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SummitTIMES

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Independent verification found no fake Col's; Govt to include holographic security features in COIs and Residential Certs

**SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 08 DEC:**

The Commission instituted by the State Government to inquire into allegations of "doubtful" and "fake" Certificates of Identification having been issued in Sikkim has found that no fake COIs have been issued.

The Commission headed by Justice Malay Sengupta, a retired judge of the High Court of Sikkim, it may be recalled, was constituted on the orders of the High Court that appointment of an independent agency chaired by a retired High Court judge be considered by the State Government for the purpose of verification of Sikkim Subject Certificates and Certificates of Identification.

This was in connection with the petition filed by Biraj Adhikari and Delay Namgyal Barfungpa demanding that air be cleared on suspicions that such fake documents were in circulation and that better security features be added to the certificates to avoid forgery.

The High Court, in its order of 24 August, 2017, had given time to the State Government to consider appointing such a commission and one was instituted on 04 Sept, 2017.

The Commission was tasked to inquire into allegations that fake

COIs had been issued and recommend issuance and digitisation of COIs in smart-card format.

A year later, on 01 Sept, 2018, the Commission completed its inquiry and submitted its report to the State Government.

The Commission reported that "of the 33,388 listed persons it is found that the list includes a number of unverified cases most of which may include genuine cases but on account of lack of verification by the person[s] concerned have been categorized as 'reported false cases'."

With stress, the Commission's report adds: "The Commission thus concludes that in view of the fact that out of 8,378 cases verified by the District Collectors so far, none were reported to be 'fake' as alleged."

That said, the Commission observed that the issuance of Col's "must be further strengthened" and recommended that Col's be issued in smart-card format since the records have now been fully computerized.

Since hard copies also need to be issued, the Commission recommended that high security paper be used instead of

the plain paper option in practise.

On 05 November, 2019, the petitioners submitted in Court that since the recommendations have been accepted by the State Government, it should now implement the recommendations and the State Government informed the Court on 03 December that the Land Revenue Department has been in communication with Holostik India Ltd for supply of High Security Holographic Certificate papers to be used for issuance of Col's.

A final decision on this was kept pending the High Court's final orders on the matter. Meanwhile, the process of digitising the issuance and record of Col's was already underway.

In the final hearing of the case on 03 December, the High Court bench of Justice Meenakshi Madan Rai and Justice Bhaskar Raj Pradhan was assured by the Advocate General that "such steps will be taken and all steps pertaining to the process of High Security Holographic papers and digitization will be in accordance with the prevailing laws of Sikkim."

With these assurances on record, nothing was left to be adjudicated in the case and the writ petition was disposed of by the High Court.

Sikkim's 9-member iCompete Natural team lifts 18 trophies at intl event



**SAGAR CHHETRI
GANGTOK, 08 DEC:**

A nine-member team of iCompete Natural [ICN], Sikkim, has returned with an impressive haul of 18 trophies from the recently-held ICN Goa Supershow. INC North-East president, Sikkim's Legden Dorjee Bhutia was adjudged Champion Coach at the event held from 30 Nov to 02 Dec at Cavelossim, Goa.

The Sikkim squad was accompanied by Mr Bhutia as team coach and Bishal Pratap Pradhan as team manager.

The international natural physique, figure bikini and fitness model event received the participation of 399 athletes from different parts of the country and also from Iran, Italy, Sri Lanka

and other countries.

Akinori Megi bagged second prize in men's physique in 30-plus category and fourth place in men's open physique, while Kalsang Bhutia came third in bodybuilding 40 plus and again third prize in men's physique 40 plus; Tempo Yargay Bhutia stood fifth in men fitness, Arab Dorjee Bhutia 5th in men's physique 40 plus, Rupesh came fifth in men's fitness, third in men's street model open and Nima Lama came fourth in men's street model.

Likewise, Lamin Theeng won second prizes in Miss Classic Figure International, Miss Figure and Miss Fitness; Amrita Limboo won a participation medal in bikini novice and stood fifth place in Miss Fitness Open and

Rebecca Chettri won the first prize in Miss Bikini Open category, third prize in Miss Classic Figure International and second prize each in Miss Figure and Miss Bikini Novice and third prize in Bikini First Time.

Addressing a press conference here today, Mr Bhutia informed that the Supershow was a totally natural fitness modeling and bodybuilding event and Sikkim participants impressed everyone with their outstanding performance.

He stated that it was proud and historic moment for the state that a nine-member ICN Sikkim team returned with 18 trophies and four participation medals in their debut appearance.

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HSP wants Sikkim MPs to speak more forcefully against CAB

**SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 08 DEC:**

Has urged Sikkim Krantikari Morcha's Lok Sabha MP Indra Hang Subba and Sikkim Democratic Front's Rajya Sabha MP, Hissey Lachungpa, to raise their voices more strongly against the Citizenship [Amendment] Bill in the Parliament.

The party asserted that MPs from Sikkim should convince the Union Government to exempt Sikkim from the purview of CAB to secure and protect the distinct identity of Sikkim as enshrined under Article 371F of the Constitution of India.

Addressing a press conference here today, HSP spokesperson, Sonam Gyatso Sherpa, while welcoming the decision of Chief Minister PS Tamang [Gola] and the Lok Sabha MP to stand against CAB, which



HSP maintains is an anti-Sikkimese Bill, expressed that this effort was "too little, too late" given that the Bill has already been passed by the Union Cabinet.

"Surprisingly, SKM chose to remain silent throughout this process," he said.

"Sikkim neither made any representation nor opened any

communication with the Union Government until the controversial Bill was passed by the Union Cabinet," he pointed out.

He added that timely protests by several North-Eastern states had forced the Centre to revisit the Bill and exclude States with Inner Line Permit and Sixth Schedule areas from

the purview of CAB, but Sikkim, because it had remained silent thus far, received no such consideration.

Mr Sherpa added that even though SKM has opposed CAB in its election 2019 manifesto, has not taken any strong steps on the matter thus far.

He also demanded that the Sikkim unit of Bharatiya Janata Party

also immediately clear its stand on CAB and its implementation in the State.

He added that HSP has also taken serious note of the implementation of Motor Vehicles Amendment Act to Sikkim and said that the implementation was done on a rushed manner without consulting any stakeholders.

"The Act is one more violation of the Old Laws protected under Article 371F and HSP wants the concerned department to revisit its decision on the implementation of Motor Vehicles (Amendment) Act in Sikkim," he said.

Another spokesperson, Neeraj Adhikari, in turn urged the people and organizations in the State to come out and register their protest against CAB and "save the future generations of Sikkim."

43 killed in massive blaze in north Delhi building

NEW DELHI, DEC 8 (PTI): In the worst fire accident since the 1997 Uphaar Cinema tragedy in the national capital, 43 people died when a massive blaze ripped through a four-storey building housing illegal manufacturing units in north Delhi's congested Anaj Mandi area on Sunday.

Police and fire department officials said most of the fatalities occurred due to suffocation as many people were sleeping when the fire started around 5 am on the second floor of the building that did not have fire safety clearance.

Those awakened by the fire, suspected by officials to have been triggered by a short-circuit due to "internal system" trouble, had to struggle to escape as the exit routes were partially blocked and several windows were found sealed.

The fire was first reported at 5:22am after which 30 fire tenders were rushed, officials said.

Nearly 150 firefighters worked to pull out 63

people from the building. While 43 labourers died, many others were injured including two fire department personnel, they said.

The injured included a minor. However, it was not confirmed whether the injured worked in the units but most of the labourers were migrants.

The narrow lanes of Anaj Mandi area made rescue operations difficult for firefighters, who had to cut window-grills to get access to the building. A preliminary probe suggested that a short-circuit triggered the blaze. Power discom BYPL said the fire began due to "internal system" trouble.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi described the fire incident as "extremely horrific" and Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal said it was "very, very tragic".

Modi and Kejriwal also announced an ex-gratia of Rs 2 lakh and Rs 10 lakh each for the next of kin of those who lost their lives.

Kejriwal also an-



nounced Rs 1 lakh for the injured and said his government will bear the cost of their treatment.

The prime minister approved Rs 50,000 each for those seriously injured. The amount will be paid from the Prime Minister National Relief Fund, the PMO said in a tweet.

The Delhi government has ordered a probe into the incident and sought a detailed report within seven days. North Delhi Mayor Avtar Singh said he has asked the municipal

commissioner to form a team which will visit the site and probe the exact cause of the fire.

Police said they have registered a case against the property owner.

Chaotic scenes were witnessed at the site, clogged with bystanders and politicians arriving in convoys. Firemen made their way through narrow lanes to rescue those trapped inside the blackened building and carried many unconscious labourers on their backs.

As the building lacked

proper ventilation, most of the people died due to asphyxia.

Aditya Pratap Singh, deputy commander, NDRF said they detected carbon monoxide (CO) in the building. "The entire third and fourth floor was engulfed with smoke. The content of CO was more."

He said when the team started the operation, it found some windows sealed.

At the hospitals where the dead and injured were taken LNJP Hospital and Lady

Delhi fireman saves 11 people, hailed as hero

NEW DELHI, DEC 8 (PTI): Rajesh Shukla was hailed as a hero on Sunday after the firefighter pulled 11 people out of a multi-storey building in north Delhi amid a blaze on Sunday.

Racing past smoke-filled corridors, the Delhi Fire Service personnel said he entered the building at least 12 times before his breathing apparatus exhausted. During the operation, he suffered injuries to his knee-cap and had a severe headache owing to inhalation of smoke.

He is now recuperating at LNJP Hospital.

Shukla told PTI that he has seen massive fires during his service but the

Anaj Mandi incident was one of the deadliest.

"I have handled close to 7,000 fire rescue calls and was a part of the rescue operation during the Hotel Arpit Palace Fire in Karol Bagh and the recent AIIMS hospital fire. This was one of the major fires in terms of the casualties," he told PTI.

Union Health Minister Harsh Vardhan and Delhi Home Minister Satyendar Jain met Shukla and lauded his bravery.

"Kudos to young, dynamic firefighter Mr Rajesh Shukla whose brave action saved 11 lives in the fire that engulfed Anaj Mandi factory today. Rajesh ji

himself suffered burns & injuries. Many thanks also to Fire Deptt personnel who rescued injured ppl carrying them on their backs," Vardhan posted on Twitter.

"Fireman Rajesh Shukla is a real hero. He was the first fireman to entered the fire spot and he saved around 11 lives. He did his job till the end despite of his bone injuries. Salute to this brave hero (sic)," Jain tweeted.

Forty-three people died and many were injured in the fire in the four-storey building, that housed illegal manufacturing units, on Sunday. Most of them were labourers.

Chief Justice visits West Sikkim



GYALSHING, 08 DEC [IPR]: Chief Justice of the High Court Sikkim, Justice Arup Kumar Goswami, visited the District & Sessions Court here on Saturday.

The Chief Justice was accompanied by Registrar General, High Court of Sikkim, Karma Wangchuk Bhutia, and was received by District and Session

Judge (West), KC Barphungpa, Civil Judge-cum-Judicial Magistrate (West), Zamyang Choden Bhutia, and ASP [West] PVG Satish along with other officials and dignitaries.

The CJ visited the District & Sessions Court and inspected the ongoing construction of the Special Court, the Alternative

Dispute Redressal Forum (ADR) Building and the District & Sessions Court buildings. He also interacted with the officials and staff.

Here on a two-day visit, the Chief Justice was scheduled to also visit the Court of Civil Judge-cum-Judicial Magistrate, Soreng Sub-division, West Sikkim.

Third preparatory meet held for Jorethang Maghey Mela

JORETHANG, 08 DEC [IPR]: The third preparatory meeting for the state-level Jorethang Maghey Mela 2020 was held at the conference hall here at Green Park today.

Chaired by SDM [Jorethang], RB Bhandari, who is also the president of Jorethang Maghey Mela Celebration Committee 2020, the meeting was attended of committee general secretary Rajani Pega, SDPO (Jorethang) SK Shrestha, Director SIRD Bishal Mukhia, SHO Jorethang Mahendra Pradhan alongside nodal officers, police and traffic personnel and stakeholders of Jorethang Maghe Sankranti Mela.

