



**NBC HAS LAUNCHED A
FORMAL INVESTIGATION INTO
“AMERICA'S GOT TALENT”**
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REVERSE PROGRESS IN
ACHIEVING GENDER EQUALITY**

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**ADAM SANDLER TELLS HOWARD STERN
HOW HE AND CHRIS FARLEY RESPONDED
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SummitTIMES

Vol 04 | Issue 321 | Gangtok | Friday | 06 December 2019

ON TOP OF THE NEWS

RNI No. SIKENG/2016/69420

Pages 8 | ₹ 5

Debate over onion prices spices up political talk

NEW DELHI, DEC 5 (PTI): Spiralling prices of onion in the country have become the talk of the town, and a subject of banter among politicians.

On Thursday, the onion prices which have been fluctuating for over a month in Delhi, touched Rs 109 per kg in many markets in the city.

The soaring rates may have made a common man's platter a little less appealing, but the ongoing debate over onion prices has surely spiced up verbal exchanges among a few in political circles.

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Wednesday had said in Lok Sabha that the government has taken several steps to check rising prices of onion and to improve technology for better storage of the kitchen staple.

Adding a dash of humour to her statement, she, however, also said she doesn't eat much of onion or garlic, adding, "I belong to a family which does not eat onion and garlic."

When asked about Sitharaman's comment, former finance minister P Chidambaram, who arrived in Parliament on Thursday after spending 106 days in Tihar jail, quipped, "Does she eat avocado?"

Addressing a press conference later, Chidambaram, however, said his comments on the finance minister was not "sarcastic".

"I was not sarcastic, I was quoting her. They should have planned in advance, what is the point of importing (onion) now, when will they arrive. But if the finance minister says I don't eat onions, that shows the mindset of this government," he said.

Asked about the soaring prices of the bulb across the country, Union minister Ashwini Kumar Choubey said he is not aware of it as he never tasted onions.

The government had on Wednesday said that the state-run trading firm MMTC has placed

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Motor Vehicles (Amendment) Act 2019 extended to Sikkim

Road Safety cum Enforcement Drive from Jan next year

**SAGAR CHETTRI
GANGTOK, 05 DEC:**

The Motor Vehicles (Amendment) Act, 2019, was extended to the State of Sikkim on Thursday. Motor Vehicle Division of Transport Department brought out a notification today regarding the implementation of the said Act in the State after taking the government's approval.

Addressing a press conference here today, Secretary to Transport Department, Raju Basnet, stated that the Motor Vehicles (Amendment) Act, 2019, received the President's assent on 09 August this year and was implemented in various States.

"We wanted to first understand the feedback from other States who have already implemented the Act in their respec-



tive states. We received overall good feedback and results from these States," he said.

He added that other States have mentioned that the act has been successful in reducing traffic violation and has disciplined traffic manage-

ment in their States.

Fines as per the new amendment act will now be applicable in the State, he said further adding that fines are around ten times more than the existing fines.

There are stringent fines

mainly for over-speeding, over-loading, driving without license and others, said Mr Basnet. He informed that enforcement agencies found breaking the rules will be charged double the fine amount.

Mr Basnet mentioned that

there were 85 deaths in road accidents in 2016, 87 deaths in 2017, 85 deaths last year and a total of 137 road accidents have been reported till October this year in which there were 72 deaths. On the same, he stated that the

department wants to implement the new amendment act strictly to address the issue of road accidents.

The Secretary informed that the department has decided to educate the people and stakeholders on road safety norms and will be starting a three-month long Road Safety cum Enforcement Drive throughout the State from January next year.

While appealing to all stakeholders and people to keep all papers and documents updated by end of December, he stated that the drive would be kept at different spots throughout the State.

"We are also ready to listen to different stakeholders and general public for redressal of genuine issues," he said.

Mr Basnet informed that the department is also working on technical processes to support the amendment act. He informed that e-challan will start from March next year followed by introduction of other technical services.

Youth found dead, public accuse ASI of murder



**WANGCHUK BHUTIA
MANGAN, 05 DEC:**

The public of Thingchhim in North Sikkim gheraad Rang Rang Police Outpost this morning over the death of an 18-year-old, Jigdal Bhutia who was working as a Village Guard at the said outpost. The public had also blocked the North Sikkim highway this morning which was later opened.

The deceased's body was found under a bridge near the Police Outpost this morning. While the death was initially thought to be a suicide, later the family of the deceased along with

the people of Thingchhim alleged that Rang Rang OP in-charge, Assistant Sub-Inspector, Dawa Namgyal Bhutia could have murdered the youth.

They alleged that the ASI was given to drinking and used to harass the deceased.

It was also informed that in the past, Panchayat President of Thingchhim GPU, Sari Bhutia had submitted a written complaint against the ASI and had requested the authorities to transfer him from Rang Rang OP.

The ASI is placed under police custody and DC

North has taken charge of the inquiry into the case. The body of the deceased has been taken to CRH Tadong for autopsy.

Earlier in the day, the family of the deceased and public demanded that they be allowed to meet the ASI which was denied by the police.

To bring the situation under control, the Director Inspector General of Police had also reached Rang Rang Outpost. Later, Dzongu MLA, PN Lepcha, SKM Party in-charge, Dzongu constituency and Up-adhyaksha, North, also reached Rang Rang spot.

Pakyong Airport affected families receive Rs 20.06 cr compensation

**SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 05 DEC:**

In what looks like a breakthrough in the dispute regarding land compensation in the construction of the Pakyong Greenfield Airport, a total amount of Rs 20.06 crore was disbursed to 35 affected land owners today.

Flights to and fro Pakyong Airport had been suspended in June 2019 due to poor visibility and lack of proper landing facilities. Affected landowners had further refused to allow any work like expansion of the runway at the site until the compensation and land acquisition issue was resolved.

The affected land owners had demanded that the State government and Airports Authority of India (AAI) adequately compensate for the loss caused to their farmlands and houses according to Land Com-



pensation Act 2013.

An IPR Deptt release informs that this is the first installment which makes 40% of the total compensation amount.

The compensation was disbursed in a program held at the Community Hall, Pakyong, in the presence of area MLA [Rhenock], Bishnu Kr Sharma, SKM area in-charge, Gnathang-Machong, Tshering Bhutia, Additional Chief Secretary, Dr K Jayakumar, Air-

port Director, Ramatanu Saha, ADC (Dev), Pakyong, Radha Pradhan, SDM, Pakyong, Hemant Rai.

Joint agreement and the letter of Consent / Undertaking was also read out to the affected families/landowners in both English and Nepali. The salient aspects of the provisions of the Agreement were also highlighted and explained by the concerned official.

On behalf of the landowners, Krishna Dhakal

thanked the Chief Minister and his government for the release of the long pending compensation in such a short period. Further, he assured that they would extend all possible support and co-operation in the completion and full operation of the Airport.

The gathering was also addressed by the Area MLA, Rhenock, Area in-charge, Gnathang Machong, Addl. CS and SDM, Pakyong.

28 SHG tailoring groups to stitch 20,000 school uniforms

**SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 05 DEC:**

One-day orientation for SHG Tailoring Groups who will be engaged in stitching school uniforms was organized by Sikkim Rural Livelihood Mission [SRLM] at SICUN conference hall at As-sam Lingzey today.

A press release informs that the Education department has given approval for stitching 20,004 pieces of uniforms through SHGs this year. There are 28 such tailoring groups formed under SRLM.

The orientation was organized to prepare these SHGs, the release mentions.

Sikkim Rural Livelihood Mission of Rural Development Department facilitated the formation of these tailoring groups among the SHGs from all Districts.



In the program, RDD Minister, Sonam Lama distributed sewing machines to selected SHG members.

As per the assurance given by the Chief Minister, this year School uniform stitching work is being awarded to SHGs on pilot basis with

20,000 pieces of school uniforms to be stitched by SHGs. He informed that this year Sewing Machines are being provided to 116 SHG members who have tailoring skills but do not have sewing machines.

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PWD Minister inspects West roads, directs immediate resumption of stalled works

GYALSHING, 05 DEC [IPR]: PWD Minister Samdup Lepcha, who is on a two-day visit to West Sikkim, visited ongoing road constructions and today, the final day of his tour.

Mr Lepcha first visited the Chagay Falls where he instructed the contractor to immediately resume construction of the bridge there which has been pending for a long time and urged the ACE Roads and DE Roads to take note of the progress and keep him updated.



He gave stern directions to the contractor to resume work immediately as the delay was hampering the public.

He then proceeded towards the Som Slide site where he met residents

of the affected area and urged the Roads & Bridges Department to work more aggressively to complete restoration of the area.

He then inspected the road condition on the Dentam-Uttarey-Chi-

wa Bhanjayang axis and here as well asked the contractor to resume and complete the work at the earliest. He emphasized the importance of road connectivity and its impact on rural and international tourism which needs to be seen and understood by the contractor.

He also mentioned that the Department was willing to help contractors if they were willing to finish the work as early as possible.

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Bhaichung Bhutia Football School and Sports Deptt join hands to scout and promote young players

**SAGAR CHHETRI
GANGTOK, 05 DEC:**

Sports & Youth Affairs Department and Bhaichung Bhutia Football School have come together to promote football and attempt to produce more footballers from different corners of the State. This collaboration was formally announced by Secretary, Sports & Youth Affairs Department, Kuber Bhandari and BBFA founder, Bhaichung Bhutia, at a press conference here at Paljor Stadium on Thursday.

The joint venture's main intent is to scout for talented footballers in U-13 and U-15 age-group from the grassroot level. The best footballers in the two categories will receive scholarship from BBFA for two years.

Addressing a press conference, Mr Bhandari informed that this was the first collaboration between the Department and BBFA and



mentioned that coaching camps will be organised in the district-level under the 'Prince of Football' programme.

He added that district-level teams in both categories will then

be formed and taken through a 20-day coaching camp to prepare them for state-level competition.

"After the state-level competition, a state-level team will be formed

in each category. These U-13 and U-15 teams will then be taken by BBFS on exposure trips," he said.

The Secretary informed that after the exposure trip, the best footballer in each of the two

categories will receive scholarship and also exposure to clubs in Europe by BBFA for two years.

Mr Bhutia mentioned that the scholarships could be extended on the basis of the progress and improve-

ment of the player.

He informed that BBFA was now the highest rated football academy as per the All India Football Federation and provides coaching to more than 300 children every day at its 75 training centres. The Academy has more than 200 coaches and a residential academy which was started a year back in Gurgaon. A second residential academy was coming up in Kerala.

"We always wanted to work for Sikkim and are thankful to the State government, Minister and SYA Department for this tie-up," he said and expressed hope for the success of the joint venture.

He informed that the 20-day district-level coaching camp will start in all districts on 05 December and will be followed by a state-level competition and an exposure trip to Delhi in March next year.

Debate over...

another onion import order of 4,000 tonnes from Turkey and the shipments are expected to reach by mid-January.

From Facebook to Twitter, the social media too revelled in some humour over the rising prices of onion, while a few users offered some suggestions.

"Work in Silence, B! Let your Success Buy onion !!!! (FEELING PROUD) (sic)," user Raju Roy posted on Facebook and shared a picture of a basket carrying some onions.

Anchit Pandey, another Facebook user wrote in Hindi, "Can live without love ('pyaar'), but not without onion ('pyaaz')."

