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SummitTIMES

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ON TOP OF THE NEWS

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HSP condemns CM's allegation that Opp has hired shooters from outside

SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 17 MAY:

Hamro Sikkim Party has strongly condemned recent claims of the Chief Minister that "shooters" hired from outside the State have been commissioned by opposition parties to create disturbances in the State. The CM has said so in his State Day address here on Thursday.

An HSP press release issued by its spokesperson, Biraj Adhikari, contends that the "CM once again resorted to fear-mongering, as he has been doing for the last 25 years..."

The release goes on to point out that since the CM also holds the Home portfolio "it does

not suit his office to scare people and create panic among the citizens like his statements have done."

"The party considers it outright sickening and condemns such attempts in the strongest terms," the release adds.

HSP has also demanded that "in order to instill a sense of confidence in the system among the general people of Sikkim, the caretaker government should immediately inform the measures taken to manage any eventuality and also carry out other confidence building measures which are either visible, or well informed."

Rare sighting of snow leopard and tiger at Kyongnosla

TIGER PHOTOGRAPHED AT 11,715 FT

SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 17 MAY:

Sighting of a snow leopard and a tiger in the same area, a rarest of rare occurrence, has been confirmed from the Kyongnosla Alpine Sanctuary.

Sikkim Biodiversity and Forest Management today informed of a Royal Bengal Tiger being sighted in Kyongnosla Alpine Sanctuary for the first time on 02 May 2019 [see pic alongside]. This on the heels of the sighting of the big cat at Pangolakha Wildlife Sanctuary in Nov-Dec last year.

Interestingly, a snow leopard was also sighted in Kyongnosla Alpine Sanctuary towards the

end of last year, according to Forest officials. Kyongnosla Alpine Sanctuary is the highest range in the state at an elevation of 11, 715 ft while Pangolakha Wildlife Sanctuary, East Sikkim, sits at a much lower elevation of 9, 583 ft.

The sightings were reported by a team of Forest Officials led by Range Officer, Navin Gurung and Block Officer, Bivek Chettri, of Kyongnosla Alpine Sanctuary it is informed.

Addressing the press conference today, DFO, East Wildlife Division, Dechen Lachungpa said that past records show that the movement of tiger upto an elevation



of 10,000ft was unusual phenomena and sighting of a tiger in Sikkim forests is greatly surprising.

Forest officials claimed that the presence of tiger

in Sikkim forests is sign of a healthy eco-system flourishing in the state.

Besides tiger other fauna like Red Panda, Musk Deer, Red Fox, Wild

Yak Blood Pheasant and Himalayan Monal were also caught on camera, which is good prey base in the habitat, added Ms Lachungpa.

DFO, Sikkim Biodiversity and Forest Management, Karma Choden informed that 8 cameras were installed in Kyongnosla Wildlife Sanctuary where a big cat was photographed by one of the cameras.

Chief Conservator of Forest, Bhuwan Pradhan stated that with the wide usage of camera traps as part of the population estimation study under JICA assisted SBFM, it has provided a great insight into wildlife presence particularly of tiger

movement in the state.

He also stated that the state offers best circumstances for conserving tigers and securing their habitats across the Himalayas.

More surveys are required along the probable route-viz; Pangolakha-Kyongnosla-Tamzey-Toong-Naga Reserve Forest-Torsa Lake-Khedum-Lema-Qu-say and Meruk Reserve Forest, it was informed by the Department. The officials also appeal that any information on poaching be reported to the DFO. The identity of the informant will be kept confidential and suitable reward also offered.

Ram Patro Memorial Award conferred, deliberations address challenges posed to journalism

SAGAR CHHETRI

GANGTOK, 17 MAY:

Ajay Agarwal of Sikkim Chronicle was today conferred the 'Ram Patro Memorial Award 2019 for Excellence in Journalism'. The award has been instituted by Sikkim Express in the memory of its founder, the Late Ram Patro, who also launched SE's sister publication, Himali Bela. The award is presently annually.

The award was presented by MP and former Minister in the Government of Nepal, Ram Karki, and senior journalist and Editor-in-Chief of East Mojo, Karma Paljor.

In his address, Mr Karki shared anecdotes from his connection with Himali Bela during his



stay in Sikkim in 1993.

He also spoke about the various welfare initiatives undertaken for journalists in Nepal and stressed that journalism was social and political action, a responsibility which requires journalists to engage in active and responsible jour-

alism.

Mr Karki admitted that the present scenario of journalism in the world was a matter of concern and called on journalists to work towards regaining their fading professionalism. He further urged journalists to take their jobs

very seriously to save journalism itself.

Likewise, Mr Paljor expressed concern over the increasing challenges posed to journalism due to the proliferation of smart phones and social media platforms. He added that every person with a smart phone has

now become a journalist and broadcaster.

He mentioned that it was easy to become famous by claiming to be doing journalism and stressed that journalists could remain relevant and useful by delivering in-depth reportage which was the need of the hour.

In this context, he underlined the need for in-depth data and research driven journalism.

He also said that journalists should check against fake news to deliver sincere and responsible information to the society.

Also today, the 'Best working journalist in Sikkim Express and Himali Bela for 2018-19' award was

No green nod required for construction on 20000-50000 sq metre area: Env Min's new EIA notification

NEW DELHI, MAY 17

(PTI): Construction in areas between 20,000-50,000 square metres will not require environment clearance from the government anymore, the Centre has said in its modified notification on the environment impact assessment (EIA).

The notification, recently issued by the Ministry of Environment, states that it has decided to "re-engineer" EIA rules based on amendments and the experience over the years in its implementation.

"As the principal notification has undergone substantial changes over the years, the Ministry has decided to re-engineer the entire notification in line with the amendments issued...and circulars issued from time to time and experience gained over the years in implementation of the EIA notification," it said.

Under the new notification, the process of clearances granted for sand mining and construction activities have been eased out, a decision that has not

gone down well with environmental activists who claim that the EIA notification compromises public hearings.

The draft allows district-level authorities, headed by the district magistrate, to seek exemption from public hearing while granting green clearance for sand mining in areas up to five hectares of land.

Lawyer and environmentalist Vikrant Tongad said that through the notification, the government was trying to give benefit to builders and mining companies which in turn was weakening the EIA.

"Under the modified EIA, building and construction in areas between 20,000 square metres and 50,000 sq metres do not require environmental clearance, which has been taking place all this while. In the sand mining sector, no public hearing will now take place for mining in an area of 0-5 hectare. It is a wrong move and public hearing must take place," Tongad said.

West DAC convenes preparatory meeting for counting



GYALSHING, 17 MAY

[IPR]: A preparatory meeting to discuss arrangements for the counting of votes [scheduled for 23 May] with the candidates and political representatives was conducted here at the Conference Hall, Zilla Bhawan, today.

The meeting was chaired by DC-cum-DEO West, Karma R. Bonpo along with SP West, Tenzing Loden Lepcha; ADC West, Karma Lodey Lepcha; SDM (HQ), Tushar G. Nikhare; SDM (Gyalshing) Gilbert Lepcha and SDM Dentam, Bimal Rai.

The District Collector congratulated all the candidates and political par-

ties of West Sikkim for keeping the election process peaceful and non-violent. He also urged them to do the same during the final phases of the elections.

The DC briefed them extensively on the arrangements at the counting halls where a total of 4 Halls have been designated for the counting.

He stated that since various checks have been made for the counting of the results, the counting process will be swift and error free.

He also mentioned that each hall would have an Assistant Returning Officer and an Observer. Each counting room will

have 10 counting tables manned by a Counting Supervisor, one Counting Assistant, one Micro Observer and one support staff.

He also mentioned that necessary security measures have been put in place and that secrecy of votes in case of postal ballots will be maintained at all costs.

He further advised that a team of counting agents from each party be selected and sent by the candidates. He added that no one will be allowed to enter the premises without a valid Identity card issued by the Returning Officer.

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Two more Indian mountaineers die, another missing in Nepal

SHIRISH B PRADHAN

KATHMANDU, MAY 17

(PTI): Two Indian climbers, including an Indian Army soldier, have died and another has gone missing in Nepal after one of them successfully scaled the world's highest peak Mount Everest, the expedition organiser said Friday, days after two mountaineers from the country perished in the Himalayan nation.

Army soldier Ravi Thakar, 28, was found dead inside his tent at Camp IV on Mount Everest ear-

ly Friday while Narayan Singh died at Camp IV on Thursday night when he was climbing down from the 8,485-meter Mount Makalu summit, world's fifth highest mountain.

Dipankar Ghos, 52, from Kolkata went missing from above Camp IV while returning from the Mount Makalu summit, said Mingma Sherpa, Chairman at Seven Summit Treks. A search team, which reached the area from where the climber is suspected to have gone missing, however, failed to trace him, Sherpa said.

Ghos climbed Mount Everest in 2011 and has also scaled Mount Kanchenjunga, Mount Lhotse, Mount Manaslu and Mount Dhaulagiri among other peaks.

Thakar died after he suffered from high altitude sickness.

"Fellow climbers found him dead inside the tent," Sherpa was quoted as saying by The Himalayan Times.

Ravi was part of an eight-member expedition led by renowned Irish climber Noel Richard Hanna.

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ATTC Bardang holds project exhibition



**WANGCHUK BHUTIA
RANGPO, 17 MAY:**

The Advanced Technical Training Centre (ATTC) Bardang, East Sikkim, conducted a project exhibition on Thursday which was attended by many schools from nearby places. Students from Rangpo Govt Sr.

Secondary School, Duga Govt. Secondary School, Majitar Secondary School, East Point Sr Secondary School, Singtam Govt Sr Secondary School and Sumin Lingchey Govt Secondary School attended the exhibition.

There were around 50 projects that were

displayed in the exhibition with various automated projects and innovative approach towards machines which aim at reducing human effort such as, firefighting, college musical bell, automated street light, two way hacksaw, health

monitoring system, vehicle plate number recognition and preparation of contour map and drawing details of proposed open gallery stadium and many more.

The project exhibition was conducted with interactive sessions for students.

Bhim Army chief warns Guj govt against Dalit 'atrocities'

AHMEDABAD, MAY 17 (PTI): Criticising the BJP government in Gujarat over the recent incidents of wedding processions of Dalits being stopped by some sections of the society, Bhim Army founder Chandrashekar Azad Friday issued a warning saying such atrocities will no longer be tolerated.

Talking to reporters here, Azad said 'jungle raj' is prevailing in Gujarat as members of the Scheduled Caste (SC) community are deprived of their fundamental rights given by the Constitution.

"I came to Gujarat because many incidents of atrocities on Dalits have happened recently. It seems that Constitutional provisions do not apply in Gujarat. Article 15 of the Constitution, which protects all the citizens from discrimination, has been removed by the Gujarat government," said Azad alias Ravan. Not just for taking out wedding processions, Dalits in Gujarat were persecuted for keeping moustache and suffixing 'Sinh' in their names, he said. "They are still not allowed to visit temples. This is nothing but 'jungle raj'. I want to tell the government that Dalits will not tolerate this insult anymore. We want the government to wake up and come to its senses," he added.

The Bhim Army chief added that he would visit all those villages of Gujarat where wedding processions of Dalit grooms were stopped.

