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SummitTIMES

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

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Golay inaugurates zonal office in Jorethang, receives slew of new converts BS Panth and other SDF members join SKM

SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 14 DEC:

Sikkim Krantikari Morcha party president, PS Tamang [Golay], inaugurated the zonal office of his party for South and West Districts at Jorethang in South Sikkim on Friday. An SKM press release informs that on the occasion, former MLA and SDF party vice-president, BS Panth, a founding member of the ruling party, Shankar Agarwal, independent panchayats Om Nath Bhattari and Tara Sunam, SDF CEC members Sanjay Portel and Dhurba Gautam, former panchayat member, SB Limboo, BJP state unit advisor, BB Chettri, retired government and police officials and former teachers and others,

along with 393 families aligned to the SDF from different constituencies joined SKM.

The release states that the party president alleged that the State government has been displaying partisan tendencies and was being unfair to Opposition parties which are give the run around when trying to organize meetings.

He also went on to allege that power supply to opposition functions have also been cut on the directions of the CM.

Claiming that political murders were not rare any more in Sikkim, he reassured the people that even if he were to be killed, the movement begun by SKM will not stop.

Mr Tamang went on

to claim that only 10% of approved budgets ever get used for developmental projects and that it was now time for the people to enquire after the 90% that was pilfered away.

He also repeated the SKM allegation of the CM holding properties outside the State and even the country.

As for the recent announcements made by the Government, he questioned how the State Government plans to complete these tasks in the few months left till the elections when it has dragged its feet for the entire term in office.

Mr Tamang also announced today that an SKM Government would



form development boards for all the communities of

Sikkim and will also start teaching Sanskrit in

schools in all constituencies.

He also mentioned that the Limboo and Tamang communities will not get their reserved seats before the 2019 elections as the State government has not been sincere on this issue.

He also announced that an SKM government will open a degree college and a hospital in Jorethang for South and West Districts.

The SKM party president also offered prayers at Jorethang Bazaar Mandir before the inauguration and was accompanied by a large number of the party workers who joined him in a round of Jorethang bazaar.

Denzong Sherpa Association holds solidarity meeting at Singtam

YOGEN THATAL

SINGTAM, 14 DEC:

Denzong Sherpa Association organized a solidarity meeting here at Singtam bazaar today.

The meeting was chaired by its president Lha Tshering Sherpa, spokesperson, Passang Sherpa and other members.

During the meeting, various issues related to the protection of the community's rights and identity, were highlighted.

According to the Revenue Order No 1 under Article 371F, the Sherpa community must have rights at par with Bhutia and Lepcha communities, the meet-

ing highlighted.

"History cannot forget that our community has faced various difficulties in terms of rights, opportunity and equality. Now the time has come for us to fight for equal status which every other community already has," said Passang Sherpa.

He also presented various examples of how the Sherpa community along with Limboo Tamang communities was deprived of their rights in the past.

"There are about 56,000 Sherpas in the State and like other Scheduled Tribes the government must treat us at par with BL community", Mr Sherpa said.

Shiva Hang leaves for 12Hr Stadium Run in Delhi



SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 14 DEC:

Long distance runner from Sikkim, Shiva Hang Subba, has left to participate in the 12-Hour Stadium Run to be held on Saturday at Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium in Delhi. A promising marathon runner, Shiva has already proved his mettle in different long distance competitions. He came fourth in the 12-Hour Stadium Run held in July earlier this year at Bangalore in which he covered a distance of 101.5 KMs in 12 hours.

Gehlot to be Rajasthan CM, Pilot his deputy NEW DELHI, DEC 14

The Congress on Friday named Ashok Gehlot as Rajasthan's next chief minister and Sachin Pilot his deputy after party president Rahul Gandhi successfully brokered peace between the veteran leader and his younger colleague following several rounds of discussions.

After Congress' observer to the state K C Venugopal made the announcement at a media briefing here, Gehlot thanked Gandhi for giving him an opportunity to serve the people of the state for the third time and promised that he and Pilot will give "good governance" Pilot exuded confidence that Congress' good electoral performance will continue, saying the party will get a big mandate in 2019 polls and form the government.

Nepal govt bans use of Indian currency notes above Rs 100

SHIRISH B PRADHAN

KATHMANDU, DEC 14 (PTI):

The Nepal government has banned the use of Indian currency notes of Rs 2,000, Rs 500 and Rs 200 denominations, a move that could affect Indian tourists visiting the Himalayan nation where Indian currency is widely used.

Indian currency is extensively used by Nepalese people and businesses for their savings and transactions.

The government has asked the people to refrain from keeping or carrying Indian bank notes higher than Rs 100 denomination as it has not legalised them, Nepal's Minister for Information and Communications Gokul Prasad



Baskota said.

"The government has decided not to use, carry and keep the Indian bills of 200, 500 and 2000 denominations. The government will soon issue a formal notice in

this matter," he said.

The decision will adversely affect Nepalese labourers working in India as well as Indian tourists visiting Nepal.

India is Nepal's largest trade partner and

supplies the majority of its consumer goods.

The Indian government introduced new banknotes of Rs 2,000, Rs 500 and Rs 200 denominations after the demonetisation of old notes worth Rs 500 and 1,000 in 2016.

However, the move hit countries such as Nepal and Bhutan where Indian currency is widely used.

Nepal Premier K P Sharma Oli said earlier this year that demonetisation hurt the Nepalese people and added that he would raise the matter with Indian leaders.

People have been using the new Indian currency in Nepal for nearly two years now.



NOTICE INVITING TENDER

Sealed tender invited from the interested firm/ individual for the Auction of the Vehicle belonging to Sikkim Tourism Development Department Corporation bearing the following description :-

Particulars of the Vehicle			
1	Make / Model	Toyota Innova	Year of Manufacture
	Engine No-	2KD 6401834	Nov-09
	Chassis No	MBJ11JV4007194845	
	Life of the Vehicle	09 Years	
	Vehicle Registered No	SK-01-Z-0048	
Offset value as vaulted by SNT Division Transport Deptt, Govt of Sikkim:-Rs 2,10,000/-			
3	Make / Model	Toyota Innova	Year of Manufacture
	Engine No-	2KD 6402065	Nov-09
	Chassis No	MBJ11JV4007195018	
	Life of the Vehicle	09 Years	
	Vehicle Registered No	SK-01-Z-0051	
Offset value as vaulted by SNT Division Transport Deptt, Govt of Sikkim:-Rs 2,10,000/-			
2	Make / Model	Toyota Innova	Year of Manufacture
	Engine No-	2KD 6403743	Nov-09
	Chassis No	MBJ11JV40071954567	
	Life of the Vehicle	09 Years	
	Vehicle Registered No	SK-01-Z-0049	
Offset value as vaulted by SNT Division Transport Deptt, Govt of Sikkim:-Rs 2,10,000/-			

On "as in where is basis" Lowest amount of the tender should not be below then Rs 2,10,000/-(Two Lakh Ten Thousand Only)/- .Sealed tender should reach to the Office of Chief Executive Officer, Sikkim Tourism Development Corporation, Hotel Mayur, P.S.Road, Gangtok.

Duly accompanied by the earnest money in the form of TDR of Rs10,000/-(Rupees Ten Thousand Only) drawn in favour of Sikkim Tourism Development Corporation as on 19th December 2018.

The tender will be opened on the next day (i.e., 20th Dec 2018) between 15.00 hrs -16.00 hrs in the presence of Tender Committee and interested parties at Sikkim Tourism Development Corporation, Head Office, Hotel Mayur, P.S.Road, Gangtok

The Vehicle can be inspected at Burtuk Helipad with the permission of the Assistant Manager, Burtuk Helipad during working hour between 10.00 hrs to 15.00 hrs.

Sikkim Tourism Development Corporation reserves the right to reject any or all tender without assigning any reason thereof.

Tender forms could be collected by paying Rs 1000/-(Non Refundable) from below mentioned addresses(During working hour between 10.00 hrs to 15.00 hrs.)

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- STDC, Travel Division Office, M.G.Marg, Gangtok
- STDC Burtuk Helipad

Sd/-

Chief Executive Officer,
Sikkim Tourism Development Corporation
Hotel Mayur, 1st Floor
P.S. Road, Gangtok

Gangtok on Saturday, 15 Dec

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Sunrise: 06:05 AM

Sunset: 04:42 PM

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Opposition will fail again in 2019, says DD Bhutia

SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 14 DEC:

Barfung MLA and Panchayat Minister, DD Bhutia said that despite all efforts of the opposition, Sikkim Democratic Front will form government again in 2019 while addressing the Government Formation Day celebration at Rabongla in South Sikkim on 12 Dec, in-forms a press release.

He stated that the SDF government led by the visionary Chief Minister Pawan Chamling has transformed Sikkim into the best State in the world in its 25



years of governance.

The present government has maintained peace and security in the

State and made unprecedented achievements, said Mr Bhutia further adding that there is no alterna-

tive to SDF in Sikkim.

On the occasion, the message of the party president was also read

out and 41 families from different political parties joined SDF, the release mentions.

4 Sikkimese awarded Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Fellowship Award

SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 14 DEC:

Four persons from Sikkim were awarded the Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Fellowship Award 2018 which was recently held in New Delhi on 10 Dec. The awardees were Anil Kr. Darjee from Mangang, North Sikkim, Naku Pariyar from Mangshila, North Sikkim, Bina Sewa from Pakyong, East Sikkim and Homay Biswakarma from Lingdok, East Sikkim.

The awardees have expressed their gratitude to the government and the Chief Minister for empowering the Scheduled Caste communities in every sphere.

Naam-Aal Namsoong celebrated at Upper Kabrey

SUMMIT REPORT

NAMCHI, 14 DEC:

Naam-Aal Namsoong celebration 2018 was organised in a grand manner at Upper Kabrey near Namthang, South Sikkim on 13 Dec. The celebration was organised by Kabrey Rubdi Mayal Mutenchi Kyoung Tarzum, a branch of Renjong Mutanchi Rong Tarjum, South District and the celebration was supported by Sikkim State Social Welfare Board, Gangtok.

Apart from being a festive celebration the event also included an awareness session on topics related with health, legal issues and girl child with the motive to spread awareness among the people of the area.

The constituency level celebration was attended by area MLA, Tilu Gurung as the chief



guest along with special guests Phurmit Lepcha (Chairperson Social Welfare Board Government of Sikkim), PK Gurung (Advisor RMDD Government of Sikkim), Ongden Tshering Lepcha (Advisor Renjong Mutanchi Rong Tarjum South District), Himal Tamang (general secretary

South District Tourism Development Society), panchayat members and other guests.

The Naam-Aal Namsoong celebration started with the offering of prayers in a traditional manner followed by lighting of ceremonial lamps and welcome dance by students of Kabrey Sec-

ondary School.

The significance of Naam-Aal Namsoong celebration was shared by PT Lepcha [PGT Namthang Senior Secondary School] who informed that Naam-Aal Namsoong celebration is the New Year celebration of Lepcha community.