"What are you trying to say @nsitharaman if you are not eating onions, what you want from citizens of India they should also stop eating onions, you should try to decrease the prices," tweeted Aditya Jaiswal.

The onion prices remained a part of online conversation on Thursday on the social media, and many urged government to take steps to curb rising prices.

"Onion is one of the cheapest vegetables in India most of the times, if it increases beyond a point people will switch to other vegetables increasing the prices of those too. So it is not a great thing that onion prices are high," tweeted another user.

PWD Minister...

He also met with the Panchayats of Sopakha GPU who placed their grievances about the condition of roads in their respective areas.

The Minister expressed his gratitude towards the PWD Officials of West district for their tireless efforts towards maintaining connectivity in the district and urged them to continue working in similar fashion.

He also mentioned that the State Government was continuously working for the people's benefit and will try to do more with the cooperation of the State and District Officials.

The Minister was accompanied by Additional Chief Engineer Thupden G Bhutia, Divisional Engineer [Roads] Phurba Bhutia; Assistant Engineer RD Lepcha, Panchayats and other Departmental Officials.

Similarly, on the first day of his visit yesterday, the Minister visited the Chenrezig Singkham Riwo Potla where he chaired a meeting of the Governing and Managing Committees of the project along with the DC, ADC and the officials of the Culture Department.

He also inspected the area and interacted with the District Officials and the Committee.

28 SHG...

RDD Minister, Sonam Lama, was the chief guest for the program. The program was attended by Principal Secretary, CS Rao, Commissioner RDD, Dr P Senthil Kumar, GM NABARD, Tshering, other officials and staff of SRLM, NABARD, LDM, SBI and other bank Managers along with the SHG members from SHG tailoring groups across the state.

Commissioner/RDD, Senthil Kumar said that if the SHGs prove themselves by delivering quality stitching, SHGs will be able to get the entire contract for stitching amounting to about 1 lakh pieces next year onwards.

He advised all SHG tailors to adhere to the quality, size and pattern as prescribed by the Education Department and deliver it on time.

Deputy Director, Education Department explained the process to be followed in completing the school uniform stitching by the SHG members and the charges admissible to them.

In the afternoon there was a detailed discussion on execution of school uniform stitching works by SHGs. The Commissioner explained in detail about the allocation methods, the availability of fabrics, time line for the job and support by the government including the stitching charges fixed by the Government and process for releasing the payments, etc.

All SHG Tailor members expressed confidence that they will work with dedication and deliver quality uniform to the students.

Pariksha Pe Charcha short essay competition launched

Best entries to take part in Charcha with PM

NEW DELHI, 05 DEC (PIB): The HRD Ministry in partnership with MyGov has launched a 'short essay' competition for students of classes 9 to 12 for the third edition of Prime Minister's Interaction Programme with school students "Pariksha Pe Charcha 2020" proposed to be held next month. The entries for the competition, to be sent online, have been made open from 2nd December, 2019.

As in previous years, students are also being invited to send their questions for the event online. The students whose entries are judged the best for both the competitions will be invited to take part in the programme to be held in Delhi.

The first edition of Prime Minister's Interaction Programme with school and college students "Pariksha Pe Charcha 1.0" was held at Talkatora Stadium, New Delhi on 16 Feb, 2018. The second edition of the said Interaction Programme with school and college students "Pariksha Pe Charcha 2.0" was also held at Talkatora Stadium, New Delhi on 29th January, 2019.

Third edition of Prime Minister's Interaction Programme with school students "Pariksha Pe Charcha 2020" is proposed to be held at Talkatora Stadium, New Delhi in third week of January, 2020.

Proposed format: PPC2020 will

have the same 'Town Hall' format as in previous two events, which is unique in itself wherein the Prime Minister interacts with school students at the Talkatora Stadium, New Delhi. This format was a huge success during the last 2 years. About 2000 school students will be participating in the programme PPC2020.

For the above mentioned online competitions, students can participate through www.mygov.in website on the following themes:

- Gratitude is Great
A short write-up on the people who a student thinks has played an important role in his/her academic journey so far mentioning why he/she is grateful to them.
- Your future depends on your Aspirations
A short write-up on the goals and career aspirations a student sets for himself/herself.
- Examining Exams
Opinion of students on prevailing examination system and suggestions on ideal examination system.
- Our Duties, Your Take
Write-up on duties of citizens and how one can inspire everyone to become more dutiful citizens.
- Balance is Beneficial
Write-up on balanced activities of students apart from studies.

Selected winners stand a chance to attend Pariksha Pe Charcha 2020 and interact with Prime Minister, Narendra Modi. Total 2000 students, parents and teachers will be participating from all over India in Pariksha Pe Charcha 2020.

Students from all over the country from class VI to XII are being requested to see/hear the broadcast on Doordarshan (DD National, DD News, DD India)/on radio channels (All India Radio Medium Wave, All India Radio FM Channel).

Last year more than 8.5 Crore students from across the country viewed or heard the programme on DD/TV Channels/ Radio Channels. It was widely covered by print and electronic media. As per media reports, the interaction programme, became a raging hit on social media, and was the No. 1 trend conversation on "Pariksha Pe Charcha" which got more than 2.5 million impressions on twitter. It was widely viewed on youtube, Facebook Live, through webcasting, among others. Participation of Indian community abroad will also be encouraged, as done last year.

Participate in the Pariksha Pe Charcha 2020 by going in this link: <https://innovate.mygov.in/ppc-2020/>.



FLORENCE NIGHTINGALE AWARDS:

President of India, Ram Nath Kovind, presenting the National Florence Nightingale Awards on the occasion of the International Nurses Day at Rashtrapati Bhavan on Thursday. The Union Minister for Health & Family Welfare, Science & Technology and Earth Sciences, Dr Harsh Vardhan and the Minister of State for Health and Family Welfare, Ashwini Kumar Choubey are also seen. [PIB]

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ANTHYESTHI KRIYA (SUDDHI KARYA)

Anthyesthi Kriya (Suddhi Karya) of our beloved sister Late Meena Gajmer who left for Paramdham on 30th November, 2019 falls on Friday, the 6th December, 2019. All relatives, friends and well-wishers are requested to join us in offering prayers to the departed soul at our residence at Lingding Zero below Lingding Junior High School, ICAR - Lingding Road. We would also like to take this opportunity to thank all those who stood by us in the hour of bereavement.

Narendra Gajmer, Chetan Gajmer (Younger brothers), Indira Gajmer, Pushpa Gajmer (Younger sisters), DK Gajmer, DB Gajmer (Cousin brothers).

Contact: 8101480557, 8768773529, 9735963493.



ANTHYESTHI KRIYA

13th days Anthyesthi Kriya of our beloved mother Late Mrs. Pushpa Darnal of Gangtok (Deorali) who left for her heavenly soul on 27th November, 2019 falls on 09th December, 2019.

Venue – Lexicon More Pathar Ghatta Road, Ashiyana apartment, Matigara near Royal Academy school.

Contact No -

Mrs. Karuna Rai Daughter

Mr. Lakshan Darnal (Elder Son) 9635831527

Mr. Mahesh Darnal (Younger Son) 9775438955

And all family members



KVK South observes World Soil Day



**SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 05 DEC:**

Krishni Vigyan Kendra, South Sikkim, observed World Soil Day at KVK Campus on 05 Dec, 2019, a press release informs. The programme was attended by extension functionaries of Horticulture and Agriculture Department.

The farmers from Turuk, Bokrong and Ruchung villages also attended the programme. At the very outset Sr Scientist and Head KVK South, IP Shivakoti welcomed the gathering and briefed the farmers

about World Soil Day and importance of soil health management in organic farming.

ADO, Soil Testing Lab, Namthang, Yograj Pradhan, presented a detailed PowerPoint presentation about Soil Sampling procedure and management of acid soils. Method demonstrated on Soil Sample collection was also conducted by Inspector, Soil Testing Lab, Rajiv Pradhan, to ensure farmers about the proper soil collection procedure. The programme was co-ordinated by SMS Extension, Meena Pradhan.

Second general meeting for Jorethang Maghey Mela



**SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 05 DEC:**

The second general meeting of Jorethang Maghey Sakranti Mela 2020 was held here at Green Park premises in Jorethang, under Zoom-Salghari constituency in South Sikkim, today, a press release informs.

Concerned area MLA, Sunita Gajmer was present as the chief guest and was accompanied by DC South, Ragul K, SP South, Prabin Gurung and SDM, RB Bhandari.

While addressing the gathering, Sunita Gajmer informed that this upcoming Maghey Mela should be 'one man one

allotment' and equal opportunity should be given to all unlike under the previous Government.

The 2020 Maghey Mela will be transparent, peaceful and without discrimination, she added.

The meeting was also attended by concerned MEO, Rajani Pegha, ASP, Santosh Kr Shrestha, SHO, Mahendra Pradhan along with Department Officials, Mela Committee, NGO's and local dignitaries.

Different sub committees were also formed and open discussion between Committee and public regarding the upcoming Mela was held.

~ SummitTIMES ~ CLASSIFIEDS

GENERAL LAND FOR SALE

Roadside plots for sale at Adampool, Ranipool-Rumtek highway.

For details contact: 9083826462

FLAT FOR RENT/LEASE

Fully furnished 3BHK flat available for rent/lease at Church Road near DPH. Roadside and five minutes walking distance from MG Marg.

For more details: 9083826462 /9832556698

GENERAL LAND FOR SALE

General land 30X40 (3 Plots) available for sale at Tadong 6th Mile next to Harka Maya College.

Flat Land no cutting required. Price 30 Lakhs (negotiable).

Contact: 9800201335

LAND FOR SALE

A land measuring an area for 50x32 1/2 at Roadside just below housing colony is for sale. It is just a one minute walking distance from Namchi bazaar taxi stand. Interested party may contact 9593373387 and 9434406761

Pant can't be isolated, here to support him: Kohli

Hyderabad, Dec 5 (PTI): India captain Virat Kohli on Thursday backed the under-fire Rishabh Pant, asserting that he wouldn't let the young wicketkeeper-batsman feel isolated. Pant has been under the scanner for a while due to his inability to convert starts and for erratic work behind the stumps. He recently also drew flak for poor DRS calls and several former players stated that he is fast running out of time.

But ahead of the T20 International series against the West Indies starting here on Friday, Kohli threw his weight behind the 22-year-old.

"We certainly believe in Rishabh's ability. As you say, it's (also) the player's responsibility to do well but our responsibility is to give him space, to support him.

GANGTOK, 05 DEC (IPR): Department of Information & Public Relations has started a unique initiative of rewarding hard working and efficient employees of the Department every month. The Department recently constituted a Committee headed by Secretary, IPR Department to examine and recommend the name of a deserving employee as 'Employee of the Month'.

The Award is based on parameters such as punctuality, sincerity, integrity, and approach towards responsibility assigned, initiatives / innovative ideas and overall contribution of an employee to the Department.

On the basis of the recommendation of the Committee, Cameraperson, NB Chettri was felicitated with 'Employee of the Month' Award by the



Secretary, officers and staff of IPR Department today in the office of the Secretary.

Secretary, IPR Department, Namrata Thapa, presented khada and certificate to NB Chettri and officially declared him the 'Employee of the Month' for December, 2019.