Legal Services Camp held at Sumbuk



**SUMMIT REPORT
NAMCHI, 17 MAY:**

District Legal Services Authority (South) and Taluk Legal Services Committee (South) in co-ordination with the Sikkim State Legal Services Authority organized a Legal Services Camp as well as Legal Awareness at Government Senior Secondary School, Sumbuk, South Sikkim today, a press release informs.

The purpose of the Legal Services Camps are to spread awareness about welfare legislations and schemes and strengthen the community's access to the schemes being implemented by the Legal Services Authority and other Departments of the Government.

Today's program focussed mainly on NAL-

SA (Child Friendly Legal Services to Children and their Protection) Scheme, 2015. This camp aimed at identifying and connecting people specially child welfare schemes to ensure that fruits of the welfare schemes are passed to the eligible children. The camp also looked into understanding their legal needs and addressing their legal problems by giving appropriate legal advice.

The program was launched by the Chairperson, DLSA (South), Jivan Kumar Kharka in the presence of the Secretary DLSA (South), Jwala D. Thapa, Ld. Panel Advocates, D.B. Rai (Deputy Director, Human Resources Development Department), Bir Ba-

hadur Rasaily (Social Welfare Department), Zeba Ansari (Co-ordinator, Driшти NGO), S.K. Rai (Health Educator, Namchi District Hospital), Diki Lhamu Lepcha, (District Child Protection Unit, Namchi), Radha Sharma (Panchayat President, Sumbuk, GPU) and Para-Legal Volunteers and staff and students of Government Senior Secondary School, Sumbuk.

There were around 325 people who attended the program and a substantial number were school children. The attendees interacted with the officers and representatives of the Departments present to address their problems and to procure appropriate advice and guidance.

World Dengue Day observed at Singtam

**YOGEN THATAL
SINGTAM, 17 MAY:**

A team of health officials led by Chief Medical Officer, Dr T Laden in collaboration with Municipal Executive Officer, PK Rai and councillors of Singtam Nagar Panchayat observed World Dengue Day today at the community hall of SNP.

The theme of the

day was 'Prevention and Control should be everyone's concern'.

District Health Education officer from DHS, Sonam Bhutia hosted the program today along with his team, including ASHA members and IEC section.

Chief Medical Officer, Dr Tashering Laden, with the help of a

PPT explained about the dengue disease. She also talked about prevention measures that an individual or family can take against the dengue virus.

Quiz competition was also held between eight schools on the day.

It may be mentioned that Singtam has seen many cases of dengue in the past few years.

Ram Patro Memorial Award...

presented to Sikkim Express staff reporter, Isabella Gurung. On the occasion, a staff of Sikkim Express, Ram Shakal Sharma was felicitated with the 'Certificate of Appreciation' for his dedicated service.

The function was also addressed by both awardees. Earlier, the function started with the welcome address by Editor, Sikkim Express, Amit Patro, and concluded with the presentation of vote of thanks by associate editor, Himali Bela, Rupesh Sharma.

Decision of foreigners tribunal will prevail over NRC order: SC

NEW DELHI, MAY 17 (PTI): The Supreme Court Friday held that a tribunal's order declaring a person as an illegal foreigner would be binding and prevail over the government decision to exclude or include the name from the National Register of Citizens (NRC) in Assam.

A bench of Chief Justice Ranjan Gogoi and Justices Deepak Gupta and Sanjiv Khanna was dealing with the question that if the name of a person, included in the NRC in Assam is deleted on the ground that he was a foreigner, then he should have a right of appeal before an appropriate forum against exclusion or dropping of his name.

Justice Khanna, pronouncing the order, said

that the principle of 'res-judicata' (a judicially decided issue cannot be re-agitated) would apply on the decision of foreigners tribunal and a person who has been declared an illegal immigrant cannot seek re-decision in normal circumstances.

The bench distinguished between the decisions of NRC and of foreigners tribunals and said that the latter's order being the quasi judicial one would prevail.

The top court, however, said the persons whose names are not included in the NRC in Assam can produce documents including the ones related to family tree and seek review of the tribunals decision.

The court rejected the

Governor begins South tour from Melli

NAMCHI, 17 MAY (IPR):

The Governor, Ganga Prasad commenced his two-day tour at Melli today. He was accompanied by SDM (Jorethang), Tshering Bhutia, SDPO (Jorethang), Sonam Wangdi Bhutia, Melli Panchayat President, Kusum Dhakal and other officials.

Upon his arrival, the Governor was accorded with warm welcome alongwith guard of honours by the IRBns at Melli Checkpost.

The Governor had a brief interaction with the business community at a local auditorium in Melli bazaar. At the onset, Mr. Prasad was briefed about the demographic of the area. The members of the business community also placed their demands and other grievances with the Governor.

Speaking with the business community, the Governor said that the community member consist of hard working people from various parts of the country and they should live in harmony and proper coordination especially as Melli is one of the border towns of the state. He highlighted that the community should continue to do profitable business in cooperation with the organic farmers so that both parties can benefit



from the affairs.

The Governor alongwith the officials also visited the Solid Waste Management at Lower Paiyong where he enquired about the process and the management of the solid waste.

The Governor also inspected cow sheds of Badri Nath Sharma and N. B. Pradhan at Melli Paiyong. Similarly, he also toured the piggery farm under Animal Husbandry and Veterinary Services at Melli Dara. In both the places the Governor enquired about the well-being of the domesticated animal, the quality of their produce such as milk, meat and other yields.

The Governor also stopped at Village Administrative Center in Melli Dara. This centre is one of the first centre where the Panchayats

have initiated digital e-Governance at grassroots level. Panchayat President Ms. Dhakal gave an overview about the centre. Later, the Governor also inspected and took a brief analysis about the working of the centre.

Thereafter, the Governor ceased his tour at eco hut at Tarey Bhir wherein he interacted with the locals of the area. These locals appraised the governor in detail about the different kinds of development and other essential needs required in the area.

The locals also informed that the area comprises of the progressive farmers who are practising dairy, organic vegetable and other animal husbandry and livestock farming and also updated on how the farmers have benefitted

from these types of farming. They also shared the impressive plan to set up a rain water harvesting unit which can aid the inhabitants at Sadam which is particularly a dry place.

The Governor in his address expressed his concern about Sadam being a highly natural waterless place and the imperative need to establish a tank through water harvesting projects. He added that he will put earnest efforts in tandem with the concerned departments to help set up the tank. The Governor explained how the locals can utilize locally found raw materials into finished products and sell it in the market at a higher rate which will further assist the locals to be self-reliant and self-sufficient.

Final training for counting held in South



NAMCHI, 17 MAY (IPR):

The last and final round of training for the Counting Supervisors and Counting Assistants for South District was held at DAC Conference hall today.

DC (South), Ragul K chaired the training which was also attended by ADC (South), Satyen K Pradhan SDM (HQ), Hemant Rai and other election officials.

Addressing the gathering, the DC instructed the attendees to report at the

Counting hall located at Namchi Senior Secondary School at the stipulated time on the Counting day i.e on 23 May 2019. These counting officials will be given an order via the randomization process and they will be assigned to the respective counting tables for Counting of votes.

He further informed that there shall be four counting halls, two each for Assembly Constituencies and Assembly segments of

Parliamentary Constituencies, wherein thirty counting tables shall be set up. In each hall, there shall be a Counting table designated as VVPAT counting booth wherein the VVPAT slips of five VVPAT machines shall be counted. The postal ballots of the eight Assembly Constituencies shall be counted only in the Counting hall no 1 and 4.

Only the votes registered in the EVMs of the Assembly Segments of

PC shall be counted by the respective AROs of South District.

He also added that the counting of votes shall continue till the midnight of 23rd May 2019.

SDM Ravangla, Jigme Bhutia imparted the counting training procedure along with hands on training on use of Control Unit and VVPATs. During the course of the training it was informed that the participants can do the hands on training till 21 May.

Guj: Mob booked for stopping Dalit man's wedding procession

AHMEDABAD, MAY 17 (PTI): A mob of around 150 people, including 16 women, from the Patidar community was Friday booked for allegedly stopping the procession of a Dalit man in Khambisar village in Modasa taluka of Gujarat's Arvali district, police said. The incident happened on May 12 and had seen stone-pelting, leaving several people, including policemen, injured. The groom's father, Dayabhai Rathod, filed a complaint on Friday following which a case was registered under relevant sections of the Indian Penal Code and the SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, said sub inspector SF Chavda of Modasa police station.

"We have lodged an FIR today against a mob of around 150 persons. The complainant has identified 45 persons, including 16 women, all from the Patidar community. Their names were mentioned as accused persons in the FIR. Further probe will be conducted by Deputy Superintendent of Police of SC/ST cell S S Gadhvi Chavda said.

"They have been booked on charges of rioting (IPC 147), attempt to murder (IPC 307), wrongful restraint(341) and criminal intimidation (IPC 506-2) and the SC/ST Act. No arrest has been made so far," he added.

In his complaint, Rathod said he had sought police protection a week pri-

or to the wedding as some members of the Patel community had warned him against the procession winding through their areas in the village.

Though police, on May 11, had asked Patel community to cooperate during the procession to be held on May 12, Rathod alleged that his son's procession was eventually blocked at three different places by Patidar men and women, Rathod's complaint alleged.

When the procession was stopped at the third spot, police tried to convince them to let it pass but in vain which led to a clash in which several members of the Rathod family and policemen were injured, his complaint added.

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SU's Dept of Anthropology celebrates Intl Museum Day



SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 17 MAY:

International Museum Day, was observed today by the Department of Anthropology, Sikkim University, a day ahead of its scheduled date, 18 May.

The daylong program included lectures on Heritage, Museums and Material Objects, a press release informs.

PK Dong, Convenor for INTACH (Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage), Sikkim Chapter, and a Guest Lecturer with the Depart-

ment of Tourism, pointed out how museums are indexes of culture and stressed the need for a museum in the state.

He shared his museum experience from different parts of the world and also connected it with tourism and about how museums are tourist sites in themselves.

Dr Garima Thakuria, Assistant Professor, Department of Anthropology, in turn discussed the origin and development of museums and how they came to be.

In her presentation,

'museum and anthropology,' she touched on how the two are related.

The third speaker, Rongnyoo Lepcha, a PhD scholar, Dept of Anthropology, talked about the objects that are found inside the museum and the importance of material culture –the object and its meanings.

An interactive session followed in which students asked questions and interacted with the speakers about museums. They also gave various suggestions on how museums can be

made popular sites of interaction. They also discussed ways to develop a departmental museum that is currently under construction.

The second part of the day featured an exhibition of material objects donated by different individuals for the development of the department's museum. Some of the objects included kitchen utensils, musical instruments, hunting implements, baskets, textiles, jewelry and stone tools.

NSE to challenge Sebi rulings in co-location case

MUMBAI, MAY 17 (PTI):

Largest stock bourse NSE Friday said it will soon move the Securities Appellate Tribunal against Sebi rulings in the co-location case as there are "strong grounds" to challenge the orders.

In April, Sebi directed the exchange to disgorge profits worth over Rs 1,000 crore and imposed a six-month ban on launching new derivative products besides action against other entities, including some current and former officials.

