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SummitTIMES

Vol 04 | Issue 73 | Gangtok | Saturday | 16 March 2019

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RNI No. SIKENG/2016/69420

Pages 8 | ₹ 5

SDF's first list of 18 has 10 new faces

SAGAR CHHETRI
GANGTOK, 15 MAR:

Sikkim Democratic Front today released its first list Assembly election candidates. Of the 18 names announced for constituencies spread across the four districts, there 10 new faces with nine sitting MLAs losing their existing constituencies. The first list of 18 also has four female candidates, already one more than the three female candidates the party had fielded in the 2014.

SDF party president, Chief Minister Pawan Chamling, will be contesting from two constituencies - Namchi-Singithang and Poklok Kamrang, both in South Sikkim. It may be recalled that he had contested from these two constituencies in 2009 as well and won from both. Legislative Assembly Speaker, KN Rai, was elected from Poklok-Kamrang in 2014.

Among the MLAs who have retained their candidatures from their respective constituencies in this first list are: NK Subba from Maneybong-Dentam, KS Lepcha from Rinchenpong, GM Gurung from Temi-Namphing, Ugen T Gyatso Bhutia from Tumin-Lingee, DT Lepcha from Gnathang-Machong and Pintso Chopel Lepcha from Gangtok.

The ruling party has given four new women candidates in Dechen Ongmu Bhutia who



PAWAN CHAMLING
POKLOK KAMRANG & NAMCHI SINGITHANG

- First list already has one more female candidate than last time
- 9 sitting MLAs dropped from their existing constituencies

will be contesting on an SDF ticket from Yuksum-Tashiding, Dhan Kumari Kami from Salghari-Zoom, Pharwanti Tamang from Melli and Raj Kumari Thapa from Rangang-Yangyang.

The other new faces in the list LM Sharma from Gyalshing-Bermiok, Pem Norbu Sherpa from Daramdin, Birjan Tamang from Namthang-Rateypani, former MLA Em Prasad Sharma from Namcheybong, GT Dhungel from Upper Tadong and Pintso Namgyal Lepcha from Dzongu.

As the list reveals, of the eight constituencies in West Sikkim, SDF has declared candidates for six, with candidates still awaited for Soreng-Chakung and Yangthang constituencies. Except Ralung constituency in

South Sikkim, the party has announced candidates for all the eight constituencies there. Power Minister DD Bhutia is the sitting MLA from Ralung.

Of the three constituencies in North Sikkim, a candidate has been announced only for Dzongu, where the sitting MLA has apparently been rested for a new face.

East Sikkim, which has the most number of constituencies, twelve, candidates have been announced only for four. This is also the district where eight of the ten MLAs of the Opposition SKM were elected in 2014. Save Gangtok, the remaining three constituencies for which candidates have been announced, were all won by SDF in 2014.

Three Ministers and

the Deputy Speaker - Sher Bahadur Subedi, Arjun Kumar Ghatani, Tulsi Devi Rai and Sonam Gyatso Lepcha - do not figure in the first list with their existing constituencies having gone to other candidates.

The list was officially released at a press conference here at SDF Bhawan this afternoon although details were already circulating in social media since much earlier in the day.

SDF spokesperson, Lok Sabha MP PD Rai, informed that the second and final list will be announced before 18 March, Monday.

Responding to media queries, SDF spokesperson Bhim Dahal mentioned that the election campaign of the party was already underway on

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HSP announces six candidates, president Dr Basnett to contest from Upper Tadong

SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 15 MAR:

Hamro Sikkim Party has released its first list of candidates for the upcoming Assembly and Parliamentary elections in the State. The party has announced six candidates in its first list.

HSP president, Dr Bina Basnett will contest the election from Upper Tadong constituency in East Sikkim, while the party vice-president, DS Limboo will contest from Yangthang constituency in West Sikkim.

Former Minister Athup Lepcha will again contest the election from Dzongu in North Sikkim. Likewise, other HSP candidates are Kamala Rai from Rangang-Yangyang constituency, Indra Kumar Suji from West Pendam and Anush Rai from Namcheybong constituency.

While congratulating all party candidates, HSP working president, Bhaichung Bhu-



tia expressed his best wishes to them by offering khadas.

HSP spokesperson, Biraj Adhikari mentioned that the party has fulfilled its promise to introduce new and young faces as well as

women in the politics of Sikkim. He added that the party has created opportunities for the young generation to represent the people of Sikkim.

Six candidates include a medical doctor,

former Minister, social workers and teacher who have already been serving people in their respective fields, he said. He expressed that the party was confident that its slogan 'Naya Sikkim, Hamro Sikkim' will be realised and achieved in the upcoming election.

Mr Adhikari informed that the party will contest all 32 seats and will release names of other candidates within a few days. He added that the party has already started its door-to-door campaigning across the State.

Speaking to media persons, HSP president, Dr Basnett expressed hope that the people of Sikkim will seriously and responsibly cast their votes this time. The people should support candidates who can lead the young generation towards positive and productive path, and create more opportunities for the young, she added.

SKM calls off alliance with BJP

SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 15 MAR:

The SKM-BJP alliance appears to have fallen through. In a brief post on its official Facebook page, SKM Darpan, quotes the party president, PS Tamang [Golay], as announcing

that there will be no alliance with BJP for the upcoming elections and that the party would go it alone and contest the Assembly and Lok Sabha elections on its own.

He is reported to have made this announcement

at an emergency CEC meeting of the party held at Jorethang today. There was no official communication on this development from the party till the time of going to print.

The reasons why the alliance failed, if it has,

will be known in the coming days once the party makes an official announcement about it.

Meanwhile, the same Facebook page also announces that the party's candidate list will be released on 20 March.

China knows power of Dalai Lama's position: Author

YOSHITA SINGH

NEW YORK, MAR 15 (PTI):

China wants to install its own Dalai Lama as it is astute enough to recognise power of his position as an instrument of great influence as long as he is amenable to their commands, an Indian-American journalist and biographer of the Tibetan spiritual leader has said.

Mayank Chhaya's remarks came as the 60th anniversary of the Dalai Lama's escape to India from Tibet is marked this week.

Chicago-based Chhaya is the author of the critically-acclaimed 2007 biography of the spiritual leader titled 'Dalai Lama: Man, Monk, Mystic.'

The book has since been published in over 20 languages around the world as well as audio books. An updated new biography titled 'The D nouement: The 14th Dalai Lama's Life of Persistence' has just been released and contains four new chapters and a new epilogue bringing up to date until January, 2019 the life and teachings of the Dalai Lama. In the updated biog-

raphy, Chhaya explains why he thinks Beijing is interested in the idea of retaining the figure of the Dalai Lama as long as the next one is of its own choosing and not the one through which the 14th reincarnates.

"The Chinese leadership is sharp enough to recognise the power of the figure of the Dalai Lama as an instrument of great influence as long as he is amenable to their commands," Chhaya told PTI in an interview.

In his book he mentions that "not willing or able or both to deal with the currently living Dalai Lama, China insists that he must reincarnate after his death, presumably as a pliable 15th Dalai Lama."

The 14th Dalai Lama, who is arguably the most popular and consequential in the tradition's history, is much more inclined to end his lineage and preempt reincarnation.

"In a bizarre believe-it-or-not twist to the question of whether the Dalai Lama should reincarnate, Beijing now seems to insist that he

must but as a sort of made-to-order successor who could be shaped and conditioned to accept complete Chinese control over Tibet and Tibetans, he writes in the book.

"Even as the Chinese Communist Party does not accept the concept of Dalai Lamas as an old institution and is particularly contemptuous towards the current one, it is astute enough to recognize the political and cultural consequence of having a Dalai Lama in place as long as he is the kind they can run as their operative. It would not mind some return to Buddhism as long as it is this Dalai Lama-free," Chhaya writes in his book.

Chhaya has been engaged with the Tibetan issue, particularly from the standpoint of the Tibetan refugees in India and the Dalai Lama, since 1996. During the course of researching for his book, Chhaya has spent several hours in personal interviews with the Dalai Lama and over the years has kept up with his travels, engagements, speeches and pronouncements.

turn to pg02

Former Samay Dainik editor awarded Ph D

SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 15 MAR:

Assistant Professor of Nar Bahadur Bhandari Degree College, Tadong, Parasmani Dangal has been awarded with a Ph D degree by Nepali Department of Sikkim University. He was the former editor of Nepali Daily, Samay Dainik and former president of Press Club of Sikkim and Nepali Sahitya Parishad. He completed his research work on the topic ‘Nepali Vyavasayik Patrakarita: Vishleshanatmak Adhyayan’ under Prof Pratap Chandra Pradhan from year 2013. After successfully defending his Ph D thesis on 01 March, he was awarded with doctorate ti-



tle from Sikkim University on 14 March.

Mr Dangal has expressed his gratitude to everyone for extending their support in his research work. He also thanked his guide Prof Pratap Chandra Pradhan and other professors and journalists for their support in the research work.

DLSA organises legal services camp at Upper Bermiok

GYALSHING, 15 MAR (IPR):

A Legal Services camp was organized by District Legal Services Authority, West in coordination with Sikkim State Legal Services Authority under the aegis of National Legal Services Authority on NALSA (Effective Implementation of Poverty Alleviation) Scheme, 2015 and NALSA (Protection and Enforcement of Tribal Rights) Scheme 2015 at Upper Bermiok, West Sikkim.

The program was chaired by District & Sessions Judge cum Chairperson, Jiwan Kr Kharka, DLSA (W), Ld Chief Judicial Magistrate, Subarna Rai, Ld Secretary cum Judicial Magistrate,

Zamyang Choden Bhutia, Panel Advocates, Binita Karki, Sita Kumari Chettri and Aita Hangma.

The schemes of the Government were disseminated to the public. Applications were collected from the people. Applications were also drafted for filing cases in the Lok Adalat.

The crowd was also informed about the various provisions of law including Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act, Sikkim Anti-Drugs Act and free legal aid services. The program concluded with an interactive session which witnessed the participation of many local gentries.

JAP supporters urge Dr HB Chettri to contest Lok Sabha election

SUMMIT REPORT

KALIMPONG, 14 MAR:

On the insistence of Jan Andolan Party cadres, Dr. H.B Chettri has decided to wait for other parties to decide if they will be fielding other candidates for the Lok Sabha seat following which JAP will decide on its own election strategy. It may be recalled that a few days back Dr Chettri had announced that JAP will be staying away from the elections since hill parties had failed to arrive at a consensus candidate. JAP supporters

had assembled at Dr Chettri’s residence today and insisted that he contest the MP elections.

