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SummitTIMES

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HC strikes down “discriminatory” application of COI rules

Govt notifications which limited scope and status of COIs issued to descendants of non-local Govt servants quashed

SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 26 FEB:

The High Court of Sikkim has quashed a series of government notifications which had limited the scope of Certificates of Identification issued to children of non-Sikkimese government servants [who were in service on or before 31 Dec, 1969].

Deciding on the case on 20 Feb, Justice Meenakshi Madan Rai struck down the “discriminatory” interpretation of the rules as being “irrational” and violative of Article 14 of the Constitution of India which ensures equality before law to all citizens

This had been a vexed issue for a while, especially since the rules were in-

terpreted and applied in a manner which denied parity to such COI holders, limited the benefits for which such COIs could be used and went as far as to even refuse issuance of Certificates of Identification to the grandchildren of such government servants.

Children of those non-locals who were in government service on or before 31 Dec, 1969 used to be issued Certificates of Identification which accorded them recognition as locals in all aspects in Sikkim.

This “status” was however degraded through a series of government notifications, the first one which was issued as an executive order in the year 1995 which spelled out that “Certificate [of Identification] obtained by such persons shall be for the purpose of employment only.”

Shortly after, the Notification of 1996 imposed further restrictions on such COIs by reiterating that the certificates will be for the purpose of employment only “and no other purpose.”

The practice till then was to treat

these certificates as counting the holders among locals and allowed them all rights and privileges such as buying and selling land, owning property or securing trade licenses.

A decade later, the District Collectors, who issue COIs, perhaps emboldened by the manner in which the rules and the language was being interpreted and applied, decided that the third generation of such COI-holders were not entitled to receiving Certificates of Identification.

The rule, when it was first framed, stated that those who were government servants in or before 1969 and their children were entitled to receive COIs. At that time, this group of people had not yet reached the third generation, but by the year 2006, the third generation had also come of age, grown up with only Sikkim as their home and were seeking COIs for themselves to get recognized as locals.

It is then that they realized that of all the categories of COI-holders, only they had been singled out to be refused recognition accorded to their parents and grandparents.

The government memorandums and

notifications were not based on any statutory, legislative enactments or codified laws, but given that they were policy decisions of the government, became laws and rules in practice.

In the year 2016, the grandchildren and children of such government servants moved the High Court seeking that the discriminatory notifications and practices listed above be quashed.

The State respondents disputed allegations of arbitrariness in their interpretations and argued that the certificates issued to children of such government servants was a one-time concession extended to them and was never envisaged as extending to perpetuity.

The 50-page judgment delves deep into arguments raised by both sides and makes several observations on the constitutionality and rationality of the government decisions on the matter at hand and decides that classifying COIs issued to descendants of non-local government servants [who were in service on or before 1969] as being exclusively for em-

ployment and no other purpose was “irrational and violative of Article 14 of the Constitution of India and deserve to be and are hereby quashed.”

The Home Department letter which refused a COI to a third generation member of the said group on the argument that he was not entitled to it has also been quashed by Justice Rai and the State Government prohibited from giving effect to the arguments of this letter in any other instance as well.

The judgment goes on to clearly spell out that “descendants of persons who have obtained COI on the basis of their father being Government servants in the Government of Sikkim prior to 31.12.1969... are entitled to obtain COI.”

“This also includes the third generation and their subsequent generations,” the order reiterates.

Significantly, the judgment also directs that COI obtained by such persons “shall have the same utility and benefits” as the other four categories of COI-holders in Sikkim “sans discrimination on any count.”

Class 12 CBSE exam tomorrow postponed in northeast Delhi

NEW DELHI, FEB 26 (PTI):

The CBSE Class 12 English exam on Thursday has been postponed in the northeast and parts of east Delhi in view of the turbulent situation due to violence, according to officials.

“Considering request of Delhi government and to avoid inconvenience to students, staff and parents, the board has decided to postpone the exam for Class 12 in northeast part of Delhi,” Central Board of Secondary Education Secretary Anurag Tripathi said.

The exam has been postponed at 73 centres in northeast Delhi and seven centres in the eastern part.

“However, the exam in rest parts of Delhi shall be conducted as per scheduled. The next date of exam for affected students will be notified shortly,” the official said.

Taking note of the “worsening situation” in violence-hit areas, the Delhi High Court said it was doubtful that board exams could be held there and directed the CBSE to come up with a plan to re-schedule them or change the affected centres.

For students who live in northeast Delhi, but have their exam centres in other parts, the CBSE officials have asked the students to approach their school principals.

“The board is in regular touch with school principals and, in a case such as this, the principals can send details of students. Board will assess and take appropriate action,” an official said.

The CBSE had also postponed Class 10 exam in northeast Delhi on Wednesday. At least 24 people were killed and over 200 injured in communal violence over the amended citizenship law in northeast Delhi over the past three days.



WHITE, WHITE WEST:

Hilley and Barsey areas on the Singalila range in West Sikkim are blanketed in white thanks to heavy snowfall received on Tuesday. Heavy snow has also blocked the Okhrey-Hilley road. [from SAROJ GURUNG]

Amar Subba’s marathoners complete Pathivara Marathon in Taplejung

SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 26 FEB:

The team of five students led by Amar ‘Marathon Man’ Subba through his academy “AMAS” completed the “Pathivara Marathon 52KM” held in Taplejung, Nepal, on 25 Feb, 2020.

Mr Subba has conveyed his gratitude and satisfaction towards his students for performing well in the competition and has also expressed gratitude towards the Press Club of Sikkim and the Taplejung Celebration Committee.

The marathoners from AMAS were given tokens of appreciation by the organizing committee. Jatin Chettri of the AMAS squad completed the marathon in 7hrs.



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Lawyers’ body expresses concern over law and order situation in Delhi

NEW DELHI, FEB 26 (PTI):

The Supreme Court Bar Association (SCBA) Wednesday expressed concern over the law and order situation in the national capital due to communal violence in north-east Delhi over the amended citizenship law.

The lawyers’ body passed a resolution to take appropriate steps before the court to bring immediate normalcy in Delhi and hold the authorities concerned responsible and accountable for their failure. The Association

took note of the ongoing violence in which 22 people have died and around 200 injured, and resolved to take appropriate proceedings before the court for suitable orders.

“The Supreme Court Bar Association expresses concern about the law and order situation prevailing in Delhi and also about the wellbeing of citizens, their lives and their properties,” it said in a statement.

“SCBA has taken note of reports of large scale violence resulting in

avoidable deaths of innocent citizens and serious destruction/damage of properties. The SCBA also takes note of the reports in the media about the failure of the law and order machinery in this regard,” it added.

The association resolves that it should take appropriate proceedings in this regard before the court to get suitable orders to bring immediate normalcy in the state and to hold authorities responsible for failure and accountable, SCBA said.

Govt decides to lift ban on onion exports

NEW DELHI, FEB 26 (PTI):

The government on Wednesday decided to lift the nearly six-month-old ban on export of onions in a bid to protect the interests of farmers as prices are likely to fall sharply due to bumper rabi crop.

Sources said the decision was taken at a meeting of a Group of Ministers (GoM) headed by Home Minister Amit Shah.

“Since the price of onion has stabilised and there is bumper onion crop, government has decided to lift ban on export of onions. Expected monthly harvest in March is over 40 lakh MT compared to 28.4 lakh MT last year,” Food Minister Ram Vilas Paswan said

in a tweet on Wednesday. The lifting of ban would be effective once the Directorate General of Foreign Trade (DGFT) issues a notification in this regard.

The GoM on Wednesday also deliberated on whether to reduce or scrap the Minimum Export Price (MEP) on onion to facilitate outbound shipments, the sources said.

The MEP is the rate below which no exports are allowed.

Paswan, Agriculture Minister Narendra Singh Tomar, Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal and Cabinet Secretary Rajiv Gauba were present at the meeting.

In September 2019, the government banned onion exports and also

imposed a MEP of USD 850 per tonne. The move came after prices had started skyrocketing due to supply-demand mismatch.

There was shortage of onion as kharif crop was adversely affected due to excess rains and floods in key producing states, including Maharashtra.

Currently, the arrival of rabi (winter) crop of onion has begun in small quantities and would increase from mid-March onwards.

In March alone, onion arrivals are expected to be as as high as 40.68 lakh tonne (Metric Tonne) when compared with 28.44 lakh tonne in the year-ago period, as per the sources.

turn to pg02



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Secretary in-charge visits monasteries

GANGTOK, 26 FEB [IPR]: On the invitation received from different monasteries of Sikkim and two from Darjeeling, Secretary in-charge, ST Tamang, along with Gendrung and Research Officer made a three-day official visit to the monasteries.

He was invited as a guest to witness the annual prayers at the Monasteries.

The first visit, on 21 Feb, was to Dotsuk Bhutia Basti and Gying Lebong, Darjeeling, the Secretary in-charge interacted with the managing committee and observed



renovation of the infrastructure required to be undertaken.

The Dotsuk Gumpa

committee placed a proposal for the construction of a Chorten.

The committee also

raised the issue of land encroachment with the department. After listening to the grievances,

the Secretary in-charge assured that the Department will look into the matter and extend all

possible support.

On the second day, 22 Feb, was at Rumtek Dharma Chakra Centre, East Sikkim, where the secretary in-charge was invited to witness the mask dance. He received blessings from Gyaltsab Rinpoche.

The tour concluded with a visit to Deorali Chorten on 24 Feb coinciding with Losar.

Through his entire visit to different monasteries, the Secretary in-charge offered Mendala on behalf of the Department and received positive feedback from the monasteries.

Next hearing in Behmai massacre case scheduled on Mar 18

KANPUR, (UP) FEB 26 (PTI): A special court here on Wednesday fixed March 18 as the next date for hearing in the Behmai massacre case, in which 20 people were killed allegedly by bandit Phoolan Devi's gang in 1981.

Police apprised the special court (UP dacoity-affected area) that the original case diary (CD) of the Behmai massacre has not been traced.

Expressing disappointment, the court listed the case on March 18 for hearing arguments over the missing CD, district government counsel (criminal) Raju Porwal said.

The date for pronouncing the verdict on the role of the four surviving accused in the Behmai massacre could not be fixed in absence of the original CD, Porwal added.

The court also directed the UP additional chief secretary (Home) and the DGP to place the original CD before it at the earliest, he said, adding that the court has made

it clear that it will hear the arguments over the missing CD first before listing the case for pronouncing judgement.

Elaborating further, Porwal said the district police chief, Anurag Vats, has stated in his reply to the court that the original CD could not be traced despite all efforts.

The police claimed that an inquiry was underway, Porwal added.

Earlier, special judge Sudhir Kumar had pulled up a court official after noticing the absence of the original CD while delivering the judgement in the case on January 18.

The court had postponed the case from January 24 to January 30 and then to February 12 as the CD could not be traced.

The court is expected to pronounce its verdict on the role of the four surviving accused Posha, Bhikha, Vishwanath and Shyambabu.

Posha is still in prison, while Bhikha, Vishwanath and Shyambabu are out on bail.

