Church Road near DPH. Roadside and five minutes walking distance from MG Marg.

For more details: 9083826462 /9832556698

GENERAL LAND FOR SALE

General land 30X40 (3 Plots) available for sale at Tadong 6th Mile next to Harka Maya College. Flat Land no cutting required. Price 36 Lakhs (negotiable).

Contact: 9800201335

LAND FOR SALE

A land measuring an area for 50x32 1/2 at Roadside just below housing colony is for sale. It is just a one minute walking distance from Namchi bazaar taxi stand. Interested party may contact 9593373387 and 9434406761

LAND FOR SALE

An area measuring 1 acre at Sadam South Sikkim near Loretto Convent School at Gupti road. Price negotiable any one interested can contact:

78640-04501,62970-03235, 98320-48410

10 selected for Pendam Football Academy after winter coaching camp

SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 20 JAN:

The 13th edition of the annual winter football coaching and selection camp of Pendam Football Academy concluded on 18 January.

40 aspiring footballers from East, West and South districts had participated in the camp which had begun at Tikalal Niroula Senior Secondary School ground in Central Pendam on 05 January. At the end of the camp, 10 footballers were selected to enroll in Pendam FA for further coaching



and training.

The closing ceremony was chaired by Panchayat president of Budang Kameray GPU, Karma Gyurmey Bhu-

tia.

PFA president, Karma Zigmee Bhutia and general secretary LD Dulal also thanked the area MLA, Speak-

er LB Das, CLC president Hari Dangal, all members of PFA advisory board, all guardians and students, Tikalal Nir-

oula SSS, Sports & Youth Affairs Department and coach Sonam Pintsho Bhutia for their support in making the camp possible.

Letter of Appreciation and cash award for Ladorjee Tamang

SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 20 JAN:

Chief Minister PS Tamang [Golay] conferred a Letter of Appreciation and announced a Rs 3 lakh cash award for Ladorjee Tamang who recently won the first position in Solo Guitar competition at the 23rd National Youth Festival [Yuva Utsav] held at Lucknow from 12 to 16 Jan. The award was conferred at function held at Jorethang Playground on the occasion of the 9th All India Chief Minister International Football Tournament on 19 Jan.

The function was at-

tended by Sports & Youth Affairs Minister, Kunga Nima Lepcha, Cabinet Ministers, MLAs, Secretary Sports & Youth Affairs Department, Kuber Bhandari, members of South District Football Association and other dignitaries. While conferring the citation and khadas, the Chief Minister congratulated Mr Tamang assured to support him for his future endeavors. Also on the occasion, the CM announced that district-wise youth festivals will be organized and the winners will go on to compete in the State Youth Festival.



Dicka brace helps Punjab FC beat Gokulam Kerala 3-1

LUDHIANA, JAN 20 (PTI): A Dipanda Dicka brace helped Punjab FC register a 3-1 victory over Gokulam Kerala in an I-League match at the Guru Nanak Stadium here on Monday.

Sergio Barboza Jr broke the deadlock in the first-half stoppage time before a Henry Kisekka goal drew the visitors level in the 52nd minute. Dicka restored Punjab's advantage via a free-kick in the 64th minute, before adding his second in stoppage time to seal the three points in emphatic fashion.

Punjab head coach Yan Law named an unchanged starting eleven, choosing not to experiment as the race for the title begins to take shape, with their opponents from Kerala firmly in the equation.

Fernando Varela, on the back of Gokulam's re-

sounding victory against East Bengal, made just two changes to his side, with Mohamed Irshad and Muthu Irulandi getting the nod in his 3-5-2 formation.

Gokulam did not waste a minute in making their intentions clear, as it took them only 20 seconds after kick-off to rattle the woodwork, as Marcus Joseph went on to have a crack from a distance, but was denied by a fully stretched Kiran Limbu, who did well to get a fingertip and parry it onto the frame of the goal.

In the third minute, it was Joseph again, whose corner took an unexpected swerve towards the goal that caught everyone by surprise, but Limbu did well to react just on time and punch it clear.

Punjab looked all over the place, struggling

to find themselves out of their own half with Gokulam in total control.

In the 16th minute, Joseph whipped in a beautiful cross from a set-piece down the right flank, which was met by the toe of Jestin George, but his speculative touch almost paid dividends, as it ricocheted off the near post. The rebound fell to Joseph, but he blasted it wide.

In the 33rd minute, Salman Kalliyath was played through down the right and with only a man to beat, made a total hash of it. Caught between two minds, whether to shoot or pass it to a lurking Kisekka, but in the end did neither.

Much against the run of play, Punjab took the lead in the first minute of first-half stoppage time. A Cavin Lobo strike from

a distance hit Dicka on the way, who knew nothing about it, but the deflection fell kindly to Sergio Barboza Jr who made no mistake in squaring it past the keeper.

Gokulam played all the football, but it was Punjab who walked away with the goal, heading into the break.

In the second half, Gokulam stuck to their game plan and were rewarded in the 52nd minute. It was yet another exquisite Joseph set-piece which found Kisekka whose thundering shot hit the crossbar and went in.

Punjab stuck to a plan, playing out from the back while allowing the visitors more possession. The home side earned a free-kick on the edge of the 18-yard box, yet again in total contrast to

the run of play. Dicka stepped up and did just enough to shoot over the wall, leaving Ubaid CK in goal stranded to restore the Punjab side's advantage.

Punjab added a third in the first minute of stoppage time. With three minutes to go, Ubaid made a horrible error with the ball at his feet.

With Dicka lurking, the Kerala keeper tried to play smart by dribbling past him but his audacious attempt was made to pay, as Dicka snatched the ball from his feet and with the keeper in no man's land, added a third to seal the three points for Punjab.

The result saw Punjab remain on second place with 14 points, three behind leaders Mohun Bagan, while Gokulam occupy fifth with 10 points.

21 child labourers rescued in Rajasthan, 4 men held

JAIPUR, JAN 20 (PTI): Twenty-one child labourers were rescued from a bangle factory and four men were arrested in this connection here on Monday, police said.

A police team raided a bangle making factory and 21 children working there were rescued, said Shiv Narayan, Station House Officer of Bhatta Basti police station.

He said the children are in the age group of 12 to 16 years and all residents of Bihar.

Four men -- Mohammad Anzar, Mohammad Firoz, Mohammad Dildar and Lorik Kumar -- were arrested in this connection, Narayan said.

The rescued children have been sent to a juvenile home, he said.

33 take part in Indian National Mathematical Olympiad



SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 20 JAN:

Indian National Mathematical Olympiad (INMO) was successfully conducted in Nar Bahadur Bhandari Degree College, Tadong, a press release informs.

After clearing PRMO and RMO, 42 students had qualified for this year's exam from among over 200 students. Out of this 33 students appeared for the exam.

This is a Government of India program under

Department of Atomic Energy conducted by HBCSE, TIFR under the aegis of National Board of Higher Mathematics (NBHM). Candidates get an opportunity to represent India in International Mathematics Olympiad if they do well in this competition, the release mentions.

Various scholarships are also offered to such candidates. However, the ultimate objective of this program is to identify and nurture

hidden mathematics talent among students and eradicate math phobia.

To facilitate their preparation a 5-day residential camp was organised in collaboration with Sikkim Mathematical Society. Travel support and food were also given to all the INMO candidates on exam day.

According to Regional Co-ordinator, Kshittiz Chettri, top three students from Sikkim would be given prizes for encouragement.

Students clash in Bengal's Dinhat, one injured

KOLKATA, JAN 20 (PTI): Two groups of students clashed near Dinhat College in West Bengal's Coochbehar district on Monday, leaving one of them injured, police said.

The Trinamool Congress Chhatra Parishad (TMCP) alleged that "rowdies patronised by the BJP" attacked its activists near the college gate, leaving one student injured while RSS-affiliate ABVP dismissed the charges and termed the incident as "factional feud" of the TMCP's college unit.

The injured student

has been admitted to a hospital, an officer of Dinhat police station said. A college spokesperson said there was a report of "disturbances and scuffle between two groups of students outside the college campus" during the day but the authorities do not have further information.

"As there is no support for ABVP in colleges across West Bengal, the BJP is desperate and trying to create terror and panic to help ABVP spread its base. We will not let that happen," TMCP state president

Trinankur Bhattacharya told PTI.

Dismissing the allegations, ABVP national secretary Saptarshi Sarkar said, "Everyone saw that both the factions of the students were holding TMCP flags during the clash." He alleged that the clash was a fallout of TMCP's bid to control the students' union fund in the college.

"Similar incidents are taking place in higher educational institutions across the state wherever TMCP is in power. They will be rejected by students," he said.

