



SIKKIM BOY TO PLAY IN 2ND INDIAN OPEN PICKLEBALL TOURNAMENT
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CENTRAL LEADERS COVERTLY HELPED MNF TO WIN MIZORAM POLLS: BJP STATE UNIT CHIEF
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DRIVER INJURED IN ACCIDENT AT MP GOLAI
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SummitTIMES

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O N T O P O F T H E N E W S

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SKM will empower Sherpa community: Golay

SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 13 DEC:

Sikkim Krantikari Morcha president, PS Tamang [Golay] concluded his Parivartan Sankalp Yatra of Gyalshing Bermiok constituency in West Sikkim today. The 12th day of Parivartan Sankalp Yatra started with offering of prayers at Singha Mandir at Gautam Gaon in Bermiok and then the party president interacted with the people of Upper Bermiok, Sherpa Gaon, Gurung Gaon, Upper Martam, Maneydara, Pechrek, Manjha Gaon and Hee-Patal to conclude the yatra for Gyalshing Bermiok constituency, informs an SKM press release.

Addressing the people in a meeting at Sherpa Gaon, Mr Golay stressed



that Sherpa community should also get rights and privileges at par with other tribal communities in the State. He stated that

SKM government would give justice to the community and assured a Minister from the Sherpa community if his party comes to power.

Mr Golay alleged that the State government does not have any policy or programs and has been distributing only

Central benefits and schemes. He informed that all other States of India have already implemented the Scheduled Tribes and other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006 (2 of 2007) except Sikkim. On the same, he added that the state government has neglected the tribals of Sikkim by not implementing this Act to deprive tribals of their rights.

The release informs that the party president will inaugurate SKM circle office at Jorethang in South Sikkim on Friday. It is added that the inauguration function will also have the participation of leaders and workers from SDF party and social workers. The

Father Rapes 13 Year Old Daughter for Two Years, Murders Her to Hide Crime

SUMMIT REPORT
KALIMPONG, DEC13:

In a shocking incident, Jaldhaka Police have arrested 45-years-old Shukra Bahadur Pradhan from the remote Lower Godak village, on charges of murdering his own daughter. They were in for a shock, when the culprit confessed to also repeatedly raping his daughter for past two years. This grotesque episode of human depravity just doesn't end there. After murdering her, Shukra had audaciously buried his daughter next to his house, hoping it would cover his crime.

According to sources, Shukra Bahadur Pradhan seems to be a very controlling person. He never allowed his daughter to mingle with anyone else. If she got delayed even by minutes while com-

ing from somewhere, he would literally make her life hell, by brutally beating her up. The neighbours also informed the press that, he used to brutalize his wife too, because of which, she had left him around two years ago.

On the night of the 9th December, the little girl had been delayed; he went on to brutalize her, and later killed her. He then attempted to hide his crime by burying her right next to his house. Next day, on 10th December, he created a story and told his nephew that his daughter had committed suicide the night before so he buried her near the house.

It was the nephew who went to inquire and raised the alarm. This brought other people from the village there, and gradually

the truth came out.

Jaldhaka Police OC Nilam Sanjeev Kujur conducted preliminary interrogation at the site of murder. Accused Shukra Bahadur later confessed his crime in front of the press; he said that his daughter had threatened to expose his repeated crime of raping her, so he killed her.

This incident has left everyone in the village numb, with his own family members now asking for a death sentence for him.

Police have recovered the dead body of the little girl, and was sent for autopsy. Accused Shukra Bahadur was presented at the Kalimpong District Court. He has been sent to seven days police remand. Cases have been filed against him under sections IPC 302, 201 and POCSO.

Namprikdang Namsoong festival gets underway

DZONGU, 13 DEC:

The Namprikdang Namsoong festival in Upper Dzongu, North Sikkim, started today. The festival marks the new year of the Lepcha tribe and provides for a magnificent visual treat of folk dances, traditional games and exotic Sikkimese (Lepcha) cuisine. The festival will continue till 16 Dec. The inaugural function today was attended by Gangtok MLA, Pintso Chopel Lepcha, in the presence of Deputy Speaker cum MLA Dzongu, Sonam Gyatso Lepcha, Chairperson SNT, Pintso Namgyal Lepcha, DC North, Karma R Bonpo, Tom Tshering Lepcha, OSD, Sr SP North, KD Sangdarpa, officials from various departments, pancha-



yat members and the general public.

Prof Prakash Patnaik from Delhi University who was the special guest of the function highlighted the importance of languages that bond different communities and further appreciated the festival being organised by the committee.

Earlier, the function was welcomed by Chair-

person SNT, Pintso Namgyal Lepcha. A colorful traditional cultural program was presented by the different communities from Sikkim and other parts of the country.

The main venue for the celebration of this festival at Namprikdang Ground is situated next to the confluence of Rivers Teesta and Rangeet with a beautiful traditional

Lepcha house that commemorates the resting place of their ancestors. Traditional Lepcha dance and food stalls serving authentic Lepcha cuisine provide visitors an opportunity to experience local culture.

The chief guest in his speech wished the people on the occasion and highlighted that Namsoong

is a festival of all communities urging all to participate in the celebrations at Namprikdang.

The State level tribal festival is being organized by Social Justice, Empowerment and Welfare Department, North District Administration and Namsoong Celebration Committee Dzongu and funded by the Ministry of Tribal Affairs. The festival has been organized for the last forty years.

A football tournament for both men and women is also being organized by the committee. The Women's tournament is being organized under the Beti Bachao Beti Padhao banner to highlight the scheme and provide a platform for the girl child to excel in various fields.

Deshaj concludes in Lachen

SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 12 DEC:

The three-day national folk and cultural dance, music and play festival, 'Deshaj,' concluded on 10 December at Lachen in North Sikkim.

The event saw over 300 established and renowned artists from 21 States of the country in performance.

On the occasion, local artists of Lachen also highlighted local culture and traditions of the State to visiting artists from different parts of the country.

The event was jointly organised by Cultural Affairs and Heritage Department and Sangeet Natak Akademi, North



East Centre, Guwahati, and was inaugurated by District Collector [North], Karma R Bonpo, at the community hall at Lachen. 15 representatives from each State performed during the three-day event.

OSD, Cultural Affairs and Heritage Department, Jagdish Sharma, informs that although it was a challenging task to organise the event at

high altitude in winter, it was still a grand success.

He added that participants enjoyed the natural beauty of the area even in this chilly weather.

He added that 305 artists from different States performed during the festival.

The concluding day of the festival had Forest Minister, Tshering Wangdi Lepcha, as the chief guest.

Cong rubbing salt into wounds of anti-Sikh riot victims: AAP on Kamal Nath as Madhya Pradesh CM

CHANDIGARH, DEC 13 (PTI): With Kamal Nath among the frontrunners for the chief minister's post in Madhya Pradesh, Arvind Kejriwal's AAP said Rahul Gandhi's party was rubbing salt into the wounds of 1984 anti-Sikh riot victims.

AAP alleged that Kamal Nath's name figured prominently for leading a groups to attack Sikhs in 1984 following the assassination of Indira Gandhi. Congress has rubbed salt into the wounds of anti-Sikh riot victims instead of providing justice, Punjab AAP lawmaker and Leader of Opposition in the state assembly Harpal Singh Cheema said.

He asked Gandhi to not make Nath the chief minister, saying it has caused a widespread resentment among Sikhs. Cheema also demanded the Centre to initiate a time-bound inquiry against Nath for his alleged role in the riot.

He reminded Congress that how the party had to rollback the decision of appointing Nath as in-charge of its Punjab unit in 2016.

However, Punjab minister Vijay Inder Singh hit out at the opposition, saying they should leave the decision on who will be Madhya Pradesh's chief minister to the Congress.

"They are no au-

thority to tell our party high-command what it should do," Singla told reporters when asked to comment on Shiromani Akali Dal's Manjinder Singh Sirsa accusing the Congress leadership of "protecting the perpetrators" of the riot.

Singla said rather the SAD leadership should tell people of Punjab for what "mistakes" they have sought atonement for. The SAD leadership, led by party patron Parkash Singh Badal, had offered prayers at Akal Takht last week, the supreme temporal body of Sikhs, to seek atonement for the "mistakes" it committed "inadvertently" in the past.

No hidden agenda behind petition on 'immigrant' tag: HSP

REBYNA RANA
GANGTOK, 12 DEC:

"We are just trying to clear the confusion around the word 'immigrant' used against the Sikkimese Nepalese since 1992," said spokesperson of Hamro Sikkim Party, Biraj Adhikari, during a press conference held today at HSP party office, Deorali.

HSP had filed a petition in the Supreme Court on 29 Nov seeking removal of the world "immigrant" used for Sikkimese Nepalese from a judgment

passed in the 1990s.

Mr Adhikari said that the party has no hidden agenda behind this initiative and only want the 'immigrant' tag to be removed.

Vice president of HSP, Dilip Rai, said that people are still unaware, confused and misunderstood, because of the word 'immigrant'. We are not challenging the Supreme Court verdict but just want it to remove the word or amend the judgment, he added.

HSP is only doing this



so that Sikkimese Nepalese do not have to face any kind of discrimination within or outside the State, said vice president, DS Limboo.

The party has also condemned allegations made by Sikkim Republican Party that HSP is

raising this issue because of the upcoming elections.

The petition has not been admitted by the court as yet but it is expected that it will be admitted by the end of Jan next year according to the party.

PRC to non-tribals after receiving panel report

ITANAGAR, DEC 13 (PTI): Arunachal Pradesh government on Thursday

said a decision on providing Permanent Resident Certificate (PRC) to non-tribals would be made only after receiving recommendations of a panel set up to look into the issue.

Around 300-400 households of non-tribal communities have settled in Namsai and Changlang districts of the state several decades ago and they have been demanding the PRCs.

However, tribals last week demanded that the PRC should be granted to non-tribals only after receiving the report of the Joint High Power Committee (JHPC).

After Cong's win, C'garh gears up to resolve farmers' issues

RAIPUR, DEC 13 (PTI):

With the Congress storming to power in Chhattisgarh, the state cooperative department has started the process of collecting details of the outstanding loans of farmers, in view of the loan waiver promise made by the party in its

poll manifesto.