The Secretary in her address congratulated NB Chettri for being the first recipient of the Award. She said that Mr Chettri was the first choice for the Award because of his diligence and hard work and valuable contribution to the Department, even beyond the duty hours.

The Secretary further said that the Award is being initiated to encourage all the employees to perform to the best of their capacities, and give them due recognition for their performance. She added that the Award would be a regular feature of the Department and urged everyone to excel in their

work.

Earlier, Under Secretary, IPR Department, Gideon Lepcha read out a brief profile of NB Chettri.

Mr Chettri has a long unblemished record of performing his duties and is known to cover all important functions of the State Government.

He has shouldered the responsibilities at the District Information Centre (North) during his posting from 1985 to 1997. He has also taken initiatives in conducting Photography/Videography training in the Department as Instructor.

He is known for his dutifulness, multi-tasking abilities and sense of responsibility and is said to have never shied away from his duties even during odd hours and on Government holidays. Due to retire from service in May 2020, Mr Chettri has rendered thirty-seven and half years of service in the Department. He is known for his amiable personality and is often found sharing his vast knowledge with his contemporaries and juniors.

In his brief address, Mr Chettri expressed his gratitude to the

Secretary for initiating the Award and to the Committee for selecting him as the 'Employee of the Month'.

While sharing his experiences of working in the field, he said that he has always taken the numerous challenges in his stride and moved ahead with the sole intention of accomplishing the assigned duty.

He said that he valued this award because it was initiated by IPR Department where he has served throughout his career. He also shared some words of advice for the upcoming officers and staff of the Department and wished them the best in their career.

The programme had the presence of Director, IPR Department, Kincho Doma Lepcha, and officers and staff of the Department.

DC West inspects Gyalshing Municipality area



GYALSHING, 05 DEC (IPR): A joint inspection was carried out by the District Collector, West, Karma R Bonpo, along with all the heads of various departments for the development of Gyalshing Municipal Council and its adjoining areas today.

The DC instructed PHE department to streamline all the scattered drinking water pipeline of bazaar areas blocking the jhoras. The land behind District hospital for road connectivity was also inspected to reduce traffic congestion in the junction of the market.

He also directed concerned departments and officers to identify land in and around Gyalshing for the construction of

an officers' club. The DC also inspected the vacant land beside RTO office for the construction of police station.

For the alternative road from Bhanu Salig to ITI Gyalshing, the DC had a discussion with the Public Works department and instructed them to submit the report on its flexibility.

A brief meeting was also held at the office of the GMC, Chairperson, where discussion on construction of parking plaza, streamlining of drinking water pipelines, connecting roads in an around Gyalshing bazaar, construction of mechanical shed at ITI, Gyalshing, land verification for Officers Club, helipad construction, etc. was held.

UN says online anti-vaxxers fuelling Samoa measles deaths

Social media giants must crack down on anti-vaccination posts that are fuelling Samoa's deadly measles epidemic from afar, UNICEF's Pacific islands chief said Thursday. Sheldon Yett, the regional representative for the UN children's agency, said "incredibly irresponsible" online material on platforms such as Twitter, Facebook and Instagram had exacerbated the Samoa measles outbreak -- which has claimed 62 lives since mid-October -- by discouraging immunisation.

"It's quite clear that they have a corporate responsibility to step up to the plate and make sure that populations, particularly vulnerable populations, get accurate information that's going to keep children alive," Yett told AFP.

Immunisation rates in Samoa dropped to just over 30 percent before the outbreak, well below accepted best practice of around 90 percent, making the island nation extremely vulnerable to infection. The World Health Organisation blamed an anti-vaccine messaging campaign, which Yett said was carried

out largely online by overseas-based activists.

"It's quite obvious that there are very loud people on social media making very false claims about vaccines," he said.

"Unfortunately it's found a ready audience in Samoa, where some people are suspicious about the quality of healthcare and may have issues with local (vaccine) providers." He said activists posting anti-vaccine material from wealthy developed countries such as the United States and Australia needed to realise the impact of their actions in developing nations.

"It's devastating, it can be a death sentence for a child here where there's low immunisation and possibly other health issues going on in the background," he said from the capital Apia.

- 'No easy fix' -

Yett said suspicion of vaccines in Samoa stemmed from a case last year when two babies died after receiving measles shots, leading to an eight-month suspension of the country's immunisation programme.

Judicial Colloquium on Prevention of Human Trafficking



SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 05 DEC:

Sikkim Judicial Academy organized a Judicial Colloquium on "Prevention of Human Trafficking" on 30 Nov, 2019. The Resource Persons for the Colloquium were Retired IPS Officer and an expert on Anti-Human Trafficking, Dr PM Nair and Secretary, Tapoti Bhowmick SANLAAP NGO, Kolkata, West Bengal.

A press release in-

forms that the programme was attended by Police Officers, Executive Magistrates, NGO's, Law Students and Para Legal Volunteers from Sikkim State Legal Services Authority.

Dr PM Nair discussed the important provisions of Immoral Traffic Prevention Act, 1956. While discussing the same, he also gave analogies as well as shared his experience of rescue of children

and women who have fallen victim to trafficking. Tapoti Bhowmick and her NGO SANLAAP are well known for their rescue of trafficked victims as well as rehabilitation of such victims. She shared her experience of rescue of such victims.

She informed that her NGO has started a School of Justice to empower such victims who desire to study law and advocate their rights.

iDEX roadshow 2019 by AIC-SMUTBI Majhitar



REBYNA RANA

GANGTOK, 05 DEC:

The iDEX roadshow, 2019, was organized by AIC-SMUTBI Majhitar in Directorate of Handicrafts and Handloom today here in Gangtok. The roadshow was held at the Teesta Rangeet MSME Utsav being organised by the Department of Commerce and supported by MSME, Government of India at Directorate of Handicraft and Handloom from 03-05 December.

The event began with the introduction of iDEX challenge by CEO of AIM-SMUTBI, Dr Tejanta Singh Chingtam [Atal Incubation Mission- Sikkim Manipal University Technology Business Incubator] supported by AIM & NITI Aayog, Govt of India.

This was followed by felicitation of Lt Gen (Dr) MD Venkatesh (Retd) VC, SMU, Addl Chief Secre-

tary, Thomas Chandy, Govt of Sikkim, Secretary, SK Pradhan, Commerce & Industry Department, Govt of Sikkim, Col SS Sengar, representative from MoD.

An introduction video of iDEX with the prime focus of the government for requirement of self reliance through innovation and indigenization and the iDEX challenges were shown followed by the current iDEX scheme of Defense India Start up Challenge-3 (DISC-3) to over 100 entrepreneurs and startups who were present there in order to encourage them to come up with the solutions towards the challenges given by MoD.

Following the felicitation, an introduction video of the iDEX challenge, the video of the 2 challenge in DISC III and the video of the open challenge were presented to over 150 entrepreneurs

and startups present at the venue.

The videos gave an overview of the challenges faced by the army, airforce and navy in their respective fields.

The iDEX challenge is open to all startups, MSME and individual innovators who have revolutionary ideas which would solve the existing problems faced by our troops in the border line.

Later, VC, SMU, Lt Gen (Dr) MD Venkatesh (Retd) addressed the young and vibrant minds of Sikkim to harness their potential in achieving defence excellence for self-reliance by meeting the said challenges of Armed forces.

He also stated that overwhelming response as shown in the previous two versions of DISC is expected and the same would also be met to overcome the problems faced by Armed Forces.

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Quotaed into Lethargy

Time to ask the right questions and demand better

Reservation, quotas, local protection... These remain strong political constituencies to this day in the country, 72 years and counting since the day India became Free and its people equal! The exclamation because the stop-gap arrangement of quotas, put in place while long-term policies were kick-started to make equal opportunity and equal access realities for communities that had remained underprivileged, subjugated and sidelined for centuries, appears to have mutated into a permanent fixture. This reality perhaps deserves a double exclamation mark because the nation continues to discover more communities which require a reserved slot and special treatment to come at par with the mainstream. Yes, this is an inexplicable situation teetering at risk of short-term gains becoming long-term liabilities.

Fact remains that reservations have made people lazy and segregation can never deliver either unity or equality, but this is not a statement supporting the end of quotas and reservations, in fact, it is an attempt to get those in the reserved lot to ask the more important questions and flex beyond the chips hammered into their shoulders. What has arguably flawed the reservation regime is its institutionalization, which requires its reinforcement at every level through overt displays – from the makeup of bureaucracy to the Cabinet. Merit, as a result, gets not only sidelined, but even compromised at times because harmonised composition becomes the desired trait. One cannot blame the first leaders of Independent India for this measure, they did after all, plan to have a more concrete solution in place before the idea outlived its utility or instilled tokenism. Later leaders did not allow that to happen and preferred to secure captive vote-banks instead. And only they (such leaders) appear to have gained. Look around, there are many examples of individual members from the reserved categories having benefited from the policy, but has reservation delivered what it promises to the community as a whole? At least in the same scale as it has fed political careers which require people to remain underprivileged and denied at some levels to remain relevant. Such ideologies have problems with real reform and actual progress and examples of such self-centered profiteering from the miseries of others abound.

The limitations of a reservations-only approach to lift communities up started manifesting with the second generation itself and the benefits have not spread as uniformly, and only very rarely to the grass-roots level. Make no mistake, we are still a country of such massive inequalities and astounding privilege that quotas and reservations are still required, unfortunately not because the model is perfect, but because this has remained the only route opened. The carrot of quotas makes people lazy and soon people enjoying this benefit [at least on paper] forget that this was to undo the damage of centuries of discrimination and subject themselves to more humiliation by themselves believing that they are feeding on a sop or lack the potential to compete better, when they are actually being compensated for historical wrongs. This makes them refrain from asking the right questions.

Quotas are fine, but they are limited. What should be given is access to the best grooming, an education that prepares them to compete with the best... aspire for the “open” category, not snuggle into the slivers offered as quota. Reserved quotas are add-ons, the plan-B’s, and not the constricting pigeonholes they have now become to stifle ambition and suffocate confidence. Things can improve only when the educational infrastructure in villages and “backward” areas is strengthened, made at par with “city” institutes; when the best teachers take classes in basti schools and a generation of eager competitors replaces those who set their ambitions with one eye on their surnames and what it accrues them. And this was always how things were to proceed when reservation was first introduced, presenting itself as a salve for the short-term while long-term interventions were put in place to level the playing field. That follow-up never happened, and that remains the continuing denial of people who have been marginalized throughout history because access is still controlled.

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Climate crisis could reverse progress in achieving gender equality

NITYA RAO

theconversation.com

People who directly depend on the natural world for their livelihoods, like farmers and fishers, will be among the greatest victims of the climate crisis. In vulnerable hotspots, such as the arid lands of Kenya and Ethiopia, farming communities are already struggling with droughts and water scarcity that kill their cattle and threaten their very survival. The glacial-fed river basins of the Himalayan mountains, or the deltas of Bangladesh, India and Ghana, are increasingly prone to floods, landslides and powerful cyclones.

As a result, men are often migrating further to keep their families going, looking for casual work in neighbouring towns or villages for a few days or weeks at a time, or to cities further away. Many try to return home when they can, with whatever they have earned. But during their absence, the entire burden of maintaining the family is on women.