SIKKIM STATE DISASTER MANAGEMENT AUTHORITY (SSDMA) LAND REVENUE AND DISASTER MANAGEMENT DEPARTMENT GOVERNMENT OF SIKKIM

Tashiling Secretariat, Block - B, Gangtok, East Sikkim - 737101
Phone No: 03592-201145/Fax: 03592-201075/website:www.ssdma.nic.in
Email:ssdma01@gmail.com

Ref no: 249/SSDMA/LR&DMD/GoS/2020

Date: 14/01/2020

Expression of Interest

National Disaster Management Authority, Government of India has approved the Detailed Project Report (DPR) for Mitigation of Mangan Landslide, North Sikkim submitted by Sikkim State Disaster Management Authority (SSDMA) as a Demonstrative Landslide Mitigation Programme. The approved cost of the civil works is around Rs.10 crores which includes Scaling & Dressing works, Driving of Self Drilling Anchors, Construction of Catch Drains, Shotcreting works along with quality & Post Monitoring Cost including HM instrumentation. The main areas of work fall along SNT complex, vicinity of Senior Secondary School Mangan, and areas below Multi Storey Car Parking. The Detailed Project Report with Detailed Estimate is available at the Office of Additional Director, SSDMA, Land Revenue and Disaster Management Department, Government of Sikkim, Gangtok and can be accessed at www.ssdma.nic.in and www.sikkimlrmd.gov.in.

The registered Firms/Contractors having requisite qualification, equipments and expertise to undertake the above work can submit their Expression of Interest (EOI) to the office of undersigned in a sealed envelope within 28th January 2020 before 2 pm with necessary documents mentioning qualification and experience.

The EOI will be opened at 3:30 pm on 28th January 2020 in the presence of Committee constituted for this purpose who shall have the right to accept and reject the EOI based on the acceptance criteria.

Sd/-
Additional Director
SSDMA

LR&DM Deptt., Govt. of Sikkim
Gangtok, East Sikkim.

R.O. No. 330/IPR/Pub/Class./19-20 Date: 16.01.2020

GOVERNMENT OF SIKKIM OFFICE OF THE PRINCIPAL DIRECTOR PENSION, GROUP INSURANCE & PROVIDENT FUND FINANCE DEPARTMENT GANGTOK

NO. 338 /PGIPF

Date: 13.01.2020

NOTICE

The PGIPF Division of Finance Department, Government of Sikkim is conducting Pension Adalat at the District Head Quarters as per the schedule detailed below. All Pensioners including Family Pensioners are requested to kindly attend the said Pension Adalat with their queries and grievances between 10.30 AM to 1.30 PM

Date	District	Venue
20.01.2020	North	Conference Hall of District Collector, Mangan
22.01.2020	South	Conference Hall of Zilla Panchayat, Namchi
23.01.2020	West	Conference Hall of District Collector, Rabdentse
27.01.2020	East	Conference Hall of District Collector, Gangtok

Sd/-
Deepak Kumar Pradhan
Director, PGIPF
State Pension Nodal Office

R.O. No. 325/IPR/Pub/Classi./19-20dt. 13.01.2010

Nadda takes over as BJP president

NEW DELHI, JAN 20 (PTI): Jagat Prakash Nadda was elected unopposed as the BJP's national president on Monday, taking over the reins from Amit Shah whose tenure of five-and-a-half years saw the party turning into a formidable election-winning machinery despite occasional setbacks.

The 59-year-old leader from Himachal Pradesh is seen as an affable and low-key politician who enjoys the trust of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the RSS -- the BJP's ideological mentor. He is largely expected to continue with the course it took under Shah with Modi laying out the broader agenda.

The Delhi assembly election is the first challenge for Nadda, who has been touring the capital extensively as the Bharatiya Janata Party works overtime to oust the Aam Aadmi Party from power.

BJP leader Radha Mohan Singh, who was the incharge of the organisational election process, made the announcement of Nadda's election as the party's 11th president after he emerged as the only nominee in the fray.

Modi later arrived at the party headquarters to felicitate the newly-elected president at a ceremony that was attended by members of the BJP parliamentary board, its highest body, and veterans like L K Advani and Murli Manohar Joshi.

Earlier, Shah was joined by senior party leaders, including Union ministers Rajnath Singh and Nitin Gadkari, besides several functionaries from state units in filing nominations in support of Nadda.

BJP chief ministers like Yogi Adityanath of Uttar Pradesh and Vijay Rupani of Gujarat were also at the party headquarters to en-

dorse his bid.

Nadda's elevation was on expected lines since his appointment as the BJP working president last June after Shah joined the Modi government as the home minister. The BJP has traditionally abided by the norm of 'one party one post'.

BJP leaders hailed the appointment, expressing confidence that the party would achieve new successes under his leadership.

Shah congratulated Nadda and expressed confidence that under the new BJP president and the guidance of Modi, the party will scale new heights of success and grow from strength to strength.

Wishing Nadda a successful tenure, Rajnath Singh said: "I am confident the party will achieve new glory and success under his leadership. Known for his organisational experience Naddaji has always been an asset to

the party."

Gadkari said the elevation of Nadda, who started as a common party worker and rose through its ranks, shows that the BJP was an organisation of workers unlike parties run by dynasties.

Nadda, considered an affable and accessible politician, enjoys good rapport with all top party leaders.

He is seen as seasoned organisation man, who was associated with the Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP) from his college days before joining the youth wing of the BJP and rising through its ranks.

Nadda has also served as a minister in the BJP governments in Himachal Pradesh and at the Centre.

He has also been in charge of his party's campaigns in a number of states, including in Uttar Pradesh during the 2019 Lok Sabha election.

Committees Require Commitment

Their failure in basic tasks snowballs into across the board deficiencies

One understands that agencies and committees instituted by the government have only so much motivation, leeway or even interest in going after other agencies of the same establishment when it comes to fixing accountability. But something needs to be done if such committees are not delivering even on the basic task of keeping track or maintaining at least a semblance of an over-watch. The Annual Technical Report on Panchayati Raj Institutions and Urban Local Bodies for the year ended 31 March 2016 by the Office of the Accountant General (Audit), Sikkim, paints a rather dismal picture of the functioning of various committees constituted for smooth function of PRIs. And this is not the first time that such shortcomings have been flagged. In fact, the lethargy enumerated in the latest report have appeared in past reviews as well, but either no one is reading, or more worryingly, no one cares.

So, the State Government has constituted a string of such committees and appointed/ nominated people into them as well, but there is a big slip between the tasked assignments and performance on ground. For instance, anyone who lives in rural Sikkim would be aware of Social Audit-cum-Vigilance Committees which, on paper, are required to ensure that works are executed at Panchayat level as per estimate. They should also monitor the quality of works and are to be comprised of a “wide spectrum” of stakeholders, users and marginalized and vulnerable sections of society including women and senior citizens of the respective Gram Panchayats. The Audit Comment accompanying the report on “position of functioning” of this committee informs that it “simply certified” works executed by the GPs “without exercising any checks”. Adequate monitoring was not undertaken, hence quality of work “as envisaged in the estimate” was not ensured. As a result, the “certificate” issued by these committees were a “mere formality” so that payments could be released to the contractors. Then there are the important, but similarly inept Disaster Management Committees which have been found to be “largely ineffective” due to lack of training or involvement as a result of which “victims could not be given immediate relief at the time of need”. And really, when has anyone heard of the involvement of DMCs in the wake of any disaster in Sikkim. Sure, the district administration responds and delivers relief, but the disaster management committees surface only occasionally in press releases informing about meetings of drills. Then there is the Block Development Committee which might have a wider jurisdiction territorially than the Social Audit committees but that does not make them any more serious or effective. The Audit Comment for them refers to them as “largely non-functional”; this, due to absence of proper coordination among line departments, DPC and Block Office. And this comes at a cost because in its non-functionality, “identification, scrutiny, implementation of schemes and proper monitoring of schemes for overall development of the GP and Block could not be done”.

One would have thought that the State Government’s flagship CATCH programme and the State’s Total Sanitation status would have provided the required impetus to the Village Health Sanitation Committees to be better performing. But even that has not happened for these VHSCs which the Audit has found “not adequately functional”. Since these committees did not bother to carry out household surveys or analyse health issues and health conditions of the villages, sanitation facilities were not created adequately and community toilets were not maintained in hygienic condition. Everyone is aware of the result, now we also know why. There are, apparently, also District Technical Support Committees in Sikkim which are required to support the preparation of District Perspective Plans for each sector by coordinating with the PRIs and technical experts. What the Audit discovered was that estimates prepared by the GPs were not technically vetted by the DTSCs and this resulted in “deficiency in preparation of estimate and also execution of a number of works without preparation of estimates”. The litter abandoned and/ or over-budget projects across the state stand testimony to this. A frequent complaint received from the villages is of the lack of proper drinking water supply. Water Supply & Sanitation Committees exist for preparation of Village Action Plans deliver “source to mouth” water supply proposals. These committees have remained “largely ineffective” the Audit Comment puts on record but that is being polite since records show that preparation of proposal for submission to district authorities has not even been initiated.

In its recommendations to the State Government, the auditors have suggested that utilisation certificates be submitted in time to avoid delayed or short release of funds; financial management be strengthened to avoid diversion of funds and/ or extra and avoidable expenses; programme execution be strengthened and dedicated and effective monitoring systems be established. All of these can be achieved if only the already existing bouquet of committees were somehow convinced to their basic tasks effectively enough.