“Be it as a consensus candidate or an independent candidate, Harka Sir has to contest this election. We are there to support him and will make sure that he emerges victorious,” said one JAP supporter outside Dr. Chettri’s residence.

Dr Chettri’s attempts at fielding a consensus candidate from the region had failed when GNLF and CPRM decided to field their own candidates.

SDF’s first list...

a war-footing and now with the first set of candidates announced, will pick up even more vigorously.

He informed that the party president was starting a unique door-to-door election campaign starting from Lall Bazaar in Gangtok to Namchi in South on Saturday morning.

On the release of the election manifesto of the party, PD Rai informed that the manifesto will be released shortly and announced that it will be a “historic” document in that it will set the course to take Sikkim to the next level in terms of development and addressing the aspirations of the youth.

SDF spokesperson, KT Gyaltsen, also commented today that there was no apparent political wave in favor of the opposition even in East Sikkim this time and scoffed that the confusion over the SKM-BJP alliance was representative of the weakness of SKM leadership.

When asked to comment on the first list of Hamro Sikkim Party which was also released today, Mr Dahal scoffed that HSP did not even have 32 members hence might not be able to even field 32 candidates.

China knows power...

Since he left Tibet in 1959 to escape from the Chinese occupation, the Dalai Lama, 83, has been keeping China on tenterhooks about his successor.

China says that the successor to the Dalai Lama must be chosen according to the religious rituals and historical conventions as well as the backing from the ruling Communist Party.

VOTERLIST ENIGMA

SD TSHERING

The Assembly election bugle has sounded and time has come for the “Netas” to remember their voters who they may have ignored for the last five years. The ruling party has pulled all stops to attract the voters by giving government jobs, laptops, cookers, water filters, gas connections, blankets etc paying no heed to the financial impact that these sops have on the state economy. The Opposition parties have resorted to raising their voices to draw attention of the public to the evils that the ruling party has committed during their rule and promising the voters a better future and a cleaner government if

stituencies and overlook the total voter scenario in the state. However, they seem to forget the importance of studying the overall voter scenario which will decide their election campaign. The growth of voters in Sikkim is a puzzle which needs to be understood by Sikkim’s public. The increase of voters between 1971 to 2019 in India was around 228% while in Sikkim the growth was 218% around the same period. The population growth during this period was around 211% in the state. The increase in population was highest between 1971 and 1981 while voters increase was highest between 1979 and 1985.

The large increase in

states to Sikkim after the merger leading to the increase of voters in 1985 election. The impact of the influx has continued since then further increasing the voters in the state. The census figure also correlates the rise in population and its influence in the rise of voter numbers in Sikkim. Census 2011 shows that the people between the ages of 10 to 14 comprised 10.96% of the population in 2011, if majority of them enrolled as voters in 2019 when they reached the age of 18 the increase in voters between 2014 and 2019 cannot be justified due to this cause. In 1991 census the population between ages of 10 to 14 was 13.05% and in 2001



the lowest in the country. The fertility rate of Sikkim has gone down to a point where population replacement itself might pose a prob-

lem and lead to decline in population. This low fertility figure however is in contrast with the population growth in Sikkim which indicates that the growth cannot be due to local births. The Socio Economic Census of 2006 showed that 25.20% of the population was non local and census data of 2011 also indicates that there are a large number of people who are non residents of Sikkim who were present in the state during the cen-

sus period. Although increase of voters is found all over the state, the increase is found uneven across various constituencies. The largest increase is seen in some of the constituencies in West district, the lowest growth of only 52% is seen in the Sangha constituency which is not a territorial constituency. The 2011 census also gives the electoral age breakup of Sikkim population and shows that the largest section of voters fall in the 25 to 34 age-range followed by 18 to 24 age range.

This age voter data clearly indicates that the youth of Sikkim will have a very decisive impact on the election results.

The “Netas” have very good grasp of voters demography and the impact they have on their constituency votes that is why the appeasement of non local population has already begun by giving government holidays to non-ethnic local festivals, allotment of prime housing sites to non local ethnic groups, advocating religious ideas and allotments of sites to religious groups

foreign to Sikkim etc. Nonetheless, the appeasement policy of non locals for election victory can be a fatal mistake leading to circumstances like in some North East States where non local population has dominated the local population and they influence every state policy suppressing the rights and voices of the native population. The safeguard the constitution of India has provided protection to Sikkim via 371F which is already being diluted and it won’t be long if it vanishes if non local “Netas” come to power aided by non local bureaucrats who would not hesitate to interpret the old laws to their benefit. The future of Sikkim now lies with the youth of Sikkim and their choice of leaders will determine the future course of history, it is now up to them to think wisely and choose prudently their representatives in the coming Assembly election.

[The writer is ex-Secretary of Department of Economics, Statistics, Monitoring & Evaluation (DESM&E)]

Increase in voter strength over the years										
Year	1975	1979	1985	1989	1994	1999	2004	2009	2014	2019
Voters	97000	117157	155041	192619	217743	255377	281937	300584	370770	423325
%Increase	-	20.78	32.33	24.23	13.04	17.28	10.40	6.61	23.34	14.17

Increase in population over the years					
Year	1971	1981	1991	2001	2011
Population	209843	406457	406457	540851	610577
% increase	-	50.27	33.06	33.06	12.89

Total Fertility Rate													
Year	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Sikkim	2.2	2.2	2.0	1.8	1.8	1.8	1.6	1.6	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.2	1.2
India	2.9	2.9	2.8	2.7	2.6	2.6	2.4	2.4	2.3	2.3	2.3	2.3	2.3

Constituency with 400+% increase between 1979-2019	3
Constituency with 300+% increase between 1979-2019	12
Constituency with 200+% increase between 1979-2019	9
Constituency with 100+% increase between 1979-2019	6
Constituency with less than 100% increase between 1979-2019	1

Electoral age in Sikkim	
Age 18 to 24	21.1%
Age 25 to 34	30.4%
Age 35 to 44	19.8%
Age 45 to 54	14.7%
Age 55 to 64	7.6%
Age 65+	6.5%

they come to power.

All political parties seem to focus on con-

population in 1981 was mainly due to influx of people from neighboring

Expenditure Monitoring teams complete training

GANGTOK, 15 MAR (IPR):

A two-day training for officials and staff deputed to the Expenditure Monitoring Committee for General Elections 2019 concluded today.

Held at the District Collectorate Complex, the training was conducted by Assistant Collector, East, Rohan Agawane, with assistance from the Accounts Officer.

The training was held in three batches, each comprising of six teams of Assistant Expenditure Officers, Accounting Teams, Flying Squads, Static Surveillance Teams, Video Surveillance Teams and Video Viewing Teams.

The training was conducted primarily to brief and acquaint the expenditure monitor-

ing teams on guidelines issued by the Election Commission of India for the elections and strict adherence to the Model Code of Conduct.

It was further informed that all the teams falling under the committee were imparted hands-on training sessions to correctly file daily reports and submit them to the office of the District Election Officer and their concerned officials/ heads.

More than 100 trainees were part of the two-day training programme.

District Election Officer, East, has informed that Nomination Papers are available now at the District Administrative Centre with Sub-Divisional Magistrate, Gangtok.

Training on Energy Conservation Building Code at SMIT

SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 15 MAR:

Two-day intensive training programme on “Energy Conservation Building Code (ECBC)” was organized by the Electrical & Electronics Engineering department of Sikkim Manipal Institute of Technology (SMIT) in collaboration with Government of Sikkim, Bureau of Energy Efficiency and State Designated Agency Sikkim, a press release informs.

Resource persons for the programme were

master trainer, Saibal Saha, master trainer, Kumar Biplap, and ECBC Coordinator, Gayatri Shivakumar, AIILSG.

This two-day hands-on training program covered different aspects of Energy Conservation such as building envelope, including thermal performance requirements for walls, roofs, and windows; HVAC system, etc.

Director SMIT, Prof (Dr), Ashis Sharma thanked Addl Chief Engineer, Dilip Kumar Shar-

ma, and Nodal Officer, SDA Sikkim, E&P Dept, GoS, Project Co-ordinator, Kanagaraj Ganesan, ECBC Cell, AIILSG and Project Officer, Dinesh Acharya, ECBC Cell, Sikkim for initiating this collaborative training program with SMIT, where final year and pre-final year students of SMIT from the Dept. of EEE, ME, CE along with the Engineers, Junior Engineers, Government officials from State Government have participated.

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Dist level school sports meet starts in North

MANGAN, MARCH 15

(IPR): A three-day district level School Sports Meet 2018–19 got underway here on 14 March.

Competitions are being held in eight disciplines - Athletics, Archery, Badminton, Boxing, Football, Karate, Table Tennis and Taekwondo at different venues in the district.

Organized by the Human Resource Development Department in collaboration with Sports and Youth Af-

fairs Department, the event is open to students below 17 years of age.

Table Tennis, Taekwondo and Badminton matches played at Mangan Nagar Panchayat Hall.

Chungthang Block won the boys TT tournament while in the girls category, Mangan Block emerged victorious.

In total, 34 students from four Blocks participated in Table Tennis.

Similarly, in Tae-

kwondo 7 boys and 7 girls were selected for the state level meet.

The final match of football, Mangan Block won in both categories.

The district-level boxing will be played at Mangshila on 16 March.

Deputy Director Janim Lepcha informs that the selected players from different disciplines will now proceed to the state-level sports meet scheduled to be held in Gangtok from 18–22 March.



ICAR-NOFRI trains Andaman and Nicobar farmers in organic farming

GANGTOK, 14 MAR (PIB):ICAR-National Organic Farming Research Institute (ICAR-NOFRI), Tadong successfully organized “3-day Training on Organic Farming for Farmers and Officers of Andaman and Nicobar Islands during 11-13 Mar, 2019. A team of 15 progressive farmers and officers visited ICAR-NOFRI to get acquainted with Organic Farming technologies.

During the program, Joint Director, Dr RK Avasthe, ICAR-NOFRI highlighted the importance of organic farming and motivated the farmers and officers of Andaman and Nicobar Islands to adopt organic farming on large scale.

He said that Andaman and Nicobar is a tourist destination and adoption of organic farming is the best option for promo-



tion of agro-eco tourism. He mentioned that implementation of organic farming will help in protection of environment and conservation of biodiversity.

He also discussed in detail the concept of physico-chemical and microbiological properties of soil and soil health management for organic crop production. Joint Director also distributed certificates and various

‘Extension Folders on Organic Production Technologies’ to the trainees.