Citing that the up-

coming generation and the children should know about the significance of this occasion he further narrated the story behind the celebration of Naam-Aal Namsoong and the Lepcha tale behind it.

The celebration was marked with felicitation programme and presentation of different

traditional cultural performance like Lepcha dance, Nepali dance, Sangini Nritya, Rai dance among others which was performed by different clubs, schools and organisations from in and around Namthang.

The celebration also witnessed the felicitation of four personalities from the field of sports, literature, journalism and politics for their contribution and with the motive to encourage the people. Those felicitated were football player, Pratima Mukhia, teacher and litterateur, Samten Dorjee Lepcha, senior journalist, Namo Dixit, and Area MLA, Tilu Gurung.

All the felicitated persons were presented with a Lepcha traditional shawl and a citation. Football player Pratima Mukhia and author Samten Dorjee Lepcha were felicitated by the organis-

ing committee in collaboration with Sikkim State Welfare Board Gangtok, while the other two persons namely, journalist Namo Dixit and MLA Tilu Gurung were felicitated by Kabrey Rubdi Mayal Mutanchi Kyoung Tarzum Namthang a branch of the parent body Renjong Mutanchi Rong Tarjum, South District.

The chief guest of the day, Area MLA, Tilu Gurung, in her address said that Sikkim is the only state where people of different castes and communities celebrate their festive occasions with harmony and brotherhood and are provided with holidays to mark the occasion which are declared as government holidays by the state government.

The MLA mentioned that Sikkim is the best example of a secular state in the country.

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Namprikdang Namsoong festival enters second day



WANGCHUK BHUTIA
DZONGU, 14 DEC:

The second day of the Namprikdang Namsoong festival cum State Level Tribal festival-2018 was attended by Forest Minister, Tshering Wangdi Lepcha, in the presence of Deputy Speaker cum MLA Dzongu, Sonam Gyatso Lepcha.

The festival is being organised by Tribal Re-

search Institute, Department of Social Justice, Empowerment & Welfare in collaboration with Namprikdang Namsoong Celebration Committee.

Addressing the function, the chief guest said that the Monsolung statue will be a boon for tourism in the area. He also said that people should not believe rumours spread

by the opposition party.

The function wound up with the vote of thanks delivered by general secretary of the organizing committee, Samten Lepcha. The chief guest and other guests also visited the stalls set up in the festival.

The annual festival has traditional food stalls, display of organic

produce and tribal artefacts, photo exhibition, cultural programme and many more.

Also present were Chairperson SNT, Pintso Namgyal Lepcha, DC North, Karma R Bonpo, Sr. SP North, Kunzang Dorjee Sangdarpa, DFO Territorial North, James Saring Lepcha and other officials and panchayat members.

234 one-stop centres opened for women: WCD

NEW DELHI, DEC 14 (PTI): As many as 234 one-stop centres have been opened since the scheme was launched in 2015 to provide under one roof medical aid, police assistance, legal aid, psycho-social counselling and temporary support to women affected by violence, the Lok Sabha was informed Friday.

Minister of State for Women and Child Development Virendra Kumar, in a response to a question, said 1,90,527 people have been benefited by the one-stop centres.

He said the 234 centres that have been functioning are part of 654 one-stop centres that are approved by the government.

The scheme aims to

facilitate access to an integrated range of services including medical aid, police assistance, legal aid/case management, psycho-social counselling, temporary support services to women affected by violence, he said.

Under the scheme, it has been envisaged to open such centres across the country in a phased

manner, he added.

Madhya Pradesh has the highest number of one-stop centres at 50 and a total of 3,217 people have benefited by it, he said.

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J&K becomes first state to have a law banning ‘sextortion’

JAMMU, DEC 14 (PTI): Jammu and Kashmir has become the first state in the country to have a law banning sexual exploitation of women by those in positions of authority, having a fiduciary relationship or a public servant.

The State Administrative Council (SAC) under the chairmanship of Governor Satya Pal Malik Friday approved the ‘Prevention of Corruption (Amendment) Bill, 2018’ and the ‘Jammu and Kashmir Criminal Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2018’, an official spokesman said.

The Jammu and Kashmir Criminal Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2018 seeks to amend the Ranbir Penal Code, whereby specific offence under section 354 E is being inserted to provide for the offence of ‘Sextortion’, he said.



Amendments are being made in section 154, 161 and Schedule of Criminal Procedure Code and section 53 A of the Evidence Act so as to bring sextortion at par with similar offences prescribed under Ranbir Penal Code, and amendment is being made in the Prevention of Corruption Act to amend the definition of misconduct and provide that demand for sexual favours would also constitute misconduct within the meaning of section 5, the spokesman added.

IGNOU OPENMAT & B.Ed. Entrance Test on 16 Dec

SUMMIT REPORT GANGTOK, 14 DEC:

Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU) is conducting Entrance Tests for Management Programmes (Openmat-xtv) and B.Ed. Programme on Sunday, 16 Dec (10:00 AM to 1:00 PM).

The Test is being organized at 98 Examination Centres, accommodating 24,375 candidates.

The examination centre for applicants from Sikkim is at Nar Bahadur Bhandari Degree College Tadong.

The Hall-Tickets have already been uploaded on the University website www.ignou.ac.in.

The candidates are advised to download the hall ticket by entering the Control No. or Mobile no. and date of birth

and report to the Examination Centre.

In case candidates are unable to download the Hall- Ticket, they can contact the IGNOU Regional Centre Gangtok and obtain a print out of the hall ticket. Candidates must report at the Examination Centre 45 minutes before commencement of the Entrance Test.

Rahul hits back at govt, asks why CAG report on Rafale deal cited by SC not tabled before PAC

NEW DELHI, DEC 14 (PTI):

Notwithstanding the Supreme Court’s verdict on the Rafale deal, Congress President Rahul Gandhi on Friday maintained that there was massive corruption in the contract and wondered why the CAG report “cited by the Supreme Court” on it had not yet been shared with the Public Accounts Committee of Parliament.

Gandhi also reiterated

the Congress’ demand for a Joint Parliamentary Committee (JPC) probe into the fighter jet deal and claimed that if it was conducted, names of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and businessman Anil Ambani will come to the fore.

Both government and Anil Ambani’s Reliance Group have rejected Gandhi’s allegations of any wrongdoing.

At a press conference, Gandhi said the Supreme

Court in its verdict cited that a report by the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) on the Rafale deal was submitted to the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) but asserted that no such report was given to the House panel headed by Congress’ leader in Lok Sabha Mallikarjuna Kharge.

Kharge, who was also present at the briefing, said PAC has not received any such report.

Heavy school bags need to go

SURAJ KUMAR SHARMA

Recent time has seen significant changes in the school for the betterment of students and education system. There has been change in teaching learning style (from teacher centric approach to learner centric approach), school environment (dull and weary looks to print rich and welcoming atmosphere) and role of community (active involvement of all stakeholders of education) lately. But, one thing that remained unchanged all these years is the system of carrying school bags with loads of books and other materials by the tiny tots. Early morning, the sights of small students carrying school bags that are unnecessarily heavy and sometime even larger than the weight of the students, rushing towards their schools are most common scenes across all major cities and towns. The little kids carry their loads from home to school and back, six days a week, 10 months a year for around 13 years of their developmental period. Carrying heavy bag pack can often lead to backpack syndrome which includes fatigue, muscle strain, back pain, distortion of spines and rounding off shoulders. The pain and physical discomfort resulting from carrying a heavy school bag have resulted in stress and lack of attentiveness in a child affecting their learning in the precious formative years.

Effects of Heavy Load of School Bags on Child’s Health

Numerous scientific studies have been conducted by various agencies across the globe to understand the effect of this load on the health and mental state of the students. Heavy bag puts the child’s health and physical development at risk which reduces the growth of the child.

Immediate Effects

- Back, neck and shoulder pain along with numbness and weakness in the hands
- Long Term Effects
- Strain on the neck and shoulder leading to headache
- Spine damage leads to problem like the hunched back and scoliosis (Spine bent sideways)
- Reduced blood flow to limbs
- Cause cervical and lumbar pain
- Bent posture reduces the breathing capacity due to the pressure on lungs
- Carrying excess weight could damage the growth centre leading to the stunted or abnormal growth of the bones of a child

Despite being aware of all these effects impairing our child’s physical and mental health, our country has been unnecessarily quiet on the silent struggle of our students to carry heavy school bags. Other countries have not only recognised the socio economic problem associated with their students carrying heavy school bags but also implemented diverse solution to the problem. In Australia, some state government provide their public with advisory information about the sizes of heavy school bags, ways of reducing the risks and ways of reducing the number of books students carry. In USA, health specialists have recommended the critical ration of the weight of school bags to the student’s body weight. In the United

Kingdom, health specialists have called for a review of the weights students carry. In some countries, media also awakened the public on the issue.

In contrary to this, there are number of instances in our country when students are being punished for not carrying their home works or textbooks to the school; leave aside the thought of any attempt to reduce their plight. In our country, beside textbooks and notebooks, students carry tiffins, water bottles and umbrella and raincoats too. Parents as well as teachers insist and rely heavily on textbooks for gaining knowl-

edge. Deviating from this traditional practice sometime invites severe punishments. In one such case, a student of Class VIII was beaten so severely by his teacher for not bringing textbook that his left eardrum got damaged and caused extreme pain and bleeding from ear. The incident took place on Feb 2, 2018 at a school in Nalasapora district of Maharashtra (Hindustan Times, Feb 13, 2018).

It is not that nothing has been done to limit the weight of school bags to give relief to the young children. In 1989, noted writer Lt. R K Narayan (10 Oct 1906-13 May 2001), the then Member of Parliament (Rajya Sabha; nominated for his contribution to literature) first spoke on the incredible burden the education system puts on young school going children. Using heavy school bags as a metaphor for the load young school children carry, R K Narayan pleaded with the house to pass legislation that would rid the education system of this burden. A consequence of Narayan’s speech was the formation of a committee chaired by the “People’s Scientist” Professor Yash Pal whose remit was to ensure why school bags are getting heavier and what could be done to resolve this situation. In 1993, the committee came up with its report titled “Learning without Burden” whose recommendation remain as relevant as ever. When National Curriculum Framework (NCF, 2005) was drafted, again chaired by Prof. Yash Pal, was also built upon the previous recommendation of the “Learning without Burden” report with an additional emphasis on children being able to “Construct knowledge” on their own term.