Researchers are in a race against time to predict how climate change will affect these communities and help them adapt, with drought and flood resistant crops and cattle breeds for example. But it’s often overlooked that climate change will affect one half of humanity significantly more than the other. Longstanding gender inequality means that within regions of the world that are particularly vulnerable to climate change, women are likely to suffer more than men.

ISOLATED AND OVERBURDENED

In a recent study, we found that extreme weather and unpredictable seasons disproportionately weaken the agency of women to find well paid work and rise above rigid gender roles, even when these appear to be bending after decades of reform and activism. Without support in the form of assured drinking water, energy, childcare or credit,

women end up working harder and in poorer conditions for lower wages.

Women already in poverty are increasingly finding themselves in a vicious cycle of low productivity, indebtedness and food insecurity as crops and livestock fail, as we found particularly in semi-arid parts of Africa and India. Women in northern Kenya complained that they could no longer afford meat, so ate rice and potatoes instead, even when this wasn’t enough to satisfy their hunger.

As environmental stresses accumulate, community support networks break down. When people are displaced and have to settle elsewhere, men search for work and women are left behind at home, often in unfamiliar surroundings and lacking support from friends and relatives. But even if they do know people, with all the challenges of running the household in a strange environment, there is little time to help others.

With full responsibility for household chores, farming and caring for the children and elderly, women have less time to socialise or take part in community events, including meetings of the elected village government. If the state or charities can help, there’s often competition for securing those benefits. In Namibia, people tend to stick with their ethnic groups to guarantee access through collective effort, but this means that ethnic minorities in the region are often excluded.

In Mali, heavier burdens are placed on women who are young and less educated. In India or Pakistan, women belonging to a lower social class or marginal caste suffer the most. Gender relations differ in each place and according to each situation – they’re often too variable to emerge in broad national and global assessments. We tried to find a way to generalise our findings across 25 very diverse locations, in Asia and Africa, without losing

the nuance of each woman’s experiences.

THE BARE NECESSITIES

If much of the problem is structural, then short-term solutions like cyclone shelters or drought relief won’t address the underlying causes of poverty and precariousness. Social safety nets that can ensure the basic necessities of food and shelter are needed, like the public distribution system for cereals in India, or the pensions and social grants available in Namibia.

To ensure that the health of people in these places doesn’t irreversibly decline, women need to be supported with child and healthcare services, but also drinking water and cooking fuel. The role of community support is crucial during crises, but there’s little that women can do to help themselves without resources and skills.

Competitive labour markets are also undervaluing the labour of poor women. Ensuring minimum wages and fair working conditions would help, but these are hard to implement across borders. As climate change causes traditional livelihoods to collapse, migrant men are similarly exploited by new employers. Deprived of adequate food and rest, many end up sick and spend their earnings on medical treatment.

Tackling the climate emergency and making sure these women and men live meaningful lives will take more than overcoming gender stereotypes. If given support, they can find creative solutions to the disruption that climate change has brought. But this support must mean the guarantee of universal access to food, shelter and basic services. At COP25 in Madrid, world leaders should help vulnerable communities to adapt to climate change with resources and solidarity, not warm words and rhetoric.

[the writer is Professor of Gender & Development, University of East Anglia]

How can we actually create happy societies?

SAM WREN-LEWIS

theconversation.com

Imagine two different societies. In the first, people tend to be stressed, tense, irritable, distracted and self-absorbed. In the second, people tend to be at ease, untroubled, quick to laugh, expansive and self-assured.

The difference between these two imagined scenarios is vast. You’re not only more likely to be happier in the second scenario – you’re also more likely to be safer, healthier and have better relationships. The difference between a happy and an unhappy society is not trivial. We know that happiness matters beyond our desire to feel good.

So how can we create a happy society? The Buddhist nation of Bhutan was the first society to determine policy based on the happiness of its citizens, with the king of Bhutan famously claiming in 1972 that Gross National Happiness (GNH) was a more important measure of progress than Gross National Product (GNP).

Many other countries have since followed suit – looking to move “beyond GDP” as a measure of national progress. For instance, the UK developed a national well-being programme in 2010 and has since measured the nation’s well-being across ten domains, not too dissimilar to Bhutan’s approach. More recently, New Zealand introduced its first “well-being budget”, with a focus on improving the well-being of the country’s most vulnerable people.

Such initiatives tend to broadly agree over the conditions required for a happy society. According to the World Happiness Report, there are six key ingredients for national happiness: income, healthy life expectancy, social support, freedom, trust and generosity. Scandinavian countries

– which typically top the global happiness rankings (Finland is currently first) – tend to do well on all these measures. In contrast, war-torn nations such as South Sudan, Central African Republic and Afghanistan tend to do badly. So does happiness rely on these six key ingredients?

THE WHAT, NOT THE HOW

I don’t think so. This approach is, ultimately, too simple – even potentially harmful. The problem is that it focuses on what happiness is, not how to achieve it. Clearly, things such as a good life expectancy, social support and trust are good for us. But how we come to that conclusion may matter more than the conclusion itself.

For instance, how do we know that we are measuring what is most important? The world happiness rankings largely rely on measures of life satisfaction. But it is far from obvious that such measures can account for important differences in emotional well-being.

Alternatively, perhaps we could ask people what they think matters. The development of the UK’s national well-being programme took this approach, undertaking qualitative research to develop their ten domains of happiness. But this approach is also problematic. How do we know which of the ten domains are most important? The most important ingredients for one community may not be the same for another. Asking people is a good idea. But we can’t just do it once and then assume the job is done.

Don’t get me wrong – I believe these kinds of initiatives are an improvement on more narrow ways of measuring national progress, such as an exclusive focus on income and GDP. But that doesn’t mean we should ignore their faults.

There are parallels here with the

pursuit of happiness on an individual level. We typically go about our lives with a list of things in our head which we think will make us happy – if only we get that promotion, have a loving relationship, and so on. Achieving these things can certainly improve our lives – and may even make us happier.

But we are fooling ourselves if we think they will make us happy in a lasting sense. Life is too complicated for that. We are vulnerable, insecure creatures and will inevitably experience disappointment, loss and suffering. By exclusively focusing on the things we think will make us happy, we blind ourselves to the other things in life that matter.

HAPPINESS 101

Psychologists are beginning to focus their attention not just on the ingredients of individual happiness, but also on the capacities people need to be happy within inevitably insecure and fragile circumstances.

For instance, the so-called “second wave” of positive psychology is as interested in the benefits of negative emotions as positive ones. The mindfulness revolution, meanwhile, urges people to go beyond their notions of good and bad and instead learn how to accept things as they are. These approaches are less concerned with what conditions make people happy and more interested in how people can pursue happiness within conditions of insecurity and uncertainty.

The more we focus on our list of desired things, the more we fail to see what really matters. When we are certain of the things that make us happy, and urgently try to achieve them, we fail to appreciate the value of the things we already have and the multiple unknown opportunities we have yet to discover. When things inevitably go wrong in our lives, we

blame others or ourselves instead of learning from what happened.

Psychologists are beginning to understand the limits of this. Happy individuals tend to have humility as well as certainty; curiosity as well as urgency; and compassion as well as blame.

We can apply these same lessons on a national scale. Creating a happier society requires not just promoting what matters, but also promoting the capacities for discovering what matters.

We know this on an institutional level. In education, we know that it is important to promote curiosity and a love of learning as well as good exam results. In academia, we know that, although we can discover important scientific truths, almost all of our current scientific theories might be surpassed by other theories and we should remain open minded. We know that the appeal and relevance of religious institutions depends on balancing dogmatic teachings with mystery and curiosity - order and faith on the one hand, openness and flexibility on the other.

Creating a happy society does not just depend on creating the right conditions. It also depends on creating the right institutions and processes for discovering those conditions. The irony is that members of the happy society described at the beginning of this article – who tend to be at ease, untroubled, quick to laugh, expansive and self-assured – are probably less focused on what makes them happy and more focused on exploring what really matters – with humility, curiosity and compassion.

To actually create a happy society, we need measures and institutions that do much the same.

[the writer is Honorary Associate Professor in Philosophy, University of Nottingham]

Cong gears up for Bharat Bachao rally on Dec 14

LUCKNOW, DEC 5 (PTI): Preparation are being made to make the “Bharat bachao rally” of the Congress in New Delhi on December 14 a success.

“Lakhs of party workers from Uttar Pradesh will reach the Ram Lila ground in New Delhi on December 14 to take part in the Bharat Bachao rally to protest the murder of democracy, curb on freedom of expression, economic loot and corruption under the BJP government,” UP Congress chief Ajay Kumar Lallu told mediapersons here on Thursday.

For making the rally a success, party national secretaries, office-bearers and senior leaders were continuously touring districts, he said.

The UP Congress president said the crime against women in the state had been on the rise.

The state has set a record in the cases relating to rape, murder, loot, kidnapping and cyber crimes,” he said.

Lallu also attacked the Union government for the bad shape of economy due to “wrong policies”.

Rajya Sabha nod to lower corporate tax rates

NEW DELHI, DEC 5 (PTI): The Rajya Sabha on Thursday gave its consent to the Taxation Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2019, replacing an ordinance that was used to slash corporate tax rates to stimulate growth.

The Lok Sabha has already passed the bill and the Upper House cleared the legislation with voice vote without any changes.

As per rules, the Rajya Sabha cannot amend money bills but can recommend amendments.

A money bill must be returned to the Lok Sabha within 14 days, or the bill is deemed to have passed both houses in the form it was originally passed by the Lok Sabha.

Cases against me are like medals on my chest, says Rahul Gandhi

Wayanad (Ker), Dec 5 (PTI): Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Thursday said he would not be cowed down by the string of cases being registered against him across the country by the BJP and considers them as “medals”.

“There are 15 to 16 cases against me. When you look at soldier, he will have lots of medals on his chest.

Every single case is a medal for me”, Gandhi said addressing a convention of the Congress led United Democratic Front (UDF) at Vanyambalam here.

“The more they are, the happier I am,” he quipped adding he was fighting them ideologically.

The congress leader said he did not believe in an India of hatred and no matter how many times BJP tries to convince him, he will not believe it.

Anti-citizenship bill protesters hit Assam streets

GUWAHATI, DEC 5 (PTI): Protesters took to the street across Assam against the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill on Thursday as the Krishak Mukti Sangram Samiti said it would move the Supreme Court if the Bill is passed in Parliament.

Workers of several social and youth organisations joined the KMSS in a massive rally here demanding that the Bill be scrapped, while opposition Congress MLAs demonstrated against it in the Assembly premises.

The All Assam Students’ Union (AASU), the All India United Democratic Front (AIUDF) and others also took out rallies across the state denouncing the Bill which is likely to be introduced in the Lok Sabha on December 9 and taken up for passage the next day.

Accusing the ruling BJP at the Centre and the state of sacrificing the sentiment of the Assamese people at the cost of vote bank politics, KMSS chief Akhil Gogoi said, “If the CAB is not scrapped, the people will



overthrow the Sarbananda Sonowal-led BJP government in 2021 (when Assam goes to polls)”.

The CAB seeks to amend the Citizenship Act, 1955, in order to grant Indian nationality to Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains, Parsis and Christians, who come to India due to religious persecution under CAB, the existence of the Assamese language will be

threatened and the jobs and land will be taken away by them depriving the indigenous people,” Akhil Gogoi said.