Senior Scientist (Horticulture), Dr Ashish Yadav, welcomed all the trainees and briefed about the various skills development activities undertaken by ICAR-NOFRI. Dr Yadav discussed the ‘Organic fruit production techniques; and ‘Organic high value vegetable production techniques’. He also

coordinated the three-day training program.

Assistant Director (Agriculture), PS Prasad, Rangat, Andaman and Nicobar coordinated visit of farmers from Andaman and Nicobar. In his address, he mentioned that Nicobar District is completely organic and farmers are focusing on integration of agriculture, horticulture, animal husbandry and fisheries. He also appreciated the

Scientists efforts in making talks very simple for farmers.

During the training program, all the members also visited the ICAR-NOFRI Research Farm and were briefed about the on-going research and development activities. Giving the feedback of the program, Bishnu Pada Biswas, Abdul Karim, Reepan Nandi, and Seema Baroi, Progressive Farmers of Andaman and Nicobar appreciated ICAR-NOFRI efforts in organizing the training program. Junior Agriculture Assistant, Daniel Antony also mentioned that Neil Island is an important tourist place and farmers are slowly converting into organic. Since organic manures are bulky in nature, they are adopting bio-decomposers to reduce the load of manures.

PNG School appoints school captains



SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 15 MAR:

Paljor Namgyal Girls Senior Secondary School organised the oath taking ceremony of for the school captain and house captains today, a press release informs.

During the ceremony,

badges were offered to the chosen captains for the academic year 2019. This year's school captain is Disha Bhujel (XII Com) and vice captains are Pema Doma Bhutia (XII Hum) and Nikhila Bhutia (XII Sc).

Captains for the four

houses; Ralong, Rabong, Borang and Rayong were also offered badges today.

Oath taken by the captains stated that they would serve the school as befitting the motto of Love, Service and Joy. The program ended with the school song.

Cos allowed to pass on volume benefit to consumers for GST cut

KOLKATA, MAR 15 (PTI):

The National Anti-Profiteering Authority (NAA) Friday said companies are free to offer volume benefit or price reduction to consumers, in the wake of rationalisation of GST rates.

To evaluate cases of GST benefits, the NAA has decided to look into three yardsticks - proportionate grammage increase (volume) in products, timeline of the passing on the benefit, and additional benefits offered by a firm.

NAA (GST) Chairman B N Sharma said this on the sidelines of a session by the Merchants' Chamber of Commerce and Industry here.

Citing an example, he said, passing on price benefits to consumers for goods sold in small sachets might not be feasible and practical.

Sharma, however, did not explain whether the same can be replicated in products of higher volume-packs or in sectors other than FMCG.

He declined to take media queries. “Allowing volume benefit will have a dual advantage to companies. This will help achieve higher turnover and profits,” said Dipankar Chatterji, partner of chartered accountancy firm L B Jha.

Sharma also said companies have to pass on GST benefits in all the SKUs. Meanwhile, in case of realty sector, the NAA was waiting for the March 19 GST Council meeting which is expected to come out with greater clarity about implementing the GST benefits it announced earlier.

Rahul Gandhi to address election rally in Arunachal on Mar 19

ITANAGAR, MAR 15 (PTI):

Congress President Rahul Gandhi will address an election rally here on March 19 in support of party candidates, a party leader said here Friday.

Election to the 60-member Arunachal Pradesh Assembly and the two Lok Sabha seats in the state will be held on April 11.

The Congress will announce the names of the candidates for the polls in the state

before Gandhis visit, Arunachal Pradesh Congress Committee (APCC) president Takam Sanjoy said.

Gandhi will address an election rally at Indira Gandhi Park here on March 19, the party leader said.

The Congress had won 42 seats in 2014 state Assembly election but now has only five MLAs as a large number of legislators left the party and joined other parties.

PAYING GUEST AVAILABLE

PG available for working women & girls at EPCS Church premises, near Primula Lodge at Chruuch Road, Gangtok, Sikkim. Contact: Mob: 9064804782/ Whatsapp No: 9641549764.

KUTSE SHEGU

The 21 day Shedu of Lt. Sachin Tamang who left for heavenly abode on 25th February 2019 falls on 17th March 2019 (Sunday).

All relatives, family, friends and well wishers are requested to join us in offering prayers for the departed soul at our residence Barbotey, Tamang Gaon, Soreng, West Sikkim. We also express our sincere gratitude to all those who stood by us during our time of bereavement.



Mrs. Binu Subba (wife) 9647892791
Ms. Jaikala Tamang, Ms. Sujata Tamang, Ms. Sweta Tamang (sisters)
Mr. Rajen Tamang (brother)
6297875142, 9734142686,
8670576733, 9593388722

“My Freedom Day” observed at Manjusri

SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 15 MAR:

Manjusri Public School observed “My Freedom Day” with a deep sense of happiness and solemnity on 14 Mar, 2019.

The week-long awareness program had started on 09 Mar, with videos, written compositions, discussions and speeches to express thought and feelings about human trafficking, modern day slavery, and what freedom meant to each student. The school was also featured on CNN's website for



taking part in the media giant's Freedom Project titled #MyFreedomDay.

There were posters and soft-board competitions through which

students showcased their creativity and artistic talents, while at the same time, capturing the essence of “My Freedom Day”.

National Handloom Expo from 12 Mar

GANGTOK, 14 MAR (IP-)

R):The Sikkim Handloom and Handicraft Development Corporation Ltd, Zero point, Gangtok is organising the National Handloom Expo 2018-19 at Directorate of Handloom and Handicrafts premise, Zero Point, Gangtok from 12-26 Mar, 2019 which is being sponsored by the office of the Development Commissioner (Handloom), Ministry of textiles, Government of India.

The expo was inaugurated by IFS, Principal

Secretary, Shri Thomas Chandy, Commerce and industries Department and the function was also attended by Director, Jyotsna Karthak, Directorate of Handicrafts and Handloom and other officials.

The Chief Guest visited the stalls and interacted with participants and expressed keen interest and happiness in the various activities being conducted over the period of the Expo.

The National Handloom Expo is a PAN India Programme and a total

numbers of 40 stalls have been allotted to various weavers and SHGs from 9 different states. The National Handloom Expo provides a platform for weavers, sellers and buyers to converge and create awareness vis-a-vis the handloom sector as an employment and income generating industry. Further, the Government's vision and a policy of creating sustainable cottage industry and in every home and village is also being proactively disseminated.

Q4. What is the maximum number of votes which can be cast in EVMs?

Ans .An EVM being used by ECI can record a maximum of 2.000 votes.

Q5. Who has designed the EVMs?

CALL 1950 FOR ANY ELECTION RELATED QUERIES

Contact Hours : 9:00 AM to 9:00 PM

Training for 3rd batch of Presiding and Polling Officers concludes

GYALSHING, 15 MAR (IPR):

The fifth day of the 2nd Round of Training for the 3rd batch of Presiding and Polling Officers I was successfully concluded at Conference Hall, Zilla Panchayat Bhawan Gyalshing and Conference Hall, SDM Office, Soreng simultaneously.

Various procedures of the EVM and VVPAT were discussed in the training. The essential as well as mandatory actions that are needed to be carried out through-

out the course of upcoming election process were also explained by the Master Trainers.

The training focused on theory along with the practical hands-on training on the EVM and VVPAT sealing, testing, filling of forms, presiding diary.

The Master trainers for the training in Gyalshing were SDM (HQ), Tushar G Nikhare, DE Power, KSC Tongden and Senior Welfare Officer, Santosh Alley. Amit Bhan-

dari also explained the working ethics and important information about Pollstar Application to the attendees.

Similarly for Soreng Master Trainers were SDM, Himmat Rai, Soreng and DCSO (West), Dillip Sharma. The Master Trainer for Pollstar Application was US (Elections), Ms Sonam Palmu Bhutia.

A total of 95 trainees were present at Gyalshing for the training and similarly at Soreng there were 40 trainees.

SummitTIMES

ON TOP OF THE NEWS

Shape the Monolith into an Asset

Don't blame the bureaucracy, inspire it

In some recent public addresses, the Chief Minister has consistently called upon public servants to adapt faster to the demands and requirements of the changing times. This is not a new call from his office and he has often stressed that government officers should be on the job 24x7. That he continues to make such appeals is a clear indication that the message has not gone through effectively enough. Now, with elections round the corner and administrative and executive shortfalls at the root of many current complications and confrontations, expect this sentiment to be voiced more often.

Of course, he obviously does not mean that officials should be in office throughout the day all through the week, and is only underlining the fact that officers should not shirk responsibility or dodge behind excuses. This call is required because there is simply too much procrastination in how government offices function, too much nonchalance in how work is put off and staggering insensitivity with which people's affairs are handled. What this leads to is a scenario where officials from departments get so inured by the routineness of things that they do not recognize obvious priorities and drag their feet even on urgently required interventions.

This attitude continues to remain entrenched. A work culture under which even on-the-spot directions [which would convey urgency] by the Chief Minister himself can be deferred, needs a vigorous shake up and this is clearly recognized by the CM as well. This comes after several attempts at working the bureaucratic monolith into better shape. There was the five-day week with longer office hours on working days idea which was abandoned as much because there was no guarantee that the extra hours will see adequate attendance as the complaint of teachers who too are government servants but will have to work an extra day every week. Then there are the smart-card and biometric attendance gadgets which were installed at offices. These obviously did not deliver because frequent appeals are still made for better attendance in government offices.

What is obvious is that the public as well as the public representatives are not very satisfied with the performance of the public servants. Improper as it may be to paint all officers and government employees with the same brush, the end-result, the performance of the departments on the whole makes it difficult not to be prejudiced.

But all of this should not lead to fatalistic acceptance. It is not as if government employees don't want to work at all. Given the multiplicity of agencies and offices, in many cases lethargy has set in for want of clear job descriptions, undefined roles and too much interference. A visit to any government office will bear out the fact that the work-culture is slack in Sikkim not because of the personnel, but because there are too many with too little work. There are few who abandon work midway and leave office, but there are many who have nothing constructive to do in all the hours they spend in their chambers. Here again, the tried and tested formula for similar problems elsewhere is VRS. It fails in Sikkim because even before the employees takes the option of VRS there are others in line to take up their jobs. The weight never really gets shed, especially not now when every agency of the government is on the verge of being over-staffed, because there are too many considerations and connections which cannot be ignored in a small state like Sikkim where most things work at a personal level.

