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SummitTIMES

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ON TOP OF THE NEWS

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No Coronavirus in Sikkim, beware of misinformation: Health Dept

**SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 06 FEB:**

The Health Department has refuted claims of Coronavirus cases being detected in Sikkim and cautioned people against believing or sharing such misinformation.

An audio clip has been circulating on Whatsapp where it is claimed that a Coronavirus case has

been confirmed at New STNM Hospital, Gangtok.

Speaking to Summit Times, Director General, Health Department, Dr Pempa T Bhutia, said that no case has been reported and this audio clip is a scary prank.

"There is a national watch on Coronavirus cases across the country which is constantly

updated and till 6 pm today there have been only 3 confirmed reports of Coronavirus in the entire country and no reports in Sikkim," informed Dr Bhutia.

He cautioned people against believing or sharing such misinformation.

The department has established a 20-bed-

ded ward in old STNM hospital for quarantine process and isolation wards.

Dr Bhutia said that no case has been reported from this ward so far.

It may be mentioned that the Health Department had held a press conference on 05 Feb informing about the intense screening process

underway at all border checkpoints of Sikkim. The Department had said that 81,237 persons entering Sikkim had been screened so far with no reports of any Coronavirus case.

Health Department has also set up a helpline – 104 – where people can call for any information regarding the virus.

12 Sikkimese in India team for International Strength Lifting C'ship



**SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 06 FEB:**

It is a proud moment again for the State as 12 strength lifters from Sikkim have been selected to represent the country in the 8th International Strength Lifting & Inclined Bench Press Championship 2020 to be held from 13 to 17 February at Bangkok in Thailand.

They were shortlisted for the national team on the basis of their performance in the recently held 29th Senior and Master National Strength Lifting Championship 2019 from 25 to 28 December at Udaipur, Rajasthan.

The selected strength lifters from Sikkim are Pema Dorjee Bhutia, Ram Dhoj Rai, Kishore Dungalai Rai, Santosh Gupta, Chandra Kumar Chettri, Bhim Raj Gurung, Hom-

nath Siwakoti, Kalpana Chettri, Manisha Tewari, Madhu Mahal Majhi, Edu Tshering Bhutia and Pempa Tamang. It is debut for Madhu Mahal Majhi, Chandra Kumar Chettri, Bhim Raj Gurung, Manisha Tewari, Kishore Dungalai Rai and Ram Dhoj Rai in the international competition.

These strength lifters are part of a 67-member India team in this international championship.

In a small function held here at White Hall complex on Thursday, Sikkim Strength Lifting Association [SSLA] executive members offered khatas and expressed their best wishes to all selected lifters from the state.

In his address, SSLA general secretary, Sonam Tshering Bhutia congratulated them for getting such a big opportunity to represent the country

in a prestigious international level championship. While expressing his best wishes, he stated that it was a proud moment for SSLA that Sikkimese strength lifters have been representing the country continuously in the international competitions.

Likewise, SSLA chief coach, Pema Dorjee Bhutia expressed that all lifters are in high spirits and confident of winning medals and laurels for the State and the country in this international championship.

He thanked the SSLA for supporting and encouraging local lifters for national and international levels. The State lifters are scheduled to leave on 10 Feb to join the national team at Kolkata and then on will fly to Bangkok for the championship on 12 Feb.

Adventure time at SGMi Rocks!



**SAGAR CHETTRI
GANGTOK, 06 FEB:**

Adventure activities at the SGMi Rock Area at Selep Tank here under the ongoing Adventure Tourism Festival 2020 have been attracting a good number of adventure-seekers, especially students from schools and colleges.

The ten-day long festival, which was inaugurated by Tourism Minister, BS Panth, on 31 January, is being organized by Indian Himalayan Centre for Adventure & Eco-Tourism [IHCAE], Chemchey, under Tourism & Civil Aviation Department.

Adventure activities like Tree Top Rope Course, Natural Rock Climbing, Zip Line Cross-

ing, Hill Climbing and day and night camping have been underway at the SGMi Rock Area under the guidance of a team of instructors and experts from IHCAE.

More than 300 participants, mainly students from schools and universities, have registered for the various activities on offer.

Speaking to media persons at SGMi Rock Area on Thursday, IHCAE Deputy Director, Kazi Sherpa mentioned that ten activities under tree top canopy have been organised.

"These activities have been designed especially for disaster preparedness and safety during emergencies. Such activities are very important for young children

and also to stay fit and healthy," he said.

Mr Sherpa informed that activities like ladder climbing, traversing, commando bridge, zip line, net climbing, Burma bridge, swing, up ladder and suspension bridge were started on 02 February and will continue till 09 February.

"Such adventure activities are necessary for school students as most of the colleges here have already started adventure tourism in their curriculum and their students have to do at least 20 days of adventure activities," he said.

He pointed out that children are occupied with electronic gadgets and unhealthy activities nowadays and this

makes them physically weak hence such activities were necessary to make them stronger and more confident.

Mr Sherpa mentioned that the festival also includes a 14-day skiing course at the best skiing slope of the country at Gnathang in East Sikkim and an 80KM mountain biking expedition from Ganesh Tok to Luving in two categories - joyride and a two day ride which includes an overnight camp.

Thus far, eleven participants have registered for mountain biking and 28 of the 30 seats available for skiing have already been booked. He expressed that IHCAE plans to make this festival an annual event.

turn to pg 02

Over 2,800 under observation in Kerala for Coronavirus

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, FEB 6 (PTI): Over 2,800 people are under observation in Kerala for the novel coronavirus infection and no new cases have been reported, Kerala Health Minister K K Shailaja said.

India's three positive cases for the virus have been reported from Thirissur, Alappuzha and Kasaragod districts.

At least 2,826 people are under surveillance in the state as of Thursday, a press release quoting the minister said.

Of this, 2,743 are under home quarantine and 83 are in isolation wards of various hospitals, a press release quoting the minister said tonight.

The samples of at least 263 people, who have shown minor symp-

toms for the virus, have been sent to the National Institute of Virology at Pune and results of 229 samples came out negative, according to the release.

There is no cause for any concern with regard to those who are under observation in hospitals, including three foreign nationals, the release said. The health department has trained staff from even other departments and people's representatives to spread awareness about the coronavirus and fight the epidemic.

Following the detection of three positive cases, the LDF government had declared the epidemic as a "state calamity" and the health department has issued advisories to the education,

turn to pg 02

RBI keeps benchmark interest rate unchanged at 5.15 pc

MUMBAI, FEB 6 (PTI): The Reserve Bank of India, for the second straight time, on Thursday kept its key policy rate unchanged at 5.15 per cent, maintaining its accommodative policy stance as long as it was necessary to revive growth.

The central bank retained GDP growth at 5

per cent for 2019-20 and pegged it at 6 per cent for the next fiscal.

"Economic activity remains subdued and the few indicators that have moved up recently are yet to gain traction in a more broad-based manner. Given the evolving growth-inflation dynamics, the MPC felt it appropriate to

maintain status quo, the Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) said.

The six-member committee voted unanimously to hold rates, but also said that there is policy space available for further action.

Between February and October 2019, the RBI had reduced repo rate by 135 basis points.



TWO BLOKES ON BIKES

Alex and Marcos reached Gangtok today at noon on their mountain bikes. The duo cycled to Sikkim from Kathmandu and will be heading to the North East after a two-day stay in Sikkim. Alex is from Colombia while Marcos is from Spain. [from Nisim Subba]

Shah's speeches contain 'only trash': Rahul

NEW DELHI, FEB 5 (PTI): Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Wednesday said Union Home Minister Amit Shah's speeches contain "only trash" and asked people not to listen to him.

Addressing poll rallies in Kondli and Chandni Chowk assembly constituencies of Delhi, the Congress leader claimed that unlike the leaders of other parties, he never lied in his speeches.

"The speeches of PM (Narendra) Modi, (Delhi Chief Minister) Arvind Kejriwal are nothing but full of lies," Gandhi said.

"I have been in politics for 15 years. You can listen to any of my speeches, you won't find a single lie. You listen to Modi, Kejriwal, Shah...leave it. Don't listen to Shah, they (his speeches) contain only trash," he said.

Polls for the 70-member Delhi Assembly will be held on February 8. The results will be announced on February 11.

Two IEDs found, one arrested ahead of PM's Assam visit

GUWAHATI, FEB 6 (PTI): One suspected anti-talk ULFA(I) cadre was arrested on Thursday for planting two improvised explosive devices in the state capital ahead of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's day-long visit to Assam.

Modi is scheduled to visit Assam on Friday and address a public rally at Kokrajhar after the Bodo peace agreement, which was signed in New Delhi on January 27.

Guwahati Police Commissioner Munna Prasad Gupta told PTI that the two IEDs were found in the busy Paltanbazar and Panbazar areas of the city late on Wednesday night.

"The bomb squad took the IEDs away from the populous location and those were detonated safely later. We suspect it is the handiwork of ULFA(I)," he added.

The police team immediately launched an operation and arrested one suspected cadre of ULFA(I), Gupta said.

To queries whether these bombs were planted targeting Modi's visit to the state, Gupta said, "We cannot say immediately that the IEDs were planted targeting to the PM's visit. We are investigating".

Police had recovered another five IEDs from Panikhati area, near here on the same day.

Modi during his visit to Assam has no programme in the city. He will reach the Lokpriya Gopinath Bordoloi International Airport here from Delhi and leave for Kokrajhar by a chopper. On the way back he will reach the airport here by a chopper and leave for the national capital in the plane, officials said.

HAVE A STORY TO SHARE?

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Four-day CAEPHT training on plasticulture concludes

SUMMIT REPORT GANGTOK, 06 FEB:

Four-day off-campus training on "Scope of plasticulture engineering technologies in agriculture and allied activities" for progressive farmers at Assam Lingzey, East Sikkim, concludes on 06 Feb organized by Professor (SWCE Dept.) and PI of All India Coordinated Research Project on Plasticulture Engineering and Technologies, CAEPHT (CAU), Dr. D. Jhajharia.

The four-day training was organized from 03 - 06 Feb to highlight the

various scopes of plastics in agriculture and allied activities, such as, greenhouses, solar dryers, poultry-sheds, plastic vermin-beds, fisheries through plastic pond-liners, plastic slatted flooring based sheds for goat and small animals including Yak Calf, etc.

Thirty-eight progressive farmers from different wards of Assam Lingzey, Aho and Pakyong attended the valedictory program on 06 Feb at Assam Lingzey. During the four days program, various faculty members of CAEPHT (CAU),

such as, Prof. D. Jhajharia, Dr. Pradip Narale, Dr. Shivam, Dr. Ghanshyam Singh Yurembam, Dr. R. Anand delivered lectures on different aspects of plasticulture engineering technologies.

Dr. Alok (i/c Gangtok centre of National Horticulture Board) explained different schemes of NHB to the farmers, and urged them to come forward to grow high-valued vegetables under organic management inside the greenhouse.

Dr. Ghanshyam Singh Yurembam, Dr. Shivam, Er. Aribam Priya Ma-

hanta Sharma and Dr. Smriti devoted full day by installing drip irrigation system in low-cost greenhouse at Soureni. Dr. Pradip Narale inspected different houses and ultimately finalized two farmers for installing the FRP based biogas plant in East Sikkim district.

Prof. Jhajharia discussed a success story of a local progressive farmer from Assam Lingzey, who has made significant progress through the use of different plasticulture engineering technologies, such as, low-cost bamboo

polyhouse, cultivation of yellow and red colored capsicums under protected cultivation with gravity-fed drip irrigation system and black-silver plastic mulch.