Addressing the meeting, Mr Bhandari updated the gathering about previous meet-



ings and called for collective partaking and responsibility by the concerned officials, committee and sub-committee members to uphold the grandeur and tradition that characterizes Jorethang Maghe Sankranti Mela.

He spoke at length about how public and departmental participation

with mutual assistance from each other entails the regional as well as international success of Maghey Mela.

He also directed officials to identify and mobilise stakeholders to extend more support to the event.

Allocating roles and responsibilities to respective individuals and

line departments, he emphasised active participation from each one to ensure success of the festival.

He also issued directives regarding law & order, traffic arrangement, sanitation, water and uninterrupted electricity supply to the officials concerned.

Further, the SDM

stressed the need to focus on key aspects of the mela such as traditional stalls, bazaar beautification, cultural programs, Saras Mela, adventure sports, expo exhibition, art gallery, food court, mini fair, selfie booths and talent hunt while also emphasizing the urgency to expedite the process of various issues which would accelerate the developmental momentum of Mela activities.

Discussions on the responsibilities allocated to each department and various administrative and management wings were also held at the meeting.

Other aspects that would back the Maghe Mela 2020 to be a successful cultural event were also deliberated upon at length.

CJ inspects Jorethang Court



JORETHANG, 08 DEC [IPR]: Chief Justice, High Court of Sikkim, Justice Arup Kumar Goswami, visited the Court of the Civil Judge-cum-Judicial Magistrate at Jorethang sub-division today.

The Chief Justice was accompanied by SDM [Jorethang] RB Bhandari,

Registrar General High Court of Sikkim Karma Wangchuk Bhutia and Civil Judge cum Judicial Magistrate [Jorethang], Urvashi Pradhan, along with other officials and dignitaries.

The CJ inspected the Court of the Civ-

il Judge-cum-Judicial Magistrate and also interacted with the officials and staff present. He also held a brief interaction with the members of the Bar from South District.

The Chief Justice was on a two-day tour of West and South Districts.

Budget-making team of Finance Ministry short of two key officials

NEW DELHI, DEC 8 (PTI): The budget-making team of the Finance Ministry is short of two key officials, including a full-time expenditure secretary, while the preparation for the second budget of Modi 2.0 government has shifted into top gear.

The budget for 2020-21 to be presented on February 1 is keenly awaited for the expected second wave of structural reforms for pulling out the economy from its over six-year low growth of 4.5 per cent.

In addition to expenditure secretary, the position of joint secretary (Budget), one of the key officials in the entire Budget-making process, is also vacant for almost three months.

The post of Expenditure Secretary fell vacant after the appointment of G C Murmu as the first lieutenant governor of the newly-created Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir. Murmu relinquished the post of Expenditure Secretary on October 29 and subsequently, the additional charge of the Department of Expenditure was given to Atanu Chakraborty.

Chakraborty, a 1985-batch IAS officer of the Gujarat cadre, is Sec-

retary Economic Affairs in the Finance Ministry.

After over one year stint in the Department of Investment and Public Asset Management (DIPAM), Chakraborty was appointed Economic Affairs Secretary in July this year in a major bureaucratic reshuffle.

The finance ministry kick-started the exercise to prepare the annual budget for 2020-21 from October 14 with pre-Budget/RE (Revised Estimate) meetings. The series of meetings with different departments and ministries concluded last month.

The Budget Estimates for 2020-21 are provisionally finalised after the Expenditure Secretary completes discussions with other secretaries and financial advisers.

The second budget of Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman is considered to be crucial as it will come in against the backdrop of a slowdown in the economy.

The Reserve Bank in its monetary policy last week downgraded the growth forecast for 2019-20 to 5 per cent from the earlier projection of 6.1 per cent.

To beat the slowdown, the Finance Minister has said reforms to boost the economy would continue and also hinted at tweaking personal income tax rates in the upcoming Budget.

The government is examining the direct tax code (DTC) report concerning Personal Income Tax. It is considering the rationalisation of the personal income tax rate for boosting consumption.

Following the reduction in corporate tax in September, there has been a growing demand for a slash in the personal income tax to buttress consumption.

In the biggest reduction in 28 years, the government in September slashed corporate tax rates up to 10 percentage points as it looked to pull the economy out of a six-year low growth with a Rs 1.45 lakh crore tax break.

Base corporate tax for existing companies has been reduced to 22 per cent from 30 per cent, and to 15 per cent from 25 per cent for new manufacturing firms incorporated after October 1, 2019, and starting operations before March 31, 2023.

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BJP, Cong try to corner AAP govt for Anaj Mandi fire

NEW DELHI, DEC 8 (PTI): Congress and BJP leaders on Sunday blamed the Arvind Kejriwal government for the fire accident at Anaj Mandi here which claimed 43 lives.

Delhi BJP president Manoj Tiwari, who visited the spot along with Union Housing and Urban Affairs minister Hardeep Puri, said

electricity wires were dangling in the area but no action was taken by government agencies despite repeated complaints.

The Congress too blamed the AAP government and the BJP-led municipal corporations for the incident.

"Kejriwal government is responsible for

this. The MCDs come under the BJP. They are also equally responsible for it," Delhi Pradesh Congress Committee President Shubhash Chopra said.

Tiwari announced an ex gratia of Rs 5 lakh to the families of each victim and Rs 25,000 for treatment to the injured, on behalf of the BJP.

Awareness prog on Buckwheat seed multiplication



SUMMIT REPORT

RANGPO, 08 DEC:

A daylong programme on the opening of a farm school for organic seed multiplication of buckwheat was organised

today on campus by ATMA [West Sikkim], Gyalshing block.

29 farmers from Middle Gyalshing were in attendance. Mani Kumar Chettri has been as

selected as farm school teacher for 2019-20 and Lower Gyalshing ward panchayat, Rajan Karki, was present a chief guest.

Sikkim Pentecostal Churches Council meets



SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 08 DEC:

Sikkim Pentecostal Churches Council [SPCC] convened an executive committee meeting at Bethsaida Christian Church at Sawney Singtam in East Sikkim on Saturday.

The meeting started with an invocation prayer by Rev Eliya Pratap Rai followed by welcome speech by SPCS

secretary Pastor Basant Gazmer.

In his address, the Council president, Rev Deo Simile Gurung, urged members of the executive committee to work effectively on the objectives of the council and urged them to always work for the needy churches in different matters.

He informed that there were more than 700 Pentecostal Church-

es in the State and all churches need to stay united and stressed that the Council will always stand with the Pentecostal Churches of Sikkim.

Rev Gurung informed that SPCC was preparing for the Pentecostal Churches Summit 2020 in which the council will also felicitate the founder of SPCC and senior pastors of Pentecostal Churches.

Rape, POCSO case probes should be completed in 2 months: Prasad to write to CMs, CJs

PATNA, DEC 8 (PTI):

Union minister Ravi Shankar Prasad on Sunday said he would write to chief ministers and high court chief justices of all the states to complete investigation into cases of rape and those registered under the POCSO Act in two months.

Trial of such cases should also be completed within six months,

Sikkim's 9-member iCompete...

"We have the potential to do well in the natural fitness modeling and bodybuilding platform and just need a little support and encouragement to do better in the future," he expressed.

Mr Bhutia informed that the ICN Sikkim chapter was formed in the year 2016 and feels proud to have produced international-level athletes within three years.

"We have placed a proposal to the international federation to allow Sikkim to host an international show next year to further promote natural fitness modeling and bodybuilding in the state," he said.

Team manager Mr Pradhan, in turn added that this outstanding performance was the result of the team's discipline, hard work and dedication. He also thanked the Chief Minister and other individuals for their support in sending teams to such competitions.

He also thanked the CM for giving priority to sports in the State.

Likewise, Akinore Megi and Rebecca Chettri expressed their happiness on winning prizes on their debut in the international event.

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SKM thanksgiving event for Lachen-Mangan

SUMMIT REPORT

MANGAN, 08 DEC:

Sikkim Krantikari Morcha organized a victory celebration and thanksgiving event for the constituency here at the Helipad area today for the electoral victory secured by the party in the Assembly elections held in April 2019.

The area MLA [Lachen-Mangan], Minister Samdup Lepcha, was presented as the chief guest and felicitated by the party supporters with a letter of appreciation.

In his address, he assured the people that all

their genuine demands placed by public will be followed up on and expedited.

He also commented the social ills were noticeably on the rise in Sikkim and invited suggestions from panchayat members, civil society and intellectuals on how best to address this challenge.

Former chairperson, NT Lepcha, also addressed the event and praised the SKM Government for its achievements thus far and urged all to lend support to the government.

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ANTHYESTHI KRIYA

13th days Anthyesthi Kriya of our beloved mother Late Mrs. Pushpa Darnal of Gangtok (Deorali) who left for her heavenly soul on 27th November, 2019 falls on 09th December, 2019.

Venue - Lexicon More Pathar Ghatta Road, Ashiyana apartment, Matigara near Royal Academy school.

Contact No -

Mrs. Karuna Rai Daughter

Mr. Lakshan Darnal (Elder Son) 9635831527

Mr. Mahesh Darnal (Younger Son) 9775438955

And all family members



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

For details contact: 9083826462

FLAT FOR RENT/LEASE

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

For more details: 9083826462 /9832556698

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General land 30X40 (3 Plots) available for sale at Tadong 6th Mile next to Harka Maya College.

Flat Land no cutting required. Price 30 Lakhs (negotiable).

Contact: 9800201335

LAND FOR SALE

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

ISKCON organizes Gita Jayanti Festival



SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 08 DEC: International Society for Krishna Consciousness [ISKCON], Gangtpk, organized a Gita Jayanti Festival here at Mannan Bhawan on Sunday to mark Moksada Ekadasi.

Students participated in a range of activities like drama, Bhagavad Gita recitals, Quiz competition based on the Bhagavad Gita, Debate competition on the Relevance of Bhagavad Gita in Mod-

ern Era etc, a press release informs. Earlier, the programme had started with an Invocation Mantra by ISKCON-Gangtok Manager Madhava Kanata Das and had Sikkim State

University Vice Chancellor, Dr Gopal K Nirola, as chief guest. Free copies of Bhagavad Gita were distributed to all participants as well as to all the people assembled in the audience followed by lunch.

Brahma Kumaris proceed on Holistic Rural Awakening Program



SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 08 DEC: The Holistic Rural Awakening Program of Brahma Kumaris, Sikkim, was flagged off by RDD Minister Sonam Lama from Shanti Kund here at Development Area on Sunday. Brahma Kumari, Gangtok centre in-

charge, Sonam Didi, informs that the drive will continue till April next year and cover 25 places with awareness programmes. She added that free camps for De-Addiction, Youth Empowerment, Women's Empowerment, Yoga, Yogic farming, Cleanliness and Health Camps will be

held as part of the Holistic Rural Awakening Program. The flag-off programme was also attended by Forest Minister, Karma Loday Bhutia. After the flag-off, the Brahma Kumari motorcade moved towards Ranka. In his address, the RDD Minister wel-

comed the program convinced that it will help create awareness against suicides, substance abuse, addiction and other social evils to the grassroots level. He also appreciated the efforts of the Brahma Kumaris in taking the right message on such serious issues to the society.

Special session addresses addiction and recovery

SUMMIT REPORT
SINGTAM, 07 NOV:

Addressing a special programme here today, Addiction Specialist at the District Hospital, Dr Satish Rasaily, while speaking to recovering addicts, stressed, "It's your life and it matters." The program was attended by people still grappling with addiction, recovering addicts and some who have been released from detoxification centres. During the session, patients shared their experiences and their journey towards recovery. They unanimously flagged peer pressure as being the primary reason leading to addiction.

Constitution has let us remain united despite several upheavals: Madras HC CJ

PUDUCHERRY DEC 8 (PTI): Chief Justice of Madras High Court Justice Dr A P Sahi on Sunday said in spite of several diversities, regional differences and social and political upheavals India has proved to the world that its constitution has allowed the people to remain united. In his address at the celebration of 70th Law Day (Constitution Day) organised by Puducherry Bar Association, the Chief Justice said, "our Constitution is the longest writ-

ten Constitution and has the largest amendments. However it is a living entity because it is life itself and encompasses every aspect of human life." Justice Sahi, who also felicitated senior lawyers on the occasion said, "the Constitution has seen its evolution, application and fall outs during the last seventy years since it was framed." Noting that the power of pen was greater, the Chief Justice said this power should however be used very carefully.