Union Cabinet okays Surrogacy (Regulation) Bill

NEW DELHI, FEB 26 (PTI): The Union Cabinet on Wednesday approved the Surrogacy (Regulation) Bill after incorporating recommendations of a Rajya Sabha Select Committee.

"Surrogacy Regulation Bill incorporating recommendations of RS Select Committee has been approved by the Cabinet," Union Minister Prakash Javadekar said at a press conference.

A parliamentary panel had recommended that not only close

relatives but any woman who is "willing" should be allowed to act as a surrogate.

The 15 major changes suggested by the 23-member select committee of Rajya Sabha to the Surrogacy (Regulation) Bill, 2019, also included deleting the definition of "infertility" as the inability to conceive after five years of unprotected intercourse on the ground that it was too long a period for a couple to wait for a child.

Rajinikanth condemns Centre over Delhi violence

CHENNAI, FEB 26 (PTI): Superstar Rajinikanth on Wednesday lashed out at the central government over the violence in Delhi that left 22 people dead, saying the riots should have been dealt with an iron fist.

The actor also opined that protests should not turn violent and recalled his earlier statement that he will stand

by Muslims if they were affected by the amended citizenship law.

"Definitely it is Central government's intelligence failure. I strongly condemn the Central government," he told reporters here.

The actor also rued that some sections of media and political observers were linking him with the BJP.

Trump, Melania relish Bukhara's naan, sikandari raan



NEW DELHI, FEB 25 (PTI): US President Donald Trump and First Lady Melania enjoyed the "Trump platter" specially laid out for them at the famed Bukhara restaurant of ITC Maurya, where the couple stayed during their visit to Delhi. They relished the table-sized 'naan' and 'sikandari raan', a dish of roasted mutton leg for which the over four-decade-old restaurant is known for, according to the sources.

The president's daughter Ivanka Trump and his son-in-law Jar-

ed Kushner were also at the Bukhara.

The Trumps were also gifted aprons, which have the trademark horse painted by M F Husain replicated on them, sources said.

Legend has it that Husain was so impressed with Bukhara that he painted his trademark horse on his canvas while having food at the restaurant. This trademark horse has been replicated on the aprons that are given as mementos to the guests.

On Monday, when the Trumps arrived at the

hotel, they were accorded a traditional welcome, and when they left on Tuesday, they were given a special parting gift.

Hotel authorities, however, remained tight-lipped.

The entire hotel was booked for the US delegation accompanying Trump.

The president stayed in the grand presidential suite of the five-star property, which has hosted his predecessor Barack Obama, and other US presidents like George W Bush and Bill Clinton.

When Obama had

stayed at the hotel, the Bukhara had laid out the "Obama platter" for him and had introduced the special "Clinton Platter" and "Chelsea Platter" at the time of Clinton's visit.

Trump, who was on his maiden visit to India, landed in Delhi on Monday evening after attending the 'Namaste Trump' event in Ahmedabad and visiting the Taj Mahal in Agra.

The hotel was under a three-tier security cover and the Indian security agencies were working in close coordination with the US Secret Service.

MNF told to leave NEDA if it does not like BJP ideology

Aizawl, Feb 26 (PTI): Taking serious note of Chief Minister Zoramthanga's assertion that his party does not follow the ideologies of the BJP, the saffron party's Mizoram unit on Wednesday said the ruling Mizo National Front should leave the North East Democratic Alliance (NEDA).

Formed in 2016, the BJP-headed NEDA is an alliance of non-Congress parties in the North East. The MNF is a member of the NEDA but did not contest the 2018 Assembly polls together with the BJP.

During a discussion on a private member's resolution related to "religious freedom" in the state Assembly last week, Zoramthanga had said the MNF does not find the BJP a 'good' party and the two are fighting each other over principles and ideologies.

"We suggest the chief

minister and his party leave the NEDA banner if he finds that the BJP and the MNF are ideologically antagonistic to each other," state BJP president Vanlalhmuaka said here.

The MNF hit back saying it is a part of the NEDA and not of the saffron party.

The statement of Zoramthanga, who also heads the MNF, was a serious matter and does not behove a member of the NEDA, Vanlalhmuaka told a press conference.

After taking oath on December 15, 2018, Zoramthanga said the MNF did not have any intention to leave the NEDA although it was under fire from the Congress for joining hands with the Hindutva forces as the party is a member of the NEDA.

The private member's resolution adopted unanimously by the state Assembly on February

21 asked the Centre to take measures for protection of religious freedom enshrined in the Constitution.

The MNF is a party that is not easily convinced by the word of an opposition leader, general secretary T Lalhmachhuana said.

"No doubt the MNF is a constituent of the NEDA. But this does not imply that the party is accepting the BJP's ideologies cent percent. We are NEDA partner and not BJP member," he said.

Defending his party chief Zoramthanga, Lalhmachhuana said the MNF was opposed to the Hindutva agenda and the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill before it became an Act giving exemption to Mizoram.

The BJP state president Vanlalhmuaka also accused state Congress president and former chief minister Lal Than-

hawla of spreading misinformation that the Centre would lift the ILP regime in the Northeast.

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BHUBANESWAR, FEB 26 (PTI): As many as 90 schools in Odisha do not have blackboards and 34,394 schools have no toilet and drinking water facilities till March last year, the state Assembly was informed on Wednesday.

Besides, 35,769 schools have no electricity till 2018 -19 financial year, School and Mass Education Minister Samir Ranjan Dash said while replying to a question.

He said 37,645 schools in the state do not have playgrounds, 2,451 schools have no library facility and 16,368 schools have no boundary walls.

Besides schools run by the school and mass education department,

the state has institutes managed by the SC&ST department. There are also government-aided schools under private management. The minister's written reply did not mention under which category these schools fall.

Dash, however, said 51,434 primary, upper primary and high schools run by the school and mass education department have drinking water facilities.

Replying to another question, the minister said the annual average dropout rate in primary schools in Odisha was 5.42 per cent while it was 6.93 per cent in upper primary, and 5.41 per cent in secondary schools during 2018-19.

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Govt decides...

The arrival is anticipated to be higher at 86 lakh tonne in April compared to 61 lakh tonne in the year-ago, they added.

Exports of onion are expected to arrest sharp the fall in domestic prices and thereby protect the interest of growers, the sources said.

During the meeting, the sources said import of pulses, especially urad, was also discussed.

Two fatalities...

dead, while another died during treatment," Medical Superintendent of LNJ Hospital Kishore Singh told PTI.

Earlier, the toll stood at 22, all fatalities being recorded at GTB Hospital.

LOST

NAME : PINKI RAWAT

D/O : Ram Chandra Rawat.

Address : Jorethang, South Sikkim.

Lost : BA Degree Certificate while travelling between Jorethang to Namchi on few days ago.

Lost GD Entry NO.264 JPS at Jorethang Police Station on 26.02.2020.

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SMU to offer NSE Academy's NCCMP course

**SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 26 FEB:**

The Department of Humanities & Social Sciences under Sikkim Manipal University (SMU) is organising a one-day National Awareness Programme on "Financial Awareness" at SMIMS Auditorium level VI, SMU 5th Mile Tadong, Gangtok on 28 Feb, 2020, a press release informs.

The awareness programme consists of two events; Event I is a joint

effort of Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, SMU and NSE Academy (a wholly owned subsidiary of National Stock Exchange of India) and Event II will be an interactive session with market experts from IIFL Securities Ltd.

The main highlight of the awareness programme will be the 90 minutes in-depth discussion filled with highly valuable information and exceedingly useful

practical tips in relation to financial market and investment decisions for the working professionals and its career prospects for the students directly from the market experts.

The Key Note Speaker for Event I will be Achal Jaiswal, (MBA, Finance) Cardiff University United Kingdom, (MDP) IIM Ahmedabad, Vice President, National Stock Exchange (NSE).

There will be Signing

of MoU between Sikkim Manipal University, Department of Humanities and Social Sciences and NSE Academy (a wholly owned subsidiary of National Stock Exchange of India) NSE Academy's Certified Capital Market Professional (NCCMP) 100 hours programme in Sikkim Manipal University under Department of Humanities and Social Sciences will also be officially inaugurated during the Programme.

The signing of MoU and initiation of Certification course in Capital Market by SMU in Joint Collaboration with NSE Academy is first of its kind in Sikkim, the release mentions.

Sikkim Manipal University, Department of Humanities and Social Sciences will be the 1st Private University in North East India to offer NSE Academy's Certified Capital Market Professional (NCCMP) course.

NIC rally and cultural extravaganza in Namchi



NAMCHI, 26 FEB (IPR): As part of the ongoing National Integration Camp, a rally and cultural performance were showcased at Central Park here on Wednesday.

The five-day camp is being organized by Nehru Yuva Kendra San-

gathan at Indian Himalayan Centre for Adventure and Eco Tourism at Chemchey.

The theme for this year's camp is, 'Ek Bharat, Shreshth Bharat,' and has 250 children from 16 states in attendance.

The camp is part of

the 23rd National Integration Camp being organized across the country.

In today's program, the participants presented cultural specialties of their respective states through dance and other forms of performance arts.



Todhay Zarbas archers beat Navey Shotak

**SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 26 FEB:**

Todhay Zarbas of Kalimpong defeated the archery team from Navey Shotak, East Sikkim, at the ongoing 19th Chief Minister's Gold Cup Archery Tournament [Compound] here at the Tenzing Namgyal Memorial Ground Archery Shooting Range in Tathangchen on Wednesday. Todhay Zarbas won 55-07 and has proceeded to the next round of the tournament. On Thursday, Pemayangtse Dapen, West Sikkim, will take on Green Tara, Gangtok.

Maha: Undertrial smuggles 10 blades in his stomach

THANE, FEB 26 (PTI): An under-trial prisoner lodged at the Thane District Jail was booked for allegedly smuggling 10 blades inside his stomach, police said on Wednesday.

The jail staff noticed something suspicious about Diwakar Yadav @ Rocky when returned to the jail from his hearing in court on February 18, inspector Ashok Sawant of Thane Nagar police station said.

They forced him to pass stool and a capsule containing 10 blades got

ejected from his rectum, he said, adding that the purpose of smuggling the blades is yet to be ascertained.

An offence has been registered against Yadav under section 188 (disobedience of an order duly promulgated by a public servant) of the IPC and relevant sections of the Prisons Act, the official said.

The accused has been lodged in jail in a case of murder, which was registered with the MHB police station at Borivili in 2017, he added.

Liverpool not the best EPL side yet: Alan Shearer

MUMBAI, FEB 26 (PTI): Former England legend Alan Shearer on Wednesday said Liverpool will have to consistently win titles if are to be considered the best English Premier League side.

Asked if Jurgen Klopp's Liverpool are the best EPL side ever, Shearer told reporters, "No (not at the moment) if they go on and win several titles like Manchester United did and like Manchester City have (done), then you can say that they are the best Premier League team".

"But at the minute, they are going to win (Premier League) this season and it is only a matter of time and they have played some phenomenal football.

"But I don't think that you can say that they are

the best team ever in Premier League yet because they are about to win their first one (in the Premier League era after 1989-90)," said Shearer, who is in the city for the Next Generation Mumbai Cup a grassroots initiative by Premier League and Reliance Foundation.