The watchdog had passed five separate or-

ders, together running into 400 pages, related to the co-location case, wherein some entities allegedly got preferential access in high frequency trading.

"... the company believes that it has strong grounds to contest the above orders including monetary liability (including from adjudication proceedings) raised by Sebi," the NSE said.

"The company intends to file appeals before the Securities Appellate Tribunal (SAT) against the orders passed by Sebi," the ex-

change said in its annual accounts statement signed by its MD and CEO Vikram Limaye.

Earlier, Sebi had directed it to carry out an investigation, including forensic examination by independent external agencies in respect of certain aspects of NSE's co-location facility.

Pending completion of the investigations, all revenues emanating from the co-location facility with effect from September 2016 were being transferred to a separate bank account. Accordingly, Rs 2,258.71

crore has been transferred to a separate bank account and invested as of March 31.

In the books of accounts, these investments along with accruals have been shown under restricted/earmarked investments and bank balances. The bourse has not made any provision for any liability because of Sebi order, NSE said.

Three current executives of the exchange and former chief executive Ravi Narain have received interim stay from the tribunal on Sebi orders.

Moti Nagar murder: Muslims of Basai Darapur living in fear of backlash

New Delhi, May 17 (PTI):

The tension in the air is palpable at the Basai Darapur village in west Delhi's Moti Nagar with several Muslim residents living under constant fear of backlash--days after a member of the majority Tyagi community was killed by his neighbours from the minority community.

While several Muslim families who had have fled their homes have returned after assurances from the Delhi Police, members of the Tyagi community have decided to boycott Muslims from outside Delhi.

Locals claim that the village, around 10 km from the power corridors in Lutyens' Delhi, remained peaceful even in the aftermath of the Babri Masjid demolition back in 1992.

However, the killing of the 51-year-old businessman on May 12, allegedly for resisting youths who passed lewd remarks at his daughter, has not only shook both the communities to their core but is now threatening the bonhomie that has characterised Basai Darapur for decades.

"Even during the Babri Masjid demolition, we have never witnessed any such instance. Hindus and Muslims have always stayed as a family here for ages. This is the first time something horrific like



this has happened," Irfan Salami, a property dealer in the area said.

Salami who has been living here for the last 44 years said he was forced to move his family to a relative's place after he heard that thousands of people from the Tyagi community would be flooding the area.

"I returned this morning after assurances from the police," he added.

The SHO of Moti Nagar Police Station had met the Muslims of the area personally to assure them that there would be no threat to their safety.

While the victim's family has appealed to not give the incident a communal colour, the locals have alleged that some fringe groups were trying to flame communal passions.

"Just to achieve political mileage, some fringe elements are trying to create a rift between the two communities," Salami said.

His views were corroborated by 32-year-old Riyaz Ahmed, who was among those who took the profusely bleeding Tyagi and his

son to the hospital.

"I shifted my family to my younger sister's house in Uttam Nagar. It was only after the assurance of the police that we returned," Ahmed, who has been living in the area for the last 35 years said.

Recalling the fateful night, Ahmed said, as soon as he heard noises, he rushed to rescue the businessman and his son but by the time he reached there, they had been stabbed.

"I tried to rescue his daughter from the accused and then immediately rushed the two to hospital. There were so many people watching the entire incident, but none of them came forward to help instead they filmed the episode," he said.

The minority community has condemned the incident, saying crime has no religion and the culprits involved in the act should be hanged to death.

Hundreds of locals joined the victim's family in a condolence meeting in the village on Thursday and demanded financial compensation for the

deceased's kin and death penalty for his killers.

A Mahapanchayat called by the Tyagi community on Thursday decided that Muslims from outside Delhi should not be allowed to stay as tenants or be given shops on rent, which has left the minority community unnerved.

However, the Muslims of the area alleged that many among the protesters raised hateful slogans against their community and even filmed the entry and exit routes of the village mosque.

"A recce was conducted to ascertain the number of Muslim residents living here. Most of them who stay here as tenants were threatened by hateful comments made by the protesters," Ahmed said.

"Even the entry and exit routes of mosque were being filmed. Now, who will take the responsibility if anything untoward happens here?" he asked.

Another local, Shahbaaz Ahmed (27), reminisced about the days gone by when the two communities dwelled together in unity and harmony.

"I along with my relatives - about 26 of us moved to Okhla fearing for our lives. Although we have returned, panic has gripped the area. We are feeling unsafe and I have never ever felt like this before," he said.

State-Day Clean-Up Drive



Various social organisations of Rongneck near Gangtok came together on State Day [16 May] to undertake a cleanliness drive in their area. Members of Manav Utthan Sewa Samiti, Rongneck branch, Aprajita Self Help Group, Akanksha Jyoti SHG and other social organisations of Rongneck carried out the drive along the road and surrounding areas from Rongneck Gram Prasashan Kendra premises to Dokan Dara Devi Mandir. Local panchayat, Shankar Chettri also participated in the drive.

St Stephen's college row: AC, EC members of Delhi University write to V-C

NEW DELHI, MAY 17 (PTI):

Members of Delhi University's Academic and Executive Councils Friday wrote to the varsity's vice-chancellor, saying the decision of St Stephen's college to include a member of Supreme Council in the interview panel for students "will compromise with the academic integrity in the admission process".

The letter addressed to Professor Yogesh Tyagi was written by Executive Council members J L Gupta and Rajesh Jha, Academic Council members Seema Das, Richa Raj, Sudhanshu and Pradip Kumar, and Finance Committee member Rajpal Singh Pawar.

"We request you to preserve and protect the academic integrity in the admission process and dignity of the teachers of St Stephen's college, which is under serious threat by some recent decisions of the college administration," the letter read.

"We respect the status of the minority institution, but we also demand respect for the

university's statutory framework and service conditions of the teachers," the members said in the letter.

It stated that the warning letters issued to the three teachers must be withdrawn immediately as they were performing their duty as the members of Governing Body.

"Including a member of the Supreme Council in the admission panel is clearly an encroachment on the administration of the college and will compromise with the academic integrity in the admission process," the members said.

Students and staff members of St Stephen's college Friday staged a protest against the alleged interference of the church by including a member of the institution's Supreme Council in a panel to select students.

The Supreme Council is a subset of six members of the Governing Body (Managing Committee) and comprises all members of the church of North India.

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Two more Indian mountaineers...

He along with other members made it to the summit of Mount Everest on Thursday morning.

Another member of the same expedition Seamus Sean Lawless from Ireland slipped from the balcony area while descending from the summit point.

"Fate of the missing Irish climber is still unknown," Sherpa said.

"Indian climber Narayan Singh died in Mt Makalu. He died at camp 4 while descending the summit," Nepal Tourism Ministry official Mira Acharya told PTI.

Two Indian climbers from West Bengal - Biplob Baidya (48) and Kuntal Karar (46) - died in Nepal on Wednesday due to high altitude sickness near the summit of Mount Kanchenjunga, the world's third tallest peak.

Another climber from Chile is missing from above Camp IV of Mount Kanchenjunga since Wednesday evening.

Makalu is the fifth highest mountain in the world. It is located in the Mahalangur Himalayas 19-kilometer southeast of the 8,848-meter Mount Everest, on the border between Nepal and Tibet Autonomous Region, China.

Hundreds of climbers flock each year to Nepal - home to several of the world's highest mountains, to scale Himalayan peaks during the spring season that begins around March and ends in June.

West DAC convenes...

The DC informed that the strong-room will be opened on 23 May at 7 AM. Also a dry run (Mock Counting) will be conducted in the Kyongsa Girls Senior Secondary School auditorium hall on 20 May at 9:30 AM.

The SP West spoke on security arrangements for the counting day and how the premises has been placed under 3-tier security manned by SSB forces in the inner quadrant, IRB personnel in the second quadrant and Sikkim Police in the outer quadrant of the Kyongsa Strong Room.

He urged the political representatives to maintain discipline and quorum during the counting period and asked them to avoid the use of liquor and also co-operate with the police if and when necessary.

He also asked the political representatives to be stationed at their respective designated places.

The SDM (HQ) demonstrated the EVM and VVPAT Machines to the candidates.

NOTICE

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Disaster Mitigation: Informed Response Better Than Jerking Knees

It is that time of the year again

The pre-monsoon rains have opened strong this time around and have already started scratching at the hill sides. The monsoon is scheduled to hit Kerala in a fortnight's time and, if all goes well, will officially debut in Sikkim a few days later. And, if the nor'wester showers coursing through the State are any indication of what the monsoon months will bring, Sikkim would be well advised to do much more by way of preparedness than the occasional preparedness meetings over cold tea and stale samosas.

The State, in fact the entire region, needs no reminding of how fragile its hills are. The slopes here have a long history of slips and slides and if anyone bothered to spend time with some of the village elders, they could also learn of how settlements came to be settled along safer zones and more stable locations. That traditional knowledge was honed over generations of living here, but now "development" has been added to this organic lifestyle mix. Roads, projects, constructions and expansions are disruptors too powerful for even rural pragmatism to manage, hence the need for more informed preparedness and quicker, more organized responses.

Unfortunately for the cause of disaster management awareness, the monsoon-opening landslips and road-blocks have bypassed Gangtok thus far in their severity if one were to ignore the sewage sinks and overflowing storm drains which mostly manifest after dark and are invariably cleared by the Gangtok Beautifiers before Gangtok wakes up. That, however, cannot be said for the districts, their roads and their habitations. The reason this is referred to as 'unfortunate' for disaster management awareness is because while areas beyond Gangtok are the ones which require better warning systems, more effective responses and more elaborate community-based training to minimize the destruction caused by monsoon calamities, the people who can influence decisions rarely see beyond Gangtok. Even the media has not effectively highlighted the problem of areas beyond the capital, in as much as rain-fed disruptions are concerned. To understand how locational reactions work, take the case of two incidents. The 1997 landslides in Gangtok were unfortunate and the scale unprecedented. They rightfully led to the creation of a Civil Defence programme, formalization of new building bylaws and the no construction during monsoons rule. In the year 2004, Gyalshing and areas around Namchi were ravaged by severe landslides, mud-slips and flashfloods. And two years back, there was the Mantam hillside collapse, which, even though not monsoon-induced, was more evidence of the fragility of the slopes here and the need to save the hills. One still does not know what really caused it, or what policy course-corrections that incident has resulted in. Ditto for the flashfloods and glacial lakes-threat reported from North Sikkim over the recent years. In all these cases, the administration responded to a natural calamity, carried out rescue and relief operations, but, as mentioned, one is yet to hear of any policy decisions which could effectively mitigate such devastations in the future.

Every time a landslide occurs or a road-widening work collapses, as is commonly reported from West Sikkim, one hears complaints against unplanned constructions, irresponsible drainage and unsafe workites. There is nothing new in these observations. Still, after all these years, the districts remain knee-jerk in their response to the annual monsoons.

