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Summit **TIMES**

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ON TOP OF THE NEWS

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Golay and Bhaichung discuss issues of Sikkim, confident of positive alliance

SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 15 JAN:

Sikkim Krantikari Morcha president, PS Tamang [Golay], and Hamro Sikkim Party vice president, Bhaichung Bhutia, sat in a closed door meeting here today and emerged confident that the two parties could work together for Sikkim. The meeting lasted for around 40 minutes and the two are reported to have discussed many issues concerning Sikkim and explore the possibility of an alliance for Election 2019.

Speaking to media-persons after the meeting, the SKM president said that it was a very positive meeting.

"We will work together for the people

of Sikkim. We talked about taking forward our programmes for the people of Sikkim. We talked about the issues of Sikkim. We are meeting again on 31 January for the second round of talks," he informed.

Mr Bhutia added, "The meeting was very positive. We had discussions on many issues. We will meet again on 31 Jan along with CEC members of both the parties and take forward the talks. As said by Mr Golay, we will work together for the people of Sikkim".

Asked about where the possibility of an electoral alliance stood and whether the CM candidate was discussed, Mr Tamang said, "We are positive about the alli-

ance but it has not been finalized yet. We will have a meeting on 31 Jan with CEC members on this. The discussions took place on the issues of Sikkim. There was no talk about CM candidate. Whatever discussions took place were on the issues of Sikkim. We have no personal agenda. We will together take forward the issues of Sikkim seeing the current situation."

Mr Bhutia echoed the same sentiments, albeit in a more abrasive tone. He said: "We have not come into politics to become CM or MLA...only Chamling is doing politics for the chair, only he is worried about the chair, he is not doing politics for Sikkimese people. We are



not for CM's chair but for the people of Sikkim. Our parties are not one man shows, so a final call will be taken by the CEC."

Asked about whether other parties were also coming forward to explore alliances, Mr Tamang said that SKM

was ready to work with parties which oppose the present system in Sikkim and want to bring change.

Mishaps in North Sikkim claim two



WANGCHUK BHUTIA

MANGAN, 15 JAN:

Two persons were killed in a fatal road mishap reported here at Dzongu in North Sikkim today.

The deceased, Tashi Lepcha and Sonam Lepcha, residents of Gnon basti, Lower Dzongu, died on the spot when their vehicle, a WagonR, plunged down around 300ft off the road at Gangdong under Hee-Gyathang GPU.

A third occupant, a lady, was grievously injured and has been referred to Gangtok after

first aid at Dikchu PHC. The ill-fated vehicle is reported to have been returning from Upper Dzongu when it met with the accident at around 9.10 AM.

In another incident, a cement-laden truck bearing registration WB-73C-3897 went off the road at Jang village near Dikchu.

The driver and the handy boy sustained injuries and have been referred to the District Hospital at Singtam after first aid at Dikchu PHC. The truck was plying to North Sikkim from Siliguri.

Tonight was an MS classic, says elated Kohli

ADELAIDE, JAN 15 (PTI):

India captain Virat Kohli called it an "MS classic" after Mahendra Singh Dhoni, with sixes that reminded of his heydays, hammered home the point that the finisher in him is still alive.

Dhoni slammed an unbeaten 55 off 54 balls after Kohli laid the foundation for India's series-leveling six-wicket victory over Australia in the second ODI with a fluent century.

"There is no doubt that he should be a part of this team. Tonight was MS classic. He calculates the game so well. He takes the game till the end, when only he knows what's going on in his mind, and he backs himself to hit those big shots at the end," Kohli said at the post-match presentation ceremony.

Kohli could not take his team home this time but Dhoni and Dinesh Karthik (25 off 14) rose to the occasion with an unbeaten 57-run stand, helping India chase down a target of 299 with four balls to spare.

Maghey Mela begins in Jorethang



JORETHANG, 15 JAN (IPR):

The three-day long Jorethang Maghey Sankranti Mela, themed "connect with your soul a festival of culture customs and tradition," was inaugurated by Speaker KN Rai at Jorethang playground today.

The chief guest was accompanied by IPR Minister, AKGhatani, who

is also the Maghey Mela Celebration Committee chief patron, Ministers RB Subba and NK Subba, chairpersons, advisors and a strong gathering of people.

The Speaker first offered prayers at the Trikaleshwar temple and then inaugurated AROGYA and CATCH Mela at Garib Utthan Bhawan.

He then inaugurated the 10th Sikkim SARAS Trade Fair organized by Sikkim Rural Livelihood Mission (SRLM), Rural Management and Development Department at the main venue.

Addressing the gathering, he spoke at length about the importance of this event and spoke in detail about the good

governance that the SDF Government has ensured for Sikkim in order to uplift the living standard of the general public with such initiatives as the recent Ronggar Mela and inauguration of a 1000-bedded Multi-Speciality Hospital at Sochyagang, Sichey.

Additionally, he informed that Janta Melas

will be commencing from 16 Jan from Paljor Stadium and urged the public to take advantages of the benefits provided by the State Government. Moreover, the Speaker emphasized that the Sikkim State Government will assiduously focus on the positive advancement of the State and its people. **turn to pg02**

Health services commitments to West dist have been met: Minister

SUMMIT REPORT

JORTHANG, 15 JAN:

Health Minister AK Ghatani shares that the State government has paid special attention to West district and improving health services there in line with IPCS norms.

He said that all the required infrastructure has been put in place, including upgrading two PHSCs to CHCs, and necessary manpower deployed. The Minister was responding to SummitTimes queries on allegations of non-fulfillment of commitments by the Health Department.

West district youth, it is informed, have initiated a "Gangtok Chalo" movement to protest the government's failure to deliver on written assurances given last July, in which the Department had sought 90 days to install all required infra-

structure including CT scan & sonographic machines and proper blood bank facilities.

The Minister said that the Department has already installed the ultrasound machine and blood bank facilities, adding that it has been made mandatory for specialists to visit the district hospital once a month to perform required procedures. Recently, the State Government upgraded the Soreng and Dentan PHSCs to CHC level.

He also informed that once the 50-bed AyUSH hospital is completed, West district will not face any difficulties in medical sector. Health Secretary, Vishal Chauhan, told SummitTimes that SPSC has already invited applications for appointment of super-specialists and hoped that many are joining the state government.

SKM files FIR against CM on menstruation comments

SAGAR CHHETRI

GANGTOK, 15 JAN:

Sikkim Krantikari Morcha today lodged an FIR against the Chief Minister at Sadar Thana alleging that his remarks on menstruation at a party meeting on 05 Dec were derogatory and outraged the modesty of women. It may be recalled that while speaking about untouchability, the CM had pointed out how, even today, some women were ostracized when on their monthly menstrual cycle.

The FIR filed by the SKM women's wing, also accuses the CM of making communal remarks



against different castes and speaking derogatorily about their religious beliefs.

Addressing a press conference here today, SKM Nari Morcha [East & North District] reiterated its demand for an apology from the CM and announced that they will continue with their protest until an apology

was issued.

SKMwomen's wing vice convener, Ganga Parsai, insisted that the remark was humiliating and disrespectful to women and also rejected SDF claims that the CM's comment was to initiate a wider discussion on menstruation which **turn to pg02**

Devanshi Agarwal: Sikkim's shooting star

SHITAL AGARWAL

GANGTOK, 15 JAN:

Born to Sanket Agarwal and Sonia Agarwal at Singtam, Devanshi Agarwal, is 14 years old and studying at Ecole Globale International Girls School, Dehradun. She took up Air Rifle shooting sport at her school. Meet Devanshi Agarwal who made history last August at the 17th Uttarakhand Open State Shooting Championship held at Poudha. She won five gold medals and a bronze, the most by an individual. And this was only Devanshi's second tournament.

Devanshi's success should inspire youngsters here and also intro-

duce the sport of shooting to the State.

The last one and half years have been wonderful for Devanshi. She bagged 17 medals - nine golds, five silvers and three bronze. Her medals came in Inter School State Championships, CBSE Nationals held in Punjab and CBSE Cluster held at Karnal.

She is the best shooter of her school and has outclassed several international participants from her school.

Devanshi gives credit for her success to Shiv Lal Dogra, her coach.

He has been a guiding force behind each sportsperson at the school, she shares.

After completing her early schooling at East Point SSS, Singtam and Holy Cross School, Gangtok she joined Ecole Globale International Girl's School, Dehradun in 2017. It was her father's idea to introduce Devanshi to shooting. He spoke with Shiv Lal Dogra, Head of Department, Sports, at her school, trials were arranged and she has never looked back since.

Devanshi had participated in any form of shooting event until joining Ecole Globale International Girls School, so she feels very good when she looks at her recent success.

Devanshi participates



in 10 meters .177 (Peep Sight) Air Rifle events.

It's all about mental and physical strength while preparing for this particular event, she says.

She believes shooting to be a mind game; it has helped her in concentrat-

ing in studies too.

"I have learned to manage time. I get up in the morning at 5AM for my practice and after that I move ahead with my classes in the afternoons. Shooting is also challenging in a way that we **turn to pg02**

Speaker inaugurate cooperative society



JORETHANG, 15 JAN (IPR): On the occasion of Maghey Sankranti, Speaker KN Rai inaugurated the Sikkim Pragatishil Nari Co-operative Society Limited at Nandugana today. This

society is registered under the South Co-operative Department and is promoted by North East Rural Livelihood Project (NERLP). It is run by women and aims at generating employment

through providing training on sewing machines, marketing of organic produce and on various other amenities to transform the women's life into a self-sufficient and self-reliant one.

2 arrested for killing 16 puppies at hospital premises

Kolkata, Jan 15 (PTI): Two nursing students were arrested on Tuesday after they apparently confessed to their involvement in the killing of 16 puppies at a hospital premises here, an incident that had outraged animal lovers in the city.

Acting on an FIR lodged on Monday, the police had identified some students and security guards on the basis of CCTV footage and interrogated them for hours.

Of them, two nursing students admitted their involvement in

the crime and they were arrested, Entally police station officer-in-charge Supriyo Pal said.

On Sunday, carcasses of 16 puppies were found in plastic bags in front of a hostel at the state-run Nil Ratan Sircar (NRS) Medical College and Hospital in Sealdah. Preliminary reports had said the puppies were beaten to death.

The NRS hospital authorities, which had ordered an internal inquiry, said appropriate steps would be taken against those who had been arrested.

Meanwhile, animal lovers from different

NGOs, who had demonstrated outside the Entally police station on Monday, continued their protests demanding punishment to the culprits.

Some of them turned restive, injuring a policeman and damaging vehicles parked outside, the police said.

On Sunday, an adult dog, who was found in a critical condition nearby, was taken away for treatment by an animal lover.

Kolkata Municipal Corporation Deputy Mayor Atin Ghosh had said the civic body would also inquire into the incident.

SKM files FIR against CM...

is still used to discriminate against women. Ms Parsai alleged that the CM has always been using cheli morcha to defend him and questioned why the women's wing of the SDF was turning a blind eye to what the SKM sees as an offensive comment.

She also questioned the present whereabouts of a woman Minister and asked why the government was not taking a medical bulletin on the Minister.

SKM vice-president, Chung Kipu Lepcha, East District Chief convener, Prabha Pradhan and Chalak morcha vice-president, Rajani Gurung, in turn asserted that the CM should apologize for his remarks.