On the last day, the progressive farmers learnt the practical aspects of cultivating mushroom under the technical guidance of Dr. R. Anand. Finally, a few progressive farmers were also identified to construct low-cost greenhouses soon as part of the extension activities of CAEPHT (CAU), Ranipool under the AICRP on PET scheme.

SMIT all set for 4th Global Alumni Meet



SUMMIT REPORT GANGTOK, 06 FEB:

SMIT Alumni Association is going to organize the fourth edition of SMIT Global Alumni Meet on 15 Feb at the campus of Sikkim Manipal Institute of Technology, a press release informs.

The event will be attended by SMIT alumni

from all around the world along with Vice-Chancellor, SMU, Registrar, SMU, Director, SMIT, Head Alumni Cell, SMIT, HODs and faculty members.

The organizing committee is planning Alumni versus Faculty T10 cricket match, panel discussions and more. Few cultural programmes like band

performance and dance will also be organized.

For instituting good communication between the alumni and the current students, a one-to-one conversation platform called "Alum.Connect" has been arranged.

The institute has a tradition of honoring alumni who have made a difference in the world in various fields involving technology. The committee is setting up arrangements to follow the same tradition this year as well in the form of SMIT Alumni Awards 2020 in the categories of 'Alma Mater', 'Entrepreneurship', 'Technology and Innovation' and 'Arts, literature, music and sports'.

Month-long Beautician Training Program concludes



GYALSHING, 06 FEB (IPR): Month-long residential Beautician Training Program under Civic Action Programme in North East region concluded at the premises of Industrial Training Institute, ITI, Gyalshing organised by 36th Bn. SSB, Gyalshing.

The training program was held from 08 Jan to 06 Feb in which participants stayed at the premises during the training.

Agriculture Minister, Lok Nath Sharma was

the chief guest for the program along with I. K. Neopaney [Chairman, GMC], Karma L. Lepcha [ADC West], Ram Narayan Mishra [Commandant 36th Battalion SSB], Krishna Awadihya [72nd Bn 2nd in Command], T. N. Sharma [Principal ITI], faculties of ITI, students of the Institute and all other present for the occasion.

The Minister in his address congratulated the certificate recipients and urged the par-

ticipants to grab every opportunity available and encouraged them to gather experience.

He then thanked the officials of SSB for providing training for the people of the area.

R N Mishra highlighted the main motive of the program which is Civic Action Program for unemployed youth residing in border areas and make them self-sufficient.

Chief guest, Mr Sharma distributed the certificates to the trainees.

NABARD DGM visits ICAR-NRC Orchids



GANGTOK, 06 FEB (PIB): DGM, NABARD, G. Ramesh Kumar visited ICAR-NRC Orchids, Pakyong, accompanied by AGM, Divya Rai on 03 Feb, a press release informs.

Principal Scientist (Plant Breeding), Dr. Ramgopal Devadas, coordinated the visit and explained the genesis of institute, significant achievements and national level awards by institute and farmers.

Mr Kumar visited laboratories and ongoing field experiments during field visit and interacted with scientists. Dr. Tshering Lhamu Bhutia [Scientist] explained Orchid based farming system model based on vegetable cultivation and other short duration crops and

flowers. DGM enquired on export potential of orchids and experienced on protected cultivation, germplasm conservation, DUS Cymbidium hybrids, Lady's slipper orchids, hi-tech floriculture and vertical farming.

He also expressed willingness to support and collaborate with NRCO for transfer of technologies through various trainings and demonstrations. DGM applauded the efforts of orchid based farming system which is expected to generate continuous income generation at farmers' level and new orchid varieties at institute.

Other scientific personnel Dr. B.P. Mallikarjuna, Dr. Madhurima Das and Dr. N.S. Kalaivanan were also present on the day.

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Campaigning for Delhi elections ends

NEW DELHI, FEB 6 (PTI):

Marked by the BJP aggressively pushing the anti-CAA protests in Shaheen Bagh as a poll issue, the AAP hardselling development and the Congress conspicuous by its near absence, the bitter, often divisive campaign for the Delhi elections ended on Thursday. In their final electioneering push, the three key parties made last ditch efforts to seek votes and slugged it out over issues ranging from the amended citizenship law, appeasement politics and unemployment.

The campaign ended at 6 pm on Thursday, ahead of voting on Saturday. On the last day of the campaign, Union Home Minister Amit Shah took out three road shows at Seelampur in northeast Delhi, and Hari Nagar and Madipur in west Delhi.

Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia took out a 'padayatra' in his Patparganj constituency in east Delhi. The BJP, which started the campaign with a focus on the development work done by the Centre for the national capital, took a sharp turn and made Shaheen Bagh, the epicentre of anti-Citizenship Amendment Act protest in southeast Delhi, its main poll plank.

The saffron party's campaign saw Prime Minister Narendra Modi address two rallies while

Home Minister Amit Shah addressed many more. BJP President J P Nadda and Yogi Adityanath were also in full throttle over the Shaheen Bagh protest.

Apart from its MPs and MLAs, the BJP also roped in chief ministers of party-ruled states -- Vijay Rupani (Gujarat), Yogi Adityanath (Uttar Pradesh), N Biren Singh (Manipur), M L Khattar (Haryana) -- to canvass for its candidates.

The campaign got bitter when Union Minister Anurag Thakur, in a rally, egged the crowd to say 'shoot the traitors', and the party's West Delhi MP Parvesh Verma made a controversial statement on Shaheen Bagh.

Both Thakur and Verma were banned from campaigning for 72 and 96 hours respectively and also dropped from the party's star campaigner's list. On Wednesday, Verma was barred from campaigning for a second time.

Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal led the campaign for the Aam Aadmi Party. He however, focussed on road shows and public meetings rather than rallies.

The AAP held silent marches against the BJP in all 70 constituencies in Delhi for three days to protest against the "terrorist" remarks made by Verma.

Over 2,800...

tourism and the animal husbandry departments on taking precautions.

Shailaja said on Wednesday that even though no positive cases were reported, the state needs to remain vigilant and reiterated the 28 days quarantine period for those returning from China.

Of the 2,826 people under observation, the maximum number is from Malappuram (396), followed by Kozhikode (358), Ernakulam (345) and Thrissur (268).

Adventure time...

Sharing their experience of the adventure activities, students said that this has been a fun learning experience.

They added that these activities have helped them overcome their fears and build confidence. "We enjoyed ourselves and learned a lot and will definitely enrol again in future as well," they said.

Agartala-Akhaura...

workers under the supervision of 30 engineers of IRCON are working round the clock to complete works.

Officials said Nischintapur will have a transshipment yard, the first in the north east region and the passengers and goods coming from Bangladesh will be off boarded there.

The IRCON engineers are expected to start laying the railway tracks by September/October this year.

The first phase of the 5.46 km Gangasagar-Nischintapur railway track and construction of station building, a 1600 m platform and the transshipment yard are expected to be completed by December, they added.

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Bedi greeted by protests in Yanam

PUDUCHERRY, FEB 6 (PTI): Puducherry Lt Governor Kiran Bedi was on Thursday faced protests led by a minister against her visit to Yanam, an enclave of Puducherry in Andhra Pradesh, for reviewing developmental works there. Health and Tourism Minister Malladi Krishna Rao launched the protest along with his supporters holding a bunch of black balloons and dressed up in the same colour.

Reacting to the agitation, the former IPS officer sought to know the need for it. "Is it a protest against steps taken to ensure financial prudence or for seeking information on sustainability of projects or to ensure that the money meant for Yanam goes straight to the poor under various schemes?" she asked.

Noting that her office had to "undo the injustice" meted out to the staff at the lowest ranks of posts in Yanam, she insisted that all officers observe due process of clearing projects by meeting the audit requirements without falling a prey to departmental irregularities. "Some of the past actions have been subject to CBI probe.

Some officers were wrongly punished in the past and even lost their employment," she said. Bedi also said, "currently certain irregular constructions, demolitions carried out in Yanam are under vigilance enquiry." She maintained that Yanam could have seen development had it not been in the clutches of several vested interests in the past.

Justifying her visit to Yanam, the Lt Governor said, "the visit by Team Raj Nivas (led by her) and senior officers was to connect people of the outlying region with the administration without fear or favour and to give the people a voice which is heard and not stifled as had been complained."

Training on Internet of Things [IoT] using Raspberry Pi

SUMMIT REPORT GANGTOK, 06 FEB:

National Institute of Electronics & Information Technology (NIELIT) – Gangtok Centre conducted 20-day intensive project based Training on Internet of Things [IoT] using Raspberry Pi for students of SRM University – Sikkim during the winter vacation from 09 Jan to 05 Feb 2020 under the Digital India initiative of Government of India to train students on modern technology to make them industry ready, a press release informs.

The training was attended by the MCA students of SRM University – Sikkim. Students who completed the training, received certificates from NIELIT, the release mentions.

In this context a valedictory session was organized on 05 Feb where the students demonstrated the skills acquired by them in IoT and Raspberry Pi. The programme was attended by HOD, Department of Comput-



er Applications, Sikkim Central University, Dr. Swarup Roy along with Partha Pratim Ray [Sikkim Central University] and Sabna Sharma [School of Information Technology, SRM University Sikkim] as guests of honour. Khagendra Sharma, Pawan Kumar Sharma, Anugra Wangchuk Lepcha, and Biky Chowhan participated as resource persons in the above training.

Arup Chattopadhyay [Director-Incharge, NIELIT-Gangtok] informed about the initiatives of the Ministry of Electronics and IT (MeitY), Govt. of India in

generating trained manpower in state-of-the art IT and IT Enabled Services at pan India level under Digital India – the flagship program of Government of India.

Dr. Swarup Roy while appreciating the initiative of NIELIT Gangtok centre in imparting the training to the students on state-of-the-art technologies looked forward to close cooperation among the academia in Sikkim and requested NIELIT to extend such training to all sectors of students and working IT/ITES professionals in Sikkim to make them abreast with modern technology.

Minister convenes coordination meeting with sports & youth affairs officials

GANGTOK, 06 FEB [IPR]: Sports & Youth Affairs Minister, Kunga Nima Lepcha, convened a co-ordination meeting of the Department at Paljor Stadium here, a press release informs.

The Minister congratulated all concerned for successfully conducting the Inter Constituency Football Tournament, Annual School Sports Competitions and Winter Coaching Camp and further commended the active participation of more than 200 players at the 65th National School Games and 23rd National Youth Festival.

He also conveyed his New Year greetings to all and extended best wishes for sporting activities to be held over the year 2020-21.



During the meeting, deliberations were held about organising GPU-level games & sports events, talent hunt programmes, celebration of National Sports Day, Sports Calendar of SYA Department and Khelo India U-17 Football Girls League.

The meeting was also addressed by the Secretary and Director of the Department while the vote of thanks was delivered by the Additional Director.

Vipra Foundation Siliguri Chapter formed

SUMMIT REPORT GANGTOK, 06 FEB:

Vipra Foundation Siliguri Chapter was formed today under the leadership of its president, Ramchandra Sharma, a press release informs.