An Oscar for Parasite? The Global Rise of South Korean Film

AGATA LULKOWSKA
THECONVERSATION.COM

The international success of Parasite, the black comedy thriller by Bong Joon-ho, has been rather spectacular. It started with a slew of early season awards, including the prestigious Palme d’Or (by unanimous vote) at Cannes. It has now won Best Motion Picture – Foreign Language at the Golden Globes, multiple nominations at the Baftas, and six Oscar nominations, including in some of the most distinguished categories (film, director and screen play).

If it wins an Oscar, it would be the first Korean film to do so and a testament to the rising popularity and success of the Korean film industry internationally.

The estimated export value of the Korean film industry in 2018 was US\$41.6 million (£32 million). South Korea is the fifth leading film market by gross box office revenue after the US, China, Japan and the UK.

ROOTED IN THE 90S

South Korea has come a long way since the damaging effects of Japanese occupation (1910 to 1945) and the Korean War, which ended with a ceasefire agreement in 1953. Experiencing monumental growth between 1960 and 1990, the country became one of the Four Asian Tigers and is now the continent’s fourth largest economy.

In the late 80s, as Korea emerged from a period of censorship, restrictions that had previously limited the influx of foreign films were lifted. This led to an increased appetite for Hollywood blockbusters and a decline in Korean cinema. To protect the country’s arts industries and counter the effects of the Asian economic crisis of the late 90s, the government mounted several policies with a strong focus



on promoting Korean culture abroad.

Central to this was the Framework Act on the Promotion of Cultural Industries in 1999, which said:

“The purpose of this Act is to lay the groundwork for the development of cultural industries and enhance the competitiveness thereof, thereby contributing to the improvement of the quality of national cultural life and development of the national economy, by providing for matters necessary for supporting and fostering cultural industries.”

As a result, South Korean culture has grown globally in recent years. K-pop, K-drama, K-beauty, and K-cuisine have all found new international audiences, initially in China and later in wider Asia and the west.

The “Korean New Wave”, the in-

ternational fascination with Korean entertainment and film industry, began in the 1990s. This phenomenon, known as Hallyu, centres around the work of directors Park Chan-wook (Oldboy, Lady Vengeance, The Handmaiden), Bong Joon-ho (Memories of Murder, Host, Okja and Parasite) and Kim Jee-woon (A Tale of Two Sisters and I saw the Devil).

DISTINCTLY KOREAN

Korean cinema is deeply embedded in the Korean experience, eschewing Hollywoodisation and producing an oeuvre that makes a Korean film distinctive to international audiences. Korean society has a reverence for tradition and at once extraordinarily modern, and its cinema embodies these qualities proudly. Korean cinema has become

known for often exploring the dark side of human experience. The films can be unsettling, often mixing dark humour with elements of extreme violence, sumptuous cinematography and high production values. Many of them feature passionate revenge stories (Oldboy, 2003, or I Saw The Devil, 2010), captivating crime investigations (Memories of Murder, 2004), or unusual friendships (Joint Security Area, 2000, or The Handmaiden, 2016).

Not shying away from controversial topics or challenging its audience, Korean films dare to tread in places western films are sometimes scared of. It is not surprising, then, that they have attracted the attention of a wider public and the admiration of filmmakers such as Quentin Tarantino – who has compared Joon-ho to Steven Spielberg in his prime.

Parasite has amassed a box office revenue of US\$137 million (£105 million) globally, and is set to rake in more with this slew of awards and nominations. Exceeding everybody’s expectations, this subversive anti-capitalist film is winning over both critics and audiences. So much so, there is already a rumoured HBO series spin-off in the works.

Parasite’s accomplishments come off the back of Joon-ho’s previous critical success with the 2017 ecological fantasy Okja, Park Chan-wook’s 2018 film Handmaiden (the first Korean film to be nominated for and win a Bafta) and Lee Chang-dong’s 2018 film Burning (the first Korean film to make it to shortlist for best foreign film at the Oscars). If this momentum is anything to go by, the “Korean Wave” is only set to get bigger.

[the writer is Lecturer in Film Production, Staffordshire University]

Russia’s constitutional changes are designed to perpetuate power of Vladimir Putin’s elite

RICHARD SAKWA
THECONVERSATION.COM

Russian president Vladimir Putin has always enjoyed the decisive move that takes everyone by surprise. Long periods of quiet are broken by a sudden, shocking manoeuvre.

This was the case with his package of reforms following the Beslan school hostage crisis in September 2004, and again with the announcement in September 2011 that he planned to return to the Kremlin, following the four-year presidency of his close colleague, Dmitry Medvedev. The Russian constitution, agreed after a referendum in December 1993, stipulates that nobody can serve more than two consecutive terms, and so, after the gap, Putin legitimately returned to the Kremlin.

On January 15 2019 in his annual address to Russia’s Federal Assembly, Putin sprang yet another surprise package of changes, signalling the beginning of a transition period that could last up to the end of his fourth constitutionally-mandated term of office in 2024.

The speech fired the starting gun on another managed succession, although Putin’s personal role at the end of this time is unclear. It appears he is seeking to create a management structure for the country’s affairs without his direct involvement.

Putin’s speech was followed by the immediate resignation of Medvedev as prime minister and of his cabinet, and the appointment of the former head of the Federal Tax Service, Mikhail Mishustin, as prime minister. Medvedev was appointed to the new post of deputy head of the Security Council, subordinate to the council’s head, Putin.

But Putin’s proposals represent neither a “January coup”, as some Russian media described it, nor democratisation. Rather, they are a way to ensure the continuity of the current elite and the system they preside over.

WHERE POWER LIES

In his speech, Putin outlined the most significant package of constitutional reforms since 1993, suggesting seven amendments to the constitution. Some have a democratising edge while others are clearly designed to create a repertoire of institutions to perpetuate Putinism without Putin.

The most crucial was a suggestion by Putin to allow the State Duma to appoint the prime minister, and then “the deputy prime ministers and federal ministers at the prime minister’s recommendation”. The president would have no right to reject the candidates approved by parliament.

This would represent a major transfer of power back to the legislature from the presidential executive, raising the status of parliament. If approved,



the changes could also provide a path for the United Russia political party and its leader (currently still Medvedev) to formalise its control of power from within the legislature.

Putin did not stop there, and he also asserted that Russia: “Cannot properly advance and even exist sustainably as a parliamentary republic.” The country would therefore remain “a strong presidential republic” – and a proposed constitutional change would reinforce this structure. The president would set the government’s tasks and priorities and maintain the right to sack the prime minister and ministers. The president would continue to exercise direct control over the armed forces and the entire law enforcement system (the siloviki).

A third change concerned the personnel staffing the nation’s top offices, who would no longer be allowed to have foreign citizenship or residence permit. The requirements would be even tougher for presidential candidates, who must have had permanent residency for at least 25 years with no foreign citizenship or residence permit.

Putin then noted that:

“People are discussing the constitutional provision under which one person cannot hold the post of the President of the Russian Federation for more than two successive terms. I do not regard this as a matter of principle, but I nevertheless support and share this view.”

This classically ambiguous formulation pointed the way to the imposition of a conclusive two-term limit on future Russian presidents, rather than the current limit on them serving two consecutive terms.

A fourth change stressed the need to increase the role of governors in federal decision-making due to Russia’s enormous size and diversity. In 2000, Putin restored the State Council as a presidential consultative body, bringing together the heads of the regions and some officials. He has now extolled the quality of its work and proposed making it a formal constitutional body. Many have spec-

ulated that the State Council could then provide a platform for his continued indirect leadership.

SOVEREIGNTY AND LIVING STANDARDS

Fifth, he proposed to entrench in the constitution a law passed in December 2015 that granted domestic legislation priority over international law. Putin argued that: “Russia can be and can remain Russia only as a sovereign state. Our nation’s sovereignty must be unconditional.” The changes would constitutionally entrench the principle that Russian norms take precedence over international law and treaties.

A sixth proposal reflected a major theme of his speech: the question of improving the country’s standard of living and dealing with demographic, climate and other issues. He suggested a constitutional change to “seal the principles of a unified system of public authority”. This would include expanding the authority of local government, alongside a constitutional provision to ensure the regular adjustment of pensions for inflation.

A final seventh proposal granted the Federation Council, Russia’s upper legislative house, the constitutional authority to dismiss Constitutional and Supreme Court judges in the event of misconduct, on the proposal of the president. How such misconduct would be defined opens up a range of possible abuses by politicians.

As the amendments represented “substantial changes”, Putin proposed they would be put to the people in a referendum. A 75-strong working group has already begun work to formulate the text of the draft amendments to the constitution.

Overall, the changes slightly diminish the president’s powers and restore greater balance in the relationship between the executive and legislative authorities. The introduction of some checks and balances would ensure that Putin’s legacy would not be easily undone. But the reforms are as much about ensuring that Putin’s system will endure as about perpetuating his leadership.

[the writer is Professor of Russian and European Politics, University of Kent]

Arunachal govt on toes as poppy cultivation spikes



Itanagar, Jan 20 (PTI): Poppy cultivation has increased manifold in Arunachal Pradesh, prompting the state government to take multi-pronged approaches to tackle the menace, a senior official said.