"If they go on to win two, three, four, then you can have that discussion," quipped Shearer, who is Newcastle and Premier League's record goal-scorer.

Liverpool lead the Premier League table with 79 points, 22 ahead of defending champions Manchester City, who are on 57.

Liverpool are four wins away from winning their first Premier League title since 1989-90 season.

SMIT's Kaalrav to play out this weekend



**SUMMIT REPORT
RANGPO, 26 FEB:**

Sikkim Manipal Institute of Technology is all set to host its three-day mega cultural fest, Kaalrav, starting 28 February.

Billed as the largest college cultural fest in North Bengal and Sikkim, Kaalrav 2020 has in store cultural, literary, fashion and sports events along with star performances every evening.

Kaalrav started in the year 1998.

With an expected footfall of around 5,000 people across the three days, Kaalrav 2020 will feature the participation of 25 schools and colleges from in and around Sikkim.

The first evening will have a performance by 'aswekeepsearching' title sponsored by Winkies. The following evening has Bollywood Night sched-

uled with celebrated artist Nikhil D'Souza. The Music Partner for the event, 'Gaana,' is also the title sponsor for the evening.

The final day will feature the EDM night with DJ NYK.

Apart from the star performances, Mega Entertainment will present Mr and Miss Kaalrav, with the winners getting direct entry to Mr and Miss North East finals.

Delhi Police complicit in violence, alleges Owaisi



HYDERABAD, FEB 26 (PTI): AIMIM president Asaduddin Owaisi on Wednesday alleged the Delhi Police was complicit in the violence that rocked parts of the national capital in the last few days even as the BJP in Telangana charged him with making provocative statements on CAA.

Accusing the BJP-led NDA government of 'failure' to control the communal riots over the amended citizenship law that left 22 people dead in north east Delhi, he said it was high time Home Minister Amit Shah take responsibility.

He also urged Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Shah to visit the violence-hit areas and instill confidence.

It is the failure of the BJP government... The whole world has seen how the Delhi police was complicit in this whole communal carnage which took place. I will not call it a communal riot. But, this is a deliberate pogrom. It reminds the nation of what happened in 2002, the Hyderabad MP told reporters here.

He claimed the violent atmosphere was created by the incendiary

speech made by a former MLA of BJP.

Despite being aware of this, the Modi government and the Delhi Police deliberately failed to react creating an atmosphere in which fatalities occurred, he charged.

Referring to certain reported incidents, he said: It clearly shows the government allowed these unsocial and communal elements to have a field day in Delhi." On the visit by National Security Adviser Ajit Dobhal to the affected areas, Owaisi claimed unsocial, communal elements entered the NSAs convoy.

Innocent people had been killed. This is a shameful thing which has happened in the capital of our country. What is the Home Minister doing? What is the Prime Minister doing? You allowed this atmosphere to be created," he charged.

On the reported comments of Himachal Pradesh Chief Minister Jai Ram Thakur that those who chant Bharat Mata ki Jai will stay in India, Owaisi said he would like to ask the Prime Minister whether it is the sab ka sath- sab ka vikas that he talked about. Is this your belief in Indian Constitu-

tion? Your BJP chief minister is saying that if you want to live in India, you have to say this slogan. I will not say this slogan," he added.


I would urge the Prime Minister, if you want to end this, let the Prime Minister, Home Minister visit these areas.

Let them create confidence and take to task, who is responsible for all this. What is the message you are sending to the whole world," he said.

Hitting out at Owaisi, state BJP President K Laxman said the Hyderabad MP had become like "another (Muhammad Ali) Jinnah.




"He is provoking people the way Jinnah did then for creation of Pakistan," he alleged in a statement here. Laxman also accused Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao and his son and Minister K T Rama Rao of keeping mum and not taking action against AIMIM leaders.

"What the CM is doing and why Rama Rao is not responding when the AIMIM leaders are making provocative statements and sowing seeds of differences by giving a communal colour to the CAA," he added.



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. 	
<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; align-items: center;">    </div>	
<p>If you seek help, you may call :</p> <p>-Toll free no. 104</p> <p>District surveillance Officer</p> <p>EAST : 7029372100</p> <p>WEST : 9593297809</p> <p>NORTH : 9641957468</p> <p>SOUTH : 7407691463</p> <p>New STNM</p> <p>AMS : 9434711402</p>	
<p>DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & FAMILY WELFARE GOVERNMENT OF SIKKIM</p>	

Sikkim Subjects' Day

28 Feb to deliberate on issues of identity and belonging

Sikkim should consider observing 29 February as Sikkim Subjects' Day. It was on 29 February 2008 that the then Union Finance Minister had introduced an amendment to the Income Tax Act which allowed for Income Tax exemption for all "Sikkimese" from all incomes earned in the State. 2008 was a Leap Year, hence the suggestion that the Day be celebrated on the 28th of February every year unless the people would rather go for Olympic gaps between such celebrations. And this celebration not because Sikkimese were exempted from paying Income Tax, but more importantly because this was the first time that "Sikkimese" were officially defined by Central Government and Sikkim Subjects officially recognized as a unique population group of Sikkim.

The wording of the exemption was as special. The exemption was extended to all "Sikkimese", an identity explained in a footnote as those with their names included in the Sikkim Subjects Register and their descendents. It was a historic development and one without any recent precedence in the country because special treatment was announced for "a people" collectively, and not divided by community, caste, or religious denominations. For Sikkim, the Centre had reiterated the individuality of "Sikkim Subjects". Interestingly, not the 8 May Tripartite Agreement of 1973, nor even Article 371F, makes any specific mention of "Sikkim Subjects". Delhi has never really acknowledged the people of Sikkim as a united group and even leaders here have acquired the rhetoric which speaks of the people of Sikkim as belonging to the three ethnic communities of Bhutia, Lepcha and Nepali. They might claim the three to be united, but the segregation is obvious in how the references are made. Of course, even this Bhutia-Lepcha-Nepali coinage came into currency primarily with the Tripartite Agreement of 1973 and just continued to remain in circulation. These were always the underlying demarcations on which the Sikkimese were slotted. Of late, the Byapari have been added in the mix as Old Settlers. But the point remains that the State is too small for such divisions and it is ironic that this message had to be driven home with an amendment of the same Bill, which in 1994, had cleaved Sikkim into perhaps its deepest ever communal divisions. Although it took 14 years since that tumultuous confusion, when I-T exemption was finally extended, it was to the Sikkimese as one people.

As far as the I-T exemption is concerned, it was citizenship [Sikkimese Citizenship] which earned exemption, nothing else. The exemption can be looked at as a reward for everyone who decided to take on the risks of becoming subjects to a King because they loved the land or were so completely invested in it that they did not consider any other option. Of course, like is the case with every privilege, there are sections which have been left out, Sikkim's royalty for one. It is unlikely that the royal family would have enumerated itself in a register being maintained for Subjects. And although they have other documents to secure recognition as Sikkimese, when it comes to I-T exemption, the volume and serial number listing in the Register is the only criteria. Many of them will thus not qualify. Then there are the Old Settlers – people who meet the criteria set for becoming Sikkim Subjects, but who decided not to. They clearly preferred to remain free citizens of a democratic India instead of becoming subjects under a monarch in Sikkim. The decision would have been made easier by the fact that no extra privileges would have accrued to them beyond what they were already enjoying in the State. That said, the Old Settlers are an important part of the Sikkimese fabric, and their special status should have been resolved much earlier. Even if the idea of I-T exemption for commercial earnings rankles a bit, what cannot be ignored is that this section of the society continues to be denied privileges (not just I-T exemption) available to other Sikkimese. This has always been an unfair treatment, but is only now being discussed. Of course, the exemption has also exposed Sikkim's other ugly reality of how it extends conditional identity to its mothers and daughters and wives.

So, when the suggestion is floated that 28 February be celebrated as Sikkim Subjects' Day, it is more for the people to discuss and deliberate issues of identity, belonging and history, not celebrate parochial takes on what being Sikkimese means, which, unfortunately, seems to be the jingoism which dominates the public domain. This year, of course, the Day could be observed on 29th.

Crash Landing on You: Korean drama crosses the north-south divide

SARAH A. SON
theconversation.com

After the failure of talks between US president Donald Trump and North Korean leader Kim Jong-il and as the excitement about the prospect of a formal inter-Korean peace agreement has waned, a television series has focused on the ties that bind the two Koreas.

Crash Landing on You, the last episode of which aired in early February, achieved the highest ratings in the history of South Korean TV channel TVN and has caught the imagination of audiences worldwide.

The ambitious, cross-border storyline involves a wealthy South Korean heiress who accidentally paraglides on to the wrong side of the military demarcation line where she meets and falls in love with a North Korean soldier. Their meeting sets the stage for a tale which continually references the complexity of the inter-Korean division.

The drama reverses the old Korean saying, "nam nam, buk nyeo", or "southern man, northern woman" as representative of the ideal Korean couple.

Instead it presents the audience with a strong but sensitive North Korean male lead and a career-driven but kindhearted female lead. Their story plays out both north and south of the border which divides the two countries, which remain officially at war.

North Korean escapees in South Korea have described the series as a fairly accurate representation of ordinary life in the north – including the local dialect, the availability of South Korean products in the markets as well as the frequency of power blackouts, the prevalence of bribery and the privileged lives of the elite.

The drama has also been praised by North Korean escapee organisations in South Korea for breaking down stereotypes of North Korea and its people, whose image has long suffered as a result of inter-Korean tensions and a lack of positive cross-border, people-to-people contact.

The election of Moon in 2017 and his stated aim of working towards a formal peace agreement facilitated a new phase of inter-Korean rapprochement and several high-profile meetings between the leaders of the two Koreas and the United States in 2018-19. But the warm atmosphere of 2018 and hopes for greater inter-Korean engagement have since cooled, following the breakdown of US-North Korea negotiations on de-nuclearisation and the failure of South Korea to broker any further progress.

PAINFUL PAST

The inter-Korean division as a great tragedy and the unnatural situation on the peninsula is a theme that runs strongly throughout Crash Landing on You's storyline. The love between the northerner and the southerner, seemingly destined to unite but kept apart by arbitrary forces beyond their control, mirrors the bitter narrative of the two Koreas, which has spanned more than 70 years.

Viewers are reminded of the interminability of the Korean War when the central characters take refuge in an abandoned house within the demilitarised zone which still divides the peninsula. There they find a water bowl sitting atop a traditional Korean storage jar, which the North Koreans explain was left out as part of a Shamanistic prayer ritual for a son sent to war between 1950 and 1953, in the hope of a return which never came.

TALKING POLITICS

The real-life representations in the script were aided by the work of assistant script writer and North Korean escapee, Kwak Moon-Wan, who studied film in Pyongyang before coming to the South. Kwak told the BBC he was keen to avoid political controversy and unnecessary demonisation of the North Korean regime in his writing. The drama's lead villain is therefore portrayed as being driven by his own corruption and personal vendetta rather than acting on orders from higher up.

Yet in a poignant scene where an anguished North Korean officer confesses his guilt for aiding in the murder of an innocent man on orders from his superior, the officer laments: "If that's my mis-

sion given by the country ... don't you think that's too cruel?" The viewer also can't help but note the fear surrounding mention of the North Korean Ministry of State Security and the structures of surveillance that pervade daily life among the North Korean characters.