So what does one do?

The oversized administration has been viewed for far too long as a burden and since no solution has really worked out, perhaps a change in attitude is required. What if, the same monolith is accepted as an asset and then segregated into compact units with clearly identified roles and responsibilities and then deployed on the field to deliver the "development" that is the final aim of every government. The BDO experiment was one such effort and has delivered rather well. To repeat a point here, there are very few government employees who don't want to work, they grow lethargic because they are not given anything interesting and constructive to do. If more clarity is offered and more responsibility given, things could start looking up. The approach should be to challenge the public servants with complex tasks, back it with greater autonomy in decision-making and then establishing a clear relationship between effort and reward. This, when complemented by the frequent trainings that have now become mandatory should keep refreshing the officials on their exact roles and contributions to Sikkim's future.

Few will fail to measure up if this is done. In the end, even this solution might not work out, but at least Sikkim would have tried and exhausted all options...



India, Pakistan and the changing rules of engagement: here's what you need to know

STUTI BHATNAGAR & PRIYA CHACKO
theconversation.com

More than 40 Indian security staff lost their lives in a suicide attack on February 14, 2019 in the Pulwama region of Indian-administered Kashmir. The Pakistan-based Islamist militant group Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM) claimed responsibility for the attack.

Twelve days later, India launched air strikes against JeM training camps in Balakot, Pakistan. India claimed the strikes inflicted significant damage on infrastructure and killed militant commanders, while avoiding civilians.

India said the strikes were "pre-emptive", based on intelligence that JeM were planning more suicide attacks in Indian territory. Pakistan denied India's claims, both about the damage done by their airstrikes and that Pakistan was planning further attacks.

But Pakistan retaliated with an airstrike on what it termed a "non-military installation" in the Indian controlled region of Kashmir. In the ensuing skirmish with the Indian Air Force, an Indian jet was downed and a pilot captured.

These events, in the disputed territory of Kashmir, have brought international attention to the prospect of a nuclear confrontation between India and Pakistan. But why is the decades-long conflict heating up again, and why now?

HISTORY OF KASHMIR

India and Pakistan have been involved in a territorial dispute over Kashmir for decades. The roots of the conflict lie in the partition of British India in 1947, which created the secular state of India and the Muslim state of Pakistan.

The idea behind the partition was for Muslim-majority regions to become a part of Pakistan. But Kashmir was complicated. Although a Muslim-majority state, it was ruled by a Hindu king.

He decided to accede to India in October 1947. This was unacceptable to Pakistan, which launched a war in 1948 to capture Kashmir by force.

A result of the war was a UN-mediated ceasefire line. This divided Kashmir into Indian-administered "Jammu and Kashmir" (J&K) – which constituted two-thirds of the territory – and Pakistan-administered "Azad (free) Kashmir", which was one-third of the territory.

While the 1948 ceasefire brought an end to the fighting, Kashmir's status remained unresolved and Pakistan continued to contest the territorial boundaries. India granted J&K constitutional autonomy, while the Pakistan-administered region was a self-governing entity.

VIEW FROM PAKISTAN

Kashmir is central to Pakistan's national identity as a Muslim state, and therefore it represents unfinished business after the 1947 partition.

Pakistan launched another war against India in 1965, which caused thousands of casualties on both sides. Hostilities between the two countries ended after a diplomatic intervention by the Soviet Union and the United States and a UN-mandated ceasefire.

The 1965 war, the 1971 Indian intervention in Pakistan's civil war, and the subsequent creation of Bangladesh led to more changes to the territorial borders in Kashmir. The ceasefire line is now designated as the Line of Control (LoC).

Since the 1990s, Pakistan has supported militant groups such as the Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) and Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM) to attack Indian security forces and civilians.

VIEW FROM INDIA

Kashmir has also been central to India's national narrative of unity in diversity propagated by leaders of the independence movement, Jawaharlal Nehru and Mahatma Gandhi. Indian leaders have often projected the accommodation of a Muslim majority state in the J&K region as proof of Indian secular democracy.

India's official position considers the whole of undivided Kashmir as a part of India. And India has not consistently upheld J&K's constitutionally-guaranteed autonomy. Political instability in the state has been compounded by interference from the Indian government. Indian armed forces in the area have often used force against civilians.

In the 1990s, this led to a mass uprising and insurgency among the Kashmiri population in India. Pakistan exploited this discontent, offering arms, training and funds to both Pakistan-based and local Kashmiri militants.

The insurgency in Indian Kashmir eased in 2003, with a ceasefire and the initiation of an India-Pakistan peace process that led to a relative period of calm.

The peace process came to an end after the 2008

Mumbai terrorist attacks, carried out by the LeT. But India's policy of strategic restraint and pressure on Pakistan by the United States to address militancy prevented a worsening of hostilities.

A new government came to power in India in 2014, led by the Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party. The leadership's approach to Pakistan and Kashmir has been significantly different from the previous administration, with more emphasis on curbing dissent in J&K and using pre-emptive strikes across the LoC against militant groups in Pakistan's territory.

Local discontent in Indian Kashmir has also led to an increase in militancy since 2014 with more Pakistani support and a combination of rising local recruitment and an influx of foreign militants.

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?

The rules of engagement between India and Pakistan are changing. India's "pre-emptive" air strikes in February were a significant shift away from the previous policy of strategic restraint. This is the first time since the dispute emerged that India has targeted militants inside Pakistani territory.

Pakistan chose to escalate tensions further, a move that had previously been prevented by the US. Pakistani Prime Minister, Imran Khan, has reiterated his desire for dialogue with India. But ceasefire violations across the LoC and the international border have continued unabated since February 14k, with both sides reporting civilian casualties.

Diplomatic pressure from the UN and the rest of the international community has forced the Pakistani government to ban some militant groups. Yet, it continues to deny that JeM is active in Pakistan.

Meanwhile, tensions with Pakistan are playing well into Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's promotion of being a "strong leader", capable of protecting the country from its enemies. This is all part of the strategy leading up to the coming elections.

The escalatory responses by both governments have shown the actions of the two countries are becoming more difficult to control, particularly with the United States' lack of involvement in defusing tensions as it disengages from the region.

[Stuti Bhatnagar is Adjunct Fellow, University of Adelaide; Priya Chacko is Senior Lecturer in International Politics, University of Adelaide]

Hospital disinfectants should be regulated like antibiotics new study suggests

KAROLIN HIJAZI
theconversation.com

Bacterial resistance to two disinfectants used in large amounts to control the spread of hospital infections is strongly associated with resistance to several antibiotics used to treat common infections, our latest study shows.

Our analysis, published in Nature Microbiology, focused on resistance to disinfectants in Staphylococcus epidermidis. This bacteria is found on the skin of healthy people and usually causes no harm. But it can cause serious blood infections in patients in intensive care units (ICUs), especially those with immune paralysis, where the immune system cannot recover despite bacteria being cleared with antibiotics.

Staphylococcus epidermidis can also transfer genes to a major disease-causing bacteria called Staphylococcus aureus. This gene transfer

turns Staphylococcus aureus into MRSA (Methicillin-resistant Staphylococcus aureus), a so-called "superbug" that is resistant to several common antibiotics.

Until now research on antibiotic resistance has largely focused on MRSA with little or no attention paid to Staphylococcus epidermidis. Our study suggests that Staphylococcus epidermidis may also pose a threat. This "harmless" bacteria can develop resistance to drugs commonly used to treat infections in environments with a high concentration of disinfectant, such as ICUs.

We initially looked at resistance in an ICU in Aberdeen, Scotland, but when we analysed the genomes of bacteria from around the world, we found the same trend: a strong association between resistance to disinfectants and resistance to several antibiotics in harmful Staphylococcus epidermidis. These resistant bugs cause

around ten to 15 infections a month in individual ICUs, with patients developing multi-drug resistant sepsis.

COMMON SKIN BACTERIA

A large clinical trial in the US in 2013 compared the benefit of disinfecting all patients admitted to an ICU with chlorhexidine (a skin disinfectant) versus just disinfecting patients at risk of serious infections. The findings from this study, published in the New England Journal of Medicine, showed that disinfecting all patients is better at reducing hospital infections than disinfecting selected patients. The authors of the paper encouraged this approach. But the study didn't look at antimicrobial resistance in Staphylococcus epidermidis. In fact, no studies had.

Disinfecting all ICU patients with chlorhexidine is very effective at controlling a wide range of hospital infections. Still, we believe that a lot more attention needs to be paid to the long-

term impact of this practice on the emergence and spread of antimicrobial resistance. Importantly, a major ICU in England (St Thomas' Hospital in London) adopted the disinfectant octenidine as a replacement for chlorhexidine after a two-year outbreak of MRSA that carried genes for resistance to chlorhexidine following concerns that chlorhexidine may increase antimicrobial resistance.

Our results suggest that we need to change the way we think about using disinfectants, particularly in hospitals. Tackling antimicrobial resistance continues to be a worldwide health priority. Most people know that misusing and overusing antibiotics is causing this problem, but our study suggests that we should also pay attention to the disinfectants used in hospitals, and they should be regulated in the same way that antibiotics are.

[The writer is Senior Clinical Lecturer, University of Aberdeen]

AGP, BJP won't speak on Citizenship Bill during campaigning: NEDA convenor

GUWAHATI, MAR 15 (PTI): The AGP, which returned to the NDA fold on Wednesday, and the BJP will not speak on the contentious Citizenship Bill while campaigning for the upcoming Lok Sabha polls in Assam, NEDA convenor Himanta Biswa Sarma said on Friday.

The two parties had decided to resume the talks on the bill after the election, he added.

The Asom Gana Parishad (AGP), which had walked out of the North-East Democratic Alliance (NEDA) remonstrating against the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill brought by the Centre two months ago, returned to the grouping on Wednesday.

"During the campaign, we will not say anything about our differences (on the bill), but project our unity to the people," Sarma said.

Both the parties would sit together after the polls to find out a solution through "consultation and consensus", the senior BJP leader added.

The NEDA convenor was addressing a joint press conference with Assam BJP chief Ranjeet Kumar Dass and AGP president Atul Bora here.

The Citizenship (Amendment) Bill, passed by the Lok Sabha on January 8, seeks to grant Indian citizenship to non-Muslims who fled



religious persecution in Bangladesh, Pakistan and Afghanistan and entered India before December 31, 2014.

"The sole aim of our campaign will be to make Narendra Modi the prime minister again for the development of Assam and the north-east."