Nari Morcha general secretary, Pabitra Bhandari, suggested the SDF cheli morcha members to carefully read the chapter 'Anek Adhyay Ma Beena,' from the book 'Afnai Maan Ka Pardesh Haru' by Pravin Rai Jumeli to learn about the situation of women in Sikkim.

Maghey Mela begins in Jorethang...

Mr Ghatani, in turn, highlighted the various features of Jorethang Maghey Sankranti Mela.

Also today, the chief guest along with the dignitaries distributed proud mother schemes, free dentures, spectacles and hearing aids, free medicines for hypertension and diabetic patients etc.

The Mela committee also felicitated the chief guest for his unwavering support for the Jorethang Maghey Mela and work for the State. The Speaker also released the Jorethang Maghey Sankranti Mela, 2019 souvenir published by the Information and Public Relations Department.

Devanshi Agarwal...

have to go for many tours missing our studies after which we need to catch up by taking extra classes. Our teachers are always willing to help us in this regard," she adds.

Her dream is to represent Sikkim at the nationals once an association is formed by the State Government and then to represent India in Asian Games and other international events.

Devanshi recalls Tusitta Rai, another girl from Sikkim who is also did well in 10 mtrs. 177 (Peep Sight) Air Pistol at National Inter School Competition. She believes gradually the sport will have a promising growth in the state too.

She follows national shooting champions closely. She has high regard for Abinav Bindra, Gagan Narang, Heena Sindhur and Jitu Rai. Each of them exchanged positive feedback, she says. "But it is her father who is my role model," she adds.

In her words, "He is always by my side, whether I am excelling or going down at times. Because of his constant support and love, I am where I am today, proudly known as a National Level shooter. It is all because of my Dad and my family's constant support. Everybody inspires me a lot in some way or the other way, be it my lovely mother Sonia Agarwal or my grandmother Nirmala Devi Agarwal."

SDF chelis from South District defend CM

SUMMIT REPORT NAMCHI, 15 JAN:

The women's wing of the Sikkim Democratic Front came out in strong condemnation of the manner in which the Sikkim Krantikari Morcha was misrepresenting SDF president, Chief Minister Pawan Chamling's comments on menstruation.

The condemnation was aired at a press conference called by the SDF Cheli Morcha of South

District here today which was addressed by Cheli Convener South, Vice Cheli Convenors from different constituencies of South District along with women party workers of the district.

The issue, it may be recalled was taken up by the women's wing of the SKM recently and they are contending that the CM mocked menstruation in a recent speech have demanded an apology from him apart from

filing complaints, including an FIR accusing him of outraging the modesty of women with his comment.

The Cheli Convener South District, Sanju Rai, today countered that SKM was trivializing an issue as important as menstruation by unnecessarily targeting the Chief Minister and using a selective portion of the CM's speech and projecting it out of the context the comments were made in.

Similarly, general secretary, Devi Maya Baraily, Legal Cell of SDF party, said that she was one of the participants at that meeting where the comment was made and reiterated that the selective use of the CM's comment was being mischievously circulated by the SKM even though it is obvious to all that the CM meant no offense and was in fact initiating a necessary discussion on the topic.

Cheli Morcha office bearers from all over the district also addressed the meeting, each one condemning SKM's "opportunistic" politics of "misinformation" and each listing out the many policy decisions taken by the Chamling Government to ensure women's empowerment in Sikkim to highlight that the CM was sensitive to gender issues and not one who will ever offend women's sentiments.

Two MLAs withdraw support to Congress-JDS govt in Karnataka

BENGALURU, JAN 15 (PTI): In a blow to the Congress-JDS coalition in Karnataka, two MLAs Tuesday withdrew support to the government headed by H D Kumaraswamy.

H Nagesh (Independent) and R Shankar (KPJP) have written to governor Vajubhai Vala conveying their decision.

In separate identical letters, available to the media here, the lawmakers said they were withdrawing support extended to the coalition government of the Congress and the JDS with immediate effect.

The MLAs, who are



now staying in a Mumbai hotel, requested the governor to take "necessary action."

Both the Congress and the BJP have been accusing each other of trying to lure legislators.

The BJP MLAs are presently camping in Gurgaon, amid reports that some Congress and Independent MLAs are staying at a hotel in Mumbai.

SUF wants SDF MP to withdraw support for Citizenship Bill

SUMMIT REPORT GANGTOK, 15 JAN:

Sikkim United Front has demanded that the Lok Sabha MP of Sikkim withdraw his support to the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill in the interest of the people of Sikkim.

The party has argued that if the Act was implemented in Sikkim, it would threaten the rights and identity of the indigenous communities of the State.

Addressing a press conference here today, SUF president, Narendra Adhikari, highlighted that the bill was a very serious and sensitive matter in the context of

a small state like Sikkim which has the population of barely 7 lakh.

Speaking on the 'One Family, One Job' scheme of the State government, Mr Adhikari stated that SUF welcomed the initiative of the State government to provide government jobs to local youth but questioned the intention of the government on launching the scheme so near the elections.

He also questioned that whether the youth of Sikkim have received the jobs on the basis of qualification and capacity. On the same, he alleged emotional exploitation

of youth through such schemes.

SUF General Secretary, Ramesh Khanal, demanded the Central OBC status for Chettri, Bahun, Newar, Jogi and Sanyasi communities of Sikkim.

He further demanded the State Government to regularise the services of vocational and Sanskrit teachers in government schools, as also the services of those working under the Organic Mission and national health mission.

He also demanded the government to immediately release the remaining arrears of the government employees.

HRD to increase nearly 25 pc seats in varsities to implement 10 pc quota for poor in gen category

NEW DELHI, JAN 15 (PTI): The HRD Ministry announced Tuesday that it will implement 10 per cent reservation for economically weaker section of the general category from the 2019 academic session and increase around 25 per cent seats in higher educational institutions and universities across the country.

Union Human Resource Development Minister Prakash Javadekar informed that the decision was taken at a meeting of officials from the ministry, University Grants Commission (UGC) and the All India Council of Technical Education (AICTE).

"The reservation will be implemented from the 2019-2020 academic

session itself. Nearly 25 per cent seats will be added to ensure that the reservation does not disturb the existing quota for SC, ST and other categories. There are around 40,000 colleges and 900 universities across the country and supernumerary quota will be provided in these," Javadekar told reporters.

The minister, however, did not specify the number of seats which will be added.

"The modalities are being worked out and within a week's time we will have the exact number of seats that will be added. The operation manuals about how to implement the quota will be issued soon. The colleges and universi-

ties will also be asked to mention the quota in their prospectus as well and make infrastructural arrangements accordingly," he added.

Javadekar also said that the private universities are also ready to implement the quota.

The Rajya Sabha on January 9 approved amending the Constitution to provide 10 per cent reservation to general category poor in jobs and education, with the government terming the landmark move as "slog over sixes".

The quota will be over and above the existing 50 per cent reservation to Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and Other Backward Classes (OBCs).

JNU sedition case: Police says countrywide probe, voluminous records led to 3 yrs for chargesheet

NEW DELHI, JAN 15 (PTI): Amid criticism over filing of chargesheet after almost three years in the JNU sedition case, the Delhi Police has said such cases "generally take such time" as it involved probe spread across the country and involved voluminous records and evidence.

The police on Monday filed the 1,200-page chargesheet at a city court against former Jawaharlal Nehru University Students' Union (JNUSU) president Kanhaiya Kumar and others, saying he was leading a procession and accused him of supporting seditious slogans raised on the campus in February 2016.

Kumar and others have questioned the delay in filing of the charge-sheet, alleging that its timing just a few months before the general elections had po-

litical undertones.

A core member of the investigating team, however, said it was not a delay as "these kind of cases generally take such time".

"The probe was spread across the country across the country. A lot of evidence had to be collected, which also included the statement of a large number of accused and suspects as well as the witnesses," he said.

He said the maximum time was consumed in the interrogation of accused/suspects and witnesses of the case.

Police has also charged former JNU students Umar Khalid and Anirban Bhattacharya for allegedly shouting anti-India slogans during the event held on the JNU campus on February 9, 2016 to commemorate the hanging of Parliament-attack mas-

termind Afzal Guru.

In its charge sheet, the police has claimed that it has video clips to prove the offence which has been corroborated by the statements of the witnesses.

Police has alleged that Kumar had incited the mob to shout anti-India slogans.

A case was registered on February 11, 2016 under sections 124A and 120B of the IPC against unidentified persons at the Vasant Kunj (North) police station, following complaints from Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) MP Maheesh Giri and the Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP).

The event in 2016 had taken place despite the university administration cancelling the permission, following a complaint from the ABVP, which had termed it as "anti-national".

Google doodle celebrates Patna man who opened first Indian restaurant in Britain



NEW DELHI, JAN 15 (PTI): Search giant Google Tuesday celebrated the legacy of Patna-born entrepreneur Sake Dean Mahomed by dedicating a special doodle to a man of many talents credited with opening the first Indian restaurant in Britain.

Mahomed also became the first Indian to write and publish a book in English (The Travels of Dean Mahomet, 1794).

The doodle shows soap powder, ginger, turmeric and a bottle of shampoo placed in the middle, with mint leaves flanking it, giving the doodle a virtual garnish.

An image of Mahomed, showing his profile is depicted on the bottle, which forms the 'O' in the stylised letters of the doodle, hosted on a day that would have been his 260th birth anniversary.

"A man of many talents, Sake Dean Mahomed was an entrepreneur who made a name for himself by building cultural connections between India and England. On this day in 1794, he became the first Indian author to publish a book in English and later, to open an Indian restau-

rant in England, ushering in what would become one of Great Britain's most popular cuisines," said Google on its official doodle page.

He also found success as the 'shampooing surgeon' of Brighton, opening a spa in the British seaside town that attracted the rich and royal.

In 1822, King George IV appointed Mahomed as his personal 'shampooing surgeon'. He continued to hold this post under William IV, according to British Library.

"In 1822, Mahomed published 'Shampooing; or Benefits resulting from the use of the Indian medicated vapour bath'. This medical work featured testimonies from his patients, as well as details of the treatment that made him famous.

"Mahomed's decision to publish a work of this kind was canny: the book acted as a marketing tool for his unique baths in Brighton and capitalised on the early 19th century trend for seaside spa treatments," according to the information shared by the library on its website.

Born in Patna, Bihar in 1759, Mahomed initially served as a soldier

in the East India Company's Bengal Regiment before arriving in Ireland in 1784 with his colleague Captain Baker, it said, adding that he married Jane Daly.

After moving to London in 1810 Mahomed established the Hindostanee Coffee House at 34, George Street, the first Indian restaurant in Britain.

"The Epicure's Almanack -- an early London restaurant guide -- hailed it as a place for nobility to enjoy hookah and Indian dishes of the highest perfection. Nonetheless, Mahomed was forced to close his luxurious restaurant in 1812 and sought to reinvent himself," according to the Google doodle page which shared the information Tuesday.

He later moved his family to Brighton and opened a spa named Mahomed's Baths offering luxurious herbal steam baths.

"His speciality was a combination of a steam bath and an Indian therapeutic massage -- a treatment he named 'shampooing' inspired by the Hindi word champissage meaning 'a head massage,' the doodle page said.

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GATC appeals to rockers to be at MG Marg for Red Panda fest

SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 15 JAN:

Girish and The Chronicles [GATC] is featuring renowned, award-winning guitarist, Baiju Dharmajan, from Kerala for their gig at the upcoming Sikkim Red Panda Winter Carnival. GATC and Baiju Dharmajan will share the stage on 17 Jan at MG Marg.