On the other side of the divide, South Korea is painted in a markedly more flattering light. Explicit reference to the comparative sophistication of all things southern – from fashion to the dialect – is frequent. When some of the northern characters find themselves in the South, their childlike wonder at the sheer abundance of apparent luxury is consistent with the southern view of their northern cousins as provincial and unworlly.

At other times, that provincial simplicity, manifested in a slower, low-tech pace of life in the North, as well as close appreciation of the seasons and of nature, is presented as a virtue lost in the hectic pace of the urban South.

Academic scholarship on the prospects for the future unification of the two Koreas has warned of the threat to North-South reconciliation posed by the sheer scale of the socio-cultural divide, which would take much more than a political agreement to overcome.

Through the re-framing of stereotypes, albeit with some creative licence, Crash Landing on You arguably humanises the North for its audience in ways that inter-Korean dialogue has not in recent years. Despite its soft-focus romanticisation of the political situation, Crash Landing on You brings the pain of the division to a personal level for a generation of Koreans who, unlike their grandparents, have no memory of what it was like to be a single nation.

While forays into such fraught territory in South Korean popular culture have had mixed results over the years, the success of this story suggests there is still room to explore new ways to reignite affection between the people of North and South Korea.

[the writer is Lecturer in Korean Studies, University of Sheffield]

World economy flashes red over coronavirus – with strange echoes of 1880s Yellow Peril hysteria

JOHN WEEKS
theconversation.com

As the novel coronavirus pandemic continues to unfold, travel restrictions are being imposed around the world. China is the main target, with various countries including Australia, Canada and the US placing different restrictions on people who have travelled through the country where the outbreak started. Beijing has attacked the US restrictions on Chinese citizens as "excessive", advising them not to travel to the country as a result.

It brings to mind the Yellow Peril hysteria of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. It was used to justify European colonialism in Asia; while in response to inflows of Asia immigrants to California, the US congress passed the Chinese Exclusion Act in 1882 to block the entry of people of Chinese origin.

Obviously the circumstances today are quite different: where the 19th century hysteria over Asian immigration reflected a racist anxiety about hordes of low-wage incomers undermining white livelihoods, the latest developments reflect understandable fears about the spread of a new infectious disease that has killed hundreds of people. And besides China, we are also seeing travel restrictions being imposed on the likes of Italy, Iran and South Korea.

Yet in an interesting parallel with the Yellow Peril, the mounting fears around coronavirus have come when Western anxieties about China had been reaching new highs already. These are all about China's emergence as a global power; a narrative that has been forming for decades.

The Soviet collapse at the end of the 1980s ushered in a short period of US domination. Several rivals began manifesting pretensions of global influence – notably the European Union (in practice Germany), the BRICS countries and Japan – but the rapid rise of Chinese economic and military power has ended any illusion of a multi-polar international system. Two decades into the 21st century, global power has coalesced into a new bipolar rivalry between the United States and China.

MEASURING CHINA'S RISE

These two powers have separated themselves from the others to a

striking extent. At the end of 2018, the US economy accounted for 22.3% of global GDP, the Chinese 14.6% and number three Japan a distant 5.4%. GDP may be a poor measure of citizen welfare, but it accurately indicates productive power, and thus the capacity to generate military hardware and research.

For exports, the top two reverse. China leads with US\$2.5 trillion, 13% of the global total, with the US at US\$1.7 trillion. Germany comes a close third at US\$1.6 trillion, but at

ita, the US led China with 15.5 metric tonnes compared to 6.6. But the US was not number one per capita, a dubious distinction going to Saudi Arabia (followed by Australia).

Finally, a country's private investment holdings abroad have usually tracked its economic and military power, as well as indicating its phase of development. Countries emerging from underdevelopment partly do so by attracting private investment from more technologically advanced countries. On the other hand, when a coun-

ing comes from Chinese visitors. An effective quarantine on travel in and out of China looks difficult if not impossible. As the World Health Organization warned recently, the "window of opportunity" to contain the outbreak is narrowing.

By any rational calculation, human suffering from the pandemic should far outweigh its economic impact, though the latter will directly affect the former. In 2019 the world economy expanded at a rate of 3%, China at 7% and the rest of the



number four Japan is less than a trillion. Exports also provide a measure of military and political power, with the exception of Germany, which has found it useful to minimise military expenditure in favour of economic competitiveness since the second world war. Both this economic policy and Germany's constitution, which outlaws aggressive wars, rule the nation out as a superpower, at least for the foreseeable future.

Buttressed by the world's largest economy, the US government in 2018 had a military budget of US\$750 billion (3.2% of its GDP), far ahead of China's US\$237 billion (1.9%). No other government reached US\$100 billion and only three exceeded US\$50 billion (Saudi Arabia, India and the United Kingdom). The Chinese government did, however, field the world's largest standing army (followed by India, then the United States).

Along with economy size and exports goes another, pejorative, superpower indicator: the power to pollute. In absolute terms China produced more CO₂ emissions than any other country, 9,041 million metric tonnes (MMT) in 2019, with the US a distant second at 5,000MMT. Per cap-

try shifts from net investment inflows to net outflows, it is sign that it is moving from development to maturity.

In the late 2010s, the Chinese economy reached that latter stage, with investment outflows of US\$860 billion and inflows of US\$795 billion. At the end of 2018, foreign investments in Chinese stocks still well exceeded the holdings of Chinese companies abroad. But if you include Hong Kong, as the Chinese ministry of commerce does, the two sides of the ledger almost balance: Chinese and Hong Kong companies held US\$3,580 billion in overseas assets compared to foreign holdings of US\$3,625 billion in China and Hong Kong. This was still distantly second to the US at US\$6,476 billion in overseas assets, but Chinese capital far exceeded the Japanese and German totals of about US\$1,650 billion.

ECONOMIC IMPACTS

China's challenge to American dominance helps explain everything from their trade war to the security row over Huawei. It also explains the scale of the threat to the global economy from the novel coronavirus. Chinese business executives as well as workers travel the globe, and the largest single source of tourist spend-

world at 2.3%. Analysts and business leaders are predicting a substantial impact on growth in 2020, with the emphasis on the availability of auto parts, smartphone production and commodity prices falling due to reduced demand.

In my view the estimates are too modest. The Chinese economy may have no growth and perhaps decline in 2020. Should that occur, world trade would fall negative as it did in 2009, 2015 and 2016, and a global recession would follow.

To venture a prediction, all the major European countries will enter recession, perhaps to match the declines in 2008-09. The financial markets have fallen sharply in the past two days, perhaps because they are seeing how quickly the disease can potentially spread around the world. In truth, the economic risks have been apparent for some weeks. The threat from China is quite different to the one that rival nations had been expecting, but there's nothing false about the mounting sense of alarm.

[the writer is Professor Emeritus of Economics, SOAS, University of London]

Northeast Delhi violence: HC holds midnight hearing, directs police to ensure treatment of injured

NEW DELHI, FEB 26 (PTI): In a midnight hearing, the Delhi High Court directed police to ensure safe passage to government hospitals and emergency treatment for those injured in the communal violence erupted in northeast Delhi over the amended citizenship law.

The court held a special hearing, which started at 12:30 am, at the residence of Justice S Muralidhar after receiving a call from an advocate explaining the dire circumstances under which the victims were unable to be removed from a small hospital to the GTB Hospital.

A bench of Justices S Muralidhar and Anup J Bhambhani directed the Delhi Police to ensure safe passage of the injured victims by deploying all resources at its command and on the strength of this order as well as to make sure they receive immediate emergency treatment if not at the Guru Teg Baha-



dur Hospital then at the Lok Nayak Jai Prakash Narayan Hospital (LNJP) or Maulana Azad or any other hospital.

The bench also called for a status report of compliance, including information about the injured victims and the treatment offered to them, and the matter will be heard during the day at 2:15 pm.

It said the order be communicated to the medical superintendents

of the GTB and the LNJP Hospitals.

The urgent hearing was conducted after advocate Suroor Mander called the judge and sought urgent orders for safe passage of ambulances for the injured.

The Delhi Police and the government were represented through additional standing counsel Sanjoy Ghose.

During the hearing, the bench spoke over phone to doctor Anwar

of the Al-hind Hospital in New Mustafabad who told the court that there were two bodies and 22 injured persons there and he had been trying to seek police assistance since 4 pm on Tuesday without success.

The court then directed the senior officials to reach to the hospital forthwith, following which they started the process of evacuating the injured to the nearest hospitals.

It also said this order be brought to the knowledge of the Delhi Police Commissioner.

Communal violence over the amended citizenship law in northeast Delhi claimed at least 17 lives till Wednesday.

On Tuesday, the violence escalated in northeast Delhi as police struggled to check the rioters who ran amok on streets, burning and looting shops, pelting stones and thrashing people.

Govt closely monitoring coronavirus impact on economy: FM

NEW DELHI, FEB 26 (PTI): Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharman on Wednesday said the government is keeping a close watch on the impact of the coronavirus outbreak on the Indian economy.

The minister also said that the process of merger of public sector banks was underway as per the schedule. The government has announced to merge 10 sector state-run banks to create four bigger lenders.

The government is "closely monitoring" the impact of the coronavirus outbreak on the economy, she said.

Over 2,700 people have died due to Novel Coronavirus 2019 (COVID-19) while the

number of those infected is around 80,000. In the wake of the virus outbreak, whose epicentre is China, many airlines, including Indian carriers, have cancelled some of their overseas flights.

On bank mergers, Sitharaman said there is "no uncertainty about bank merger" and the process is on as per the schedule.

Last year in August, the government announced merger of 10 public sector banks into four: United Bank of India and Oriental Bank of Commerce are to be merged with Punjab National Bank, making the proposed entity the second largest public sector bank (PSB) from April 1

this year. It was also decided to merge Syndicate Bank with Canara Bank, and Allahabad Bank with Indian Bank. Similarly, Andhra Bank and Corporation Bank are to be consolidated with Union Bank of India.

In April 2019, Bank of Baroda, in the first three-way merger exercise, amalgamated Vijaya Bank and Dena Bank with itself.

SBI had merged five of its associate banks -- State Bank of Patiala, State Bank of Bikaner and Jaipur, State Bank of Mysore, State Bank of Travancore and State Bank of Hyderabad as well as Bharatiya Mahila Bank with itself effective April 2017.

Naveen Patnaik becomes BJD president for 8th time



BHUBANESWAR, FEB 26 (PTI): Odisha Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik was elected as the president of the ruling BJD for the eighth consecutive term on Wednesday.

The re-election of Patnaik, who was the only leader to have filed nomination papers for the post of BJD president, was announced by returning officer P K Deb.

The 73-year-old leader, who steered the Biju Janata Dal (BJD) to a landslide victory in the assembly polls held last year to become Chief Minister for the fifth time in a row, has

been holding the top post since the regional party was formed on December 26, 1997.

"The BJD does not fight election to win or lose. It fights to win the love and affection of the people and to serve the people of Odisha," Patnaik said after being formally chosen as president of the regional outfit.