"Our campaign will focus on the success of the prime minister and Chief Minister Sarbananda Sonowal's tenure," Sarma said.

There will not be a separate manifesto or common minimum programme for the constituents of the ruling coalition in Assam, he added.

A "common statement" approved by all the parties in the NEDA would be issued in the coming days, the BJP leader said.

Commenting on the

issue, Bora said, "We have some issues of difference and it is very common between alliance partners.... We have decided to sort out those through discussion. We have joined the alliance in the greater interests of the state and country."

He claimed that Modi had done "lots" of development works in the country, while former prime minister Manmohan Singh "did nothing" for the north-east, despite being a parliamentarian from Assam for 10 years. "We hope to win all the 14 seats and appeal to our workers to ensure that the votes fall in the right place. Narendra Modi should be the prime minister for the second term for the development of Assam and the region," Bora said.

Sarma further said

the seat-sharing details between the AGP and the BJP would be formally announced on Saturday in New Delhi after a delegation of the regional party meets BJP president Amit Shah.

The BPF, the third NEDA partner in Assam, had announced state minister Pramila Rani Brahma as its only candidate for the Lok Sabha polls from the Kokrajhar seat on Tuesday.

On the prospects of the alliance in Assam, Dass said, "We had earlier said 9-10 seats will be won by the BJP and the BPF. But after the AGP coming back to us, our workers are enthused and now the alliance will win at least 12 seats."

Local, community-based parties of Mising, Rabha, Tiwa and other tribes had also ex-

tended their support to the BJP-led alliance and this would ensure a clear victory of the NEDA in Assam, he added.

In 2014, the BJP had won seven of the 14 Lok Sabha seats in Assam, the Congress and the AI-UDF had three MPs each and one member was an Independent. The two BJP allies, the BPF and the AGP, had no representation in the Lower House of Parliament. Regarding other north-eastern states, Sarma, also the state's finance minister, said, "On March 17, there will be a meeting of all the NEDA parties' members with Amit Shah. After the meeting, the seat-sharing details for the rest of the region will be announced."

Voting in Assam will take place in three phases on April 11, 18 and 23.

SC stays Meghalaya HC order convicting newspaper editor, publisher in contempt case



NEW DELHI, MAR 15 (PTI): The Supreme Court Friday stayed the Meghalaya High Court judgment convicting The Shillong Times editor Patricia Mukhim and publisher Shoba Chaudhuri in a contempt case.

The high court had also imposed a fine of Rs 2 lakh each on them and said if they failed to deposit the amount, they will have to undergo six months simple imprisonment and the paper will be banned.

The case relates to an article published by the paper on the perks and facilities for retired judges and their families.

A Supreme Court bench, comprising of Chief Justice Ranjan Gogoi and Justices Deepak Gupta and Sanjiv Khanna, also issued notice to the high court registrar on the appeal filed by the editor and the

publisher of newspaper.

While pronouncing the judgement in the contempt case, the high court had on March 8 asked both of them to serve the sentence by sitting in the corner of the court room till the rising of the court.

Immediately after the high court order was stayed, Mukhim told PTI, "The Supreme Court has stayed and suspended the judgment passed by the Meghalaya High Court on March 8, 2019. I have full faith that judiciary will protect the freedom of press."

In her December 10, 2018 article titled "When judges judge for themselves", Mukhim sought to draw parallels between the order by Justice S R Sen on perks for retired judges and an order passed by two former judges of the high court in

2016 before their retirement.

The order by the two judges demanding special category security was quashed by the Supreme Court.

Mukhim and Chaudhuri were asked to show cause as to why contempt proceedings should not be initiated against the newspaper for publishing the article.

In his show cause notice, Justice Sen had said that the media is not to dictate what the court should do.

"It is really shocking that the publisher and editor of the said newspaper without knowing the law or background of the case are making comments which are definitely derogatory to a judge who is handling the case as well as the entire fraternity of the judges," Justice Sen had said.

Azerbaijan seeks trade, investment exchanges with West Bengal

KOLKATA, MAR 16 (PTI): Azerbaijan, located in the south Caucasus region of Eurasia, is keen to establish trade and investment exchanges with West Bengal.

Ambassador of the Republic of Azerbaijan, Ashraf Shikhaliev, said the dynamics has shifted all of the sudden to the eastern coast of India starting from West Bengal.

Though a small country, Azerbaijan has a huge potential, he said

at a session organised by BNCCI here on Friday.

The envoy said language would not be a hurdle as English was spoken in Azerbaijan to some extent.

Some of the sectors which had good potential for exchanges were information and communication, transport, petrochemical and chemicals, hospitality, tourism, agriculture and food processing.

Shikhaliev said Azerbaijan would also

be a suitable destination for MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Conferencing, Exhibitions) tourism for Indian companies as it had the potential to bring it back to India.

Filming in Azerbaijan was also a feasible area as cost of shooting was much lower than Europe and the country was blessed with mountains, forests and the sea.

Direct flight from Baku, capital do Azerbaijan, to New Delhi would start shortly, he said.

Dy election commissioner to visit Tripura Sunday



AGARTALA, MAR 15 (PTI): Deputy Election Commissioner Sudip Jain would visit Tripura on Sunday to review poll-preparedness, state Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) Sriram Taranikanti said Friday.

Jain would hold meetings with officials of the state election department and top police officers.

"If time permits, he would also meet representatives of political parties," Taranikanti told PTI.

Asked about the requirement of central forces for the election, the CEO said, "We are not divulging now our demand for central security forces and how much we are getting from the Cen-

tre. May be we would be able to let you know it after a few days."

He said adequate number of forces would be deployed in the state and some of them are scheduled to arrive here Friday.

Elections for the two Lok Sabha seats of Tripura would be held on April 11 and 18.

Illegal Bangladeshi entrants set up 16 villages in Mizoram

AIZAWL, MAR 15 (PTI): Illegal immigrants from neighbouring Bangladesh have set up 16 villages in South Mizoram's Lunglei district, the Assembly was informed Friday.

There were nine more such villages set up illegally by people who had entered the state without valid documents, Local

Administration Minister K Lalrinliana said.

Of the nine villages, four were set up in Aizawl district, followed by three in Champhai bordering Myanmar, and two in Mamit bordering Tripura, he said while replying to a query from C Lalsawivunga of the Zoram People's Movement. Besides people

from Bangladesh, illegal immigrants from Myanmar, Manipur and Tripura also reside in these nine villages, officials said.

Officials as well as student leaders, who had earlier conducted study of the border areas, claimed that those entered the state from Bangladesh belonged to the Chakma community.

Lok Sabha polls: West Bengal has maximum first-time voters followed by UP, MP

NEW DELHI, MAR 15 (PTI): West Bengal has the maximum number of first-time voters in the coming Lok Sabha election, followed by Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh.

According to Election Commission data, 20.1 lakh first-time voters will be exercising their franchise in West Bengal. Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh have 16.7 lakh and 13.6 lakh first-time voters, respectively.

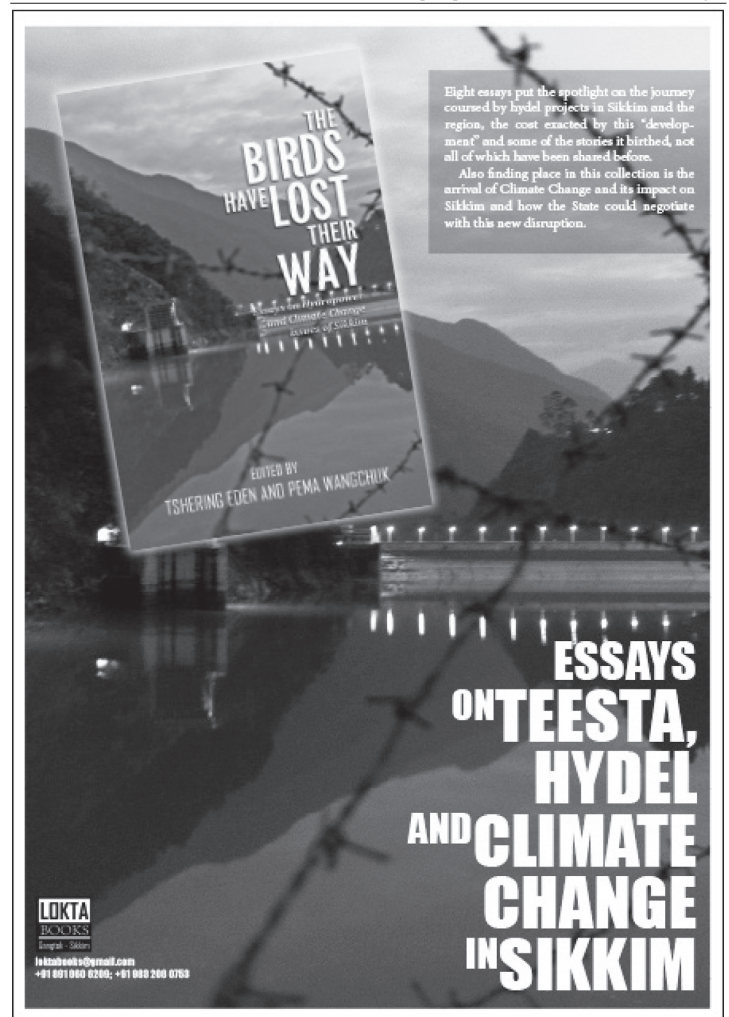
The number of people eligible to vote in Lok Sabha polls beginning next month has increased by 8.4 crore as compared to the 2014 general election, and

these include 1.5 crore "young voters" who are in the 18-19 age group and would exercise their franchise first time.

Over 1.5 crore voters are in the age group of 18-19 years. These "young voters" constitute 1.66 per cent of the total electors. Rajasthan, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh have 12.8 lakh, 11.9 lakh, 8.9 lakh and 5.3 lakh first-time voters, respectively.

Delhi has 97,684 first-time voters.

Lok Sabha elections will begin on April 11 and continue for over a month till May 19 across seven phases.



Guardiola stays coy as City aim to advance quadruple bid

SWANSEA, MAR 15 (AFP): Pep Guardiola remains coy about Manchester City's chances of winning the quadruple, but his side face Swansea in the FA Cup quarter-finals on Saturday standing just 16 games away from a clean sweep of all four major trophies.

Guardiola's team moved closer to the unprecedented silverware haul on Tuesday as they advanced to the Champions League quarter-finals with a 7-0 demolition of Schalke in the last 16, second leg.

City have already won the League Cup, beating Chelsea in last month's final, but that has not quenched Guardiola's thirst for more success.