Other office bearers are Vinod Sharma, Todermal Tiwari and Shivnath Sharma as the vice president, Niranjana Sharma as general secretary, Tarun Sharma and Vipul Sharma as joint secretary along with Deukinandan Pareek, Gopal Sharma (Advocate), Tarun Sharma (Advocate), Manoj Tetrewal, Shyam Sundar Kankda, Satyanarayan Dayama and Malchand Moth as the Executive Committee Members of the Vipra Foundation Siliguri Chapter.

It was decided that the new committee will celebrate the foundation day cum oath ceremony in March.

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National Defence College team calls on Governor



SUMMIT REPORT GANGTOK, 06 FEB:

A 15-member delegation of National Defence College, New Delhi including 3 foreign officers from Sri Lanka, Oman and United Kingdom called on the Governor, Ganga Prasad this evening at Raj Bhavan. The team is in Sikkim for a socio-political study tour from 02 Feb, a press

release informs.

The team visited Mangan, North district today where they were briefed by the District Administration.

During the interaction with delegates, the Governor mentioned that at present the army has great role to play and appreciated their efforts in Sikkim while evacuating tourists from Nathula

during heavy snow fall and road disruption. The Governor said that Sikkim being a small state hold lots of potential.

Finally, the delegation appreciated the Sikkim civil administration for its efforts to run the state smoothly.

Delegates expressed their gratitude and thanked the State government for the warm hospitality.

Governor meets reps from South SHGs

SUMMIT REPORT GANGTOK, 06 FEB:

Governor Ganga Prasad today met representatives of Sikkim Harvest, a Multi-Purpose Cooperative Society, and Pragati Self Help Group from Dunchung, South Sikkim. The delegation was led by HB Rai, an entrepreneur associated with the SHG.

In the brief interaction, the representatives apprised him about the various institutions and products being produced and marketed by the SHG and brand Sikkim Harvest.

The federation comprising 23 SHGs of South



Sikkim are producing products like incense sticks, candles, farm products, soaps and other various farm products being marketed within the State as well as outside the State.

The Governor expressed his happiness

over the entrepreneurial skills being displayed by members of the SHGs and also expressed keenness to visit the area and interact with the stakeholders, an official press communiqué from Raj Bhawan informs.



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No: 318/SSERC/2017-18/10

Date: 30.01.2020

NOTICE FOR PUBLIC HEARING

Power Department, Government of Sikkim, a deemed licensee engaged in distribution and retail sale of electricity in the State of Sikkim has filed its Annual Revenue Requirement (ARR) and Tariff Petition for the Financial Year 2020-21 before the Sikkim State Electricity Regulatory Commission (SSERC). The ARR and Tariff Petition have been registered by the SSERC as Case No. MYT/2020-21/P-01/PDS dated 05.12.2019. The copies of the ARR/Tariff Petition can be viewed and downloaded from the Commission's website (www.sserc.in/Tariff Petitions) and also from the official website of the Power Department (power.sikkim.gov.in).

Power Department has already issued a 'Public Notice' on the ARR/Tariff Petition soliciting objections and suggestions from the consumers and stake holders on the proposed ARR and Tariff proposal. As per the said 'Public Notice', any person who intends to file objections or suggestions on the ARR/Tariff Petition of the Power Department may do so by filing statement of objections or comments before the Secretary, Sikkim State Electricity Regulatory Commission. Objections or comments shall be submitted in 5 (five) copies by registered post or in person, which should reach the Secretary, Sikkim State Electricity Regulatory Commission, Old SITCO Complex, Deorali, Gangtok-737102 on or before 10th February 2020.

The objections or comments shall be submitted with copies of the relevant documents and evidences in support thereof alongwith Affidavit as per Form SSERC-3 of Sikkim State Electricity Regulatory Commission (Conduct of Business) Regulations, 2012. Form SSERC-3 can be downloaded from the Commission's website (www.sserc.in/Regulations & Rules/Conduct of Business).

The SSERC therefore proposes to hold a Public Hearing on the ARR/Tariff Petition filed by the Power Department on the date, time and venue mentioned below:

Date	Time	Venue for Public Hearing	Category of Consumers.
19 th February 2020	10.30 AM to 2.30 PM	Small Meeting Hall, Chintan Bhavan, Gangtok, East Sikkim	All categories of Consumers

Interested parties/persons who intend to be heard in person may appear before the Sikkim State Electricity Regulatory Commission for the purpose and would be heard as per the above schedule.

**Sd/-
Director (T&T)
Sikkim State Electricity Regulatory Commission**

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Water!

To meet the challenge, engage the young

It is not clear whether the showers that the region received over the past few days were the Nor'westers or not. Of course they were not. They were Western Disturbances bringing down some moisture. Irrespective of what they were, the showers have been working wonders for farms parched by Winter. A similarly dry spell had also set over most of North India and even the North-East was hard hit since what it received from a late and barely normal monsoon coursed away with the floods, and the dry winter scorched the fields and brought its many hydel projects to sputtering stops. Of course the fall in demand can also be blamed for some of the sputtering and one needs to only look at the sliver that the Teesta becomes between dams every winter to realize the amounts that the reservoirs hold back thumbing their collective noses at the fiction of "run of the river" model. And this after a normal monsoon and a Winter which has had its share of drizzles. It goes without saying that if the main rivers [on which hydel projects are developed] are running low, the feeder streams and jhoras and springs on which mountain people rely for drinking and agricultural water supply must also be drying out. The region is thus facing an irrigation and drinking water shortfall along with a power crisis. And all this because the Winter, despite the overcast skies, has not been wet enough to replenish the watersheds. In that sense, the recent rains have been welcome.

The situation has not been as dire for Sikkim although fields which rely on rains for irrigation have suffered. A possible reason why Sikkim fared better than the rest of the similarly parched regions is perhaps because it retains a better forest cover in comparison to what has happened elsewhere. The nation requires 33 per cent of its land mass to be under forest cover. At present, this cover in the country stands at 23.68%. When one speaks of the Indian landmass, the 10% shortfall in forest cover presents a monumental task, especially when not much is being done to meet this target. Given the national average and targets, some might say that Sikkim need not have undertaken the State Green Mission given the fact that nearly 46% of the State is already under forests. And yet it did and should the Green Mission sustain, the State will be all the richer from the initiative. It is after all the green cover which keeps the watersheds replenished and wet even if the winters are dry. Gangtok, for example, does not have a water supply problem. Taps run dry here because of distribution problems, not because the source at Ratey Chu does not have enough water. Few regions are as well naturally provided and sustained as Gangtok and most other parts of Sikkim. The areas which have a supply problem have inherited a traditional challenge or have messed up the sources with poorly planned 'development' projects like roads which have choked up springs with debris or runaway construction which has not planned for supply.

It is possible that readers will notice a surge in water-related events in the State as the World Water Day [22 March] eventually arrives, but it would be apt to begin discussing water issues now. The timing is perfect as Feb-March sits in the cusp of acute shortage [winter] and the problem of plenty [monsoons]. The policy-makers or event managers will be well advised to engage the young in more meaningful discussions on water. Saving them from indoor speeches and taking them out to where water is sourced from would be a good place to begin. That will establish a connection which can be complemented with sessions on how watersheds need to be nurtured and conservation returned as an instinctive habit. This engagement is necessary because if such issues are to be addressed and resolved in the long run, the young need to be involved. And unless the young re-establish a more organic connection with nature, the involvement will not move beyond participating in awareness programmes.

For instance, how many youngsters in Gangtok know where the town gets its water from? Most of those who think they know will say Selep [which is the reservoir, not the source] and only very few of those who know the source to be Ratey Chu would have actually seen it. But take them up to Ratey Chu on an excursion and most of them will return with a clearer appreciation of the need to conserve. More earnest commitments to lifestyle changes to support conservation will then follow...

WRITE US:

Readers are invited to comment on, criticise, run down, even appreciate if they like something in this paper. Letters carrying abusive/ indecorous language and personal attacks, except when against people responsible in this newspaper (who are fair game), will have to be ignored. Letters which carry forward a conversation or initiate a dialogue will command immediate attention and receive prominence. Mail us at: news@summittimes.com

Lung Cancer: Quitting smoking regrows protective lung cells – new research

SAM JANES & PETER CAMPBELL
theconversation.com

We know that quitting smoking is an excellent way to reduce your risk of developing lung cancer. But until now, experts weren't quite sure why this was the case. Our latest research has uncovered that in people who quit smoking, the body actually replenishes the airways with normal, non-cancerous cells that help protect the lungs, in turn reducing their risk of getting cancer.

Cancer develops when a single rogue cell acquires genetic changes, called mutations, that instruct that cell to ignore all the normal constraints on its growth, causing it to rapidly replicate out of control. Throughout our lives, all of our cells acquire mutations at a steady rate – around 20-50 mutations per cell per year. Thankfully, the vast majority of these mutations are entirely harmless and don't affect our cells in any measurable way.

But occasionally, a mutation will land in the wrong gene in the wrong cell and push the cell along the path to cancer. We call these genetic changes "driver mutations". For the cell to become a full-blown cancer cell, it would probably need five to ten or more of these driver mutations.

Thanks to advances in DNA sequencing technology, we're now able to study all 3 billion bases of DNA that make up a cell's genetic blueprint (called a genome). By sequencing the DNA of lung cancer cells in smokers and never-smokers, we know that smoking increases the number of mutations.

The binding of tobacco carcinogens to DNA is influenced by their chemical properties, meaning that certain types of mutation are more likely to occur than other types. For tobacco, this results in a distinctive "signature" of mutations appearing in the genome, which is unlike other causes of DNA damage.

Our team has been interested in the very earliest stages of lung cancer development. Specifically,

we're trying to understand what happens to normal cells when they're exposed to tobacco smoke.

To study this, we developed methods of isolating single normal cells from small biopsies of a patient's airways, then growing these cells in an incubator to obtain enough DNA for sequencing. We then analysed the genomes of 632 cells from 16 study participants including four never-smokers, six ex-smokers and three current smokers (all middle-aged or older) as well as three children.

Among the never-smokers, we found that the number of cell mutations increased steadily with age. So, by the time someone is 60 years old, each normal lung cell will contain about 1,000-1,500 mutations. These mutations are caused by the normal wear-and-tear of life, the same type of mutations we see in other organs in the body. Only about 5% of cells in never-smokers were found to have any driver mutations.

But the picture was very different in current smokers. We found that each lung cell on average carried an extra 5,000 mutations above what we would expect for a never-smoker of the same age. Even more striking was that the variation from cell to cell also dramatically increased in smokers.

Some individual cells had 10,000-15,000 mutations – ten times more mutations than we would expect if the person hadn't smoked. These extra mutations had the signature we would expect from the chemicals in tobacco smoke, confirming that they can be directly attributed to cigarettes.

Alongside an increase in the total number of mutations, we also saw a substantial increase in the number of driver mutations. More than a quarter of lung cells in all the current smokers we studied had at least one driver mutation. Some even had two or three. Given that five to ten of these kind of mutations can cause cancer, it's clear that many normal lung cells in these middle-aged or older smokers will likely become cancerous.

NEVER TOO LATE TO QUIT

Our most exciting finding was in the people who had quit smoking. We found ex-smokers had two groups of cells. One group had the thousands of extra mutations seen in current smokers, but the other group were essentially normal. The group of normal cells had the same number of mutations as we would expect to see in the cells of someone who had never smoked.

This near normal group of cells was four times larger in ex-smokers than current smokers. This suggests that these cells increase to replenish the lining of airways after someone stops smoking. We could see this expansion of near-normal cells even in ex-smokers who had smoked a packet of cigarettes every day for more than 40 years.