The state government's multi-disciplinary coordination committee headed by Chief Secretary Naresh Kumar has decided to form anti-drug squads up to the village level while destruction of poppy crops has also increased, Oli Koyu, state nodal officer of Narcotics Cell said.

Over 4,000 acres of poppy crops were destroyed in the state in 2018-19 while the corresponding numbers in

2017-18 and 2016-17 were 5,000 and 2,500 acres respectively, he said, quoting Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) reports.

He said over 3,000 acres of poppy crops were destroyed in Namsai district alone in 2017-18.

NCB data says that less than 400 acres of poppy crops were destroyed in the state in 2012-13 while the number shot up to 1,222 acres in 2013-14 and 1,067 acres in 2014-15.

It says that of 2,530 acres of poppy crops destroyed across the country in 2014-15, Arunachal Pradesh accounts for more than 40 per cent.

Koyu said Chowkham and Wakro circles in Namsai district, Hayuliang, Hawaii and Chaglagam in Anjaw; Pong-sao and Laju in Tirap and Wakka and Pongsa in Longding district were the most affected by poppy cultivation.

He said the district anti-drug squads will be headed by the deputy superintendents of police and will comprise an executive magistrate, a narcotic and excise inspector, a forest range officer, horticulture and agriculture officers and police personnel.

Speaking about nexus of the drug trade with insurgency, Koyu recalled how his vehicle was surrounded by armed mili-

itants who shot rounds in the air while he was on the way to destroy poppy crops in Laju circle in Tirap district in 2017.

Koyu said Tirap district Deputy Commissioner P N Thungon and security forces had rescued him then.

He said that insurgent groups are also involved in the sale of drugs to fund their activities.

Arunachal Pradesh shares border with Myanmar which is part of the golden triangle of opium and heroin production with Laos and Thailand.

The state government has taken a zero-tolerance approach with drug abusers and is also mooting alter-

native crops for poppy growers in nine of the worst-affected districts, Koyu said.

After learning that several teachers have become drug addicts, the chief secretary has directed the education secretary to evolve a comprehensive action plan to free all institutes from drug menace, he said.

Five detoxification centres would be upgraded to full-fledged rehabilitation centres and a meeting would be held in this regard soon, Koyu added.

Cultivation, sale and consumption of opium are offences under the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act, 1985.

NPR dangerous game, a precursor to NRC: Mamata



KOLKATA JAN 20 (PTI): West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Monday appealed to her counterparts in the northeast and non-BJP states to take a note of the "clauses" mentioned in the NPR form, before participating in the exercise to update the register.

Dubbing the NPR exercise as "a dangerous game", Banerjee said the form, which seeks birth details of parents, could be nothing but a precursor to NRC implementation.

"I will appeal to all chief ministers, governments including those in BJP-ruled northeast

states -- Tripura, Assam, Manipur and Arunachal -- and the opposition party-ruled states to read the law properly and consider the clauses in the NPR form before arriving at a decision.

"I request them not to participate in this matter because the condition is very bad," the chief minister said.

The TMC boss asserted that the West Bengal Assembly would soon pass a resolution against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act.

Banerjee also said that she came to know from the news media

that fields which seek birth details of parents in the NPR form were not mandatory.

"If the fields are not mandatory, why are they a part of the form? Efforts should be made to remove those questions.

"If they continue to exist on paper (form), those that do not enter birth details of parents might be automatically excluded. There is an apprehension..." she claimed, before leaving for Siliguri.

The CM is scheduled to lead anti-citizenship law rallies in north Bengal over the next four days.

Presidency alumni association to honour Abhijit Banerjee

KOLKATA, JAN 20 (PTI): The alumni association of the Presidency University on Monday said it would felicitate Nobel laureate and alumnus Abhijit Vinayak Banerjee with the prestigious 'Atul Chandra Gupta Memorial Award' when he next visits the city.

Bivas Chaudhuri, the secretary of Presidency Alumni Association, said the felicitation programme would be organised "any time after January 28 during Banerjee's stay in Kolkata".

"We had previously

conferred the award on luminaries like Amartya Sen and Bimal Jalan, who made the Presidency proud. This year, we are bestowing it on Banerjee.

"We are grateful that he has agreed to receive the award," Chaudhuri said on the sidelines of the institute's 202nd Foundation Day celebrations here.

The association secretary also said that all alumni publications, some dating back to the early 19th century, has been archived on the National Digital Library of

India (NDLI).

NDLI is a single-window platform that collects and collates meta-data from premier learning institutions in India and abroad, as well as other relevant sources.

"All editions of alumni publications -- from 1900 to this date -- have been scanned, digitised and uploaded on the NDLI website.

"We hope it will be of great help to those interested about the university's rich academic past," Chaudhuri said.

Himanta 'habitual liar', says Tarun Gogoi on cut-off controversy

GUWAHATI, JAN 20 (PTI): Calling Assam minister Himanta Biswa Sarma a "habitual liar", Congress leader Tarun Gogoi on Monday alleged that the BJP leader had lied in the Assembly about the Assam Accord despite submitting an affidavit in the Supreme Court with 1971 as the cut-off year for detecting and deporting illegal immigrants.

The former Assam chief minister accused Sarma, who was his former cabinet colleague, of "misleading" people of the state with "false explanations".

Gogoi's comments on Sarma came a day after the All Assam Students' Union (AASU) had made similar allegations against Sarma, saying he had lied in the Assembly by claiming there was no mention of March 24, 1971 cut-off date in the Accord.

"Himanta Biswa Sar-



ma lied in the Assembly that the Accord did not say anything about 1971. Lying is his habit.

What more can we expect when the Prime Minister Narendra Modi lies on everything," Gogoi told reporters here.

Sarma is misleading the people of Assam to deviate the movement against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, he

said.

"Himanta himself had submitted an affidavit in the Supreme Court on July 14, 2015 on fixing 1971 as base year for the NRC update work. It is strange that now he is saying that there is no mention of 1971 in the Accord," Gogoi said.

He asked how were the Foreigners' Tribunals conducting trials for

suspected illegal immigrants coming to Assam after March 24, 1971 if there was no mention of the cut-off date in Assam Accord.

On January 13, Sarma had said in the Assembly that the amended Citizenship Act does not violate the Assam Accord, but is aimed at addressing the "unresolved" issues of the pact.

"The Assam Accord didn't speak about children of those coming before 1971, so it's inconclusive," he had said.

"The Assam Accord is not that bad. If we had read it properly, 1966 would have been the cut off year and 1967 voter list would have been the NRC. I regret that," he had claimed citing clauses 5.1 to 5.7 of the pact.

However, Sarma did not mention Clause 5.8 of the Accord which says, "For-

eigners who came to Assam on or after March 25, 1971 shall continue to be detected, deleted and expelled in accordance with law. Immediate and practical steps shall be taken to expel such foreigners."

AASU Chief Adviser Samujjal Kumar Bhat-tacharya had on Sunday demanded that Sarma and Chief Minister Sarbajit Sarma apologise to the people for providing "wrong explanation" about the Accord at the one-day special session of the Assembly on January 13.

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

Kerala govt to inform Centre it cannot update NPR

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, JAN 20 (PTI): The Left front government in Kerala on Monday decided to inform the Centre it would not cooperate with the updation of the NPR, saying there were fears among the public about the process and it has the "Constitutional responsibility" to alleviate them and ensure law and order.

A special cabinet meeting, chaired by Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan here, decided to inform the Registrar General and Census Commissioner under the Union Home Ministry that it was unable to cooperate with anything with regard to the updation of the NPR.

"The decision was taken as it was the Constitutional responsibility of the government to alleviate the fears of general public and ensure law and order situation in the

state," a Chief Minister's Office release said.

However, the state would fully cooperate with the census procedures, it said.

The LDF government, which has been on a warpath against the Centre over the Citizenship Amendment Act, has last month stayed all activities related to updation of NPR, considering 'apprehensions' of public that it would lead to NRC in the wake of the controversial CAA.

"As the NPR is a process that leads to the National Register of Citizens (NRC), there is a sense of fear among the people that its implementation could lead to widespread insecurity", the CMO release said on Monday.

The experience of the state which had already compiled the NRC was an example for this, it added, in apparent reference



to Assam.

Kerala had already stopped all procedures regarding the NPR updation, the release said adding there was also a report of the state police that the if the government went ahead with the procedures, it would adversely impact the law and order situation.