"You have heard a lot about instant, instantaneous, quick justice and justice at door steps. But remember whatever is legal that is only just," he told the gathering of lawyers. Justice Sahi said the founding fathers of the Constitution took care of doctrine of separation of powers by placing judiciary at a level that was far beyond the legislature and Executive and by placing judiciary at a level like a bastion that no one is able to pene-

trate. Judge of the Madras High Court Justice R Sureshkumar (who is the portfolio Judge for Puducherry) and Principal District Judge of Puducherry P Dhanabal were among those who spoke. Chief Minister V Narayanasamy who was scheduled to preside could not be present at the celebration as he is recuperating after recent knee replacement surgery at a private hospital in Chennai.

India in growth recession; extreme centralisation of power in PMO not good: Rajan

New Delhi, Dec 8 (PTI): Former Reserve Bank of India (RBI) governor Raghuram Rajan said India is in the midst of a "growth recession" with signs of deep malaise in the Indian economy that is being run through extreme centralisation of power in Prime Minister's Office and powerless ministers. Penning down his recommendations to help the ailing Indian economy out of the ongoing slowdown in the India Today magazine, he called for reforms to liberalise capital, land and labour markets, and spur investment as well as growth. He also urged India to join free trade agreements judiciously in order to boost competition and improve domestic efficiency. "To understand what has gone wrong, we need to start first with the centralised nature of the current government. Not just decision-making but also ideas and plans emanate from a small set of personalities around the Prime Minister and in the Prime Minister's Office (PMO). "That works well for the party's political and social agenda, which is well laid out, and where

all these individuals have domain expertise. It works less well for economic reforms, where there is less of a coherent articulated agenda at the top, and less domain knowledge of how the economy works at the national rather than state level," Rajan wrote. Stating that previous governments may have been untidy coalitions but they consistently took path of the further economic liberalisation, he said, "extreme centralisation, coupled with the absence of empowered ministers and the lack of a coherent guiding vision, ensures that reform efforts pick up steam only when the PMO focuses on them, and lose impetus when its attention switches to other pressing issues". "The Modi government came to power emphasising 'minimum government, maximum governance'. This slogan is often misunderstood. What was meant was that government would do things more efficiently, not that people and the private sector would be freed to do more. While the government continues the creditable drive to

automation -- direct benefit transfer to recipients is an important achievement -- the role of the government in many spheres has expanded, not shrunk," he said. Rajan said the starting point to address the economic slowdown will be for the Modi government to acknowledge the problem. "The starting point has to be to recognise the magnitude of the problem, to not brand every internal or external critic as politically-motivated, and to stop believing that the problem is temporary and that suppressing bad news and inconvenient surveys will make it go away," he said. "India is in the midst of a growth recession, with significant distress in rural areas." India's economic growth slowed to a 6-year low of 4.5 per cent in the July-September quarter. With inflation rising, fears of stagflation -- a fall in aggregate demand accompanied by rising inflation -- have resurfaced. He said construction, real estate and infrastructure sectors are in "deep trouble" and so are lenders to like the non-bank finance

companies. The crisis among shadow lenders and a build-up of bad loans at banks have curbed lending in the economy. Seeking asset quality review of the non-bank finance companies, he said corporate and household debt is rising, and there is deep distress in parts of the financial sector. Unemployment, especially amongst youth, seems to be growing, as is the accompanying risk of youth unrest. "Domestic businesses have not been investing either, and the stagnation in investment is the strongest sign that something is deeply wrong," he said. Rajan called for reforms in land acquisition, labour laws, stable tax and regulatory regime, fast track bankruptcy resolution of developers in default, proper pricing of electricity, preserving competition in telecom sector and giving farmers access to inputs and finance. Calling for not selling already dominant family enterprises to avoid concentration of power, he also wanted decentralisation of power by empowering ministers

and engaging states, beginning with amending the terms of reference of the 15th Finance Commission by not curtailing states' share of tax revenue. Rajan said the government should desist from cutting personal income tax rates for the middle-class for now and should use its scarce fiscal resources to support the rural poor through schemes such as the MGNREGA. The repeated government allusions to a USD 5-trillion-economy by 2024, which would necessitate steady real growth of at least 8-9 per cent per year starting now, seem increasingly unrealistic, he added. "Furthermore, even if some of the problems are legacies, the government, after five-and-a-half years in power, needs to resolve them. A massive new reform thrust is needed, accompanied by a change in how the administration governs," he said. Rajan said the Modi government has shown "surprising timidity" when it comes to unfinished reforms on the business environment, land acquisition, labour and the role of the public sector.

BEFORE THE LEARNED OATH COMMISSIONER, EAST SIKKIM AT GANGTOK
AFFIDAVIT

I, Ms ReenaTiwari, D/o Tulsi Ram Tiwari, aged about 24 years, by Faith Hindu, resident of Lower Aho near Barpipal Dara, P.O Aho& PS Pakyong, East Sikkim do hereby solemnly affirm and declare on oath as follows:
1. That I am a legitimate born daughter of Shri Tulsi Ram Tiwari of above mentioned place.
2. That my Mother's actual and correct name and title is wrote and spelt as Purna Maya Tiwari which is correctly recorded in my Birth Certificate Reg. No. 276/2010 dated 26/02/2010 Purna Maya Tiwari.
3. That however in my Senior Secondary School Certificate Examination, 2013 CBSE, bearing Sl. No. 0503525 wherein my Mother's name has been inadvertently recorded as PurnimaTiwari instead of Purna Maya Tiwari.
4. That this affidavit is sworn to declare on an oath that my Mother's actual and correct name and title is wrote and spelt as Purna Maya Tiwari. And the person names by "PurnimaTiwari" And "Purna Maya Tiwari" refers and denotes to same identical person i.e, my Mother.
5. That this Affidavit is made bonafide.

Deponent

BEFORE THE LEARNED OATH COMMISSIONER, EAST SIKKIM AT GANGTOK
AFFIDAVIT

I, Ms ReenaTiwari,D/o Tulshi Ram Tiwari, aged about 23 years, by Faith Hindu, resident of Lower Aho near Bar pipalDara, Under P.O Aho& PS Pakyong, East Sikkim do hereby solemnly affirm and declare on oath as follows:
1. That I am natural daughter of Shri Tulshi Ram Tiwari.
2. That my father's actual and correct name is Tulshi Ram Tiwari and same is recorded in my Aadhar Card bearing Aadhar Number 4773 2431 3426, issued by Unique Identification Authority of India and other relevant documents.
3. That however in my Birth Certificate, bearing Registration No. 276/2010, Date of Registration 26.02.2010, issued by the Department of Medicine & Services, Government of Manipur my father's name is in advertently recorded as Tulsiram Tiwari and in my Class XII pass Certificate bearing Serial No. SSCE/2013/0503525, issued by Central Board of Secondary my father's name is inadvertently recorded as Tulsi Ram Tiwari.
4. That this affidavit is made bonafide to declare on oath that the person known by the names of "Tulsi Ram Tiwari", Tulsiram Tiwari and Tulshi Ram Tiwari" denotes and refer to one and same identical person i.e my father.
5. That this affidavit is made bonafide.



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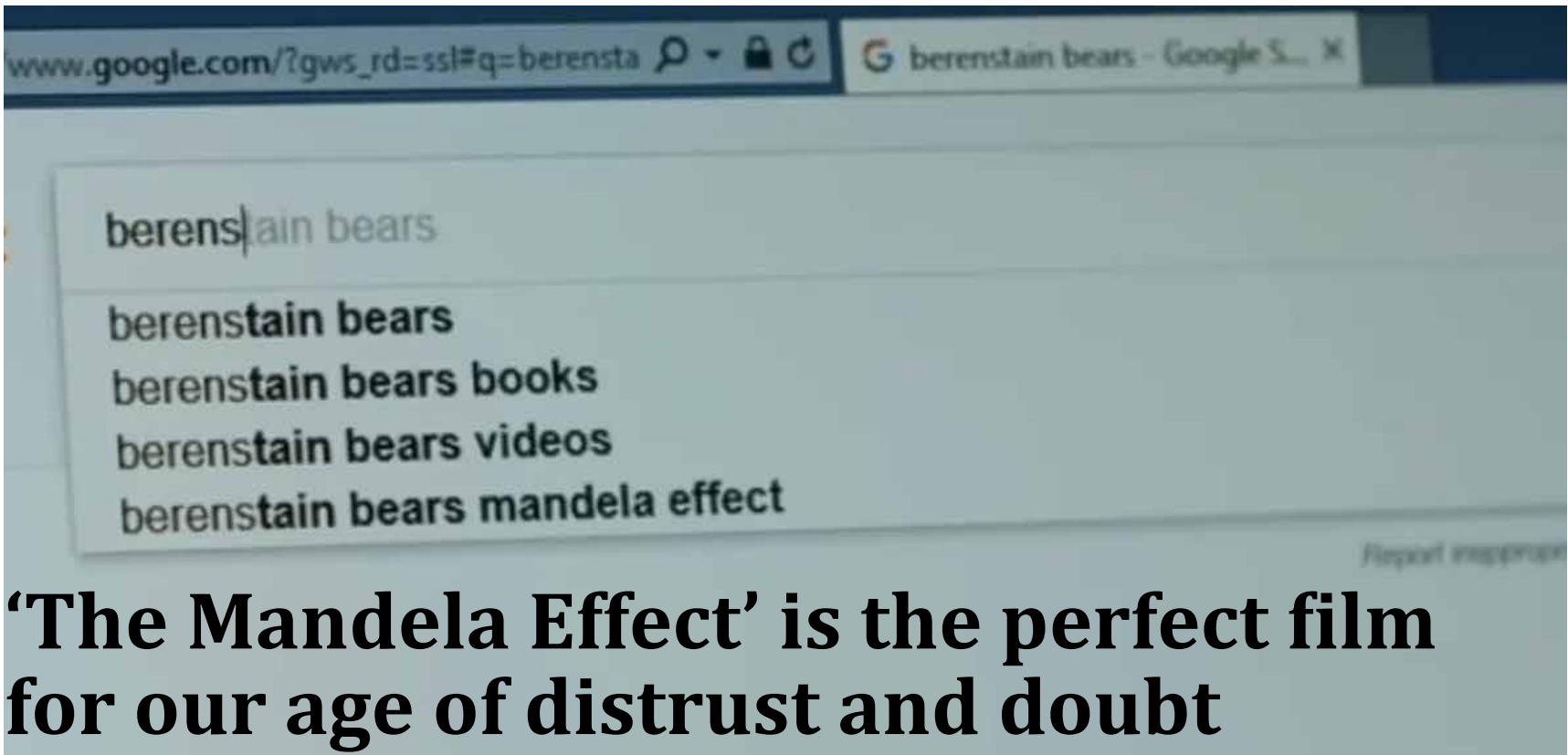
Hold Us Accountable, Please

News requires reader-engagement to stay the course

Journalists live a charmed life. Those outside the clique have an inflated perception of our effectiveness and readers in general believe media persons to be much better informed than they actually are. This fiction, when it circulates too widely and for too long, can start convincing those who wield the pen [hammer keyboards nowadays] that they are indispensable, and with that comes the arrogance which, at least in our country, has also caused substantial damage to politics and administration. There is a fine line dividing standing up for something and becoming overbearing, but it is an important marker still, and over-stepping it can compromise the best of intentions. If the news-media is indeed seen as the fourth estate/ pillar in a democracy, then hollowing it out weakens the overall structure, so, as much as it needs to be supported and backed, it also needs to be held accountable. A free press, after all, is a necessity to ensure real progress.