Nearly 25 years later, the Ministry of Human Resource Development issued a circular which listed the rules and regulation regarding how much a bag for a school going children should weight and a total ban on homework for class 1 and 2. This circular was issued following the judgment of Hon’ble Madras High Court (W.M.P No 9267 of 2018 and W P No 25680 of 2017, dated 29.05.2018) which directed CBSE and the Association of Management of Private Schools to use only NCERT books and

not overload children with books and other study materials and assigns homework to Class I and II (Express News Service, 30th May 2018, The New Indian Express). Justice N. Kirubakaran, J passed the order on a writ petition from M. Purusothaman, an advocate, which challenged the CBSE circular dated July 29, 2017 and further directed the Department of School Education and Literacy, Ministry of Human Resource Development, New Delhi and the NCERT, Bengaluru to require CBSE schools to buy books published by NCERT alone and not books published by private publishers. The judge also directed the Union government to formulate policy forthwith on the lines of Children School Bags (Limitation on Weights) Bill 2006 and to ask the state government and the union territories forthwith to formulate a “Children School Bag Policy” to reduce the weight of the bags. This has been a landmark judgment keeping in mind the health and emotions of a child. Consequent upon issue of the guidelines by Department of Education, Government

of NCT of Delhi an association of publishers (The Federation of Publishers of India) has challenged the DoE direction claiming the fixed limit as unscientific and irrational in the Hon’ble High Court of Delhi and the hearing is scheduled for January 2019.

In our state of Sikkim, a significant move in this regard is the development of integrated textbooks by HRDD for Classes I to V. Main curricular subjects English, Mathematics and Environmental Studies has been included in the book along with a section of General Knowledge and handwriting practice section. The textbooks are so designed that most of the concepts can be learnt easily. Moreover, space for activities and assignments have also been provided in the book; thus reducing the need of exercise notebooks to some extent. Of course, a single notebook can be used for practicing or other writing purposes for the above subjects.

The order has been laid down by the court and appeals have been made from all corners including NGOs and human right activists. Now the onus lies on the Union and State governments to make the law and ensure its implementation in letter and spirit. Further, it is the responsibility of the teachers to make sure that no important information or message is missed by the students, in the wake of reduction of textbooks, which is deemed to be meant for learning by the students of that particular grade/level. Whatever may be the judgment of the Hon’ble court (The Federation of Publishers of India Vs Department of Education, Government of NCT of Delhi), most probably can be expected in the favour of child’s right, we all must make it sure that our children do not suffer in the name of providing knowledge and putting him under pressure of books and limiting their growth which will again produce unhealthy and unproductive human resource in future.

[The writer is Headmaster, Government Secondary School, Lingi Paiyong, South Sikkim]

OBITUARY



Lakpa Tsering Ethenpa, 88, passed away, Monday, 10th December 2018 at Neotia Hospital, Siliguri.

Those that remember him in his hometown at Gangtok, he was a common feature in all the social occasions. Everyone who knew him, loved him for his active spirit and everyone had different names for him. To his contemporaries, he was simply called ‘Lakpala’, for youngsters he was their beloved ‘Pala’ or ‘Popola’. His absence is a loss to not just his family members but to everyone who knew him because the twinkle in his eyes, his mischievous smile, his ever helping hands (mostly clutching a newspaper), his gentle guttural, and his tender love for all he knew always combined to work a magic. Who could resist his purity, his sincerity, his drive to bring out the best in everyone he met, in everyone he worked with, no matter what their age, what their standing in life, what their ideas or opinions. He always tried to do better, this was perhaps the principle of his life, to strive for something better, not once but always.

Lakpa Tsering Ethenpa’s funeral service will take place on 14th December 2018, Friday, at 8 a.m. from Ethenpa Villa, Tadong to Decheling.

**Ethenpa Family
Ethenpa Villa
Lower Tadong
GANGTOK.**



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OUR COURSE OBJECTIVES:

1. To give clear concept of the chapters
2. To give the students proper guidance to excel in their examinations
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4. Greater emphasis would be to excel.
5. Last minute suggestion tips as per board requirements

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Eight essays put the spotlight on the journey caused by hydel projects in Sikkim and the region, the cost exacted by this “development” and some of the stories it birthed, not all of which have been shared before.

Also finding place in this collection is the arrival of Climate Change and its impact on Sikkim and how the State could negotiate with this new disruption.

ESSAYS ON TEESTA, HYDEL AND CLIMATE CHANGE IN SIKKIM

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SummitTIMES

ON TOP OF THE NEWS

Socially Challenged For some resolutions beyond improving the self

Another year is drawing to a close, and in a year-end through which has been picking up in the political arena, as is to be expected given the closeness of the next election cycle, it is still social concerns which underline the problem areas for Sikkim.

Given that the SDF Government has completed 24 years in office and is now closing its fifth term, a spurt of politicking was always on the cards and has been surfacing around it for a while now. There will obviously be some disgruntlement around and also the need to remain politically remembered, a task made easier by the State's intransigence to remain uncommunicative by way of explaining things even as it promulgates substantial policy decisions. But even as politics provides for some vicarious pleasures in the viciousness with which the different sections have a go at each other and the convenience with which divergent ideologies manage to find common ground by targeting a common adversary, experience bears out that these passions are only seasonal in Sikkim.

What are leaving more permanent scars, however, are the worrying social challenges which have been around for a while now but because they have remained largely ignored by the people at large have grown in their potential to harm. Petty crime has settled in with occasional reports of more worrying excesses coming in, and suicides continue to haunt. Addiction consistently converts more people at still younger ages and corruption stories remain in circulation, now narrated even without furrowed brows. Now, crimes logged under the POCSO Act also surface routinely to disturb and distress. Social crimes, frauds and scams have made it to the headlines this year as well. And one wonders how long will it be before the hate of the national political scene percolates here as well.

Much as one would want to get convinced that these are problems erupting out of poor governance, because that would absolve the lay people of blame, fact remains that these are ills that a poor social fabric foment. All it takes to contain these "ills" is more sharing which will bring about more support and that will guarantee more resolute defences. There have been few, very few, instances when people have come together to further a good cause. There have been too many indications of a disinterested society more comfortable at sweeping its responsibilities under the carpet than addressing issues head on and solving them. The lethargy one often associates with the bureaucracy is as acute among the people who should make up the civil society and Sikkim remains the poorer for it. Agreed, there have been individual initiatives, some of which have dropped out while some continue with the struggle, but there has been no consolidated effort by the people [through their social organisations and other associations] for anything really substantive or long term. Every initiative that should have come from the people has come from the government instead. This does not always work, because if the people themselves are not convinced or motivated enough or concerned enough, then mere legislations or policy initiatives will not help.

The present times are times of change, rapid change, and unless the society remains involved in this process of change, and thus noticing challenges early enough and preparing for it, it will soon realise that they have mutated into something ugly when they could have metamorphosed into something much prettier. With our vacuity, we also cripple the chances of an improved future for the coming generations. That will be a guilt difficult to live down and will hopefully play on all minds when New Year resolutions are made, again, in a fortnight's time. As more of us make resolutions to make or individual selves and healths better, perhaps some moments can also be spent ruminating over how we can collectively improve as a collective.

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Saudi Arabia is allying with Russia to shore up oil prices as OPEC's power wanes

GREGORY BREW
theconversation.com

The Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries likes to look united. That's evident when OPEC leaders meet in Vienna at the end of each year to decide how much oil its members will aim to produce the next year. There is always a show of togetherness and the appearance of the quasi-cartel's ability to move markets.

But the truth is, OPEC is in the midst of a major crisis made more evident by Qatar's announcement that it would be leaving OPEC, partly to protest Saudi dominance over the group.

My research has taken me through the history of oil, particularly the relationship between oil revenues, economic development and the geopolitical balance of power in the 1960s and 1970s. I believe that rather than the arbiter of global energy, OPEC has often been held back by division, disagreement and divergent interests.

This weakness helps explain why OPEC has struggled to move markets in effective ways since the 2014 collapse of oil prices. The latest production cuts, which were bigger than expected but followed considerable acrimony, are further proof that OPEC's disunity remains intact.

EARLY DAYS: DIVIDED AND POWERLESS

OPEC was formed from frustration. In the 1950s, the world was awash in oil as small nations in the Middle East and Latin America discovered enormous deposits.

To gain access to those deposits, the major oil companies, known as the "Seven Sisters," signed concessionary agreements with local governments. This arrangement gave the companies control over the oil – they set production levels and prices – while governments simply collected a check.

In February 1959, amid an oil glut, the Seven Sisters decided that a price correction was necessary. Acting unilaterally, they cut the price of oil, from US\$2.08 to \$1.80 by August 1960.

That may sound odd today, but back then oil prices didn't always follow market forces and were typically set by the companies.

The cuts meant a significant loss of revenue for the oil-producing states. In protest, the oil ministers

of Iraq, Iran, Venezuela, Saudi Arabia and Kuwait met in Baghdad that September and formed OPEC to achieve a more equitable arrangement with the Seven Sisters. Algeria, Qatar, Indonesia and Libya joined later.

But the big oil exporters like Iran and Saudi Arabia could do little to coerce the companies. Oil was abundant, and the companies could suc-



cessfully exclude any country from the market, as they did with Iran in 1951. OPEC did not possess enough market share or unity to pressure the companies into surrendering control over price.

A NEW BALANCE OF POWER

OPEC couldn't agree on a consistent policy among its members. Saudi Arabia wanted to keep production levels low and prices consistent. Iran wanted prices pushed as high as possible in order to maximize revenue.

According to Ian Skeet, a scholar and an oil consultant, the shah of Iran sought a separate agreement that sabotaged an attempt to extract more favorable terms from the Seven Sisters in 1963.

During the 1960s, OPEC failed to form a united front.

Nevertheless, things were changing. Demand for oil shot up and U.S. production stagnated. The Seven Sisters' power was undermined by international competitors drilling new fields in North Africa, where Libya's Muammar Qaddafi threatened to shut off supply if he didn't get higher prices. Oil giants faced more pressure to deliver better terms to producing governments.

These conditions, while not the result of OPEC's actions, gave it an opportunity to upset the balance of power.

EMBARGO, REVOLUTION AND CRISIS

This shift accelerated in the 1970s as war broke out between Israel and its Arab neighbors in October 1973.

To punish the U.S. for supporting the Jewish state, Arab oil producers (not all OPEC members, as popularly believed) cut production and declared an embargo against the United States.

OPEC also demanded a higher oil

barrels per day, flooding the market and pushing the average price down to \$18 per barrel, about \$39 today, according to oil company records.

This move indicated Saudi willingness to use its massive reserves to "correct" the market and push out high-cost producers, even at the cost of its OPEC allies.

RUSSIA'S NEW ROLE

As OPEC's fortunes have oscillated with increasing volatility since the 1986 shock, cooperation has remained elusive.

In 2014, oil prices began to decline, due to increasing U.S. production. To squeeze out American drillers, Saudi Arabia pumped more oil, sending prices to historic inflation-adjusted lows in early 2016.

But the move backfired: U.S. producers held on, while OPEC members like Venezuela endured enormous economic pain.

To gain leverage, Saudi Arabia has partnered with Russia, a major oil exporter that doesn't belong to OPEC, forming what some analysts have called OPEC+. The two countries now coordinate their production cuts to stabilize prices.