“If the Bill is passed by Parliament, the KMSS will move the Supreme Court. The movements on the street will also continue. Assam will never accept the CAB,” Gogoi, also an RTI activist, said.

Condemning state minister and Asom Gana

Parishad president Atul Bora’s comment that Assam has to accept a few thousand Bangladeshis, the RTI activist threatened to start a movement against the party if it does not change its stand in favour of the indigenous people.

Gogoi addressed the protesters during a sit-in demonstration near the Assembly which is in session and the adjacent

state secretariat. The KMSS and others then took out a procession along the arterial Guwahati-Shillong Road.

Leaders and supporters of the KMSS coming from other parts of the state to join the protest programme here were detained by the police at various places.

The opposition Congress MLAs led by their legislature party leader

Debabrata Saikia also demonstrated in the Assembly premises, holding banners and shouting slogans opposing the Bill.

Members of the AASU and 30 other indigenous ethnic organisations also took out motorcycle rallies in Jorhat, Golaghat and other parts of the state.

AIUDF workers staged a rally opposing the Bill in Nalbari district and burnt effigies of Union Home Minister Amit Shah and Assam Chief Minister Sonowal.

Dissension in the ruling AGP was noticed when leaders of Tezpur unit told reporters that the party’s grass root workers did not support the amendment as it was against the interest of the indigenous people’s existence and language.

The BJP’s alliance partner AGP appears to be divided on the issue with its founding president Prafulla Kumar Mahanta opposing the Bill, while its current chief and state Agriculture Minister Atul Bora coming out in its support.

TMC MP raises onion price rise issue in Lok Sabha



NEW DELHI, DEC 5 (PTI): TMC MP Sudip Bandyopadhyay on Thursday said the Centre should ask states to ensure that there was no hoarding of onions.

Raising the issue during the Zero Hour in the Lok Sabha, Bandyopadhyay said the price of onion had reached an extreme height and it was a serious issue.

The Trinamool Congress leader said hoarding was the cause of price

rise of onion and added that enforcement department should check on hoarding of onions.

He was also of the view that price monitoring division should be more active. Bandyopadhyay termed it a failure of the government, saying rising prices had gone out of limit and “we all condemn it”.

Prices of onion in many places have crossed Rs 100 per kg because of less production.

Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman had on Wednesday said in the Lok Sabha that the government had taken several steps to check rising prices of onion and also initiated steps to improve technology for better storage of the kitchen staple.

Attributing shortage to low production, the minister had said there were severe “structural problems” related to onions.

WBPCB plans to install sensors to detect stubble burning

KOLKATA, DEC 5 (PTI): The West Bengal Pollution Control Board (WBPCB) is planning to install remote sensors across the state to detect stubble burning which is a major cause of air pollution, an official said on Thursday.

The board will buy software for the sensors from Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO), WBPCB Chairman Kalyan Rudra told reporters.

“WBPCB is working with IIT Delhi on this project and we will sign an MoU with the institute soon,” he said.

Two scientists from the board will be trained by IIT Delhi to work on the project, he said.

The pollution watchdog has got a space near a shopping mall which is located close to a private hospital on E M Bypass in

the city, where a monitoring station that will work in sync with the sensors will be set up, he said.

After getting the images of stubble burning, the state pollution control board will inform the police to take appropriate action, Rudra said. “The sensors will help in tracking any incident of stubble burning across West Bengal and our scientists will inform the board’s top officials who will coordinate with the administration,” he said.

Rudra was talking to reporters on the sidelines of a workshop, West Bengal Air Quality Management Mission, organised by the board. Environmental experts and World Bank representatives were present at the programme.

Asked about the alarming air pollution in Howrah’s Ghosuri area,

he said, “Two-three days back, we have ordered closure of seven hot mix plants and issued notices to five others to show why all prescribed environment norms were not followed.”

Due to high density of hot-mix plants and foundry units in the area, Ghosuri and Belur in Howrah have witnessed deteriorating air quality and the state pollution control board is keeping watch on it, he said.

Responding to a query on whether the board is taking any initiative to control the use of plastics, Rudra said it was mulling an idea to ask a state-run dairy for having a buy-back arrangement to collect milk and other plastic packets from its customers.

“Modalities of the scheme will be chalked out,” he added.

Two killed in shooting at Hawaii’s Pearl Harbor base

A US sailor fatally shot two people and wounded a third at the Pearl Harbor Naval Shipyard in Hawaii on Wednesday before taking his own life, a senior Navy officer said. The base was locked down for more than an hour after the shooting, according to a statement issued by the facility, while Navy officials said they were investigating what prompted the attack.

“I can confirm that there were three shooting victims. We have confirmed that two are deceased, one is in stable condition in a local hospital,” said Rear Admiral Robert Chadwick. He added that the shooter -- “tentatively” identified as a sailor assigned to the USS Columbia, a Los Angeles-class attack submarine -- had also died after “an apparent self-inflicted gunshot wound.”

One witness told local media he was sitting at his computer when he heard shots fired and rushed to the window, where he saw three victims on the ground. The witness, who did not want to be identified, said he then saw the gunman, who was wearing a sailor’s uniform, shoot himself in the head.

White House spokesman Hogan Gidley said that US President Donald Trump had been briefed on the shooting and was monitoring the situation.

Hawaii governor David Ige tweeted that the “White House has reached out to offer assistance from federal agencies, and the state is standing by to assist where necessary.” “I join in solidarity with the people of Hawaii as we express our heartbreak over this tragedy and concern for those affected by the shooting,” Ige wrote.

- Pearl Harbor anniversary -

The shooting took place at 2:30 pm local time near the south entrance of the sprawling base located on the southern shore of Oahu.

Citizenship bill unconstitutional & divisive: Mayawati

LUCKNOW, DEC 5 (PTI): BSP president Mayawati on Thursday described the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill as unconstitutional and divisive, and demanded that it be sent to a parliamentary committee for review.

“The Citizenship Amendment Bill cleared by the central cabinet is both unconstitutional and divisive,” Mayawati told reporters here.

“Citizenship in the name of religion and discrimination in the name of religion of the citizens through it is totally against the basic structure of the humanitarian and secular Constitution of Dr Bhimrao Ambedkar,” the BSP leader said.

On Wednesday, the Union cabinet had cleared the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill that seeks to grant citizenship



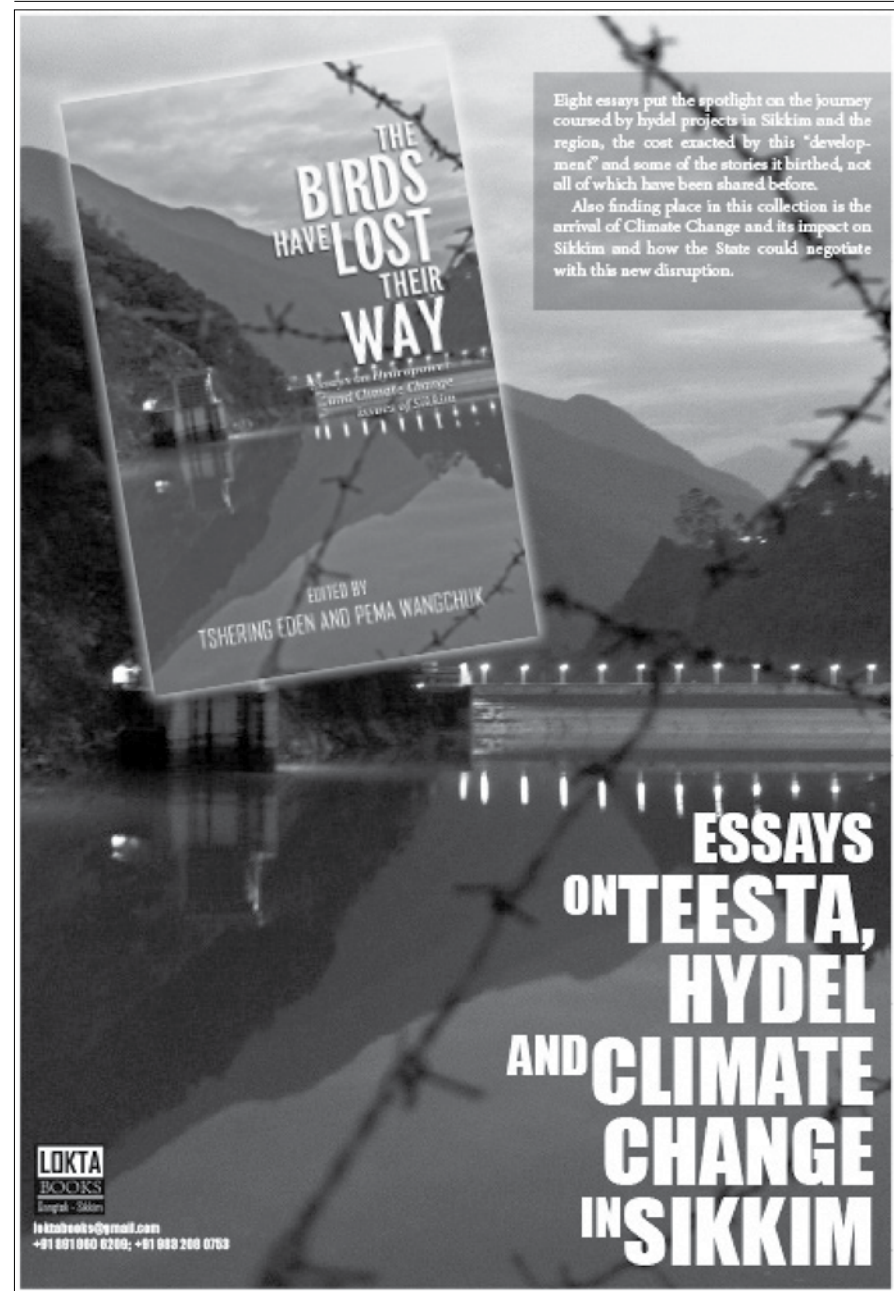
to non-Muslim refugees from Pakistan, Bangladesh and Afghanistan if they faced religious persecution there. “Instead of forcing this bill, like demonetisation and GST, the central government should review it,” she said. “It should be sent to a parliamentary committee for better deliberations so that this bill could come before people in a proper manner that is in consonance with the Constitution.”

The BSP president pointed out that her party believes that if the central

government takes right decisions in the interest of the country and people’s interest, it would rise above party politics and support them.

Mayawati welcomed the extension of reservation for the SC/STs for another 10 years in the legislature and requested the government to fill the backlog of the posts reserved for these sections in the central and state governments by launching a drive.

She also rooted for reservation for these sections in private sector.



Jamie Vardy sets Leicester on their way to win over managerless Watford

PAUL DOYLE
LEICESTER, 05 DEC [THEGUARDIAN]: It is extraordinary that this is becoming business as usual. For the seventh Premier League game in a row, Jamie Vardy scored and Leicester won. This was their most stuttering performance during that run and Vardy needed a second-half penalty to make the breakthrough against the league's bottom team before James Maddison netted in stoppage time, but Leicester made sure they took maximum points. That is what they do now. If Liverpool ever stop doing likewise, Brendan Rodgers' team might just take advantage.

Vardy's goal here kept him on course to eclipse his own Premier League record of scoring in 11 consecutive games, which he did three years ago when Leicester last won the title. If Vardy is to make it 12 in a row this term he will have to score in every Leicester game between now and Boxing Day – when the opponents, as it happens, will be Liverpool. The importance of that match in the title race is growing by the week.