"I thank the 4.5 crore people of the state," the chief minister added.

The organisational polls of the BJD, conducted in different phases, concluded with the declaration after the state

council meeting held at the party headquarters here on Wednesday. Out of the 355 council members, 80 were elected as state executive members. On February 21, the party had declared the names of 33 organisational district presidents.

Patnaik had filed his nomination papers for the BJD's top post on February 23. He was the lone leader to file nomination for the post.

The organisational elections are held in the BJD every three years according to the regional party's by-law.

West Bengal minister dons director's hat

KOLKATA, FEB 26 (PTI): Taking time off his busy schedule, West Bengal minister Bratya Basu is directing a Bengali film starring actor-turned-Trinamool Congress MP Nusrat Jahan.

The film, 'Dictionary', deals with the distance created in relationships, the minister of science and technology said. 'Dictionary' has been adapted from two short stories by Buddhadeb Guha - 'Baba Howa' (Becoming a father) and 'Swami Howa' (Becoming a husband).

"The film seeks to explore the layers of human ties," Basu, who is a well-known theatre personality, told reporters at the shooting location.

Basu said theatre is his passion and he has been squeezing out time to direct and stage plays, besides facing the camera in around 30 Bengali films. "Hence, finding out time for acting or directing cannot be impossible if you have the will to work," he said to a question on Tuesday.

Basu, who had directed Bengali film 'Tara' in 2010 before becoming a minister, said, "It is more challenging from the technical point of view this time since I am making the film on digital media instead of celluloid stock."

Actor Nusrat Jahan, who plunged into politics last year, said she wanted to work with Basu for long. "This time I am happy he is directing me," she said.

Popular Bangladeshi actor Mosharraf Karim is essaying a pivotal role in the film which also stars Abir Chatterjee and Parambrata Chattopadhyay.

The shooting of the film will take place at Bolpur and Purulia apart from Kolkata.

Water conclave begins at IIT Roorkee

DEHRADUN, FEB 26 (PTI): A conclave on hydrological aspects of climate change began at Indian Institute of Technology Roorkee on Wednesday.

Roorkee Water Conclave 2020, a three-day event being attended by experts from several countries like the USA, Spain, Germany, Japan, Netherlands and the UK, is being organised by IIT-R in collaboration with the National Institute of Hydrology.

Addressing the gathering as the chief guest, Central Water Commis-

sion Chairman RK Jain, laid emphasis on formulating new mechanisms to address the impact of global warming on water resources. "The planning and projections of the past have failed miserably. We need to formulate new mechanisms to address the challenges that lie ahead in the wake of the impact of global warming on our water resources," he said.

India has about four per cent of the world's freshwater resources despite having only 2.4% land area making it a bet-

ter a placed country on the global average. However, due to high population, temporal and excessive variability we are facing very high stress, Jain said.

Visiting professor, IIT-R, V P Singh, who was the guest of honour, congratulated the organisers of the event saying "it will go a long way in contributing to and sustaining the rich culture of excellence for which Roorkee has come to be known worldwide."

The conclave will go on till Feb 28.

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Food festival recreates flavours of Old Delhi

NEW DELHI, FEB 25 (PTI): From "dau-lat ki chaat" and "mohabbat ka sherbat" to "changezi chicken" and "matar ka kulcha", the quintessential flavours of Old Delhi have been recreated at a food festival in Okhla here.

The 10th edition of "Dilli 6" food festival, underway at Edesia in Crowne Plaza Okhla, is an ode to the walled city, in replicating not just its gastronomical flavours, but also the "chaos" of Chandni Chowk.

There is no pattern whatsoever in the way the different food items are placed. Like in Chandni Chowk, one needs to push through crowds before finally reaching their favourite shop, at "Dilli 6" too one needs manoeuvre multiple stalls before getting their food of choice.

Visitors are welcomed by several sweet shops, followed by a stall serving the much relished deep-fried breads from Chandni Chowk's iconic "paranthe wali gali". The paranthas are available in a range of stuffing, including 'mirchi', 'nimbu', 'papad', 'mewa' and more.

"We have attempted to bring back the magical recipes from the households and streets of Old Delhi for our patrons. We have attempted to recreate those flavours, and aromas to take forward the legacy," Sumit Sinha, director of food and beverage at Crowne Plaza, said.

He said the ingredients for dishes like "Akbari Murgh Masala", "Jahangiri Mutton Korma", and "Haleem" have been sourced from Old Delhi, and added that as part of the event, they had also brought vendors from

Chandni Chowk to whip up some traditional delicacies. To add an element of nostalgia, organisers have put a gramophone on display, and parked a Lambretta right outside the venue. There is also a parrot astrologer, ready to predict fortunes. Besides the main



menu, there is an additional menu dedicated to the "Bhuli Bhatiyari ka Mahal", a 14th century hunting lodge, believed to be one of the most haunted places in the city.

The spookily labelled dishes of this menu include "Amawasya Ki Raat Walee Daal", "Paneer Khooni Masala", "Veerana Cutlet", "Chatpati Chudail", "Dayan ka Tadka" and "Tantrik Bhasma Laddoo".

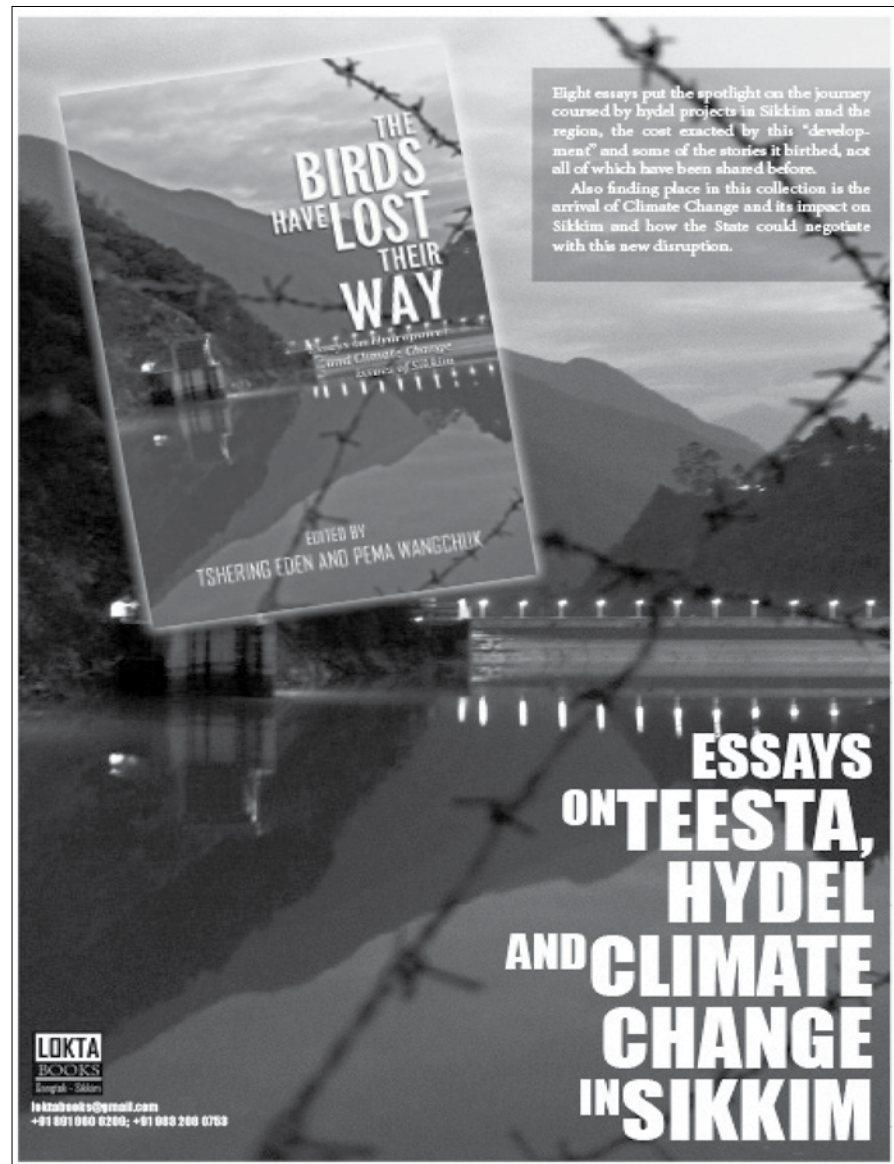
For those who are a fan of other spirits, worry not as there is also the trademark "Jhilmil Bar" dedicated to the yesteryear villains of Bollywood -- "Old Fashioned Gab-

bar", "Kaancha Cheena", "Mogambo Margarita", "Sidecar Shakaal", "Langda Tyagi", "Kali Charan", "Pink Lady Mona Darling", and "Crime Master Negrone". The show stealer, however, is a re-created "Chor Bazaar" dining experience. The overwhelmingly lit-up space

features a mix-n-match set up created by putting together cutlery, furniture, curtains, candle sticks, table napkins, fans, and lights from different suites, restaurants, kitchens, store rooms, laundry room of the hotel itself.

To take the entertainment quotient up a notch, the festival is also hosting a "Mohabbat Ka Sherbat" drinking challenge.

"The challenge is that the visitor has to finish a tower full of sherbet in three minutes. Reward: complimentary dining experience at Edesia for the next one year," rganisers said.



Kohli loses top spot in ICC Test Player rankings

DUBAI, FEB 26 (PTI): India skipper Virat Kohli lost the top spot in the ICC Test Player Rankings after managing only 21 runs in the first Test which his side lost to New Zealand by 10 wickets in Wellington.

Kohli, who has 906 points, slipped to the second position in the list which also features Ajinkya Rahane, Cheteshwar Pujara and Mayank Agarwal at the eighth, ninth and 10th place respectively.

While India vice-captain Rahane, who scored 75 in the opening Test, gained a spot and Mayank returned to a career-best 10th position after amassing 92 runs, which included a second-innings half-century, Pujara dropped two places after returning with identical scores of 11 in the two innings.

Kohli's slump meant Australia's Steve Smith was back on top of the list for the eighth time after first occupying the top position in June 2015. The last batsman apart from Smith and Kohli to be number one is New Zealand's Kane Williamson, for an eight-day period in December 2015.

In bowling chart, off-spinner Ravichandran Ashwin, who took three wickets for 99 in the first innings against New Zealand, slipped a place to ninth but remained the only Indian featuring in the top 10 with 765 points.

Fast bowler Ishant Sharma, who took a five-wicket haul on his comeback from injury during the opening Test, gained a place to be at the 17th spot.

New Zealand pacers Tim Southee and Trent Boult made big gains after finishing with nine and five wickets, respectively in the first Test against India.

While Southee advanced eight spots to take sixth position, which is his highest since a career-best fifth place in June 2014, Boult moved up four slots to take joint-13th position.

The all-rounders' list features Ravindra Jadeja and Ashwin at the third and fifth positions respectively. While Jadeja didn't play the first Test, Ashwin scored 0 and 4 in the two innings to lose a place. In the ICC World Test Championship, India continue to be placed at the top with 360 points, followed by Australia (296).

New Zealand are on 120 points after gaining 60 points for the Wellington victory. They had won 60 points in a 1-1 draw against Sri Lanka.