The reason this finding is so exciting is that this near-normal group of cells protects against cancer. If we study a lung cancer cell from an ex-smoker, it always comes from the heavily damaged group of cells – not from the near-normal group.

Now, we know the reason our risk of cancer decreases so significantly is because the body replenishes the airways with cells that are essentially normal. The next step will be to identify how this group of cells manages to avoid damage from exposure to cigarette smoke – and how we might stimulate them to recover even more.

One potential explanation – suggested by past work in mouse models – is that there's a group of stem cells buried deep in the glands that produce the mucus secreted by the airways. This location would naturally be better protected from tobacco smoke than the surface of airways.

For now, our research reiterates that stopping smoking – at any age – not only slows the accumulation of further damage, but it can reawaken cells that haven't been damaged by past lifestyle choices.

[Sam Janes is Professor of Respiratory Medicine, UCL; Peter Campbell is Head of Cancer, Ageing and Somatic Mutation, Wellcome Trust Sanger Institute]



Leaveism: welcome to the dark side of 21st century flexible working

IAN HESKETH & CARY COOPER
theconversation.com

Most people are familiar with presenteeism, where employees spend many more hours at the workplace than necessary – out of a sense of duty or to impress the boss or whatever. Presenteeism damages productivity, ultimately weakening the economy, and many companies now prioritise stamping it out.

A few years ago, our research into this sort of behaviour led us to identify a related but different phenomenon: employees using annual leave or other work entitlements, such as banked flexi-hours, to go off sick or to look after a relative or dependent. There was no name for such situations, so we called it leaveism.

As part of the same category, we also included employees taking work home that can't be completed in normal working hours, or catching up on work while on leave or holiday. Half a decade later, the bad news is that leaveism appears to be getting more and more common.

A recent Deloitte report, Mental Health and Employers: Refreshing the Case for Investment, included a deep dive into the phenomenon. It found that 51% of employees were working outside contracted hours and 36% were taking allocated time off when they were, in fact, unwell. It also noted that 70% of respondents who had witnessed presenteeism in their organisation had also observed leaveism.

Worryingly for the future, the report said that younger professionals are more susceptible to taking leave in this way. They are also prone to burnout and financial worries, and

twice as likely to suffer from depression as the average employee.

Little wonder that the BBC last year included leaveism in a review of the 101 people, ideas and things changing how we work today. It described the phenomenon as a "major scourge in the modern-day workplace".

NEVER NOT AVAILABLE

We are in an era where people are much more afraid of losing their jobs than in the past: companies have been operating in a low-growth environment for the past decade, which has meant more focus on profitability – including labour costs. Alongside this is the prospect of more and more jobs being automated in the coming years.

This has meant more employees having to live with excessive workloads, and bosses afraid for their own livelihoods who are micromanaging people and not giving them enough autonomy and control at work. A study of Austrian workers in 2015 concluded that employees were more likely to use annual leave to go off sick if they fear losing their jobs or having them downgraded, or if they were experiencing low job satisfaction.

Compounding this sense of unhappiness at work is likely to be the way that technology is changing how we do our jobs. In a survey of 1,000 HR professionals representing 4.6 million UK employees, 87% said that technology was affecting people's ability to switch off out of working hours. Common examples were employees taking work-related phone calls or responding to work emails.

At first glance, these behaviours may look fairly innocuous and just part of modern-day working life.

But we are in danger of endorsing a tech-enabled 24-7 working culture from which it is increasingly difficult to switch off. Work-life balance is becoming a thing of the past. For many of us, it is being superseded by work-life integration.

Whatever the positives of not being tied to an office desk, it is not helping us to relax. Stress and mental ill health now account for 57% of all long-term absences from work, having replaced physical complaints, such as backache, as the main reason employees are off sick.

According to the UK mental health charity Mind's most recent Workplace Wellbeing Index, employees with poor mental health may resort to taking leave rather than disclosing mental health problems in as many as one in 12 cases. In an echo of the Deloitte findings, Mind found younger employees far less likely to disclose they are struggling with mental health.

HOW COMPANIES SHOULD RESPOND

So what should modern managers and employers do to ensure staff are not being run into the ground by leaveism? As reported by Deloitte, responsible employers are now considering the impact of it in their corporate reporting frameworks. This is something that needs to become standard practice, in a similar way to what has happened with presenteeism.

Unlike previous generations, many bosses will be overseeing teams of displaced staff, many of them working an array of rotas, hours and working patterns. They need to understand how employees think and feel in today's workplace,

bearing in mind that this might be a spare bedroom or a cafe with internet access. Being alone, whether actually or perceived, may exacerbate stress and mental health issues.

We recommend that managers and employers make time for regular meaningful contact with all employees, discussing not only their work but also how they are feeling about life in general. They certainly need to encourage staff to take annual leave for holiday and recuperation time. They also need to distribute work evenly and fairly, ensuring there is cover for the employee in question so that work is not simply stacked up awaiting their return.

As far as employers are concerned, they need to encourage managers to develop the necessary people skills to handle these kinds of interactions, by making sure they receive regular, appropriate training. Especially when you are talking about a scattered, remote workforce, it is important to make sure there is workplace peer support in place for employees and regular check-ins.

It's all about creating a workplace environment conducive to a supporting culture. Expecting fewer employees do more is a false economy, since you tend to lose the best people and do more harm to your organisation in the long run.

Finally, we have to give a nod to all those emails outside working hours. Managers need to stop sending them. You know who you are.

[Ian Hesketh is Project Support, National Health & Wellbeing Forum, University of Manchester; Cary Cooper is Professor of Organisational Psychology and Health, University of Manchester]

KMC puts Aadhaar drive on hold after protests in city

KOLKATA, FEB 6 (PTI): The TMC-run Kolkata Municipal Corporation (KMC) has decided to put its drive to update Aadhaar details on hold, following protests by people, who feared that the exercise was being conducted to collect data for the National Population Register (NPR). The decision drew sharp criticism from the BJP, which accused the ruling party of creating an “atmosphere of fear” among the masses to pursue vote-bank politics.

Locals had hit the road in Watgunge area of the city on Wednesday evening, after two officials of a private bank, engaged to collect details for Aadhaar, visited the area, a source at the civic body said.

The protesters blocked the road, refused to provide details and held the officials captive for three hours, alleging that the process was being carried out for updating NPR -- an exercise, which the Mamata Banerjee government said, would not be allowed in Bengal. The CM had also stated that NPR was a “dangerous game”, which could lay the groundwork for NRC.



According to the KMC source, it was only after the police intervened, the two officials were rescued and later arrested. Both have been booked on charges of criminal conspiracy and under

various sections of the IT Act, and remanded in police custody till February 12.

The source also said that the form for Aadhaar update was an old one and had an NPR column, which led to panic among the locals in Watgunge.

Expressing concern over the incident, Kolkata Mayor Firhad Hakim said all work to update and rectify Aadhaar cards

have been put on hold to avoid a breakdown of law and order. “We have asked our officials to immediately stop Aadhaar card updation and rectification at all borough offices. There was some panic in Watgunge area. We don't want any panic as it might lead to a law and order situation,” the senior TMC leader told reporters. Hakim, who had filed the complaint

against the two officials, also said he sought a clarification from the bank with reference to the use of old NPR forms.

“We have asked them to stop work on Aadhaar enrolment and rectification, till the time a clarification is received,” the mayor added.

The civic body is set to go to polls in April.

Slamming the TMC for stalling the Aadhaar drive, the BJP claimed that the ruling party was “trying to take back the state to Stone Age”.

“They (TMC) have stopped NPR, they are now stopping Aadhaar updation. It seems the TMC thinks that Bengal is not a part of India, but a nation of its own. They would get a befitting reply in the upcoming polls,” BJP leader Shamik Bhattacharya said.

CPI(M) leader Sujan Chakraborty, on his part, said both the BJP and the TMC were trying to push their “divisive” agenda, even as people lived in fear and confusion.

Tej Pratap Yadav accused of misogyny for remarks against Nitish, Sushil Modi



PATNA, FEB 06 (PTI): The BJP on Thursday accused RJD leader Tej Pratap Yadav of misogyny for his remark berating Chief Minister Nitish Kumar and Deputy Chief Minister Sushil Kumar Modi at a rally against CAA, NPR and NRC near here.

Yadav, who is the elder son of RJD supremo Lalu Prasad, put his foot in the mouth at the rally where he allegedly flayed the JD(U), which is headed by Kumar and BJP, to which Sushil Kumar Modi belongs, for the dramatic realignment of the two parties in July, 2017.

Kumar had then abruptly cut his ties with the Grand Alliance partners - the RJD and Congress and returned to the NDA.

The RJD rally was held at Masaurhi in rural Patna late on Wednesday night and video clips of it were beamed by local TV news channels.

Kumar had contested the 2015 assembly polls as the chief ministerial candidate of the Grand Alliance but took the drastic step after months of controversy that plagued his government over Yadavs' younger brother Tejashwi, who was then the deputy chief minister.

Tejashwi's name had cropped up in a money laundering case.

Yadav, who was himself a member of the Grand Alliance cabinet,

claimed that the JD(U) and BJP were scared of his father, who is now in Ranchi serving sentences in fodder scam cases.

The overnight drama that culminated in the realignment of the JD(U) and the BJP and the RJD being stripped of power was a fallout of that fear.

I therefore say, Nitish Kumar whom my father had aptly named palturam (turncoat), can also be called Nitish Kumari. And his companion Sushil Kumar Modi, the bearer of the saffron flag, should similarly be called Sushil Kumari Modi.

They cannot take us head on ... they sit in their homes wearing bangles, Yadav jeered before the crowds.

BJP spokesman Nikhil Anand came out with an angry statement in response demanding an apology from the RJD leader. He reminded Yadav of the allegations of domestic violence that his estranged wife has leveled against him.

Was Tej Pratap trying to say that those whose names are suffixed with Kumari and who wear bangles deserve no respect? His tasteless remarks and the applause these received from his supporters are proof that misogyny runs deep in the RJD, Anand said.

His misogynistic remarks lend credence to the charges his wife has leveled against him.

However, he must apologize to the CM and the deputy CM. If he is trying to emulate his uncouth father, he must beware he may similarly land in jail one day, the BJP spokesman said.

Yadav had tied the knot with Aishwarya Roy, daughter of RJD MLA Chandrika Roy, in May, 2018 but filed a divorce petition six months later. Two months ago, his wife who had chosen to stay back at the residence of her mother-in-law Rabri Devi in a bid to salvage her marriage filed a police complaint accusing the mother and the son besides eldest sister-in-law Misa Bharti of domestic violence.

RJD national vice-president Raghuvansh Prasad Singh, a founding member of the party and an old associate of Prasad, also expressed his disapproval when asked about the young leaders' remark.

This is not right. In politics, there must not be any place for derogatory remarks. People get carried away and end up with egg on their face, only to repent later, the former union minister said.

JD(U) spokesman Rajiv Ranjan Prasad said, What can one say about a remark of such low level, in such poor taste, that it has left a veteran leader of the very same party embarrassed.

Paes to play in Bangalore Open



BENGALURU, FEB 6 (PTI): Indian tennis legend Leander Paes on Thursday confirmed his participation in the Bangalore Open ATP Challenger, beginning here on February 10.

Paes, who is into his farewell season, will be seen in action for one last time on home soil at the USD 162,000 event at the KSLTA.

Paes is playing select tournaments during the year as a part of a farewell tour he is calling “One Last Roar”.