A press release informs that with his unique Carnatic style of guitar, Baiju has received several accolades over the years and is also the founding member of his former band, Motherjane.

Baiju will also be conducting a special interactive workshop/performance at Gangtok Groove on 18 Jan with Girish Pradhan featuring as special guest on vocals.

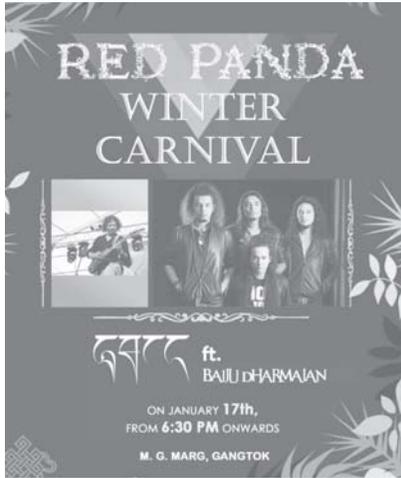
Their rendition of "Sweet Indian Child of Mine" was featured in classic rock magazine as one of the main posts on the day of its release and has more than half a million views on YouTube, it is informed.

GATC is the Headlining Band for the Fest this year and has invited all rockers to be present on 17 Jan at

MG Marg.

GATC kicked off their new year with the release of the music video of their single, "Rock the Highway". The song, which is dedicated to all the bikers, riders and rockers of the world, is an upbeat 80s style hard rock/glam rock song.

The song has had a good response so far, with one of the world's top UK based Rock magazine, Classic Rock magazine, featuring the song in their Week's top tracks, along with tracks by artists like Paul McCartney.



SHRA supports FHRAI & HREAI call to block online inventory of MakeMyTrip and Goibibo

SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 15 JAN:

Sikkim Hotel & Restaurant Association (SHRA), the apex hotel association representing all hotels and restaurants of Sikkim, convened a meeting on 14 Jan 2019 here and unanimously decided to support the call given by the parent associations representing the hospitality industry in India, FHRAI (Federation of Hotel & Restaurant Association of India) & HREAI (The Hotel & Restaurant Association of Eastern India), to close the inventory for OTA MakeMyTrip and goibibo from 16 Jan onwards indefinitely till their concerns were addressed.

SHRA had earlier written to OTAs with concerns raised by local hotels and even held meeting with them but

there has been no official reply from goibibo & MakeMyTrip apart from just verbal assurances. The concerns raised were:

1. No coupon code discounting on hotels from OTAs
2. Commission level to be set at 15%
3. No performance linked bonuses (PLB) without written consent of hotels and with exit clauses
4. Early check in / Late checkout / Cancellation / Modification policies to be decided only by the hotels and not the Online Portals
5. Payments are to be more transparent with all payments to be made within 48 hours of a booking being made and not at the time of check in.

Many other Hotel Associations all over India have accused OTAs and especially goibibo &

MakeMyTrip of charging exorbitant commissions, unfair accounting practices and unauthorized and further discounting of hotel prices set by hoteliers and have had no choice to boycott and close inventory for MakeMyTrip and goibibo.

However, other OTAs like travelguru.com, yatra.com have officially replied to concerns raised by SHRA and have agreed to all the concerns raised including reducing commission to 15% on all hotel bookings. Other OTAs, booking.com & agoda.com, airbnb.com, etc. leave the commission and discretion to the hotels themselves and which did not have cause for concern among the hoteliers as they are deemed fair as compared to business policies of goibibo and MakeMyTrip.

Safe drive, save lives



SUMMIT REPORT
RANGPO, 15 JAN:

Godrej Consumers Pvt Ltd, Mamring, South Sikkim, organised an awareness programme here today to promote safe driving habits. Officials of the company, staff, workers and families joined Rangpo police and traffic police personnel to spread awareness in the area about safe driving. The company also distributed key-chains and chocolates among the drivers.

Chennai lad crowned world's second youngest grand master

C SHYAM SUNDAR

Chennai, Jan 15 (PTI): Tamil Nadu lad D Gukesh Tuesday became the second youngest Grand Master in the world and the youngest Indian to achieve the feat at 12 years, seven months and 17 days, erasing the mark set by his state-mate R Praggnanandhaa in June last year.

He achieved his third and final GM norm at the ongoing 17th Delhi International Open Chess tournament in Delhi after beating compatriot D K Sharma in the ninth round.

Gukesh becomes India's 59th Grand Master. Ukraine's Sergey Karjakin remains the youngest-ever GM, having achieved the feat at the age of 12 years and seven months in 2002.

In December last, the Chennai boy had narrowly missed on the record when he lost his third round game against GM Daniele Vocaturo of Italy at the Sunway Sitges International in Barcelona.

Gukesh, however, recovered and he put that setback behind him to beat and has now beaten the record held by his friend Praggnanandhaa, who was 12 years and 10 months old when he became India's youngest GM.

The youngster, who idolises the legendary Bobby Fischer and India's own Vishy Anand, told PTI after achieving the feat that he was very happy and excited.

"I am very happy and excited to have become a Grand Master. I am delighted to have won the third (GM) norm and the title. I would like to play Anand sir sometime," he said over phone.

Before the game I didn't feel any pressure, only during the game. I just forgot about the pressure and focused on my

game, he added.

He said he was a little disappointed to have missed out on breaking Karjakin's record in Barcelona but felt relieved after a while and focused on his game.

"I was a little disappointed not to break the record in Spain (Barcelona) but chose to focus on the way forward. I also missed out on achieving the record in Mumbai during the Mumbai International Chess tournament due to a technical issue," he added.

The son of Rajinikanth and Padma, both doctors, the lad picked up the game playing with his parents at home and seeing his interest was enrolled in an academy in the locality.

Gukesh said he did not feel any pressure in the lead-up to the tournament adding there was some pressure when he played in Barcelona with the record on the line.

"I felt some pressure while playing in Barcelona as there was a possibility of my breaking the record. But once I missed the chance the pressure was gone. Now, I am relaxed," he added.

After starting out by playing at home with his parents, he was enrolled in a summer camp and was drawn to the game under the guidance of M S Bhaskar and then a few others, including Vishnu Prasanna.

At the age of seven I joined a summer camp in my school. MS Bhaskar, was my coach there, spotted my talent and encouraged me," Gukesh said of his early days in chess. He is presently coached by Grand Master Vishnu Prasad.

A seventh standard student of Velammal Vidyalaya, he said his school had supported him a lot whenever he had to miss classes to play in tournaments.

ANTHYESTHI KRIYA



Anthyesthi Kriya of Lt. Bal Bdr. Lamichaney who left for his heavenly on 11/01/2019 falls on 22/01/2019. All relatives, friends and well wishers are requested to join us in offering prayer for the departed soul at our residence at Gale Tea Garden, Kharka Dhura, Rangli Rangliot, Dist. Darjeeling. We would also like to take this opportunity to thank all those who stood by us during the time of bereavement.

Pranjay Lamichaney (Senior Journalist) 8918852813

NOTICE

NOTICE INVITING TENDER FOR RUNNING CANTEN IN THE PREMISES OF THE DISTRICT & SESSIONS COURT AT SICHEY, GANGTOK, EAST SIKKIM.

For and on behalf of the Bar Association of Sikkim, sealed tender in the prescribed form are invited from interested parties having experience in catering/canteen/restaurant business, for running Canteen at the District Court Complex at Gangtok for a period of 2 (Two) years.

TIME SCHEDULE

1. Date of issue of tender forms: 15th January 2019 - 21 January 2019.
2. Last date of submission of tender form: 28th January 2019.
3. Date time and venue of tender opening: 1st February 2019 at the Bar Room, District Court Complex. 3.30 PM
4. Tender forms shall be available at the Bar Room, District Courts Complex, Gangtok, East Sikkim during office hours. Contact: Mr. Pramod: 9647972160.

Tender forms shall be issued on payment of Rs. 1000 (Rupees One Thousand) only per form, which shall be Non-refundable.

TERMS & CONDITIONS:

1. The Schedule rate of tender shall be Rs.2, 40,0000 (Rupees Two Lakh Forty Thousand) only per annum.
2. The tenderers are free to quote above the schedule rate and the highest bidder shall be given preference subject to the pricing /rate fixed for the food products on the Menu.
3. The tenderers are required to abide by the terms and conditions as specified in the tender form.
4. The Bar Association of Sikkim reserves the right to cancel/reject any tender form.

S/d

(Sh. Karma Thinlay Gyatso)
Treasurer,
Bar Association of Sikkim.
Contact: 9932352194

Rivalry and revenge: Iran face Iraq at Asian Cup



Dubai, Jan 15 (AFP): One of football's great rivalries takes centre-stage at the Asian Cup on Wednesday when Iran play Iraq still smarting from their controversial exit four years ago.

Iran played most of the classic 2015 quarter-final with 10 men after Mehرداد Pooladi's hotly disputed first-half dismissal but when it ended 3-3 after extra-time, Iraq edged the penalty shoot-out.

Iran's protest that Iraq yielded an ineligible player was dismissed as Carlos Queiroz's three-time winners were sent packing from the tournament in Australia.

Four years on from their clash in Canberra, Iran forward Saman Ghoddos said memories were still fresh as Team Melli take on Iraq in their final game of Group D.

"Iraq are tough opponents and I think that this will be a revenge match for us," said Ghoddos, according to Iran's Varzesh3 website.

"I've been waiting for this match ever since the last Asian Cup. We will win this match for the people."

Football is one of the

remaining points of contention between the Middle East neighbours, who fought a bloody war in the 1980s in which hundreds of thousands of people died.

Relations between the two countries have warmed since the removal of long-serving Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein in 2003, but games between the two are not for the faint-hearted.

Iran, the three-time Asian Cup winners, lead Iraq on goal difference at the top of Group D, with both teams already qualified for the next round.

Former Real Madrid and Portugal coach Queiroz, linked with a move to the Colombia national team after the Asian Cup, said his prime concern was maintaining Iran's perfect start.

"In football, the most important match is always the next one and every match is like a final for us in the tournament," Queiroz said.

"Iraq are a strong team and they are one of the favourites to win the title. We have to be at our best." Iran have not won the Asian title since 1976 but they have been the most impressive so

far among the 24 teams in the newly-expanded tournament.

A 5-0 thrashing of Yemen was followed by a clinical 3-0 victory over Southeast Asian champions Vietnam.

Iraq, meanwhile, came from behind to beat Vietnam 3-2, and then defeated Yemen 3-0. Facing Asia's highest-ranked team will be a different challenge entirely, however.

"You can't compare the matches we had with Vietnam and Yemen to the match against Iran," said coach Srecko Katanec, who took his native Slovenia to the 2002 World Cup and joined Iraq in September.

"Vietnam played very fluid football for the first 45 minutes and we came out on top. Against Yemen, we were a little complacent and maybe that's why we need to play a strong team, on paper, like Iran."

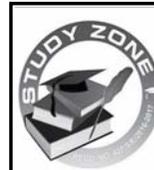
The build-up to the game has been closely followed in both countries, with former Iraqi player Imad Mohammad telling AFP that Iraqi media had played up its "political character".

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SummitTIMES

New Year, New Resolution

At least allow space for new collaborations, more understanding

Accepted. Still talking about the prospects of a New Year already a fortnight in by when even the resolutions have started failing is a bit too much. But then again, this is also an exercise which will not present itself for another whole year, so here goes another attempt.