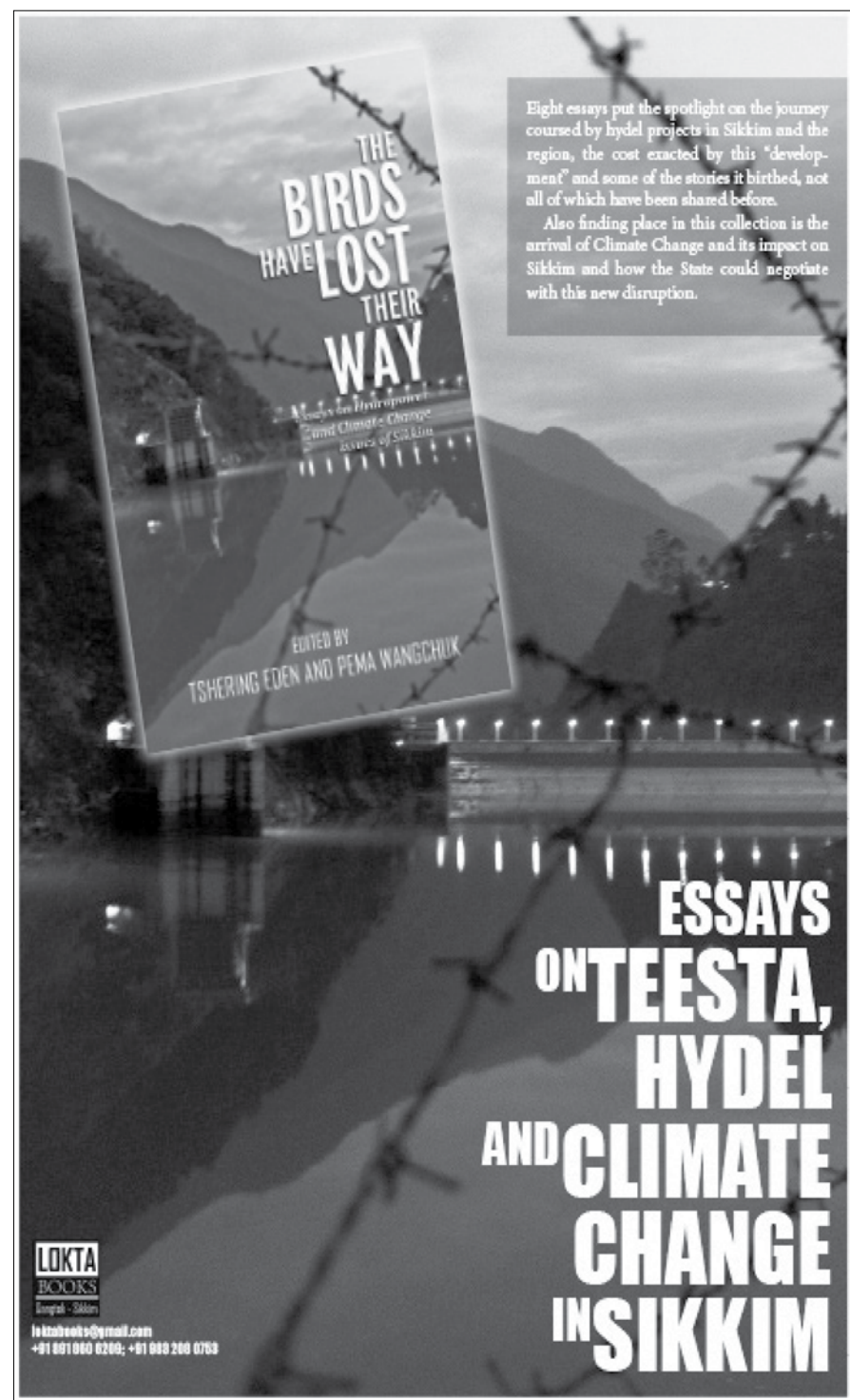
The district collectors have also informed the government that the Census procedures would be affected if the updation of the NPR was done along with it,

the CMO release said.

The CPI(M)-led LDF government had recently convened a meeting of political parties and socio-religious organisations here on December 29 in the wake of the concerns among people in various stratas of the society, it said.

A special assembly session was convened and a resolution was passed requesting the Centre not to implement the CAA and the government had also approached the apex court against the law, it added.

**CONTACT
SUMMIT
TIMES
REPORTERS
SINGTAM
8170070813
MANGAN/
DIKCHU
9832612485/
9434011213
GANGTOK
8116388176
9832424750
8016270440
NAMCHI
9832048410**



Unheard-of achievement beckons as Liverpool begin their victory parade

BARNEY RONAY

LIVERPOOL, 20 JAN [THEGUARDIAN]: They're coming for you, they're coming for you. The boys of '99. Fergie and Eric. Andy and Dwight. Arsène, Thierry, Sergio and Pep. They're coming for you.

So much for the league and so much for Manchester United, who were awkward opponents at Anfield, without ever feeling like much more than a bump in the road. At the end of this 2-0 victory Liverpool will have something else in their sights.

Whisper it but Jürgen Klopp's team have a shot at a genuine legacy season here, a sense of ultimacy beyond the basic business of titles and cups, a chance to win in a way nobody has quite won before.

One thing is certain. They won't stop chasing it. With a minute left in added time at Anfield Mo Salah could be seen surging once more down the left flank, bumping away the last United defender, before punting the ball under David de Gea to kill a game that had spent the previous hour and a half doggedly refusing to die.

The feeling around the ground at that moment was distinct from the usual triumphalism. As the players lined up in an oddly formal crocodile to shake hands there was a feeling for the first time of a step into something else; of this Liverpool team setting off on what could turn into an extended victory lap, high-fiving the bases, that small white ball still rising as it clears the stadium roof and disappears across the skyline.

Liverpool must surely lose a league game somewhere. Common sense and human error dictate it. But now there are only 16 of them left.



Some of those games look tricky. Away to Wolves on Thursday, for a start. Not to mention trips to Goodison in March and Manchester City in April. Arsenal at the Emirates in May could have the feel of a last stand for the Invincibles. But they're ticking down now. And at some point that focus will narrow to a point.

Facile as it may be to compare eras, football won't stop doing it. And there is a fresh mark to be set here. Liverpool became club champions of the world last month. Should they go on to win the league undefeated it will be hard to argue with the idea this is the best one-off team the Premier League has produced, the best season of all the champion seasons.

This game always looked like one of the more obvious hurdles, a visit from the keepers of the recent past. United have an interest in this as the club that dominated the early years of the Premier League so completely it is still hard to shake that feeling of ownership.

Squint a little and there was a vague feeling at Anfield of ghosts stalking the fringes, a spectral Frenchman, collar up, lurking just out of your line of vision, Sparky in green and yellow harlequins, the resonance of Fergie-time.

And United did play quite well here. Ole Gunnar Solskjær had hinted at a cunning plan for this game, and the change of shape to a three-man backline was a qualified success.

Is there any coherent reason why international defenders would allow this scenario to develop without intervening, for the £80m defensive rock Harry Maguire to look on and think, "Yeah, why not?"

After which the afternoon unravelled into something agreeably haphazard. Liverpool had two first-half goals chalked off. Salah missed a sitter. Jordan Henderson hit a post.

There was a two-minute interlude where Liverpool's three-man attack squared up against United's three-man defence and basically stalked them back into their own penalty area, like battle-hardened mountain wolves closing in on a flock of geriatric sheep. For a while in the second half Fred appeared from nowhere and briefly ran the game, zipping passes about, pirouetting in space, before vanishing from this earthy plane once again.

At the end of which Liverpool can march on towards something that feels close enough to have assumed a recognisable shape. Part of the story will be the ways they have found to win. Liverpool have not conceded a goal in the league in seven matches since the first week of December as the Van Dijk-Gomez partnership has shifted to another plane.

It is this solidity that looks most ominous for every other champion team of the recent past. Sixteen games to win them all, to take a shot at the ultimate reward not just for the surging energy of this team but for success stretching back far beyond the pitch, the feeling of thoroughbred expertise in every aspect of this club, from intelligence-driven recruitment to the cult of the Klopp personality. From here you really wouldn't bet against it.

Lionel Messi gets Quique Setién's Barcelona reign off to winning start

SID LOWE

BARCELONA, 20 JAN [THEGUARDIAN]: Managers come and go but Lionel Messi remains. There were 15 minutes remaining in Quique Setién's first game as manager of Barcelona and the tension was growing, when the Argentinian finally escaped to score the goal that prevented his opening night ending in failure.

Barcelona were closing in on 1,000 passes but they had struggled to create clear chances until Messi, Antoine Griezmann and Arturo Vidal combined. Down on the bench, Setién celebrated. It was only 1-0 but it was enough, for now. It was a start.

Setién had said it was not enough just to win; he wanted his team to play well, too. Yet he knew that he had to win to on a cold, windy night when summary judgments would be served and everyone would search for clues as to what the future holds, signs of what has changed. It is only one match but if they did not come with the score they did come with the intentions – the ball is above all else. Yet doubts remain too, things to improve.

There were no major surprises in Setién's first starting XI, no grand statement made. In the absence of Luis Suárez this was a team Ernesto Valverde would probably have chosen, including Vidal and Ivan Rakitic, two footballers sometimes offered up as further proof that Valverde didn't get Barcelona. This was only the first day and there were few other options, while the late introduction of young Riqui Puig may well be just the first of many.

Besides, when it started, there were shifts. Setién put Ansu Fati on the right, with Messi moved into the middle. Griezmann lined up to his left, but narrow and close to him, leaving the wing free for Jordi Alba. That meant that much of the time, it was a back-three, with Sergi Roberto staying while Alba stepped up – in possession he was as high as Fati on the right. In attack, it appeared a 3-5-2; in defence a 4-3-3.