The cooperative department's deputy secretary P S Sarpraaj in a letter asked authorities concerned on Wednesday to submit farm loan details of farmers at the earliest. The Congress promised in its election manifesto to

waive farm loans within 10 days of formation of its government in the state, a department official told PTI Thursday. To implement the announcement, a scheme to waive farmers' debts is to be drafted, the official said. The Directorate of Institutional Finance,

state-level bankers committee of the State Bank of India's zonal office and the Chhattisgarh State Cooperative Bank have been asked to submit details of pending agriculture loan amounts of farmers in banks functioning under their purview, the official added.

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Gangtok on Friday, 14Dec

Temp: 14°C/09°C

Forecast: Sunny to partly cloudy with a little rain in the evening, then a shower in spots

Sunrise: 06:05 AM

Sunset: 04:42 PM

Governor dines at Patna Raj Bhavan

SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 13 DEC:

Governor Ganga Prasad attended a special dinner hosted by the Governor of Bihar, Lalji Tandon, at Raj Bhavan, Patna, on 12 December. The Chief Minister of Bihar, Nitish Kumar, Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh, Yogi Adityanath, and several other ministers and dignitaries were present on the occasion.

REBYNA RANA

GANGTOK, 13 DEC:

Sikkim Unit of National Confederation of Bank Employees is all set to organise its first ever State Conference here in the capital. The conference is slated to be held on 16 Dec at Hotel Summit Denzong, Kazi road, Gangtok. Addressing the media today here at the Press Club of Sikkim, vice president for State Bank of India (SBI), Staff Association (Bengal circle), Rajesh Chandra Pradhan, said that the conference shall address wage negotiation of banking employees and banking facility for rural families.

The National Conference of Bank Employees (NCB) has come up with

NCBE Sikkim unit to hold first State conference



this idea of holding a state conference in Sikkim for the benefit of all banking employees here, he said.

This is the first time that such a conference is being organized in Sikkim, Mr Pradhan said

further adding that Gangtok MLA, Pintso Chopel Lepcha will be the chief guest of the conference.

Sandeep K Bandalish [Convenor, United Forum of Bank Unions], S P Behera [President,

SBI Staff Associations, 8 Circle], Rajesh Tripathi [Chief Secretary, SBI Staff Association, 8 Circle], along with host of other leaders from NCBE and State Bank of India Staff Association will be attending

the conference, it was informed.

The press meet was also attended by regional secretary, SBI Staff Association, Passang Tamang, from Sikkim and assistant secretary, Pravin Rai, Gangtok branch.

Need spl courts in each districts of 18 states for trial of MP, MLA cases, SC informed

NEW DELHI, DEC 13

(PTI): Special designated courts in all districts of 18 states should be set up for speedy trial of criminal cases involving sitting and former lawmakers, the Supreme Court was informed Thursday.

Senior advocate and amicus curiae Vijay Hansaria told the top court that high courts in Bihar and Kerala have issued directions for setting up special designated courts in each of their districts as directed by it on December 4. He said special courts, which were directed to be established by the Patna High Court and Kerala High Court, may be directed to exclusively deal with cases of lawmakers assigned to them on priority basis.

Hansaria, in his third status report filed on Thursday, said 18 states which do not have any special designated courts for trial of cases against lawmakers should be directed to set up in each districts.

"That in States, namely, Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Chhattisgarh, Goa, Gujarat, Haryana, Him-

achal Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir, Jharkhand, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Odisha, Punjab, Rajasthan, Tripura and Uttarakhand no special courts have been constituted and cases are pending in respective jurisdictional court. It is submitted that appropriate directions for expeditious disposal of cases in the said states may be passed...", the report said.

The apex court is seized of a PIL filed by lawyer and BJP leader Ashwini Upadhyay seeking a life time ban on politicians convicted in criminal cases besides the setting up of special courts to expeditiously try such cases. Hansaria was appointed by the apex court as amicus curiae in the matter.

He sought directions for respective High Courts of these 18 states to allocate the criminal cases involving sitting and former legislators to as many Sessions courts and Magisterial courts as each high court may consider proper, fit and expedient.

"Such courts will exclusively deal with cases thus assigned and no other

cases till all such cases are decided. The courts will fix a calendar for each case and will try the cases on day to day basis without grant of adjournment except in rare and exceptional circumstances and for reasons to be recorded," the report said.

Hansaria added that directions should be passed that the special courts will give priority to the trial of cases against MPs and MLAs without distinction between former and sitting legislators.

He said that first the special courts should first take up the matters pertaining to offences punishable with imprisonment for life, then cases of serious offences punishable with imprisonment of five years or more and then cases involving other offences.

"Each court will send a monthly status report to the high court and the high court on examination of the same will issue necessary administrative directions as and when required," he said adding that directions should also be passed to the forensic laboratories to give priority in furnishing

the pending report in cases tried by the special courts.

He said that directions should also be given to the state government and Union Territory administration to designate at least two special public prosecutors for prosecuting cases being tried in special courts and request to the high courts to decide the cases where stays were being granted.

"That there are about 250 cases pending in different high courts in which further proceedings in criminal cases against MPs/MLAs have been stayed. High Courts may be requested to decide all such cases preferably within three months from date of order of the court," the report said.



Yogen Thatal Singtam, 13 Dec:

Brand Ambassador of Swachh Bharat Mission for Sikkim, Prakash Subba receives a letter of appreciation from the Area MLA, Somnath Poudyal during the Government Formation Day celebration at Singtam on 12 Dec.

Manu Bhaker among 16 shooters named for TOPS support

NEW DELHI, DEC 13

(PTI): Eight young shooters including Manu Bhaker and Saurabh Chaudhary were on Thursday included in the Target Olympic Scheme (TOPS) along with two tennis players and three paddlers, keeping in mind the 2020 Tokyo Olympics.

The TOPS offers a monthly financial support of Rs 50,000 to the selected athletes.

"The performance of potential athletes was reviewed in the context of the Tokyo 2020 Olympics. It was also decided to extend support towards a specific developmental group for the 2024 Olympics," a Sports Authority of India (SAI) release said.

Both Bhaker (women's 10m air pistol) and Chaudhary (men's 10m air pistol) had won gold medals at the recent Youth Olympics in Buenos Aires, Argentina.

As many as 16 shooters made the cut, including Mehuli Ghosh (women's 10m air rifle), Anish Bhanwala (men's 25m rapid fire pistol) Elavenil Valarivan (women's



10m air rifle), Lakshay Sheoran (men's trap) and veteran Sanjeev Rajput (men's 50m rifle 3 position).

Ravi Kumar (Men's 10m Air Rifle), Deepak Kumar (Men's 10m Air Rifle, Apurvi Chandela (Women's 10m Air Rifle), Anjum Moudgil (women's 10m Air Rifle and Women's 50m Rifle 3 Position), Abhishek Verma (Men's 10m Air Pistol), Om Prakash Mitharwal (Men's 10m Air Pistol), Ravi Sarnobat (Women's 25m Pistol), Kynan Chenai (Men's Trap), and Angad Veer Singh Bajwa (Men's Skeet) were the other shooters

to figure in the list.

Additionally, six shooters are being considered under the development group for the 2024 Olympics. They are: Hriday Hazarika (Men's 10m Air Rifle), Divyansh Panwar (Men's 10m Air Rifle), Shreya Agrawal (Women's 10m Air Rifle), Aishwarya Pratap Tomar (Men's 50m Rifle 3 Position), Esha Singh (Women's 10m Air Pistol), Manisha Keer (Women's Trap).

"There was an intense deliberation over the inclusion of Heena Sidhu and Jitu Rai in the scheme. The committee post the discussion

agreed to keep them on a watchlist along with a few other athletes, and it was decided to take a call on their inclusion in the scheme, post the World Cup in February 2019 to be held in New Delhi," the release added.

The Asian Games gold medallists Divij Sharan and Rohan Bopanna were the only tennis players named in latest TOPS list.

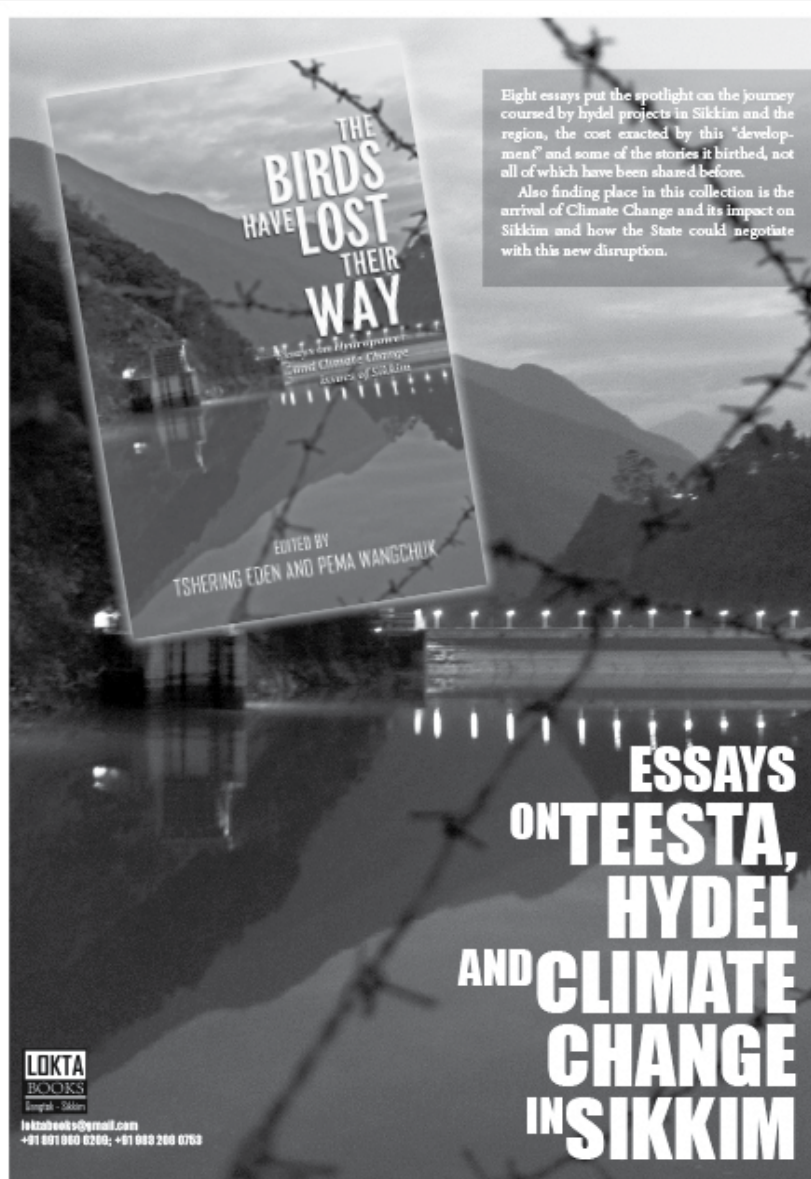
"The committee also decided that Sania Mirza could be considered for inclusion at a later date for Mixed Doubles depending on her plans to recommence training," the release added.