A victory at second-tier Swansea would see City move into the FA Cup semi-finals, with the Premier League title race set to go down to the wire.

City are one point clear of second-placed Liverpool and although the reigning champions would be knocked off top spot if the Reds win at Fulham on Sunday, they will have a game in hand.

In a bid to keep the



pressure off his players, Guardiola has tried to talk down the possibility of City winning all four trophies, something that no team in the history of the English game has managed.

"I said so many times, and I know you are generous and thank you so much guys, but every time you make that comment we lose a competition, so I think you provoke me in that way so,

the next one we will see," joked Guardiola recently when asked about the prospect of a quadruple. Swansea, currently mid-table in the Championship, are not expected to pose a major threat to City, but sterner tests lie in wait in what promises to be a dramatic finale to the season.

The Champions League has provided some painful moments for Guardiola, who won

the tournament twice as Barcelona boss but has not lifted the trophy since 2011.

-TRADITIONAL POWERS-

Yet with English clubs constituting half of the eight teams in the Champions League quarter-finals, there are few opponents remaining who can intimidate City, especially with traditional powers such as Real Madrid and Bayern Munich having already

exited the competition. Even so, given the magnitude of the achievement City are chasing, the hype surrounding his team at present appears muted.

The last -- and, so far, only -- English club to win the treble of Premier League, FA Cup and Champions League was Manchester United under Alex Ferguson in 1999.

Guardiola himself achieved the equivalent in Spain with Bar-

celona in 2008-09.

Yet, Guardiola has done such a good job of playing down expectations in almost every scenario in which City have found themselves this season that the issue of a possible quadruple has barely been on the news agenda.

On the occasions that he has been asked about such a possibility, Guardiola has claimed that, to be considered among Europe's elite, City first have to ensure they are regularly competing in the latter stages of the big competitions.

"The big clubs, that is the big difference, as I said many times -- what is the best clubs in the last decade? Juventus, Bayern Munich, Barcelona -- these are the best three teams in the last decade in Europe," said the Spaniard.

"Why? Because every season they win the league, every season they win the cups, every season they are there, because they are the best.

"It's difficult to imitate them, being in the competition, it doesn't matter which one -- until the last stages.

Switzerland's Bencic reaches Indian Wells semi-finals

INDIAN WELLS (UNITED STATES), MARCH 15 (AFP): Switzerland's Belinda Bencic's resurgence continued Thursday as she reached the Indian Wells WTA semi-finals with a battling 6-3, 4-6, 6-3 win over fifth-ranked Karolina Pliskova.

Bencic, a former world number seven whose ranking slumped as injuries stalled her career, took her current winning streak to 12 matches.

Six of those wins have come against top-10 players, including a 6-3, 6-1 triumph over world number one and defending Indian Wells champion Naomi Osaka in the fourth round.

Bencic, who won her first title in four years at Dubai last month, will face either seven-time Grand Slam champion Venus Williams or two-time Grand Slam winner Angelique Kerber for a place in the final.

US Senate rejects Trump's border emergency declaration



WASHINGTON, MAR 15 (PTI): In a stunning rebuke to Donald Trump, a dozen Republican senators broke party ranks and sided with Democrats to terminate the US President's declaration of a national emergency on America's border with Mexico.

In a 59-41 vote, 12 Republicans joined every Senate Democrat on Thursday in a rare move to block the president's effort to divert billions in funding to build his long-promised border wall without congressional approval.

The Democratic-controlled House of Representatives last month backed the measure.

The Republicans joined Democrats in voting down the emergency, arguing that the president had exceeded his powers in trying to build a border wall over Congress' objections, the New York Times reported.

Following the vote, President Trump tweeted, "VETO!"

Trump slammed the vote, calling it a "Democrat-inspired Resolution".

"I look forward to VETOING the just passed Democrat inspired Resolution which would OPEN BORDERS while increasing Crime, Drugs, and Trafficking in our Country," he said in a tweet.

"I thank all of the Strong Republicans who voted to support Border Security and our desperately needed WALL!" Trump said.

Congress needs a two-thirds majority of both chambers to override a presidential veto, which is viewed as unlikely in this case.

"Never before has a president asked for funding, Congress has not provided it, and the president then has used the National Emergencies Act of 1976 to spend the money anyway," said Senator Lamar Alexander, Republican of Tennessee. Trump had sought to frame the vote publicly as not only a declaration of support for his border security policies but as a sign of personal loyalty, the report said.

"It's pure and simple: It's a vote for border se-

curity; it's a vote for no crime," Trump told reporters before the vote, which he declared on Thursday morning on Twitter to be "a vote for Nancy Pelosi, Crime, and the Open Border Democrats!"

But he could not overcome concerns among Republican senators about the legality of redirecting USD 3.6 billion from military construction projects toward the border wall, even after Congress explicitly rejected the funding request.

"I believe the use of emergency powers in this circumstance violates the Constitution," said Senator Jerry Moran, Republican from Kansas, in a statement.

"This continues our country down the path of all powerful executive something those who wrote the Constitution were fearful of," Moran was quoted as saying.

The Republican senators who stood by Trump insisted that there was an immigration crisis at the southern border and that the order was well within the jurisdiction of the National Emergencies Act, which gives presidents wide-ranging latitude to declare a national emergency.

The vote came a day after the Senate rebuked president Trump on foreign policy by approving a bill to end US support for the Saudi-led coalition in Yemen.

Trump declared a national emergency last month after signing a funding agreement that did not include the money he requested to build a wall. His signature ended a 35-day partial shutdown of the federal government, which was triggered by a show-down after Congress refused to appropriate the USD 5.7 billion he requested to start construction at the border.

In his annual budget proposal, which Trump sent to Congress this week, the president asked for USD 8.6 billion in funding for his wall, far more than he had previously requested.

A wall along the US-Mexico border was one of Trump's signature campaign promises.

Anjali upbeat on Indian shooting scene



MUMBAI, MAR 15 (PTI): Ace shooter Anjali VEDPHATAK- Bhagwat believes that the country has a bright future in the sport because of the new bunch of shooters who are performing consistently well. "Now it (the shooting scenario) in the country is positive because all the youngsters have taken their respective places in the senior category," Anjali told PTI after receiving an award at the ET Edge Maharashtra Achievers' Awards 2019 supported by Femina late last night.

Anjali, a former Commonwealth champion who was world No. 1 in 10 metre air rifle, reasoned that the young shooters are giving consistent scores.

"The youngsters are giving consistent scores in competitions like the World Cup, World Championship and even in a stressful event like the Asian Games where all top-level shooters from China and Korea are present.

"They dominated it and we have won almost all the medals in all the events in ladies and gents rifle and pistol category. So we have a bright future in shooting and are keeping our fingers crossed for the 2020 Olympics," she said.

India's Anjum Moudgil and Apurvi Chandela have already booked their places for the 2020 Olympics in Tokyo.

To these two and the phenomenal young shooter Saurabh Chaudhary, Anjali's advise is they should keep their preparation on the same track as of now.

"We have already got two entries in air rifle. Anju Modgil and Apurvi Chandela are in extremely good form. Even Saurabh (Chaudhary) is shooting unbelievably well. "If they keep their mental attitude or the preparation on the same track (then) we really can count on medals in the (2020) Olympics," she added.

She also praised Maharashtra's Rahi Sarnobat and advised her to focus on her technique.

"Rahi is a mentally strong shooter. She had a very bad injury in the past two years. Overcoming that injury and again taking the top place in the Indian shooting team and winning gold at the Asian Games - the first (woman) shooter (from India) to win a gold medal (in Asian Games) - is commendable," Anjali said. "She is mentally strong and has to focus on the technique and should not think about the end product - whether she will get the quota or the medal. She should focus on technique and performance," she said.

"Her preparation is professional and is going on the right track," the veteran shooter concluded.

Bangladesh cricketers escape shooting attack in NZ mosque, tour called off

Christchurch, Mar 15 (PTI): The Bangladesh cricket team's tour of New Zealand was Friday called off after the players had a narrow escape from a shooting attack on a mosque here, described as an "unprecedented act of violence" by the country's Prime Minister Jacinda Arden.

The attack on the Masjid Al Noor mosque in Hagley Park killed several people, the local media reported.

The Bangladesh team, which was about to enter the mosque to offer prayers, escaped unscathed but the prevailing situation led to the authorities calling off the third and final Test match starting Saturday.

The match was the tour finale for the visitors.

"All members of the Bangladesh Cricket Team in Christchurch, New Zealand are safely back in the hotel following the incident of shooting in the city. The Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) is in constant contact with the players and team management," the BCB said in a statement on its Twitter page.

Bangladesh's Performance analyst Shrinivas Chandrasekaran, a Chennai-based computer-engineer-turned-cricket-analyst, also spoke about the incident on



social media.

"Just escaped active shooters. Heartbeats pumping badly and panic everywhere," he was quoted as saying by media reports.

New Zealand Cricket tweeted to confirm the safety of the players and support staff.

"Our heartfelt condolences go out to the families and friends of those affected by the shocking situation in Christchurch. A joint decision between NZC and the @BCBTigers has been made to cancel the Hagley Oval Test. Again both teams and support staff groups are safe," it said.

Senior opener Tamim Iqbal said it was a frightening experience for the team. "...please keep us in your prayers," he tweeted. Arden termed

the shooting as "one of New Zealand's darkest days" and issued a strong statement condemning the attack.

"This is significant and I can tell you now this is and will be one of New Zealand's darkest days. I would describe it as an unprecedented act of violence, an act that has absolutely no place in New Zealand. This is not who we are," she said.

"Certainly it has occurred at a place where people should have been expressing their religious freedom, where they should have been in a safe environment, and they have not been today. There is no place in New Zealand for such extreme acts of unprecedented violence.

"The people who were the subject of this

attack today, New Zealand is their home, they should be safe here. The person who has perpetuated this violent act against them, they have no place in New Zealand society," she added.

The players were initially barred from leaving the bus but, after several minutes, disembarked and made their way through to the Hagley Park ground. After that they went back to their hotel.

According to 'ESPNCricinfo', most of the coaching staff was in the team hotel at the time of the incident while head coach Steve Rhodes was at the ground.

"Liton Das and Nayeem Hasan were also back in the hotel and have been contacted, and told to stay back at the hotel," the report stated.

Mumbai cueist shines with silver medal at Belgium event

MUMBAI, MAR 15 (PTI): Mumbai's seasoned cueist V Subramaniam has bagged a silver medal in the group 4-5 event of the World Disability Billiards and Snooker (WDBS) Belgian Open 2019.