All this, despite the fact that just about everybody, everywhere, is participating in disaster risk management committee meetings all over Sikkim, and yet when the first chance arrives to display their training and commitment, they are found wanting. The problem is neither with the training nor with the individuals, it is with motivation. Sikkim is speaking of disaster risk management committees not because the people demanded it or even knew of it, these are being set up only because a central directive ordered it and UNDP funds it. That said, Sikkim could genuinely use some scientific and organized response to natural calamities. Instead of just making a token presence in such committees, the members should realize that every village in the State needs to work out a coherent and rehearsed response to calamities and set up a working advance warning system. If Sikkim continues to drag its feet, the State will continue paying the price for it every year.

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How to tackle India's sexual violence epidemic – it starts with sex education

MADHUMITA PANDEY
theconversation.com

"Do you masturbate?", "When did you first have sexual intercourse?", "Did you ask for consent?" These are just some of the taboo-breaking questions I asked convicted rapists in a Delhi prison during interviews for my research.

Most of these men did not understand what consent meant or that it needed to be sought. Their stories also highlighted a sense of entitlement and ownership over the victim. I was not particularly surprised by their discomfort and lack of awareness. I myself had never received any form of sex education at home or at school while growing up in India.

Soon after the 2012 Delhi gangrape, Aavaaz Foundation, a US-based non-profit organisation, gathered over 1.1m signatures on their online petition to start an extensive public education programme to dispel traditional cultural attitudes towards women. In their 2013 report, which looked at how to tackle India's rape epidemic through education, they even set out a four-step public education campaign for changing sexist attitudes.

Since then, several public awareness campaigns on recognising and reporting violence against women have been seen in India, some developed by NGOs, international organisations and some by or in collaboration with the Ministry of Women and Child Development. But India is yet to see a nationwide campaign that focuses explicitly on changing everyday normalised misogynistic attitudes.

My own research highlights the role of education as a medium for change – and calls for the inclusion of a comprehensive sexuality education module in the school curriculum.

GROWING UP IN INDIA

Young men in India mature and

develop in a male dominated environment, with little or no sex education. And in rural areas, with very little contact with female peers after puberty. Together, this leads to misdirected masculinity, characterised by male sexual dominance and unequal gender attitudes and behaviour.

Differences in gender roles intensify during adolescence, when boys enjoy new privileges reserved only for men – such as autonomy, mobility, opportunity and power. Whereas girls have to start enduring restrictions. Their parents curtail their mobility, monitor their interactions with males and in some cases even withdraw them from school. This is why, India is in great need of comprehensive sexuality education or modules focusing on sexual violence and exploitation awareness.

Such lessons can help to empower young people by highlighting women's changing roles in society. And they can also provide a safe space to address distorted views of masculinity and create awareness of violence against women.

A comprehensive curriculum-based sexuality module, such as the one launched by UNESCO in 2018, can help young boys and girls understand their bodies and the age-related changes better. And it can also teach young people about consent and respecting each others' personal space. Sex education should also be a space to learn about menstruation, sexual intercourse, sexually transmitted diseases and risks of pregnancy.

Young people also need to know about the risk of sexual exploitation and abuse. This in turn will allow them to recognise abuse, should it occur, and to protect themselves. Parents should also be involved in this process – findings from my research highlight the importance of children witnessing positive and equitable



gender roles at home.

GLOBAL PROBLEM

According to UN Women – the UN organisation dedicated to gender equality – 35% of women worldwide have experienced either physical or sexual violence at some point in their lives.

We are now living in the #Metoo era where more and more people are opening up about their own experiences of sexual violence. Yet sex and sexuality still remain taboo subjects in India. Young children need to have a safe environment to discuss these issues. This is important because ultimately, unless people have conversations about sexuality, the issue of sexual violence in India – or in any other part of the world – will never be addressed.

A SOLUTION

Sex education is more than just talking about sexual intimacy. It includes reproductive health, sexually-transmitted diseases, contraceptives, consent, gender identity, gender equality and self worth – all of which are important themes when addressing sexual violence.

In 2015, the New Zealand Ministry of Education released a new curriculum policy document for sexual-

ity education in all schools. This policy is a rare international example of a curriculum document that explicitly values diversity and promotes inclusive school environments, and it is important to encourage schools to view sexuality as innately motivated by social and political factors. Students also need to be taught to critically think and learn about sexuality and all that it encompasses. Particularly as research shows how schools all around the world act as key locations for exclusion and marginalisation of non-heterosexual youth. The new policy also approaches sexuality education as an area of study rather than a health intervention.

In its historical ruling in 2018, the Supreme Court of India decriminalised homosexuality. The judgement reflects the rapid social change in the country. Building on this momentum, sexuality must now be positioned as an area of learning and not an intervention. This is a crucial step in the battle to end sexual violence against women in India.

[the writer is Lecturer in Criminology, Sheffield Hallam University]

Plastic warms the planet twice as much as aviation – here's how to make it climate-friendly

LAURIE WRIGHT
theconversation.com

We're all too aware of the consequences of plastics in the oceans and on land. However, beyond the visible pollution of our once pristine habitats, plastics are having a grave impact on the climate too.

Newly published research calculates that across their lifecycle, plastics account for 3.8% of global greenhouse gas emissions. That's almost double the emissions of the aviation sector. If it were a country, the "Plastic Kingdom" would be the fifth-highest emitter in the world.

Demand is set to rise, too. At 380m tonnes a year, we produce 190 times more plastic than we did in 1950. If the demand for plastic continues to grow at its current rate of 4% a year, emissions from plastic production will reach 15% of global emissions by 2050.

PLASTIC ACROSS THE LIFECYCLE

More than 99% of plastics are manufactured from petrochemicals, most commonly from petroleum and natural gas. These raw materials are refined to form ethylene, propylene, butene, and other basic plastic building blocks, before being transported to manufacturers.

The production and transport of these resins requires an awful lot of energy – and therefore fuel. Greenhouse gas emissions also occur during the refining process itself – the "cracking" of larger hydrocarbons from petrochemicals into smaller ones suitable for making plastic releases carbon dioxide and methane. According to the study, about 61% of total plastic greenhouse gas emissions comes from the resin production and transport stage.

A further 30% is emitted at the product manufacturing stage. The vast majority of these emissions come from the energy required to power the plants that turn raw plastic materials into the bottles, bin bags and bicycle helmets we use today. The remainder occurs as a result of chemical and manufacturing processes – for example, the production of plastic foams uses HFCs, particularly potent greenhouse gases.

The remaining carbon footprint occurs when plastics are thrown away. Incineration releases all of the stored carbon in the plastic into the atmosphere, as well as air pollutants such as dioxins, furans, mercury and polychlorinated biphenyls, which are toxic and damaging to human health.

As plastics take centuries to degrade, disposal in landfill makes only a small contribution to emissions in theory. However, as much as 40% of landfill waste is burnt in open skies, dramatically speeding up the release of otherwise locked-up



carbon.

MAKING PLASTIC CLIMATE-FRIENDLY

If we are to combat climate breakdown, reductions in plastic emissions are clearly needed. Thankfully, the solution with the biggest potential is already in motion, albeit slow. In showing that transitioning to a zero carbon energy system has the potential to reduce emissions from plastic by 51%, the study provides yet another reason to rapidly phase out fossil fuels.

However, beyond urgently required global decarbonisation, we need to reduce our seemingly insatiable demand for carbon-based plastic. Increasing recycling rates is one simple way of doing this. The highest-quality plastics can be recycled many times, and nearly all plastic can be recycled to some extent – but only 18% was actually recycled worldwide in 2015. Although each recycle process requires a small amount of new plastic, we can greatly increase the life cycle of the material by efficiently reusing what we make.

A more fundamental solution is to switch to making plastics from biodegradable sources such as wood, corn starch, and sugar cane. The materials themselves are carbon neutral, although renewable power is essential to eliminate the climate impact of energy costs during production, transport and waste processing.

However, a massive ramping up in the production of bioplastics – which currently make up less than 1% of total plastic production – would require vast swathes of agricultural land. With the population set to rise dramatically, increasingly coveted arable space may not be able to satisfy demand.

The bottom line, therefore, is that we will need to reduce our demand for plastic. According to the study, simply reducing the annual growth in plastics demand from 4% to 2% could result in 60%

lower emissions from the sector in 2050. While a life without plastics may seem unimaginable, its worth remembering that their prevalence is a relatively recent phenomenon. The first artificial plastic, Bakelite, was developed in 1907, but it wasn't until the 1950s that the age of plastic began. If we show a genuine appetite to address plastic pollution, the world could change again just as quickly.

Governments, corporations, and individuals must make research into alternatives a priority, and support alternatives to needless plastic waste. Were most people to carry a reusable water bottle, for example, we could eliminate the need for the estimated 20,000 single-use bottles bought each second around the world.

Of course, any of these solutions alone will not be enough. As the recent study notes, only by combining reduction in demand, top-notch recycling, decarbonisation of energy, and large-scale adoption of bioplastics can we tackle plastic's contribution to the climate crisis. But if we manage to do all of this, then we can cut plastics emissions to just 7% of current levels.

Plastics need not be completely demonised as environmental scourges. Affordable, durable, and versatile, they bring a raft of societal benefits, and will undoubtedly serve an important role where replacements are unable to be found. But decades of unbridled use and a throw-away culture are having grave consequences that go far beyond the visible pollution of our land and water. It is essential that we drastically reduce our use of avoidable plastics, and eliminate the carbon footprint of the ones we need to use. Our relationship with plastic may be toxic, but it doesn't need to be forever.

[the writer is Senior Lecturer, War-sash School of Maritime Science and Engineering, Solent University]

Chit fund case: SC dismayed over feud between CBI, WB Police

NEW DELHI, MAY 17 (PTI): The Supreme Court Friday expressed “disappointment and dismay” over the feud between CBI and West Bengal Police during probe into the Saradha chit fund scam case and said though the situation was “grim”, there was no administrative mechanism to avoid or resolve such conflicts.

While withdrawing the protection from arrest granted earlier by it to former Kolkata Police Commissioner Rajeev Kumar in the case, the apex court said that despite orders and words of advice, “antagonism and acrimony” has escalated between the two forces of the country.

A bench headed by Chief Justice Ranjan Gogoi said that due to the “clash” between the Central Bureau of Investigation and West Bengal Police, lakhs of small town and rural investors who have been deprived of their savings in the case are “at the receiving end”.

“They (CBI and West Bengal Police) have forgotten that the primary purpose and role of the police is to investigate crime, collect evidence and prosecute the offenders. Situation is grim as both sides have hardened their stand and there is no administrative mechanism in place to avoid and resolve such conflicts between the two wings of the police force in the country,” said the bench, also comprising Justices Deepak Gupta and Sanjiv Khanna.

The bench noted that by slew of orders passed in the case, including the one on February 5 this year, granting protection from arrest to Kumar, the apex court had sought to “allay confrontation and clash” between the CBI and the Police Force in the State of West Bengal (WBSPF).

“With regret, we acknowledge and accept that despite orders and words of advice, antagonism and acrimony has escalated and not ebbed



as is evident from the pleading and arguments addressed before us,” the bench said.

“To avoid prolixity and as limited controversy arises for consideration, we are not referring the earlier orders for the purpose of the present judgment, albeit express our disappointment and dismay seeing the CBI and the WBSPF pitted and casting aspersions against each other and being embroiled in this feud,” the court said.

Referring to the fued between the two forces, the bench said, “At the receiving end are silently waiting lakhs of small town and rural investors who have been deprived and looted of

their savings.”