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game), will have to be ignored. Letters which carry forward a conversation or initiate a dialogue will command immediate attention and receive prominence.

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SummitTIMES

ON TOP OF THE NEWS

Never Forget Nirbhaya

She was without fear, while we appear to be without conviction or shame

The Delhi gang-rape of 'Nirbhaya' around this time of the year in 2012 had left the entire nation shocked and disturbed.

The incident had triggered spontaneous protests on the streets of Delhi and expressions of support across the country as the repressed anger of a large section of the nation's population spilled over and expressed itself with staggering forthrightness. The anger among the protesters was genuine, and the establishment's response to the situation, both the rape and the protests, was typically nonchalant and ignorant, at least initially. The gang-rape, disturbing and heinous as it was, provided the trigger to unleash pent-up frustrations of the people. The insecurity that Delhi infects women living there with and the disinterest with which those responsible to keep citizens safe deliver on their responsibilities, manifested in the near anarchic string of protests there. One will recall that the protests continued even after all the accused were behind bars and the victim [who passed away later], was receiving the best medical attention possible. That was clearly because as much as the protest was about that one incident of a brutal gang-rape, it was also against the society's general ambivalence when it comes to violence against women – physical, mental and through denial of opportunities – which allows such perversions as the Delhi Shame which had the entire nation in a roil.

What the thousands who stared down water cannons on the streets of Delhi wanted was not just justice for Nirbhaya, but an assurance that public spaces will be made safer for women and the law & order personnel and institutions so sensitized that they not only bring perpetrators of violence against women to book, but also, through quicker response and better policing, prevent such crimes from transpiring.

Effective punishment for violence against women should already have been in place and by now, the State machinery should have earned the trust of the people when it comes to ensuring justice for victims. Because the State has failed on both counts, the people are left with no recourse but to take to the streets so often.

The establishment lumbers towards reforms and will hopefully come up eventually with a plan which will not only reduce the number of rapes in the country, but also improve the conviction rate beyond the present dismal statistic of 24%. It is already six years since the incident, and yet there is not much to show about improvement. Be that as it may, even as the administration and the policy makers begin prioritizing women's issues, the women found new resolve in the wake of the Nirbhaya shocker. It goes without saying that they are now expressing their protests and disdains with more determination and less unencumbered by the inhibitions which held many of them back. Rape incidents used to occasionally bring women to the streets in solidarity earlier, but over the past few years, one has noticed many more expressions of individual and organizational protests. Women in India no longer appear inclined to ignore what would have earlier been considered 'minor' transgressions. And when it comes to more serious offences, the clamour is even louder. And that has been one of the positive course corrections that the Nirbhaya incident triggered in the country. Unfortunately, while the women are finding the resolve to express themselves more strongly, the establishment continues to remain regressively patriarchal. The manner in which we responded to the documentary film, "India's Daughter", and hounded it off the air and the disturbing reality of violence against women remaining as rampant as it always was, expose our disinterest and entrenched gender insensitivity.

The policy announcements made in the wake of the Nirbhaya episode remain only partially implemented and are still to progress beyond the tokenism which is the standard follow-up to most people-driven course-corrections. What is required is for the issue of rape and other forms of violence against women to be kept constantly in conversation so that the pressure never wanes and improvements never stop. And while we dragged our feet, the MeToo movement was upon us to hold up the mirror again. And we still refuse to look.

WRITE US: Readers are invited to comment on, criticise, run down, even appreciate if they like something in this paper. Letters carrying abusive/ indecorous language and personal attacks, except when against people responsible in this newspaper (who are fair game), will have to be ignored. Letters which carry forward a conversation or initiate a dialogue will command immediate attention and receive prominence.

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Who are the Enemies of Janta Raj?

Janta Raj- The Brand of Sikkimese Democracy

JIWAN RAI

It was December 1994. The congregation of top bureaucrats awaited the arrival of a new Chief Minister, Pawan Chamling, who would address the heads of all the departments of the state government. The man finally arrived and took his seat at the head table. He looked at the faces of those men and women seated in the hall who constituted the pinnacle of the bureaucratic totem pole. They ran the most dominant system in the state called bureaucracy, which is feared and venerated as the ultimate body of power in the state. No wonder some of them were obnoxiously self-possessed. Not every citizen had the courage to face them head on and speak frankly.

Against this back drop of them ruling the roost of the state administration, Pawan Chamling had stirred up a hornet's nest with his slogan - Janta Rajma, Jantai Raja. Now was the time to proclaim it once again in front of these pantheons of power. But he didn't say a word. Suspense hung in the air. Was he overwhelmed at the presence of some of those overbearing personalities, stuck up, almost intoxicated by the power that they had so pompously held for so long? At least one of them thought thus and so he blurted out, "Sir, why don't you start your speech? What are you waiting for?" It was probably a ploy to attack the new Chief Minister psychologically.

Unperturbed by this rude remark, he looked at them silently for several moments longer and then at last told them that they were under no obligation to listen to his command. He said, "But please know that I, as chief minister, embody the public mandate and I, in that sense, represent the power of the people. I expect you to respect the government's decisions made in the interest of the people who have given us this responsibility to run the state administration for five years.

That was exactly 24 years ago. The 19 year old state of Sikkim had welcomed a 44 year old man - Pawan Chamling as its fifth Chief Minister. Democracy was the buzzword. His party, the Sikkim Democratic Front, strongly condemned the decline of democracy under the Bhandari government. The evaluation of the Chamling leadership, therefore, should be conducted in relation to the promise of democracy that he made with a candle brandished in the State Legislative Assembly.

His accentuation on Janta Raj is a logical outworking of his political ideology. The biggest question is - how did Sikkim benefit from his Janta Raj? In other words, has he done anything special in Sik-

kim politics that other governments can take note of?

Janta Rajma Jantai Raja actually promises more than what democracy gives in a general sense. It attempts to shorten the gap between the government and the people. Or it at least keeps the people at the closest distance from the seat of governance. Here are a few examples:

In his recent meeting with research scholars from across the state, one of the speakers, Patrus Lepcha, proposed that Sikkim, with the success of organic farming, may soon need an Agriculture and Horticulture college of its own. The Chief Minister in his response said, "In democracy, people make decisions and the government implements. Respecting the decision of the scholars' community, I promise to initiate the establishment of the college and we will see it running from next year." That is how instantly and easily Janta Raj should work. Is this a one off incidence? Sikkim is probably the only Indian state that has witnessed scores of 'on the spot' approvals of public demands for school upgradations, roads, establishments of colleges and so on. Easy and instant state recognition of almost all the local languages, seat reservations in various fields and direct affirmative actions are Sikkim-specific political activities unheard of in other states. This is not to mean that the state government does not grapple with a shortage of funds, technicalities of union list versus state list and unforeseen difficulties that hinder some processes, thereby causing inconvenience and frustration to people. However, it is safe to say that Sikkim enjoys some of the best development indicators in the country - such as a record breaking poverty reduction, the highest literacy rate, an increase of over 10 years in life expectancy in the last two decades, the highest growth rate of higher educational institute at 15 percent (the national average is 7 percent), the lowest crime rate, the safest place for women, the first Nirmal Rajya and open defecation free state, the hottest tourist destination and the first and only organic state. Over a hundred national awards in various fields of administration testify to her unprecedented rise.

These indicators apart, the most significant thing is the nature of the counter-narrative of the opposition parties. The buzzword in the opposite camp is "parivartan" not democracy. This, in a sense, is huge a compliment to the ruling party that stands for democracy. The opposition voices in the

state politics are getting ever louder, ironically suggesting that there is full freedom of speech and safe and ample space for dissent.

Does that mean that all is well in the SDF leadership? Certainly not! Not everyone in the party and in the government understands the essence of Janta Rajma Jantai Raja. Not all know the dignity of people that Chief Minister has been drumming into his colleagues' head. Janta Raj is premised upon the service of people in the true spirit of servant-hood that upholds the dignity of life. In the Bhandari government, there were leaders who never greeted the common people except during election campaigns. Some of them were exceedingly arrogant and were overtly disrespectful to people. Do such leaders exist today? There is a general feeling among people that the quintessential Chamling humility has not quite seeped its way into many leaders.

What is equally crucial is the role played by bureaucracy. While some are incredibly committed to the service of the people, some are simply blinded by power, just as they were before the SDF government took over the reins of administration. Megalomaniac officials who do not allow a fly to sit on their nose (Nepali expression) are a huge liability to the government. In the name of government service, they are serving their own egos and, unfortunately, many such folks hold key positions. They are the enemies of Janta Raj and the Chief Minister openly concedes that he has been battling against such forces till this day. People have begun to express their displeasure against such people. One hopes that the Chief Minister-people connectivity would become even more meaningful and productive. There is where the strength of the Chamling leadership and Janta Raj lies.

"Janta Raj is premised upon the service of people in the true spirit of servant-hood that upholds the dignity of life. Not everyone in the SDF party and in the government understands the essence of Janta Rajma Jantai Raja. Not all know the dignity of people that Chief Minister has been drumming into his colleagues' head. There is a general feeling among people that the quintessential Chamling humility has not quite seeped its way into many leaders. Megalomaniac bureaucrats are a huge liability to the government. In the name of government service, they are serving their own egos and, unfortunately, many such folks hold key positions."

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Why losing the African Cup of Nations is a heavy blow for Cameroon

JO CLARKE
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The proud footballing nation of Cameroon is under the spotlight for all the wrong reasons. This follows the announcement that they have been stripped of the hosting rights for the African Cup on Nations (AFCON) 2019 because of delays with preparations as well as security concerns.

The Confederation of African Football (CAF) announced the decision after a meeting of its executive committee, saying that "a number of compliance conditions have not been met" and that it did not want to expose the Africa Cup of Nations to "any issues that could impact on the success of the most prestigious African competition."

The competition is due to start in June 2019.

There's no denying that hosting a large scale sporting event comes at a cost. There are years of planning and investment to ensure that the necessary infrastructural work gets done. This kind of financial commitment is daunting for any nation, but particularly for Cameroon which is ranked 93rd out of 190 nations in terms of its wealth.