It goes without saying that the right environment needs to be created for press to be free, and this is provided by institutional and civil-society support systems. It is also obvious that such an environment is always under constant pollutions by agencies which are threatened if journalists are allowed genuine freedoms. But new-media cannot be shackled only by a repressive systems, it can also be compromised by unethical practitioners. It is always a bad idea to pass the correctional cane into the hands of the powers-that-be, because they will definitely misuse it, so, it becomes important for every person with a stake in world affairs or national developments and also Sikkim to start reading newspapers [because more readers will mean more power, more independence for newspapers] and more importantly, start sending in more letters. At present, most letter writers are inspired by personal reasons to write. What is required for a more accountable media is to have a wider response base. Not eulogies, please write in hate mail, letters that point out errors, letters that demand clarifications, letters that complain of half-truths and incomplete reportage, letters that mention that readers notice the personal agendas of editors, publishers and reporters being packaged as news. The media needs feedback to stay on course, battle somnolence, remain relevant, and most importantly, remain accurate. The willingness to admit mistakes is an important part of being accurate. This has become even more significant in the age of online archives, although it has always been the case that mistakes in old newspaper cuttings could be repeated and result in an inaccurate report being circulated again years later. Accuracy, it needs no further stressing, is essential if journalism is to inform the public debate. And if public wishes to be served well with accurate information, significant perspectives and intelligent opinions, they need to engage, maintain a pressure which inspire excellence. Do that often enough, and even if newspapers do not publish them, the editors will be forced to read them and soon, the guilt will lead to more responsible, more accountable journalism.

This, in case you have forgotten how media peddled outright lies in how the Kanhaiya episode at JNU was reported, or how a Hindi news channel dredged the bottom of the ignorance barrel to claim and explain the nano-microchips they believed to be embedded in the new currency notes, or the comatose disinterest with which the northeast continues to be reported about, of how the right questions are rarely asked, of how even when incidents are reported there is too much color added or removed or how when a certain national party wins state elections it becomes about local issues but when another national party wins in states it is credited to the charisma of The Leader... all of these should convince any consumer of “news” of how the sector requires more professionalism. In Sikkim’s case, the news-media admittedly needs to evolve beyond the incident-based reportage and press release/ press conference-driven political reporting that currently pack our pages, in colour. These happen because the readers remain aloof consumers. Much more and much better will arrive if readers became more engaged and started demanding better.



‘The Mandela Effect’ is the perfect film for our age of distrust and doubt

AARON FRENCH

THECONVERSATION.COM

You’ve likely used the internet to help you remember something, like a quote from a movie, only to discover the answer differed from what you had anticipated. Maybe you shrugged, telling yourself your memory was faulty, and went on with your life.

But what if you found thousands of people online had this same experience about this same movie quote – and misremembered it in exactly the same way?

Could all these people be wrong? What if their memories were actually correct, and someone – or something – had slightly altered the past?

That’s the theme of the new film “The Mandela Effect.” The movie’s title refers to a real internet phenomenon – some might call it a conspiracy theory – that has become increasingly popular over the past few years.

Those who believe in the Mandela Effect are convinced that small details from the past are being altered.

As a scholar of religion, I see the growing interest in the Mandela Effect as one offshoot of a larger trend in conspiratorial and alternative thinking. But it also signals a change in the way people are experiencing history and a general distrust of the collective historical narrative.

THE ORIGIN STORY

The phrase appears to have been coined around 2009 by a paranormal researcher named Fiona Broome.

On her website, Broome explained how, during a science fiction and fantasy convention, someone mentioned to her that former South African president Nelson Mandela was still alive. And yet Broome was convinced that he had died in prison in the 1990s. She even remembered watching his funeral on TV. Of course, Nelson Mandela was very much alive at the time.

During the convention, she probed others about commonly misremembered historical details. The phrase “the Mandela Effect” was born.

The Mandela Effect caught my attention in 2012 after I read a blog post about one of the better-known examples of it: the spelling of the popular children’s book series “The Berenstein Bears.”

The blogger, “Reece,” was convinced it had always been spelled “Berenstein.” To explain the change, the post floated the idea that our reality had been altered. According to Reece, in the past, the name actually had ended with “–ein.” But in this new reality, it had always been “–ain.” The blog concluded by proposing that we

are living in a parallel universe.

Before Reece wrote this post, the spellings were already being discussed on the online message board 4chan, and many others also remembered it as “Berenstein.” As the idea migrated to YouTube, it took off, with one video garnering almost 10 million views.

IF YOU BUILD IT...HE WILL COME?

Since then, hundreds of examples of the Mandela Effect have been documented. People are convinced that Darth Vader’s quote from “The Empire Strikes Back” – “No, I am your father” – was originally “Luke, I am your father.” Some claim that in “Field of Dreams,” the line “If you build it, he will come” was changed from “If you build it, they will come.” And they’re certain that the Queen’s famous quote from “Snow White” – “Magic mirror on the wall” – was, at one point, “Mirror, mirror on the wall.”

It isn’t just movie quotes. Proponents of the Mandela Effect are convinced that “Sex and the City” was once actually titled “Sex in the City.” They also claim logos and product names, from Ford to Froot Loops, have changed, and that Rich Uncle Pennybags from Monopoly once wore a monocle but now no longer does.

Among adherents, several explanations for this phenomenon have emerged.

Some theorize that the Large Hadron Collider at the European Organization for Nuclear Research has been distorting the fabric of reality with its experiments, launching us into an alternative dimension. Others have interpreted it through a religious lens; to them, it’s a sign that the end times are imminent.

Cognitive scientists tend to give a more straightforward, psychological explanation: they’re examples of “schema driven errors,” which refer to distortions in the way memories are packaged and then recalled.

Still, the forces behind the widespread interest in this phenomenon are not fully understood. Perhaps it’s due to the fact that, over the past several years, more people seem to have embraced alternative and conspiratorial ways of thinking.

The internet has oversaturated the world with information, and it’s also radically democratized content to an extent we haven’t seen since the invention of the printing press. For this reason, people are more likely to question conventional ways of thinking – as Goethe once wrote, “We know accurately only when we know little; with knowledge doubt increases.”

But this has also created an environment for con-

spiracy theories to thrive.

HISTORY’S METANARRATIVES ARE MALLEABLE

Not everything about the Mandela Effect can simply be discounted as conspiracies or false collective memories.

For example, some proponents of the Mandela Effect claim that historical events continue to crop up that no one has heard of, for example, the explosion on Black Tom Island, when German agents blew up a munitions facility in New York Harbor in 1916. They allege that details from famous historical events, such as the JFK assassination and the Tiananmen Square protests, have changed. There are even claims that new animals have emerged out of thin air, like the dumbo octopus and coconut crab.

In such cases, people are actually confronting something that historians have long grappled with – namely, an understanding that the historical narrative is, in part, a human construct, not an objective reality. There tend to be gaping holes and inconsistencies in the way history and science are formed, taught, learned, and understood.

The expression “history is written by the winners” highlights this issue, as does French writer Bernard Le Bovier de Fontenelle’s 1758 description of history as “une fable convenue,” or “a fable agreed upon.”

Accounts of the past – just like memories – are recreated, usually from a sparse number of available facts and often with politically or intellectually biased motives.

Most people typically don’t concern themselves with the question of whether history is real. Yet they go through life with assumptions narrated by the powers that be, whether it’s a cultural trope like the American dream or the idea that capitalism arose through a natural progression of mercantile economics, rationalization and human nature.

Such metanarratives are manifest; all contain an element of truth. But all are human creations, and because they have been created, they can be changed.

In the movie “The Mandela Effect,” the main character descends into a world where nothing can be trusted and reality is constantly in flux.

As we plunge toward an unknown future that feels increasingly unstable, it’s a fitting parable for our time. Questioning the shared understanding of reality and history might provoke instability. But it may also induce answers to questions we never thought to ask.

[the writer is PhD Candidate in the Study of Religion, University of California, Davis]

How toys became gendered – and why it’ll take more than a gender-neutral doll to change how boys perceive femininity

MEGAN K. MAAS

THECONVERSATION.COM

Parents who want to raise their children in a gender-nonconforming way have a new stocking stuffer this year: the gender-neutral doll.

Announced in September, Mattel’s new line of gender-neutral humanoid dolls don’t clearly identify as either a boy or a girl. The dolls come with a variety of wardrobe options and can be dressed in varying lengths of hair and clothing styles.

But can a doll – or the growing list of other gender-neutral toys – really change the way we think about gender?

Mattel says it’s responding to research that shows “kids don’t want their toys dictated by gender norms.” Given the results of a recent study reporting that 24% of U.S. adolescents have a nontraditional sexual orientation or gender identity, such as bisexual or nonbinary, the decision makes business sense.

As a developmental psychologist who researches gender and sexual socialization, I can tell you that it also makes scientific sense. Gender is an identity and is not based on someone’s biological sex. That’s why I believe it’s great news that some dolls will better reflect how children see themselves.

Unfortunately, a doll alone is not going to overturn decades of socialization that have led us to believe that boys wear blue, have short hair and play with trucks; whereas girls like pink, grow their hair long and play with dolls. More to the point, it’s not going to change how boys are taught that masculinity is good and femininity is something less – a view that my research shows is associated with sexual violence.

PINK GIRLS AND BLUE BOYS

The kinds of toys American children play with tend to adhere to a clear gender binary.

Toys marketed to boys tend to be more aggressive and involve action and excitement. Girl toys, on the other hand, are usually pink and passive, emphasizing beauty and nurturing.

It wasn’t always like this.

Around the turn of the 20th century, toys were rarely marketed to different genders. By the 1940s, manufacturers quickly caught on to the idea that wealthier families would buy an entire new set of clothing, toys and other gadgets if the products were marketed differently for both genders. And so the idea of pink for girls and blue for boys was born.

Today, gendered toy marketing in the U.S. is stark. Walk down any toy aisle and you can clearly see who the audience is. The girl aisle is almost exclusively pink, showcasing mostly Barbie dolls and princesses. The boy aisle is mostly blue and features trucks and superheroes.

BREAKING DOWN THE BINARY

The emergence of a gender-neutral doll is a sign of how this binary of boys and girls is beginning to break down – at least when it comes to girls.

A 2017 study showed that more than three-quarters of those surveyed said it was a good thing for parents to encourage young girls to play with toys or do activities “associated with the opposite gender.” The share rises to 80% for women and millennials.

But when it came to boys, support dropped significantly, with 64% overall – and far fewer men – saying it was good to encourage them to do things associated

with girls. Those who were older or more conservative were even more likely to think it wasn’t a good idea.

Reading between the lines suggests there’s a view that traits stereotypically associated with men – such as strength, courage and leadership – are good, whereas those tied to femininity – such as vulnerability, emotion and caring – are bad. Thus boys receive the message that wanting to look up to girls is not OK.

And many boys are taught over and over throughout their lives that exhibiting “female traits” is wrong and means they aren’t “real men.” Worse, they’re frequently punished for it – while exhibiting masculine traits like aggression are often rewarded.

HOW THIS AFFECTS SEXUAL EXPECTATIONS

This gender socialization continues into emerging adulthood and affects men’s romantic and sexual expectations.

For example, a 2015 study I conducted with three co-authors explored how participants felt their gender affected their sexual experiences. Roughly 45% of women said they expected to experience some kind of sexual violence just because they are women; whereas none of the men reported a fear of sexual violence and 35% said their manhood meant they should expect pleasure.

And these findings can be linked back to the kinds of toys we play with. Girls are taught to be passive and strive for beauty by playing with princesses and putting on makeup. Boys are encouraged to be more active or even aggressive with trucks, toys guns and action figures; building, fighting and even dominating are emphasized. A recent analysis of Lego sets demonstrates this dichotomy in what they emphasize for boys – building expertise and skilled professions – compared with girls – caring for others, socializing and being pretty. Thus, girls spend their childhoods practicing how to be pretty and care for another person, while boys practice getting what they want.

This results in a sexual double standard in which men are the powerful actors and women are subordinate. And even in cases of sexual assault, research has shown people will put more blame on a female rape victim if she does something that violates a traditional gender role, such as cheating on her husband – which is more accepted for men than for women.

A 2016 study found that adolescent men who subscribe to traditional masculine gender norms are more likely to engage in dating violence, such as sexual assault, physical or emotional abuse and stalking.

TEACHING GENDER TOLERANCE

Mattel’s gender-neutral dolls offer much-needed variety in kids’ toys, but children – as well as adults – also need to learn more tolerance of how others express gender differently than they do. And boys in particular need support in appreciating and practicing more traditional feminine traits, like communicating emotion or caring for someone else – skills that are required for any healthy relationship.

Gender neutrality represents the absence of gender – not the tolerance of different gender expression. If we emphasize only the former, I believe femininity and the people who express it will remain devalued.

So consider doing something gender-nonconforming with your children’s existing dolls, such as having Barbie win a wrestling championship or giving Ken a tutu. And encourage the boys in your life to play with them too.