“Playing at home in front of my fellow Indians has always been a source of immense pleasure and motivation for me. Bangalore has always had a crowd that understands tennis and the vibe of the stadium and the energy of the city really invigorate me,” said Paes, who

is currently playing at the TATA Maharashtra ATP Tour event in Pune.

The 46-year-old veteran has 54 ATP Tour doubles titles besides eight Grand Slam men's doubles crowns and 10 Grand Slam mixed doubles titles. Paes also won a historic bronze medal at the 1996 Atlanta Olympics.

With just three short of 100 Grand Slam appearances, Paes is now aiming to play all the Slams this year before signing off.

“To my Bangalore friends, fans and tennis lovers, I am looking forward to entertaining all of you One Last Roar time. See you guys soon,” said Paes, who last played in Bengaluru in the Davis Cup 2014 when he partnered with Rohan Bopanna.

Tendulkar to flag-off New Delhi Marathon on Feb 23

NEW DELHI, FEB 6 (PTI): Indian cricket icon Sachin Tendulkar will flag off the IDBI Federal Life Insurance New Delhi Marathon on February 23, with around 13,000 runners having already registered for the event.

The runners will take part in four different categories -- full marathon, half marathon, timed 10k and the 5k Swachh Bharat Run. Tendulkar is the brand ambassador of IDBI Federal Life Insurance.

Organised by NEB Sports, the New Delhi Marathon is certified by Association of International Marathons and



Distance Races (AIMS). The marathon is recognised as a National Marathon Championship by Athletics Federation of India.

The marathon will start off at the iconic Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium with the route winding past historic landmarks like India Gate, Rashtrapati Bhavan and Rajpath.

TMC leader terms Union Minister Hardeep Puri arrogant

NEW DELHI, FEB 6 (PTI): TMC leader Sudip Bandyopadhyay on Thursday accused Union Urban Development Minister Hardeep Singh Puri of being arrogant, saying his attitude was reflected in Lok Sabha.

However, Speaker Om Birla defended Puri by saying that he is a very kind-hearted person.

“Ministers should not be arrogant. We have seen a few ministers replying arrogantly. We have seen Mr Puri a few minutes ago. This type of attitude should

not be reflected in the House,” Bandyopadhyay remarked.

The West Bengal leader's comment came after Puri gave a reply to a supplementary raised by AIMIM leader Asaduddin Owaisi.

The Speaker then said Puri is not like that and is a very kind-hearted person.

Birla also said that MPs should ask short questions and ministers should also be brief in their replies.

Earlier, Puri and Owaisi sparred over fund

allocation for the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (PMAY). The exchange happened while responding to supplementaries from Owaisi related to funding for affordable housing in the country.

Puri, who is in charge of Housing and Urban Affairs, gave figures and also told Owaisi, “please don't provide... false narrative”.

Owaisi mentioned budgetary allocation for the Housing and Urban Affairs Ministry while the amount required for PMAY was much higher.

I have a bigger camera now: Rima Das on life after two internationally acclaimed films

RADHIKA SHARMA

NEW DELHI, FEB 6 (PTI): With two critically-lauded and internationally celebrated films, life has changed but not much for National Film Award winning-director Rima Das who says she will never compromise with her “creative vision” to woo producers.

A self-taught director, Das was a one-woman army when she shot the coming-of-age “Village Rockstars” in her village in Assam's Chhaygaon.

“When I did ‘Village Rockstars’, I had nothing. Same thing happened with ‘Bulbul Can Sing’. I don't feel getting a producer is a struggle because I come from nothing. Now other producers are approaching me. But I have my own equipment, honestly I don't feel dependent on someone else,” the filmmaker told PTI in a telephonic interview.

Das is now ready to fly to Berlinale, just like her last directorial “Bulbul Can Sing”. The film had its European premiere at the 69th Berlin International Film Festival last year.

But she will be in Berlin in a different avatar - as one of the three jury members of the 14plus International Jury. The other two are, Iranian

filmmaker Abbas Amini and South African director Jenna Bass. 14Plus is a sub category of the Generation section at the festival and focused on creating stories for those aged 14 and above. From Chhaygaon to Mumbai to now Germany, the director said the festival, which runs from February 20 to March 1, is making her feel at home.

“I had a great experience at Berlinale last time and I'm really glad that they are calling me this time as well. But I didn't expect to be invited there as a jury member and that too so soon,” she said.

Das' film “Village Rockstars” premiered at the 2017 Toronto International Film Festival (TIFF) and earned four National Film Awards in 2018, including best film and best editing for the director. The Assamese language feature was India's official entry to last year's Academy Awards in the best international film category.

Recounting her time in Berlin last year, the director-writer said she was both “nervous” and “mesmerised”.

“After ‘Village Rockstars’, when ‘Bulbul’ went to TIFF, I knew how to navigate through the festival circuit there. But

Berlinale was very new and I knew it has a very experienced audience. Even the kids there are very well-versed and come up to you with a lot of questions.

“I remember sitting there with other filmmakers and wondering if my film could get a prize. And now they are calling for me for the jury, it's unbelievable. I feel like I'm still learning. But this is an acknowledgment that they love me, respect my work, and understand it. It gives me a lot of confidence.”

“Bulbul...” too has had an interesting flight -- the film won best Assamese film at last year's National Film Awards and best indie honour at 2019 Indian Film Festival of Melbourne.

“When ‘Bulbul’ won in Melbourne, they gave me a (professional) Blackmagic camera. Earlier, I had a small camera to shoot with, I now have a bigger one,” she added.

But Das will never trade autonomy of her stories for better funds, she asserted.

“If producers who approach me allow me to work my way, it's fine. Otherwise it's pointless. I can always go back to producing my own films. Whether I have an audience of a thousand or a lakh.

Odisha reports first swine flu case of 2020

BHUBANESWAR, FEB 6 (PTI): Odisha on Thursday reported its first swine flu case of the year, after a resident of Dhenkanal district tested positive for the virus, officials said.

The patient is under treatment at the SCB Medical College Hospital in Cuttack, they said.

The person tested


positive for the H1N1 virus and has become the first confirmed case of swine flu in Odisha this year, said Director of Medical Education and Training (DMET) Prof CBK Mohanty.

Mohanty said the patient was being treated as per WHO guidelines, and that there is no possibility

of spread of the virus.


Three patients, suspected to have contracted the virus, were recently admitted to a special ward of the SCB Medical College Hospital, of whom two tested negative.

The two other patients will soon be discharged, a doctor at SCB-MCH said.



What is Novel Coronavirus - nCoV?

The Novel Coronavirus (nCoV) is new strain of Coronavirus that originated in Wuhan, China. Notorious for mutating quickly and acquiring new qualities, it is a rising epidemic that was previously not identified in humans.

<p>Symptoms of nCoV</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Fever ● Difficulty in breathing ● Dry Cough ● Severe acute respiratory syndrome ● Pneumonia - like symptoms 	<p>Precautions to Prevent nCoV</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Wash your hands often with soap. ● Use an alcohol based hand sanitizer ● Observe good personal hygiene. ● Avoid touching your face with unwashed hands. ● Avoid contact with people with possible symptoms. ● Avoid contact with animals and consumption of undercooked meats. ● Avoid travel to nCoV affected places. ● Wear a mask if you have respiratory syndrome. and cover your mouth while coughing or sneezing.
<p>Treatment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Treatment is symptomatic and supportive, based on the patient's clinical condition. ● No vaccinations available as of now. ● Visit Doctor in case symptoms detected. 	
	
<p>If you seek help, you may call :</p> <p>-Toll free no. 104 District surveillance Officer EAST : 7029372100 WEST : 9593297808 NORTH : 9641957468 SOUTH : 7407691463 New STNM AMS : 9434711402</p>	
<p>DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & FAMILY WELFARE GOVERNMENT OF SIKKIM</p>	

SAI and Hockey India launch high performance centres

NEW DELHI, FEB 6 (PTI): Sports Authority of India (SAI) and Hockey India on Thursday announced the establishment of the High Performance Centres in seven places across the country to provide state-of-the-art facilities to junior and sub-Junior players.

The move was aimed at grooming young talent in view of 2024 and 2028 Olympic Games.

While the National Hockey Academy at Dhyani Chand National Stadium, New Delhi, SAI Sundergarh, Odisha, SAI UDMCC, Bhopal, and SAI Bengaluru will be active within the next three months, the remaining three centres will be developed over the next one year.

These centres will be closely monitored by Hockey India and its High Performance Director and the programme will also that the athletes are provided with international exposure.

These seven High Performance Hockey Centres will be set up under the Khelo India scheme and will have expert professional training, utilization of sports science, and education of the youngsters.

"Owing to the large hockey-playing population in and around these seven cities and availability of infrastructure, SAI and Hockey India have strategically shortlisted these centres as the first seven High Performance Hockey Centres in the country, and will further be identifying other suitable centers around the country which can be converted into High Performance Centres in the future," a release said.

"The existing SAI Centres and Hockey Academies around India will serve as 'feeder' centres to these new High Performance Hockey Centres, which shall hold 72 men and 72 women hockey players at each location. These young hockey players will be selected from a specific age range of 14 to 24 years in order to ensure that they are developed and prepared in time for the 2024 and 2028 Olympics."

The initial seven High Performance Hockey Centres will be established at the following locations:

1. SAI Centre, Bengaluru, Karnataka (South Zone); 2. Major Dhyani Chand National Stadium, New Delhi (North Zone); 3. SAI Sundergarh, Odisha (East Zone); 4. SAI UDMCC, Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh (Central Zone).

Followed By: 5. SAI NS NEC, Takyel, Imphal, Manipur (North-East Zone); 6. Balewadi Sports Complex, Pune, Maharashtra (West Zone); 7. SAI Centre, Ranchi and Gomke Jaipal Singh Astroturf Hockey Stadium (East Zone II).

The SAI Centre Bengaluru will remain as the main site for the senior and junior national teams.

HAVE A STORY TO SHARE?

email us: news@summittimes.com

The Blame Game: how Lionel Messi's patience finally snapped at Barcelona

SID LOWE

MADRID, 06 FEB [THEGUARDIAN]: Quique Setién scoffed and then started laughing. "No way," he said. He had been talking for 12 minutes and he was only halfway through, still trying to put out the fire, when he was asked if he regretted becoming the Barcelona manager. "It's true that a month ago I was at home and I had no problems, but [these are] blessed problems. I have the same enthusiasm as ever, the same will, because my life hasn't been easy. You know things will happen here, you know the repercussions will be huge, but I'm blown by the north wind; I don't go down easily."

Nobody said it was easy, but nobody said it would be this hard. As for the problems, there are a lot. "It's not normal to take over at a team that's top," Setién said when he arrived on 13 January but nor is it normal for so many things to happen so fast. And the scale of the latest problem – his captain and best player publicly calling out the sporting director – is yet to be fully gauged. The club's president, Josep Maria Bartomeu, spoke to Eric Abidal and Lionel Messi on Wednesday, desperate to restore calm. After a long meeting, the decision was made to stick with Abidal.