"I'm not really bothered who scores as long as we win and play well, but he is a real talisman, a fantastic striker," said Rodgers of Vardy. Talk of the title, meanwhile, is not something Rodgers is ready to entertain yet. "Its still reasonably early. For us it's about our performance level. I'm so happy with how the players have been performing. We can't get carried away. We just keep focused and keep moving forward."

Watford wish all that was relevant to them. Instead they remain sprawled at the foot of the table, survival the extent of their hopes. At least they could take heart from this display even if it ended in defeat. For this first match in caretaker charge, Hayden Mullins was sparing with his broom, with the return of Troy Deeney the only personnel change from the side that lost at Southampton last week. Mullins also changed formation, dispensing with the three-man central defence favoured by his predecessor.

The visitors were solid and hinted at a threat on the counterattack. And yet Leicester should have opened the scoring in the second minute after a move nicely begun and terribly finished by Ayoze Pérez. The Spaniard did everything right until he slammed the ball over the bar from 10 yards following a smart setup by Vardy. Pérez flopped again four minutes later, failing to make a clean connection from eight yards out after another Vardy pass.

Watford had to spend most of the first 10 minutes protecting their own goal as Leicester enjoyed what we may start calling the Foxes' share of possession thanks, in particular, to the midfield dominance of Wilfred Ndidi. But with Watford well-organised and some of Leicester's most creative players, notably Youri Tielemans, uncharacteristically subdued, chances began to dry up for the hosts.

Rashford exposes Tottenham to ruin Mourinho's Manchester United return

DAVID HYTNER
MANCHESTER, 04 DEC [THEGUARDIAN]: The sight of Marcus Rashford in smooth and pacy flow, the components of his technique in perfect sync, would once have delighted José Mourinho.

Not here. Mourinho had wanted to mark his return to Manchester United with a fourth win out of four with Tottenham; to make his biggest statement yet with his new club.

Instead, Rashford comprehensively upstaged him, scoring both of the goals in a United victory that ought to have been more emphatic, such was their first-half dominance, to provide his current manager, Ole Gunnar Solskjær, with a much needed tonic.

Solskjær had overseen United's worst start to a season since 1988 but, not for the first time at this venue, his team raised their levels against a rival with pedigree. It had been a similar story in the win over Chelsea and the draw against Liverpool.

Rashford was unplayable at times, particularly in the first 30 minutes, when he scored once and might have had more. He saw the Spurs goalkeeper, Paulo Gazzaniga, tip one vicious long-range shot against the crossbar. He was a threat for most of the evening and, after a moment of sorcery from Dele Alli had temporarily hauled Spurs level, Rashford earned and converted the penalty that proved to be the winner.

The statistics show that Rashford now has 12 goals



for United this season, nine of them in the Premier League, and he has certainly hit a rich vein of form. Since the middle of October he has scored nine in 10 at club level.

Yet it was his all-round game that propelled United to a result that lifted them to sixth in the table; his positivity and directness; the feeling, to borrow a phrase from Solskjær, that he was playing in his own back yard.

"Doubters just spur me on," Rashford tweeted after the game, which set a few tongues wagging. Was it a dig at Mourinho, with whom he did not always see eye to

eye? Whatever the interpretation, Rashford has got United feeling a bit better about themselves before Saturday's derby at Manchester City and he was not the only plus point for the team. Scott McTominay, back from injury after one light training session with the reserves, was authoritative in midfield alongside Fred and behind Jesse Lingard, who made things happen from the No 10 role. Solskjær would describe McTominay as "undroppable".

Mourinho's presence at a stadium where he spent two and a half seasons was always going to be a sideshow and, although he had described

United as a "closed chapter" for him, he might still have wanted to hear a chant from the home crowd as acknowledgement for his efforts. That did not happen.

Instead, the United support serenaded Solskjær, with their first songs about him following Rashford's early breakthrough. Lingard robbed Davinson Sánchez and, when the ball broke to Rashford on the left-hand corner of the area, he unloaded a shot that was designed to bounce awkwardly in front of Gazzaniga. The Argentinian could only help it in off the inside of his near post – a grisly

error. Mourinho had restored Lucas Moura to his front four and preferred Moussa Sissoko to Eric Dier in midfield – another attack-minded move – but it was United who pressed with the greater intensity for much of the first half. They could have been out of sight by the half-hour. They had the chances.

Rashford was determined to showcase his shooting technique and, after fizzing a free-kick narrowly wide, he was denied by a combination of Gazzaniga and the woodwork. In between times, Mason Greenwood – who played in place of the injured Anthony Martial – was thwarted by

a fine Gazzaniga block while Rashford and Lingard went close with curlers.

When Spurs bounced up off the canvas, it was the latest illustration of Alli's rebirth under Mourinho. The midfielder had Fred and Ashley Young for company inside the area as he eyed a dropping ball after David de Gea had saved from Serge Aurier. The United players appeared to have the situation under control. Yet with a sumptuous touch, Alli eased the ball over his head, wrong-footing his markers, before surging on to it and finishing past De Gea. There would be a VAR check to investigate a possible brush of the ball against Alli's arm. There was nothing untoward.

Back came United after the interval. Mourinho complained about the non-award of a throw-in for his team but he ought to have been angrier at Sissoko for how he nibbled at Rashford inside the area. United had missed four of their previous six penalties this season but Rashford never looked like worsening that statistic. This was his night.

The second half was cagier. Son Heung-min saw a shot blocked by Fred while, at the other end, Daniel James twice worked Gazzaniga. Solskjær sought to close out the result with defensive substitutions and, had Spurs equalised, it is a fair bet that the criticism would have been fierce. The visitors built up a head of steam in the final 15 minutes and, amid mounting tension, Aurier and Alli went close. United had done enough.

'Do they fear losing?': Rapinoe urges Messi and Ronaldo to speak out on injustice

PARIS, 05 DEC [THEGUARDIAN]: Megan Rapinoe has called on a collection of the most famous male footballers in the world to join her in the fight against injustice.

Rapinoe won the Ballon d'Or, recognising her as the best women's player in the year, earlier this week. Messi won the men's award for a record sixth time. As well as her achievements on the field – she won her second World Cup with the US this summer – Rapinoe is a powerful voice away from football. She has spoken out against racism, sexism and homophobia. She was also the first white professional athlete to kneel for the US national anthem, joining Colin Kaepernick's protest against racial and social injustice in the United States.

cial and social injustice in the United States.

"I want to shout: 'Cristiano [Ronaldo], Lionel [Messi], Zlatan [Ibrahimovic], help me!'" she told France Football, the organisers of the Ballon d'Or. "These big stars do not engage in anything when there are so many problems in men's football. Do they fear losing everything? They believe that, but it is not true. Who will erase Messi or Ronaldo from world football history for a statement against racism or sexism?" After Napoli's Kalidou Koulibaly suffered racist abuse during a game against Internazionale last season, Ronaldo posted a message on Instagram saying "No to racism and any offense & discrimination", while

Ibrahimovic, whose father is Muslim, has said he has been a victim of Islamophobia. Messi is notoriously reluctant to say anything to the media beyond events on the field.

None of the three can be compared to Rapinoe in terms of activism. Indeed, Ibrahimovic sparked controversy in 2013 when he spoke about Sweden's women's team. "With all respect for what the ladies have done, and they've done it fantastically well, you can't compare men's and women's football," he said. "Give it up, it's not even funny."

Rapinoe acknowledged that her reward may have partly been a recognition of her work as a voice for change.

Glenn Maxwell returns to Victoria training, is 'not far away' from playing

VICTORIA, 05 DEC [AP]: Glenn Maxwell has taken another positive step in his comeback from a mental health break, with the all-rounder training with the Victoria Sheffield Shield squad.

Maxwell stepped away from cricket, citing mental health issues, during Australia's Twenty20 series against Sri Lanka in October. He has played three Victorian Premier Cricket matches with club side Fitzroy Doncaster since and has taken part in some aspects of Victoria's Shield program.

But Thursday morning's hit-out at the MCG was the first time Maxwell has completed a full

session with his teammates since he stepped away from the game.

"I think he is doing everything he needs to do ... when he is ready to come back (he will)," teammate Marcus Harris said. "I'm not sure if it is this week or Big Bash, but he's not far away I think."

Victoria batsmen Will Pucovski and Nic Maddinson have also recently taken breaks to deal with mental health issues. Both returned for this week's drawn game against NSW at the MCG where Pucovski made a gritty 82 and Maddinson an impressive 59.

Victoria take on Western Australia at the MCG starting on Saturday, but

Maxwell was not named in that squad. This weekend's matches are part of the last Shield round before the BBL break, where Maxwell is captain of Melbourne Stars.

Harris said it will be left to Maxwell to decide when he feels the time is right to return to the game on a full-time basis.

"I think those sort of guys need some space," he said. "I think they've got everyone hounding them about what's going on and what they're doing. They are adults. Max has been really good and all the guys dealing with stuff have been very good and we just put our arm around them and support them."

Dillian Whyte reawakens career after sleeping through his moment on plane



SEAN INGLE
RIYADH, 05 DEC [THEGUARDIAN]: Dillian Whyte was fast asleep when a passenger had a panic attack and tried to open the emergency door on his BA flight to Saudi Arabia earlier this week. But it is typical of the heavyweight that when he woke up and discovered his brother Dean had intervened to stop the dramatic incident he wished he had got involved.

"I didn't know what Dean had done," he said. "I was asleep. I'd trained and jumped on the plane so I was a bit tired. When I woke up I heard all about it. I was disappointed he didn't hit the guy, I would have just knocked him out, to be honest, because that's no joking matter. My brother gave him a chance but I would have knocked him out clean. I probably would have hit him on the floor as well."

For someone who relishes a tear-up Whyte has barely laced up his gloves in anger since beating Óscar Rivas in July, due to an adverse finding in a UK Anti-Doping sample. The case is still unresolved, although he has been cleared to fight. He laughs when it is suggested his brother is getting more fights than him at the moment – but the frustration is evident too.

"It's been stressful and a few times I've thought about walking away from boxing and jacking it in," admitted Whyte. "I'm not someone to talk about my emotions, but I have been stressed and down and depressed. But my team kept pushing me, urging me to go to the gym and taking the mickey out of me, saying my belly was getting bigger."

"I'm a very strong person mentally and physically, but without my team I would have walked away from boxing without a doubt."

But at least one cloud is lifting. On Saturday he returns to the ring to face Mariusz Wach on the undercard of the Andy Ruiz Jr v Anthony Joshua rematch. "Wach is gonna get whacked," said Whyte. "He's very experienced and he knows how to survive. He's got a very good jab. So it's up to me to go in there and bring maximum pain, as I do. I will be trying to knock him out. "The last few months have been tough. But you know me, it doesn't take much to get me in a fight. And I will come to the ring with maximum violent intentions."

Whyte's only defeat in 27 fights has come at the hands of Joshua and, as he points out, he has also spent more than 600 days as the No 1 contender with the WBC. "Never in the history of heavyweight boxing has someone been mandatory contender for so long," Whyte laments. "Except maybe Jack Johnson and Sonny Liston."