But countries opt to host events like this because they believe that there will be positive economic and social spin offs. Cameroon is no longer in a position to benefit in this way. And the decision is also a blow to its reputation, particularly given its reputation as a great footballing nation.

THE IMPORTANCE OF FOOTBALL Football is known as the "king" sport in Cameroon. Ever since its introduction in the 1920s it's been the number one sport in the country. When the national team plays, the streets are empty and the bars are full of people. Even the local



football leagues, are a favourite topic of conversation even though most matches aren't broadcast on television. The growth and popularity of football in Cameroon is largely attributed to the success of the national men's team "The Indomitable Lions" and more recently the emergence of the national women's team "The Lionesses". The men's national team has played in seven FIFA World Cup competitions, more than any other African team. The women's team competed in their first ever FIFA Women's World Cup in 2015 making the last 16.

Even today, football fans reminisce the triumphant emergence of the men's national team in the 1990 World Cup and forward Roger Milla's trademark dance by the corner flag, more than any other African team. The women's team competed in their first ever FIFA Women's World Cup in 2015 making the last 16.

POLITICS AND THE PEOPLE'S GAME

But football has become more than a sport in Cameroon, with many people arguing that football is politics. For instance, political interest began in the early part of 1990 after protests and calls for political reform. Luckily for President Paul Biya, who has been ruling the West

African country for 36 years, the national team's performances at the 1990 World Cup in Italy diverted attention from political issues.

Research studies have shown that football plays a very prominent role with building a sense of nationalism and unity for Cameroonians. It's therefore no surprise that the government has used football as bait to gain some form of stability when its power has been at stake. For example, Biya declared a national holiday as a result of the successful performance of the national team in the 1990s.

More recently he has taken to several news outlets and forums personally to defend his country and argue that Cameroon is fit to host the African Cup on Nations in 2019.

LIKELY ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL FALLOUT

So what is the likely impact on Cameroon after losing the event?

Firstly, it will lose a great deal of good publicity. Hosting major sports events often helps to increase the positive profile of the host nation. In Cameroon's case, its currently in the headlines for all of the wrong reasons.

CAF's decision is also likely to

tarnish the Cameroon's international reputation. And it's likely to affect the country's economy. The short term economic boost which is typically associated with big events is a surge in visitors, athletes and media who spend and inject money into the local economy has also been lost.

In the longer term, a significant benefit of hosting a prestigious competition is investment which inevitably leaves a legacy of improved sporting venues and the creation of local jobs.

This investment hadn't yet got off the ground in Cameroon. Only four of the planned six stadiums have been built while three out of five cities still have no accommodation infrastructure.

WIDER INSTABILITY

In addition to the infrastructural delays, the CAF Security Inspection Team also noted wider issues during its most recent visit to Cameroon. The team noted that "wider issues" could affect the success of the competition. This was a reference to the political instability in the country which has extended to some fearing that Cameroon is on the brink of civil war.

Cameroon's ruthless military crackdown on a separatist movement in Anglophone regions has led to claims of genocide. Cameroon also continues to contend with the enduring terrorist threat of Boko Haram attacks as the terrorist sect remains operative in the country's far north.

CAF's decision means that an urgent call is now out for new host country bids to ensure that AFCON 2019 takes place as planned. The plan is to announce the new host in early 2019.

[the writer is Lecturer in Sport Business Management, Sheffield Hallam University]

Centre sets up tribunal to adjudicate ban imposed on 8 Manipur insurgent groups

NEW DELHI, DEC 13 (PTI): The Centre has constituted a tribunal to adjudicate matters related to extension of ban imposed on eight insurgent groups in Manipur for five more years over continued involvement in unlawful and violent activities. In a notification, the Home Ministry said the tribunal was set up under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967 and will be headed by Delhi High Court judge Justice Sangita Dhingra Sehgal.

The tribunal will adjudicate whether or not there is sufficient cause for declaring the Meitei extremist organisations of Manipur as "Unlawful Associations", the notification said. The organisations which were banned last month include Peoples' Liberation Army generally known as PLA and its political wing, Revolutionary Peoples' Front (RPF), United National Liberation Front (UNLF) and its armed wing Manipur Peoples' Army (MPA), Peoples' Revolution-

ary Party of Kangleipak (PREPAK) and its armed wing 'Red Army'.

The others are Kangleipak Communist Party (KCP) and its armed wing, also called Red Army; Kanglei Yaol Kanba Lup (KYKL); the Coordination Committee (CorCom) and Alliance for Socialist Unity Kangleipak (ASUK).

The home ministry said the eight Meitei extremist organisations of Manipur were involved in 756 violent incidents in the past five years from January 1, 2013 to July 31, 2018 during which they killed 86 people, including 35 security personnel.

The groups have been indulging in acts of intimidation, extortion and looting of civilian population for collection of funds, making contacts with sources abroad for influencing public opinion and securing assistance by way of arms and training for the purpose of achieving their secessionist objective, the ministry said.

BJP activists attacking houses of Cong supporters: TPCC chief

AGARTALA, DEC 13 (PTI): Opposition Congress in Tripura Thursday alleged that ruling BJP activists had attacked the houses of the party's supporters after the Congress' win in three states in the just concluded assembly elections.

President of Tripura PCC, Birajit Sinha alleged inaction by the police despite lodging an FIR police and remained mere spectator.

BJP, he said, was frightened by the assembly poll results of five states which went to poll recently and they were seeing the "spectre of defeat" in the coming general elections to be held next year.

Congress has won in Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan.

He alleged that BJP activists attacked the house of Ratan Das, who had contested and lost from Badharghat constituency in the February assembly poll in the state here.

"BJP supporters and

activists started attacking the Congress supporters just after the election results were announced on Tuesday last.

"They damaged our party offices and attacked the Congress activists in different parts of the state since Tuesday night apparently to create a fear psychosis", Sinha said.

He said more than 100 BJP cadres attacked Das' house at Kathaltali area in Badharghat on December 11 and damaged his car and properties and threatened to kill him and his family members on Tuesday night.

"They (BJP cadres) also attacked our party supporters at Charilam and Chowmohni Bazar area in West Tripura district", he claimed.

When contacted, Amtali police station officer-in-charge Pranab Sengupta said an FIR had been received from Congress and another from ruling BJP party and both parties alleged that they



had been attacked by each other.

He said, police force has been deployed near Das' house and investigation was on, but no one was arrested so far.

AIG (law and order) Smriti Ranjan Das said, We have received complaints from both sides from different places of the state and are investigating the cases. We cannot arrest anyone without evidence".

Sinha alleged that the policies adopted by the NDA government, mainly demonetisation and introduction of GST and

false promises made by it had led to debacle.

BJP spokesperson Ashoke Sinha when contacted said, There is no plan or indulgence from our party to attack the opposition party workers. If any such stray incidents had happened is condemnable.

"But I think something might have developed at the local level after the poll results of the five states were assembly polls were held were declared and there were altercations between supporters of both the parties".

Bengal govt to build lab for restoring, digitising films

KOLKATA, DEC 13 (PTI): The West Bengal government has sanctioned Rs 21 crore for setting up a world-class laboratory in the city for preserving and digitising films that form a part of the state's cultural identity, an official said.

A nine-storeyed laboratory will shortly come up in Tollygunge, where a major chunk of production houses and studios of the Bengali film industry are based, he said.

"The government has

massive digitizations

plans and the laboratory

will be equipped with

all modern facilities for

the purpose. An e-tender

has already been floated

for purchase of technical equipment," he explained.

The initiative will go a long way in helping filmmakers in the future, the official said.

"The administration has also arranged for workshops to train people in handling reels and other equipment," he added.

Earlier this year, the state government had built a film vault at the Cinema Centenary Building in Tollygunge for storing films and documentaries by some of the auteurs of Bengal in temperature and humidity-controlled environment.

to book advertisements in SummitTimes call: 03592-208698, 9734152541, 9647102692

Bird flu: Govt orders culling of chicken in 4 villages in Puri district

BHUBANESWAR/PURI, DEC 13 (PTI): The Odisha government Thursday ordered culling of chicken in four villages located near the Chilika lake in Puri district following detection of the H5N1 virus in samples of poultry birds and crows.

"Bird culling within a radius of 1 km from the affected area has been suggested to the collector of Puri. The culling will start on Friday," Fisheries and Animal Resources Development Secretary Vishal Gagan said.

A ban has also been imposed on the sale and transportation of poultry products within a radius of 10 km from the affected areas, Collector of Puri J P Das said.

The collector said he has issued orders to stop supply of eggs for mid-day meals in schools and anganwadi centres.



At least eight teams have been formed for undertaking the culling operation in the affected areas.

An outbreak of bird flu is suspected in Puri after 20,000 hens and crows died in the Krushnaprasad block of the district.

The blood samples of the birds were sent to the National Institute of High Security Animal Diseases (NIHSAD) in Bhopal.

The samples tested positive for the H5N1 virus, Chief District Veterinary Officer (CDVO) Dr Girija Patnaik said.

The administration is dealing with the matter seriously, as the affected areas are close to the Chilika lake, where a large number of migratory birds are likely to congregate during winter season.

A joint team of forest

and veterinary officials had gone to Nalabana in the lake and collected stool samples of about 150 migratory birds.

So far, the team has sent 308 samples to the ADRI, officials said adding that the Chilika Wildlife Division had convened a meeting on this issue at Balugan on Wednesday in the presence of senior veterinary and forest officials.

Mizoram Polls: Lowest winning margin 3 votes, highest 2,720

Aizawl, Dec 13 (PTI): The lowest winning margin in the just-concluded Mizoram Assembly election was only three votes while the highest was 2,720.

Lalchhandama Ralte of the Mizoram National Front (MNF) won the Tuivai seat with a victory margin of only three votes.

Ralte had secured 5,207 votes while his nearest rival, sitting Congress legislator R L Piamawia bagged 5,204 votes.

Pianmawia had demanded a recounting of votes which was accepted by the Election Commission of India. But the recounting also found that the winning margin was only three votes.

Election to 40-member Mizoram Assembly was held on November 28 and counting of votes took place on December 11.

The highest winning margin in the state Assembly election was

2,720 votes. Sitting MNF legislator Lalruatkima retained his Aizawl West-II seat defeating his nearest Congress rival Lalmalsawma Nghaka by a margin of 2,720 votes.

Lalruatkima had secured 7,626 while Nghaka scored 4,906 votes. Mizoram Chief Minister and Congress candidate Lal Thanhawla lost his Serchip seat to his Independent rival Lalduhoma by 410 votes.