The ball was Barcelona's and always brought out from the back, never thumped long. That said, Granada, seemingly unwilling to press high, may have been complicit in that pattern. Barcelona accumulated men inside, close together. One early Messi run through the middle especially concerned Granada but his options were different and at times he was less fluid, the decisions less automatic, his passes not always reciprocated or delivered with the same sense of security. He also found more players crowded around him.

Barcelona played around and in front of Granada more than beyond them, only occasionally finding a way past the men accumulated around the edge of the area.

Kohli greatest ODI player of all-time, Rohit in top-five: Finch

BENGALURU, JAN 20 (PTI): Australian captain Aaron Finch has rated his Indian counterpart Virat Kohli as "probably" the greatest ODI player of all-time, while picking Rohit Sharma in the top-five.

Rohit (119) scored his 29th ODI hundred and Kohli made 89 off 91 balls as they shared a match-winning stand of 137 in the decisive third game against Australia here on Sunday.

For Finch, what stood out was that India overhauled the 287-run target with ease despite opener Shikhar Dhawan not coming out to bat due to a shoulder injury.

"They've got Virat who is probably the greatest ODI player of all-time, and Rohit who'd probably be in the top five batters of all-time. They're exceptional, and the thing with the Indian side at the moment is their experienced players are getting the job done in the big games," Finch said.

"Rohit's 100, especially without Shikhar there tonight, for them to shuffle and their two most dominant players to still get majority of the runs is a sign of a really settled and really quality top-order," said Finch at the post-match media interaction on Sunday night.

Australia could not get the final flourish they were looking for, mustering only 63 runs in the last 10 overs at the loss of five wickets, far too many in Finch's view.

"In the last two games we have had the bowlers batting for the majority of the last few overs. Which we saw in Rajkot the damage that KL (Rahul) could do in the back end because he was a set-

tled batter. I think that's an area we just missed a couple of tricks.

"Just not having an in batter being in and having faced 20 or 30 balls to get us deeper and get us to the back end," Finch said.

He also praised India's death over bowling at the same time.

"But credit to India, their death bowling in the last few games was exceptional. (Mohammed) Shami was nailing his yorkers, (Navdeep) Saini in the last two games and (Jasprit) Bumrah. In both games they were exceptional. You can look at where we could have improved but also you've got to give some credit to India," said Finch.

Finch opted to bat at the Chinnaswamy Stadium, unlike the game in Rajkot where he chose to field. However, the pitch did not play as per his expectations.

"It probably played a little bit slower than we expected. It looked like it was really hard. It was probably just a little on the dry side. But it was a damn good wicket, it probably spun a bit more than we expected it to," he said.

"But I thought all four spinners for the game bowled exceptionally well. A little bit slow with the new ball but it seemed to slip on a bit towards the end there and there was a bit more dew than last night."

Finch added there were enough positives for them to take from the series despite being on the losing side. One of them was Marnus Labuschagne making an ODI debut.

Can Labuschagne also be an option in the shortest format?

European Roundup: Cristiano Ronaldo double moves Juventus four points clear

PARIS, 20 JAN [REUTERS]: Cristiano Ronaldo struck twice to continue his sensational scoring run and help move Juventus four points clear at the top of Serie A with a 2-1 win over Parma. The 34-year-old's deflected shot opened the scoring in the first half, but Juve were pegged back after the break when Andreas Cornelius headed in from a corner. Ronaldo restored the home side's advantage just three minutes later with a low strike that took his tally for the season to 16 league goals, 11 of which have come in his last seven appearances.

Mario Balotelli was sent off just eight minutes after coming on in Brescia's 2-2 draw with Cagliari. The striker was booked for a clumsy challenge before being dismissed almost immediately, having collected a second yellow card for dissent.

The points were shared as Ernesto Torregrossa's two goals for Brescia were cancelled out by João Pedro getting a double of his own before Balotelli saw red in the 81st minute.

Inter Milan were held to a 1-1 draw by relegation-battling Lecce on Sunday as Antonio Conte's side dropped points for the second weekend in a row. Inter substitute Alessandro Bastoni headed in a second-half opener four minutes after coming on, but Lecce soon drew level through captain Marco Mancosu.

"We are a team who have to go at 100 kilometres per hour," Conte told Sky Sport Italia. If someone is below par, or off the pace, we cannot



afford that and will end up drawing a game we comfortably should have brought home. If we hold an average pace, we cannot get victories. We had to go at full pelt throughout the first half of the season. Once we don't do that, we become a perfectly normal team."

Ante Rebic broke his Milan duck with two second-half goals, including a stoppage-time winner as they beat Udinese in a five-goal thriller.

Zlatan Ibrahimovic started for the first time since returning to the club for a six-month loan but Milan made a terrible start. With six minutes played, the goalkeeper Gianluigi Donnarumma rushed out of his area and collided with Udinese's Kevin Lasagna, leaving Jens Stryger Larsen to slot into an empty net.

Rebic came on at half-time and levelled

from close range within three minutes, his first goal since joining on loan from Eintracht Frankfurt at the start of the season. Donnarumma then made amends for his mistake with saves from Rolando Mandragora and Stefano Okaka before Milan took the lead.

Theo Hernández rifled the hosts in front in style, steering a volley into the bottom corner from outside the area after a corner was cleared. Ibrahimovic fired over from Rafael Leão's pass, but Lasagna silenced the San Siro by heading Udinese level in the 85th minute. Milan looked like they would have to settle for a point but Rebic had the final word, collected a loose ball on the edge of the area and threading his shot through a pack of defenders to seal a dramatic victory.

Fabio Borini came off the bench to score a

debut goal and rescue a point for Hellas Verona as they earned a 1-1 draw at Bologna. Mattia Bani put the home side in front in the first half before being sent off for a second booking after the break, and Borini headed in an 81st-minute leveler less than a week after joining from Milan.

In La Liga, Valencia's Champions League hopes were hit by a shock defeat at Real Mallorca, who boosted their survival bid with a 4-1 win.

Amid stormy conditions in Palma, Albert Celades' side quickly fell two goals behind, Antonio Rallo and Ante Budimir striking for the hosts. Budimir added his second before half-time, finishing a fine team move from a tight angle. Valencia's hopes of a fight-back were extinguished when Daniel Parejo was sent off for picking up a second yellow card. Dani

Rodríguez added a fourth for Mallorca, before substitute Ferran Torres pulled a late goal back.

Defending Bundesliga champions Bayern Munich scored four times in 24 minutes in the second half to crush hosts Hertha Berlin 4-0 on Sunday and move into second place as the Bundesliga resumed after the winter break. Thomas Müller stabbed in from close range on the hour for his third goal of the season, with Bayern upping the tempo after the break following a largely lacklustre first half. Robert Lewandowski bagged his 20th league goal of this season when the Polish striker sent keeper Rune Jarstein the wrong way to score with a penalty. Thiago Alcântara made it 3-0 with a superb strike and Ivan Perisic headed in at the far post in the 84th from a fine Mueller cross to complete their win.

Toy Story: Hong Kong protest models become major hit

Intricately detailed Hong Kong protester figurines have become the latest must-have collectables as toy stores recreate the pro-democracy movement's street battles with police in their shop displays. Stacked on shelves next to comic book superheroes, the models come in a variety of shapes and sizes, some holding make-shift shields and flags, others extinguishing tear gas rounds or playing instruments in protest orchestras.

A local figurine enthusiast and his friend designed dozens of characters based on their own experiences of attending months of protests.

Among their 1:6 scale figures are white-collar workers who hold regular lunchtime rallies outside their offices, elderly "silver-haired" protesters and a demonstrator wearing an oversized Pepe the Frog mask.

"We hope the figurines can reconstruct the situation with authenticity," said Charlie, a 30-year-old freelance photographer by day, who asked to use a pseudonym.

Their models boast many features of the street protests, which have upended Hong Kong for the last seven months in the most serious challenge to Beijing's rule since the city's 1997 handover.

Slogans have been painstakingly painted



onto small helmets and some models have cling-film wrapped around their arms -- a method protesters use to defend against police pepper spray.

Others have scrapes on their legs from street skirmishes and almost all have removable gas masks that have become ubiquitous during the protests.

"We want to make them as detailed as possible so that they can evoke empathy in people," Charlie said.

- 'Self-censorship' - Some of the parts came from the duo's own military toy collections or were made with 3D printers.

Other elements were built from scratch.

For a reporter figurine, the pair hand-stitched a tiny camera bag while popsicle sticks have been transformed into wooden shields used

by hardcore activists.

Two of their front-line figure characters -- named after the lyrics of the protest anthem "Glory to Hong Kong" -- have gone into mass production after the pair became a hit online.

"I want to raise people's awareness within the movement and hopefully the figurines will allow more people to know what has happened in Hong Kong," Charlie said.

Priced at about HK\$900 (US\$116) per set, the different parts of their products had to be manufactured in seven countries to avoid political sensitivities -- especially in mainland China.

"A water bottle or a helmet is not sensitive by itself. But after this movement began, they are seen as sensitive... This is self-censorship," said Charlie.

One manufacturer, he said, suddenly refused to

make yellow raincoats, a symbol of the movement which has adopted the colour.