It noted that keeping in view the magnitude, plight of investors, inter-state ramifications and need for swift and efficient investigation, the apex court had on May 9, 2014 transferred chit fund scam cases lodged in different police stations in West Bengal and Odisha from state police agencies to CBI.

The apex court said its May 2014 order had required that the state police agencies investigating these cases provide “fullest cooperation” to CBI, including assistance in terms of manpower and material, to enable them to conduct and complete the investigation expeditiously.

It said CBI has alleged non-cooperation and charged the West Bengal Police with “obfuscating the investigation by causing impediments and roadblocks with a view to protect big names and members/leaders of the ruling party in the state of West Bengal.”

It noted that state government, West Bengal Police and Kumar have alleged “political vendetta” and made allegations against former acting CBI Director M Nageswara Rao.

Earlier, Kumar had alleged in the apex court that he was targeted by CBI in the chit fund case due to “mala fide intent” and “conflict of interest” of M Nageswara Rao as his family members were under the scanner post-demonetisation.

He had alleged that post demonetisation in November 2016, investigation was initiated into some shell companies that prima facie were involved in receiving huge deposits and a FIR was

registered.

In his affidavit, Kumar had said that during the probe of shell companies, role of one firm Agela Mercantiles Pvt Ltd came under the scanner for collecting money from public unauthorisedly.

He had also alleged that during further investigation of the case names of wife and daughter of Rao have come to light and the matter is being further probed.

In its Friday’s order, the apex court withdrew the protection from arrest granted to Kumar and left it open to CBI to act in accordance with the law.

It, however, made it clear that the interim order of February 5 would continue for a period of seven days from today to enable Kumar to approach competent court for relief, if so advised.

Kumar was earlier heading the West Bengal Police’s special investigation team (SIT) probing the chit fund scam.

Better machines, manpower need of the hour in disaster-prone Odisha

BHUBANESWAR, MAY 17 (PTI): With Odisha coast prone to natural disasters, better machines and manpower training are required to overcome the challenges posed by the calamities in a more effective manner, a senior official has said.

Presiding over the Executive Council of Disaster Management (ECDM) meeting here Thursday, Chief Secretary A P Padhi said that Odishas disaster management should be more effective in future.

Taking a lesson from cyclone Fani which devastated the entire coastal region of the state, the ECDM decided to give priority on training human resources to face the post-cyclone situation more effectively.

Though the state has raised 20 units of ODRAF (Odisha Disaster Rapid Action Force) for natural calamities, it should be strengthened with more training programmes for its personnel and better equipment.

Padhi also directed officials to purchase more implements that came in handy during the post-Fani restoration work and sufficiently equip the OSDMA, police and fire stations with the equipment.

“If trained men and better machines are available in each police station area, it will help the administration in undertaking early restoration work,” he said.

The meeting also resolved that more plasma cutters and power cutters should be stored in strategic locations which should be used immediately after a calamity strikes a region.

During post-cyclone situation this time, the National

Disaster Response Force (NDRF) had to procure additional plasma cutters and power cutters from Kolkata for using in Puri, which had experienced a huge damage to its power infrastructure.

Plasma cutters and power cutters are used to separate broken iron poles. These are mostly used to restore the high tension power towers.

More than 125 big electric towers were damaged in the cyclone this time, official sources said.

Special Relief Commissioner B P Sethi said the collectors of the affected districts have been asked to furnish their reports by May 22 on the losses to individual houses and buildings, crops, public properties, domestic animals, fishing nets and boats and handicraft establishments.

It was decided to sanction funds from the State Disaster Response Fund (SDRF) for immediate repair of affected drinking water projects, irrigation projects, schools and primary health centres.

The meeting also decided to immediately implement Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik’s announcements on various relief packages, house repair assistance and restoration of livelihood resources.

Funds were allotted for special relief packages for the worst-affected Puri and Khurda districts, as announced by the chief minister.

As per the package announced by the chief minister, financial assistance of Rs 95,000 will be given for fully damaged houses, Rs 5,200 for partially damaged houses and Rs 3,200 for mildly damaged houses.

NPF to review its alliance with BJP in Manipur

IMPHAL, MAY 17 (PTI): Contending that the BJP does not pay heed to its ideas and suggestions, the NPF, a partner in the saffron party-led alliance in the state, has convened a meeting of its leaders on Saturday to decide if it would continue to stay in the coalition or withdraw support.

Denying the allegation, the BJP said it has extended all possible cooperation to its partners to ensure smooth functioning of the government.

The NPF has four MLAs in the 60-member Assembly. Even if the party pulls out, it wouldn’t impact the BJP-led coalition, which currently has 29 legislators in the House.

Eight of the 28 Con-



gress MLAs, who had won the 2017 polls, defected to the BJP last year, taking its tally from 21 to 29 in the Assembly. The other parties in the ruling coalition are NPP (4), LJP (1), Independent (1) and AITC (1).

Talking to PTI, Awangbou Newmai, the state unit chief of the Naga People’s Front (NPF), claimed that the BJP “looks down” on its alliance partners.

“The BJP has never re-

spected the spirit of alliance since the formation of government in 2017. There have been instances when their leaders have refused to consider our members as alliance partners,” he said, without elaborating.

Newmai also said that the saffron party did not live up to the promises it made to its coalition partners.

“The NPF has always considered the BJP as its big brother, but that did

not stop the saffron party from bluffing to us. We haven’t got our due respect,” he claimed.

Rebutting Newmai’s assertions, Ch Bijoy, the spokesperson of the BJP, said the NPF had maintained that it did not want any ministerial berth while joining the alliance, but now, it seems, the party has several demands.

Of the four NPF MLAs in the Assembly, Loshii Dikho, who won from the Mao Assembly seat, is a cabinet minister.

“The allegations made by the NPF are totally baseless and unfounded. All possible cooperation has been extended to our coalition partners for smooth functioning of the government,” he added.

Despite RBI clarification, no takers for Rs 10 coin in Manipur

IMPHAL, MAY 17 (PTI): If you happen to board a bus or visit a grocery store in Manipur with Rs 10-denomination coins in wallet, chances are there that you might be shown the door.

Despite regular clarifications by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), people in Manipur, especially small traders, are reluctant to trade with Rs 10 coins.

While some are aware that the coin is in circulation, skepticism still runs high over the validity of the particular tender among local vendors and shopkeepers.

Th. Manglembi, a teacher in a state-run school, said vendors, mostly grocery stores, do not deal with Rs 10 coin while maintaining that private banks do not accept it.

Vendor P Pishak, a vegetable seller at a local market here, said she does not know the exact reason, but her colleagues have asked her not to accept Rs 10 coins.

Clearing the air on the misconception, Mary Tangpua, the general manager of RBI’s Imphal branch, stated that the reluctance stems out of rumours doing the rounds over the “genuineness” of the tender.

“The Rs 10-denomination coin, which comes in 14 designs, is not counterfeit or fake and can be accepted without any hesitation,” she told PTI.

The Imphal branch of the RBI has been regularly organising “financial literacy camps” across the state to educate and enlighten people about valid tender and fake currency, she insisted.

“It’s been 2.5 years since demonetisation, but people here are still skeptical about what is legal and what isn’t,” she explained.

When told that certain banks in Manipur allegedly refuse to accept Rs 10-denomination coins, she said appropriate action would be taken against them, if complaints are filed with the RBI.

Saradha scam: SC vacates order granting protection from arrest to ex-Kolkata police commissioner

NEW DELHI, MAY 17 (PTI): The Supreme Court Friday vacated its order granting protection from arrest to former Kolkata police commissioner Rajeev Kumar in the Saradha chit fund scam case.

The apex court said its February 5 order granting interim protection to Kumar will continue for seven days from Friday to enable him to approach the competent court for legal remedy.

A bench headed by Chief Justice Ranjan Gogoi asked the CBI to act in accordance with law in the case.

One of the advocates who appeared for the IPS officer said that as per the apex court order, Kumar cannot be arrested in the next seven days.

“We have withdrawn the protection given to Rajeev Kumar vide order dated February 5,” the court said while pronouncing the order.

The judgment was pronounced by Justice Sanjiv Khanna who was part of the bench head-

ed by the CJI and Justice Deepak Gupta.

Pronouncing the operative part of the order, Justice Khanna said, “We are leaving it to the CBI to act in accordance with law.”

“Our February 5 order will continue for seven days from today to enable Rajeev Kumar to approach the competent court for relief,” he said.

At the outset, Justice Khanna, while pronouncing the order, said, “We have expressed our concern as to what has happened in the matter.”

The Election Commission on Wednesday ordered the removal of Kumar, who was posted as Additional Director General, CID, in West Bengal for allegedly failing to control incidents of violence in the state and had asked him to report to the Union Home Ministry on Thursday.

Kumar was removed along with West Bengal’s Principal Secretary (Home) Atri Bhattacharya after parts of Kolkata witnessed

widespread violence during BJP president Amit Shah’s massive road show in the city.

Kumar was earlier heading the West Bengal Police’s special investigation team (SIT) probing the chit fund scam. The apex court had in May 2014 directed the CBI to investigate the case.

The CBI had told the apex court that it wanted custodial interrogation of Kumar as there was prima facie evidence that he was allegedly trying to destroy or tamper with evidence and “shield high and mighty” in the case.

The apex court, on February 5, had granted protection from arrest to Kumar while directing him to appear before the CBI and “faithfully” cooperate into the investigation of cases arising out of the scam.

During the arguments on CBI’s plea, the apex court had said it would examine whether there was evidence requiring Kumar’s custodial interrogation in the case and had also perused the case diary

placed before it by the agency.

However, Kumar’s counsel had countered CBI’s submissions and told a bench headed by the CJI that the agency wanted his custodial interrogation “just to humiliate” him and CBI should not be allowed to abuse the process of law.

Kumar’s counsel had told the bench that CBI’s application seeking custodial interrogation of the IPS officer was a “mala fide exercise”.

The CBI had claimed in the court that they were seeking vacation of interim protection granted to Kumar as some crucial evidence, collected by the West Bengal Police SIT, was not shared with it despite repeated requests.

Kumar’s counsel had argued that the IPS officer was interrogated by the CBI for almost 40 hours and the agency was not able to spell out clearly as to what was the offence committed by him for which they want his custodial interrogation.

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Eight essays put the spotlight on the journey caused by hydel projects in Sikkim and the region, the cost exacted by this “development” and some of the stories it birthed, not all of which have been shared before. Also finding place in this collection is the arrival of Climate Change and its impact on Sikkim and how the State could negotiate with this new disruption.

THE BIRDS HAVE LOST THEIR WAY
Edited by TSHERING EDEN AND PEMA WANGCHUK

ESSAYS ON TEESTA, HYDEL AND CLIMATE CHANGE IN SIKKIM

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Indian women to tour Australia for A series in December



MELBOURNE, MAY 17 (PTI): India women's A team will embark on its maiden tour to Australia in December this year for a limited-overs series, Cricket Australia confirmed Friday.

The series is a part of an agreement between CA and BCCI to host annual A series between the two nations.

The first such series was held in October last year, when Australia A toured India for an ODI and T20 series.