Lal Thanhawla got 5071 votes while Lalduhoma bagged 5481 votes. Mizoram Chief Minister and Congress candidate Lal Thanhawla lost his Serchip seat to his Independent rival Lalduhoma by 410 votes.

Lal Thanhawla also lost the Champai South seat to his MNF rival T J Lalnunluanga by 1,049 votes. Lalnunluanga got 5,212 votes while Lal Thanhawla received 4,163 votes.

MNF president and chief minister designate Zoramthanga won his Aizawl East-I seat by a margin of 2504 votes. Zoramthanga got 8358 votes while his nearest Independent rival secured 5854 votes.

Mizoram Assembly will have no woman MLA

AIZAWL, DEC 13 (PTI): The Mizoram Assembly will not have a single woman legislator as all the 15 female candidates lost in the November 28 election in the state where women outnumber men in the voters' list.

Of the total 209 candidates, 15 were women -- the highest ever to have contested the assembly polls in the state so far.

Of the 7,07,395 electorates, around 6,20,332 voters had cast their votes on November 28, of whom 3,20,401 were women.

Political analysts attributed the failure of women to win the assembly election to the Mizo society being strictly patriarchal and the major political party's refusal to field women candidates.

The Mizo National Front (MNF), which bagged 26 seats in the 40-member House, had not fielded a single woman



candidate.

The BJP, which won only one seat, had put up the maximum number of women candidates at six.

The 'Zoramthar' a religious-based group had fielded five women candidates.

The People's Representation for Identity and Status of Mizoram (PRISM) and the National People's Party (NPP) also did not field any woman candidate.

State Cooperation minister Vanlalawmpui Chawngthu, who was the sole woman candidate

to have been fielded by the Congress from the Hrangturzo seat, could not taste success.

The Zoram People's Movement (ZPM) had put up two women nominees while the Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) and the Congress fielded one woman candidate each.

The 15 women candidates together secured only 14,482 votes with Lalrinpui of the ZPM, who contested from Lunglei South, getting 3,991 votes - the highest among the women candidates.

The second highest

vote scoring woman candidate was Chawngthu, who bagged 3,815 votes in Hrangturzo seat.

In the 2013 election, there were six women candidates and no woman was elected to the state assembly.

Vanlalawmpui Chawngthu contested the bypoll to the Hrangturzo seat in 2014 and won it after it was vacated by Lal Thanhawla as he was elected from two seats.

Last year, Chawngthu was appointed as the state Cooperation minister.

SC stays Meghalaya HC order directing private airlines to begin flight operations from Umroi airport

NEW DELHI, DEC 13 (PTI): The Supreme Court Thursday stayed the Meghalaya High Court order that had directed commercial airlines like Indigo and Spicejet to immediately begin flight operations from Umroi airport in the northeast state.

A bench headed by Chief Justice Ranjan Gogoi took note of the submissions of senior advocate Mukul Rohatgi, representing Indigo airlines that there were no fire fighting and other facilities available at Umroi airport and flight operations cannot be started immediately. "The high court order shall remain stayed," the bench which also comprised Justices S K Kaul and K M Joseph said.

The apex court had on Wednesday agreed to give urgent hearing to the plea of private



airlines challenging the high court order asking it to start flight operations from the Umroi Airport, 30 km from the Meghalaya capital Shillong.

The apex court was told that the high court on its own had last week taken up the matter and asked the Director General of Civil Aviation, Secretary, Ministry of Civil Aviation and Airport Authority of India (AAI) Chairman to hold a meeting within a week on the issue of making the airport operational.

The court was told that the airport was not ready for landing of big aircraft and does not have fire-fighting facilities.

Central leaders covertly helped MNF to win Mizoram polls: BJP state unit chief

AIZAWL, DEC 13 (PTI): Despite getting a seat in the Mizoram Assembly for the first time, the state BJP has charged its central leadership with "covertly helping" the MNF, claiming that its candidates would have fared better otherwise.

The MNF, however, denied the claim and maintained that the party won the elections without any support.

The saffron party's state unit chief, John V Hluna, said Thursday that a nexus between his party's central leadership and the Mizo National Front (MNF) might have spoiled the state BJP's chances and paved way for the regional party's victory.

"The BJP central leadership might have covertly helped the MNF. No concerted efforts were made by the party's central leaders to help the state unit. The poll results fell far short of our expectations," he said.

The state BJP chief

contended that the campaigns by the central leaders were only restricted to the interstate border areas. "I had requested the central leaders to campaign in various constituencies of the state for the Assembly polls but they concentrated only in areas bordering Bangladesh and Tripura," Hluna, who is in Delhi, told PTI over phone.

The Mizoram National Front (MNF) is a constituent of the BJP-led North East Democratic Alliance (NEDA) and the NDA. It won 26 seats in the 40-member Assembly, followed by the Zoram People's Movement (ZPM) at eight and the Congress at five.

Hluna said the BJP cadre were shocked to see the dismal performance of their party as they had predicted win in "at least five seats".

"We had high hopes that Hiphei, who resigned as the Assembly speaker and contested from his home turf Palak seat in



Siaha district, would win," he said. The party was also confident of winning Mamit, Hachhek and Dampa seats in Mamit district, which has a sizeable number of minorities, Hluna said.

The BJP leader also attributed the loss of his party to the low voter turnout in 15 temporary polling stations at Kanmun village, where Bru voters from the six relief camps in Tripura had exercised their franchise.

The voter turnout at Kanmun polling stations was 56.46 per cent while the total voter turnout in

the November 28 Assembly polls was over 81 per cent. Hluna asserted that the central leadership of the BJP did not have confidence in the state unit to capture power in the state.

The main aim of the BJP leaders in Delhi was to kick out the Congress, he said, adding the saffron party should be a part of the new government in the state as the MNF is a constituent of the NEDA.

MNF president and chief minister-designate Zoramthanga had said before the polls that his party would not forge any alliance in the state.

Green top awaits India and Australia in Perth's new Test venue

CHETAN NARULA

PERTH, DEC 13 (PTI):

Most Indian teams of the past would be wary of a green top but the Virat Kohli-led side will see it as an opportunity to bulldoze the Australians when the second Test begins on a pitch offering plenty of pace and bounce at the brand new Optus Stadium, here Friday.

The mood in the Indian camp was summed up best by the skipper after a green pitch was unveiled on eve of the maiden Test at the new facility.

"We get more excited than nervous looking at lively pitches now," said Kohli, who has a potent pace attack at his disposal.

Curator Brett Siphthorpe is trying to produce the 'bounciest' pitch he can and that could very well work in India's favour as the visitors aim to take a 2-0 lead in the four-Test series,

India won the first Test in Adelaide by 31 runs.

Keeping with tradition at the good old WACA, a raging quick wicket has been laid for this inaugural five-day game. It has a healthy layering of grass which could impact strategies for both sides.

The visitors will surely name a changed eleven as they have been hit by a couple more injuries. India named their 13-man squad for this second Test, with R Ashwin and Rohit Sharma the

two notable absentees.

Ashwin is ruled out owing to a left-abdominal strain while Rohit is laid low due to a back issue that he sustained whilst fielding in the first Test at Adelaide.

The batsman missed out on both days of practice leading to the second Test.

Ashwin also skipped the optional training on Wednesday, and while he was present for warm-ups during Thursday practice, he didn't bat or bowl in the nets. Meanwhile, Prithvi Shaw continues to be ruled out, meaning India will retain their opening combination of KL Rahul and Murali Vijay.

For the other two spots in the playing eleven, Hanuma Vihari, Ravindra Jadeja, Bhuvneshwar Kumar and Umesh Yadav have been included in the 13-man squad. It gives rise to different permutations and combinations, and Kohli does have prior history of picking an all-pace attack earlier in 2018.

At Johannesburg, on another raging green-top wicket, he picked a four-pacer attack with Hardik Pandya as the all-rounder.

India also have played an all-pace attack in Perth back in 2012, when MS Dhoni fielded Zaheer Khan, Umesh Yadav, Ishant Sharma and R Vinay Kumar at the WACA Ground. Virender Sehwag bowled 7.2 overs



of off-spin in that Test, and it provides a template for Kohli to follow.

With Rohit out injured, Vihari is likely to play his second Test after his maiden appearance at the Oval, wherein he scored 56 runs in the fifth Test against England.

Vihari is a handy off-spinner as well, and the team management hasn't been shy to use him as such. At the Oval, when India did play with four full-time bowlers, he bowled 10.3 overs.

In the practice game in Sydney too, Vihari bowled 12 overs against Cricket Australia XI. Along with Vijay, picking Vihari allows the Indian think-tank to go in with a four-pacer strategy, with Bhuvneshwar Kumar coming in for the injured Ashwin.

Even so, recent records need to be consid-

ered. In November, Western Australia hosted New South Wales for a Sheffield Shield game at this new ground as a dry-run for this maiden Test.

Out of 40 wickets to fall in that four-day game, eight went to spinners with Nathan Lyon taking seven wickets for 120 runs in two innings and left-arm spinner Ashton Agar picking the one wicket for 69 runs in two innings.

Clearly, Lyon as the off-spinner was able to exploit the bounce on offer. If Ashwin had been available, Kohli perhaps would have still been tempted to play him. With Jadeja in the squad though, there is still possibility to go in with a spinner albeit the temptation is greatly reduced.

The Indian batting line-up should otherwise be unchanged. On

Thursday, the three Indian pacers, who played in Adelaide, didn't bowl at all. They did pad up and have a hit in the nets.

Australia could make a tactical change to their batting line-up as well. Aaron Finch has come under sharp criticism for his shot selection in the first Test and there are growing concerns about him going into this match.

After Wednesday's practice sessions, there was growing opinion that either Usman Khawaja or Shaun Marsh could open in his place, with Finch slotting down in the middle order.

All-rounder Mitchell Marsh still only has an outside chance to play in this Test with skipper Tim Paine declaring himself fully fit after being hurt on his right hand in Adelaide. Australia are expected to field the

same bowling line-up and barring any surprising injuries, Peter Siddle is not in consideration.

Squad: India (13-players): Virat Kohli (capt), KL Rahul, Murali Vijay, Cheteshwar Pujara, Ajinkya Rahane, Hanuma Vihari, Rishabh Pant (wk), Ravindra Jadeja, Ishant Sharma, Jasprit Bumrah, Mohammed Shami, Bhuvneshwar Kumar, Umesh Yadav. Other squad players: Parthiv Patel, Kuldeep Yadav, Prithvi Shaw, R Ashwin, Rohit Sharma.