OPEC+ MINUS ONE

Not all OPEC members are happy about this arrangement, including Qatar, a small Persian Gulf state. It has been at odds with Saudi Arabia since 2017. In December 2018, Qatar announced it would be leaving OPEC to concentrate on liquefied natural gas exports.

Meanwhile, President Donald Trump was imploring OPEC to pump more oil rather than less of it, to keep gasoline prices low.

When OPEC+ met in Vienna it didn't buckle. But the deal it reached followed considerable disagreement, which laid bare divisions within the group over how much oil output it should cut. In the end, Russia and Saudi Arabia agreed to do most of the cutting required to slash oil production by 1.2 million barrels per day. And Iran did not pledge any cuts at all.

The overall cut was bigger than expected. But Iran's defiance, Qatar's departure and the fight over cuts underscores what has been true from the very beginning: OPEC projects unity, but behind the scenes the group struggles with division, disunity and differing interests.

[the writer is Postdoctoral Fel-

Conflict in Cameroon is extracting a heavy toll on ordinary people

JULIUS A. AMIN
theconversation.com

The Confederation of African Football (CAF) has let Cameroon's President Paul Biya know that his nation will no longer host the 2019 African Nations Cup competition. The decision is a humiliation. Once a powerhouse of Africa's football, Cameroon's reputation had dropped significantly.

CAF's decision serves as a reminder that the country is sinking, and something must be done.

Until a few years ago Cameroon was a nation on the move. Despite its many political, economic and social problems, the country was peaceful, attracted people from all over for tourism, business, and education.

For example the University of Dayton had, over two decades, run immersion programmes in the country, and so did many other American universities. Cameroon was also an international centre where major conferences, symposia, and cultural activities took place.

The nation was a major banking centre, as well as host to Nigerian businessman Aliko Dangote's many activities, and more recently the proposed site of car assembly plants to be constructed by Indian and Chinese businesses. And the list goes on.

But the Anglophone conflict has taken its toll. A peaceful protest which began three years ago against the marginalisation of Anglophone Cameroon quickly turned violent as some called for the region's complete secession from Cameroon to form the Ambazonia Republic. As a result Cameroon's military force and the Ambazonia Defence force have been locked in a deadly embrace with no end in sight.

Already in the 7th term of office as president, Biya's obsession with a military solution to the crisis has exacerbated tensions, as well as the misery of ordinary people.

Beneath CAF's rationale that Cameroon was ill-ready, ill-equipped and ill-prepared to host the games was a sense that the country is deeply in-

secure. The cities of Limbe and Buea in the heartland of Anglophone Cameroon were going to host the games. But routine kidnappings, attacks, road closings, and killings in the region would have undermined the essence of the games.

CAF's announcement coincided with the failure of a last-ditch effort by His Eminence Cardinal Christian Tumi to broker peace and convene an All Anglophone Conference. But the culture of threats, and Cameroon government's failure to grant a permit for the conference to take place meant that it was doomed.

Ordinary people have called on Cardinal Tumi not to give up. The conference, they note, must go on. Many Cameroonians are desperate for a peaceful solution to the conflict.

As the brickbats fell, conditions for communities in the Anglophone region continue to deteriorate. And while debates continue to rage about the rights and wrongs of widely publicised suggested solutions such as federalism, decentralisation, and secession, ordinary people continue to chafe in their daily lives.

WHAT'S BEING LOST

As the warring factions stand eyeball to eyeball waiting to see who will blink first, few are asking how the outcome of the struggle will change the lives of ordinary people in the region.

Yet the impact has been enormous. There are immense economic and social consequences which have transformed communities and their way of life.

Cameroonians who would go home for Christmas holidays and other festivities no longer do so. Their spending stimulated the economy. In email correspondences and responses to questionnaires with people in Kumba and Buea, local people are noting that Cameroonians living in other countries are no longer coming home for their holidays. As a result businesses, such as hotels, are barely holding on.

There has been more profound economic con-

sequences. The region's main agrobusiness facility, the Cameroon Development Corporation, the heart of the region's economy, is in ruins. Plantations which produce palm oil are no longer operational. Workers at banana plantations are brutalised and rubber processors have been repeatedly attacked. Families that depended on cocoa for livelihood now face a life of destitution.

Another disturbing aspect of the conflict is the gradual erosion of key parts of people's culture. Funeral celebrations are a significant aspect of Cameroonian culture. But in conversations with people, it appears these festivities are disappearing. Irrespective of where people reside, Cameroonians typically prefer their burial sites to be in their village of origin. But not anymore. Increasingly, people are buried anywhere possible.

Visits to burial sites of friends and family members have turned into a deadly experience. For example, going to Lewoh in Lebiale, is unthinkable because of the violence.

And there is more. In communities in Anglophone Cameroon, basic services such as trash collection no longer exist. Trash is piling up in the cities. And corpses can be seen on roadways. Businesses that traditionally operated in the evenings have been bankrupted.

The list of hardship goes on. School buildings remain empty. And both refugees and internally displaced people are nowhere close to returning to their homes.

TIME TO RE-ASSESS

The recurring accusation is La Republique has caused these problems. But it's not all the fault of La Republique. Given that some of the attacks are undertaken by Anglophones, they have become accomplices to the violence. No wonder ordinary people are increasingly asking more direct questions about the benefits of the revolt they were promised.

[the writer is Professor, Department of History, University of Dayton]

Mizoram official transferred by EC back in earlier position

AIZAWL, DEC 14 (PTI): Mizoram government official Lalnunmawia Chuauungo is back in his earlier position - Principal Secretary, Home and Finance departments - from where he had been transferred by the Election Commission (EC) before the state assembly polls.

A government notification on Friday said the allotment of the departments to Chuauungo was with immediate effect.

The EC on November 2 had directed the Mizoram government to remove Chuauungo on the charge of interfering with the poll process. He was then attached to the

Ministry of Home Affairs. The IAS officer has been working in Mizoram on inter-cadre deputation on loan from Gujarat since April this year.

Shortly after his transfer, an umbrella organisation of major civil societies and student bodies of the state demanded the removal of Mizoram Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) S B Shashank, claiming that he has lost the trust of the people.

The NGO Coordination Committee intensified its agitation and the EC removed Shashank on November 15, 13 days before the election was held on November 28.

WB BJP to wait till Saturday for state govt permission for 'rath yatra'

KOLKATA, DEC 14 (PTI): The West Bengal BJP will "wait and watch" till Saturday for permission from the state government for the party's rath yatra campaign in the state, top leaders of the saffron party said Friday.

A division bench of the Calcutta High Court had directed the state chief secretary, home secretary and the director general of police to hold a meeting with three representatives of the BJP by December 12 and take a decision on the rally by December 14.

"We had met government officials yesterday. Now we will wait and watch till tomorrow as the state government officials have told us they will inform us on Saturday. Let's see what happens, then we will decide our next course of action," Bengal BJP president Dilip Ghosh said.

"Our schedule is already in place and as soon as the government grants us permission we will announce the new dates," he said.

The BJP Thursday said it will stick to its 'rath yatra' programme in West Bengal but will launch it only after hearing from the state government on the new dates.

The party held a meeting with Chief Secretary Malay Dey, Home Secretary Atri Bhattacharya and state Director

General of Police Virendra during the day as directed by the Calcutta High Court.

After the meeting at the Lalbazar police headquarters here, Ghosh had said, "We informed the state government that we want to organise our programme the way it was scheduled. Only the dates will be changed."

The 'rath yatra', touted as a "save democracy" programme and a "game changer" by the BJP, was scheduled to start on December 7 from Cooch Behar but could not as the state government denied permission on grounds that it might cause communal tension.

The 'Rath yatra' in Cooch Behar was slated to be the first of three by the BJP in the state before the Lok Sabha polls next year. The other two were scheduled to be held on December 9 from Kakdwip in South 24 Parganas district and on December 14 from Tarapith temple in Birbhum district.

The 'rath yatras' were supposed to cover all the 42 Lok Sabha constituencies in the state.

A Calcutta High Court division bench of Justices Biswanath Somadher and A Mukherjee disposed off an appeal by the BJP against a single bench order on December 6 that refused permission for the 'rath yatra' and directed the state to hold the meeting by Wednesday.

SC dismisses petitions seeking Rafale probe, says no reason to doubt decision making process

NEW DELHI, DEC 14 (PTI): There is no occasion to doubt the decision-making process in the procurement of 36 Rafale jets from France, the Supreme Court said on Friday and dismissed all the petitions seeking an investigation into alleged irregularities in the Rs 58,000 crore deal.

There was no substantial evidence of commercial favouritism to any private entity, the bench headed by Chief Justice Ranjan Gogoi said on the issue of an offset partner

in its ruling on a batch of petitions. While one lot sought a court-monitored investigation into the deal, another asked for a direction to the CBI to register an FIR for alleged irregularities. The bench, also comprising Justices S K Kaul and K M Joseph, said it is not the job of the court to deal with the comparative details of the pricing.

There has been a necessity for fighter aircraft and the country cannot remain without jets, it said.

The CJ, who read out

the judgement for the three-judge bench, said no reasons were found to interfere in the procurement process for the fighter jets.

The apex court said it does not find substantial matter to interfere with the issue of procurement, pricing and offset partner.

It noted the need for induction of 4th and 5th generation of fighter aircraft like Rafale in the Indian Air Force (IAF).

Both sides involved in the deal have clarified all aspects in the procurement of Rafale jets

deal, the bench said.

The court said nobody questioned the procurement of the Rafale fighter jets when the deal was finalised in September 2016.

It added that questions were raised on jet deal only after former French president Francois Hollande came out with a statement. This cannot be the basis of judicial review, it said.

The court said it cannot compel the government to procure 126 or 36 fighter jets. That depends on its decision.

US House describes crime against Rohingya in Myanmar as genocide

LALIT K JHA

WASHINGTON, DEC 14 (PTI): In an overwhelming bipartisan vote of 394-1, the US House of Representatives on Thursday, in a non-binding resolution, declared the crime against Rohingya Muslims in Myanmar as a genocide.

Such a move by the US House of Representatives comes months after the State Department released a report on alleged widespread acts of violence against the Rohingya in the northern Rakhine state of Myanmar, which the lawmakers rued had failed to label these atrocities as genocide.

The atrocities have driven more than 7,00,000 Rohingya from their homes to Bangladesh, bringing the total Rohingya refugee population there to nearly 10 lakh.

"The United States has a moral obligation to



call these crimes genocide. Failing to do so gives the perpetrators cover and hinders efforts to bring those accountable to justice. With this resolution, the House fulfils its part of that duty," Congressman Ed Royce, Chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, said.

"The measure also accomplishes a number of other important goals: It provides a thorough accounting of the crisis, calls out the complicit Burmese government, urges the Secretary of State to join us in formally declaring genocide and

promotes multilateral agreement on that declaration," Royce said.

Following the resolution, Royce urged the US government to put more pressure on the Burmese government.

"We want the pressure to be felt and this message to be heard in Burma that the United States is going on record (on) the finding of genocide so that these atrocities stop," he said.