There are rarely good years or bad years, the annual cycle playing out in a mixed bag kind of routine. In individual experiences, of course, years can be brilliant or disappointing, lucky or depressing, but when it comes for a collective people, like say the residents of Sikkim, the best one can hope for is a "normal" year – one in which the dejections and shocks are balanced out by a fair share of euphoric delights.

Year 2018, however, was a largely uneventful year in that very little of lasting consequence happened in it. In a way this was perhaps well prescribed since it allowed Sikkim a pause from the frenetic stirring that Election 2019 is bound to whip up here. The "stirring" never really went away completely 2014, though. So, while alignments changed even as status quo prevailed, the animosities that 2014 entrenched, let's accept it, did not dwindle and held firm and occasionally expressed itself overtly. This was a rather new phenomenon for an otherwise laidback Sikkim. The environment is expected to get roiled in an election year even if the challengers are uninspiring, and in 2014 the contest had already been set up to be intense so the fireworks were expected. But nothing could have prepared Sikkim for the scale of carnage that the campaign trail littered in its wake in Sikkim that election. Countless vehicles were torched, an unfortunate number of homes targeted, too many bodies bruised, and unforgivably, two lives lost to political violence that year.

Sikkim is not new to political violence, but save the rare face-to-face, it was mostly limited to sabre-rattling in the form of an occasional effigy burning or a parked vehicle getting torched in the dead of night. One thought that Sikkim was too small a place and people here too closely connected/related to allow for any "real" violence. Election 2014 dispelled all such notions and brought home the nightmare of hate, spite and violent hostility. Gangtok escaped with only secondhand experience of the terror, but wide swathes of South and West districts and parts of East Sikkim lived through traumatic months. Investing in violence could thankfully not be cashed in at the polling booths and when the votes were counted, it became apparent that violence only closed ranks instead of opening doors.

While violence ended with the elections, it had clearly cemented an environment of general distrust, disillusionment and hostility. These emotions marked the post-election months and years, events through which have played out in a manner and tone which suggest that the repairing remains a work in progress. And now it is already time for a fresh election cycle to start churning. While there can be no justification for violence of the campaign days, one can still explain it away to the pressures of political ambitions. The distrust which continues between groups and in how people are engaging each other and how one views institutions and initiatives is something which should have been addressed better. It would have been wonderful for Sikkim if suspicions were informed responses, but that is clearly not the case and most of the distrust that permeates all sectors at present is born from prejudice and individual bias.

Sikkim is too small a place to hold on to its grudges for too long; its people should bury at least the irrational dislikes that have been allowed to take root. Such positions will serve no one any good. Once that has been done, a wider awareness can be generated to inculcate healthy skepticism instead. Sikkim needs to converse more; at present, those who have found a voice, shout and shut out, it will be nice to see some conversations going, some deliberations, disagreements and a respect for divergent approaches and attitudes. For this process to begin, more civil voices will need to engage in the public space which is currently monopolized by political noise.

Another election will be upon Sikkim in a couple of months and it is important that a clear enough message is conveyed that violence will no longer be tolerated as the language of politicking.

*Let that be a New Resolution for a New Year.
Happy New Year, Sikkim!*

How governments use Big Data to violate human rights



ANDREW THOMPSON
theconversation.com

The right to privacy has become a pressing human rights issue. And rightly so. Big data — combined with artificial intelligence and facial recognition software — has the capacity to intrude on people's lives in unprecedented ways, in some cases on a massive scale.

While much of the discussion has focused on how social media and tech companies use the data they collect about their users, more attention needs to be paid to the wider relationship between violations of privacy and other types of human rights abuses.

The reason is simple. Mass invasions of privacy can undermine the rights of millions, if not billions, of people around the world as governments gain a greater capacity to discriminate — or worse — across gender and sexuality lines, and stifle dissent, including through violence. More about this in a moment.

So what can be done to limit the human rights fallout? What we need is a multi-pronged approach that involves civil society, the private sector, foundations and states.

ESTABLISHING HUMAN RIGHTS FUNDS

First, foundations that support human rights should establish human rights and technology funds. Activists are already harnessing new technologies to monitor and document abuses. Amnesty International is working with a data analysis company to quantify levels of misogyny on Twitter. This type of innovation should be encouraged and resourced.

Second, states should negotiate new norms and

laws for the digital age. The Montreal Declaration on the Responsible Use of Artificial Intelligence offers a powerful statement on the need for the ethical development of new technologies. Similarly, the UN Rapporteur on the Right to Privacy is leading efforts to develop what's been called a "Draft Legal Instrument on Government-led Surveillance and Privacy." These initiatives, and others like them, should be supported.

Third, states must reaffirm the principle of the right to asylum. States that use technology to violate human rights will displace people. Those with a well-founded fear of persecution will need protection.

Finally, states that believe in a rules-based international order must redouble efforts to tackle impunity. Human rights abuses occur because those who commit the violations are rarely held to account. This needs to change.

'GRAVE CONSEQUENCES'

Failure to check invasions of privacy enabled by technology will have grave consequences. Here are four examples that illustrate this point.

Women's Rights: Surveillance technologies are often used to police morality, especially in places where there is no clear distinction between "sin" and law.

Take Saudi Arabia. In 2017, Human Rights Watch reported that Saudi courts are using the "vague provisions" in the anti-cybercrime law to "sanction people suspected of committing sexual relations outside marriage, including adultery, extramarital and homosexual sex."

Women are paying a disproportionately high price for these intrusions.

LGBTQ Rights: According to the International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association (ILGA), 72 countries prohibit same-sex relations. Surveillance technologies give governments the ability to "out" individuals. They know where people sleep at night, and with whom. The potential for lives to be destroyed is very great, indeed.

Torture: The governments that violate privacy to suppress minorities are often the same governments that will not think twice about using torture to maintain control of their citizens. Syria is a case in point.

Extrajudicial Executions: If governments can track their citizens' movements, it is not difficult to have them assassinated. The Jamal Khashoggi killing is a tragic example of this. The New York Times has reported that the Saudis used the Pegasus spying software to eavesdrop on Khashoggi, thus enabling his murder.

Other governments could interpret a lack of any meaningful response as permission to target journalists. This is not a hypothetical concern. According to IFEX, an organization dedicated to protecting free expression, 78 journalists were murdered in 2018, and another 159 were imprisoned.

This is not hyperbole. States of all stripes are collecting data on their citizens, and have been for quite some time. This is not going to end any time soon. Quite the opposite.

If left unchecked, invasions of privacy enabled by technology could put every other human right at risk, and on a scale that would be truly terrifying.

[the writer is Adjunct Assistant Professor Political Science, and Fellow at the Balsillie School of International Affairs, University of Waterloo]

Recalling happy memories can reduce depression risk in vulnerable teenagers – new study

ANNE-LAURA VAN HARMELEN
theconversation.com

Recalling positive memories may help lower the risk of depression in young people who have had a difficult childhood, our latest study has found. Depression often emerges during the teenage years. Many mental health problems in later life are linked to adverse experiences in early life, such as poverty, parents having mental health problems, being bullied, neglect and abuse. Mental illness often emerges earlier in young people who have experienced adversity and is more severe and less responsive to treatment, so it is vital that we have a better understanding of how we can reduce vulnerability before depression emerges.

HAPPY MEMORIES

Memories are critical to our sense of self, decision-making and mental health. We spend much of our waking time ruminating about past events and planning the days ahead. Some have suggested that this constant mind wandering makes us unhappy, but it has also been found that reminiscing about happy events may increase positive feelings and dampen the release of stress hormones after a stressful event.

My colleague (Adrian Dahl Askellund) and I wanted to know whether remembering positive experiences could protect against stress. To do this, we collected measures of stress hormones, mood and negative thoughts in 427 14-year-old teenagers at risk for depression due to adversity experienced during childhood.

Our results, published in Nature Human Behaviour, showed that those

who recalled more specific positive memories (a happy 13th birthday, say) when entering the study, had fewer negative thoughts about themselves and lower levels of the stress hormones cortisol one year later. This may suggest that training teenagers to recall specific positive memories could reduce the risk of depression.

Interestingly, recalling specific positive memories lowered negative thoughts and depressive symptoms in those who experienced at least one stressful event during the 12 months of our study. But recalling positive memories did not affect negative thoughts and depression in those who had not experienced such negative events.

Our finding suggests that recalling specific positive events may promote mental health resilience especially in the face of stress in teenagers at risk of depression. In particular, recalling positive memories when something bad happens (such as "when I helped that little boy who fell and hurt himself") may protect against negative thoughts ("I am useless"). This may, in turn, lead to fewer depressive symptoms.

CBT+

Our findings could help develop new methods for preventing depression in teenagers and for improving treatment. One possibility is that training teenagers with a history of childhood adversity in recalling specific positive memories may help build resilience and prevent mental ill health in these young people.

One increasingly popular habit that could help with increasing access to positive memories is keeping a journal. Although this is something



that needs to be studied further, it may be beneficial to write down both positive and negative events that have happened, reflecting on how they affected your thoughts and mood. However, this may not be an effective method for people who struggle with clinical levels of depression. In these cases, our findings may be best applied in established treatments, to potentially improve their effects.

Some people who suffer from clinical depression may struggle with remembering specific positive events. For these people, training positive memory recall may work best if it is combined with established treatments, such as cognitive be-

havioural therapy (CBT).

In CBT, patients are often trained in using techniques to challenge negative thoughts. Our study suggests that being able to recall specific positive events from the past ("that day I got that high mark for maths") may help disconfirm negative thoughts ("I am dumb").

Future research should investigate whether this ability to recall specific positive memories could be trained and whether this would boost therapy outcomes in vulnerable youth.

[the writer is Senior Research Associate at the Department of Psychiatry, University of Cambridge]

Assam govt forms GoM on ST reservation

GUWAHATI, JAN 14 (PTI): Assam Government on Monday set up a Group of Ministers (GoM) headed by Dr Himanta Biswa Sarma to recommend measures for protection of rights of existing tribal communities as well as to decide on the benefits to be given to new Scheduled Tribes, official sources said.

The GoM was formed on the direction of the Centre following introduction of the Constitution (Scheduled Tribes) Order (Amendment) in Rajya Sabha on January 9.

The bill proposes to grant Scheduled Tribe (ST) status to six communities of the state - Koch Rajbongshi, Tai Ahom, Chutia, Moran, Matak and tea tribes of Assam who form a sizeable chunk of the population of the state.

After examining the ethnic communities' status, the committee will submit its report to the Centre within 15 to 20 days with modalities for granting Scheduled Tribe (ST) status to the six communities, but without harming the rights of the tribes that are currently enjoying the status, the sources said.

Other ministers in the GoM are Pallab Lochan Das, Naba Doley and Tapan Gogoi with Chandan Brahma being its Convener.

Tribal groups with ST status, including Bodos, have expressed apprehension that the Bill tabled without consulting them may lead to curtailment of their rights and had even called an Assam bandh on January 11.

Supreme Court asks West Bengal government to allow BJP's 'Rath Yatra'

New Delhi, Jan 15 (PTI): The Supreme Court Tuesday asked the West Bengal government to allow proposed public meetings and rallies of the BJP under its "Ganatantra Bachao Yatra".

A bench headed by Chief Justice Ranjan Gogoi asked the BJP's West Bengal unit to submit a revised schedule of its proposed 'Rath Yatra' with the authorities and seek necessary approvals.