As per the information available on WDBS website, the tournament was held at the Trickshot Club in Bruges, Belgium, and Subramaniam, fondly known as 'Raja', lost to England's Daniel Blunn in

the final to settle for silver.

Blunn claimed a record eighth WDBS title.

Subramaniam was competing in his first competition since the 2016 Open Disability Snooker Championship.

Previously undefeated in WDBS play, Subramaniam maintained his flawless record by coming through the round-robin stage without the loss of a frame, before

defeating Gunter DHondt 2-1 in the last eight round.

In the semifinals, he defeated Welshman Ben Rawson 2-1 to set up a clash of the titans in the final.

Having dropped one frame in the group stages to David Moore, Blunn progressed to the final with knockout victories against Olivier Biernaux and David Church, the latter in a repeat of last year's final in Belgium.

NKorea official: Kim rethinking US talks, launch moratorium

PYONGYANG, MAR 15 (AP): North Korean leader Kim Jong Un will soon make a decision on whether to continue diplomatic talks and maintain the country's moratorium on missile launches and nuclear tests, a senior North Korean official said, noting the US threw away a golden opportunity at the recent summit between their leaders.

Vice Foreign Minister Choe Son Hui, addressing an urgent meeting Friday of diplomats and foreign media in Pyongyang, including The Associated Press, said the North was deeply disappointed by the failure of the two sides to reach any agreements at the Hanoi summit between Kim and President Donald Trump.

She said Pyongyang now has no intention of compromising or continuing talks unless the United States takes measures that are commensurate to the changes it has taken such as the 15-month moratorium on launches and tests and changes its "political calculation." Choe, who attended the Feb. 27-28 talks in Hanoi, said Kim was puzzled by what she called the "eccentric" negotiation position of the US. She suggested that while Trump was more willing to talk, the U.S. position was hardened by the uncompromising demands of Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and National Security Adviser John Bolton.

"Personal relations between the two supreme leaders are still good and the chemistry is mysteriously wonderful," she added. She said it was entirely up to Kim whether to continue the launch and test moratorium, and said she expects he will "clarify his position" within a short period of time.

"On our way back to the homeland, our chairman of the state affairs commission said, 'For what reason do we have to make this train trip again?'" she said. "I want to make it clear that the gangster-like stand of the US will eventually put the situation in danger. We have neither the intention to compromise with the US in any form nor much less the desire or plan to conduct this kind of negotiation."

Choe questioned the claim by Trump at a news conference after the talks in Hanoi broke down that the North was seeking the lifting of all sanctions against it, and said it was seeking only the ones that are directed at its civilian economy. After the summit had ended, State Department officials clarified that was indeed the North's position, but said the lifting of economic sanctions was such a big demand that it would essentially subsidize the North's continued nuclear activity.

Choe said it was the US that was being too demanding and inflexible.

"What is clear is that the U.S. has thrown away a golden opportunity this time," she said. "I'm not sure why the US came out with this different description. We never asked for the removal of sanctions in their entirety." "This time we understood very clearly that the United States has a very different calculation to ours," she added.

Mass shootings at New Zealand mosques kill 49; 1 man charged

CHRISTCHURCH, MAR 15 (AP): Mass shootings at two mosques full of worshippers attending Friday prayers killed 49 people in New Zealand as authorities charged one person, detained three others and defused explosive devices in what appeared to be a carefully planned racist attack.

Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern said the events in Christchurch represented "an extraordinary and unprecedented act of violence" and acknowledged many of those affected may be migrants and refugees. In addition to the dead, she said more than 20 people were seriously wounded.

"It is clear that this can now only be described as a terrorist attack," Ardern said.

Police took three men and a woman into custody after the shootings, which shocked people across the nation of 5 million people. One of the suspects was later charged with murder.

While there was no reason to believe there were more suspects, Ardern said the national security threat level was being raised to the second-highest level.

Authorities have not specified who they detained, but said none had been on any watch list. A man who claimed responsibility for the shootings left a 74-page anti-immigrant manifesto in which he explained who he was and his reasoning for the attack. He said he was a 28-year-old white Australian and a racist.

Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison confirmed that one of the four people detained was an Australian-born citizen.



lian-born citizen.

Police Commissioner Mike Bush said Friday night that a man had been charged with murder. He did not mention the other three suspects and did not say whether the same shooter was responsible for both attacks.

Ardern at a news conference alluded to anti-immigrant sentiment as the possible motive, saying that while many people affected by the shootings may be migrants or refugees "they have chosen to make New Zealand their home, and it is their home."

They are us." As for the suspects, Ardern said "these are people who I would describe as having extremist views that have absolutely no place in New Zealand."

Bush said police had found

two improvised explosive devices in one car, a clarification from an earlier statement that there were devices in multiple vehicles.

He said they had disabled one and were in the process of disabling the second. The deadliest attack occurred at the Masjid Al Noor mosque in central Christchurch at about 1:45 pm. At least 30 people were killed there.

Witness Len Peneha said he saw a man dressed in black enter the mosque and then heard dozens of shots, followed by people running from the mosque in terror.

Peneha, who lives next door to the mosque, said the gunman ran out of the mosque, dropped what appeared to be a semi-automatic weapon in his driveway, and

fled. He said he then went into the mosque to try and help.

"I saw dead people everywhere. There were three in the hallway, at the door leading into the mosque, and people inside the mosque," he said. "It's unbelievable nutty. I don't understand how anyone could do this to these people, to anyone. It's ridiculous."

He said he helped about five people recover in his home. He said one was slightly injured.

"I've lived next door to this mosque for about five years and the people are great, they're very friendly," he said. "I just don't understand it." He said the gunman was white and was wearing a helmet with some kind of device on top, giving him a military-type appearance. A video that was

apparently livestreamed by the shooter shows the attack in horrifying detail. The gunman spends more than two minutes inside the mosque spraying terrified worshippers with bullets again and again, sometimes re-firing at people he has already cut down.

He then walks outside to the street, where he shoots at people on the sidewalk. Children's screams can be heard in the distance as he returns to his car to get another rifle.

The gunman then walks back into the mosque, where there are at least two dozen people lying on the ground. After walking back outside and shooting a woman there, he gets back in his car, where the song "Fire" by English rock band "The Crazy

World of Arthur Brown" can be heard blasting from the speakers. The singer bellows, "I am the god of hellfire!" and the gunman drives away. The video then cuts out.

There was a second shooting at the Linwood Masjid Mosque that killed at least 10 people.

Mark Nichols told the New Zealand Herald he heard about five gunshots and that a Friday prayer-goer returned fire with a rifle or shotgun.

Nichols said he saw two injured people being carried out on stretchers past his automotive shop and that both people appeared to be alive.

The police commissioner warned anybody who was thinking of going to a mosque anywhere in New Zealand on Friday to stay put.

The man who claimed responsibility for the shooting said he came to New Zealand only to plan and train for the attack. He said he was not a member of any organisation, but had donated to and interacted with many nationalist groups, though he acted alone and no group ordered the attack. He said the mosques in Christchurch and Linwood would be the targets, as would a third mosque in the town of Ashburton if he could make it there.

He said he chose New Zealand because of its location, to show that even the most remote parts of the world were not free of "mass immigration."

New Zealand is generally considered to be a welcoming country for immigrants and refugees. Last year, the prime minister announced the country would boost its annual refugee quota from 1,000 to 1,500 starting in 2020.

China announces plans to stabilise growth amid trade war with US

BEIJING, MAR 15 (PTI): China is facing "downward pressures", Premier Li Keqiang admitted Friday as he announced plans to boost market vitality with a new foreign investment law backed by tax cuts to stabilise growth in the world's second largest economy amid a bruising trade war with the US.

China is targeting a GDP growth range of 6 to 6.5 per cent this year, down from 6.6 per cent in 2018 - the slowest pace in 28 years.

"The Chinese economy is indeed encountering new downward pressure but we will not allow our economic growth slide below the reasonable range", Li told journalists at his annual press conference held at the end of the nearly fortnight long meeting of China's Parliament, the National People's Congress (NPC).

To meet the 6 to 6.5 per cent target, China will not resort to a "liquidity deluge" method of quantitative easing to stimulate the economy because it will bring serious side-effects, he said.

Li said China will further cut taxes and fees, simplify administrative regulatory procedures, facilitate market entry and foster new growth engines and fair competition environment to boost market vitality.

China has announced that it will cut a total of

two trillion yuan (USD 297.5 billion) in taxes and corporate pension payments this year to ease financial pressure on enterprises.

He also projected the new foreign investment law approved by the NPC in shortest possible time could be a main driver of growth in future.

China will introduce a series of regulations and documents in accordance with the foreign investment law to protect the legitimate rights and interests of foreign investors, he said skirting question that whether it was passed in a hurry to meet the US demands to a end trade war. The US and China, the world's two largest economies, are locked in a trade war since President Donald Trump imposed heavy tariffs on imported steel and aluminium items from China in March last year.

Trump imposed tariff hikes of up to 25 per cent on USD 250 billion of Chinese goods. In response, China, the world's second largest economy after the US, imposed tit-for-tat tariffs on USD 110 billion of American goods.

Top trade officials from America and China are holding talks to negotiate a comprehensive trade deal.

Trump is demanding China to reduce the USD 375 billion trade deficit, provide legal protection for intellectual property rights (IPR), technology

transfer and more access to American goods to Chinese markets.

This is an important thing China has to do in the next step to ensure that the law is implemented smoothly, Li said.

He underscored efforts to make the complaint mechanism open, transparent and effective. The NPC on Friday passed the foreign investment law at the closing meeting of its annual session. The law will become effective on January 1, 2020.

The law will offer better legal support to the protection and attraction of foreign investment, as well as regulate government behaviours, Li said.

Li also said China can use such tools as the reserve requirement ratio of banks and interest rates to support the economy. But he stopped short of providing a timetable for any reserve requirement ratio or interest rate cuts.

Li said the downward adjustment of the GDP growth target was made against the backdrop of a slowing global economy, as several international organisations have recently lowered their forecasts for global growth this year.

The 6.6-per cent GDP growth rate in 2018 did not come by easily, and the 6-6.5 per cent target is going to be a growth on top of a very large base figure, he said. "Keeping

steady growth of China's economy in itself is an important progress," he said.