"It's not only sanctions, but also increasing the pressure internally. One of the things we have to do is use social media, radio, television

to tell the people inside the country what is actually happening. Because their government is giving them disinformation," Royce said.

The Burma Task Force welcomed the House resolution.

"The House of Representatives has now officially adopted the position that the ongoing policies of mass violence and displacement against the Rohingya by the Myanmar government constitute genocide, bringing the US closer to the emerging international consensus on the issue," it said.

Agriculture, women's safety, jobs are my priorities: Kamal Nath

BHOPAL, DEC 14 (PTI): Madhya Pradesh chief minister-designate Kamal Nath said Friday that strengthening the farm sector, ensuring safety of women and job creation will be his priorities.

He also said that the promise of farm loan waiver made by the Congress will be fulfilled.

"Our priority will be to strengthen the agriculture sector to ramp up farm-based economy in Madhya Pradesh," he told reporters at his residence here.

"My government will provide a safe environment to women and shore up employment avenues for the youth," Nath said.

An alarming number of cases of crime against women in the state in the last couple of years has been a matter of concern.

"We are going to



waive farmers' loans as promised," Nath said, adding, "I thank the people from the bottom of my heart for voting for the Congress. I assure them I will never let them down."

Nath (72) will be sworn in as the 18th

chief minister of Madhya Pradesh on Monday. The nine-time Lok Sabha member from Chhindwara was elected as the leader of Congress Legislature Party Thursday night.

The Congress emerged as the single largest par-

ty by bagging 114 seats in the 230-member Assembly in the recently concluded state polls. It also secured the support of one SP legislator, two BSP and four independent MLAs to cross the majority mark of 116.

Chinese FM to visit India next week for first meeting of people-to-people mechanism



BEIJING, DEC 14 (PTI): Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi will visit India next week to attend the first high-level meeting of Sino-India 'people-to-people mechanism' agreed between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and President Xi Jinping in June, officials announced here on Friday.

During the visit from December 21-24, Wang will co-chair the meeting along with External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Lu Kang told a media briefing.

The two countries decided to set up "people to people mechanism"

during Prime Minister Modi's meeting with President Xi at Qingdao in June this year on the sidelines of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) summit.

The people-to-people mechanism is aimed at building on the momentum of the informal summit between Modi and Xi at Wuhan in April this year.

Prime Minister Modi met President Xi in April in an unprecedented two-day heart-to-heart summit in the central Chinese city of Wuhan to solidify the India-China relationship after the Doklam standoff last year.

Hundreds attend Khole Chetkoh Konyak's memorial service

Dimapur, Dec 14 (PTI): Hundreds of people from all walks of life Friday attended a memorial service of National Socialist Council of Nagaland (ISM) vice president Khole Chetkoh Konyak who passed away on Wednesday in New Delhi.

The service, held at Agri Expo here, was jointly organised by Naga Hoho and Naga Council, Dimapur.

A representative of Naga Hoho, the apex body of the Naga tribes, described Khole as a true Naga nationalist who made significant contributions to the Naga freedom struggle and stood tall till his last breath.

Minister for Agriculture, G Kaito Aye said Khole was at the forefront of Naga political struggle and his demise is a big loss to the Nagas.

This is not a good moment for the Nagas, he said, adding that the need of the hour is to remain united for Naga political solution without sabotaging it.

Opposition Leader T R Zeliang said Khole stood his ground in his quest to bring about a solution to the Naga political issue.

"He was not a man of greed or for personal gain but dedicated for the well-being of the Nagas till his last breath.

The Naga people expected that under the leadership of Khole and Th Muivah, the Naga political issue could be resolved once and for all. However, Khole's sudden demise before any final solution is a huge loss to the Naga people in general," Zeliang said.

Zeliang added that 70 years of struggle and 21 years of political negotiations were long enough and it was high time that both the negotiating parties -- the India government and Naga political groups -- should come to a conclusion to bring permanent peace and harmony to the region.

Forum for Naga Reconciliation, FNR Wati Aier said Khole was always consistent when it came to Naga nationalism.

Various other Naga civil societies including Naga Mothers Association, Eastern Naga Legislators Forum, and Eastern Nagaland Peoples Organisation were part of the memorial service.

Meanwhile, NSCN(ISM) sources said that Khole's send off service will be held at Camp Hebron on Saturday after which his body will be taken to the native village in Wangshu under Tobu sub-division in Mon district.

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Privatisation of PSBs not panacea; need to cut govt mandates for PSBs: Rajan

NEW DELHI, DEC 14 (PTI): Pointing out that privatisation of public sector banks is not panacea for all ills, former RBI Governor Raghuram Rajan Friday made a case for reduction of uncompensated mandates like lending targets and pushing government schemes through branches of state-owned lenders.

He also said there is a need to reduce the Statutory Liquidity Ratio and substituting this with the li-

quidity coverage ratios and net stable funding ratios set by Basel.

Last week, the RBI decided to reduce SLR, the portion of deposits required to be mandatorily invested in government bonds, by 0.25 per cent every quarter beginning January 2018. The calibrated reduction in SLR will continue till it reaches 18 per cent from the existing 19.5 per cent.

The banking system

is overburdened with non-performing loans and there is a need to adequately professionalise boards of PSBs, Rajan said adding the government should do away with board appointments to avoid unnecessary politicisation.

"Much of the problem lies in PSBs but private sector banks like ICICI and Axis Bank, as well as some of the old private banks, have not been immune. Some of the malaise comes from

a general need to improve governance, transparency and incentives in the system. However, the difficulties in even some private banks suggest that 'simple' solutions like privatising all public sector banks may be no panacea," he said.

The former RBI governor also expressed concerns over uncompensated government mandates being imposed on PSBs for a long time.

"This is lazy govern-

ment if an action is worth doing, it should be paid for out of budgetary resources. It also is against the interests of minority shareholders in PSBs. Finally, it does not draw the private sector in to compete for such activities," he said. The government should incentivise all banks to take up activities it thinks desirable, not impose it on a few, especially as the privileges associated with a banking license diminish, Rajan added. Not-

ing that among the more dangerous mandates are lending targets and compulsory loan waivers, he said government-imposed credit targets are often achieved by abandoning appropriate due diligence and creating the environment for future NPAs. He also emphasised that the government should keep its banks well capitalised.

"This is simply good accounting practice, for it prevents the government from building up contingent liabil-

ities on bank balance sheets that a future government will have to pay for," he said. Rajan, who was 23rd Governor of the RBI, also observed that too many risks devolve onto banks, including those of interest rate volatility that banks elsewhere typically lay off in markets.

"Too much project risk stays with banks because other financial instruments such as equity and subordinate debt cannot be issued cheap-

ly. Risk also returns through the backdoor; Banks do not make loans to housing developers because of their intrinsic risks. Nevertheless, they make loans to NBFCs, who make loans to developers," he said.

To prevent risk from returning to bank balance sheets, NBFCs must be able to raise money directly from markets, he add-

India bounce back but Australia still on top



PERTH, DEC 14 (PTI): India recovered from a patchy start to reduce Australia to 277 for six on the opening day of the second Test but the hosts still walked out with advantage considering the bowler-friendly conditions, here on Friday.

A 112-run opening stand between Marcus Harris (70) and Aaron Finch (50) vindicated their decision to bat on green top before Indian bowlers made a decent recovery by taking three wickets each in the last two sessions.

With the pitch offering better assistance from the post lunch session and the Indian bowlers managing to rectify their line and length, the visitors made in roads into the Australian batting line-up.

Skipper Tim Paine (16 not out) and Pat Cummins (11 not out) were unbeaten at stumps after enduring a testing spell from Jasprit Bumrah.

Pacer Ishant Sharma (2/35) and spinner Hanuma Vihari (2/53) took two wickets apiece while Bumrah (1/41) and Umesh Yadav (1/68) accounted for one batsman each.

Following a good start, Shaun Marsh (45) and Peter Handscomb (7) looked to extend their fourth-wicket partnership but could only manage to add three runs as Sharma broke through early in the final session.

Handscomb looked to cut away too close to his body, and Virat Kohli held a stunning one-handed catch at second slip to dismiss him in the second over after tea.

Marsh and Travis Head (58) then added 84 runs for the fifth wicket, and in doing so took Australia past 200 in the 69th over. India could have broken through early, but Rishabh Pant put down a regulation catch from Marsh (on 24) off Vihari in the 67th over.

India were looking in bother again when Marsh fell against the run of play, trying to cut Vihari and edging to first slip where Ajinkya Rahane made no mistake.

Head reached his third Test half-century off 70 balls but threw it all away as he square cut a wide delivery off Sharma six overs later and was caught at wide third man.

Earlier, India struck thrice post lunch as Australia were reduced to 145-3 at tea.

Jasprit Bumrah (1/41) and Umesh Yadav (1/68) struck during a tight spell in the second hour of play after lunch, as Australia lost three wickets for 22 runs.

Post lunch, Marcus Harris had brought up his maiden Test half-century off 90 balls as he took his opening stand with Aaron Finch (50) to

112.

Their 100-stand had come up in the 34th over, with India leaking another 48 runs in the hour's play after the break. Mohammed Shami (0-63) conceded 23 runs in his four-over second-spell after lunch.

Finch too reached his second Test half-century off 103 balls as Australia reached a position of strength. But things turned thereafter as Bumrah struck first up in the 36th over, trapping Finch lbw with a fuller delivery.

KL Rahul dropped Harris (on 60) off Shami in the 45th over, with the fielder failing to time his jump at second slip. It didn't cost India too much though as four overs later, he hit a surprise bouncer from Vihari straight at Rahane at slip.

In between, Yadav used the pressure built and etched out Usman Khawaja's (5) wicket, out caught behind in the 46th over as India gained the fruits of their hard work in this second hour of play.

In the morning session, Australia defied a green-top wicket and made steady progress to reach 66-0 at lunch.

The Perth wicket at the Optus Stadium was talked up a raging green-top wicket, but the Australian openers defied all that speculation. For their part, Indian pacers chipped in with all possible help and bowled a poor first spell with the new ball.

Sharma started with a delivery down leg as the first Test ball to be bowled at this ground. It didn't change much for this first spell of four overs as he sprayed the ball all over. He seemed to be more concerned about not bowling any no balls, than maintaining an attacking line first up.

At the other end, Bumrah was bowling short of length, even if he bowled quicker than Sharma. This new ball pairing proved expensive and wasteful as Yadav came on as first change in the ninth over.

Shami was India's best bowler of the first session as he bowled with immaculate control from the very beginning. He came on to bowl in the 12th over and immediately troubled the batsmen.

Finch survived an lbw shout on account of height as India wasted a DRS review. They had another loud shout turned down on the very next ball, but this time no review was taken.

India bowled better in the second hour of play and conceded only 19 runs in 13 overs. But the damage had already been done as the duo were set and the new ball had been wasted on a fresh pitch.