The bench also comprising Justices L N Rao and SK Kaul asked the West Bengal government to consider the revised schedule of the BJP for 'Rath Yatra' keeping in

mind the fundamental right of speech and expression under the Constitution.

The bench said the apprehension of the state government of possible law and order situation cannot be called "unfounded" and BJP will have to take all possible steps to address the apprehension in a reasonable manner.

The top court had earlier sought response from the state government on BJP's plea seeking permission to take out 'Rath Yatra' in the state.

The BJP's Bengal unit challenged the December 21 order of a division

bench of the Calcutta High Court, which had set aside the order of a single-judge bench allowing the procession.

It had also asked the BJP state unit to submit a revised plan for its 'save democracy rally' for consideration by the state government.

The BJP has now decided to cut short its 40-day programme to 20 and the fresh 'Yatras' would start from Baharampur in Murshidabad district, Diamond Harbour in South 24 Parganas district, Medinipur and the Lok Sabha constituency of Kolkata North, a lawyer associated with the matter said, adding that

the decision was taken in view of the upcoming school examinations and the general elections.

Earlier, the BJP's West Bengal unit had approached the apex court seeking permission to take out the rally, which would cover 42 parliamentary constituencies in the state. In its plea, the BJP has said that their fundamental right to hold a peaceful 'Yatra' cannot be withheld.

The high court's division bench had sent the case back to a single-judge bench to hear it afresh and also to consider the intelligence inputs by state agencies.

The order of the division bench had come after hearing an appeal moved by the West Bengal government challenging the order of the single-judge bench.

The rallies, according to the original schedule, were supposed to be flagged off by BJP president Amit Shah from Cooch Behar district on December 7, Kakdwip in South 24 Parganas on December 9, and from Tarapith temple in Birbhum on December 14.

In the plea filed in the top court, the BJP's West Bengal unit contended that authorities cannot abridge their right and

they have a duty to facilitate them in exercising their democratic right.

The BJP alleged in the plea that the state government was repeatedly "attacking" the fundamental right of citizens due to which different petitions have been filed challenging the activities of the state government in denying permission to different organisations.

It has claimed that earlier too, permission was denied several times at the last moment to "harass the BJP" which later moved the high court and that the party "is facing such political vendetta since 2014 in West Bengal".

Protests against Citizenship Amendment Bill rage on amid Bihu celebrations

GUWAHATI, JAN 15 (PTI): Protests against the controversial Citizenship Amendment Bill raged on in Assam Tuesday amid 'Bhogali Bihu' celebrations as copies of the legislation were burnt symbolically.

There was no let up in the protests during the traditional 'Meji-Bhelaghar fire' in the morning where people usually pray for a bright future for the state and a good harvest for farmers in the coming year.

Bhogali Bihu is the harvesting festival in Assam which is preceded by Uruka -- the night of feast and merrymaking on Bihu's eve. The community meal is cooked inside the 'Bhelaghars' -- made of bamboo, thatch, dry leaves and wood -- which is set on fire the following day on 'Makar Sankranti' with

religious rituals.

Copies of the bill were burnt at senior advocate Arup Borbor's house here on 'Uruka' yesterday night by eminent litterateur Hiren Gohain and senior journalist Manjit Mahanta against whom the state government has filed a sedition case.

International award winning film director Jahnur Barua, popular singer Pulak Banerjee, 'Amar Asom' newspaper editor Prasanta Rajguru, political commentator Haidar Hussain, senior advocates Hafeez Rashid Chaudhary and Nekibur Zaman, among many others joined the protests.

The bill threatens the existence of the Assamese people, they said, and vowed to continue their agitation for the "protection of Assamese people, their land, language, culture

and heritage".

Krishak Mukti Sangram Samiti (KMSS) leader Akhil Gogoi, one of the leaders of the anti-Bill protest movement and against whom sedition case was also filed along with Gohain and Mahanta, went on a 24-hour hunger strike yesterday on Uruka day.

The Assam Police on January 10 filed sedition cases against litterateur Gohain, RTI activist Akhil Gogoi and senior journalist Manjit Mahanta for their comments on the citizenship bill.

They were booked by the Assam Police for their remarks against the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill at an event three days ago, even as the state witnesses protest against the legislation.

Gogoi stayed away from the traditional Bihu

feasting yesterday as the state is facing "trying times with the Bill passed by the Lok Sabha on January 8".

Responding to Gogoi's appeal, members of the 70 indigenous organisations allied to KMSS were seen this morning burning copies of the Bill on the 'Meji fire' to register their opposition to the Bill and praying that the "evils of the Bill are burnt in the fire" as they offered their obeisance to the Sun god for a good harvest in the coming year.

Prominent journalists, veteran Assamese film actors, members of the Assam Jatiyatabadi Yuba Chhatra Parishad (AJYCP) and other similar organisations were also seen burning copies of the Bill in the 'Meji fire' across the state, including Guwahati.

30 lakh Ganga Sagar pilgrims take holy dip on Makar Sankranti

SAGAR ISLAND (WB), JAN 15 (PTI): Over 30 lakh pilgrims from across the country and neighbouring Bangladesh and Nepal took holy dip at the confluence of the River Ganga and the Bay of Bengal on the occasion of Makar Sankranti Tuesday, the state government said.

Panchayat and Rural Development Minister Subrata Mukherjee said the pilgrims also offered prayers at the Kapil Muni Temple.

Mukherjee, who has been assigned the task of monitoring the arrangement for the pilgrims along with his cabinet colleagues Power Minister Sobhandeb Chattopadhyay and PWD Minister Aroop Biswas, told reporters that the gathering was over 30 lakh, compared to last year's 20 lakh.

Every year, on Makar Sankranti day, lakhs of Hindu pilgrims flock to Ganga Sagar to take a dip and offer prayers in the



Kapil Muni Temple.

"Last year, over 20 lakh pilgrims had visited the Ganga Sagar. This year, it has crossed 30 lakh mark despite Kumbh Mela at Prayagraj. It was absolutely peaceful and the pilgrims have also appreciated our arrangement," Mukherjee said.

Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee has also been monitoring the fair and has been advising the officials from time to time.

Four persons have so far died of cardiac arrests, while police have arrested 50 persons for petty crime.

A thick blanket of

security cover has been thrown in and around the Mela premises.

The state government deployed a huge contingent of security personnel and volunteers, besides pressing into service 20 drones to keep a tab on security. It also equipped its officials with satellite phones to ensure uninterrupted connectivity during the Mela.

Over 800 CCTV and 200 balloon cameras have been installed to aid security of the grand fair.

The state disaster management department has made arrange-

ments to receive live feed from the mela for effective monitoring of the proceedings.

Several giant LED screens have been placed at different points through which pilgrims are being updated on the timings of trains, buses and ferries. Tide timings as well as safety tips are also being announced in Bengali, Hindi and English.

The Indian Coast Guard (ICG) has enhanced its surveillance along the coastline of West Bengal for the Ganga Sagar Mela, an official said.

People vehemently opposing Citizenship Bill: Zoramthanga to PM

AIZAWL, JAN 15 (PTI): Mizoram Chief Minister Zoramthanga has told Prime Minister Narendra Modi that the people of the northeastern state vehemently opposes the passage of Citizenship (Amendment) Bill, an official statement said Tuesday.

The controversial bill, which has triggered large scale protests in the northeastern states including Mizoram, was passed by the Lok Sabha on January 8.

The statement said that Zoramthanga met Modi in New Delhi yesterday and discussed several issues including the opposition to the proposed amendment on the Citizenship Act, 1955.

They also discussed about bamboo projects, Mizoram's separate cadre for all India services and proposed termi-



nation of Jet Airways' flights from Aizawl to Kolkata and Guwahati from February 10, the statement added.

The Citizenship (Amendment) Bill, 2016, provides for according Indian citizenship to the Hindus, Jains, Christians,

Sikhs, Buddhists and Parsis who fled religious persecution in Bangladesh, Pakistan and Afghanistan after six years of residence in India, instead of the 12 years currently, even if they do not possess any document.

A meeting of the

state council of ministers on January 10 had expressed regret that the citizenship bill was passed in the Lok Sabha and that the state government should make concerted efforts for the defeat of the bill in the Rajya Sabha.

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Teary-eyed Constantine resigns after India's Asian Cup exit

SHARJAH, JAN 15 (PTI): With tears in his eyes, Stephen Constantine stepped down as the Indian football team's coach, the group stage Asian Cup exit turning out to be one bitter pill that he found too hard to swallow.

India's promising start to the continental showpiece ended in a heartbreak when they conceded a 90th minute penalty for Bahrain to eke out a 1-0 win in their final group engagements here Monday night. And his "cycle" was finished.

"I'm stepping down after this game. I've been here for four years, my objective from day one was to qualify for the AFC Asian Cup. I've done that and I'm exceptionally proud of the players for everything they have given," Constantine said. "I think my cycle has finished. I did what I was asked to and a little bit more and after four years, I think it's time to leave," the Anglo-Cypriot added.

This was Constantine's second stint with the Indian side after having been at the helm be-



tween 2002 and 2005. He returned to the hot seat after taking over the reins for a second time in 2015, succeeding Netherlands' Wim Koevermans.

Ahead of the Asian Cup, speculation was rife that Constantine was no longer on good terms with talismanic striker Sunil Chhetri and a few other senior players over his coaching methods.

"I've been here for four years. My objective from day one was

to qualify for the Asian Cup and I've done that and we've broken a few records as we did that. I'm exceptionally proud of the players and everything they've given.

"The boys are sick as you can imagine. I am just disappointed for them as they gave everything in the last few games."

Under Constantine, India reached their second best FIFA rankings of 96 after slumping to 173, their worst ever, before

his arrival.

"I'm sad to be leaving, the players and staff have been fantastic throughout the tournament. Even those who failed to make the final squad."

His contract was to end on January 31 and a perfect send-off was on the cards, but a reckless tackle by Pronay Halder, India's captain for the Bahrain game, ruined all plans. Constantine is now looking forward to spending time with

his family.

"It's my wife's birthday today and I haven't been back to my house in six years. I've only seen my three daughters every three or four months and the time has come for me to move on," he said.

The All India Football Federation (AIFF), on its official twitter handle, said that the 56-year-old's resignation has been accepted.

"Mr. @StephenConstantine has announced his

resignation as the Head Coach of the Indian National Team. We haven't received any official communication from him yet but we accept his decision & thank him for his contribution to #Indian-football: Mr. Kushal Das, General Secretary, AIFF," the tweet said.

The coach refused to buy the argument that the team may have played for a draw.

"We didn't intentionally set up for a draw. Bahrain started with real energy, looking to get the early goal and as the game wore on, this is maybe a little inexperience on our side.

"We started defending deeper and deeper and in the end, we got punished. But I thought we were unlucky. We defended well for 90-something minutes and as the 70th and 75th minute came on the boys thought, okay we can hold on.

"Bahrain were playing with six forwards and four in midfield, it was tough, but to get beaten by a penalty is harsh in anybody's eyes," he added.

Japan Olympic chief denies corruption allegations



TOKYO, JAN 15 (AFP): The head of Japan's Olympic Committee Tuesday denied involvement in a suspect payment made before Tokyo was awarded the 2020 Games, while apologising for any possible impact on the hosting of the event.