He said China has over 100 million market entities, whose vitality will create incalculable energy once fully unleashed and reiterated that China will continue to cut taxes and fees, streamline administration, foster new drivers of growth, broaden market access, and level the playing field for all market players. Li said China has policy room reserved for dealing with possible uncertainties this year such as raising the deficit-to-GDP ratio, or using other instruments like required reserve ratios and interest rates.

"We are not going for monetary easing, but trying to provide effective support to the real economy," Li said. "China's economy will remain an important anchor of stability for the global economy," Li said.

In order to keep the country stable China will ensure the creation of more than 11 million new urban jobs this year, he said. "In actual practice, our goal is to generate the same amount of job opportunities as we did last year, which is over 13 million," Li said.

"This year, for the first time, we are elevating the status of employment-first policy to a macro policy together with the fiscal policy and monetary policy," Li said.

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BEHIND THE SCENES! Nicole Kidman looks ravishing in a red coat and boots while filming *The Undoing* in NYC.

'The Sopranos' prequel film to release in September 2020



LOS ANGELES, MAR 15 (PTI): The prequel film to hit HBO series "The Sopranos" has been officially given a release date.

The film, titled "Newark", will release in the theatres in the US on September 25, 2020, reported Variety.

It was earlier given the title "The Many Saints of Newark". The project is being directed by Alan Taylor from a script by show creator David Chase and Lawrence Konner.

The film, set against the backdrop of the Newark riots of the 1960s when Afri-

can-Americans and Italians clashed, will feature an ensemble cast of Alessandro Nivola, Vera Farmiga, Jon Bernthal, Billy Magnussen, Corey Stoll, and Ray Liotta.

Michael Gandolfini, the son of late "The Sopranos" star James Gandolfini, is playing the younger version of his father's famous character, Tony Soprano, in the film.

"The Sopranos", headlined by Gandolfini, was HBO's one of the most critically acclaimed shows. It ran for six seasons and won 21 Emmys.

ARIES: Daydream interruption alert! New information or opportunities may unfold that require 100 percent of your focus. Of course, with distractible Jupiter in your worldly and visionary ninth house smashed up with mental Mercury retrograde in your dreamy twelfth, it could easily to confuse so-called reality with fantasy.

TAURUS: In your quest for balance between being transparent and protecting secrets, you might veer too far to one side or the other today. A challenging clash between loose-lipped Mercury retrograde and #NoFilters Jupiter could make it hard to keep things under wraps. You know that confidences need to be carefully guarded, yet you may have a burning desire to share an irresistible piece of gossip or a questionable photo.

GEMINI: A percolating partnership could merit a closer look today. Even if things have been humming along beautifully, it's always smart to think ahead. How's your prognosis as a team? Supersizer Jupiter has been spurring things on, but a square

to analytical Mercury retrograde in your future-oriented tenth house raises some legit concerns.

CANCER: There are only so many hours in the day, Cancer. And today's clash between boundary-challenged Jupiter and methodical Mercury (who's currently retrograde) is a reminder that even YOU can't magically change that. This might not be a matter of time management; it may be more about managing your FOMO. Of course you want to do, see and experience it all! That's the beautiful thing about you—but by trying to be everywhere, you can't enjoy the present moment.

LEO: You may not be getting a clear read on someone under today's confusing star-map, so take that as a sign to proceed with extreme caution. Zealous Jupiter in your romance zone is squaring off against analytical Mercury (retrograde) in your intensely emotional eighth house. Are you letting your rational left brain override your more feelings-oriented right brain? Drop it down into your heart and react from there. That's your

superpower, Leo! That said, you COULD always come out and ask someone how they feel. Better than agonizing over an assumption that may be wildly off-base.

VIRGO: You hate to disappoint a friend in need—or to miss a happening after-work event. But some days, you just have to resist the pressure to come out and play. You may be feeling depleted, and if you don't get some "me time," like, now, you could totally crash (not to mention make yourself susceptible for those nasty winter bugs going around).

LIBRA: No need to lower the blinds if you want a little shade. Thanks to today's agitating Sun-Jupiter square, you'll be throwing some of it yourself. Under this magnifying transit, people's annoying "quirks" will really get under your skin. Breathe, Libra, breathe. Let this be your signal to deploy some immediate self-care. Book the 90-minute massage or spend the whole day at the spa.

SCORPIO: All the glitters may not be gold—but that won't stop you from pulling out your wallet. With a decadent Sun-Jupiter mashup overhead, you'd be wise to carry

a set amount of cash and leave your debit cards locked up at home. If you're trying to save up, don't meet friends for "window shopping." The odds of you heading home empty-handed are basically zero.

SAGITTARIUS: Familiarity can breed contempt today, as your ruler, Jupiter, in Sagittarius catches some shade from the moody Pisces Sun. Yesterday, it was all love with your soul squad and favorite relatives. Today, even their most endearing traits will grate on your nerves. At moments like this, your best course of action is to just take some space. Better than to lash out at them for an innocent "mistake" or, worse, for simply being in your space!

CAPRICORN: Peel off that power suit and kick off those pinchy stilettos. Your heart—and the rest of you—wants to hunker down in your home sweet home. Can you swing a remote workday or head home early? Grab that sheepskin throw and make yourself a pillow fort as your "office." No can do? Do everything in your power to make your cubicle feel cozier. Maybe it's time to invest in a French press for brewing up loose-leaf

tea or a pair of noise-canceling headphones for playing meditative music...and drowning out your coworker's ultra-annoying voice.

AQUARIUS: Tighten your grasp on your wallet, Aquarius, especially if you're part of any decadent Friday night celebrations. Things could spin out of control without much warning, as rounds of drinks escalate into the double digits or someone wants to dine at that \$\$\$\$ resto. Definitely don't be the one to reach for the (paycheck-sized) bill. You may wind up spending a bit more than you planned to, but you don't HAVE to break the bank. And if there's a part deux to the partying and you're already exhausted, don't be shy about calling it a night.

PISCES: Overwhelmed by work? If you can filter out the disruptions and concentrate on each task, you CAN pull this off, Pisces. Today, visionary Jupiter in your career corner is squaring off with distracted Mercury retrograde in your sign. The temptation to multitask is strong, but you are stronger! Focus on your goals and the reasons you set them in the first place. Keep your phone on silent and close all social media sites.

James Bond should always be played by a man: Bond Girl Eva Green

LOS ANGELES, MAR 15 (PTI): Former Bond Girl Eva Green is not in the favour of flipping the gender of 007 spy as she believes it would be wrong to ignore the history of the character, which has always been played by a man.

The "Casino Royale" star, considered one of the best Bond girls in the history of the franchise, says women should create their own action film legacy.

Daniel Craig is set to leave the franchise after the release of Cary Fukunaga's "Bond 25" in April 2020 and there is already a lot of speculation about his replacement with names such as Idris Elba and Richard Madden doing the rounds. Some actors and fans are in favour of giving a gender swap to the character as they believe it is time for a female actor to take on the role, created by Ian Fleming.

"I'm for women, but I really think James Bond should remain a man. It doesn't make sense for him to be a woman. Women can play different types of characters, be in action movies, and be superheroes, but James Bond should always be a man and not be

Jane Bond. There is history with the character that should continue. He should be played by a man," Green

the way Bond girls are perceived.

"I originally had reservations about being a Bond girl. I didn't want to be a



told Vanity Fair on the "Dumbo" red carpet.

Green is proud of the fact that her character Vesper Lynd brought about a change in

bimbo. The women are now perceived differently. They are intelligent and sassy and fascinating. I loved playing Vesper. She's the only one to get to Bond's heart and has a big impact on his life," she said. "Bond 25" will be Craig's fifth outing as 007 following "Casino Royale", "Quantum of Solace", "Skyfall" and "Spectre".

Kit Harington, Emma Stone to host SNL

LOS ANGELES, MAR 14 (PTI): "Game of Thrones" star Kit Harington will debut as the host of "Saturday Night Live" in the April 6 episode, NBC announced.

According to EW, the actor will be joined by Sara Bareilles, who will serve as musical guest.

Harington's hosting

duties come ahead of the much anticipated April 14 premiere of the HBO fantasy drama's final season.

"The Favourite" star Emma Stone will emcee the April 13th episode, with popular South Korean boy band BTS attached to perform, which will be their first appear-

ance on the show.

This will be Stone's fourth stint at the "SNL".

The late-night stand-up show had previously announced that "Killing Eve" star Sandra Oh is set to host the March 30 episode, to be joined by Australian music group Tame Impala.

Parineeti Chopra replaces Shraddha Kapoor in Saina Nehwal biopic



MUMBAI, MAR 15 (PTI): Actor Shraddha Kapoor has exited the biopic of ace badminton player Saina Nehwal and Parineeti Chopra has been announced as her replacement.

The biopic, titled "Saina", will be directed by Amol Gupte, who has helmed movies such as "Stanley Ka Dabba" and "Hawa Hawaai". The film went on floors in September last year.

Shraddha departed the project due to the scheduling issues as the actor is filming back-to-back films.

"We want to wrap up Saina by this year-end for an early 2020 release, so going ahead with the project is a decision taken by mutual consent. We are glad Parineeti has come on board for the film. Saina has made every Indian

proud and we can't wait to take her story to the world in the year of the Olympics," T-Series top boss, Bhushan Kumar, said in a statement.

Parineeti, who has now boarded the project, said she always wanted to work in a sports biopic.

"It's a part of my personality as an actor that I have never explored, and I am so happy that I get to portray a strong and powerful girl like Saina. She has put our country on the world map and I am excited to put in all the training and hardwork that comes with learning the game of Badminton and portraying Saina on screen," the actor said.

Parineeti, who is currently awaiting the release of "Kesari", will soon start the prep work for the film.

Katy Perry is 'open' to collaborating with Taylor Swift



Los Angeles, Mar 15 (PTI): Singer Katy Perry says she is "open" to work with Taylor Swift for a new track.

In an interview with Entertainment Tonight on the sidelines of iHeartRadio Music Awards, the 34-year-old singer was asked whether she would be open to collaborating with Swift. The two were frenemies for a long time.

To this, Perry replied, "I'm open! Open, open, open!"

Last year, they ended their feud after the "Bon Appetite" hitmaker sent a surprise package to Swift requesting for her forgiveness.

Over the years, the two singers have shared a love-hate relationship.

In 2017, Perry had said she is ready to move on from the fight and only wished best for her.

Swift was accused by Perry, who claimed the former had sabotaged her tour by stealing her backing dancers.

Earlier, Swift wrote the song "Bad Blood" about their fight and Perry seemed to hit back with her single "Swish Swish".