Australia (expected eleven): Tim Paine (capt & wk), Marcus Harris, Aaron Finch, Usman Khawaja, Travis Head, Shaun Marsh, Peter Handscomb, Nathan Lyon, Mitchell Starc, Pat Cummins, Josh Hazlewood.

Other squad players: Mitchell Marsh, Peter Siddle. Match starts at: 7.50am IST.

Double blow for India as Ashwin, Rohit ruled out of Perth Test

PERTH, DEC 13 (PTI): India's premier spinner Ravichandran Ashwin and batsman Rohit Sharma have been ruled out of the second Test starting here on Friday, dealing a double blow to the visitors at a time when opener Prithvi Shaw is yet to recover from an ankle injury.

With the trio unavailable for selection, India included Hanuma Vihari, Ravindra Jadeja, Umesh Yadav and Bhuvneshwar Kumar in a 13-man squad announced on eve of the second Test.

While Shaw injured his ankle while fielding in the sole warmup game before the series opener, Ashwin suffered an abdominal strain and Rohit hurt his back during the first Test which India won by 31 runs.

"Prithvi Shaw is recovering well from his left ankle injury but still

undergoing treatment. R Ashwin has a left-sided abdominal strain. He is receiving treatment at the moment. Rohit Sharma jarred his lower back while fielding in the 1st Test at Adelaide. He is undergoing treatment. He too is ruled out of the second Test," read a statement from the BCCI.

"The team management is closely monitoring these players and a call on their availability for the third Test will be taken at an appropriate time," it added.

Ashwin's unavailability is a big loss as he had taken a six-wicket haul at Adelaide to help India record their first win in a series opener in Australia.

Rohit, who made a Test comeback at the Adelaide Oval, was expected to retain his place in the eleven after scores of 37 and 1.

Odisha boy to receive National Bravery Award

KENDRAPARA, DEC 13

(PTI): A minor boy from a far-flung village in Odisha's Kendrapara district has been selected for the National Bravery Award for exhibiting exemplary courage in saving his paternal uncle from a crocodile attack, officials said Thursday.

Situ Malik (15), a class 10 student in government-run Basudebpur Vidyapitha high school in Kandira village, will receive the coveted award, instituted by Indian Council for Child Welfare, from Prime Minister Narendra Modi on January 23, 2019, the officials said.

Situ had saved his uncle

Binod Malik from claws of a croc which had sneaked into the village pond on February 20 this year.

The brave boy reacting on the spur of moment had picked up a bamboo stick and had dealt a blow on animals forehead. The reptile which had clung onto the victim was jolted by the sudden attack and left Binod to slip into the wa-

ter. Both of them were at the Hanshina river-side crop field when a crocodile leaped from the water and attacked the survivor, they said.

"We feel honoured that the teenager from the district has been selected for national bravery award. The award instituted by ICCW will be given by the prime minister next month. The IC-CWs letter in this regard has been received by the district administration," said Kendrapara Collector, Dasarathi Satpathy.

Its a matter of pride for all the people here as the act of bravery has brought the village under national limelight. The administration had earlier recommended the 'tiny-rescuer' for the national bravery award, he said.

"We feel privileged. Our student has been accorded national recognition. He will shake hands with the prime minister," said Headmaster of Basudebpur Vidyapitha High School, Maheswar Rout.

Manchester United through as runners-up after limp defeat to Valencia



VALENCIA, DEC 13

(AFP): Manchester United squandered the chance to win their Champions League group on Wednesday after a lacklustre display got what it deserved in a 2-1 defeat to Valencia.

Already through to the last 16, Jose Mourinho made eight changes at the Mestalla, including a return for Paul Pogba, but United were largely outplayed by their Spanish opponents, who sit 15th in La Liga.

After the game, Mourinho seemed to aim a dig at those players to have come in. "Nothing surprised me at all," he said.

Carlos Soler's driven shot and a Phil Jones own-goal put Valencia two up early in the second half before United came alive in the final minutes after Marcus Rashford's header gave them brief hope.

Perhaps Mourinho and his players had assumed Juventus would win away at Young Boys but the Italians' surprise 2-1 loss meant United

had first place within their grasp.

Instead, they go through as runners-up into Monday's draw for the last 16, with Real Madrid, Barcelona, Bayern Munich, Paris Saint-Germain, Borussia Dortmund and Porto all potential opponents.

As group winners, they would have had Atletico Madrid, Roma, Schalke, Ajax or Lyon.

"Apart from a couple of clubs that are clearly much better than the others, I don't think the draw will be significantly different," Mourinho said.

"There are teams that finish second that the ones that finish first will not be happy to play against."

Porto would probably be the favoured pick but on this evidence, they might feel the same about United. After all, Valencia also made changes, eight of them, with their fate resigned to dropping into the Europa League.

Valencia had failed to score in six of their previous eight Champions League games while poor

form in La Liga has their coach Marcelino fighting for his future.

After drawing against Sevilla last weekend, their fans swung white handkerchiefs in the air to demonstrate their dissatisfaction.

"We needed this winning feeling back in our game," said Marcelino afterwards.

Pogba, left out against Arsenal and Fulham, started here but contributed little, save for a glaring miss in the first half. Eric Bailly also came in but his partnership with Jones was rocky all night.

United made Valencia look like world-beaters in the opening 45 minutes. They were slow in possession and just as sluggish out of it. Frustration bubbled and burst, as a handful of tackles flew in and missed.

Valencia were excellent. Geoffrey Kondogbia and Dani Parejo both went close early on before another pinball session in the penalty area saw the ball land at the feet of Soler. He looked up, picked his spot and

drove into the far corner. Michy Batshuayi should have made it two but headed over and Mouctar Diakhaby could have had a penalty when denied a simple finish by the clambering Marouane Fellaini.

United had the occasional opening, the best of them falling to Pogba, who somehow stabbed wide after Fellaini's header offered him a tap-in from two yards at the back post.

Jones marched off at half-time shaking his head, having berated his midfield for failing to track back, but the interval brought no relief.

Almost as soon as they restarted, Romelu Lukaku misread a Bailly pass. Just as others had before, Bailly threw his arms up in frustration.

Women MLAs' number falls in MP Assembly

BHOPAL, DEC 13 (PTI):

The number of women members in the newly-elected Madhya Pradesh Assembly has decreased as compared to the previous House.

In the just concluded state polls, 17 women candidates won as against 31 lawmakers in the last Assembly.

Among the 17 newly elected women MLAs, nine represent the BJP while eight are from the Congress, as per the EC data.

The BJP women MLAs in the new Assembly are - Yashodhara Raje Scindia (Shivpuri seat), Manisha Singh (Jaitpur), Meena Singh (Manpur), Nandini Maravi (Sihora), Leena Jain (Basoda), Krishna Gaur (Govindpura), Nee-

na Verma (Dhar), Malini Gaud (Indore-4) and Usha Thakur (Mhow).

The Congress' women lawmakers are Imarti Devi (Dabra), Heena Likhiram Kanware (Lanji), Sunita Patel (Gadarwara), Sumitra Devi Kasdekar (Nepanagar), Jhuma Solanki (Bhikangaon), Vijaylaxmi Sadho (Maheshwar), Chandrabhaga Kirade (Pansemal) and Kalawati Bhuria (Jobat).

In the previous Assembly, there were 24 women MLAs of the BJP, five of the Congress and two of the BSP.

In the just concluded state polls, the Congress won 114 seats, BJP-109, BSP-two, SP-one and Independents-four.

World Tour Finals: Sindhu breaks Tzu Ying code, Sameer also win

GUANGZHOU, DEC 13

(PTI): Olympic silver medalist P V Sindhu finally broke her jinx against world no 1 Tai Tzu Ying with a come-from-behind win in a thriller, while Sameer Verma outclassed Indonesia's Tommy Sugiarto at the World Tour Finals here Thursday.

After six successive losses in 13 meetings, Sindhu got the better of her nemesis Tzu Ying of Chinese Taipei 14-21 21-16 21-18 in a Group A match that lasted a little over an hour.

World No 14 Sameer, who qualified for the tournament at the last moment after defending his title at the Syed Modi International last month, dished out a dominating

performance to beat the 10th ranked Sugiarto 21-16 21-7 in a 40-minute group B clash.

The 24-year-old Indian had lost the opening match against world no 1 and world champion Kento Momota.

Sindhu, who had finished runners-up in the last edition, gave ample display of her grit as she bounced back from a game down and erased a 6-11 deficit in the final game to record her first win over Asian Games champion Tzu Ying since the 2016 Rio Olympics.

In the 16-minute opening game, Sindhu couldn't produce the winners initially and could only consolidate on the unforced errors of her ri-

val. Tzu Ying, on the other hand, looked as impressive as ever with her deceptive strokes and technical acumen.

Sindhu was lagging 2-6 early on. Tai extended her lead to 8-4 after Sindhu went long and wide.

A couple of good looking shots helped Sindhu to grabbed two points before she lifted one to the net.

Two delightful shot with her racquet head on both sides of the court gave Tzu Ying a 11-7 advantage at the first break.

After the breather, Tzu Ying unleashed two cross court returns on Sindhu's backhand to continue gathering points, reaching 15-8.

Sindhu grabbed the next three points before

the Chinese Taipei shutter produced a smash to break the run of points.

Tzu Ying's acute angled strokes bothered Sindhu as she reached 17-12. A lucky net chord gave another point to Tzu Ying, who also played an eye-catching behind-the-back shot to win another point.

She grabbed six game points when Sindhu went to the net and sealed the opening game as the Indian went long.

In the second game, Tzu Ying made Sindhu run around the court with her acute angled returns but made many unforced errors herself.

Sindhu jumped to 6-3 with her rival missing the lines time and again.

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Gandhi statue removed from Ghana Univ after student protest

ACCRA, DEC 13 (AFP): A statue of Indian independence leader Mahatma Gandhi has been removed from Ghana's most prestigious university after complaints that he was racist against black Africans.

India's former president Pranab Mukherjee unveiled the statue to the global peace icon at the University of Ghana in Accra two years ago as a symbol of ties between the two nations.

But lecturers soon began a petition calling for its removal, citing passages written by Gandhi claiming that Indians were "infinitely superior" to black Africans.

The online protest was one of a number on university campuses in Africa and beyond about the enduring symbols of the continent's colonial past.