NEW DELHI, DEC 14 (PTI):

Real Kashmir FC and Gokulam Kerala buried the hatchet after a bitter spat over training ground, with the third-placed visitors agreeing to go ahead with their I-League game in Kozhikode Saturday.

"All set for the game tomorrow.Lets play.@ILeagueOfficial," Real Kashmir FC wrote on their twitter handle after the two teams decided to make peace during a meeting.

Earlier in the day, Real Kashmir had alleged they were hurled abuses and manhandled by officials of Gokulam Kerala, who "deprived" the visitors training facilities ahead of their game.

"Football is passion for RKFC and whatever happened at Kozhikode today was not in the interest of the game," Real Kashmir co-owner Sandeep Chattoo said through the club's twitter handle.

Lying third after a

sensational start to their maiden season in top-flight, Real Kashmir are scheduled to face seventh-placed Gokulam Kerala at the EMS Corporation Stadium.

"Winning or losing is a part of game and we hope that football wins! It's heartwarming to receive an overwhelming support of local Kerala population which rallied behind RKFC," Sandeep Chattoo and Shamim Mehraj, Co-founders, Real Kashmir FC, said on twitter.

The Srinagar-based club also tweeted a photo of the two coaches -- Real Kashmir FC's David Robertson and Gokulam Kerala's Bino George -- shaking hands on the eve of the match.

Gokulam Kerala also wanted to look ahead to the game, which they will need to win to avoid slipping further in the pecking order.

"GKFC requests everyone concerned to put

an end to this chapter and focus on the better things, we will continue to be good hosts no matter what others say about us," Gokulam Kerala tweeted.

Real Kashmir have had a wonderful campaign till now collecting 13 points from seven games, with four wins to their credit.

Gokulam have earned nine from the same number of games but have had some good days in office.

GKFC coach George said: "It is a do or die match for us, the players are ready to face @realkashmirfc and they are motivated to prove themselves. We hope to get our 3 points, and stay in the @ILeagueOfficial fight."

Earlier, countering RKFC's claims, Gokulam Kerala FC had issued a clarification and alleged poor and irresponsible behaviour by the visiting team.

Real Kashmir FC club

was the first to issue a statement, giving the sequence of events.

"An unfortunate incident happened today morning in Kozhikode in Kerala when the coach and other members of RKFC were abused and heckled by officials of Gokulam Kerala FC," the Kashmir club had said in a statement.

"As per protocol, the home team is supposed to provide a ground two days ahead of the main game for practice. However, RKFC was deprived of that. This morning no transport was provided to ferry the team from hotel to the ground and when they managed to reach themselves, the home team officials prevented physically from entering the ground," it added in the statement.

Real Kashmir go into the match after a thumping 6-1 win against Shillong Lajong at home.

They further said, 'Abuses were hurled at

the team members including their coach and finally the RKFC members were asked to leave the ground and stay indoors till the match tomorrow with Gokulam Kerala FC.

"There was no team bus, no proper training ground was provided by the host Gokulam Kerala FC, which is a mandatory requirement as per the guidelines of the I-League."

This is Real Kashmir's first season in the I-League after winning the second division last year.

"We condemn the treatment that has been met by our team members who have been asked to stay inside the hotel till tomorrow's game.

"Our coach and staff was abused by the officials of Gokulam Kerala FC. We need police protection and assurance that none of our players or staff members

will be harmed," said Real Kashmir.

Gokulam also took to Twitter to issue a clarification. Gokulam said that they had arranged for a bus for the club officials to the Medical College training ground.

Gokulam alleged that Real Kashmir invaded the EMS stadium where training a day before the match is not allowed.

"Today is 'Harthal' (strike) organised by a political party. After a long previous night of arrangements to get the transport for both the teams, we managed to send the bus for RKFC. Medical college ground was booked for RKFCs training," Gokulam had said.

"Before the bus arrived, RKFCs officials who are staying in a nearby hotel invaded the EMS Stadium, where training a day before the match is not allowed. To keep this in track, we refused to let them train in the EMS.

Lyon will enjoy bowling with amount of bounce here: Finch

PERTH, DEC 14 (PTI): Australian opener Aaron Finch believes the second Test against India is going to be a "real grind" and off-spinner Nathan Lyon will play an important role considering the amount of bounce on offer at the Perth wicket here.

Finch and Marcus Harris put on 112 runs for the opening partnership after which Australia finished the day at 277-6.

"It's going to be one of those games that'll be a real grind for both sides. The position we're in we would have taken at the start of the day, no doubt, especially winning the toss and batting," Finch told reporters.

"I think Nathan Lyon will enjoy bowling with the amount of bounce on this track, no doubt he

will be excited to bowl here," added the opener, who scored 50 in Australia's first innings on Friday.

Finch said batsmen can become indecisive sometimes while playing on this wicket.

"When the ball starts seaming off good parts of the wicket and quite dramatically at times, I think that's when you know you need to tighten up," he said.

"But you have to also be in a position to cash in on some balls that you can hit, otherwise you get stuck in two minds and end up letting the wicket get you out.

"So you have to be really proactive and take that out of play as much as you can," he added, on how he and Harris batted on this wicket."

We need to focus on grassroots sports, says Bindra

MUMBAI, DEC 14 (PTI): India's lone individual Olympic gold medalist, Abhinav Bindra, Friday underlined the importance of catching them young, in sporting disciplines, for the country to make waves at the global level.

"Having a sports culture in a country like ours is extremely important. If we are serious about sports, we need to focus on grassroots, because grassroots is where we need (to) invest our efforts to create sporting champions of tomorrow," said the 2008 Olympic shooting champion.

He was speaking at the scholarship awards function of Sports for All, a school-level competition.

"Our partnership



with SFA is a reiteration of the same. This platform is brimming with potential talent which, if trained in the right manner, can win laurels for the country," added Bindra who was here to scout for young talent from SFA to train in his high perfor-

mance centres.

Ananya Budhivant (shooting) and Yohaani Panjani (football) were among seven Mumbai school children who were picked to train at the Abhinav Bindra Targeting Performance Centre (ABTP).

The others were:

Joshua Eapen, Saheb Sodhi (both tennis), Deviah Jain (badminton), Reva Ranjan Kotian (karate) and Sahil Atul Manjrekar (mixed martial arts).

Also present at the function was former India tennis star Somdev Devvarman.

Indian techie sentenced to nine years in prison for sexual assault inside plane

WASHINGTON, DEC 14 (PTI): A 35-year-old Indian IT professional was sentenced in the US to nine years in prison for a "brazen sexual assault" against a sleeping woman during a flight early this year and will be deported to India after the completion of his jail term.

The incident happened on a nighttime Spirit Airlines flight from Las Vegas to Detroit in January.

Prabhu Ramamoorthy, who came to the US on a H-1B visa in 2015, will be deported after he serves his sentence, a federal court in Detroit said as it sentenced the Indian national to nine years of imprisonment.

Judge Terrence Berge hoped it would be grave enough to deter others from committing similar crimes. Federal prosecutors had sought 11 years of imprisonment for Ramamoorthy.

"Everyone has the right to be secure and safe when they travel on airplanes. We will not

tolerate the behaviour of anyone, who takes advantage of victims who are in a vulnerable position. We appreciate the victim in this case for her courage to speak out," US Attorney Matthew Schneider said after the sentencing was announced.

Ramamoorthy, who hails from Tamil Nadu, was convicted in August after a five-day trial that was conducted before United States District Judge Terrence Berg. The jury deliberated approximately three-and-a-half hours before returning the guilty verdict.

According to the evidence presented at the trial, on January 3, Ramamoorthy had engaged in a sexual act with a female, while she was sleeping on a flight from Las Vegas to Detroit. Ramamoorthy was seated along with his wife, when he sexually assaulted his co-passenger.

During the trial, the government admitted evidence demonstrat-



ing that Ramamoorthy had digitally penetrated the 22-year-old woman sleeping next to him during the overnight flight. The sexual assault woke her up, she found her pants unbuttoned and unzipped, and sought help from the flight attendants.

The victim, who was a model, sat paralysed in disbelief, and texted her boyfriend.

The sentence was proof that the safety and security of all aircraft passengers was a priority for the FBI, said Timothy R Slater, Special Agent in Charge, Detroit Division of the FBI.

According to court papers, Ramamoorthy's parents are farmers. He came to the US in July, 2015 after his graduation to work as an IT professional.

During his trial, Ramamoorthy presented himself to the court as a confused man stranded in America without English language skills despite his sophisticated technological job, federal prosecutors alleged. "His lack of empathy and remorse should not go unnoticed by this court," they argued, seeking nearly 11 years of imprisonment for him.

In pleading for leniency, Ramamoorthy's lawyer, James Amberg, argued that his client lived a clean and productive life before this incident. He had no criminal record in the US or India.

Amberg also said that his client had already been assaulted in prison since his arrest months ago, and that he faces a lifetime of shunning when he returns to India.

"He will suffer long after this sentence is done," Amberg said.

In recent years, a number of Indian nationals have been ar-

rested or charged with sexual assaults inside a plane. The FBI says airplane sexual assault is a serious offence that is on the rise. FBI statistics indicate that investigations of mid-air sexual assaults increased by 66 per cent from 2014 to 2017.

That was in part due to increasingly "cramped, confined spaces; alcohol and drugs; fewer flight attendants; and dark cabins on night flights" -- factors that "likely embolden offenders" -- the FBI said in a recent report.

The cramped style of airplane seating can exacerbate trauma for victims. According to mental health professionals, victims who are violated in confined spaces feel even more helpless, vulnerable and powerless. Victims may also feel intimidated by the person sitting next to them since the seating arrangement means that the perpetrator is effectively blocking the victim from getting up, according to the FBI.

UN climate talks: Experts slam ‘weak’ draft text on implementing Paris accord

TG BIJU KATOWICE (POLAND), DEC 14 (PTI): Hours ahead of the UN climate talks are set to end here, diplomats from across the world Friday came up with a “weak” draft text on a rulebook for the full implementation of the Paris Agreement post-2020, even as key issues like finance remain unresolved.

Developing nations, which rely on fossil fuels, say they cannot make their economies greener without transparent funding from the developed nations.

With the UN Climate Change Conference (COP24) about to conclude, civil society organisations criticised the current draft text released by the host, Poland, saying it is “weak” and it carries “the US imprint everywhere”.

They claimed that the basic principles of the

UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) such as equity and Common but Differentiated Responsibilities and Respective Capabilities (CBDRRC) and matters agreed in the Paris accord, including on finance, have not been reflected in the draft text.

“On the whole, the analysis is that the current draft text is weak in terms of finance and raising ambition. It is still a long way to go to determine the finer details of the elements,” Indian climate expert Chandra Bhushan said.

Bhushan, who is also the deputy director general of New Delhi-based advocacy group Centre for Science and Environment (CSE), alleged that developing countries have lost the fight for “flexibility to all” while providing information on their climate action.

He said it is a clear



victory for the US, the EU and China.