He hopes he will cross paths again with Joshua, who he beat in the amateurs, for a decider. "We both respect each other but it's a weird thing," he said. "It's like we hate each other, but respect

each other. It's just a job." He also expects Joshua to regain his WBA, IBF and WBO titles against Ruiz. "Hopefully his head is in the right space and he doesn't listen to all this negativity because as a country we like bringing each other down too much," he said. "Someone loses, 'ah he was rubbish, he was no good'. You weren't saying that a few months ago when he was heavyweight champion of the world. None of his critics are going to be hall of fame. He will."

As for Whyte himself, he is quietly hopeful of getting his career back on track. "Boxing is a very dark, muddy, murky waters," he says. "One day you're floating and the next day you're sinking. I've learnt a lot of lessons from boxing. It's made me stronger as a person and given me a better life."

He smiles again. "Life is hard, man. But two things I know are to be brave and to fight. Those are the two things I'm good at."

Samoa shuts down in unprecedented battle against measles crisis

Samoa entered a two-day lockdown Thursday to carry out an unprecedented mass vaccination drive aimed at containing a devastating measles epidemic that has killed dozens of children in the Pacific island nation.

As the death toll climbed to 62, officials ordered all businesses and non-essential government services to close, shut down inter-island ferries and told people to keep their cars off the roads.

Residents were advised to obey a dawn-to-dusk curfew, staying in their homes and displaying a red flag if any occupants were not yet immunised.

Hundreds of vaccination teams, including public servants drafted in for the operation, fanned out across the nation of 200,000 in the early hours of the morning.

They plan to go door-to-door in villages and towns to administer mandatory vaccinations in red-flagged houses.

The markets on Apia's waterfront, usually packed with tourists buying handicrafts, were silent as stalls stood empty, while there was hardly any traffic in the city centre. "It's very, very quiet out here. I can just hear a few barking dogs. The streets are empty. There are no cars," UNICEF's Pacific islands chief Sheldon Yett told AFP.

"People are staying at home waiting for the vaccination campaign. The teams are getting their supplies together and getting ready to go out."

The operation, carried out under emergency powers invoked as the epidemic took hold last month, is a desperate bid to halt measles infection rates that have been inexorably rising since mid-October, with most of the victims young children. "I've seen mass mobilisation campaigns before, but not over an entire country like this," Yett said. "That's what we're doing right now. This entire country is being vaccinated."



- 'Incredibly irresponsible' material -

Immunisation rates in Samoa dropped steeply to just 30 percent before the outbreak, the World Health Organisation said, blaming an anti-vaccine messaging campaign.

Two babies died after receiving measles vaccination shots last year, which led to the temporary suspension of the country's immunisation programme and dented parents' trust in the vaccine. It was later found the deaths were caused when other medicines were incorrectly administered. Rates of 90 percent are international best practice. Immunisation rates in Pacific island nations Tonga and Fiji are at around 90 percent, and their measles outbreaks have been far milder.

Yett said social media had been used to spread anti-vaccination misinformation in Samoa and the online giants running the platforms needed to clamp down on such "incredibly irresponsible" material. "It's quite clear that they have a corporate responsibility to step up to the plate and make sure that populations, particularly vulnerable

populations, get accurate information that's going to keep children alive," he said.

Samoa's immunisation rate has risen to 55 percent over the past fortnight and Yett said this week's two-day drive aimed to push it above 90 percent, which should help curb the current outbreak and stop future epidemics.

- 'Vaccination the only cure' -

Even Prime Minister Tuilaepa Sailele Malielegaoi's residence had a red flag fluttering outside it on Thursday, with the leader saying his nephew had recently arrived from Australia and needed a measles shot.

Malielegaoi said he was angered by anecdotal reports some anti-vaccination parents were encouraging their children to hide from the teams to avoid the mandatory injection. "The only cure for this is vaccination... having your children vaccinated is the only way," he said. Malielegaoi rejected accusations that his government had contributed to the crisis by not acting more decisively to address the long-term decline in immunisation rates.

"I think you're talking to the wrong people, we did it many,

many times," he told reporters.

Children are the most vulnerable to measles, which typically causes a rash and fever but can also lead to brain damage and death. The latest figures show that 54 of the 62 dead were aged four or less and infants account for most of the 4,217 cases recorded since the outbreak began in mid-October.

A further 19 children are critically ill in hospital.

Samoa has received aid to combat the crisis from Australia, New Zealand, France, Britain, China, Norway, Japan, American Samoa, the United States and the UN. But efforts so far have failed to stop infection spreading, prompting this week's drastic escalation in the immunisation campaign.

Samoans can expect no immediate relief even if the national shutdown succeeds in boosting vaccination rates as the injection typically takes 10-14 days to become effective.

There have also been measles epidemics in neighbouring Fiji and Tonga, but higher immunisation rates mean they have been more easily contained, with no fatalities.

SMAC in the DARQ: the tech trends shaping 2020

In 2020, will the wow factor return to consumer hardware? Will blockchain and 5G punch into the mainstream? Or will the world unify against Big Tech's privacy-busting, tax-avoiding practices? AFP looks at five themes shaping the world of technology after a year in which the public's mood towards the industry grew more distrustful.

- 5G's unfulfilled promise -

Super-fast fifth-generation network speeds are meant to revolutionize communications along with areas like urban transport -- driverless cars plying our streets safely could finally become reality.

But so far, 5G has failed to meet expectations due to the lagging build of infrastructure in many places. Apple has yet to launch a compatible phone, unlike rivals including Samsung.

The rollout should quicken next year as more countries install base stations and networking equipment -- although US President Donald Trump's war on Chinese sector leader Huawei remains a wild card. As smartphone sales plateau around the world, manufacturers have been focussing more on ancillary services. "You have to sell the entire experience, the entire ecosystem," Dominique Bindels, senior analyst for home and tech with London-based research firm Euromonitor International, told AFP.

Highlighting Apple's success in payments and peripheral devices such as AirPods, Bindels predicted that smart earphones, along with speakers and at-home devices connected on the "internet of things", would be among the more dynamic sectors in 2020. Another trend could be consolidation in TV streaming, after Apple and Disney joined Netflix, Amazon Video and some national broadcasters in a crowded subscription market.

Leap into the quantum dark - For the industry at large, business consultancy Accenture this year coined the acronym DARQ to denote four major trends: distributed ledger technology (such as blockchain), artificial intelligence (AI), extended reality and quantum



computing. Unbreakable blockchain networks of computers have already been generating virtual currencies in the form of bitcoin and its ilk, bypassing the need for a regulator like a government or central bank.

Facebook wants to make the tech respectable through its "Libra" project, but has hit political opposition around the world, and several financial partners have pulled out.

Unwilling to let private enterprise dictate terms, China and other nations are building their own digital payments systems, which could see fruition next year.

However, blockchain networks devour huge amounts of energy, and concerns will mount about their environmental impact as debate intensifies more broadly about tech's contribution to climate change.

- The price of privacy -

Most companies are now actively engaged across the spectrum of another tech acronym, SMAC: social, mobile, analytics and cloud. For consumers, SMAC is felt in how we communicate with friends and how we search and shop.

That is accentuating fears about privacy, after a series of data leaks at Facebook laid bare how much of our online lives are exploited by companies and political parties.

One recent revelation showed that Google is mining the medical data of millions of people, in a bid to access what observers think will be the next frontier of growth in tech -- healthcare. "People are becoming more conscious of sharing data but also in the same moment, the Nest cameras and smart speakers are flying off the shelves," said Bindels.

"There's a huge divide. People have been learning to trade privacy

for convenience. It's just another currency." For Amnesty International, in a hard-hitting study last month into Facebook and Google, that tradeoff amounts to a "Faustian bargain" which imperils our human rights.

- Tech wars -

To Beijing's anger, Washington alleges that Huawei and another telecoms group, ZTE, are little more than shell fronts for Chinese spy chiefs. Ni Lexiong, professor at the Shanghai National Defense Strategy Institute, said US tech sanctions would only encourage China to stand on its own feet.

"In the end, once China has formed its own industrial chain in the field of artificial intelligence, the United States will also lose a large market," he said. Sam Sacks, an expert on China's digital economy at the Washington think tank New America, said the tech standoff could harm progress in areas such as precision medicine and AI-based diagnoses.

The two countries have cooperated in research, "and severing that could have global consequences", she warned.

- Taxing times - The US presidential election next November will likely prove another flashpoint over disinformation peddled on social media. Democratic hopeful Elizabeth Warren wants Amazon, Facebook and Google to be broken up on anti-trust grounds.

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development is meanwhile due by June 2020 to present a "unified approach" for richer countries to levy a digital tax on internet giants. Some like France have gone ahead with their own tax, igniting another potential front in Trump's multifaceted trade wars as the US threatens tariffs on a range of French goods.

Japanese magazine ridiculed for 'Socrates' dating advice

A Japanese magazine that advised women to compliment men on their intelligence by saying "You sound like Socrates" has been ridiculed in the country ranked one of the world's worst for gender parity. "JJ", a major fashion magazine targeted at young women, encouraged readers to compare men to the classical Greek philosopher when they say something complicated.

A picture of the page sparked mirth when it was shared on Twitter -- with some users noting that Socrates did not live happily ever after, as he was sentenced to death by drinking poison. Users of both genders poured scorn on the technique to attract men, with one saying: "If a woman told me I sound like Socrates, I would wonder if she's sane."

The tips were based on a comic book by a female manga artist, the magazine said, playing on a popular trope where women compliment men and feign stupidity. In 2018, Japan ranked 110th out of 149 countries in the World Economic Forum's gender gap report, up from 114th the previous year. The country remains low in the ranking despite Prime Minister Shinzo Abe pledging to promote women's empowerment -- his so-called "Womenomics" strategy.

South African Airways secures state-led rescue



South African Airways was placed under a state-led rescue plan on Thursday as part of a massive restructuring following a costly week-long strike last month.

Thousands of South African Airways (SAA) staff walked out on November 15 after the cash-strapped airline failed to meet a string of demands, including higher wages and job in-sourcing.

The strike was called off the following week after SAA management and unions eventually clinched a deal.

But the walkout dealt a severe blow to the debt-ridden airline, which has failed to make a profit since 2011 and survives on government bailouts.

"The Board of SAA has adopted a resolution to place the company into business rescue," said a statement by South Africa's Public Enterprises Minister Pravin Gordhan, adding that the decision was also supported by the government.

"It must be clear that this is

not a bailout," said Gordhan. "This is the provision of financial assistance in order to facilitate a radical restructure of the airline."

South Africa is struggling to get state-owned companies back on track after nine years of corruption and mismanagement under former president Jacob Zuma.

- Costly strike - Its national airline -- which employs more than 5,000 workers and is Africa's second largest airline after Ethiopian Airlines -- had been losing 52 million rand (\$3.5 million) a day during the strike.

SAA's board said the business rescue, scheduled to start immediately, was decided after consultations with shareholders and the public enterprises department "to find a solution to our company's well-documented financial challenges".

"The considered and unanimous conclusion has been to place the company into business rescue in order to create a better return

for the company's creditors and shareholders," said the SAA board of directors in a statement.

Business practitioners were set to be appointed "in the near future" to oversee the process, they added.

Unions did not immediately respond to AFP's requests for comment.

They have agreed to a 5.9-percent wage increase backdated to April, but which would only start to be paid out next March depending on funding.