The day before Setién turned up, it was confirmed Luis Suárez needed an operation and would be out for three or four months. They sold two strikers, Carles Pérez and Abel Ruiz, to raise funds and make space for another but, having briefed that it was all tied up, they failed to sign one. Carles Aleñá had gone too, and Jean-Clair Todibo, and Moussa Wagué, but still they had not raised enough. No matter, Setién said, Ousmane Dembélé would be the "signing": he was on his way back to full fitness and



would be "flying". Then the news broke that Dembélé had torn a tendon in his thigh and would miss the rest of the season. The squad are weaker, not stronger, than when Setién arrived; this is not what he was sold. On Wednesday morning only 16 first-team players were named to travel to face Athletic in Bilbao – and that is everyone they have got. Samuel Umtiti would have to make his own way there: he was wanted in court in the morning, accused of doing almost £170,000 worth of damage to a flat he was renting. At the weekend, Ivan Rakitic admitted he was unhappy at how Barcelona had tried to force him out. Arturo Vidal's agents had already begun legal proceedings over a disputed bonus.

And then, as if all that was not enough, on Tuesday night Abidal gave an interview to Sport. In it, he said he was optimistic Messi would sign a new deal and that Barça's star player was happy at Camp Nou. But what he said in response to that question was eclipsed by what he said in

response to others, which in turn changed the veracity of that statement.

Abidal had suggested some of Barcelona's players had been "unsatisfied" with the former manager Ernesto Valverde – responsible for this sacking, in other words. He also said they did not "work much". For Messi, long assumed to wield power, the heaviest of dressing-room heavyweights and invariably burdened with responsibility, the accusation was intolerable. It took less than 90 minutes from the first brief advance of the interview going live for Messi to react: it was public and unequivocal, the division and resentment exposed.

On Messi's Instagram account a red circle was drawn around the quote: "Lots of players were not satisfied and nor did they work much." Below it, Messi demanded Abidal take responsibility for his actions, accusing him of "dirtying" the players and challenging the sporting director to name names. Messi takes more responsibility

than he should; he was not going to take this one, too. Many thought he was right and even those who thought Abidal might be did not consider it a good idea to say so. The damage was done and it awoke the greatest fear: Messi leaving.

Messi has a clause in his contract that allows him to leave at the end of the season – and for free. As Abidal admitted, all he has to do is communicate that in May. The 32-year-old has said repeatedly he wants to finish his career at Barcelona but has also said he wants to compete and over the past five years he has felt increasingly like Barça do not. Nor does he have long left: at December's Ballon d'Or presentation for the first time he raised the question of retirement. There is a growing feeling his final years are being wasted and Messi is not immune to that feeling.

Messi has not won the European Cup for five years. He has watched Barcelona fail to build around him – whether he is part of that problem is a broader, more complex question – and seen a generation

has gone, desperate for a solution that never arrives. The only solution, it often felt, was Messi. He was a shield behind which many hid, a reason for complacency, conditioning everything. He wanted to share that burden, have a team constructed around him. Instead, he must have wondered what else he had to do, why it always seemed to come down to him. In the last few weeks even his best friend Suárez has been absent, with Messi cutting an even lonelier figure.

This summer Messi watched his other great friend Neymar and Barcelona end up in court, even while they spent the summer supposedly courting each other. And then said: "I don't know if the club did everything they could to sign him." Messi wanted Neymar but he didn't get that wish, however much they say he runs the place. The irony of course is that if the response is to sack Abidal, which it might be if only because the alternative is so awful, another short-term fix, it would reinforce the idea Messi is all powerful. Another fire to put out, sparked by Abidal's hint that player power was too great.

There is no player like Messi; his reaction, at least, illustrates he felt the finger pointing at him and was not prepared to let it go. He asked for names: maybe some were not happy, maybe some were not working but do not look at me. And do not hide behind me, either. He has enough responsibility already to take on other people's errors as his own, to be made a participant of the problems piling up since Setién arrived and well beyond that, failure delivered to his doorstep again. Above all, to be blamed for this mess.

The AS journalist Santi Giménez on Wednesday offered a simple response to the accusation Messi runs Barcelona: if only.

East Bengal keen to get back to winning ways



KALYANI (WEST BENGAL), FEB 6 (PTI):

East Bengal will look to arrest their slide when they square up against former champions Aizawl FC in an I-League encounter here on Friday. Having lost four of their last five fixtures, the Kolkata giants have slipped to seventh in the table, 12 points behind arch-rivals and league leaders Mohun Bagan.

There was no change in fortunes under new coach Mario Rivera, a former assistant of his predecessor Alejandro Menendez, as East Bengal were stunned by AIFF's developmental outfit Indian Arrows in their last outing.

The new pairing of Marcos Jimenez and Jaime Santos has not been able to replicate the performance of Jobby Justin and Enrique Esqueda, who scored 21 goals together last season.

While Santos was suspended for two games after a spat with ball boys, Jimenez was sent off in the last match and won't be available against Aizawl.

But the silver lining for East Bengal is that the 2016-17 champions, Aizawl are winless from six matches and are placed further below in the table at the 10th place. "There is no perfect opponents to play. The important thing is

that our team give good performance. If we perform well then we don't need to worry about the opponents," Rivera said in the pre-match conference.

The Spaniard said his side has the right attitude and could still win the league. "This team has a very good attitude. They want to play, they want to fight. They believe in themselves and are more motivated. If it is mathematically possible to win the I-League we will fight for it." However, Rivera backed his side labelling the loss against Indian Arrows an "accident".

"Indian Arrows was an accident. We played most of the parts well but we lost. But that was an accident. If we play that same match 10 times, we will win nine times and lose once.

"If we create chances then there is no problem. The real problem is if you can't create the chances. Sometimes players need only one chance to score and sometimes 10 chances. But this is normal in football. If you start scoring more things will change," he said.

The Stanley Rozario-coached Aizawl FC lost to Real Kashmir at home in their last outing as they too would be desperate to revive their campaign.

'Olympics will go ahead': Tokyo organisers slam virus rumours

TOKYO, FEB 6 (AFP): Tokyo 2020 Olympics organisers said Thursday the Games would "go ahead as planned", slamming misinformation over the new coronavirus for triggering panic.

Chief executive officer Toshiro Muto revealed that organisers have set up a task force to combat the fast-spreading disease that has killed over 560 people and infected at least 28,000 -- the vast majority in mainland China -- but promised that the Games would be not derailed.

"The Olympics will go ahead as planned," he told reporters after a Paralympic project review.

"It is important to remain objective and cool-headed. We don't want to alarm the public. The infection is still limited and there is no problem staging the Olympics based on the current situation."

International Paralympic Committee (IPC) spokesman Craig Spence complained that scaremongering had created an "info-demic" that could skew public perception in the run-up to the Olympics and Paralympics.

"Fear is spreading quicker than the virus," he said.

"It's important we quell that fear. Only 191 of the total cases are outside mainland China, so let's put things into perspective.

"If you compare those rates with the common flu, they are still relatively small numbers," added Spence.

"The World Health Organization (WHO) has not declared this a pandemic. We dealt with the Zika virus in Rio and in these matters we need to rely on the experts.

"We will follow the advice of



the World Health Organization. Every organising committee looks into countermeasures, and we have measures in place from previous Olympics and Paralympics here in Tokyo. It is standard practice, it's business as usual."

More than 20 countries have confirmed cases of the flu-like coronavirus.

- GLOBAL PANIC -

Japan has had no reported deaths so far, but 45 cases have been detected, including at least 20 people on a cruise ship carrying more than 3,700 passengers and crew quarantined off Yokohama.

The WHO has declared the outbreak a global health emergency.

Japan has warned citizens against non-essential travel to China and fast-tracked new rules including limits on entering the country as it tries to contain the spread of the virus.

Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe on Thursday pledged

that preparations for the Olympics would proceed as normal.

"The coronavirus is beginning to have an impact on tourism," he said. "But the government will continue to steadily prepare for the Games in close cooperation with the IOC (International Olympic Committee), the local organising committee and the Tokyo Metropolitan Government."

The Japanese government has chartered three flights to repatriate 565 Japanese nationals from Wuhan, the central Chinese city hardest hit by the virus.

Tokyo governor Yuriko Koike promised at the weekend to implement "thorough measures" to protect people from the virus.

The health scare has led to the cancellation of Olympic qualifying events in China such as boxing and badminton.

The Tokyo Olympics begin on July 24 with the Paralympics starting on August 25.

Saudi Arabia using secret court to silence dissent, Amnesty finds

BETHAN MCKERNAN KUWAIT, 06 FEB [THE GUARDIAN]: Saudi Arabia is using a secretive special court set up for terrorism-related cases to systematically prosecute human rights activists and other dissenting voices who defy the country's absolute monarchy, a new report has found.

The human rights watchdog Amnesty International spent five years investigating 95 cases heard at the Specialised Criminal court (SCC) in Riyadh, concluding in a report published on Thursday that the court is routinely used as a weapon to silence criticism despite the kingdom's recent attempts to cultivate a reformist image.

Since 2011, overly broad counter-terror and anti-cybercrime laws have been used by the SCC in unfair trials to hand down prison sentences of up to 30 years and in some cases the death penalty to human rights defenders, writers, economists, journalists, religious clerics, reformists and political activists, particularly from the country's Shia minority, Amnesty said.

"Every stage of the SCC's judicial process is tainted with human rights abuses, from the denial of access to a lawyer, to incommunicado detention, to convictions based solely on so-called confessions extracted through torture," said Heba Morayef, Amnesty's Middle East and North Africa regional director.

Saudi Arabia has embarked on a series of wide-reaching social reforms since Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman was appointed heir to the throne in 2017, allowing women to drive, curbing the powers of the country's notorious morality police and granting women the freedom to travel without the permission of a male guardian.

The reforms, however, have been accompanied by a crackdown on dissent, including the detention of high-profile activists such as Loujain al-Hathloul, who campaigned for women's right to drive. Saudi Arabia's human rights record has also faced renewed international scrutiny since the murder of the dissident journalist Jamal Khashoggi in the kingdom's Istanbul consulate in 2018.

The SCC was established in 2008 to try individuals accused of crimes related to membership and support of al-Qaida. However, citing court documents, government statements and national legislation, as well as interviews with activists, lawyers and individuals close to the cases documented, Amnesty alleges that the court has morphed into a "mockery of justice" that targets freedom of speech and peaceful political activity.

One of the most disturbing findings shows that the SCC is heavily reliant on confessions extracted under torture conditions. At least 20 people have been sentenced to death, 17 of whom have been executed.

I have a bigger camera now: Rima Das on life after two internationally acclaimed films

RADHIKA SHARMA

NEW DELHI, FEB 6 (PTI): With two critically-lauded and internationally celebrated films, life has changed but not much for National Film Award winning-director Rima Das who says she will never compromise with her "creative vision" to woo producers.

A self-taught director, Das was a one-woman army when she shot the coming-of-age "Village Rockstars" in her village in Assam's Chhaygaon.

"When I did 'Village Rockstars', I had nothing. Same thing happened with 'Bulbul Can Sing'. I don't feel getting a producer is a struggle because I come from nothing. Now other producers are approaching me. But I have my own equipment, honestly I don't feel dependent on someone else," the filmmaker told PTI in a telephonic interview.

Das is now ready to fly to Berlinale, just like her last directorial "Bulbul Can Sing". The film had its European premiere at the 69th Berlin International Film Festival last year.

But she will be in Berlin in a different avatar - as one of the three jury members of the 14plus International Jury. The other two are, Iranian filmmaker Abbas Amini and South African director Jenna Bass.

14Plus is a sub category of the Generation section at the festival and focused on creating stories for those aged 14 and above. From Chhaygaon to Mumbai to now Germany, the director said the festival, which runs from February 20 to March 1, is making her feel at home.