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Impatient Bayern find keys to unlock Chelsea as Hansi Flick restores old fire

JONATHAN LIEW LONDON, 26 FEB [THEGUARDIAN]: Bayern Munich may not have all the answers, but they know all the right questions. They can finish you in more ways than almost any other team on the planet. You play through the press and they smother you with possession. You lock the front gate and they find a way around the side. You sit deep and they weave their dainty triangles around you. You commit high and they make you turn and run. Thwart their slick passing game for one half, and they simply take you to pieces in the next.

This, essentially, is what happened to Chelsea here: after maintaining a stony silence for 50 minutes in the face of a relentless interrogation, they eventually squealed like piglets. If Serge Gnabry's two goals in three minutes did not quite settle matters, Robert Lewandowski's third goal probably did, even if Marcos Alonso's late red card and consequent suspension offered Chelsea a glimmer of hope going into the second leg.

The word it is tempting to deploy here is "patience": stoic Teutonic forbearance ultimately earning its reward. Here, though, Bayern were anything but. They were irascibly, irritably impatient: gradually quickening their pace, thumbing through their moves like a burglar rifling through a ring of keys, searching for the one that unlocks the safe. Eventually Gnabry found it: a short but devastating chain of passing and movement that allowed Lewandowski to evade his marker, receive the ball, and



return it for Gnabry's delectation.

The second goal was simpler still: Gnabry to Lewandowski to Gnabry again, but this time a sweeping vertical move that had begun with the goalkeeper Manuel Neuer just seconds earlier. It was a very Bayern goal: intuitive, clinical and yet giving the strong impression that it had been mapped out weeks in advance. Mate in two against any defence. These are the characteristics of great teams: that essential tension between spontaneity and choreography, a mesmeric game of perpetual fission where every pass seems to detonate two rehearsed runs.

Watch the way Bayern press, for example. It's not just the speed but the suddenness: trigger the trip-wire and there they are, closing you down, cutting off your angles, hunting you down like prey. One of Hansi Flick's first priorities on assuming temporary charge of Bayern after Niko Kovac's sacking in November was in restoring the famous

Bayern press to its blood-thirsty best: high-tempo, high-aggression, high up the pitch.

This, as much as Lewandowski's goals or Gnabry's hot streak or the return to form of Thomas Müller, is what has restored them to their familiar place at the top of the Bundesliga.

In his press conference, the Chelsea manager Frank Lampard offered up a radically different perspective. For him, Chelsea's failure had not been collective but individual, and it was now individuals who needed to take responsibility. "Who was I up against?" he wanted his players to ask themselves. "Who was my direct competitor? How do I feel I've played against them? It's about match-ups."

This was a telling comment, because it revealed not just how Lampard saw the previous 90 minutes, but how he sees the game in general: a series of individual battles, as 11 micro-clashes of personality. Win your battles, lads, and we win the match. It is a philos-

ophy that in many ways underpins the club's entire identity in the trophy-rich Abramovich era: sign the best players, send them out with the best coach, and let the gravity of football do the rest. Perhaps, too, it explains the desperate clamour to sign a big-name striker in the January transfer window: the ironed-on attacking solution that will make all their dreams come true.

Perhaps Chelsea do need a striker. But the relative failures of Álvaro Morata and Gonzalo Higuaín and Olivier Giroud and Michy Batshuayi – high-quality strikers all – suggests the problem goes deeper than personnel. Not since their title-winning season three years ago, arguably, have Chelsea enjoyed an attacking system worthy of the name.

The individual brilliance of Eden Hazard, and latterly the sparkling improvement of Tammy Abraham, have partially papered over the cracks. But in their more listless moments, there remains a feverish, on-the-hoof improvisation to their

decision-making in the final third that here contrasted strongly with Bayern's sharply-honed automations. What does a typical Chelsea attacking move look like? Who will score their goals if Abraham is injured or marked out of the game?

These are questions that are answered not just by individuals but by systems: the systems that Lampard should be trying to build at Chelsea, that Flick has managed to rebuild in just a few short weeks at Bayern.

Of course, it helps when the core of your team has been together for the best part of a decade, when you have players of the quality of Müller and Gnabry and Kingsley Coman at your disposal.

But the basic ideas are universal. Drilled and grooved patterns. Dizzying angles. A hungry press. Learned complexity. Runs begetting passes begetting runs. This is the sort of attacking play that elite European football demands as a bare minimum, and on this evidence Chelsea have a sizeable gulf to bridge.

Ex-skipper Du Plessis out of South Africa ODI squad

JOHANNESBURG, FEB 26 (AFP): Former captain Faf du Plessis will not play for South Africa in a three-match one-day international series against Australia but remains part of the country's future plans, Cricket South Africa (CSA) announced on Wednesday.

Du Plessis, who stepped down from the captaincy in all forms of the game earlier this month, is being rested along with recent regular players in Rassie van der Dussen and Dwaine Pretorius, according to a CSA statement.

The first match in the series will be in Paarl on Saturday, following the conclusion of a Twenty20 series in Cape Town on Wednesday.

Test left-arm spinner Keshav Maharaj has been rewarded for good form in a domestic one-day tournament with his first one-day international call-up since 2018.

Coach Mark Boucher said the squad was picked with an eye to the future with the next World Cup still three years away.

"We always saw the series against England and Australia as an opportunity to play

some fresh talent," said Boucher.

"If we feel that we need to rest players, we will, as we have done in the recent past. Faf (du Plessis) has been fantastic for us in white-ball cricket and remains very much in our ODI plans and we will manage his workload for the near future diligently."

The squad includes batsman Janneman Malan and wicketkeeper-batsman Kyle Verreynne, who were both included in the squad for a recent series against England but did not play. Malan has previously been capped at T20 level while Verreynne is uncapped.

"I would like to strengthen our depth pool right now and see what players we have out there. I feel that this is the time and opportunity to do so," said Boucher.

South Africa squad: Quinton de Kock (captain), Temba Bavuma, Beuran Hendricks, Heinrich Klaasen, Keshav Maharaj, Janneman Malan, David Miller, Lungi Ngidi, Anrich Nortje, Andile Phehlukwayo, Kagiso Rabada, Tabraiz Shamsi, Lutho Sipamla, Jon-Jon Smuts, Kyle Verreynne.

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Inter's European tie to be played behind closed doors

NYON, FEB 26 (AFP): Inter Milan's Europa League last-32 second-leg tie against Ludogorets at the San Siro will be played without fans due to the coronavirus outbreak in Italy, UEFA announced on Wednesday.

Inter are set to host the Bulgarian outfit on Thursday with the Italian side leading 2-0 after the second leg.

"All other UEFA matches scheduled this week will go ahead as planned and at this time there are no restrictions for attending supporters," the governing body

said in a statement.

Italian authorities have taken drastic measures to contain the outbreak which has seen 11 deaths and more than 320 cases, mainly in the north of the country.

Eleven towns have been put in isolation and tens of millions of people have been affected by school closures and the cancellation of cultural and sporting events.

More than 2,500 Juventus fans have been allowed to travel to Lyon for Wednesday's Champions League match despite the concerns.

Project Prithvi: Technical glitches visible but skipper wants to wait



KUSHAN SARKAR CHRISTCHURCH, FEB 26 (PTI): Trent Boult and Tim Southee have exposed the chinks in Prithvi Shaw's armour but India skipper Virat Kohli is ready to wait and watch before any corrective analysis as he does not see a pattern in the young opener's dismissals so far.

There are a few shortcomings that experts have noticed in Shaw's batting after the 20-year-old right-handed batsman scored just 16 and 14 in the two innings of the first Test against New Zealand in Wellington, which India lost by 10 wickets.

"I think we can sit down and analyse, maybe after 8 or 10 similar dismissals. I don't think (it's fair to the guy), who is playing away from home for the first time and is probably experiencing different kind of bowling attack at international level compared to playing at home," Kohli had said, when asked about Shaw's dismissals at the end of the first Test.

"I don't think at this stage, we need to sit down and discuss what's going wrong because I don't see anything wrong. It's the execution of things which was not there."

Shaw has, probably, the biggest back-lift in this current crop of top-order batsmen and often when the New Zealand bowlers are employing the short ball tactic, his bat face tends to close by the time the delivery reaches him.

Scott Kuggeleijn got him out in the first innings in the warm-up game in Hamilton and Trent Boult also used the tactic successfully in the second innings of the Wellington Test.

"I think as a batsman until you are committing the same mistake about seven or eight times, you can't really sit down and worry about things too much," Kohli said about his junior colleague.

International cricket is about finding one's

own straps and Shaw also will work out what is best for him, feels the captain who has 70 hundreds to his credit in all formats.

"He (Shaw) will figure out. He will find ways to score runs because he is a natural stroke-player and he scores runs. It is not that he gets small runs (when he gets them). He gets big runs and knows how to get runs."

The reason why Shaw faltered could be due to the lack of understanding of the pace of the Basin Reserve track but the former U-19 World Cup-winning skipper was not alone as some of the team's other big names also failed to gauge the nature of the pitch.

"It is just a matter of understanding the pace of the wicket and conditions as soon as possible. Again, when he is in a clear frame of mind, he is very, very destructive," Kohli said, hopeful that Shaw will learn quickly.

Clarity of mind is paramount at the highest level and once Shaw has that, there would be no stopping him.

"I think whenever we have done well overseas, the opening partnership has been with a lot of clarity and positivity even clearing the in-field, taking bowlers on so that you put them under pressure. He is that kind of a player," Kohli said.

"Once he feels that he can do it, I think it will be a different ball game. The mindset can shift very quickly."

While Kohli's Test squad has had horses for courses policy, it seems that the skipper wants to stick with Shaw in the second Test even though Shubman Gill can't be completely ruled out of reckoning.

"Prithvi obviously wants to perform and no doubt about it, every batsman wants to. We need to give him that time to get used to the conditions a little bit and once he starts scoring, he will feel more confident about it.

Griezmann rescues Barcelona after Mertens levels Napoli scoring record

BARCELONA, 26 FEB [PA]: Antoine Griezmann's equaliser cancelled out a fine opener from Napoli's Dries Mertens to give Barcelona a 1-1 draw and the upper hand in their Champions League last-16 tie.

Mertens had made the most of the Italian club's solid start to curl home an effort after 30 minutes. However, after the midfielder was forced off with injury following a heavy challenge from Sergio Busquets, Barcelona drew level when Griezmann lashed the ball in from close range.

Barça finished with 10 men after Arturo Vidal was shown two quick yellow cards for a tackle on Mário Rui and then pushing his head into the face of the Napoli man during the closing stages.

"It's a positive result for us overall," said the Barcelona coach, Quique Setien. "We controlled most of the game, but we lacked something in the final third against such an organised defence by Napoli.

"After the equaliser, they opened up a little and we were able to hurt them more. They played very well and it was not easy, so a score draw is fine going into the second leg."