French investigating magistrates have indicted Tsunekazu Takeda as they probe two payments of 2.8 million Singapore dollars (2.1 million) made before the Japanese capital was chosen to host the Olympics.

During a nationally televised news conference lasting only seven minutes, Takeda said: "I was never involved in any decision-making process" over the payment.

Takeda added that he had already protested his innocence during questioning by French authorities in Paris on December 10.

He also said the payment was not corruption but "a consultancy contract signed through appropriate approval procedures." "I'm very sorry that this trouble could possibly affect the Olympic movement," he added, vowing to co-operate with the authorities.

He did not take questions from reporters after making his statement, which was similar to remarks he made on Friday when the charges filed last month emerged.

The affair comes as an unwelcome distraction for 2020 organisers, who have been widely praised for being ahead of schedule with 18 months to go until the opening ceremony next July.

Education Minister Masahiko Shibayama, whose ministry supervises the nation's sports activities, called on Takeda to help lift suspicions by giving clear explanations.

"All we have to do is to go ahead with preparations so that the Tokyo Olympics and Paralympics can be an event to be celebrated," Shibayama told a separate news conference.

The case comes at a delicate time in Franco-Japanese relations,

with the arrest and continued detention of Renault boss Carlos Ghosn on alleged financial misconduct charges sparking criticism overseas of Japan's legal system.

The 71-year-old Takeda, a former Olympic showjumper who led Japan's campaign to win the Games, is also a member of the International Olympic Committee (IOC).

The IOC's ethics committee has said it will continue to "watch the situation" but stressed that Takeda was innocent until proven guilty.

Takeda was "mis examined" by the French magistrates, a legal step that has no direct equivalent in the British or US legal systems, but roughly translates as being charged.

It does not automatically trigger a trial but means that prosecutors believe there is strong or corroborated evidence of wrongdoing.

The French investigation, launched in 2016, centres around two payments made to Singapore-based firm "Black Tidings", a firm linked to Papa Massata Diack.

Diack is the son of the former head of the International Association of Athletics Federations (IAAF), Lamine Diack, and is also embroiled in a bribery scandal.

He is suspected of having received several million euros in bribes, either for sponsorship contracts or to favour the Rio de Janeiro and Tokyo Olympic bids.

He has been on Interpol's most-wanted list since 2015 but the Senegalese government has refused to extradite him to France despite pleas from IOC chief Thomas Bach.

The payments, labelled "Tokyo 2020 Olympic Game Bid" and paid from a Japanese bank account, were made before and after the IOC voted for Tokyo to host the Games.

The case is being investigated in France because of suspicions the funds may have been laundered there.

Kohli, Dhoni star in series-levelling win for India

CHETAN NARULA

ADELAIDE, JAN 15 (PTI): MS Dhoni pulled off a tight finish for India just like old times to silence his critics after captain Virat Kohli laid the foundation for a series-levelling six-wicket win against Australia with his 39th ODI hundred here on Tuesday.

Chase master Kohli could not take his team to the finishing line this time but Dhoni (55 off 54) and Dinesh Karthik (25 off 14) rose to the occasion with an unbeaten 57-run stand off 34 balls, taking India home with four balls to spare. Australia scored 298-8 after opting to bat.

Man of the match Kohli was dismissed in the 44th over after making 104 off 112 balls with five fours and two sixes. Dhoni, who has been coping with a lot of criticism for his waning finishing skills, turned back the clock and took India past the finish line with a final over six.

The third and final ODI will be in Melbourne on Friday.

India got off to a frantic start with Shikhar Dhawan hitting five boundaries in his 28-ball 32 runs. He put on 47 runs for the opening wicket with Rohit Sharma (43).

The latter had another strong outing, adding 54 runs with Kohli for the second wicket as India crossed 100 in the 18th over. But just when things were going smoothly, he mishit a pull off Marcus Stoinis (1-46) and was caught in the deep.

Ambati Rayudu (24) then came to the crease, and while he added 59 runs with Kohli for the third wicket, it was plain obvious that the number four batsman struggled for timing.

Kohli meanwhile was in cruise mode, rotating strike and picking the odd boundary with ease,

as he reached fifty in 66 balls. The star batsman stayed in the same mode as the asking rate climbed.

But it was Rayudu who tried attacking the bowling and perished instead, caught in the deep off Glenn Maxwell (1-16) in the 31st over.

Dhoni then joined Kohli, and the duo put on 82 runs for the fourth wicket, with clever rotation of strike as India crossed 200 in the 37th over to keep pace with the asking rate.

Kohli changed gears as he hit two immaculate sixes through pure timing, and reached his hundred off 108 balls. It was his sixth ODI hundred against Australia.

The turning point came in the 44th over though, when Australia masterminded Kohli's dismissal through some clever field placement in the deep. He holed out to Maxwell off Jhye Richardson (1-59).

Dhoni then took over and put on match-winning partnership with Karthik. In doing so, he turned back the clocks to lead India to a tense finish, and completed his second consecutive half-century in as many matches, 69th overall, off 53 balls.

The veteran's running between the wickets, laced with two sixes as the only boundaries, finished things off in style for India.

Earlier, Shaun Marsh scored his seventh ODI hundred to take Australia to a challenging total.

Marsh arrived at the crease at 26-2 and scored 131 runs and added 94 runs off 65 balls with Glenn Maxwell (48 off 37 balls).

The hosts were unchanged from the previous game, while India brought in debutant Mohammed Siraj in place of Khaleel Ahmed.

Bhuvneshwar Kumar (4-45) and Mohammed



Shami (3-58) exerted themselves on proceedings with the new ball, and didn't let the Australian openers get away quickly.

Kumar bowled Aaron Finch (6) through the gate in the seventh over, in a near-similar replay of his dismissal in the first ODI. At the other end, Alex Carey (18) looked set once again before getting out two overs later, a top-edge off Shami's quick bouncer caught at midwicket as Shikhar Dhawan took a skier.

It brought Marsh and Usman Khawaja (21) together, and they put on 56 runs off 65 balls. Their partnership threatened to turn the game away, but Ravindra Jadeja affected a brilliant run-out in the 19th over to dismiss Khawaja with a direct throw from backward point.

Marsh was able to manoeuvre the middle overs very well, as Mohammed Siraj (0-76) was proving expensive in every spell. The debutant sprayed the ball all over and was never able to hit a consistent line.

India were forced to bowl Kuldeep Yadav (0-66) and Jadeja (1-49) earlier in the innings than planned, and even Shami came back for a spell before the 25th over as the lack of a sixth bowling option started to show.

Australia did them a favour by losing wickets at regular intervals. Peter Handscomb (20) was stumped off Jadeja in the 28th over with MS Dhoni affecting another quick dismissal. But he had added 52 runs with Marsh for the fourth wicket carrying Australia past 100 in the 22nd over.

Marsh reached his half-century off 62 balls, and added 55 runs with Marcus Stoinis (29) for the fifth wicket.

Their partnership threatened to change the pace of scoring but Shami struck in the 37th over, an inside edge caught behind, to dismiss Stoinis.

Maxwell hit five fours and a six as Australia accelerated after reaching 200 in the 39th over. Marsh, meanwhile, had reached his hundred off 108 balls.

Siraj had a woeful day as he missed out twice on Maxwell's wicket as the hard-hitting batsman survived on 26 and 41. First, DRS overturned an lbw decision in the 44th over with the ball going down leg, and then Rohit Sharma dropped a tough chance at extra cover in the 47th over.

Kumar returned to account for both Maxwell and Marsh in the 48th over and it dent-ed momentum towards 300, as Australia lost a flurry of wickets.

Man City ready to pounce on any Liverpool slip-ups, says Guardiola

MANCHESTER, JAN 15 (AFP): Pep Guardiola said his Manchester City team will be poised to pounce if Premier League leaders Liverpool falter, following a comfortable 3-0 win over Wolves that left City four points behind Jurgen Klopp's side.

Two first-half goals from Gabriel Jesus, either side of a straight red card for Wolves' French defender Willy Boly, allowed City to demonstrate that they had banished their shaky December form.

The City manager was in no mood to analyse the table and insisted he is interested only in his own team's performances.

"We cannot play the games against Liverpool, we cannot do anything about them," said Guardiola.

"All we can do is win our games and be there. We've spoken to our players about it and the fact we cannot control what they can do. All we can do is be there and maybe one day they fail. But if they don't lose, then they'll be champions.

"We've done incredible numbers after last season, but one team has done better than us so far. All we can do is be there until the end and the results will dictate who will win."

Two weeks into 2019, City have scored a remarkable 21 goals in four home games this year and have hit 99 in all competitions already in the current campaign. Jesus had scored just three times in his 16 league games coming into the new year but his two-goal performance against Nuno Espirito Santo's team continued his rich vein of recent form.

He scored once in the seven-goal FA Cup win over Rotherham and hit four in last week's 9-0 League Cup humiliation of Burton, and now has seven goals in his past three outings, although City's task was made easier by a straight red card shown to Boly in the

19th minute.

Jesus's opener came in the 10th minute after a magnificent 40-yard pass from defender Aymeric Laporte exposed the Wolves defence and sent Leroy Sane sprinting down the left.

The German's low cross was judged to be perfection, as was Jesus's run, as he slid in and steered the ball into an open goal.

Boly's rash challenge, an out-of-control, one-footed lunge at Bernardo Silva, may not have been malicious but was deserving of a red soon after.

"It was quite a bad tackle but I'm fine," said Bernardo. "Yes, he did apologise at the end of the game. These things happen." With Wolves down to 10 men, Jesus's second of the evening, from a 39th-minute penalty, made it hard to see Wolves forcing their way back. Again, referee Craig Pawson appeared to have made the right decision as Raheem Sterling played a one-two only to be brought down by Ryan Bennett's clumsy challenge.

Jesus took a stuttering run-up for his spot kick, but there was nothing hesitant in his confident finish into the bottom right corner.

Kevin De Bruyne, surprisingly left on the bench after his angry reaction to being substituted in last week's thrashing of Burton, was brought on just after the hour.

And, in a lively performance, it was his cross, following a 78th-minute short corner that was deflected into his own goal by Conor Coady.

"I don't have a magician's ball to discover when I'm going to lose points," said Guardiola.

"But I said to the players, 'don't look at the calendar for the Liverpool games -- forget about it,' because normally when this happens, in my experience, you lose your games, and after that it's over."

Rivalry and revenge: Iran face Iraq at Asian Cup

Dubai, Jan 15 (AFP): One of football's great rivalries takes centre-stage at the Asian Cup on Wednesday when Iran play Iraq still smarting from their controversial exit four years ago.

Iran played most of the classic 2015 quarter-final with 10 men after Mehrdad Pooladi's hotly disputed first-half dismissal but when it ended 3-3 after extra-time, Iraq edged the penalty shoot-out.

Iran's protest that Iraq yielded an ineligible player was dismissed as Carlos Queiroz's three-

time winners were sent packing from the tournament in Australia.

Four years on from their clash in Canberra, Iran forward Saman Ghoddos said memories were still fresh as Team Melli take on Iraq in their final game of Group D.

"Iraq are tough opponents and I think that this will be a revenge match for us," said Ghoddos, according to Iran's Varzesh3 website.

"I've been waiting for this match ever since the last Asian Cup. We will win this match for the people."

India among world's leading exporters of creative goods: UN report

YOSHITA SINGH

United Nations, Jan 15 (PTI): India's creative goods exports nearly tripled from USD 7.4 billion in 2005 to USD 20.2 billion in 2014, making it one of the world's leading exporters of such products in the top 10 developing economies, according to a UN report.