"I had a great experience at Berlinale last time and I'm really glad that they are calling me this time as



well. But I didn't expect to be invited there as a jury member and that too so soon," she said.

Das' film "Village Rockstars" premiered at the 2017 Toronto International Film Festival (TIFF) and earned four National Film Awards in 2018, including best film and best editing for the director. The Assamese language feature was India's official entry to last year's Academy Awards in the best international film category. Recounting her time in Berlin last year, the director-writer said she was both "nervous" and "mesmerised".

"After 'Village Rockstars', when 'Bulbul' went to TIFF, I knew how to navigate through the festival circuit there. But Berlinale was very new and I knew it has a very experienced audience. Even the kids there are

very well-versed and come up to you with a lot of questions.

"I remember sitting there with other filmmakers and wondering if my film could get a prize. And now they are calling for me for the jury, it's unbelievable. I feel like I'm still learning. But this is an acknowledgement that they love me, respect my work, and understand it. It gives me a lot of confidence."

"Bulbul..." too has had an interesting flight -- the film won best Assamese film at last year's National Film Awards and best indie honour at 2019 Indian Film Festival of Melbourne.

"When 'Bulbul' won in Melbourne, they gave me a (professional) Blackmagic camera. Earlier, I had a small camera to shoot with, I now have a bigger one," she added. But

Das will never trade autonomy of her stories for better funds, she asserted. "If producers who approach me allow me to work my way, it's fine. Otherwise it's pointless. I can always go back to producing my own films. Whether I have an audience of a thousand or a lakh.

"Even if a thousand people like my film, it works for me. As I evolve, both as a woman and an artiste, I'll see how it goes. I'd also like to take new challenges. But my creative satisfaction matters the most." The director initially came to Mumbai to pursue acting as a career but things did not go according to plan.

Language, at first, was a barrier which she eventually overcame so much so that she might take up her first Hindi feature one day. "Mumbai has become my second home. I had

to learn Hindi and Urdu when I came here long ago with a dream to become an actor. Earlier, I had doubts about speaking a different language, but after becoming a director, I don't have that phobia anymore. I can speak freely, I've picked up some Marathi too," she said.

"Now that I know the language, there's a sense of belonging with this city. I understand the city much better today. Mumbai has given me a lot and I have given her a lot. I'd want to do something more here," she added.

Streaming services are a boon for independent filmmakers like Das, the sound of whose films is sometimes lost in the clamour of big-ticket Bollywood mainstream.

Both "Village Rockstars" and "Bulbul..." recently started streaming on Netflix and medium is not a concern for the director.

"Village Rockstars" did well but 'Bulbul' couldn't as there was a big Bollywood release at the time. We couldn't manage the number of screens and the film suffered a lot. The more people get to know about the film, the better. Medium doesn't matter, what matters more is for the film to reach to the masses. I make movies for the cinema halls but when it's not possible, something is any day better than nothing."

Das is currently working on a script with actor Tillotama Shome attached to star.

"We start soon. I was working on the story for four-five years. I'm talking to producers. But I feel I'm not getting enough time to write more. This year my focus is on writing and making films," she added.

Kirk Douglas, one of the last stars of Hollywood's Golden Age, dies at 103

LOS ANGELES, FEB 6 (PTI): Veteran actor and Hollywood's Golden Era icon Kirk Douglas, known to fans world over for his films such as "Spartacus", "20,000 Leagues Under the Sea", "The Bad and the Beautiful" and "Champion", has passed away at the age of 103, his family has announced. The actor died of natural causes on Wednesday. His son, actor Micheal Douglas shared the news of his father's death on social media.

"It is with tremendous sadness that my brothers and I announce that Kirk Douglas left us today at the age of 103. To the world he was a legend, an actor from the golden age of movies who lived well into his golden years, a humanitarian whose commitment to justice and the causes he believed in set a standard for all of us to aspire to.

"But to me and my brothers Joel and Peter he was simply Dad, to Catherine, a wonderful father-in-law, to his grandchildren and great grandchild their loving grandfather, and to his wife Anne, a wonderful husband," he wrote alongside pictures of Kirk Douglas through the ages.

Michael Douglas said his father leaves a rich cinema legacy behind but he will also be remembered for his contribution to public service.

"Kirk's life was well lived, and he leaves a legacy in film that will endure for generations to come, and a history as a renowned philanthropist who worked to aid the public and bring peace to the planet.

"Let me end with the words I told him on his last birthday and which will always remain true. Dad - I love you so much and I am so proud to be your son," he wrote. His daughter-in-law, actor Catherine Zeta-Jones also shared a loving photo with Kirk Douglas.

"To my darling Kirk, I shall love you for the rest of my life. I miss you already. Sleep tight..." she wrote.

Filmmaker Steven Spielberg, who presented Kirk Douglas with an honorary Oscar at the 1996 Academy Awards, remembered the actor who retained his movie star charisma right till the end.

Born as Issur Danielovitch

Demsky in Amsterdam, Kirk Douglas was one of the seven children of his parents -- Jewish immigrants from Russia. When he came of age, he went to work to support his family.

According to The Hollywood Reporter, Kirk Douglas put himself through New York's St Lawrence University by working as a janitor. After receiving his bachelor of arts degree, he moved to Manhattan where he received a special scholarship for the American Academy of Dramatic Arts.

He made his Broadway debut as a singing messenger boy in "Spring Again", starring Grace George and C Aubrey Smith, soon after graduating in 1941.

Next year, he legally changed his name to Kirk Douglas before enlisting in the US Navy during World War II. He attended the Midshipman School at Notre Dame, and was commissioned an ensign. He served on anti-submarine patrol in the Pacific as a communications officer until 1944, when he was honourably discharged as a lieutenant.

Post-war, he returned to civilian life and Broadway, replacing Richard Widmark as the juvenile lead in "Kiss and Tell" and appeared in "Trio and Star in the Window". His performance in "The Wind Is Ninety" brought him to Hollywood's attention.

What followed was his Hollywood debut in 1946 with the film "The Strange Love of Martha Ivers" with Barbara Stanwyck, which led to leading man roles in the 1950s-60s.

He starred as a ruthless boxer in "Champion" (1949), a hated, ambitious movie producer in "The Bad and the Beautiful" (1952) and iconic painter Vincent van Gogh in "Lust for Life" (1956).

He also launched his banner, Bryna Productions, in 1955. He is billed as the first actor to take control of his career through a production house in the post-War era, challenging the stronghold of Hollywood studios.

Kirk Douglas not only continued to play opinionated men in "Ace in the Hole", "Detective Story" but also tried his hands at sympathetic roles in memorable films

such as "Out of the Past" (1947), "Gunfight at the OK Corral" (1957), "Paths of Glory" (1957) and "The List of Adrian Messenger" (1963).

But his most memorable role is off the screen. He was the first major star to defy the McCarthy Era establishment by producing and starring as a slave in "Spartacus", written by blacklisted Hollywood screenwriter Dalton Trumbo. The movie, in a way, is considered a reflection of who he was as a person.

He also banked on a then young Stanley Kubrick with "Spartacus". The film became Universal's biggest money-spinner, an achievement that stood for a decade. Kirk Douglas earlier worked with Kubrick in "Paths of Glory".

For his banner, Kirk Douglas starred in titles such as "The Indian Fighter" (1955), "The Vikings" (1958), "Lonely Are the Brave" (1962), "Seven Days in May" (1964) and "The Brotherhood" (1968).

A decorated artiste, the actor won many honours including the highest award that can be given to a US civilian, the Presidential Medal of Freedom. He received the Cecil B DeMille Award at the 1968 Golden Globes.

Nominated three times for the best actor Oscar, Kirk Douglas received the Honorary Award for 50 years as a creative and moral force in the film community in 1996.

Despite suffering a stroke in 1996, Douglas continued to be active. He made his final screen appearance in 2004 playing an ailing film director in the low budget drama "Illusion".

In 2009, he starred in an autobiographical one-man show, "Before I Forget", at the Center Theatre Group's Kirk Douglas Theatre in Culver City.

An author of 11 books, Kirk Douglas wrote his first, an autobiography "The Ragman's Son" in 1988 and his last "Kirk and Anne: Letters of Love, Laughter, and a Lifetime in Hollywood", was published in 2017.

Kirk Douglas is survived by sons Michael and Joel from his first marriage with actor Diane Dill, and Peter and Eric from philanthropist Anne Buydens.

China hits out at Taiwan VP's visit to White House

BEIJING, FEB 6 (AFP): Chi-

na said Thursday it "firmly opposes" a meeting at the White House between US security officials and a senior Taiwanese politician, warning it could damage US-China relations. Vice President-elect William Lai made the visit this week during a personal trip to the US, reported Taiwanese media outlet CNA. On Monday, Lai had a 70-minute meeting with US National Security Council officials, according to CNA, without offering details on what was discussed.

The White House meeting has angered Beijing, which sees self-ruled Taiwan as part of its territory awaiting reunification, by force if necessary. A Chinese foreign ministry spokeswoman said Thursday that China "firmly opposes" any official exchange between the US and Taiwan.

Washington "shall



not arrange US leaders, government officials and Congress members to have any form of contact with Lai," said Hua Chunying at a regular press briefing.

She called for the US to "stop sending wrong signals to Taiwan independence forces to avoid causing serious harm to China-US relations." The trip comes weeks after Lai was elected to office, along with Beijing-sceptic President Tsai Ing-wen who won a landslide second term.

Tsai does not acknowledge Beijing's view

that Taiwan is part of "one China". Taiwan and the United States do not have formal diplomatic ties, but Washington is Taipei's main weapons supplier. Taiwan's foreign ministry declined to comment, saying the visit was a "private trip".

Lai was also expected to attend a high-profile National Prayer Breakfast in Washington on Thursday, Taiwan's United Daily News reported. The event is traditionally attended by US presidents and President Donald Trump attended last year.

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SKIMS HAS ARRIVED! Superstar couple Kim Kardashian & Kanye West celebrate the launch of Kim's shapewear line at Nordstrom NYC.

A contrarian view is a relevant part of society: Mahesh Bhatt

MUMBAI, FEB 6 (PTI): Filmmaker Mahesh Bhatt on Wednesday said controversy is not always a bad word and a contrarian view point is relevant to society.

Bhatt, is the showrunner of "Dil Jaise Dhadke... Dhadakane Do", which revolves around a godman (Rahul Azam) and two children whose souls have been damned by destiny.

Directed by Guroudev Bhal-la, the show stars child actors Jared Albert Savaille and Hirva Trivedi, besides Shruti Seth and Rahul Azam.

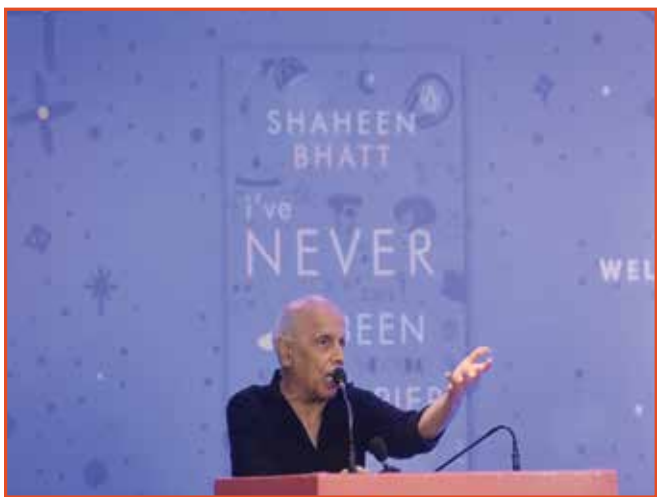
When asked if he is afraid of any controversy because of the godman angle, the filmmaker said he is open to different opinions.