"When that happens, we have to start all over again," he said.

Hong Kong's protests were sparked by a now-abandoned proposal to allow extraditions to the authoritarian mainland, where the opaque legal system answers to the Communist Party.

It soon morphed into a wider movement calling for greater freedoms and police accountability.

Among key protester demands are an independent inquiry into the police, an amnesty for the thousands arrested and fully free elections.

But Beijing and local leaders have refused further concessions.

- Subway station clash -

The frequency and ferocity of the protests

have died down over the last month, but signs of the political unrest are everywhere, from graffiti daubed on walls to huge fences surrounding government buildings.

In some of the city's toy-shops, the protest figurines are selling like hotcakes.

At one shop in Wan-chai district, the owner has created an action-packed diorama of a clash outside a subway station, complete with ranks of riot police and protesters smashing up a taxi.

"People play with toys in pursuit of happiness, especially during hard times," said the shop owner, who asked for anonymity fearing reprisals in the febrile political atmosphere.

Charlie said he primarily sells his models online after some toy stores received threatening calls telling them not to sell political products.

Around 1,000 sets of figurines they designed have been sold so far, with the profits going to groups that support the pro-democracy movement.

"Hong Kong people gave us the opportunity to create these figures and we hope to use the money to help protesters in return," he said.

In darks times, he added, the models can raise spirits.

"We hope they can console people emotionally," he said.

First smog, now rain as conditions cause havoc at Australian Open

Serena Williams and Roger Federer made winning starts before heavy rain caused chaos on day one of the Australian Open Monday, further disrupting the Grand Slam after a build-up hit by haze from raging bushfires.

Hazardous smog left several players with coughs and breathing difficulties during qualifying last week, prompting speculation about whether the year's first tennis Major would be delayed.

Air quality was rated as 'good' as the tournament started on schedule but play was suspended on outside courts about four hours later as a downpour deluged Melbourne Park at about 3:00 pm (0400 GMT).

World number three Federer was briefly hauled off court while the roof was closed on Rod Laver Arena, before returning to complete a routine 6-3, 6-2, 6-2 victory over American Steve Johnson.

Play also continued under the retractable roofs of Margaret Court Arena and Melbourne Arena, but was impossible elsewhere as the heavy rain persisted.

More rain is forecast for Tuesday, further threatening a tournament more often associated with extreme heat at the height of the Australian summer.

Officials said play would resume on the

outside courts once the rain stops, but at least 18 of the 64 scheduled matches were called off for the day.

Defending champion Osaka was done well before the downpour as she dismissed Marie Bouzkova of the Czech Republic 6-2, 6-4 in 80 minutes, smashing one powerful serve that broke a net fastening.

"It was really tough for me trying to control my nerves," said Osaka. "It's tough to play someone you've never played before in the first round of a Grand Slam."

Williams, on the hunt for a record-equalling 24th Grand Slam title, won the first set against Anastasia Potapova in just 19 minutes as she cruised to a 6-0, 6-3 win in less than an hour.

"I feel like I can still improve and get better throughout this tournament, for sure. This is a good stepping stone for right now," Williams said.

However, Williams' elder sister Venus was ousted in stunning fashion by 15-year-old Coco Gauff, who won 7-6 (7/5), 6-3 in a repeat of her first-round upset at Wimbledon last year.

In the evening session on the covered centre court, Australian world number one Ashleigh Barty plays Ukraine's Lesia Tsurenko and men's defending champion Novak Djokovic takes on Jan-Lennard Struff.

- Shapovalov row -

Player anger over smog dominated the final days before the tournament, which is taking place after deadly bushfires ravaged large parts of Australia.

Slovenia's Dalila Jakupovic was forced to retire from her qualifier after a coughing fit, while Britain's Liam Broady claimed "multiple" players needed asthma medication.

Federer was one of the players who criticised a lack of communication from tournament officials, who were forced to suspend practice and delay some qualifying matches last week.

Tournament officials are closely monitoring pollution and will halt play and close the three main stadiums' roofs if particulate matter suspended in the air hits PM2.5 200.

In other results, Canadian 13th seed Denis Shapovalov argued with the umpire in a tempestuous defeat as he lost in four sets to Marton Fucsovics after earning a code violation for throwing his racquet.

Croatia's 25th seed Borna Coric was also an early casualty as he went down in three sets to experienced American Sam Querrey.

But former champion Caroline Wozniacki, playing her last tournament before retiring, safely reached the second round as she beat Kristie Ahn 6-1, 6-3.

New York Times endorses Warren, Klobuchar for president

The New York Times on Sunday endorsed Senators Amy Klobuchar and Elizabeth Warren for the Democratic presidential nomination, its first time choosing two candidates.

The liberal newspaper's pick comes just a few weeks before the Iowa caucuses on February 3 which officially begins the presidential primary season.

The Times described Massachusetts senator Warren as the "radical" and Minnesota senator Klobuchar as the "realist" choice.

"An essential debate is underway between two visions that may define the future of the (Democratic) party and perhaps the nation," the editorial board wrote.

"Some in the party view President Trump as an aberration and believe that a return to a more sensible America is possible. Then there are those who believe that President Trump was the product of political and economic systems so

rotten that they must be replaced."

"Both the radical and the realist models warrant serious consideration," the board said. "That's why we're endorsing the most effective candidates for each approach. They are Elizabeth Warren and Amy Klobuchar."

Warren has consistently polled at third place, behind former vice president Joe Biden and Vermont Senator Bernie Sanders -- Warren's fellow progressive. She surged during the summer but has seen her support slide since October. But The Times called her the new "standard-bearer for the Democratic left," praising her plans for structural and social reform. "Ms. Warren's path to the nomination is challenging, but not hard to envision," the board said. For Klobuchar, who is more moderate, The Times said her "lengthy tenure in the Senate and bipartisan credentials would make her a deal maker (a real

one) and uniter for the wings of the party -- and perhaps the nation."

"May the best woman win," The Times concluded.

For the first time, The Times detailed its decision-making process on its television show "The Weekly".

The episode shows the editorial board's interviews with nine leading Democratic presidential hopefuls.

In addition to Warren and Klobuchar, The Times spoke with Biden, Sanders, billionaire activist Tom Steyer, entrepreneur Andrew Yang, South Bend mayor Pete Buttigieg, former Massachusetts governor Deval Patrick and New Jersey senator Cory Booker, who dropped out of the race in December.

The interviews were conducted on the record. In addition to showing video clips of the interviews in the "Weekly" episode, the Times Opinion section also published interview transcripts.

SARS-like virus spreads in China, reaches third Asian country

A new SARS-like virus has killed a third person, spread around China and reached a third Asian country, authorities said Monday, fuelling fears of a major outbreak as millions begin travelling for the Lunar New Year in humanity's biggest migration.

The new coronavirus strain, first discovered in the central Chinese city of Wuhan, has caused alarm because of its connection to Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS), which killed nearly 650 people across mainland China and Hong Kong in 2002-2003.

Wuhan has 11 million inhabitants and serves as a major transport hub, including during the annual Lunar New Year holiday which begins later this week and sees hundreds of millions of Chinese people travel across the country to visit family.

A third person was confirmed to have died and 136 new cases were found over the weekend in Wuhan, the local health commission said, taking the total number of people to have been

diagnosed with the virus in China to 201.

South Korea on Monday reported its first case -- a 35-year-old woman who flew in from Wuhan. Thailand and Japan have previously confirmed a total of three cases -- all of whom had visited the Chinese city.

No human-to-human transmission has been confirmed so far, but authorities have not ruled out the possibility.

Health authorities in Beijing's Daxing district said two people who had travelled to Wuhan were treated for pneumonia linked to the virus and are in a stable condition.

In southern Guangdong province, a 66-year-old Shenzhen man was quarantined on January 11 after contracting a fever and showing other symptoms following a trip to visit relatives in Wuhan, the provincial health commission said. He is also in a stable condition.

Another 44 people are under medical observation in Beijing, as well as a dozen more in Shenzhen and eastern Zhejiang province, according

to state media.

"Experts believe that the current epidemic situation can still be controlled," the National Health Commission said Sunday.

But the commission acknowledged that the source of the coronavirus and its mode of transmission have yet to be known.

The virus did not slow down the annual holiday travel rush, though some travellers wore masks at crowded railway stations in Beijing and Shanghai.

"Watching the news, I do feel a little worried. But I haven't taken precautionary measures beyond wearing regular masks," said Li Yang, a 28-year-old account manager who was heading home to the northern region of Inner Mongolia for the Lunar New Year.

- Detection measures -

A seafood market is believed to be the centre of the outbreak in Wuhan, but health officials have reported that some patients had no history of contact with the facility.

The World Health Or-

ganisation (WHO) said on Twitter Monday that "an animal source seems the most likely primary source" with "some limited human-to-human transmission occurring between close contacts".

It said the new cases in China were the result of "increased searching and testing for (the virus) among people sick with respiratory illness".

Scientists with the MRC Centre for Global Infectious Disease Analysis at Imperial College in London warned in a paper published Friday that the number of cases in the city was likely to be closer to 1,700, much higher than the number officially identified.