During the tour, India A will play three ODIs and as many T20 matches in Brisbane and Gold Coast respectively starting December 12.

The three ODIs between India 'A' and Australia 'A' will be played in Brisbane on December 12, 14 and 16 while the T20 matches will be hosted

by Gold Coast December 19, 21 and 23.

"Hosting the first A tour for our female cricketers is another important step in the evolution of the National Talent Pathway," Australia's Female High Performance Manager Shawn Flegler said in a statement.

"A lot of work has gone into the women's pathway and we've already seen numerous players come through the system and show they are capable of taking the next step to international level.

"We now have annual tours for our Australia Under 19 team, the Women's National Performance Squad is in its third year and now being able to schedule regular Australia A tours, both at home and away is the icing on the cake.

Federer survives match points, Nadal, Djokovic cruise as Kyrgios exits in disgrace

ROME, MAY 17 (AFP): Roger Federer saved two match points against Borna Coric to advance to the quarter-finals of the Italian Open as defending champion Rafael Nadal and top seed Novak Djokovic raced through in straight sets.

However, Australian firebrand Nick Kyrgios was disqualified on Thursday after a foul-mouthed rant during his third-round match against Norway's Casper Ruud which could land him with a lengthy suspension.

Federer came through 2-6 6-4 7-6 (9/7) against 13th seed Coric after earlier beating Portugal's Joao Sousa 6-4 6-3 in the second round as players doubled up after rain wiped out play on Wednesday.

Federer, a four-time finalist in Rome, trailed 0-4 before dropping the first set, coming back in the second and saving two match points in the third set tie-break.

"Definitely felt like I got a little lucky obviously," said Federer.

"Borna had the lead. There were crucial mo-

ments throughout the match, second set and third set, for me to stay in it. Things definitely went my way tonight."

Federer next plays Greek eighth seed Stefanos Tsitsipas, who beat Monte Carlo Masters champion Fabio Fognini 6-4 6-3.

Tsitsipas shocked Federer in the fourth round at the Australian Open in January.

Nadal, meanwhile, dropped just two games throughout the day, dispatching Georgian Nikoloz Basilashvili 6-1 6-0 in the third round after earlier also dropping just one game against France's Jeremy Chardy.

"I have been improving every week," said Nadal, who next plays fellow Spaniard Fernando Verdasco as he targets a first title on clay this season before his French Open defence.

"It's been a peculiar clay court season for me. I had some tough period of time. Has been little bit difficult to hold the body and the tennis level for every day."

Djokovic, winner in Madrid last Sunday, beat



German Philipp Kohlschreiber 6-3 6-0 after earlier easing past Canadian Denis Shapovalov 6-1 6-3.

The four-time Italian Open winner next plays Argentine seventh seed Juan Martin Del Potro for a place in the semi-finals.

"I like the fact that I didn't play yesterday because I felt like I needed an extra maybe day of rest and recovery a little bit," said the Serb.

"So it was perfect."

In the women's event, Japan's Naomi Osaka, the top seed, also won twice to retain the world number one ranking ahead of the start of the French Open.

She eased into the last eight with a 6-3 6-3 win over Mihaela Buzarnescu after earlier beating Slovak Dominika Cibulkova by the same scoreline.

Osaka was at risk of losing her world number one ranking to Simona Halep but the Romanian was knocked out by Czech teenager Marketa Vondrousova losing 2-6 7-5 6-3.

Halep's defeat also guarantees Osaka's top seeding at the French Open.

- SWEARING, CHAIR THROWING -

Kyrgios's tournament finished early after he threw a chair across court in a tantrum, be-

fore storming off and being disqualified.

The controversial 24-year-old, who had marked his presence in Rome by criticising Djokovic and Nadal in an interview on Wednesday, started arguing with the umpire in the third set.

World number 36 Kyrgios had levelled the match at one set all but was given a game penalty early on in the third set for swearing.

His response was to kick out at a water bottle before throwing a chair onto the court, packing his bag and then storming off court, shouting 'I

am fucking done'

Kyrgios was automatically disqualified with Ruud winning 6-3 6-7 (5/7) 2-1 to advance to the third round before losing to del Potro.

"I think he got what he deserved," said Ruud of Kyrgios who was then fined 20,000 euros and made to forfeit his tournament winnings.

Kyrgios had already been at the centre of controversy during Wednesday's washout when he told the NCR Tennis Podcast that Djokovic had "a sick obsession with wanting to be liked".

Nadal was described by the Australian as "super-salty".

Fifth seed Dominic Thiem slammed tournament organisers after he was dumped out 4-6 6-4 7-5 by Verdasco.

Japan's Kei Nishikori, the sixth seed, got past American Taylor Fritz 6-2 6-4 and then Jan-Lennard Struff of Germany in three sets.

Czech second seed Petra Kvitova retired in her third round match against Greece's Maria Sakkari while trailing 7-5 5-7 4-0 in the third set.

Ruskin Bond to launch new memoir on 85th birthday



NEW DELHI, MAY 17 (PTI): India's beloved children's author Ruskin Bond will celebrate his 85th birthday on May 19 this year with the release of a new memoir set against the backdrop of the partition.

The book titled "Coming Round the Mountain", will be released officially by the author at Cambridge bookstores in Mussoorie, where he signs books for his readers every week on Monday.

"This is the first time Ruskin Bond has penned his experiences about his time during the independence year. Evocative, poignant and full of spirit and hope, this book is an absolute classic; a collector's edition and a must-have for every Ruskin Bond fan!" publishers

Puffin books said in a statement.

"Coming Round the Mountain" is the third installment of Bond's award-winning memoir series for children that includes "Looking for the Rainbow" and "Till the Clouds Roll By".

In "Looking for the Rainbow", Bond described the two years he had spent with his father when he was just nine years old, and in "Till the Clouds Roll By" he talked about the sudden change in his circumstances, the efforts he had to make to adjust to a new and very different life with his mother and stepfather.

Now, the third part of the series will deal with Bond's story as a boy of thirteen during the crucial year of India's parti-

tion.

"In 'Coming Round the Mountain', I have dwelt on my schooldays, in particular one memorable year, 1947, during which a lot of things happened to me and around me. The making of friends; the loss of friends; the country's freedom and its division; changes everywhere... But there was one constant- my love of books, and an inclination for putting things down on paper-and it was this that gave me the confidence and self-belief to take on the uncertainties of living in a changing world.

"Be true to yourself, my father always told me, 'and if you are true to yourself, you will be true to others,'" Bond said.

Valencia seek perfect end to remarkable recovery in La Liga

MADRID, MAY 17 (AFP): Valencia lost to Arsenal in the Europa League semi-finals but hold pole position for La Liga's last Champions League spot as the race for the top four reaches its climax on Saturday.

Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang's hat-trick ended Valencia's hopes of qualifying by lifting a trophy and their chances looked slim in the league too, when they trailed Getafe by three points ahead of the penultimate week-end.

But a 3-1 win over Alaves, combined with Getafe losing away to a wounded Barcelona, means it is Valencia with

their fate in their own hands, as they prepare to face Real Valladolid at Jose Zorrilla.

A superior head-to-head over Getafe means they need only match the result of Jose Bordelas' side, who host a Villarreal team sitting 14th and with little left to play for.

Yet Valladolid's position appears in Valencia's favour too. Victory away at Rayo Vallecano last week-end means their safety is already secured.

Win, and Valencia will be guaranteed Champions League football in consecutive seasons for the first time in seven years, a feat that not too long ago seemed almost unthinkable.

able.

After five games, they were 15th and still to win. After 10, they were 14th, having won once and scored seven goals. After 15 games, they had won three but were back in 15th, ground to a halt by nine draws.

When Marcelino was appointed in 2017, he was the club's 12th coach in five years and only one of them -- Nuno Espirito Santo -- had overseen enough matches to make even one full league season.

Most waited for the trigger to click but Marcelino stayed and after 10 draws in 13 games, they won, coming from behind in the Copa del Rey

to beat Segunda B side Ebro, who had a man sent off after 29 minutes.

"There was this click," said striker Kevin Gameiro in an interview with AFP this month.

"And there was also a bit of luck." Defeats by Girona, Juventus and Real Madrid tempered hopes of a recovery but in between came three victories in a row and after, five games unbeaten, including a Champions League win over Manchester United.

- VALENCIA SURGE -

Eighth in the table at the start of the year, Valencia then surged through March and April, 10 wins thrusting them within

sight of the top four.

"The word surrender does not exist in my vocabulary," said Marcelino.

They stumbled again, twice, defeated last month by Atletico Madrid and Eibar, the resurgence almost evaporating in the space of four days.

But their rivals wobbled too as Getafe lost their nerve and Sevilla faded, the bounce from bringing in Joaquin Caparros to replace Pablo Machin proving short-lived.

Sevilla's decision to act has them lying sixth, needing to win at home to in-form Athletic Bilbao on Saturday and needing both Valencia and Getafe to lose.

In Dawood's black world of crime, match-fixing was white-collar business': Book

NEW DELHI, MAY 17 (PTI): For Dawood Ibrahim, match-fixing was a sort of clean job' as no force or killing were required and only a few players here and there had to be fixed' and the money shared, says a new book on the subject.

On the whole, Dawood's entry into the fixing game was fairly easy to understand. The appeal of this additional revenue stream would be pretty obvious even to the average gangster. They did not have to tapkao' (kill) anybody by way of some contractual killing. No land-grabbing was involved. No slum had to be forcibly evacuated. No tenant had to be threatened to make way for some developer, it says.

In No Ball: The Murky World of Match Fixing, Chandramohan Puppala traces cricket's biggest corruption back to kingpin Dawood himself.

Based on transcripts of police-recorded conversations and unpublished information about the players at the key of the storm, including

some of India's biggest names, the book talks of the rot at the heart of Indian cricket.

For the D-Company, match-fixing was a clean job', the author says.

They only had to fix a few players here and there and share the money. That was all. In the black world of crime, match-fixing had come to be known as white-collar business', he writes.

Betting in cricket has been part of public knowledge since the '90s. The police in India have always known about its existence, and there have been occasional raids and arrests that have not occupied more than a single-column space in the daily newspapers, the book, published by Pan, says.

However, it was only in 2000 that betting

made it to the headlines, when it ended the careers of former Indian captain Mohammad Azharuddin and batsman Ajay Jadeja. Match-fixing' also spoil the reputations of all-rounder Manoj Prabhakar and former Indian skipper



and Haryana Hurricane' Kapil Dev, it says.

Son of a police head constable, Dawood grew up as an amateur cricketer, firstly trying his hands at gully cricket, and in later years, watching every ball of every important cricket match from the best box at the pavilion end, the book says.

Even as cricket remained his passion, his eye was set on the blind alleys of crime in downtown Mumbai.

According to the author, Dawood's influence on the Pakistan cricket team has been an open secret for over a decade now. His name has also cropped up in scandals in neighbouring countries, including Bangladesh and Sri Lanka.

As the police went through the cricket dossiers, they came across the Sharad Shetty era, which ended in 2003, when cricketers would regularly wine-and-dine with mafia lords and the seeds of match-fixing were first sown in the official records of law enforcers, he says.