SAA had initially refused any pay rise.

The cash-strapped airline needs two billion rand (\$136 million) to fund operations through the end of March. "SAA understand that this decision presents many challenges and uncertainties for its staff," said the board.

"The company will engage in targeted communication and support for all its employee groups at this difficult time."

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WILD LOOKS! The “Motivation” singer, Normani poses in a leopard print ensemble at the Los Angeles Clippers and Portland Trailblazers basketball game.

Adam Sandler Tells Howard Stern How He And Chris Farley Responded To Getting Fired From ‘SNL’



Adam Sandler rarely speaks with the press — he went over 20 years between magazine profiles before recently agreeing to sit down with the New York Times (it’s a must read) — but he rarely makes movies like the skeezy indie drama *Uncut Gems*. So he’ll sit through the post-screening Q&As and sit-downs with journalists, if it gets people to see it, or as he told Howard Stern, “I love the movie. Now I gotta f*cking talk about it.”

Sandler recently appeared on The Howard Stern Show, where he talked about *Uncut Gems*, playing pranks on his next-door neighbor Conan O’Brien, and getting fired from *SNL*. “At the time, I was hurt because I didn’t know what I else was going to do,” he told Stern. “And I know it wasn’t Lorne’s decision. The NBC head dude, I know he didn’t like our

gang, me and [Chris] Farley... Maybe I would have never left, because I’m not good at saying goodbye. They had to get rid of me some time... Put a lump in my throat.”

If there are still hard feelings between Sandler and Lorne, you wouldn’t know it; the *Murder Mystery* star was part of *SNL*’s 40th anniversary special and he hosted an episode last season (I think about the “Romano Tours” sketch a lot). Stern also asked Sandler about the deserved Oscar buzz surrounding his *Uncut Gems* performance. Sandler had a good response, threatening, “If I don’t get it, I’m going to f*cking come back and do one again that is so bad on purpose just to make you all pay.” It’s either Oscar nominee Adam Sandler or Grown Ups 3: This Time They Part In a Museum.

It’s your choice, Academy.

NBC Has Launched A Formal Investigation Into “America’s Got Talent” After Gabrielle Union Complained About Toxic Workplace Culture

“I was able to, again, express my unfiltered truth. I led with transparency and my desire and hope for real change,” the actor tweeted. NBC has launched a formal investigation into *America’s Got Talent* in the wake of reports that Gabrielle Union isn’t returning to the show as a judge after speaking out about its alleged toxic work environment.

The confirmation comes after Union tweeted Wednesday that she and network executives had a “lengthy 5-hour, and what I thought to be, productive meeting yesterday.” “I was able to, again, express my unfiltered truth. I led with transparency and my desire and hope for real change,” she added.

NBC did not immediately respond to BuzzFeed News’ request for comment, but a spokesperson for the network told *Variety* and other media outlets that “the initial conversation was candid and productive.” “While there will be a further investigation to get a deeper understanding of the facts, we are working with Gabrielle to come to a positive resolution,” the spokesperson added.

Last week, *Variety* reported that Union’s contract was not picked up after she reported a racist joke to producers and was told that her hairstyles were “too black” for viewers. *Vulture*

then reported about tension between Union and fellow judge and executive producer Simon Cowell, saying she had complained about him smoking on set, something that’s prohibited in California. SAG-AFTRA also launched an investigation into Union’s departure from the

ed about the reports, saying, “So when I got the news that my wife was being fired—my first question was obviously why!? I am still waiting on a good answer to that question. But if anyone knows @itsgabrielleu or have heard of her you know she’s an advocate for our com-



NBC series. Support for Union has since grown on social media. The Time’s Up organization thanked her for speaking up, and she was praised by many other actors and fans online.

“So many tears, so much gratitude. THANK YOU!” Union tweeted on Nov. 27. “Just when you feel lost, adrift, alone... you got me up off the ground. Humbled and thankful, forever.” Earlier that day, Union’s husband, Dwyane Wade, tweet-

munity and culture.” Wade continued, “As proud as I were of her being selected as a judge on #AGT— I am even more proud of her standing up for what she stands for and that’s US.” Representatives for Union did not immediately respond to BuzzFeed News’ request for comment.

Fellow judge Julianne Hough’s contract also was not renewed for the second season of *America’s Got Talent: The Champions*.

Spider-Man might take his first step toward leaving the MCU as soon as next year

Spider-Man was at the center of a massive squabble between Disney and Sony over the summer, as the world learned the two giants were not able to reach a new understanding concerning Spider-Man’s future in the Marvel Cinematic Universe. Marvel may have created the popular superhero and Disney might own Marvel, but the company sold the rights to Spider-Man to Sony many years ago. And that’s why Sony has been making so many Spider-Man films of its own — it will lose access to the character if it doesn’t make at least one new movie every few years. Thankfully, Sony and Disney inked a new deal and we already know that Spider-Man 3 will be included in MCU Phase 4, hitting cinemas on July 16th, 2021. But we might not have to wait that long to see Tom Holland’s Spider-Man take his first step toward leaving the MCU, as the friendly neighborhood Spider-Man might appear in a non-MCU movie as soon as next fall.

After the massive successes of *Homecoming* and *Far From Home*, Sony decided to create its own MCU-like world based around the Spider-Man characters it can use. And it has long been rumored that Sony’s Spider-verse might include the *Venom* franchise, with a sequel set to premiere on October 2nd, 2020.

It’s *Venom 2* where we can expect a Tom Holland cameo, according to *We Got This Covered*. This is just a rumor, of course, but the blog says it comes from the same sources who have been accurate about other projects in the recent past:

According to our sources — the same ones who told us the Inhumans were being rebooted and that a Green Lantern

show was in development for HBO Max, both of which turned out to be correct — Holland’s scene will see him webbing his way through town when he’ll catch a news report about the crimes of Cletus Kasady AKA Carnage (Woody Harrelson). The audience will then be left with the feeling that Peter Parker’s going to do something about it. Which would, of course, tee up him and Eddie Brock going after Carnage in *Venom 3*. After they first butt heads with each other, presumably.

Marvel chief Kevin Feige could always prevent Sony from using Holland in the film, the report notes, but these unnamed sources think Feige won’t do it. Holland’s cameo is supposed to be short and should not interfere with his MCU adventures.

Once news dropped that a new Spider-Man compromise had been reached, we learned that Sony and Disney agreed to have Spider-Man in the MCU for two more movies, including *Spider-Man 3* and a crossover film. At the time, we speculated that it might be the next *Avengers* sequel, but *Avengers 5* is yet to be confirmed.

Also, the reports detailing the new deal said that Sony and Marvel will work on making it easier to use Spider-Man in Sony’s own universe without having to worry too much about what happens on the other side. The brilliant *Far From Home* post-credits scene set up the MCU for a Spider-Man movie that’s never been done before, as Peter Parker’s identity is now known to the world. But that cliffhanger would have been problematic for both Sony and Marvel in a scenario where Spider-Man would have been left out of the MCU for good.

Justin Timberlake apologizes to Jessica Biel, says ‘nothing happened’ with costar

Justin Timberlake swears that “nothing happened” with “Palmer” costar Alisha Wainwright during a drunken night out in New Orleans the Thursday before Thanksgiving.

“A few weeks ago I displayed a strong lapse in judgement — but let me be clear — nothing happened between me and my costar. I drank way too much that night and I regret my behavior. I should have known better,” the performer said in an Instagram post Wednesday evening.

He said he usually stays away from gossip, but felt the need to address it this time because his family had been hurt. Timberlake, who has been married to Jessica Biel for seven years and has a 4-year-old son with her, was photographed holding hands with Wainwright when the two were sitting together on a small balcony. Wainwright was also shown touching his knee.

The Sun, which published the pictures Nov. 23, said he appeared to have been drinking heavily at the Absinthe House on Bourbon Street. Timberlake, 38, and Wainwright, 30, had stepped away from the group they’d come with.

“At one stage he grabbed her hand and rested it on his knee. She then gently started stroking his leg,” a source alleged to the Sun. “Then he clutched her hand with both of his and was playing with her hands.” “This is not the example I want to set for my son.

ARIES: How important is emotional intelligence to you? In what manner do you show up for your soul crew when they are feeling vulnerable? Step into your power as a healer and lightworker, Aries. You can’t change what happened yesterday or the things that didn’t turn out the way you would have liked for them to.

Tip: Hold space for others.

TAURUS: The message is repeating itself, Taurus. Your mental health is important. Take charge of how you are feeling. Make a conscious effort to understand your triggers. Remember, awareness is the first step to healing and making a positive change.

Tip: Make your mental health a priority. **GEMINI:** Wise words by Solomon: “A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.” At any point of time you have two op-

tions: to add fuel to the fire or to inspire the person in front of you to believe in their own power. Use the gift of the gab wisely, Gemini.

Tip: Use the gift of the gab wisely.

CANCER: Only when you take time to replenish your spirit, will be able to fulfill your sacred purpose and serve others. Solo time is sacred, Cancer. Doing nothing at all is just as important as checking off the tasks on your to-do list and being proactive about your mission to take over the world. So eat, pray, love, and dance a little.

Tip: This is a time to hope and renewal.

LEO: “Imagine all the people sharing all the world. You may say that I’m a dreamer, but I’m not the only one. I hope someday you’ll join us and the world will live as one.” These words by John Lennon paint a perfect picture of your life right now. You are

connecting with your soul tribe on a deeper level, Leo.

Tip: You are surrounded by the people you love.

VIRGO: A Paulo Coelho quote to awaken you: “The beauty of truth: whether it is good or bad, it is liberating.” Communicate your truth in the most open and honest manner, Virgo. This will not only clear the clouds of confusion but also make space for joy and harmony in your existence.

Tip: The truth will liberate you.

LIBRA: From conspiracy theories to alien sex, you and your boo are talking about everything under the sun - and literally so. Use your secret weapons (aka charm and wit) to your advantage. Overheard at the cosmic conference: you’re tuning them on with every move you make.

Tip: Skip the small talk.

SCORPIO: Are you being too harsh

with yourself or others? The cards are reminding you of the power of gentleness. Remember, you know nothing about their struggles. Even if you did, it would be unfair to judge them. On the upside, the holiday season could bring joyous tidings on the romantic front.

Tip: Where is the love?

SAGITTARIUS: The Universe is in the mood to give and give some more. The real question is: are you ready to make space for what’s coming in? Let’s work backwards, Sagittarius. A lot of things you are clinging onto have served their purpose.

Tip: Find the courage to let go and move forward.

CAPRICORN: There are days where you can’t find the right words to express the depth of your love for them. And then there are days where you need all the self-control you can to keep yourself

from strangling them. Love can be funny that way, Capricorn.

Tip: Awaken your empathy.

AQUARIUS: When you assign the task of making you happy to another person, more often than not, you will face disappointment. Nobody understands you the way you do. Free yourself from unrealistic expectations, Aquarius. Focus on creating a life you deserve, one that sparks joy, creativity, and playfulness.

Tip: Create your own happiness potion.

PISCES: Look at that line of suitors outside your door! Your dating life is where the party is at, Pisces. But you don’t have to say yes to every offer that comes your way. Your space is sacred. Ensure those who are allowed to enter are deserving of the love you have to give. As you do, let go of the past narrative.

Tip: Be mindful of who you are letting into your space.