The Gandhi statue on the university's Legon campus in Accra appeared to have been removed overnight Tues-

day to Wednesday, students and lecturers told AFP.

The head of language, literature and drama at the Institute of African Studies, Obadele Kambon, said the removal was an issue of "self-respect".

The university authorities refused to comment while an official at Ghana's foreign affairs ministry said only: "It's an internal decision by the university."

Ghana's former government had said the statue would be relocated "to avoid the controversy... becoming a distraction from our strong ties of friendship" with India.

Though Gandhi is more commonly remembered for his non-violent resistance to British colonial rule in his native India, his legacy in Africa is more mixed. He lived and worked as a lawyer in South Africa from 1893 to 1915.

'Seriously' considering running for presidency in 2020: Tulsi Gabbard

LALIT K JHA

WASHINGTON, DEC 13 (PTI): Tulsi Gabbard, the first Hindu lawmaker in the US Congress, has said that she was "seriously" considering running for the White House in 2020. This is for the first time that the four-time Democratic lawmaker in the US house of Representatives from Hawaii has indicated that she may run for the presidency.

"I'm seriously considering it," Gabbard, 37, told MSNBC News on Wednesday in response to a question on her presidential aspirations.

If she announced her candidature, she would be the first Hindu ever to be running for the presidency in the United States. And if elected in 2020, she

could be the youngest ever and first woman to be elected as the US president.

"I'm concerned about the direction of our country. I'm thinking through it very carefully," Gabbard, an Iraq war veteran, said in response to a question on her presidential run.

Before challenging President Donald Trump in the November 2020 elections, she would have to fight it against her own Democratic party colleagues in primary elections beginning early that year.

In the last few weeks, Gabbard has been talking to her party leaders and reaching out to Indian-Americans to get their feedback on the issue.

Gabbard, who converted to Hinduism early



in her life, is highly popular among Indian-Americans.

The 2020 presidential primary cycle is scheduled to kick off from the Iowa Caucuses on February 3, 2020, followed by the New Hampshire Primary on February 11, Nevada caucus on February 15 and South Carolina on February 22.

President Donald Trump is all set to seek his re-election in 2020, none of the Democratic candidates have announced their bid yet. The Democratic race is expected to be crowded by the summer of 2019.

Among those Democrats speculated to run for the 2020 primaries include former vice president Joe Biden, Senators Elizabeth Warren, Kirsten Gillibrand, Amy Klobuchar, Tim Kaine and Indian-origin Senator Kamala Harris.

Trump's former attorney sentenced to 3 years in prison

YOSHITA SINGH

NEW YORK, DEC 13 (PTI): Michael Cohen, Donald Trump's former lawyer and longtime personal fixer will spend three years in jail for crimes, including lying to the Congress and facilitating hush-money to silence two women who alleged affairs with the US President.

Cohen made an emotional apology to US District Judge William H Pauley III, on Wednesday taking "full responsibility" for what the judge called a "veritable smorgasbord of criminal conduct".

Cohen, 52, was sentenced to 36 months in prison by the US District Court for the Southern District of New York.

"I take full responsibility for each act that I pled guilty to: The personal ones to me and those involving the President of the United States of America," Cohen said.

The judge also handed him an additional two months for the charge brought by special counsel Robert Mueller, over Cohen's lies to Congress about a possible Trump

Tower project in Moscow that he pursued in the heat of Trump's presidential campaign.

The other was brought by federal prosecutors in New York over tax and bank fraud allegations, as well as campaign finance violations.

Mueller is investigating Russian meddling in the 2016 election. This charge will be served concurrently with the US attorney's New York office term. His sentence will be the longest thus far for anyone involved with the President Trump.

Cohen has been ordered to surrender on March 6. The judge agreed to recommend Otisville prison, in upstate New York, as the prison where Cohen will serve his sentence.

Cohen also said he was living in a "personal and mental" prison since he started working for Trump.

"This may seem hard to believe, but today is one of the most meaningful days of my life...I have been living in a personal and mental incarceration ever since the day that I accepted the offer



to work for a real estate mogul whose business acumen that I deeply admired, he said.

Cohen's attorney, Guy Petrillo, had sought leniency for his client, saying his "cooperation here should be viewed against a non-standard framework".

The special counsel's office "investigation is of utmost national significance, no less than seen 40 years ago in Watergate".

In August, Cohen had pleaded guilty to charges of tax evasion, making false statements to a federally-insured bank, and campaign finance violations.

The plea was entered followed by the filing of an eight-count criminal information, which al-

leged that Cohen concealed more than USD 4 million in personal income from the Internal Revenue Service, made false statements to a federally-insured financial institution in connection with a USD 500,000 home equity loan.

In 2016, caused USD 280,000 in payments to be made to silence two women who otherwise planned to speak publicly about their alleged affairs with a presidential candidate, thereby intending to influence the 2016 presidential election.

Trump was not named in the charges but it was clear Cohen was acting on his behalf.

The payments included USD 130,000 to adult-film actress Stormy Daniels, which the government considers an illegal donation to Trump's campaign since it was intended to improve his election chances.

The charges against Cohen also include paying money to the two women in 2016 "to suppress" their stories from publishing in media "so as to prevent it from influencing the election".

"Cohen was able to arrange for the purchase of two stories so as to suppress them and prevent them from influencing the election," the federal prosecutors had said.

Amnesty says Islamic State group decimated rural Iraq

BAGHDAD, DEC 13 (AP): The Islamic State group's deliberate destruction of agriculture in northern Iraq has hindered the return of hundreds of thousands of residents, Amnesty International said in a report released Thursday.

The New York-based rights group said IS fighters burnt or chopped down orchards and sabotaged wells by filling them with rubble, oil or other materials. The militants also stole or destroyed pumps, cables, generators, transformers and vital electricity lines.

Amnesty called on the Iraqi government to repair rural infrastructure and compensate the displaced so they can return to their homes.

IS seized control of much of northern Iraq in the summer of 2014. U.S.-backed Iraqi forces gradually drove the militants from all the terri-

tory under their control, declaring victory a year ago after a costly campaign that destroyed entire neighborhoods and towns.

"The damage to Iraq's countryside is as far-reaching as the urban destruction, but the consequences of the conflict on Iraq's rural residents are being largely forgotten," said Richard Pearshouse, senior crisis adviser at Amnesty.

He said the report focuses on the "deliberate, wanton destruction" around the area of Sinjar, where the extremists massacred and enslaved thousands of members of the Yazidi religious minority. About half of Sinjar's residents have returned, with many others saying they have nothing to go back to.

Beyond Sinjar, Amnesty's report gave sobering figures for all of Iraq. "The conflict against

IS eviscerated Iraq's agricultural production, now an estimated 40 percent lower than 2014 levels," it said. "Before IS, around two-thirds of Iraq's farmers had access to irrigation only three years later, this had fallen to 20 percent. Around 75 percent of livestock was lost, spiking to 95 percent in some areas."

Syrian and Iraqi forces have gradually driven IS out of nearly all the territory it once held. But the group still maintains a presence in the Syrian desert and remote areas along the border. Many have warned it could stage a comeback if economic grievances are not addressed.

"Unless there is urgent government assistance, the long-term damage inflicted on Iraq's rural environment will reverberate for years to come," Pearshouse said.

US to oppose IMF bailout to Pakistan to repay Chinese debt: top official

WASHINGTON, DEC 13 (PTI): The US is making all efforts to ensure that any IMF bailout to Pakistan is not used to repay its Chinese debts, a senior Trump administration official has told lawmakers.

Cash-strapped Pakistan is seeking USD 8 billion from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to bail itself out from a severe balance-of-payments crisis that threatens to cripple the country's economy.

A recent meeting between the IMF and Pakistan ended in a stalemate.

The US feels that the huge Chinese debt was responsible for the economic challenges in Pakistan.

"We are working and making clear within the IMF that if it were going to supply any funding to Pakistan that it would not be used to repay Chinese loans," David Malpass, Under Secretary of Treasury for International Affairs, told lawmakers during a Congressional hearing on Wednesday.

There are concerns

among American lawmakers that the IMF money could be used to repay Chinese debt.

Malpass said that the US is also trying to make sure that Pakistan changes its economic programme so that it's not a failure in the future.

During the House Financial Services Committee hearing on "Evaluating the Effectiveness of the International Financial Institutions' Congressmen Ed Royce said Pakistan is currently seeking a multibillion-dollar IMF bailout.

"In July, Secretary (of State, Mike) Pompeo said there's no rationale for IMF tax dollars and those associated with American dollars that are part of IMF funding for those to go to bailout Chinese bond holders or China itself," he said.

"We will make strong efforts, and I believe successful efforts, to make sure that what you describe doesn't happen, meaning a payoff of Beijing via Islamabad," Malpass said.

Malpass said that

IMF loans tend to be shorter maturity loans and China's loans to Pakistan have been longer maturity loans.

"So from the standpoint of that money being used, we will look for was that that roundtripping does not happen the way you described," he said.

"But important in this, is the structural reforms in Pakistan that are necessary for it to stop being such a poor country," Malpass said.

China is making huge infrastructure investments as part of its Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). The BRI's flagship project is the USD 60 billion China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) that is planned to run from northwest China's Xinjiang province to Gwadar port in Pakistan's Balochistan province.

There are concerns that given Pakistan's growing Chinese debt, the same could happen to the Gwadar port and other major CPEC-linked projects in Pakistan.

UK PM Theresa May wins confidence vote over Brexit deal

ADITI KHANNA

LONDON, DEC 13 (PTI): British Prime Minister Theresa May won a crucial vote of confidence in her leadership of the ruling Conservative Party over the controversial Brexit deal, after she placated rebel lawmakers by agreeing that she will not lead the party into the next general election in 2022.

Though she won the backing of her party to stay on as prime minister, more than a third of Conservative MPs voted against her, underscoring the uphill battle she faces in getting her Brexit deal through Parliament.

In the secret vote held Wednesday night, May secured 63 per cent votes with 200 in favour of her and 117 against, out of a total of 317 of her Conservative Party MPs.

May, who has been prime minister since the UK voted to leave the 28-member Europe-

an Union in June, 2016, is now immune from a leadership challenge for at least a year.

The vote of confidence was triggered by 48 of her MPs angry at her Brexit policy, which they say betrays the 2016 referendum result.

"Whilst I am grateful for the support, a significant number of my colleagues did cast a vote against me and I have listened to what they have said," May said in a statement outside Downing Street soon after the results were declared.