According to the analysis prepared by the CSE, there is no mention of raising ambition in action and support post-2020 and integrating it with science.

For pre-2020, the developed countries are merely encouraged to step up their pre-2020 ambitions, it said.

“Loss and damage is

the weakest and clearly implies that developed countries have turned a blind eye to the most existential impacts of climate change on poor and vulnerable countries,” it said in its findings released to the media.

Harjeet Singh of ActionAid said the Paris rulebook is at risk of being a “total washout”.

“A rulebook that doesn’t reflect #Los-

sAndDamage and a way forward on #ClimateFinance would be unacceptable,” Singh tweeted.

Meena Raman of Third World Network (TWN) said “it looks like US writings is everywhere in the text”.

“Many concerns expressed by the developing countries are not there. But the US imprint is very very clear,” she said.

China lodges “stern” protest with US over Senate bill on Tibet



BEIJING, DEC 14 (PTI): China has lodged a “stern” diplomatic protest with the US over the Senate passing a bipartisan legislation that seeks to impose a visa ban on Chinese officials who deny American citizens, officials and journalists access to Tibet, even as Beijing asked Washington not to make it a law.

Reacting to the US move, Chinese foreign ministry spokesman Lu Kang said here that the American action disregarded facts and amounted to interfering in China’s internal affairs and was a violation of international rules.

“China is firmly opposed to it and lodged stern representations to the US. I have to point out that Tibet affairs come under China’s internal affairs and it allows no foreign interference,” he said.

“The Reciprocal Access to Tibet Act,” seek-

ing unhindered access to Tibetan areas for Americans, something which is routinely denied by the Chinese government, was passed by the US House of Representatives in September.

The US Senate on Tuesday passed the crucial bipartisan legislation that also calls for a visa ban on Chinese officials who deny American citizens, government officials and journalists access to Tibet, the remote Himalayan homeland of exiled Tibetan spiritual leader the Dalai Lama.

The legislation, passed unanimously, comes amid the Trump administration imposing massive trade import duties on

China that has started impacting the Chinese economy.

The bill now heads to the White House for President Donald Trump to sign into law.

Lu said foreigners entering Tibet can apply through normal channels and every year a lot of foreigners and local tourists visit Tibet.

He said since 2015, about 40,000 Americans visited Tibet and this included US Senators, Congressmen and businessmen.

“This shows the US accusations do not hold water at all and Chinese government and people cannot accept that. We urge the US to immediately take effective measures to stop signing the act into law and thus avoid harming US-China relations and our cooperation in key areas,” he said.

Senior Bangla opposition leader’s motorcade attacked in Mirpur

DHAKA, DEC 14 (PTI): A senior Bangladesh opposition leader’s motorcade was attacked Friday after he visited a mausoleum in Mirpur to pay tributes to intellectuals killed in the 1971 independence war with Pakistan.

Jatiya Oikyafront leader Kamal Hossain’s motorcade came under attack near the Martyred Intellectuals Memorial as he and other alliance leaders were getting in their cars, said Latiful Bari Hamim, a staff of the Oikyafront’s media wing.

The Jatiya Oikyafront is an alliance of the Ban-

gladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), Hossain-led Jatiya Oikya Prokriya, Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal, and Nagonik Oikya.

The Oikyafront was formed on October 13 with the demand of holding a national election under a neutral government after dissolution of parliament and release of BNP chairperson Khaleda Zia from jail.

At least 12 leaders and activists from the Oikya Front have been injured in the attack and about seven cars were vandalised, bd-news24.com reported.

However, Hossain was unhurt in the attack.

“We are here to pay tribute to the martyred intellectuals. We must uphold our independence and make it meaningful for everyone, as millions of martyrs have sacrificed their lives for it,” Hossain said.

“We’re working to create a beautiful society free of repression. We’ll free the country from the clutches of those who work against our dreams. They will have to give in to our countrymen, no matter how powerful they are,” he said.

The opposition said such attacks were designed to weaken them ahead of the poll on December 30.

The war in 1971 broke after the sudden crackdown at midnight past on March 25, 1971 in the erstwhile East Pakistan by the Pakistani troops and ended on December 16.

The same year Pakistan conceded defeat and unconditionally surrendered in Dhaka to the allied forces comprising the freedom fighters and the Indian soldiers.

UK’s May returns to face EU leaders after Brexit deal rebuff

BRUSSELS, DEC 14 (AFP): British Prime Minister Theresa May returned to face EU leaders Friday after they rebuffed her pleas for help to sell her Brexit plan back home and warned of the growing threat of a “no deal.”

May had sought to persuade her 27 colleagues she could overcome huge opposition to the divorce deal among British MPs if they gave her some assurances over the thorny problem of the Irish border.

But they were not convinced, and European diplomats said May had been unable to explain what she wanted or how she could deliver a British parliamentary majority to endorse the deal.

“The signals we heard yesterday were not particularly reassuring on Britain’s capacity to honour the commitments that were made,” Belgian Prime Minister Charles Michael said.

“So we will make sure to prepare for all scenarios and prepare also for a no deal scenario,” he added, as he arrived for the second and final day of the EU summit.

On Thursday, European Commission president Jean-Claude Juncker repeated statements made all week by European leaders that “there is no room

whatsoever for renegotiation” of the deal.

May postponed a vote in the House of Commons this week on the Brexit deal to avoid a crushing defeat, but has promised it will take place next month, by January 21 at the latest.

This is uncomfortably close to Britain’s scheduled exit day on March 29, 2019 - and Juncker said he was stepping up preparations in case it leaves with no deal in place.

Austrian Chancellor Sebastian Kurz added on Friday: “There is a withdrawal deal, and there is an urgent necessity to take decisions. We should avoid a no deal scenario.”

May did not speak as she arrived for the summit, where she met with French President Emmanuel Macron before EU-wide discussions on migration, Russia and climate change.

She came to Brussels wounded by a confidence vote on Wednesday night, which she won but in which 117 MPs - more than one-third of her Conservative party - voted to oust her.

Opposition to the Brexit deal in Britain is focused on a so-called “backstop” arrangement designed to keep open the border with Ireland if and until a new UK-EU trade deal is signed.

May is seeking “legal

and political assurances” that this will not keep Britain trapped indefinitely in an EU customs union.

Several EU leaders have talked of offering “clarifications” and “explanations”, and a statement issued after they talked without May late Thursday emphasised they will try to ensure the backstop is never triggered.

But, while an early draft of the conclusions said the EU “stands ready to examine whether any further assurances can be provided” on the backstop, this was removed from the final version.

“Colleagues were so exasperated that she left with less than she could have got,” a European source said.

May told EU leaders they must help her “change the perception that the backstop could be a trap from which the UK cannot escape”, according to a British official.

“With the right assurances, this deal can be passed. Indeed it is the only deal that is capable of getting through my parliament,” she told them.

But European sources said the room was tense, with German Chancellor Angela Merkel and other leaders repeatedly interrupting May to ask her what she wanted and how she could deliver it.

Another source who

had been in the room told AFP on Friday that May had contradicted herself and failed to say how any assurances on the backstop might work, to the consternation of fellow leaders.

On Friday, however, Luxembourg Prime Minister Xavier Bettel on defended May, saying she “did a good job, she got the best possible deal” despite being able to deliver her own party’s lawmakers.

“The problem is the MPs in London,” he said.

“The fact is for internal political reasons in the UK some people try to gamble the relation between the EU and the UK for the future. And it’s bad.”

May has faced constant criticism to her Brexit strategy from hardline anti-Europeans in her party, while the Northern Irish party which props up her government also opposes her deal.

They want the backstop out of the agreement entirely -- but Irish Prime Minister Leo Varadkar once again emphasised the need to have legal guarantees on keeping open the Irish border.

“By resolving it in the withdrawal agreement we can make sure no side uses the threat of a border in Ireland as part of leverage in the future relationship talks,” he said.

Lanka SC upholds restraining court order against Rajapaksa from acting as PM

COLOMBO, DEC 14 (PTI): Sri Lanka’s Supreme Court Friday refused to stay a court order restraining Mahinda Rajapaksa from holding the office of Prime Minister until it fully heard the case next month, prolonging the political uncertainty plaguing the country for nearly two months.

The apex court’s latest ruling came a day after it unanimously declared that the dissolution of Parliament by President Maithripala Sirisena was “illegal”, in a body blow to the embattled leader, whose controversial decisions plunged the island nation into an unprecedented political turmoil.

The Supreme Court decided that a Court of Appeal order issued against the appointment of Rajapaksa as Prime Minister and against his Cabinet from holding office will stand, Colombo Gazette reported.

The appeal filed by Rajapaksa will be taken up for hearing on January 16, 17 and 18.

The apex court asked all parties to provide written submissions within three weeks.

The Appeal Court on December 3 issued notice and an interim order against Rajapaksa and



his Government, preventing them from acting as Prime Minister, Cabinet and Deputy Ministers.

The order was issued in a case filed by 122 lawmakers against Rajapaksa and his new government.

Rajapaksa and the members of the purported government filed the appeal against the Court of Appeal’s interim injunction that restrained them from functioning in their respective posts.

The United National Front (UNF) said that the order means Rajapaksa cannot be Prime Minister and so the former cabinet must be reinstated.

UNF Parliamentarian Ajith Perera said that the President must now appoint Ranil Wickremesinghe as Prime Minister.

Sri Lanka is going through a major political

crisis since October 26 when President Maithripala Sirisena, in a controversial move, removed Wickremesinghe and installed ex-strongman Mahinda Rajapaksa in his place.

Parliamentarians of Wickremesinghe’s UNP, Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP) and Tamil National Alliance on November 23 filed the petition in the Court of Appeal challenging Rajapaksa on continuing to hold the office of Prime Minister after a no-confidence motion was passed in Parliament against him.

Sirisena, after sacking Wickremesinghe on October 26, dissolved Parliament and called for a snap election on January 5.

However, the Supreme Court overturned his decision and halted the prepa-

rations for snap polls.

Wickremesinghe and Rajapaksa both claim to be the prime ministers with the former claiming that his dismissal is invalid because he still holds a majority in the 225-member Parliament.

Prior to the crisis, Wickramasinghe’s UNP had the backing of 106 parliamentarians while Rajapaksa and Sirisena combine had 95 seats.

Rajapaksa has, so far,

failed to prove his majority in Parliament.

The President has

said that due to sharp personal differences with Wickremesinghe, he would not reappoint him as the Prime Minister.

However, Wickremesinghe’s UNP claims that Sirisena will be left with no choice as he would be the man who will command the confidence in the House.

Pak receives second USD 1 billion bailout package from Saudi Arabia

ISLAMABAD, DEC 14 (PTI): Cash-strapped Pakistan on Friday received USD 1 billion from its close ally Saudi Arabia as part of a second bailout package to boost the country’s dwindling dollar reserves, according to media reports.

The latest package has shored up the central bank’s foreign reserves, hitting the USD 9.4 billion mark, said State Bank of Pakistan Spokesman Abid Qamar.