[the writer is Assistant Professor of Human Development and Family Studies, Michigan State University]

TMC govt revived handicrafts sector in Bengal: Mamata

KOLKATA, DEC 8 (PTI): West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Sunday said the handicrafts sector in the state has been revived in a big way by her government in the last eight-years.

She said that at least 10 rural craft hubs have been established in the state in collaboration with the UNESCO which has benefited 25,000 artisans.

The chief minister said her government has also set up the Biswa Bangla stores to promote the states handicrafts.

"All India #HandicraftsWeek begins today. This sector has seen a big revival in last the 8 years in #Bangla. 10 #RuralCraftHubs have been established (in col-

laboration with @UNESCO), benefiting 25,000 artisans. We have set up Biswa Bangla stores to promote the state's handicrafts," Banerjee tweeted.

West Bengal Micro Small and Medium Enterprises and Textiles department has been patronising the craft heritage of the state not only to sustain it but to develop it further, keeping pace with the new demand pattern and designs.

The all India handicrafts week is celebrated every year from December 8 to 14 to raise the awareness-level, importance in the society and gather support from the people for the products.

UP govt plans cow safaris for better upkeep of bovines



LUCKNOW, DEC 8 (PTI): Faced with stray cattle menace, the Uttar Pradesh government plans to set up 'cow safaris' in the state for better safety and upkeep of the animal

The idea mooted by UP Animal and Husbandry minister Laxmi Narayan Chaudhary is in line with the Yogi government's aim of cow protection.

"The Yogi government is vigilant towards cow protection and it is our duty to save and secure them," Chaudhary said.

"Wherever we have large farms like in Barabanki and Maharajganj, we on an experimental basis, want to set up a safari where 15,000 to 25,000 cows can be put up," he said, adding, he wants to make such safaris viable by setting up bio gas plants for power generation and units to make things from cow waste.

"There are complaints about stray cattle moving about in villages and I have brought it to the notice of the chief minister," he said.

Cow safaris will initially come up on a pilot basis.

"Having so many cows at one place and with better upkeep facilities,

we are also thinking of developing it for tourism. Like people go to see safaris of other animals we can make arrangements for tourists to come and see cow safaris," he said.

"By putting cows at one place, if it is given the name of safari, there is no harm. People could come and have darshan," he said.

The Yogi government has taken a number of steps towards cow protection.

In August this year, the government has approved 'Mukhyamantri Nirashrit Besahara Govansh Sahbhagita Yojana', a scheme seeking people's participation in the protection of stray cattle by providing Rs 30 per animal every day.

Earlier, the Yogi Adityanath government had made arrangements for cow shelters in this year's budget and also instructed district administrations and municipal corporations to make arrangements for cow shelters to resolve the issue of stray cattle.

The state government also issued an order allowing corporate houses to use corporate social responsibility (CSR) funds to provide facilities for abandoned cows in rural areas.

'I will die if I have to': hunger striker leads fight against rape crisis in India

HANNAH ELLIS-PEETERSEN

DELHI, 08 DEC [THEGUARDIAN]: "Stop rape. Stop rape." The chants rang out over the Samta Sthal memorial as hundreds of women from Delhi and beyond raised their fists in a show of collective rage. Among them sat Leena, 35. "I was six years old when I was raped and I could never speak about it," she said. "This is India's worst disease and we need to fix it before even more women are hurt."

The outrage that engulfed India last week began with a brutal rape case in Hyderabad, where a 27-year-old vet was gang-raped by four men on her way home from work and then killed, her body burned in a motorway underpass. But each day since, horrific cases have emerged relentlessly, from a teenager in Bihar who was gang-raped, strangled to death and burned, to a six-year-old in Rajasthan who was raped and killed by a neighbour, and a rape victim in Uttar Pradesh who was set upon and burned alive by her rapists, who were out on bail, on her way to testify against them in court.

Doctors said on Saturday that the woman had died of her injuries. Throughout the country, women of all ages have taken to the streets to demand justice for the Hyderabad rape victim and call on the government to take action to stop the daily brutality suffered by women. But for Swati Maliwal, the chair of the Delhi Women's Commission and one of India's most forthright activists, the fear that their demands would be ignored yet again led her to take more extreme measures.

Since last Sunday, Maliwal has been on hunger strike, stationing herself permanently at the Samta Sthal memorial, demanding that the government change the judicial and state systems that are failing both to stop sexual crime and deliver justice for women.

"Over the past three years, I have handled 55,000 rape and sexual assault cases but when I heard about the Hyderabad rape, and then the six-year-old, I couldn't take it any more," said Maliwal, wrapped in blankets, her voice weak. "The systems, from police to the courts, have failed. My demand is greater police resources, greater accountability of police, more fast-track courts, a strong system that delivers punishment for rapists and a message by the government that



no more rapes will be tolerated. And if I have to die to see that happen, so be it."

Despite the number of atrocities against women that emerged last week, she pointed to the resounding silence from prime minister Narendra Modi as evidence of a complete lack of interest from the government in tackling the problem. In 2016, India recorded 106 rapes a day, and the cases are increasing each year, but the state-allocated resources are scarce and the justice system ineffective and overloaded. Some officers are handling more than 600 rapes cases each, and there are 133,000 rape cases pending in the courts.

"What does it matter to Prime Minister Modi that all these women are dying all over the country every single day?" said Maliwal. "If I die tomorrow during my fast, I don't think it will bother the central government at all."

She added: "Fear of rape is the permanent

state of mind of women in this country; it's conditioned into us from the moment we are born and it's impossible to escape. I am constantly thinking about my safety, and you can say that for almost every woman in India. Imagine where India would be if that time could be put towards the progress of our country."

This is not the first time Maliwal has gone on hunger strike relating to what she described as "the emergency of India's rape crisis". She deprived herself of food after she was beaten by police in 2012 while protesting about the gang-rape of a student on a Delhi bus, and then again last year to demand stringent punishments within six months for child rapists. But while new laws were passed both times, in effect, say campaigners, they remain nothing but ignored pieces of paper. Maliwal vowed she would accept "no more token gestures".

"Since 2012, yes, new laws have been

introduced, but everything fails and nothing is implemented," she says. "Every time a particularly vicious rape happens, people scream and protest on the streets, they then introduce some formality and then forget about it. But not this time."

On Friday morning, it emerged that the four men accused of the rape of the Hyderabad vet had all been shot, supposedly as they attempted to run away during a recreation of the crime, though many believe it was an extrajudicial killing. It divided response in India, with many celebrating the police's actions as "quick justice", while others decried the officers for taking the law into their own hands.

For Maliwal, it was another example of the systemic failures in police and judicial processes when it came to rape cases. "I think the chances are that the police had also lost faith in the system, they also

felt angry and knew if they let these men go through our judicial system, they would not be punished as they should be," she said. "If the government doesn't act, this will just keep happening."

While her strength and energy fade more each day, Maliwal said the resolve to keep going with the hunger strike came from the hundreds of protesters who have descended on to Samta Sthal every day. They have flocked to her side all week in support, and chants of "Swati keep on fighting, we are with you" occasionally fill the air. She was keen to point out that as many men as women had come to express solidarity and anger.

Ram Yadav, 43, a life insurance agent, stood among the roaring crowds. "I am here because men should be speaking up against this rape culture as much as women," he says. "These attacks that have happened, they make me ashamed of my country."

16 organisations call for 12-hour Assam bandh on Tuesday against CAB

GUWAHATI, DEC 8 (PTI): As many as 16 left-leaning organisations have called for a 12-hour Assam bandh on December 10 to protest against the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill.

The North East Students' Organisation (NESO) has already called for an 11-hour North East bandh from

Sam on Tuesday on the same issue.

Krishak Mukti Sangram Samiti (KMSS) and its sister organisations have extended their support to the bandh, called by these organisations and the North East students' body, KMSS Adviser Akhil Gogoi said at a press conference on Sunday.

KMSS has also extended its support to the 12-hour Assam bandh on Monday, called by various tribal students' bodies such as Sootea, Moran and Koch-Rajbongshi, he said.

In a joint statement, 16 left-leaning organisations, including SFI, DYFI, AIDWA, AISF, AISA and IPTA, demanded "scrap-

ping of the bill" and called for "the 12-hour Assam bandh" from 5 am on Tuesday.

The Assam State Jamiat Ulama also supported the North East bandh, called by the NESO on Tuesday.

However, Nagaland has been exempted from the purview of the bandh in view of the ongoing

Hornbill Festival there.

The Centre is likely to introduce the bill in Parliament on Monday despite stiff opposition by various organisations in the region.

The Citizenship (Amendment) Bill seeks to grant Indian citizenship to non-Muslim refugees from Pakistan, Bangladesh and Afghanistan

if they faced religious persecution there.

They will be given Indian citizenship after residing in the country for five years, instead of 11 years which is the current rule. The indigenous people of the Northeastern states fear that entry of these people will endanger their identity and livelihood.

Cops stopped peaceful activists march: DCW

NEW DELHI, DEC 7 (PTI): The Delhi Commission For Women on Saturday accused the city police of using water cannon and stopping a peaceful candlelight march heading to India Gate from Rajghat by its chief's supporters to demand death penalty for rapists.

Police, however, claimed they had to use the water cannon after the protesters began throwing torches (mashaal) towards the policemen.

"Police used water canons on protesters who were holding a candle march from Raj Ghat to India Gate. @SwatiJaiHind is protesting for time bound and strict punishment for Rapists," the DCW posted on its Twitter handle.

DCW chief Swati Maliwal has been on a hunger strike to demand capital punishment for rapists within six months of their conviction.

Maliwal's support-

ers took out a candlelight from Rajghat to India Gate but were stopped midway, they said.

The protesters took out the march raising slogan like: 'We want justice'.

According to police, the protesters threw torches towards the police, which led them to use water canons as a crowd control measure.

The protesters also tried to climb barricades and were stopped by police, they said, adding they lit candles on the barricades.

Earlier during the day DCW chief Maliwal demanded that the accused in the Unnao case be hanged within a month.

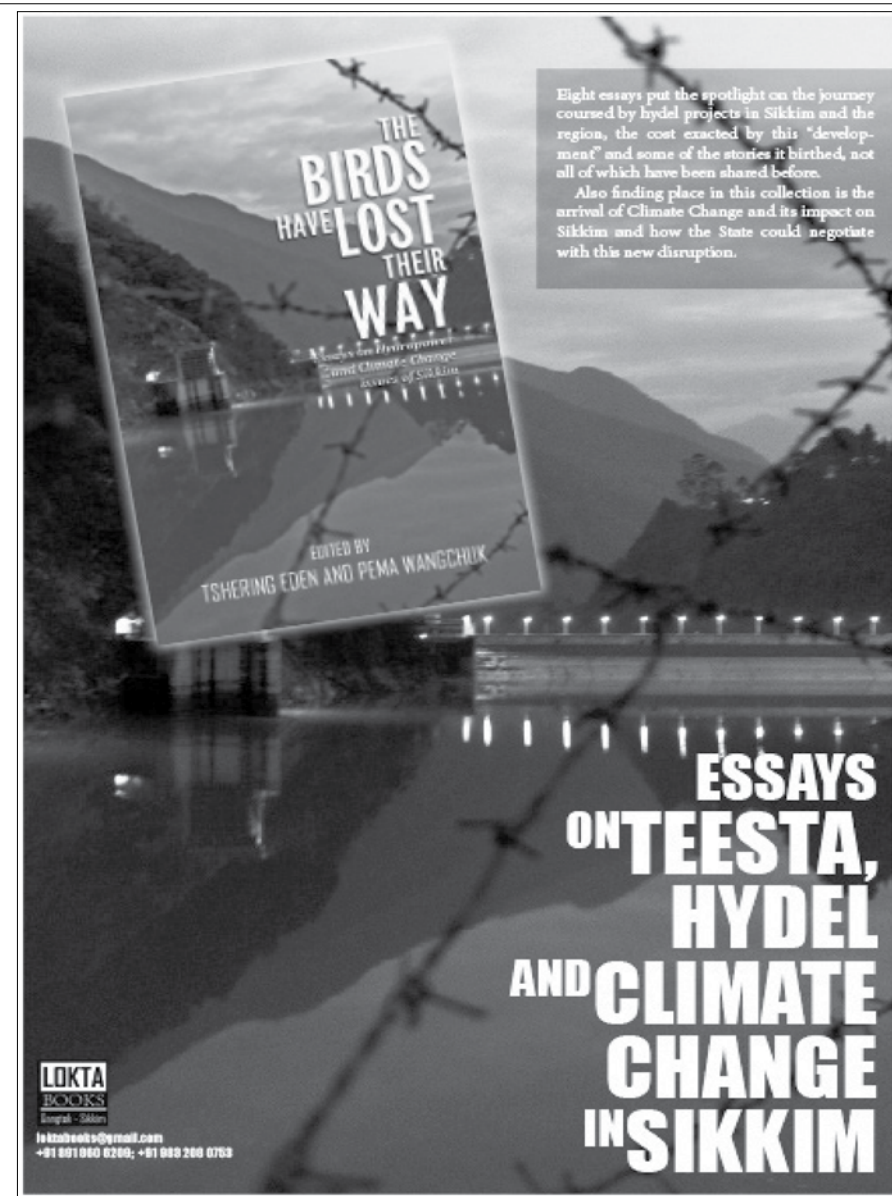
"I appeal to the UP government and the Centre to fast track this case and ensure that the perpetrators are hanged within a month," said Maliwal, who begun the indefinite hunger strike on

December 3 to press her demand that rapists be hanged within six months of their conviction.