Wuhan authorities said they have installed infrared thermometers at airports, railway stations and coach stations across the city. Passengers with fevers were being registered, given masks and taken to medical institutions.

State TV footage aired Monday showed medical staff working inside an isolation

ward at a Wuhan hospital in full-body suits.

In Hong Kong, health officials announced they were expanding their enhanced checks on arrivals to include anyone coming in from Hubei province, not just Wuhan, its capital. Over 100 people are being monitored in the city.

Passengers are also being screened at some airports in Thailand and the United States.

In Wuhan, 170 people are still being treated at hospital, including nine in critical condition, the city health commission said, adding that 25 people have been discharged so far.

Chinese state media moved to calm the mood as discussion about the coronavirus spreading to other Chinese cities swelled on social media.

Nationalist tabloid Global Times called for better handling of the new virus than that of the 2003 SARS outbreak.

The foreign ministry said Monday that Beijing had informed the WHO and other countries about the virus "in a timely manner".

Billionaires richer than 60 percent of the world's population: Oxfam

The world's billionaires have doubled in the past decade and are richer than 60 percent of the global population, the charity Oxfam said Monday.

It said poor women and girls were at the bottom of the scale, putting in "12.5 billion hours of unpaid care work each and every day," estimated to be worth at least \$10.8 trillion a year.

"Our broken econo-

mies are lining the pockets of billionaires and big business at the expense of ordinary men and women. No wonder people are starting to question whether billionaires should even exist," Oxfam's India head Amitabh Behar said.

"The gap between rich and poor can't be resolved without deliberate inequality-busting policies," Behar said ahead of the annual World Economic

Forum in Davos, where he will represent Oxfam.

Oxfam's annual report on global inequality is traditionally released just before the forum opens on Tuesday in the Swiss Alpine resort.

It had some astonishing statistics.

"The 22 richest men in the world have more wealth than all the women in Africa," it said.

If the world's richest one percent paid just 0.5

percent extra tax on their wealth for 10 years, it would equal the investment needed to create 117 million new jobs in elderly and child care, education and health, Oxfam said. Oxfam's figures are based on data from Forbes magazine and Swiss bank Credit Suisse, but they are disputed by some economists. The numbers show that 2,153 billionaires now have more wealth than the 4.6 billion poor-

est people on the planet.

Women and girls are burdened in particular because they are most often care givers that keep "the wheels of our economies, businesses and societies moving," Behar said.

They "often have little time to get an education, earn a decent living or have a say in how our societies are run," and "are therefore trapped at the bottom of the economy," he added.

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THAT'S HOT! The superstar socialite, Paris Hilton appears onstage at the Winter TCA Tour to discuss her new YouTube documentary.

Celine Dion pays tribute to mother Therese during Miami concert

LOS ANGELES, JAN 19 (PTI): Music icon Celine Dion dedicated her performance at a recent concert to her mother, Therese Tanguay Dion who passed away earlier this week.

The 51-year-old singer took the stage at the American Airlines arena in Miami on Friday just hours after her mother's demise, reported Access Hollywood.

"I'm pretty sure that you heard the news about my mom passing away early this morning. But I'm doing okay," Dion told the crowd.

The singer said she has always been an "open book about my whole life" and talked about the last few days of her mother's life.

"My mom was 92. She was ill for quite a while. And we knew she wouldn't be with us long. Two days ago, we got a call from the nurses who were taking care of her so well, saying that her time was coming soon. Very soon.

"So last night, I joined my brothers and sisters in Montreal and I spent the evening at her bedside. We told stories. We sang songs. We hugged each other. And we said our goodbyes. We are pretty sure that mom waited for us to be all together



before _she passed)," Dion said.

The singer later paid a tribute to her mother by singing a rendition of "Somewhere Over the Rainbow", with a photo of Therese displayed in the background

Therese, who was known in Canada as "Maman Dion", had been battling serious health problems for several months.

Zoe Kravitz says she plans to bring 'strong femininity' to Catwoman

LOS ANGELES, JAN 19 (PTI): Actor Zoe Kravitz says she intends to channel the strong feminine traits of iconic DC character Catwoman in her portrayal for the Matt Reeves-directed "The Batman".

Kravitz, best known for films such as "Mad Max: Fury Road", "Fantastic Beasts: The Crimes of Grindelwald", will portray Selina Kyle aka Catwoman in the movie which will see Robert Pattinson making his debut as Bruce Wayne aka Batman.

Talking to Variety on the sidelines of Television Critics Association's winter press tour, the 31-year-old actor

said looks up to Michelle Pfeiffer, who portrayed character in Tim Burton's "Batman Returns", for inspiration.

"I think Catwoman is an iconic character. I was never into a lot of comic books, but that world was always really intriguing to me. And then of course Michelle Pfeiffer her performance has always been super inspiring to me. It just felt iconic," Kravitz said.


The actor said she is excited to dive in the world of Kyle, who represents "really strong femininity".

"I think femininity represents power, and I think it's a different

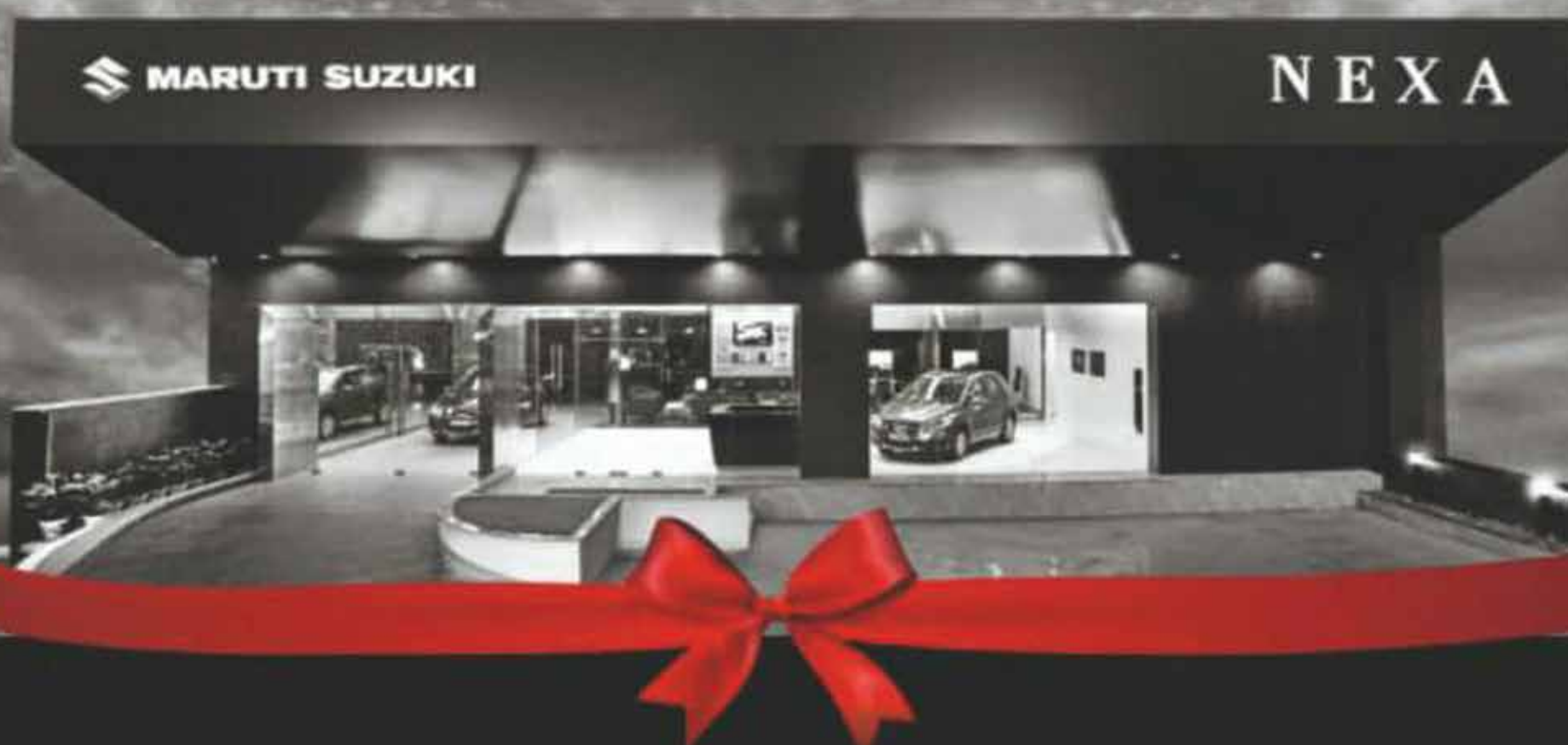
kind of power than masculine power. That's something that's really interesting about Batman and Catwoman.

"I think Batman represents a very kind of masculine power, and Catwoman represents very feminine power, slightly more complicated, and softer, too. I like the idea that you can be soft, you can be gentle and still be very powerful and still be very dangerous," Kravitz said.

"The Batman" will also feature Jeffrey Wright, Paul Dano, Andy Serkis, Colin Farrell, and John Turturro in pivotal roles. The film has a release date of June 25, 2021.

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