China is the biggest single exporter and importer of creative goods and services. China's trade in creative goods between 2002 and 2015 has been exponential, with average annual growth rates of 14 per cent, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) report said.

The second edition of the periodic Creative Economy Outlook: Trends in International Trade in Creative Industries examines the global picture and also features 130 country profiles with reported creative goods and services trade data. The data, which covers the period 2002 to 2015, shows the creative economy's contribution to world trade.

Over this period, the value of the global market for creative goods doubled from USD 208 billion in 2002 to USD 509 billion in 2015.

"China, Hong Kong (China), India, Singapore, Taiwan Province of China, Turkey, Thailand, Malaysia, Mexico and the Philippines were the top 10 performing developing economies stimulating global trade in creative goods," the report said.

Among developed economies, the US, France, Italy, the UK, Germany, Switzerland, the Netherlands, Poland, Belgium and Japan were the top 10 creative goods exporters.

India's creative goods exports nearly tripled from USD 7.4 billion in 2005 to USD 20.2 billion in 2014, the report said.

Design goods accounted for the largest share of creative goods exports with a value of USD 17.9 billion in 2014. Jewellery was a key export at USD 13.2 billion followed by fashion accessories at USD 3.2 billion.

The US was India's

top export partner for creative goods in 2005 but the country slipped to second place in 2014, when the UAE emerged as India's top trading partner, it said.

The report noted that India's fashion industry is likely to continue its growth as the country has a large young population. Art crafts (carpet and yarn products) was another dynamic sector with exports at USD 1.5 billion in 2014. India had a positive trade balance in creative goods trade, which stood at USD 15.4 billion in 2014.

In 2014, the main destination markets for India's creative goods exports were Asia (58 per cent), the Americas (20 per cent) and Europe (19 per cent).

The report said India had become the centre for outsourcing work such as game development, game support services.

In the coming years, the country is expected to become the hub for development, porting and dubbing of various games across the globe, due to low costs and the easy availability of game developers with world-class experience, it said.

"With the country's youth population standing at over 350 million, India is one of the largest markets for companies operating in the global gaming industry," the report said.

Highlighting other creative aspects emerging from the country, the report also said that India makes more movies than any other country in the world.

"Fourteen million Indians go to the movies on a daily basis (about 1.4 per cent of the population of 1 billion) and pay the equivalent to the average day's wages (US USD 1-3) to see a film, of which Bollywood produces over 800 films each year. That is more than double the number of feature films produced in the US," the report said.

Indian gastronomy is also undergoing rapid growth. Food service sales in the country are growing at about 10 per cent annually, making it one of the fastest growing sellers in the world.

This growth is double the rate expected for the much more mature US' restaurant industry, and with a population quadruple the size, it said.

"These figures are significant on two fronts. The creative economy has both commercial and cultural worth. This dual value has led governments worldwide to focus on expanding and developing their creative economies as part of economic diversification strategies and efforts to stimulate prosperity and well-being," said Pamela Coke-Hamilton, who directs UNCTAD's trade division.

The report said that globally design and visual arts are among the highest performing sectors with fashion, interior design and jewellery accounting for 54 per cent of creative goods exports in developed economies and 70 per cent (including toys) in developing economies.

"Although the downturn in global trade has impacted all industries, the report shows the creative economy is more resilient than most," said Marisa Henderson, chief of UNCTAD's creative economy programme.

The report said that the Indian animation and visual effects industry (VFX) grew at 16.4 per cent in 2016 to reach a size of USD 8.2 billion.

The State governments are implementing favourable policies and Maharashtra, Karnataka, Telangana have announced, or are coming up with, policies in support of the of the animation and VFX industry, it said.

"These would enable the Indian animation and VFX industry to effectively compete with established markets such as the US, Canada and emerging centres in Republic of Korea, France, China and Malaysia," the report said, citing a KPMG India-FICCI Indian Media and Entertainment Industry Report 2017.

It said that visual effects are indispensable parts of filmmaking and the Indian film industry is the largest in the world in terms of number of films produced.

Bangladeshi-origin Labour MP delays birth to vote on crucial Brexit deal

London, Jan 15 (PTI): A 36-year-old Bangladeshi-origin British lawmaker has delayed giving birth to vote on the UK's landmark divorce deal with the European Union on Tuesday.

Tulip Siddiq, a Labour lawmaker and a niece of Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, has been advised by doctors to have a caesarean section, but agreed to push the procedure back to Thursday so she can vote on the Brexit deal Tuesday in the House of Commons.

By her decision, the Opposition lawmaker from Hampstead and Kilburn, has reignited the debate over proxy voting in Parliament, the BBC reported.

Siddiq told the Evening Standard that she had a difficult first pregnancy with her two-year-

old daughter, and was originally due to give birth to her second child by elective caesarean section on February 4.

But after developing gestational diabetes, her doctors recommended she bring the date forward to a delivery this Monday or Tuesday.

She spoke to medical staff at the Royal Free Hospital in Hampstead, London, and they agreed to the delay.

Siddiq said: "If my son enters the world even one day later than the doctors advised, but it's a world with a better chance of a strong relationship between Britain and Europe, then that's worth fighting for."

British MPs are preparing to vote on Tuesday whether to back embattled Prime Minis-

ter Theresa May's deal for leaving the European Union on March 29, 2019.

May has called for politicians to back her deal or risk "letting the British people down".

But with many of her own MPs expected to join opposition parties to vote against the deal, it is widely expected to be defeated, British media reported.

Siddiq said she plans to go through the lobby of the House of Commons in a wheelchair.

Siddiq is the grand-daughter of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the first president of Bangladesh. Her aunt is Hasina, who was sworn in as Bangladesh's prime minister for a record fourth term on January 7.

Meanwhile, Speak-

er of the Commons John Bercow said that a proxy vote for Siddiq would be his "preference", but it was not in his power to grant it. However, he was happy for her to be "nodded through".

This process normally means an MP's vote can be counted if they are anywhere on the parliamentary estate, rather than going through the voting lobby.

It has traditionally been used for unwell MPs, such as during the votes on the Maasticht Treaty in the 1990s, where some were driven onto the estate by ambulance to be "nodded through" on crucial votes.

There is a system in Parliament for MPs who cannot make a vote called "pairing" - where an MP on either side of an issue agree to not

vote, so cancelling each other out.

However, Siddiq said she did not trust the system after Tory chairman Brandon Lewis was accused of breaking the system when he voted on a Trade Bill, despite being paired with Liberal Democrat Jo Swinson, who was on maternity leave. He later apologised for making an "honest mistake".

"If the pairing system is not honoured, there's nothing I can do, and it's going to be a very close vote," said Siddiq. "I've had no pressure at all from the whips to come and vote but this is the biggest vote of my lifetime."

"I've sat down with my husband Chris and he said to me this is my choice, but that he would support me," she said.

Ivanka Trump to help US search new World Bank president: White House

Washington, Jan 15 (PTI): President Donald Trump's eldest daughter and senior advisor Ivanka will help the US to pick the new World Bank president, the White House has said, dismissing media reports that she herself is a key contender for the top position.

World Bank's current president Jim Yong Kim said last week that he will step down next month, an unexpected departure announcement three years before his term was set to expire. The abrupt announcement triggered speculation about his replacement.

The Financial Times reported on Sunday that former US Ambassador to the UN Nikki Haley in addition to 37-year-old Ivanka were the possible candidates for the top job.

However, the White House refuted media reports that the daughter

of the US President herself was under consideration for the bank's presidency.

Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin and Acting Chief of Staff Mick Mulvaney has asked Ivanka to "help manage the US nomination process as she's worked closely with the World Bank's leadership for the past two years - however, reports that she is under consideration are false," White House Deputy Director of Communication Jessica Ditto said on Monday.

The US president cannot install its leader, who must be approved by the bank's board, but has traditionally placed his nominee in the job.

Trump has already faced harsh criticism for appointing his daughter as a senior White House advisor.

Ivanka is a successful businesswoman, fashion designer, author and re-



ality television personality. She has her own line of fashion items, including clothes, handbags, shoes, accessories which are available in all major US departmental stores.

A passionate advocate for education and empowerment of women and girls, Ivanka led a high-profile US delegation to the Global Entrepreneurship Summit (GES) in Hyderabad in November 2017.

An American has traditionally led the World Bank while the top position in the International Monetary Fund has been held from Europe.

While the candidature of World Bank presidency is finally approved by the financial institution itself, the US has a major say in its decision-making process by virtue of being its biggest stakeholder.

Last week, the Word

Bank announced its process to accept the application for the top position.

The World Bank works to promote economic development and poverty eradication through loans and technical support. The 189-member international financial institution provides loans to countries and focuses on development.

Military deployed in Zimbabwe against fuel hike protests; 5 killed

HARARE, JAN 15 (AP): A Zimbabwean military helicopter on Tuesday fired tear gas at demonstrators blocking a road and burning tires in the capital on a second day of deadly protests after the government more than doubled the price of fuel in the economically shattered country.

Soldiers moved in to disperse crowds at the busy intersection and transport hub in Harare amid Zimbabwe's biggest unrest since deadly post-election violence in August. Witnesses also reported violence in the eastern city of Mutare, where people attacked passenger buses and destroyed some shops.

Social media such as Facebook, Twitter and WhatsApp were disabled. Businesses and schools were shut down and public transport vehicles grounded in most of the country despite government assurances that security would be provided.

The government over the weekend announced a price of 3.11 per liter (0.26 gallons) for diesel, and 3.33 per liter for gasoline. That means gaso-

line in Zimbabwe is now the most expensive in the world, based on data from GlobalPetrolPrices.com. The site says Hong Kong had the highest price for a liter of gasoline on Jan. 7: 2.04.

Five people were killed in Monday's unrest during which security forces opened fire on crowds, according to the Zimbabwe Association of Doctors for Human Rights.

Another rights group said 26 people suffered gunshot wounds and that some were afraid to go to hospitals for fear of arrest or assault.

Lives were lost, police officers were injured, property was damaged and more than 200 people were arrested, said Owen Ncube, the state security minister. He blamed the main opposition MDC party and some civil society groups for stoking violence in an attempt to topple the government of President Emmerson Mnangagwa, who took power after longtime leader Robert Mugabe was forced to resign in November 2017.

Mice flown to space may help decode ageing: NASA

WASHINGTON, JAN 15 (PTI): Groups of mice sent aboard the International Space Station (ISS) may help better understand the process of ageing in space and on Earth, according to NASA.

The investigation will provide space-flown samples to scientists from academia, industry and government agencies, who have agreed to share their data and results in an online database that is open to the public.

Rodent Research-8 (RR-8) will examine the physiology of ageing and the effect of age on disease progression using groups of young and old mice flown in space and kept on Earth, NASA said in a statement.

"The objective is to expose the mice to microgravity and track physiological changes," said Michael S Roberts, deputy chief scientist at the US National Laboratory, a sponsor of the investigation.

"Tissue samples from space-flown animals are

extremely valuable to biomedical research and opportunities to use the space station are limited to a few missions each year," Roberts said.

"This investigation was conceived primarily to provide the biomedical research community on Earth with tissues from mice exposed to microgravity," he said.

Previous research has shown that spending time in space causes bone density loss, immune dysfunction, cardiovascular issues such as stiffening of arteries, and loss of skeletal muscle mass and strength in both humans and rodent models.