"There is nothing significant that can be made without any controversy. Whenever you come up with a new point, there will be people who will say things from opposite perspective. Since when controversy became a bad word?

"A contrarian view is a relevant part of society. Like, how a house is built on two pillars and both of them are opposite. It is not necessary that the opposite view is a lie, it can be an equally profound view. People will get to know the perspective of our story when they watch it," Bhatt said during an interaction

with the media here. Bhatt believes "Dil Jaise Dhadke... Dhadakane Do" will be a landmark show for television. The show will air on Star Plus from February 10.

"I was mesmerised to see the show, I have seen three episodes and I was moved, I had tears in my eyes. The show has been made



with utmost honesty and it respects the audience. I believe the show will set the screen on fire."

Bhatt is making his comeback to film direction after 20 years with "Sadak 2".

The film will see original actors Pooja Bhatt and Sanjay Dutt in the lead, besides Alia Bhatt and Aditya Roy Kapur, who are the new entrants to the sequel.

There's a class system in film industry: Hina Khan

SHUBHA DUBEY

NEW DELHI, FEB 5 (PTI): There is a class system in the film industry which makes it hard for television actors to get a breakthrough, says TV star Hina Khan.

The "Yeh Rishta Kya Kehlata Hai" star, who is making her Bollywood debut with Vikram Bhatt's psychological thriller "Hacked", believes TV actors are as good as their cinema counterparts but are pigeonholed.

"There is a class system in the film industry. Be it anything -- the big designers or the productions banners -- I have been judged so many times because of my TV background. People from the industry don't even give us opportunity. We are equally talented," Khan told PTI in an interview.

The 32-year-old actor claimed she faced rejection in the Hindi film industry because of her TV roots.

"When it comes to Bollywood and all the 'biggies' out there, one really needs to prove themselves at another level. "I don't know if one film can make a difference because it is tough to get noticed. I have faced a lot because of the tag of a TV actor. People told me things like, 'You are a television actor, you won't be able to pull off the character'," she said.

Asserting that getting into films for TV actors is not a cakewalk, Khan said she is grateful to Bhatt for the opportunity.

"There is a reason Mr Bhatt trusted me. He could have invested his money in somebody from Bollywood or a newcomer, but he decided to take me in the film because I could break that mould of an innocent girl. It, however, doesn't happen often with TV actors," she said.

The actor said though she owes her success and popularity to "Yeh Rishta Kya Kehlata Hai", she has consciously "tried" to break the character of Akshara, the doe-eyed daughter-in-law in the soap opera.

After playing Akshara, Khan later went on star in "Kasautii Zindagii Kay" reboot in which she took on the grey

ing some pivotal character role. At least people will get to know what I can do," she added.

The actor said her film "Hacked" does not only revolve around cyber crime like hacking, but also attempts to shine a light on crimes against women.

"As a woman, this story was important for me. Hacking and stalking



character of Komolika, originally played by Urvashi Dholakia.

"I'm very proud of that show ('Ye Rishta...') because it has given me what I'm today. With other shows I have tried to break the stereotype, convince people and tell them that I'm not just an innocent girl, I can also play a grey character. I want to prove that I'm a versatile actor," she said.

"I have worked a lot to come out of that mould and unlearn a lot of things to start my career in movies, but there is a dearth of opportunities. Forget about playing a lead role, I'm even up for do-

can happen with anyone, but women are subjected to it more. Men don't get stalked as much as women do. Also women don't open up about it.

"Initially, I was sceptical to take up a subject that has never been touched before. Stalking is not even taken seriously as a crime. People casually talk about stalking. You speak to any woman who has dealt with it, her life is miserable. With this film, if I'm able to give some strength to women out there, I will be more than happy," Khan said.

"Hacked" is slated to be released on Friday.

Find it exhausting to be a stereotypical hero: Emraan Hashmi

MUMBAI, FEB 6 (PTI): Bollywood star Emraan Hashmi says he can never conform to set notions of how a Bollywood hero should be though he tries to strike a balance for his viewers. The actor said his audience is divided in two segments, one that want him to experiment more and the others who love him in his comfort zone.

Hashmi, who has featured popular films like the "Murder" and "Jannat" franchise, "Once Upon a Time in Mumbai" and later appeared in edgy movies such as "Shanghai", and "Ghan-chakkar", said it is a struggle to do the balancing act.

"It is a struggle to balance the audience. They always want to see you in a particular thing and then when you step out of that, a lot of people get upset about it. This is very true to our audience, not international audience," Emraan told PTI.

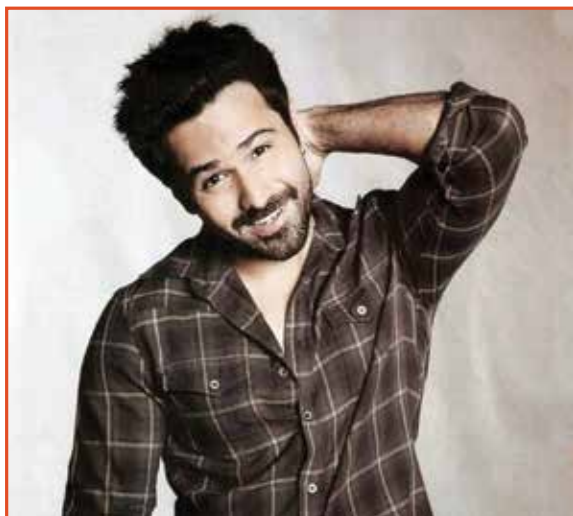
The actor said there are some "set notions" of what a leading man should or shouldn't do in India. "In the end of 'Ghan-chakkar' when I am getting beaten up, the audience was angry, a lot of distributors said why are you doing this? I was being honest to the character.

"But this is how Indian films are. They want to see the hero do certain, stereotypical things. Be that hero who does that time and again, I find that exhausting. That's why, I took a departure," he added.

Hashmi said looking back at his career, he can see that he did a lot of films that he

would not watch as a viewer. "My palette of films that I watched weren't remotely close to the ones I did. So identification with some films was difficult, but I took it upon myself that I have to be truthful to the material."

The 40-year-old actor said it was also hard to come out of his image. "Initially



in your career, you are not in a place to choose films. The films choose you. If they are successful, it has to be done to death. That's how the trade functions, they see a safety net, a cash flow so they juice it out.

"Sometimes you play to that and then after a certain amount of success, you want to get out of that trap. But they don't want you to get out of the trap, they constantly want you to bring in the moolah with that," he said.

The actor will be next seen in Sanjay Gupta's "Mumbai Saga" and "Chehre", which also co-stars Amitabh Bachchan.

Another Marilyn Monroe series in works

LOS ANGELES, FEB 6 (PTI): The show business' love affair with one of its favourite muses, Hollywood icon Marilyn Monroe, refuses to die as a new project on the legend is in the works. According to The Hollywood Reporter, "Yellowstone" producer 101 Studios and UK production company Seven Seas Films are collaborating to develop a TV series based on the final months of Monroe's life. The show, based on Keith Badman's nonfiction book "The Final Years of Marilyn Monroe", is the first filmed project about the late star's life to be endorsed by Authentic Brands Group, the owner of the Monroe estate.

101 Studios CEO David Glasser said though many people have explored the life of the "Some Like It Hot" star, the upcoming series will be a class apart. "Beloved movie legend Marilyn Monroe has had many memoirs created about her life, but none quite like this. Keith Badman has uncovered gems of never before released details, centered around the last few months of her sensationalized life and the accusations made. The series pays homage to the bright star whose life was extinguished too early," Glasser said.

Seven Seas Films co-founder Dan Sefton, who will write and executive produce the project with producing partner Simon Lupton, said the team can't wait to Monroe to life.

ARIES: Some people marry their childhood sweethearts and live happily ever after. Others serendipitously meet their soulmates in the evening of their lives after two failed marriages and several heartbreaks. Then there are those who have the privilege of meeting the one, but they take years and years to find their way into each other's arms.

Tip: Trust what's happening behind the scenes for you.

TAURUS: Wise words by Rupi Kaur to give your perspective on what you are experiencing right now: "It was when I stopped searching for home within others and lifted the foundations of home within myself, that I found there were no roots more intimate than those between mind and body that have decided to be whole." Your thoughts exactly.

Tip: You are finding a sense of home within yourself.

GEMINI: How we perceive ourselves de-

fines our relationships with not just the self, but also the world. Where are you vibrating at, Gemini? Do you believe you are being of light who is worthy of being loved? Give yourself the love and care you deserve, wild one. Address the old wounds that are keeping you from making space for the one.

Tip: Claim your independence.

CANCER: There is more than enough to go around, Cancer. So where does the feeling of lack arise from? Could our own limited beliefs be creating a sense of mistrust? Awareness is the first step to breaking old patterns and making space for the good stuff to enter. Continue to address the limiting beliefs.

Tip: You are connected to the cosmic flow of Abundance.

LEO: Those who resort to aggression in order to make a point are usually the weakest. Understand the difference between assertiveness and aggression.

Course correct if you have chosen the latter. What Spirit wants you to know: there is a way to stand up for your beliefs without going to war.

Tip: Choose assertiveness over aggression.

VIRGO: Two's a party, three's a crowd. Now that we have this out of the way, let's talk about you, Virgo. What are you going to do with this precious life of yours? Why do you keep selling yourself short or settling for less-than-perfect love? You've been seeing the signs for a while now.

Tip: It's better to fly solo than to hold onto a relationship causing you harm.

LIBRA: Libra, you're a beautiful amalgam of the mother and the crone, offering a warm cup of cocoa and sage advice to your soul circle. While giving unconditionally is truly a gift, today, you're being asked to turn your energy inwards. While, you're at it, refresh your bucket list and do at least one thing that brings you

joy and awakens that spirit of playfulness.

Tip: Live a little.

SCORPIO: The trouble is, we save our kindness and compassion for the world, while being unkind to ourselves in private. Pay attention to that inner dialogue, Scorpio. The words you are choosing in order to communicate with yourself. Replace judgements with openness.

Tip: Let your self-talk be a source of empowerment.

SAGITTARIUS: Today, you're in the mood to up your style game as you find a sustainable answer to the eternal dilemma of 'I have nothing to wear'. First things first, Marie Kondo your wardrobe. Donate the things that no longer fit right or spark joy. You always have the option to lend it to a friend who resonates with that particular style.

Tip: Reinvent your style.

CAPRICORN: Your heart isn't breaking, Capricorn. It's simply coming together.

Allow the old wounds to resurface. Consciously work through emotional entanglements in order to find your freedom. You will find that your relationships will evolve in the process.

Tip: Embrace the in-between.

AQUARIUS: What if your experiences have the power to add value to the life of another? Don't shy away from holding space for a circle or sharing your narrative with those who matter. There's a reason storytelling was considered as a form of medicine in ancient cultures.

Tip: Storytelling is a form of medicine, Aquarius.

PISCES: Cosmic truth: everybody experiences emotional pain at some point. Should that keep you from radiating like the sun, or believing that you deserve to be loved in the right way? Anything but. You're at a point in your journey where you are integrating the past lessons and seeing your experiences through the eyes of wisdom.

Tip: A period of deep healing is on the cards.