By 2010, the windfalls from this cricketing business had reached a critical mass. It had prompted the Indian Intelligence Bureau (IB) to issue an alert that funding for terror was drying up and the only two options available for the underworld to fund terror were hawala and cricket, the author writes.

The IB also claimed

that the underworld did not invest money in the game directly, but looked to invest in it through its stooges. The operation was made to look legitimate in nature and would be a great challenge to track, he says.

He is of the view that the much-glamourised IPL, in retrospect, was perhaps the perfect stage to set up a multi-crore enterprize' of such a nature.

Not only were there ample opportunities and staggering amounts of money to be made, but the result of a match played between a glamorous mix of players from countries around the world made it look like a confirmed jackpot win on a free lottery ticket for the underworld, he argues.

As the Special Cell reached the end of the Dawood files, they couldn't help but hope for poetic justice: that maybe one day, the sport that he loved most in the world would be the route to extradite him back to India, the author says.

Loftus-Cheek undergoes surgery, misses Europa League final

LONDON, MAY 17 (AFP): Chelsea midfielder Ruben Loftus-Cheek will undergo Achilles tendon surgery which will rule him out of the Europa League final, the Premier League club.

The 23-year-old England international suffered the injury during the 3-0 friendly win over New England Revolution in Boston on Wednesday.

"Ruben has seen a specialist today and will have surgery on his ruptured Achilles tendon this evening," the club



said in a statement on Thursday.

Loftus-Creek will miss the May 29 Europa League final against Arsenal in Baku as well as England's international commitments this summer.

"I went to bed last night and Ruben's in the squad and playing brilliantly," said England coach Gareth Southgate.

"He misses now a major European final and a brilliant opportunity for us.

Crucial Brexit talks between PM May and Labour leader Corbyn end without deal

ADITI KHANNA

LONDON, MAY 17 (PTI): Britain's Opposition Labour Party ended the crucial cross-party Brexit talks with Prime Minister Theresa May on Friday without striking a deal, saying negotiations have "gone as far as they can".

Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn wrote to May to declare an end to the negotiation process, blaming the "weakness and instability" of her government as a leadership contest gets underway within the ruling Conservative Party. The development came a day after Prime Minister May was forced to set a June timeline for her exit from Downing Street.

"I have written to Theresa May to say that talks on finding a compromise agreement for leaving the European Union have gone as far as they can," Corbyn tweeted.

"The government's growing weakness and instability means there cannot be confidence in its ability to deliver," he said.



Britain's exit from the 28-member European Union had been due to take place on March 29 - but after MPs voted down the deal May had negotiated with the bloc three times, the EU gave the UK an extension until October 31.

"The increasing weakness and instability of your government means there cannot be confidence in securing whatever might be agreed between us," Corbyn wrote.

"As you have been setting out your decision to stand down and Cabinet ministers are competing to succeed you, the po-

sition of the government has become ever more unstable and its authority eroded," he noted.

Stressing that his party had conducted the exercise in "good faith" and that some constructive effort had gone into finding a possible consensus, there has been growing concern within the Opposition ranks about the government's ability to deliver on any compromise agreement.

The Labour Party has been in favour of a form of a common customs arrangement with the European Union (EU) that keeps the UK aligned with its European neigh-

bours on trade tariffs post-Brexit.

Some Labour MPs have also insisted they would not back a deal with the government unless it includes another referendum.

Both scenarios have caused anger among Brexit-backing Conservatives, who claim a customs union would stop the UK negotiating its own trade deals around the world and who believe another public vote is undemocratic.

In his letter to the British Prime Minister, Corbyn noted: "Not infrequently, proposals by our negotiating team

have been publicly contradicted by statements from other members of the Cabinet.

"In recent days we have heard senior Cabinet ministers reject any form of customs union, regardless of proposals made by government negotiators."

The Labour leader is equally clear about the party's opposition to May's unchanged Withdrawal Agreement, which is set for a fourth House of Commons vote in the week beginning June 3.

"I should reiterate that, without significant changes, we will continue to oppose the government's deal as we do not believe it safeguards jobs, living standards and manufacturing industry in Britain," Corbyn said.

The compromise talks were convened around six weeks ago, when May lost the third vote in Parliament on her EU Withdrawal Agreement rejected repeatedly by MPs over the controversial Irish backstop clause.

The latest Labour stance means May's deal

looks even more unlikely to secure the parliamentary arithmetic required for the Withdrawal Agreement to be enforced in time for the new October 31 Brexit deadline.

On Thursday, after a crucial meeting with the powerful 1922 Committee of Tory backbench MPs, it was announced that May would set out a clear timetable for her resignation as Tory leader and make way for a new prime minister by next month.

Former Cabinet minister and hard Brexiteer Boris Johnson is seen as a frontrunner in the race, with a number of other Cabinet ministers set to throw their hat in the ring.

Meanwhile, May is likely to offer a set of binding indicative votes in the Commons as she had indicated when she announced the cross-party talks.

These votes are likely to take place within days as the UK Parliament is set for a break from next Thursday before reconvening in early June.

France posts new tourist record despite 'yellow vest' unrest



PARIS, MAY 17 (AFP): France welcomed nearly 90 million foreign tourists last year, a new record for the country despite the "yellow vest" anti-government protests that prompted many visitors to put off trips late last year, the government said Friday.

"France remained the world's top destination in 2018," the government's tourism committee said in a statement.

The total of 89.4 million visitors was a three percent jump from 2017, and France is now targeting 100 million foreign tourists for 2020.

The biggest increase came from Asian visitors, up 7.4 percent from the previous year, though Europeans still make up the bulk of foreign tourists to France, representing 79 percent of the total.

Statistics office Insee had already indicated another bumper year for tourism, saying last month it had tallied 438.2 million nights spent in hotels, campsites and youth hostels in 2018, an increase of nine million from the previous year.

And that figure doesn't include the figures from home-sharing platforms like Airbnb, which has 65,000 listed apartments in Paris alone.

Tourist spending reached a record as well, with a five percent increase from the previous year to 56.2 billion euros, the government said Friday.

Business tourism also picked up markedly, with Paris hosting 212 international conferences last year, pushing it to the top of the International Congress and Convention Association (ICCA) rankings.

It was a sharp jump from the 190 conventions held in 2017, allowing Paris to surpass Barcelona as the most popular destination for industry gatherings, the ICCA said.

Officials had worried the weekly yellow vest protests in Paris and other major cities would halt the steady growth in tourism, which has become a huge contributor to France's economy, generating two million jobs.

The Saturday rallies since November have often spiraled into rioting and fiery battles with rampaging protesters, with images of burning cars and looted shops broadcast worldwide.

President Emmanuel Macron's government has deployed massive police forces to contain the violence, with the Champs-Elysees and other key tourist spots often on lockdown to curb the unrest.

The year has gotten off to a rocky start, with international passenger arrivals to Paris airports slumping by five to 10 percent in December, and ticket bookings continuing to fall in the first months of this year.

Last week, Insee reported that the number of overnight stays in tourist accommodations across France fell by 2.5 percent in the first quarter, with the Ile-de-France region encompassing Paris down by 4.8 percent.

"There has been a 'yellow vest' impact in the first quarter," Tourism Minister Jean-Baptiste Lemoyne told journalists on Friday.

But the government said tourist revenues had nonetheless continued to increase in January and February.

Iran urges China, Russia 'concrete action' to save nuclear deal

BEIJING, MAY 17 (AFP): Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif on Friday urged China and Russia to take "concrete action" to safeguard the 2015 nuclear deal as he warned of a "dangerous" situation amid rising tensions with the US.

Tensions have ratcheted up with the US deploying an aircraft carrier group and B-52 bombers to the Gulf last week over alleged threats from Iran.

On a visit to Beijing, Zarif said he would talk with Chinese officials about "bilateral ties and the very dangerous issues that are ongoing in our region today", according to a video published on the Iranian foreign ministry website.

Washington has deployed more troops in the Gulf, one of the world's most strategic waterways, in what US officials said was a reaction to photographs showing Iran had loaded missiles onto small traditional boats.

On Wednesday the US State Department ordered the evacuation of most personnel from the US embassy and consulate in Iraq, fearing an attack by Iranian-directed Shiite militias.

Iran on Thursday rejected negotiations with the US, but said it was showing "maximum restraint".

Amid escalating tensions in the region, Zarif has called on the international community to save the nuclear deal, known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, or JCPOA.

Iran signed the deal with China, Russia, Germany, Britain, France and the United States. International sanctions were eased in return for curbs on Tehran's nuclear programme.

But last year President Donald Trump



walked away from the accord. The US has since then slapped sweeping sanctions on Iran.

"So far the international community has mostly released statements rather than taking action," Zarif said.

"If the international community and other JCPOA member countries and our friends in the JCPOA like China and Russia want to keep this achievement, it is required that they make sure the Iranian people enjoy the benefits of the JCPOA with concrete actions," he added.

Zarif said last week that only Russia and China had supported Iran and helped it keep the nuclear deal going, and accused other parties to the agreement of letting Tehran down.

China was one of the eight global buyers -- India, Turkey, Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, Italy and Greece -- that was allowed to import Iranian crude oil before the US ended waivers in early May.

Zarif's China trip comes after visits to Turkmenistan, India and Japan in the past week.

Despite Washington's campaign of "maximum pressure" against Iran, the Islamic Republic has vowed to keep selling oil to its main customers, especially China, even if it requires using indirect means.

On May 8, Iranian President Hassan Rouhani said Iran would stop observing restrictions on stocks of enriched uranium and heavy water agreed under the nuclear deal in retaliation for the US withdrawal and the reimposition of sanctions.

In his announcement, Rouhani threatened to go further if the European members of the deal failed to start delivering on their promises to help Iran circumvent US sanctions within 60 days.

China in response called on all parties to uphold the nuclear deal in what it called a "shared responsibility".

European nations have also called on all partners to the deal to help salvage it while expressing frustration at Iran's demands for help in circumventing US sanctions.

One European diplomat called on China to buy Iranian oil as it is less exposed to the United States.

"They are now very exposed to the dollar but it is also a question of political choice," said the source, who spoke on condition of anonymity.

"The reality for the Chinese is that they are in a global trade war with the Americans, they are in the middle of negotiations and they are not quite so sure if they want to load the boat," the diplomat added.

Sikh man gives discounts to Muslims to promote peace in Pak

PESHAWAR, MAY 17 (PTI): A Sikh trader in a tribal district of north-west Pakistan is giving discounts to Muslim worshippers in the holy month of Ramzan as a special gesture to promote peace and brotherhood in the restive region.

Naranj Singh opened a shop in tehsil Jamrud of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa where essential items are sold at prices less than the rates fixed by the government's Price Control Committee.

The edible items are sold at prices less than Rs 10 to Rs 30 as that of the original rates.

Singh said he considered it "an act of charity" and is performing the special gesture to promote



peace and amity among Muslims and the minority Sikh community.

Most of the Sikhs residing in Peshawar are those whose families previously resided in different parts of Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) but shifted to

Peshawar and started a business.

Renowned Sikh religious leader and rights activist Charnjit Singh was gunned down in Scheme Chowk area in the outskirts of the city in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province in May last year.