These changes resemble ageing in people on Earth, but happen more quickly. That makes spaceflight an opportunity to study -- and perhaps lessen -- the effects of ageing.

The investigation will keep a group of young mice (10-16 weeks old)

and another group of older mice (30-52 weeks old) on the space station for different periods of time -- approximately 30 and 60 days -- to make it possible to examine that accelerated ageing process more closely.

Researchers also plan to observe the activity levels of the different groups, expecting the younger mice to be more active than the older ones.

Activity, or exercise, is known to affect the rate of bone and muscle loss in mice just as it does in humans.

The mice are all from a genetically identical strain.

"We are trying to get down to the molecular basis for what is happening," Roberts said.

"To use mice or other organisms as models for studying humans, we need to understand whether the effects of space exposure have the same causes and outcomes as conditions in humans on Earth," he said.

Trump sends letter to Kim Jong-un: report

WASHINGTON, JAN 15 (PTI): Donald Trump has sent a letter to Kim Jong-un, a media report said Tuesday, days after the US President said he received a "great letter" from the reclusive North Korean leader, amid talks about a second summit between them on denuclearisation of the Korean Peninsula.

Kim and Trump held a historic meeting in Singapore on June 12 last year where they issued a vague goal for the "complete denuclearisation" of the Korean Peninsula without describing when and how it would occur.

The letter delivered over the weekend comes after President Trump said early this month that he had received a "great letter" from Kim and was

looking forward to meet the North Korean leader for a second time in the "not-too-distant future".

The letter comes as the two sides negotiate details of a second meeting between the two leaders. It was flown to Pyongyang and delivered by hand, the CNN reported, quoting a source familiar with the ongoing talks between Washington and Pyongyang on denuclearisation of the Korean Peninsula.

North Korea's former spy chief Kim Yong Chol - one of Pyongyang's top negotiators - could visit Washington as soon as this week to finalise details of the upcoming summit, it said.

The CNN previously reported that US scouting teams had visited

Bangkok, Hanoi and Hawaii as they search for a location for the second summit.

Last week, South Korean President Moon Jae-in threw his support behind another Trump-Kim meeting, saying it - along with a visit by Kim to Seoul - would be a turning point "that will firmly solidify peace on the Korean Peninsula", the report said.

"We will not loosen our guard until the promise to denuclearise the Peninsula is kept, and peace is fully institutionalised," Moon said.

Trump's announcement of receiving a letter from Kim had come after the North Korean leader warned that Pyongyang may change its approach to nuclear talks if Washington persists with sanctions.

Serena made sure baby's first doll 'Qai Qai' was black

MELBOURNE, JAN 15 (AFP): Serena Williams says she made sure the first doll her daughter Alexis Olympia received was black, and her second one will be white as she teaches a message of "love for each other".

The tennis great, in Melbourne in her bid to win a 24th Grand Slam title, is married to Reddit co-founder Alexis Ohanian with their first child born in late 2017.

Williams, 37, said she rarely came across black dolls when she was growing up and wanted to make sure her baby had one.

"Qai Qai is a doll I got for her. I wanted her to have a black doll," she said after easing into the tournament second round Tuesday.

"Growing up, I didn't have that many opportunities to have black dolls. And I was just thinking, like, I want her first doll to be black.

"And her heritage, obviously she's mixed, she's Caucasian and black, but I

feel like that was her first doll and I said her second doll would be Caucasian.

"I definitely want to always teach her love and teach her just that humans should always have love for each other, no matter what colour they are," she added.

Bizarrely, the doll has its own Instagram page with more than 87,000 followers, and growing.

Qai Qai is described on the social media platform as "daughter and best friend of @olympiohania and granddaughter of @serenawilliams". Williams said the name Qai Qai came from her nephew.

"We were all sitting in our living room, and we were running around names, and he said, 'call her Qai Qai'. He actually is the magic behind the name," said the American.

Williams last played the Australian Open in 2017, when she won the tournament while eight weeks pregnant. She assured reporters she wasn't expecting again as she re-



flected on life on the road with a child.

"It's definitely different to travel with a toddler as opposed to a baby, an infant," she said.

"Infants I think are easier, and everyone said it's easier. I didn't quite understand.

"Olympia takes a lot more attention now, which is why I'm trying to get out of here (press conference room). It's cool. It's really cool to be a mom and to be her mom, in particular. I feel really special.

Harry Potter classic moments to be released as limited edition fine art prints

LONDON, JAN 15 (PTI): Harry Potter fans are getting a Muggle-created Pensieve as a range of limited edition memorable moments from the beloved book series are set to be released in the first ever fine art collection from the franchise.

According to DigitalSpy, Universal Studios and Classic Stills have joined hands to announce the new range of prints from the first book, "Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone".

A date is yet to be announced. This will be later followed



up by collections for all eight of the Harry Potter films over the next few years. Subsequent collections

will be released from the other films in chronological order.

Pottermaniacs will also get a chance to help participate in curating the collections, by pointing out the scene or moment they would most like to display.

A "Doctor Who" collection is also on the horizon, with Classic Stills also teaming up with the BBC.

The line-up will comprise 20 pieces spanning the show's history and will include all 13 actors to have played a main incarnation of the Time Lord.

Michelle Yeoh stand-alone 'Star Trek' series in the works

LOS ANGELES, JAN 15 (PTI): A new "Star Trek" show, fronted by Michelle Yeoh, is officially moving forward at CBS All Access.

According to Variety, the series will be written by Bo Yeon Kim and Erika Lippoldt.

The series would see Yeoh reprise the role of Philippa Georgiou, expanding on the character's current position as a member of Section 31, a shadowy intelligence agency operating within the Federation.

The actor said she cannot wait to see where the story goes and she believes it will go "where no woman has ever gone before".

"I'm so excited to continue telling these rich 'Star Trek' stories. Being a part of this universe and this character specifically has been such a joy for me to play," she added.

There were rumours of a Yeoh-led Section 31 series



since the conclusion of "Discovery" season one, after a deleted scene revealed Georgiou being approached by a member of the organisation on the Klingon homeworld.

She is also set to appear in the second season of "Star Trek: Discovery", which debuts Thursday.

'Game of Thrones' final season to premiere on April 14

Winter is coming to scorch the TV screens as "Game of Thrones" returns for one last time on April 14 with its eighth season.

HBO on Monday announced the premiere date of the hit series last installment on its official Twitter account.

The network also offered a 90 second-long "official tease", captioned as: "April 14. #ForTheThrone."

The video clip shows Jon Snow, Sansa and Arya - three members of the Stark family - making their way through the crypts under their family home.

The viewer hears messages their from dead family members Ned and Catelyn Stark as well as Lyanna Stark, Ned's sister and the mother Jon never knew.

When the troika reaches the crypt's end, they come face-to-face with their own statues. As confusion clouds their faces, a fallen feather starts turning into ice and the crypt fills up with fog, cautioning that the winter is here.

Last wee, HBO debuted new footage from the eighth season -- that featured Jon, Sansa and Daenerys Targaryen -- as part of its 2019 line-up.

The network announced last November that the show's final season will premiere in April 2019.

Season eight has six episodes - each of which could run as long as 90 minutes. The shooting began in October 2017 and wrapped 10 months later.



ARIES: A little ahead of the curve? That's an understatement! Today's quarter moon in your sign galvanizes your goals—and good luck to the rest of the pack trying to keep pace with you. People may not even understand what you're talking about. But don't waste your time and energy trying to explain it to them, Ram. Just keeping toiling away in your workshop, experimenting and tweaking until you hit on The perfect thing that's ready to trot out on display.

TAURUS: Has that tiny pile of stuff you've been sweeping under the carpet grown to superhuman proportions, Taurus? You may be forced to deal with an unpleasant person today, as a quarter moon in combative Aries activates your unconscious twelfth house. This isn't a bad thing, though, Bull. While it may not be fun, it IS necessary. That hidden mountain could actually be an active volcano that's ready to blow. The name of today's game: compromise!

GEMINI: Team spirit is the name of your game, but don't get swept up in it today, Gemini. A quarter moon in your eleventh

house of collaboration could inspire you to start firing off big announcements on social media or inviting people to get on-board with a big project. Before you get carried away, make sure you have the right mix of people and skill sets to pull this off. It's great to have visionary minds, but you also need hard work and hustle.

CANCER: Watch out for an unceremonious visit by the green-eyed monster today. An alignment of the fiery Sun and controlling Pluto in your seventh house of relationships could leave you feeling deeply jealous. But if your sweetie or crush is acting sneaky, don't leap to conclusions. Be direct. Ask questions and listen to your gut when they respond. And no secretive snooping yourself. For all you know, they could be planning a surprise for you.

LEO: Do you sense something dodgy going down? Your natural inclination in cases like these is to blow the whistle. Not so fast, Leo! With the Sun beaming alongside undercover agent Pluto, your personal investigation could reveal that

there's more going on than meets the eye. Your best intentions to be helpful could suck you into a situation that's heavier than you bargained for. Stay out of other people's entanglements and think twice—make that thrice—before getting involved.

VIRGO: an you feel the power of your purr? You're a head turner of the first degree, thanks to today's sultry sync-up of the Sun and seductive Pluto in your glamorous fifth house. Grabbing the spotlight takes minimal effort on your part, but be careful what you do with that gift today, Virgo. You've got the power, but you need to wield it carefully!

LIBRA: Is your blood boiling, Libra? Your easygoing sign can turn fierce when you suspect someone is messing with your inner circle. Today's conjunction of the passionate Sun and possessive Pluto in your sensitive fourth house could throw up red flags. Did someone cross your line in the sand? Since you might be too emotional to confront them directly, call a dispassionate third party who can help you determine the best course of action.

SCORPIO: The pen—and the voice—are mightier than the sword today, Scorpio, so

make every word count. Potent Pluto (one of your galactic guardians) syncs up with the Sun in your third house of communication, turbocharging your confidence and helping you speak your truth. This isn't the time to confuse, conflate or manipulate. By honestly expressing yourself, you could move the masses. But make sure you know what you want to say. Anger or resentment will only serve to water down your message.

SAGITTARIUS: Read the fine print, Sagittarius, especially the digits on your financial statements. Today's keen connection between the illuminating Sun and probing Pluto could reveal a hidden charge that you forgot to cancel (your ex's phone service!) or a contract clause that needs amending. Keep your eyes wide open when making any new fiscal transactions.

CAPRICORN: Magnetic doesn't begin to describe you today as the Sun simmers alongside seductive Pluto in Capricorn. You're in the power position; a subtle assertion of leadership is all that's required for people to fall in line with your ideas. Wield

this influence carefully. Today, others may see you as their capable queen, but if you hand down orders without asking for feedback, your royal court could turn mutinous. **AQUARIUS:** Don't be so quick to trust today, Aquarius. People may not be totally on the up-and-up, and with the Sun aligned with secretive Pluto, you could put your faith in the wrong folks—and land in a heap of trouble. Even if you had nothing to do with their misdeeds, others may deem you guilty by association. Worse, you could get ensnared in activities that tarnish your reputation!

PISCES: Check your funds, Pisces. Today's balancing quarter moon in Aries takes inventory of your finances. While your bank statement may be the last thing you want to look at, it's always good to know where you stand financially. No need to panic if you're a little lower than anticipated. Necessity IS the mother of invention, after all. Let this inspire you to get creative with a side hustle or to cut back wasteful subscriptions and expenses in the new year.