Following the death of the Unnao rape victim, the DCW chief accused the government of being "deaf" and "insensitive" and not hearing the "screams" of rape victims, adding that she was "ashamed" of the country's government.

The rape victim from Unnao, airlifted to Delhi and admitted to the Safdarjung Hospital here after she was set ablaze allegedly by five persons including two men accused of raping her, died on Friday night.

Maliwal also received support from Nirbhaya's mother, politicians Sanjay Singh and Sharad Yadav, who visited Samta Sthal, near Rajghat, the venue of her strike to express solidarity.



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Messi hat-trick breaks La Liga record as Barca put five past Mallorca

MADRID, DEC 8 (AFP): Lionel Messi broke yet another record by hitting his 35th La Liga hat-trick as Barcelona thrashed Real Mallorca 5-2 to keep pace with Real Madrid at the top of the table.

A trio of vintage Messi finishes contributed to five stunning Barca goals, the best of them arguably belonging to Luis Suarez, whose brilliant backheel capped a free-flowing move, involving seven different players.

"I knew I had a little gap, my last resort was to try a backheel," said Suarez.

"I was surprised," added Barcelona coach Ernesto Valverde. "It was an extraordinary goal."

But at the end of a week in which Messi claimed a record sixth Ballon d'Or, it was the Argentinian etching his name into the history books again after pulling

clear of Cristiano Ronaldo's 34 La Liga trebles to stand alone.

"Unbelievable," said Valverde. "It was a celebration of the Ballon d'Or."

The efforts of Messi and Suarez overshadowed Antoine Griezmann's opener but that was impressive too, the Frenchman applying a sumptuous chip after being assisted by his own goalkeeper Marc-Andre ter Stegen.

An exhibition of creativity at Camp Nou allowed for the occasional lapse in defence and Mallorca's Ante Budimir twice reduced the deficit to 2-1 and 4-2, even if a comeback never looked likely.

Instead, Messi underlined his status as the world's finest footballer with another sublime performance, instant evidence for why he was



presented with his latest Ballon d'Or trophy on the pitch before kick-off.

Messi now has 12 goals this season, the highest in the division and one ahead of Real Madrid's Karim Benzema, who had scored one and set up another in an equally comfortable 2-0 victory over Espanyol a few hours earlier.

It means Madrid and Barcelona are back level on points at the top of the table, with Barca ahead on goal difference. Sevilla, in third, are four points further back.

Benzema's own irresistible form in parallel with Messi adds an intriguing sub-plot to the upcoming Clasico on December 18, which looks

increasingly likely to decide who will sit first over the Christmas break.

"We're talking about Karim a lot recently, in a good way," said Madrid coach Zinedine Zidane.

"He's getting older and that's made a difference, his maturity."

"None of us are per-

fect. But he's asked to chase and he does it. He's asked to score and he does it. I can't ask for more, only that he keeps doing it."

After rocky starts, La Liga's most successful two clubs also appear to be hitting their stride ahead of what is shaping up to be a crunch meeting in 11 days' time.

Messi in this mood will be hard to stop. For his first goal, he cut in from the right and bent the ball into the top left-hand corner and his second was almost a carbon copy, Suarez setting it back for his partner to hit the same spot.

In between, Budimir latched onto an excellent reverse pass by Salva Sevilla to briefly give Mallorca hope after Griezmann had opened the scoring, racing onto Ter Stegen's through ball and scooping it over

Manolo Reina.

Suarez hit the post and then stumbled after skipping around Reina but he made up for both two minutes before half-time with arguably the goal of the night.

Ten passes, involving seven different players, ended with Suarez with his back to goal and somehow the Uruguayan dug out a superb shot with the back of his foot that span into the far corner. Frenkie de Jong had been instrumental in the build-up.

Budimir capitalised on a rare Ter Stegen error to head in before Messi completed his hat-trick with seven minutes left. Sergi Roberto pulled back for Suarez, who set it up for Messi. His shot clipped the crossbar on its way in.

- FRENCH CONNECTION - Earlier, Benzema

gave the assist to his compatriot Raphael Varane before scoring his 15th goal of the season.

Varane's goal came in the 37th minute after Benzema had bundled through on the edge of the box. With his left foot, Varane stabbed into the far corner.

Vinicius Junior, lively on his first start since October 19, might have made it two after tearing away on the break but he failed to beat Diego Lopez at his near post.

Benzema also missed from a Vinicius cross but finally got his goal with 11 minutes left. He threaded in Fede Valverde with a smart reverse pass and then continued his run, before meeting the pull-back and finding the corner.

Defeat means Espanyol stay 19th in the table, five points adrift of Mallorca in 17th.

Indian eves win 3-Nations hockey tournament despite loss to Australia in final game



CANBERRA (AUSTRALIA), DEC 8 (PTI): The Indian junior women's team tasted its first loss of the competition on Sunday, going down 1-2 to hosts Australia in the fourth match but still won the 3-Nations hockey tournament after finishing top of the points table.

India had seven points from four matches, ahead of hosts Australia on goal difference, with New Zealand finishing third with only three points from their four matches.

In the final match, Gandandeep Kaur scored the solitary goal for India in the 53rd minute to cancel out Abigail Wilson's 15th minute strike. However, the Australian youngster scored yet again in the 56th minute to give her team a 2-1 win.

It was a difficult first period for the Indian team as they were constantly put under pressure by the hosts. The visitors had some chances of their own inside the first 15 minutes but they make the most of it.

In the 15th minute, Australia were awarded a Penalty Corner, and it was Abigail Wilson who stepped up for the hosts to make it 1-0.

India tried to make up ground in the second quarter, but some resolute defending by the home team meant that the visitors could not equalize inside the second quarter.

The Indians had a Penalty Corner in the 22nd minute, but could not force it on target. Another Penalty Corner came India's way

in the 26th minute but Australia's Hannah Astbury made a diving save to help her team retain their one-goal lead.

Two minutes later, Australia had a glorious chance of extending their lead to two goals through a Penalty Stroke, but India's Goalkeeper Bichu Devi Kharibam made a fine save to keep the score down to 0-1 at the half-time break.

Both the teams had chances through Penalty Corners in the third period, but some good defending by both the sides meant that the outcome of the match would be decided in the last period. India had a couple of Penalty Corners in the third period but were denied by Australia's Astbury.

However, the start of the fourth quarter was different for India as they put the hosts under pressure from the start, and that resulted in the visitors winning themselves a Penalty Corner in the 53rd minute.

It was Gandandeep who stepped up to take the execution, and scored past Astbury to equalize for India.

But India could not stay on level terms for too long as three minutes later, it was Australia's Abigail who scored her second goal of the match through a Penalty Corner to snatch a 2-1 lead.

India tried to equalize for the second time during the remaining four minutes, but could not make the most of their chances as Australia registered a 2-1 win.

Joshua defeats Ruiz to reclaim heavyweight crown

AD DIRIYAH (SAUDI ARABIA), DEC 8 (AFP): Britain's Anthony Joshua reclaimed his world heavyweight crown from Andy Ruiz, outclassing the Mexican-American to score a unanimous points victory.

Joshua, who suffered a stunning knockout defeat to Ruiz in New York in June, produced a masterclass to regain his IBF, WBA and WBO titles in emphatic fashion on Saturday.

Dominating from the outset, Joshua won by margins of 118-110 on two scorecards with the third judge making it 119-109.

Billed as the "Clash on the Dunes", the eagerly anticipated rematch marked the first time a world heavyweight title fight has been staged in Saudi Arabia.

And after entering the purpose built open-air arena at Diriyah, on the outskirts of the Saudi capital, just after midnight, it was Joshua who rose to the occasion with a stylish victory.

The final scores in no way flattered Joshua, who frustrated his heavier opponent with superb movement while picking off Ruiz relentlessly with his jab.

Joshua, badly stung by his defeat to Ruiz at Madison Square Garden, was ecstatic after clinching a one-sided win.

"The first time was so



nice, I had to do it twice," Joshua said as he celebrated becoming a two-time world heavyweight champion.

The 2012 Olympic champion revealed he had adapted his style after June's loss to Ruiz, when he got drawn into a slugfest before being floored four times on his way to the first loss of his career.

"I'm used to knocking guys out and last time, I realised that I hurt the man but I got caught coming in," said Joshua, who improved to 23-1, 21 by knockout.

"No excuses, but I said to myself I'm going to correct it and come again."

"I just wanted to put on a great boxing masterclass tonight and also show the sweet science of this lovely sport," Joshua added. "It's about hitting and not getting hit."

- TOO MUCH WEIGHT: RUIZ -

Ruiz had shocked on-lookers at Friday's weigh-in by tipping the scales at 283 pounds (128.4 kilograms), fully 15 pounds

heavier than his weight in the first fight.

Joshua by contrast came in at 237 pounds, his leaner, less bulky physique allowing him to dance around the ring for 12 rounds to leave Ruiz pawing at shadows.

Ruiz admitted he had prepared poorly for the rematch.

"It was his night man," Ruiz said.

"I didn't prepare as I should of. I gained too much weight. But I don't want to make excuses, he won, he bossed me around."

"But if we do a third fight you best believe I'm going to get in the best shape of my life."

Pressed on his excess weight, Ruiz said it had "affected me a lot."

"I thought I was going to feel stronger and feel better, but on my next fight I'm going to get better prepared."

Joshua established his dominance from the opening bell, feinting and changing direction to keep Ruiz at bay while simultaneously scoring with a series of stinging jabs.

A jolting right hand towards the end of the first round opened up a cut above Ruiz's left eye to draw roars from the large contingent of Joshua fans who had travelled to Saudi Arabia for the fight.

The remainder of the fight followed a similar pattern, with Joshua using his superior reach and movement to deny Ruiz any chance of unloading the sort of combinations that set up his win in June.

Finally Ruiz managed to rock Joshua in the eighth, connecting with a stiff combination.

But Joshua showed no signs of lasting damage from the exchange, and quickly settled back into the tactics which had given him a massive lead on all three card.

By the time of the closing rounds, Ruiz needed a knockout to have any chance of victory.

But it was Joshua who finished stronger, landing a solid right on Ruiz in the 12th before dancing away to close out the win.

Rashford and Martial give Manchester United derby honours against City

DAVID HYTNER MANCHESTER, 08 DEC [THEGUARDIAN]: Manchester City's hopes of winning the Premier League title for a record-equalling third time in succession had felt slim at kick-off but does anybody truly think they can overhaul Liverpool after this?

It was hard enough for the City support to see their team dismantled by their crosstown rivals, Manchester United, during what amounted to a first-half counter-attacking masterclass – led by Marcus Rashford, who was close to unplayable. But a glance at the table at the end of it all shows that City now lag 14 points behind Liverpool.

Pep Guardiola and his players have shown themselves capable

of piecing together a lengthy winning streak. Remember the 14-game surge that took them to the title last season? They fought here until the end, through five dramatic minutes of stoppage-time, yet a headed goal from the substitute, Nicolás Otamendi, was their only reward.