Lionel Messi, who scored four goals in the 5-0 win over Eibar which put Barcelona top of LaLiga, sent an early chance over before Napoli made a breakaway count as Mertens swept them in front. Piot Zielinski won possession from Junior Firpo and charged down the right before cutting the ball across the edge of the Barcelona area, Mertens took a touch before curling a wonderful finish over a static Marc André ter Stegen and into the top corner – a goal which made the Belgian Napoli's joint record scorer, level on 121 goals with Marek Hamsik. Barcelona looked for a swift response before half-time but failed to stretch the home defence or test the goalkeeper David Ospina. The Partenopei could have been further ahead after 42 minutes when a free-kick was only partially cleared, Fabian Ruiz fed Jose Callejon and his cross was fired just wide by centre-back Kostas Manolas.

They came out with more intensity at the start of the second half, too. Busquets caught Mertens with a high tackle which led to a yellow card and the Belgian eventually hobbled off, to be replaced by Arkadiusz Milik in the 54th minute.

Napoli continued to be pushed back by Barcelona's press and Griezmann equalised after 57 minutes. Nelson Semedo beat the offside trap from Busquets' pass when he darted into the right side of the area and crossed for the French World Cup winner to smash the ball in from close range. Napoli, who finished second in Group E behind Liverpool, soon threatened again. Their captain, Lorenzo Insigne, weaved his way into the left of the Barça area and forced Ter Stegen into a low save.

Japan reports two virus-linked deaths, urges public events cancelled

TOKYO, FEB 26 (AFP): Japan reported two more deaths linked to the coronavirus on Wednesday as the government called for organisers to reconsider holding major events in coming weeks to limit the outbreak.

The news came as dozens of passengers allowed off a virus-stricken cruise ship were reported to have developed symptoms including fever, and will be asked to be re-tested for the virus.

A Tokyo man in his 80s who tested positive for the infection died of pneumonia, the health ministry said.

He had not travelled to China recently and there was no sign he had contact with known infected individuals, it said in a statement.

Another elderly person in the Hokkaido region of northern Japan died of viral pneumonia, the ministry said.

Testing done after the death confirmed the infection of the individual, whose details have not been released at the request of the family.

"In light of the significant infection risks, we will ask that national sporting or cultural events that will attract large crowds be either cancelled, postponed or downsized for the next two weeks," Prime Minister Shinzo Abe told a cabinet task force meeting on the outbreak.

After the announcement, the Nippon Professional Baseball Organization said its unofficial spring games through March 15 would be held in empty stadiums before the official season opens on March 20.

Some top Japanese musicians -- including all-male group Exile and female trio Perfume -- cancelled concerts, while the Tokyo Girls Collection fashion show on Saturday will be held with no audience, according to their organisers.

The virus has also forced professional football, rugby, golf, tennis and other sports to reschedule games or to hold events with no fans in attendance.

The sumo association



will hold an emergency board meeting on Sunday to discuss whether to hold their sold-out March tournament in Osaka in western Japan.

The government has also asked state-operated museums and theatres to consider closing or cancelling shows.

Abe and cabinet ministers have repeatedly said that the coming weeks will be critical in limiting the spread of the

virus in Japan.

But those measures have been largely advisory, including recommending that people work from home or commute off-peak.

The governor of Hokkaido, where at least 38 people have been diagnosed, said he was asking local municipalities to close public schools for one week from Thursday.

In Tokyo, meanwhile, the regional education

board said public high schools could start late to spare students travelling on packed commuter trains.

The outbreak has raised fears that the Olympic Games to be hosted in Tokyo this summer could be cancelled, a possibility government officials and organisers have rejected.

"We have not thought about it. We have not heard about it.

We have made inquiries, and we were told there is no such plan," Tokyo 2020 CEO Toshiro Muto told reporters.

"Our basic thinking is to conduct the Olympics and Paralympics as planned. That's our assumption."

Along with at least 165 infections across the country, Japan has dealt with lingering worries about those who disembarked from the virus-hit

Diamond Princess cruise ship. The government has contacted 813 former passengers of the ship and found "45 people had certain symptoms", Health Minister Katsunobu Kato told parliament. "We asked all of them (who have symptoms) to see a doctor and to take tests."

Japan has come under increasing pressure over its handling of the crisis on the vessel.

Those allowed off the ship after a 14-day quarantine were asked to stay inside, but no formal measures restricting their movement were imposed.

Around 970 people were allowed off the boat last week after testing negative for the virus, but several have subsequently been diagnosed with the illness.

Opposition lawmakers have blamed the government for failing to implement a fresh 14-day quarantine after the passengers left the cruise ship -- as was required by countries that repatriated citizens from the boat.

'Trump's India visit aimed at deepening strategic ties'

BY LALIT K JHA

WASHINGTON, FEB 26 (PTI): US President Donald Trump's maiden official visit to India was aimed at deepening the strategic bilateral partnership, the White House has said after he concluded his whirlwind 36-hour tour to the country.

The US and India benefit from the strong economic ties that advance prosperity, investment and job creation in both the countries, the White House said in a statement titled 'President Donald J Trump is strengthening our strategic partnership with India'. Underlining it was the first official visit of the president to India, the White House said that both the countries enjoyed a long-standing trade relationship, exceeding USD 142 billion in 2018 alone.

India is a growing destination for American energy exports, it said, adding that during President Trump's tenure, energy exports to India have grown substantially, generating billions of



dollars in revenue. In India, ExxonMobil signed a deal to further improve India's natural gas distribution network so that the country can accept even more American LNG exports, it said.

The White House said that the US president and Prime Minister Narendra Modi are working towards a trade pact that reflects the full potential of the bilateral economic partnership. "The United States and India are committed to investing in sustainable, transparent, quality infrastructure in the

region," it said.

According to the White House, the two nations are deepening their security relationship and helping to promote a free and open Indo-Pacific region. "The United States is working closely with India to combat terrorism, confront global drug trafficking and promote a free and open Indo-Pacific," it said. "President Trump and Prime Minister Modi are calling on other countries in the region to take steps to counter terrorism. The

United States India defence cooperation contributes to the prosperity and security of the entire Indo-Pacific region," it said.

During his visit, Trump spoke about the importance of the United States-India relationship before a crowd of more than 110,000 people at the Ahmedabad's Motera stadium, the White House said, adding that he had the privilege of visiting some of India's cherished cultural sites, including the Taj Mahal in Agra.

China coronavirus: Death toll climbs to over 2,700 amidst signs of slowdown

BY K J M VARMA

BEIJING, FEB 26 (PTI): The death toll in China's novel coronavirus epidemic on Wednesday climbed to 2,715 with 52 new fatalities while the confirmed cases rose to 78,064, amidst strong signs of COVID-19 slowing down even at its epicentre Hubei province.

The country's National Health Commission (NHC) in its daily update said it received reports of 52 deaths, all from Hubei, and 406 new confirmed cases of the novel coronavirus infection from all over the country.

The death toll has gone up to 2,715 and overall confirmed cases reached 78,064, it said.

Another 439 new suspected cases were reported on Tuesday while the number of severe cases decreased by 374 to 8,752, it said.

Overall 2,491 people were still suspected of being infected with the virus.

A total of 29,745 people have been discharged from hospital after recovery.

The commission said 6.47 lakh close contacts had been traced, and over 79,000 are still under medical observation.

By the end of Tuesday, 85 confirmed cases including two deaths had been reported from Hong Kong, 10 confirmed cases in Macao and 31 in Taiwan including one death.

Wuhan, the capital city of the hardest-hit province of Hubei, remains the main battlefield for prevention and control of the coronavirus epidemic in the country, the NHC said.

Resolute efforts should be made to curb the rise in confirmed cases in the periphery of Hubei and other key provincial-level regions, He Qinghua, an official of the NHC told the media.

A joint prevention and control mechanism should be initiated between Hubei and its neighbouring provinces to help prevent the spread of the epidemic to neighbouring areas and provide materials,

personnel and transportation support needed in Hubei, He said.

Hubei and Wuhan together with over 50 million population continue to be under lockdown since January 23 with all public and private transportation remained suspended.

Other key areas including Beijing, Zhejiang and Guangdong should enhance coordination with Hubei in prevention work, such as information sharing, to contain further spread of the epidemic, He said.

For lower-risk regions across the country, preventive measures should be adopted at the county level to avoid relapse of the epidemic situation while advancing resumption of work and production as soon as possible, He said, stressing efforts to step up disinfection and ventilation as well as passengers' temperature and health monitoring to reduce the risk of virus transmission amidst people's return trips.

Greta Thunberg meets Malala Yousafzai at Oxford university

LONDON, FEB 26 (PTI): Swedish teen climate change campaigner Greta Thunberg has met Pakistani rights activist Malala Yousafzai during a visit to the prestigious Oxford University, generating buzz in social media.

Thunberg, 17, made the trip to Lady Margaret Hall where she met the 22-year-old Nobel Peace Prize laureate on Tuesday, the BBC reported.

Thunberg is set to join a school strike in Bristol this week while Yousafzai is studying Politics, Philosophy and Economics at the University of Oxford.

Yousafzai posted a picture of the two young activists on Instagram, saying simply: "Thank you @gretathunberg".

"She's the only friend

I'd skip school for," she said on Twitter.

Also posting on social media, Thunberg said: "So...today I met my role model. What else can I say?"

It is not known what the pair discussed, the report said.

According to Alan Rusbridger, the principal of Lady Margaret Hall, Thunberg spoke to students about "science, voting, the limits of protest, divestment, real zero v net zero, and much more" during her visit.

Commenting on the meeting between Thunberg and Yousafzai, Jennifer Cassidy, a lecturer in politics at the University of Oxford, wrote: "I walk out my door, on one street and see @Malala and @GretaThunberg talking outside. "Two

powerful young women standing for justice, truth and equality for all," Cassidy tweeted.

Good Morning Britain host Piers Morgan said: "What a photo... the two most influential young women of my lifetime meet in Oxford."

But some others were less complimentary, describing the pair as "overrated", the BBC report said.

Twitter user Luis Hulyer said: "One risked her life to go to school, the other plays truant."

Two years ago, Thunberg started missing lessons most Fridays to protest outside the Swedish Parliament building, in what turned out to be the beginning of a huge environmental movement.

She has become a leading voice for action

on climate change, inspiring millions of students to join protests around the world. Thunberg has been named Time magazine's Person of the Year for 2019.

In 2012, Yousafzai was shot in the head, neck and shoulder by a Taliban militant while returning home from school. She angered the Taliban by writing an anonymous diary about life under the extremists in the picturesque Swat Valley in Pakistan.

After recovering from her near-fatal injuries, she and her family relocated to Birmingham.

In 2014, Yousafzai became the youngest person ever to win the Nobel Peace Prize, at the age of 17. Three years later she accepted a place to study at Oxford.

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FASHION READY! The ladies, Cara Delevingne & Karlie Kloss sit front row at the Dior show during Paris Fashion Week.

Don't want to do sensuous roles anymore: Mahie Gill

BY RAVI BANSAL

NEW DELHI, FEB 26 (PTI): Actor Mahie Gill has much more to offer as an artiste than just playing “sensuous” characters and the actor says her upcoming film, family comedy “Doordarshan”, is her first step in the new direction.

The film, directed by Gagan Puri, was a breath of fresh air for Mahie, who has made a name for herself by delivering powerful performances in movies such as “Gulaal”, “Dev D” and “Sahib Biwi Aur Gangster”.