He said another Saudi financial package was expected in January next year, Dawn newspaper reported.

In October, Saudi Ara-

bia agreed to provide Pakistan USD 3 billion in foreign currency support for a year to address its balance-of-payments crisis.

During Prime Minister Imran Khan’s visit to Saudi Arabia on October 23, it was announced that the oil-rich country will provide a USD 6 billion package to Pakistan to support its ailing economy.

The package included USD 3 billion balance of payments support and USD 3 billion in deferred payments on oil import.

Pakistan received the first tranche of USD 1 billion from Saudi Arabia on November 9.



According to figures shared by Prime Minister Khan in October, the country’s total foreign debt has surged to Rs 30,000 billion within the last decade, while circular debt has reached Rs 1,200 billion, the report said.

The ruling Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) government has also ap-

proached China, the UAE and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to seek packages to support the economy.

The second Saudi instalment will bolster Pakistan’s foreign exchange reserves, which fell to USD 7.3 billion in the week ended December 7 - the lowest in more than four and a half years.



A ROYAL HONOR! Actress Keira Knightley looks chic in Chanel as she receives an OBE for her services to drama and charity at Buckingham Palace in London.

I definitely want to be a father: Nick Jonas



LOS ANGELES, DEC 14 (PTI): Actor-singer Nick Jonas, who recently married Priyanka Chopra, says he "definitely" wants to have kids in the future.

Priyanka, 36, and Nick, 26, exchanged wedding vows on December 1 at Jodhpur's majestic Umaid Bhawan Palace in a Catholic ceremony officiated by the groom's father Kevin Jonas Sr.

The wedding was followed by an equally grand ceremony as per Hindu traditions on December 2.

Talking to Spotify's The Rewind, Jonas shared his plans to start a family with Priyanka, saying, "I definitely want to be a father someday."

He also opened up about his own childhood and said he grew up "pretty quick".

"I think that's a real dream, and I think I have had to grow up pretty quick. With that, you could look at it two ways, you could say that was unfair, or you could say it has given me some real perspective at an early age," Jonas said.

"And I have seen a lot of life at an early age and I hope to be able to share that with a

from all sides - local newspapers, neighbors, and conversations on the street. The level of excitement in your neighborhood is likely high, and you could get caught up in it. Be prepared for some surprises.

CANCER: Cancer, you might choose to do some volunteer work today or help a friend. This could make you aware of a talent you didn't know you had. It could pave the way to more income. You could feel very proud of yourself and decide to do more with this ability, leading not only to financial benefits but also to increased self-esteem. Go for it.

LEO: Today you might wake up feeling that you can move mountains - and this might be exactly what you set out to do, figuratively speaking. Your physical energy, enthusiasm, and self-confidence are very high, Leo. Your own and others' creative projects could take up a lot of your time. If you're coaching or helping others, however, avoid the temptation to take over the project.

Varun, Alia, win favourite actor honour at Nickelodeon Kids Choice Awards

MUMBAI, DEC 14 (PTI): Popular on-screen pair Varun Dhawan and Alia Bhatt won the favourite actor award at the 2018 Nickelodeon Kids Choice Awards, Friday night.

At the ceremony, Deepika Padukone won the powerhouse performer of the year award.

"Performing for my young fans is always fun and each year of this unique awards has been much more entertaining and exciting than the previous. Being recognised by kids and being slimed as a mark of honour was a lot of fun and an amazing experience," Alia said in a statement.

Varun said he was honoured to receive the award and said performing on stage for kids brought out the child in him. Apart from the favourite actor (male) award, Varun also bagged the title of Favourite Entertainer.

The award ceremony celebrated the best in the world of entertainment across films, television, mobile gaming,

sports among others.

Superstar Salman Khan-starrer "Tiger Zinda Hai" was adjudged kid's favourite film while its chartbuster track 'Swag Se Swagat' was voted as the song of the year.

Other winners for the night were Tiger Shroff, who bagged the Favourite Dancing Star award, "Dhadak" actor Ishaan Khatter won the new kid on the block award and Huma Qureshi got a special 'Mazedaar Judge' award for her TV stint.

On the small screen front, "Tarak Mehta Ka Ooltah Chashmah" had a clean sweep, winning not only the favourite TV Show award but also favourite TV characters, male and female for Dilip Joshi and Munmun Dutta respectively.

Aakriti Sharma, who plays Kulfu on the show "Kulfu Kumar Bajewala" was adjudged Favourite Child Entertainer, TV host-actor Maneish Paul also got a special 'Sultan of the stage' award.



Jennifer Garner, JJ Abrams to reunite for Apple's new limited series

LOS ANGELES, DEC 14 (PTI): The hit team of "Alias", actor Jennifer Garner and director JJ Abrams, are all set to reunite on a new series.

According to Deadline, tech giant Apple has handed a straight to series order to the show which is based on Amy Silverstein's 2017 novel "My Glory Was I Had Such Friends".

The show will feature 46-year-old Garner with Abrams, 52, serving as the executive producer.

The two had earlier collaborated on the ABC series, "Alias".

Karen Croner, best known for "The Tribes of Palos Verdes" and "Admission", will pen the series and also executive produce it.

The story focuses on an extraordinary group of women who supported Silverstein as she waited for a second life-saving heart transplant. Garner and Bad Robot's Ben Stephenson will also executive produce. The new series is just one of many Apple TV shows in development with big-wigs attached.

The company has green lit shows starring Steve Carell, Reese Witherspoon, Jennifer Aniston, Chris Evans and Octavia Spencer.

It has also signed deals with Oprah Winfrey and scored productions from Steven Spielberg, M Night Shyamalan and Kevin Durant.



Marriage a magical, beautiful celebration: Deepika

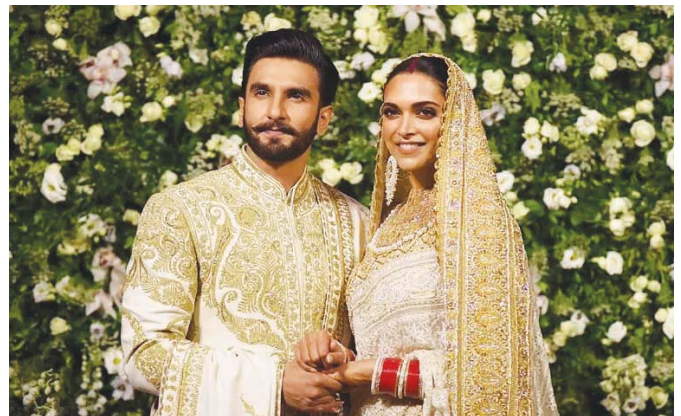
MUMBAI, DEC 14 (PTI): Newlywed Deepika Padukone says being married feels "magical".

Deepika and Ranveer got married in Italy on November 14 and 15. The couple then hosted three receptions for their colleagues from the film industry, media, family and friends in Bengaluru and Mumbai.

"It's been very magical, very special. We are happy we got to share it with all of you... Marriage itself is a beautiful celebration. While the literal celebrations are done, at least from our end, December as you know, is a festive period (so) as newlyweds the celebrations continue for a while," Deepika told reporters.

She was speaking at the red carpet of Nickelodeon Kids Choice Awards, Thursday night.

Ranveer is currently gearing up for the release of his latest "Simmba" and Deepika says the action-drama will become a huge hit. "I loved the trailer. It's signature Rohit Shetty film. I've had the pleasure of working with him and he has given me one of my most memorable characters. That aside, the film is on its way to become a blockbuster. It has success written all over it," she said.



ARIES: Changes to your chosen field are indicated, Aries. Ideas from other states or countries might fire your creativity. Your intellectual or artistic interests could take on a new dimension, expanding your horizons and opening new opportunities. You might toy with the idea of travel, perhaps to learn more about these matters. Possible formal education in new fields is also indicated.

TAURUS: A sum of money above and beyond your usual income could come your way. This could be a bonus, settlement, or even a gift of some kind. You could put it to work making changes in your home, perhaps repairs, perhaps remodeling or redecorating. This may seem like a daunting prospect, but you'll have the energy and enthusiasm in addition to the money. Go to it.

GEMINI: Some vast changes in your community could take place, Gemini. They're positive, for the most part. Today the news should spread widely, and you could be hearing about it

from all sides - local newspapers, neighbors, and conversations on the street. The level of excitement in your neighborhood is likely high, and you could get caught up in it. Be prepared for some surprises.

CANCER: Cancer, you might choose to do some volunteer work today or help a friend. This could make you aware of a talent you didn't know you had. It could pave the way to more income. You could feel very proud of yourself and decide to do more with this ability, leading not only to financial benefits but also to increased self-esteem. Go for it.

LEO: Today you might wake up feeling that you can move mountains - and this might be exactly what you set out to do, figuratively speaking. Your physical energy, enthusiasm, and self-confidence are very high, Leo. Your own and others' creative projects could take up a lot of your time. If you're coaching or helping others, however, avoid the temptation to take over the project.

VIRGO: Today you could recapture the joy in life that you had as a child, Virgo. You're serious by nature, and feelings of joy are to be lived and treasured. You could be experiencing true flow. There might not be any real reason for it, so don't try to find one. Your imagination and your relationships with others could be enhanced as a result. Relish the moment.

LIBRA: Projects involving a group, perhaps your entire community, could take up a lot of your time, Libra. Interesting news and stimulating conversations could come your way. Expect a lot of activity around you. You could be running around in the car, seeing a lot of people, getting errands taken care of. You could also find yourself changed somewhat - for the better, of course.

SCORPIO: New ideas for your career could be on your mind, Scorpio. You might be thinking not only about getting a new job but also

entering an entirely new field. This could be a positive development, but don't be too impulsive and leap without thinking. List your options, cross out the unworkable ones, and do some research on the rest. Even though you may feel some urgency, there is none.

SAGITTARIUS: Continued success and good luck should have you feeling charged up to move ahead with plans and ideas. Your energy and enthusiasm are high, Sagittarius. You're likely thinking about expanding your horizons, perhaps through travel or education. You should definitely give these serious thought. Plan carefully, and take care not to move before the time is right.

CAPRICORN: Don't be surprised if sometime during the day you feel angry for no apparent reason, Capricorn. It's probably rooted in the past, from a situation that wasn't resolved long ago. Take a good look at what's going on today. Did some person or event awaken old traumas

within you? Let them and the anger go. This can only benefit you and clear the way for more positive emotions.

AQUARIUS: This is a great day to start new enterprises with others, Aquarius. Gatherings with friends or group activities could lead to ideas for new projects that fire your energy and enthusiasm. New immediate and long-term goals should be set. Some people may not be interested and could drop out, but don't worry. Others who share your interests will quickly step in to take their places.

PISCES: Activities of some kind could put you in the public eye today, Pisces. Some work you've done well might bring you richly deserved acknowledgement. Your energy and enthusiasm are already high, and you're probably all fired up to do more. This could bring up thoughts of changes in your working situation. But don't give notice right away. Some careful thought is needed.