In terms of the broader picture City have surely left themselves with too much to do. In the history of English top-flight football no team has ever won the title after being 14 points behind the league leaders. Liverpool, who won yet again at Bournemouth, have come to resemble a dot on the horizon.

For United the emotions were rather different. This was a triumph

on many levels, particularly on a tactical front for Ole Gunnar Solskjær, whose fast-breaking approach brought a 2-0 half-time lead, which could, in truth, have been greater.

Solskjær had talked after the encouraging home win over Tottenham on Wednesday about the need for his players to enjoy and express themselves – it is a prerequisite for those in United shirts, he said – and how they did so in that opening period, when the lead they built up proved unassailable. The pace and incision of some of their football recalled the club's glory days and Sir Alex Ferguson took it in from the stands with a wide smile.

Never mind City's push for back-to-back-

to-back titles, United had merely wanted back-to-back league wins for the first time since March. They got that and, with Chelsea slipping up at Everton, they could reflect on having closed to within five points of the Champions League places.

It was another occasion when United looked good against a high-flying rival, a continuation of the trend that has seen them beat Chelsea, Leicester and Spurs, and draw against Liverpool. Once again they did not have too much possession – the statistics showed their share to be only 28% – but it was what they did with it that counted – how they cut through City in the first half with what Solskjær described as "quick, at-

tacking, flowing football".

Guardiola said his team had conceded four or five counter-attacks – no more – as he sought to play down what had happened. He was also entitled to point out that City had mustered 22 shots to United's 11, although only five were on target compared with United's six. City bristled with attacking menace, as they always do, only to routinely lack an end product.

But they had no answers in defence to United for much of the first half and, as Guardiola ran the gamut of emotions in his technical area, Solskjær's team threatened with every forward thrust. "We look like a Man United team," Solsk-

jær said. "That's a big thing."

United created a fistful of chances in the opening 15 minutes, on the back of slick passing and movement in behind the City defence, and Guardiola could be happy that Ederson's reflexes were on point. He saved from the excellent Dan James, stuck out a boot to deny Jesse Lingard in a one-on-one and plunged low to keep out an Anthony Martial shot.

City had a few flickers in the early running, although United got bodies in the way, and a goal for the visitors came to feel increasingly likely. Rashford, inevitably, was at the heart of it, sparking panic inside the City area. City had few an-

swers to his speed and directness and, on this occasion, Bernardo Silva simply crashed into him. There was no action in real time but, when the VAR checks began, it was apparent that it was a penalty. Rashford's composure from the spot was pronounced.

The breakthrough was the prompt for City to wobble and United to tighten their grip. Rashford fluffed a glorious chance after yet another rapid counter; he hit the crossbar following another and, when Martial added the second, it was too easy. Together with James, he played through City before beating Ederson at the near post.

City rallied. Gabriel Jesus missed a gilt-edged diving header, David Silva could not con-

vert a Kevin De Bruyne cross at the far post and Kyle Walker howled for a penalty when his low cross hit Fred's hand as the United midfielder jumped in to block. "Next season it [VAR] will be better or we'll be luckier," Guardiola said.

City pushed hard in the second half. Victor Lindelof blocked to deny De Bruyne, Aaron Wan-Bissaka got back to tackle Raheem Sterling and Rodri was denied by a David De Gea tip over. Although United retained a threat on the counter, it was City who came to look the likelier scorers of the next goal. Otamendi – on for the injured John Stones – got it to set up the grandstand finish and another substitute, Riyad Mahrez, extended De Gea. But United clung on.

Trapped gold miners found dead in South Africa

JOHANNESBURG, DEC 8 (AFP): Four gold miners trapped underground after a tremor caused a rockfall in northeast South Africa have been found dead, their union said Sunday.

A fifth miner was rescued with serious injuries on Friday after the accident at the Tau Lekoa Mine in the town of Orkney, the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) said.

"The four mineworkers were found dead," a union statement said after the rescue team lost

contact with the four men deep underground early Saturday.

"The last person we talked to said: 'We are suffocating please, bring us some oxygen,'" said NUM president Joseph Montisetse.

Deadly accidents involving miners are common in South Africa, which has the deepest mines in the world.

Last year 81 people died in the country's mines, according to the department of mineral resources.

Trump: Giuliani wants to take information to Barr, Congress

WASHINGTON, DEC 8 (AP): President Donald Trump indicated Saturday that his personal attorney Rudy Giuliani wants to take the information he has gathered from his investigations in Ukraine to the US attorney general and to Congress.

Trump said Giuliani had not yet told him what information he has gathered, though the president said he's heard it was plentiful.

"He's going to make a report, I think, to the attorney general and to Congress," Trump told reporters outside the White House before he departed for Florida.

"He says he has a lot of good information. I have not spoken to him about that information."

Giuliani, the former New York City mayor, has been traveling to Ukraine to pursue investigations into Trump's potential 2020 Democratic rival Joe Biden and Biden's son, as well as a discredited conspiracy theory that Ukraine, not Russia, interfered in the 2016 US election to help Trump's Democratic rival, Hillary Clinton.

Trump's push to undermine special counsel Robert Mueller's investigation into Russian interference in the 2016 election which led to a determination that Russia

meddled to help Trump win has ultimately landed him facing down articles of impeachment, which House Democrats are drafting at House Speaker Nancy Pelosi's request.

Trump is accused of pressuring Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy into announcing investigations into the Bidens while the White House held back crucial security aid for the country that had been approved by Congress.

Joe Biden's son Hunter was on the board of a Ukrainian energy company while his father was vice president, and Trump has alleged without evidence that the father got a Ukrainian prosecutor fired because the prosecutor was looking into the company.

In fact, the US and many other Western governments had pushed for the prosecutor's ouster, believing that he was soft on crime.

Trump said he believes Giuliani wants to present his information to congressional investigators and to the Justice Department.

"I think he wants to go before Congress ... and also to the attorney general and to the Department of Justice," Trump said.

"I hear he's found plenty

Long way to go: Sonakshi on having a female 'Dabangg'

MUMBAI, DEC 8 (PTI): Actor Sonakshi Sinha says not enough producers are willing to take risks with female oriented films mounted on the same budget as that of the male superstars.

In her career of nearly a decade, Sonakshi has featured in big blockbusters headlined by stars, from Salman Khan's "Dabangg" franchise, to Akshay Kumar's "Rowdy Rathore" and Shahid Kapoor's "R...Raj-kumar".

The actor has also balanced these 'masala' movies with films like "Akira", "Noor" and the recent "Khanadaani Shafakhana", where she was the lead.

She is now geared up for the third film in "Dabangg" franchise.

When asked, if the makers are reaching a possibility of a female "Dabangg" film, mounted on the same scale as the original, Sonakshi told PTI, "No. There's still a long way to go.

"I've done so many solo lead films but the budgets are nowhere closer to what they are for the male superstars. Of course, that's also because the returns that they get but then that depends on

the audience."

Sonakshi feels the change will have to begin from the audience if they become as receptive to female-led films as they are to the movies of male superstars.

"If the audience supports solo heroine films the way they support the male lead films, things would be different. I think we have a while to reach that stage."

When asked if there are people ready to take that risk, Sonakshi said, "No there aren't enough people to take that risk. Which is why it's not happening."

With "Dabangg 3", Sonakshi returns to play Rajjo, a character she made her debut with in 2010.

"Rajjo will always be special to me because I began my career playing her. I can play Rajjo in my sleep. I just have to wear the saree, put on those flowers in my hair and I become her. I know the beats of Rajjo so well."

While the character had a lot of spunk in the first installment, Rajjo appears to have become tamer over the years after she married Chulbul Pandey, the Robin Hood-styled cop.

Hong Kong: Mammoth rally marks six months of pro-democracy protests

HONG KONG, 08 DEC [AP]: Hundreds of thousands of demonstrators have once again poured on to the streets of Hong Kong, their chants echoing off high-rise buildings, in a mass show of support for a protest movement that shows no signs of flagging as it enters a seventh month.

Chanting "Fight for freedom" and "Stand with Hong Kong", a sea of protesters formed a mile-long human snake winding for blocks on Hong Kong Island, from the Causeway Bay shopping district to the Central business zone.

The crowds were so large and dense that the march ground to a standstill at times. Protesters spilled into narrow side streets, crying "Revolution in our times". One protester crawled part of the route on her hands and knees, dragging bricks and empty soda cans behind her. It was an apt metaphor for the pro-democracy movement, which has become a long-haul push to preserve Hong Kong's freedoms that make it unique

among China's cities

"This is just the beginning. We have a long way to run," said another demonstrator, Louisa Yiu, an engineer.

Many marchers held up five fingers to press the movement's five demands. They include democratic elections for Hong Kong's leader and legislature and a demand for an investigation into police behaviour during the six months of continuous protests.

Marchers said they hoped the huge turnout might help win concessions from the government of the Hong Kong chief executive, Carrie Lam. Protesters spanned generations. One man's young son marched in his Spider-man suit.

"So many people are still supporting this movement. You can see how determined Hong Kong people are," said Justin Ng, a 20-year-old student.

"I heard a small kid yelling slogans - four, five years old," he said. "That really encouraged me because it's not just



this generation but future generations, too."

Marchers said protesting had become part of their lives since demonstrations erupted in June against a now-withdrawn government measure that would have allowed criminal suspects to be sent for trial in Communist party-controlled courts in mainland China.

The protests have since snowballed into a broad, sustained anti-government movement, presenting the communist leadership

in Beijing with a major headache and battering Hong Kong's economy.

Police in riot gear were deployed in numbers on the edges of the march. Earlier in the day, they arrested 11 people and seized a cache of weapons, including a firearm with more than 100 bullets. Police said the suspects apparently planned to use the weapons during the protest to frame police, who have been accused of using excessive force against the protesters.

The rally's organiser,

Eric Lai, called for police restraint and an end to the use of teargas.

"We hope this will be a signature for our movement after six months to show to Carrie Lam as well as to the world that people are not giving up. People will still fight for our freedom and democracy," Lai said.

The authorities, who have sanctioned the use of teargas, water cannon and rubber bullets at previous demonstrations, say force has been necessary to disperse hard-core protesters who have fought with

riot officers, vandalised shops and thrown petrol bombs. Police had banned mass marches as protests turned increasingly violent, but relented and allowed Sunday's march after a few weeks of relative peace.

The rally was called by the Civil Human Rights Front, a group that has organized some of the biggest demonstrations since hundreds of thousands of protesters first marched on 9 June against the extradition bill.

Chief among the protesters' complaints on Sunday was that police have been overly heavy-handed, making thousands of arrests since June. "They are out of control," said Ernest Yau, a 28-year-old consultant. He said the movement has brought Hong Kong together.

"We understand our common enemy," he said. "We understand that we have to be united to fight against China, to fight against a government that doesn't listen to its people."

Aung San Suu Kyi heads to Hague for Myanmar genocide showdown

OWEN BOWCOTT LONDON, 08 DEC [THEGUARDIAN]: A momentous legal confrontation will take place at the UN's highest court this week when the Nobel peace prize winner Aung San Suu Kyi appears in person to defend Myanmar against accusations of genocide.

Once internationally feted as a human rights champion, Myanmar's state counsellor is scheduled to lead a delegation to the international court of justice (ICJ) in The Hague.

The claim that Myanmar's military carried out mass murder, rape and destruction of Rohingya Muslim communities has been brought by the Gambia, a west African state that belongs to the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation.

The contrast is repeatedly drawn between Aung San Suu Kyi's 1991 peace prize win and 15 years spent under house arrest, and her present position as chief denier that any ethnic violence has been perpetrated against the Rohingya. Last year, the US Holocaust Memorial Museum revoked her Elie Wiesel award.

Security around the court is expected to be tight. There has been speculation that undisclosed arrest warrants may have been issued in relation to other le-

gal proceedings against Myanmar. Aung San Suu Kyi, as effective head of government, is likely to be able to claim immunity from arrest.

Under the rules of the ICJ, member states can bring actions against fellow member states over disputes alleging breaches of international law - in this case, the 1948 convention on the prevention and punishment of the crime of genocide.

It is not the first time the tribunal, also known as the world court, has considered genocide cases - it dealt with several from the Balkan wars of the 1990s - but it is the first case involving countries that are not neighbours.