"Following this ballot, we now need to get on with the job of delivering the Brexit for the British people and building a better future for this country. A Brexit that delivers on the vote of the people," the 62-year-old leader said.

May made it clear that she intended to carry on negotiating with the European Union (EU) over controversial aspects of her Brexit deal when she heads

to Brussels for a pre-scheduled European Council meeting on Thursday.

The verdict of the confidence vote was formally announced by Graham Brady, Chair of the 1922 Committee made up of Tory backbenchers, who revealed that the Parliamentary Party "does have confidence in Theresa May as leader of the Conservative Party".

May, in her address to MPs before they began casting their ballots, said that she had listened to all their criticism and confirmed that she would only hang on to Downing Street to see Brexit through before stepping down. This would mean she would not lead the party into the next General Election, scheduled for 2022.

"She was very clear that she won't be taking the General Election in 2022," said UK work and pensions secretary Amber Rudd.

The plea seemed to

have paid off in the end as she survived the vote, turning the attention back to securing a Brexit deal that is acceptable to all sides of her deeply divided party as well as a fractured Parliament.

"I will contest that vote with everything I have got," a defiant May had said in a statement hours before the voting, warning that the leadership challenge will delay or even cancel Brexit.

May needed to convince a Had she lost, the party would have had to elect a new leader who would then go on to become the next British prime minister. May would not have been able to stand for such a leadership contest but would have to remain in Downing Street as caretaker premier while the process to select a new leader was conducted.

Some possible front-runners named in the UK media included former UK foreign secretary Boris

Johnson, current foreign secretary Jeremy Hunt, home secretary Sajid Javid and Rudd. But there did not seem to be a candidate with consensus across the pro and anti Brexit wings within the Tory party.

In her defiant statement on the steps of Downing Street soon after the no-confidence vote was announced on Wednesday morning, May said changing the Conservative Party leader would "put our country's future at risk and create uncertainty when we can least afford it".

She said: "A leadership election would not change the fundamentals of the negotiation or the Parliamentary arithmetic.

"Weeks spent tearing ourselves apart will only create more division just as we should be standing together to serve our country. None of that would be in the national interest."

I am an incomplete, restless artiste: Shah Rukh Khan

Shah Rukh Khan says he has never felt complete as an actor and that's what has kept him going for almost three decades in the industry.

The 53-year-old actor says rather than looking for end result, he believes in quietly celebrating milestones.

"I have never felt complete. As an artiste, I am very incomplete and I know that. If I am not, then I would not like to work. If I am complete then why would I wake up in the morning and work hard and still try to do something?," Shah Rukh said in a group interview.

Shah Rukh says he is restless by nature.

"I always think, within the commercial cinema set-up that I am working in, how can I bring in something new, as an actor, as a producer, in whatever capacity I can. I am not complete at all, I am very restless. If you think you are complete, then you are boring, over and done with!"

The issue with looking at things in life as a finish line, according to Shah Rukh, is what does one do when they cross it.

"So I don't think of things as completing. As an old saying goes...the journey is important. If I cross anything, which I think is a good achievement



then I don't think of it as an end-line, I think of it as a milestone.

"But I don't plan for it. I don't think of 'I should earn this much', or 'I should have that many awards', or 'I have to make that many hit films', I think it is very organic. Because, if you worked in films as long as I have, specifics become less important..." he says.

Shah Rukh says the films that he is currently doing, he is loving them as he isn't looking for any end result in the projects.

"After twenty-five years of working, I have realised that the only reason you

should be working is for the happiness of your heart," he says.

His upcoming film "Zero", directed by Aanand L Rai, aims to celebrate the incompleteness of people.

In the film, Shah Rukh plays a vertically challenged man while Anushka Sharma features as a scientist with cerebral palsy and Katrina Kaif plays an actor who is emotionally incomplete.

Shah Rukh says the film neither looks at these characters with pity nor asks viewers to give them sympathy.

"When films are made on special abilities, normally there is an attempt to gain sympathy. In the entire film, we have tried that all the three character never ask for sympathy from the audience or the world. We don't want anyone's sympathy or empathy," he adds.

Playing a vertically challenged person, Shah Rukh says, was not a gimmick for them.

"For the last one year, we have been worried that the character's height shouldn't become the mainstay of the film. In the first ten-fifteen minutes and even after the trailer, you overcome that. That doesn't become a gimmick. Aanand and I didn't want that to happen," he says.

"Zero" is scheduled to be released on December 21.

Jeffrey Dean Morgan returning to 'Supernatural' for 300th episode

LOS ANGELES, DEC 13 (PTI):

Hollywood star Jeffrey Dean Morgan is returning to 'Supernatural' as John Winchester for 300th episode.

Morgan appeared as the character in a total of 12 episodes beginning with the first season in 2005 through 2008.

The series, starring Jared Padalecki and Jensen Ackles, follows the two brothers as they hunt demons, ghosts, monsters, and other supernatural beings.

Winchester last appeared in the season two finale "All Hell Breaks Loose: Part 2" when he escaped through the open gate to Hell and helped his boys kill Yellow Eyes.

"We're incredibly excited to have Jeffrey back for this milestone episode, and think fans will love what we have planned for his character And a few other surprise guest stars," co-showrunner Andrew Dabb said in a statement to Entertainment Weekly.

Supernatural's 300th episode, titled "Lebanon", will premiere on February 7.



Cher writing her 'life story', book to publish in 2020



LOS ANGELES, DEC 13 (PTI): Legendary singer Cher has announced that she is penning a book on her life story.

The iconic singer-actor wrote on Twitter, "Book due out in first part of 2020. Bio Pic to follow."

Cher had earlier published an essay collection "The First Time", in which she recounted various events from her life. It was released by Simon & Schuster in late 1998, shortly after the death of her husband and partner Sonny Bono.

She was also behind the 1991 exercise book "Forever Fit" and the children's book "Reaching Your Goals", in which she relayed her own experiences of self-actualisation for inspiration.

Vir Das' ABC show 'Whiskey Cavalier' to premiere on Feb 27

MUMBAI, DEC 13 (PTI):

Vir Das on Thursday announced that his debut American TV show, "Whiskey Cavalier" will premiere on February 27.

The ABC series will see Das playing an agent Jai Datta.

Priyanka Chopra also made her acting debut in the West with ABC series "Quantico", in which she played a FBI agent.

"Priyanka Chopra has done extremely well in America and had opened doors for many people. She's become an icon and a recognisable name there. She has paved a way and I'm glad Whiskey Cavalier is happening at a time when there's a growing diversity in the West," Das said in a statement.

The actor is currently in Prague filming for the show and is set to return to India soon to begin his next project.



ARIES:Harmony: interrupted? Love planet Venus makes a rare opposition to disruptive Uranus today, pitting your own needs against those of a relationship. You could feel a bit suffocated, like you're losing your individuality by being part of a duo. But no need to overturn the entire union, Aries, or to stir up drama as a way of creating space.

TAURUS:Anxiety alert! Today, buried emotions could make you a bundle of nerves, possibly even affecting your health. A stressful Venus-Uranus opposition could trigger subconscious worries, wearing you down and tempting you to reach for your old vices. If you've been sticking to a new healthy lifestyle, put in reinforcements so you don't self-sabotage. No, one smoke or sugar binge won't kill you—but why unravel your own progress? Talk to someone, meditate, listen to music. Find a healthy outlet.

GEMINI:Running hot and cold? Today's disruptive Venus-Uranus opposi-

tion could turn your passionate feelings from fire to ice. Maybe you've gotten a little TOO caught up in a dramatic situation and understandably, you need to take a step back. But don't make things even more complicated by suddenly going radio silent or cutting someone off.

CANCER: Work-life balance is a figment of fantasy today as a chaotic Venus-Uranus opposition disrupts your inner peace. You could get a surprise assignment that leaves you working late, even scrambling over the holidays. Maybe you can't stop obsessing over some work drama.

LEO :Pushing buttons? Today, you could say something incendiary just to get a reaction or a jab in at someone. But thanks to a tense Venus-Uranus opposition, those words could hit below pretty strongly below the belt, taking this grudge match farther than you intended. You're trying to make a point here, Leo, not to be cruel. If you can't say something nice—or at least, be diplo-

matic—you might be better off saving this convo for another day.

VIRGO: Envy alert! The emerald-eyed monster could be your surprise houseguest today. A Venus-Uranus opposition rattles your confidence, provoking a wave of jealousy. Consider this a warning: your swagger may be built on other people's approval rather than on legitimate self-worth. Notice what triggers you about a friend or peer.

LIBRA :Need some breathing room? You don't have to disrupt the harmony of your bonds just to get a little "me" time. Today, a rebellious Venus-Uranus opposition could find you stirring up drama. Somehow, it might seem easier to pick a fight and blame the other person than to courageously assert your needs or admit something controversial (e.g., you need to flirt with other people, even when you're monogamous). Newsflash.

SCORPIO:Simmer down, o' stressed-out Scorpio. Today's Venus-Uranus op-

position can throw you into a tailspin of anxiety and overreaction. You want answers and you want them now! Alas, no amount of willpower and obsessing gets you the intel any faster. Take a step back. Consider whether you're trying to force an outcome, instead of trusting the universe to provide.

SAGITTARIUS:You know that friend who always points out what could go WRONG with every plan or idea? (Yeah, that one.) Don't go to this person for advice today, Sag. A chaotic Venus-Uranus opposition finds you easily riled up and roped into someone's hysteria. You need to remain calm and objective, and the simplest way to do so is to avoid the drama queens.

CAPRICORN: You rarely let anything get in the way of duty, especially when you've given your word. However, today's Venus-Uranus opposition could bring domestic drama that turns your plans upside-down. A female relative in particular could need your help...and

her timing couldn't be worse. Capricorn, prepare to cancel your other plans if need be. Dilemma: You may be stressed about making a bad impression at work.

AQUARIUS : Devil's advocate is not an unfamiliar role for you, Aquarius. You get a kick out of controversy and riling people up a little bit. But today's Venus-Uranus opposition warns against playing this role, especially if your comebacks are a little TOO honest. Why so aggressive? Do you have a bone to pick? It's not your job to call people out on their so-called hypocrisy at every turn, Aquarius.

PISCES :Is your money acting funny? Today, your finances could be a little shaky, or there could be an undercurrent of tension at the office. You might be tempted into a regrettable impulse splurge. Today's Venus-Uranus opposition practically guarantees buyer's remorse if you don't absolutely love your purchase.