“When Gagan came to me, I really liked the script, I loved it. It was a breath of fresh air because the kind of films that I did earlier were very serious and sensuous. I needed a break from these roles and this is a comedy which I haven't explored much,” the actor told PTI in an interview.

Mahie said she has been looking for opportunities to explore the alternate side of her personality for a long while, but film producers and directors still offer her similar characters.

“The kind of roles that were being offered to me, I was saying no to a lot of them. I don't want to continue doing sensuous roles. I did three parts of ‘Sahib Biwi and

Gangster’ but after that I was continuously offered similar parts.

“I would love to do a part four of ‘Sahib..’ but not a similar film. If I want to try something in this genre, then I prefer to continue working on this franchise. But it becomes boring for an actor to do similar roles. Somewhere



you have to take a stand for yourself.”

“Doorsharshan” revolves around a family who decides to recreate the era of 1980s after their matriarch suddenly wakes up from decades long coma.

Mahie said she liked the film for two reasons -- her character was a Punjabi like her real self and the film was trip down memory lane.

“This character is so much like me. After ‘Dev D’, this is the first movie where I'm able to speak the way I'm do real life. Since I'm from Chandigarh, the character also has a Punjabi touch to it,” she said.

“I miss the serials of that time, especially the sitcoms ‘Dekh Bhai Dekh’ and ‘Yeh

Jo Hai Zindagi’. Today, you turn on the TV and you're bombarded with the choices. You really don't know what to watch. But in the 80s, it was only Doordarshan and I now realise that most of their shows were ahead of their time,” Mahie added.

“Doordarshan”, also featuring actors Manu Rishi and Dolly Ahluwalia is scheduled to be released on Friday.

you put it into practice. What this day calls for: a greater degree of innovation and initiative. How can you set the stage for positive change? Gemini, you are being guided by your higher self at every step. Another question you want to ask yourself before you move forward: is the chosen path in alignment with my highest good? Take some time to check in with that long-term plan today. Tip: Act in alignment with your highest good.

CANCER: One person can't be your everything. Similarly, you cannot be everything to one person, though sometimes you may want to be. Relationships such as these can get co-dependent. Claustrophobic, even. That's never a good place to be. Follow your intuition, Cancer. Step back if you need to. The Universe is asking you to regroup and find a sense of fulfillment within yourself before you approach them. Tip: Let go of the need to be somebody's everything.

LEO: Here's the thing, Leo: we don't always get closure the way we want to. Is

that a bad thing? Depends on your perception of the situation. Today, you will be tested. The Universe is going check in to see if you have really integrated the lesson. So do the inner work. Accept the things you cannot change. A good way to make a positive shift is to remember that everything that is taking place is in alignment with your highest good. Tip: It's time to let go.

VIRGO: The Virgin new moon is bringing with it magical beginnings, especially in the realm of work, career and education. There's something reassuring in the air, and you know you'll make your way up despite how you have been feeling. Set your intentions from a space of love and get into action mode. For some of you, this could be a time of starting a new business or investing in a project of your own. Turn to a wise mentor or guide to understand how to make your finances work for you. Tip: Time to start a new project.

LIBRA: Loss isn't always physical, Libra. Sometimes it's mental. At other times, it's emotional. Here's the thing

though: everything we experience is a result of the choices we make. So take a moment to think about what you are allowing into your space. Could there be a relationship that is draining you rather making you feel fulfilled? There's no shame in putting yourself first. Tip: You have the permission to choose you.

SCORPIO: Albert Einstein once said, “Imagination is more important than knowledge. Knowledge is limited. Imagination encircles the world.” This week, you're being asked to tap into the forgotten reservoir of childlike playfulness, to move beyond your own limitations, and find joy in everything you do. Yes, there is a way to be happy and successful at the same time. Scorpio, you are on your way to perfecting the recipe. Oh, and don't worry too much about perfection! Think of every mistake as an opportunity to get better at the game. Tip: Tap into that playful side.

SAGITTARIUS: Take a moment to consider what you're putting on your plate. It's not just about maintaining a

balanced diet. It's about understanding the source of your ingredients. Adopting an organic diet comes with its own set of perks like increased energy, focus, and manifestation abilities. But there's nothing quite like direct experience, is there? If you've been thinking about adopting a plant-based diet or integrating more vegetables, consider this is as your green flag! Tip: Eat mindfully.

CAPRICORN: Capricorn, you're being asked to make your choice with awareness. There are so many lives that depend on the outcome. So check yourself before you go into a space of delay. Having a hard time deciding the best way forward? Truth is, you aren't paying attention to what your inner voice is telling you. So bring out those noise-cancelling headphones on and listen to your guides. Journaling the very first thought that comes to you is a good way to stay connected with the cosmic cues. Tip: Your inner voice is always guiding you.

AQUARIUS: “It is not your job to make something happen, Universal Forces are

in place for all of that. Your work is to simply determine what you want.” Let this Esther Hicks classic remind you of the importance of single-minded focus and staying in the vibration of the miracles you are manifesting at the moment. Yes, you can have it all. Allow yourself to receive. Know that the blocks that stood in your way are now being cleared. Tip: Align yourself with the miracle you are manifest. Believe.

PISCES: You may not be where you imagined you would be, yet you are exactly where you need to be. Exercise a little more faith in the mysterious forces above. The Universe is orchestrating a cosmic cleanse at this moment, one that is removing the obstacles on your path. So release the unhealthy attachments as you relinquish the need to control. Giving yourself the permission to flow will take you where you need to go. In the words of Danielle LaPorte, “Going with the flow is responding to cues from the Universe. When you go with the flow, you're surfing the life force. Tip: You are exactly where you need to be.

Merit isn't the sacrosanct in film industry: Kay Kay Menon

MUMBAI, FEB 26 (PTI): With critically-acclaimed performances in films such as “Gulaal”, “Shaurya” and “Haider”, Kay Kay Menon established himself as one of the most versatile contemporary performers, but the actor says praise doesn't take anyone a long way in the film industry. After working for close to three decades in Bollywood, Menon said he has understood that movie business doesn't function on merit.

“I've learnt how to deal with the industry, where merit isn't the sacrosanct. You have to understand this is how it is and get on with your work.. I'd prefer that people put their money where the mouth is while praising me. “I often say don't praise me anymore because I've got so many pats on the back that I've ended up with a backache and nothing else,” Menon told PTI in an interview.

The actor said social media has played a catalyst in making his work stay relevant.

“It has pulled up my past work. The young guys have messaged me saying ‘Mr Menon you have great potential!’ I have somewhere managed to fulfil that aspect of my life, that my art should outlive me.” Though he holds an impressive

filmography, the actor has also featured in films which neither got acclaim nor were box office hits.

Menon said in his earlier days in the industry, he'd often get impatient when

camera and not off it.

“When I step out of my house, I don't need any background score. I don't need flashing cameras all the time. I don't like to act in real life. I like to act in front of a



good work didn't come his way. “I used to get angry, impatient in my earlier days. I used to be hostile, sarcastic but over a period of time you realise this is the path you've chosen. If my personal marketing was a path, it would've been a different thing.”

The actor said he is not interested in branding himself using his personal life, for he prefers to act only in front of the

Lady Gaga announces first solo pop single in three years

LOS ANGELES, FEB 26 (PTI): Singer Lady Gaga is set to release her first pop single in three years, “Stupid Love”, on Friday.

The singer, who won her first best original song Oscar for “Shallow” from her debut movie “A Star Is Born” in 2019, made the announcement on Twitter.

“‘Stupid Love’. The new single by Lady Gaga out Friday,” Gaga posted alongside a picture of a billboard fea-

turing song's title splashed across a picture of bright pink lips.

Gaga, 33, dropped her last solo LP, “Joanne”, in October 2016 and supported the studio set with a world tour and a Super Bowl halftime show performance.

The singer had told Entertainment Weekly in 2017 that she had begun work on a new album. The title of Gaga's sixth album has not been announced yet.

West Bengal minister dons director's hat

KOLKATA, FEB 26 (PTI): Taking time off his busy schedule, West Bengal minister Bratya Basu is directing a Bengali film starring actor-turned-Trinamool Congress MP Nusrat Jahan.

The film, ‘Dictionary’, deals with the distance created in relationships, the minister of science and technology said.

‘Dictionary’ has been adapted from two short stories by Buddhadeb Guha - ‘Baba Howa’ (Becoming a father) and ‘Swami Howa’ (Becoming a husband).

“The film seeks to explore the layers of human ties,” Basu, who is a well-known theatre personality, told reporters at the shooting location. Basu said theatre is his passion and he has been squeezing out time to direct and stage plays, besides factoring the camera in around 30 Bengali films.

“Hence, finding out time

for acting or directing cannot be impossible if you have the will to work,” he said to a question on Tuesday.

Basu, who had directed Bengali film ‘Tara’ in 2010 before becoming a minister, said, “It is more challenging from the technical point of view this time since I am making the film on digital media instead of celluloid stock.”

Actor Nusrat Jahan, who plunged into politics last year, said she wanted to work with Basu for long.

“This time I am happy he is directing me,” she said.

Popular Bangladeshi actor Mosharraf Karim is essaying a pivotal role in the film which also stars Abir Chatterjee and Parambrata Chattopadhyay.

The shooting of the film will take place at Bolpur and Purulia apart from Kolkata.

West Bengal minister dons director's hat.

Neeraj Pandey says he has understood how to tackle sensitive issues on screen



MUMBAI, 26 (PTI): Filmmaker Neeraj Pandey says he has understood how to tackle sensitive subjects in films without being controversial. Neeraj's films ‘A Wednesday’, ‘Baby’ and ‘Aiyaary’, have dealt with socio-political issues such as terrorism and corruption.

The filmmaker is now making his debut on the digital space with “Special Ops”, a series which chronicles terror attacks the country has faced around a fictitious story.

When asked about precautions he took while making the series considering the sensitivity of the subject, Neeraj told reporters, “I have gotten used to it since ‘A Wednesday.’ It has been 12 years, so now I have gotten used to about what to say and how to say.”

The Hotstar Special revolves around a manhunt for a fictitious terrorist mastermind responsible for carrying out multiple terror attacks, from one on Parliament in 2001 to 26/11 in Mumbai.

The filmmaker said the series is set against the back-

drop of the Parliament attacks but rest of the work is a piece of fiction.

“The agenda was to tell a 7-7.5 hours story, which was of course not possible with a film. The reason we chased this idea was that it was big, not only in terms of its scale and scope but also in terms of its heart. It speaks about a protagonist and his team on a chase for 19 years and that itself was a fantastic point to start everything.”

The action-packed spy thriller series, which he has co-directed with Shivam Nair, is mounted on international scale. Neeraj said the key to make a successful spy thriller, however, lies in good writing.

“If the writing is weak, then however you want to mount it, it's not going to work. So for me the key is good writing. If it's researched well, if it's set and rooted well, it's going to fly. Otherwise it's going to be a tough one all the way.”

The show, featuring Kay Kay Menon, Karan Tacker, Divya Dutta, Saiyami Kher and Vinay Pathak, among others, will start streaming from March 17.