The three-day hearing in the neo-Renaissance-style Peace Palace is what is known as a provisional measures procedure. The Gambia will urge the court to make an emergency declaration that Myanmar must halt a continuing genocide, and the court will consider whether it has jurisdiction and whether there is a plausible case to answer.

This preliminary phase of the claim will not involve personal testimony from any of the estimated 700,000 Rohingya who fled to Bangladesh after the start of what are alleged to have been military clearance operations.

China's trade with US sinks in November amid tariff war

BEIJING, DEC 8 (AP): China's trade with the United States sank again in November as negotiators worked on the first stage of a possible deal to end a tariff war.

Customs data on Sunday showed exports to the United States fell 23 per cent from a year earlier while imports of American goods were off 2.8 per cent.

Exports to some other countries including France rose, helping to offset the loss.

Total Chinese exports were off 2.5 per cent from a year earlier despite weakening global demand while imports were up 0.2 per cent.

President Donald Trump agreed to postpone a planned tariff in-



The Gambia's submission states: "The genocidal acts committed during these operations were intended to destroy the Rohingya as a group, in whole or in part, by the use of mass murder, rape and other forms of sexual violence, as well as the systematic destruction by fire of their villages, often with inhabitants locked inside burning houses."

Its arguments rely on the findings of UN investigations that described "genocidal intent" in the crimes. The UN special rapporteur Yanghee Lee related first-hand accounts of "attacks in which homes were set ablaze by security forces, in many cases with people trapped inside, and entire villages razed to the ground."

The Gambia's case will be opened on Tuesday by Abubacarr Marie Tambadou, the country's attorney general

and justice minister, who studied law at Warwick University in England and later served with distinction as a special assistant to the prosecutor at the international criminal tribunal for Rwanda.

The hearing, which will be livestreamed, may attract a large international audience. It will be tempting for the Gambia's lawyers, distracted by Aung San Suu Kyi's presence, to personalise the accusations, but the focus will remain

on the Rohingya victims.

In the run-up to the hearing, members of Aung San Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy party held rallies in Myanmar's largest city, Yangon. Among the country's Buddhist majority, she retains overwhelming support.

The international criminal court (ICC), elsewhere in The Hague, has launched a separate investigation into alleged crimes against humanity committed by Myanmar's leaders in forcibly

deporting hundreds of thousands of Rohingya refugees to neighbouring Bangladesh.

An Argentinian federal court has begun receiving evidence in another case brought against Aung San Suu Kyi, on the principle that it has universal jurisdiction to consider torture cases from anywhere in the world.

Closing submissions from both sides at the ICJ will be made on Thursday. Judgment is expected to be reserved.

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Billie Eilish pays tribute to Britney Spears at 2019 Jingle Ball

Oh baby, baby! At iHeartRadio's 102.7 KIIS FM 2019 Jingle Ball on Friday, Billie Eilish paid tribute to none other than Britney Spears.

The 17-year-old singer wore a T-shirt and basketball shorts bearing the teen pop princess-turned-queen's likeness and name while performing at the event, which took place at the Forum in Inglewood, California. Gen-Zer Billie may be unfamiliar with Van Halen and Hilary Duff, but she knows and loves her Britney.

Perhaps Billie was simply returning the favor; In June, Britney posted on Instagram a video of herself dancing to Billie's "Bad Guy" while recreating her iconic "I'm a Slave 4 U" choreography from the 2001 MTV VMAs. The teen, who was born three months after that ceremony, commented, "OMG."

The Jingle Ball took place less than two weeks before Billie turns 18.

"I think it's really hard to navigate your teens and let alone navigate them as a person with a lot on their plate, with a lot to do. I think she's done it incredibly well and I'm just really proud of her," her brother, fellow musician, songwriter and producer Finneas O'Connell told E! News exclusively at the show. "I couldn't imagine a person turning 18 with more to be proud of."

Billie was also jointed at the event by her parents.

If somebody misbehaves it's not going to go untouched now: SRK on #MeToo movement



MUMBAI, DEC 8 (PTI): Superstar Shah Rukh Khan believes the #MeToo movement may have started in the West but it has given voice to the women across the globe, including India, to share their stories of abuse and harassment.

The 54-year-old actor says the movement has shone a light on the mistreatment of women in work space.

K-Pop Star Kang Daniel takes break over anxiety disorder

Kang Daniel is taking a break from all activities because of "extreme anxiety", his agency KONNECT Entertainment said in a statement.

His agency said the artist's depression and panic disorder was the reason for his hiatus.

"[Kang] has complained of extreme anxiety recently... leading to the conclusion that what should be considered the top priority for the health and safety of the artist is relaxation and rest," KONNECT Entertainment said, according to The Korea Times.

Kang was initially supposed to release his new song "Touchin'", but the agency stated that the K-pop star "is in a very difficult condition to promote the new digital single" and will not have any stage performance for the song.

The release of the statement came after Kang posted several messages detailing the immense mental anguish he was experiencing.

"I am under immense pain. I wish somebody could please save me," he said in one of the messages posted on his online fan community, The Korea Times reports.

Another said, "The photos of myself kneeling at the end of 'Wanna One' concert and all my emotions have become an object of ridicule ... the fact that I am me is just

'Doctor Who' returning with a bang, says showrunner Chris Chibnall

LOS ANGELES, DEC 7 (PTI): Showrunner Chris Chibnall has said the first two episodes of the new season of "Doctor Who" will be an "action-packed, location-packed, rollercoaster" ride.

In an interview with Entertainment Weekly, Chibnall dubbed the two-part series opener, titled "Spyfall", as a massive event story that will push the boundary for sci-fi storytelling.

"We start with a two-part, two-hour massive event story. It is an absolute action-packed, location-packed, rollercoaster ride of a story. Probably one of our biggest stories ever in the history of the show. So, we're coming back with a bang, I think, is the shorthand phrase," the showrunner said.

"Spyfall", which will premiere on January 1, 2020, will mark the return of Jodie Whittaker as the titular time-traveling character.

The story finds MI6 turning to the Doctor and his friends for help after intelligence agents around the world are under attack from alien forces.

The episode will feature guest appearances by veteran British actors Stephen Fry and Lenny Henry.



HOLIDAY STYLE: It is the season! Billie Eilish is making everyone get into the holiday spirit with her eccentric ensemble. The 17-year-old star made the red carpet her runway on Saturday, when she attended Variety's 2019 Hitmakers ceremony at the Soho House in West Hollywood, Calif. For the special occasion, the "Bad Guy" singer went all out with a head-to-toe upholstery-like ensemble that featured an explosion of leaves, flowers and branches. If anything, it was truly the definition of holiday style. Moreover, she accessorized with orange-brown sunnies, hoop earrings and sneakers.



too difficult," according to The Korea Herald.

The 22-year-old singer has since cancelled several scheduled appearances and recordings for TV programs, including "Show! Champion," an MBC music program.

Kang made his solo debut earlier this year with an explosive first album, Color On Me. The K-pop star was also embroiled in a lengthy legal battle with his former management agency LM Entertainment, which led the Korean crooner also set up his own agency, KONNECT Entertainment, to manage his career.

BTS teases new music

LOS ANGELES, DEC 8 (PTI): South Korean pop group BTS has announced that a new music is on the way and an album will be out soon.

The seven-member boy band, which stands for 'Bangtan Sonyeondan' or 'Beyond the Scene', is one of a number of K-pop groups with massive fanbases.

BTS, consisting of singers RM, Jin, Suga, j-hope, Jimin, V and Jungkook, was named Variety's group of the year at the Soho House in West Hollywood on December 7.

In the acceptance speech, RM thanked their fans and revealed that a new project was in the works.

"We have to say thank you and that we love you to all the Armies all over the world who always sends us the greatest love and support.

"The great news is that we are currently working on our new music and new album and can't wait to share them with you guys in the near future. I hope you guys are so excited to discover what BTS has in store in 2020," RM said.

The group was among several others honourees at the Hitmaker awards, including Billie Eilish for hitmaker of the year and Megan Thee Stallion for breakthrough artist of the year.

ARIES: There's no such thing as TMI for you today, Aries. With the moon in your sign, you're in your live-out-loud element. Don't feel bad about being so...overt. Your bold authenticity will actually create a safe space in which others can open up. Own your past, Ram! Those "embarrassing" mishaps birthed golden lessons that you can pass on to others who are struggling with the same issues.

TAURUS: You're in an emo groove today, Taurus, so just go with it. This is one of those days when you'd benefit from setting aside that intense work ethic so you can bond with the people in your environment. Power down your laptop and go have lunch with a colleague. You could even have a chance to pass along some of your sage wisdom to someone who is struggling with an issue you've overcome. Reach up to mentors too, especially a powerful woman who's been in your corner in the past.

GEMINI: Lighten up about love today, Gemini. With the moon in your "the more the merrier" eleventh house, you could turn

that table for two into a table for six or eight. If your entourage has yet to meet your amour du jour, this would be the perfect day for a getting-to-know-you gathering. Single? Sparks could fly with a friend of a friend. **CANCER:** Be more "purpose-driven" in your personal life today. People adore you, and there are plenty of friendships you COULD cultivate. But since each one requires an investment of time, you want to reserve your energy for folks who fill your cup—not a bunch of small-talking randos. Have you been loading up your calendar with "meh" events out of fear of being lonely?

LEO: Bigger, stronger, faster: Well, why not, Leo? Today's moon in your expansive ninth house could bring rapid expansion to one of your goals. Take your foot off the brake, but keep your hands on the wheel. You of all people know that progress CAN happen at supersonic speed. People from other parts of the globe could be involved, so get ready to fire up Skype or Zoom and brainstorm away! To accelerate the process, you might have to take a risk. Make sure it's a

calculated leap instead of an impulsive gamble. **VIRGO:** Got secrets? One of those skeletons is rattling the closet door, begging to be freed. Time for a confessional conversation, Virgo—the truth will liberate your soul. Connect with a trusted confidante tonight, over the phone or huddled in a private corner. If you just want them to listen without offering advice, make that clear up-front.

LIBRA: Forget all those parental advisories about the dangers of talking to strangers. Today, your usual people-watching could erupt into a fascinating dialogue when you see someone at a coffee shop who's reading a book that changed your life or who's wearing an indie-label designer that only a few insiders know about.

SCORPIO: You're back! On March 5, expressive Mercury turned retrograde in your passionate fifth house. You may have felt like you were missing the love boat. Or perhaps you couldn't get a clear read on a romantic interest. Get ready to shake off the confusion and insecurity today, as the communication planet powers forward and calls forth your most radiant self!

SAGITTARIUS: Put a little luxe in your life. Today's decadent fifth-house moon gives you a hall pass to be a little hedonistic. This doesn't have to be harmful to your health or the Earth. Skip the avocado toast and sip a smoothie made with young coconut milk, which requires less water to produce. Looking for a signature accessory for spring? Find a sustainable jeweler who repurposes gold and gems from antique pieces. This romantic lunation can turn up the heat with a love interest. Slip off for a lunch date, and don't be surprised if it turns into a spicy nooner. Though it's a weeknight, do what you can to lure friends out for some cultural activities—or at least happy hour!!

CAPRICORN: Bless this mess? Not today! With the Aries moon percolating in your domestic fourth house, tidying up your spaces could lead to sharper thinking. As within, so without, right? Now, here's the rub: The piles in your space might be a metaphor for situations you've been avoiding. As you're folding laundry and deleting junk mail, you may become acutely aware of emotions that you

swept under the rug.

AQUARIUS: The Aquarius social butterfly is bursting out of the cocoon thanks to today's lunar lift in your communication corner. Since you won't have much patience for desk work, rejig your schedule so you can handle the people-oriented tasks on your to-do list. A spontaneous lunch date with a coworker could turn into an amazing brainstorming session that leaves you buzzing with inspiration. With the moon in active Aries, slip out for fresh-air breaks. Who says you can't listen in on a conference call while walking the trail of an urban park?

PISCES: Would you care to upgrade, Pisces? With the moon beaming into your sensual (but sensible) second house, you're willing to splurge on quality. Review your financials: Is there room to indulge? As long as it's practical and functional, you can consider it an investment. Funds too tight for that go-with-everything Celine bag or the cold-pressed juicer? Create a special savings account and make your first deposit today. This will motivate you to keep on hustling, even if your gratification is delayed.