Trade war with US could slice 1% of China's GDP: Top Chinese official

KJM VARMA

BEIJING, MAY 17 (PTI): A high ranking Chinese official has said that the ongoing trade war with the US could slash China's GDP by one per cent, in the first such admission by Beijing that the tariff war with Washington is biting the world's second largest economy.

The Chinese economy which is on a downward trend slowed down to 6.8 per cent last year and the government this year officially slashed the GDP growth to be between 6.5 and six per cent.

US President Donald Trump, who kicked off the trade war last year, is demanding China to reduce the massive trade deficit which has climbed to over USD 539 billion last year. He is also insisting on Beijing for verifiable measures for protection of intellectual property rights (IPR), technology transfer and more access to American goods to Chinese markets.

The US-China trade

war could slash one percentage point off Beijing's economic growth this year, Wang Yang, one of the seven members of the elite Politburo Standing Committee of the Communist Party of China (CPC) which virtually rules the country, was quoted as saying by the Hong Kong-based South China Morning Post.

Speaking to a group of Taiwanese business people whose companies are based in mainland China on Thursday, Wang said the government had assessed the impact of the near year-long dispute and estimated that in the worst-case scenario gross domestic product growth would be one percentage point lower than expected.

While Wang did not outline any plans for dealing with the fallout from the trade war, he is the first official from the top policymaking body to speak so candidly about its possible impact on headline targets, the report said.



K-pop's Baddest Female, CL's Comeback Involves Her Own Talk Show

When 2NE1 fans saw that CL started posting photos of her on set and shooting, alongside some cryptic captions, many were predicting that the leader of the group is about to finally make her comeback.

The 28-year-old singer, rapper and songwriter has yet to make a comeback since the disbandment of 2NE1 in 2009, exactly a decade ago. The now soloist was set to make her comeback and US debut. However, after releasing her English single "Lifted", CL kept a low profile.

Until now.

With her series of cryptic Instagram posts, Blackjacks might be surprised to know that CL is making a comeback with her very own talk show. This week, South Korean broadcast JTBC confirmed that CL will be starting her own talk show called CL Nine.

They stated, "We're currently working on launching a talk show with CL called CL Nine. The premiere date has not been confirmed, and we're discussing Paris Hilton as a possible guest."

South Korean media speculated that Paris Hilton might be appear-



ing on CL's show during the time she is set to launch her new cosmetic brand on 30 May this year. In that timeline, we can expect CL Nine to premiere in July 2019.

Though no other news of the talk show has been revealed, we can infer that with Paris Hilton as a guest, CL's show will have a rather international guest list. Unlike

most Korean talk shows that primarily interview and bring on local idols and celebrities, CL Nine will have a more international reach with both local and global stars on her show.

As CL is fluent in English, till then Blackjacks will be waiting in great anticipation for more details of CL Nine to be revealed.

Robert Pattinson in talks to play Batman



LOS ANGELES, MAY 17 (PTI): British actor Robert Pattinson is in negotiations to play Batman in Warner Bros and Matt Reeves' upcoming film on the Caped Crusader.

The superhero drama begins pre-production soon and the filming is expected to start by the end of 2019 or early 2020.

According to Variety, Pattinson, 33, is topping the list of the contenders to play Batman, after Ben Affleck quit the job post the release of "Justice League".

Affleck, who played the character in three Warner Bros-DC comics film -- "Batman v Superman: Dawn of Justice", "Suicide Squad" and "Justice League" -- was also suppose to helm "The Batman". Reeves came on board as the director after his exit.

If the deal is closed, Pattinson will be the youngest actor to play Batman in the movies.

Warner Bros has not yet made any formal announcement regarding Pattinson's casting.

The Voice Leaves BTS Fans Disappointed

On Monday, American singing programme The Voice's official Twitter page had teased a clip featuring the Jonas Brothers and BTS with the tweet, "Tomorrow, two of the world's hottest bands have a special announcement." Because of this, the hashtags #BTSxTheVoice and #BTSonTheVoice were trending on Twitter that day.

Excited fans speculated that the Bangtan Boys might make an appearance or even perform on the hit reality show. The tweet was later followed up by a promotional clip of the Jonas Brothers announcing that they will be performing their latest song "Cool" on The Voice's finale show.

It was then noticed by ARMYs (BTS' official fandom) that the original tweet has been deleted with no mention of BTS making an appearance on the show. Furthermore, there was no sign of BTS on The Voice's Tuesday show this week.

In the episode mentioned, Carson Daly, host of The Voice revealed that Taylor Swift and Brandon Urie will be performing on the finale episode on 21 May.

ARMY took to social media to express their frustration regarding the situation.

As of this writing, The Voice has yet to make an official statement regarding the tweet and BTS being mentioned.



SPOTTED! Actress Marsai Martin has some fun on the red carpet at the Los Angeles premiere of Universal Pictures' latest film, Little.

Shah Rukh Khan, David Letterman come together for Netflix special

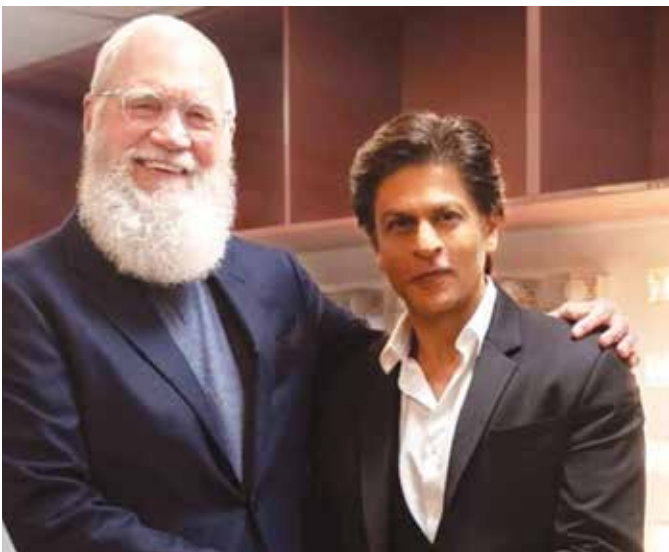
MUMBAI, MAY 17 (PTI): Bollywood superstar Shah Rukh Khan and veteran talk show host David Letterman have collaborated for a Netflix stand-alone special.

As per the press release issued by the streaming service, the show will be all about in-depth conversations, for which Letterman is renowned, and in-the-field segments expressing his curiosity and humour.

The 53-year-old Indian star said he was honoured to share his story with Letterman.

"I've watched David Letterman's late-night talk show for years and I'm a huge fan of his style of interviewing. I'm thrilled, and honoured to share my story with him. That this is on Netflix is even more special I'm working with the team on various projects and it's always been exciting partnering with them," Shah Rukh said.

After interviewing SRK in front of the live audience on Thursday in New York, Letterman, 72, said the actor was one of the loveli-



est persons he has ever spoken to.

"The best part of this job that Netflix has been happy to provide for me is to meet people. And after each one of these sessions I think to myself, it is a very smart, very lovely person from whom I have learned things. You would maybe be at the top of that list," Letterman said.

Netflix has not announced the premiere date of the special.

ARIES: Goals! Goals! Goals! Today's Aquarius new moon invites you to dream without limits. Where would you like to be in six months' time? What would you like to have accomplished? Get the manifestation ball rolling NOW. This lunar light could also bring a wave of fresh faces into your world. Keep expanding your social network and trying new experiences on for size.

TAURUS: You're movin' on up, Taurus, as today's new moon in Aquarius hits your tenth house of ambitions and accelerates your ascent up the ladder. Even if your lofty goals aren't doable in their current form, don't abandon them. It may simply be a case of paring down to a more basic 1.0 plan. Create a solid foundation that you can easily build on later.

GEMINI: If you find yourself at a crossroads with a key relationship on Saturday, Gemini, don't panic. You'll know which way to turn without a GPS. Diplomatic Venus in your partnership house teams up with game-changer Uranus, bringing on a

make-it-or-break-it moment. Suddenly the fog lifts, and you'll have the clarity to decide whether or not to ink the deal, move in together or whatever next step you're deliberating.

CANCER: Today's skies feature a new moon in Aquarius and your smoldering eighth house, amping up your magnetic mojo. Are you in a relationship that's been progressively deepening? You could take a concrete step to make it into an official "thing." If you've been struggling with someone who can't make a firm commitment, it's ultimatum time.

LEO: It takes two to make a thing go right! And as today's Aquarius new moon sparks your seventh house of partnerships, your desire for a real commitment could heat up. Newer romances might move into "official" territory, and longtime couples get a titillating reboot. In business, a collaborative venture or contract negotiation may pick up speed. Explore all kinds of synergies. Joint missions could reach dynamic duo status over the coming six months!.

VIRGO: Today's new moon in Aquarius electrifies your sixth house of healthy living, launching a six-month phase of increased vitality. Take the first steps toward clean eating, regular fitness regimens or forming a positive new habit. Don't try to do this "perfectly." Focus on establishing a sustainable routine that can bring long-lasting results, even if they don't come overnight.

LIBRA: Your love life gets a shot of mojo, courtesy of a new moon in Aquarius and your passion sector. Single? Never mind waiting for The One to right-swipe you. Slide into the driver's seat and seek out promising prospects. Your amorous efforts might be rewarded before the corresponding full moon on August 15. Fame could also come knocking under this lunar lift. Be proactive and make sure the world is aware of all the amazing gifts you have to offer.

SCORPIO: There's no place like home as today's Aquarius new moon in your domestic fourth house beams into Chateau Scorpio. Besides ensuring you have

at least one little corner you can call your own, you'll be inspired to feather your haven with brand-new decorative touches. If you're looking to move, pore over the real estate listings—the place of your dreams could emerge. A powerful woman or mother figure may assume a stronger role in the next two weeks!

SAGITTARIUS: Today's Aquarius new moon revs up your communication house, sparking synergies with like-minded people. Seize the day and join forces on a trial project. Your combined efforts could reach a high point by the corresponding full moon this August 15. If a course or workshop related to writing, media or DIY skills catches your eye, sign up! As the zodiac's eternal student, this won't just banish the winter blues, but might also help you bank a profitable new skill!

CAPRICORN: Make it rain, Capricorn! Today's new moon in Aquarius electrifies your second house of finances, launching a six-month cycle of prosperity. Get clear on what you'd like to accomplish during this lunar-powered phase and put an action plan in

place. Use these moonbeams to advance your ambitions, and you could reap the rewards by the corresponding full moon on August 15.

AQUARIUS: Your fresh start is here, Aquarius! Today, 2019's only new moon in your sign marks your "official" New Year. Like a ribbon-cutting ceremony for your resolutions, this lunar lift instructs you to invest in your grand goals and given them your all. By the time the corresponding Aquarius full moon rolls around on August 15, your star could be shining brighter than ever!

PISCES: Has a once-important situation in your life passed its expiration date, Pisces? It's time to start letting go. Today's Aquarius new moon activates your twelfth house of release and healing. Slowly (but surely) close the door on relationships you've outgrown. And say goodbye to past pain! Whether a self-destructive behavior or a toxic relationship, you now feel prepared to remove it from your life. You might want to cut off all ties, but cold turkey usually isn't successful. View it as a process, one that lasts until the corresponding full moon on August 15.