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AN EGALITARIAN FORM OF
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SummitTIMES

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ON TOP OF THE NEWS

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GANGTOKIANS might have seen these two lads busy beautifying the walls along the flyover from Metro sweets to MG Marg with their art work. Chogyal Lama of Swastik and Pralad Viswakarma of Dicheling in Gangtok, are members of an art collective called Street Art Gangtok. The two boys are not only putting in hours of work but also their own money to make these pieces of art. For those who wish they had the skills but don't, can support the duo with financial aid or in kind. You can call or message at 8250058280 to find out how you can help. [NISIM SUBBA]

BJP Sikkim congratulates SKM on foundation day

**SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 03 FEB:**

Bharatiya Janta Party, Sikkim, has congratulated Sikkim Krantikari Morcha president and Chief Minister, PS Tamang, as well as all SKM workers on the occasion of the party's 8th foundation day on 04 Feb.

In a press release issued today, BJP Sikkim has expressed hope that SKM will take Sikkim in a new direction like it did when it joined hands

with BJP Sikkim for the by-election to the State Assembly in Oct last year, and launched an environment of camaraderie in the state.

BJP Sikkim has also expressed hope that the SKM government will bring about transparency, and end corruption and discrimination in the state.

SKM will be celebrating its 8th foundation day at Rangpo, Mining Ground, on 04 Feb.

Third coronavirus case reported from India

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, FEB 3 (PTI): In the third novel coronavirus case reported in India, another Keralite student who returned from Wuhan university on Monday tested positive for the infection, Health Minister K K Shailaja said here on Monday. The student is in an isolation ward at Kanhangad district hospital in Kasaragod district, she informed the state Assembly.

The condition of the student is "stable", she said. Out of the 104 samples tested till Sunday, three have been tested positive. This is the third positive case reported from Kerala.

Two earlier positive cases, also of students who came back from Wuhan, the epicentre of the virus, were reported from Thrissur and Alapuzha districts.

Mizoram's Serchhip tops the country in maternity benefit programme

AIZAWL, FEB 3 (PTI): Serchhip district of Mizoram has bagged the best performing district award in the country in implementing Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana (PMMVY), a maternity benefit programme, an official said here on Monday.

Serchhip district Deputy Commissioner Dr Lalzirmawia Chhangte received the award from Union Women and Child Development Minister Smriti Irani at a function in New Delhi on Monday, he said.

The PMMVY was implemented in all the districts of the country in January 2017. Under the programme, a cash incentive of Rs 5000 is provided directly to the bank account of pregnant women and lactating mothers for the first living child of the family, subject to fulfilling specific conditions relating to maternal and child health.

Since the scheme was launched, Rs 77.66 lakhs were deposited in the accounts of 1,812 registered beneficiaries in Serchhip district, the official said.

State Social Welfare Minister Dr K Beichhua congratulated the people of Serchhip district for topping in the country in implementing the PMMVY.

Sense of fear appears to have gripped the society: Jayanta Mohapatra

BHUBANESWAR, FEB. 3 (PTI): Jayanta Mohapatra, the first Indian to win the Sahitya Akademi for English poetry, has said that a sense of fear appears to have gripped the society as the situation has undergone change in recent times.

What sounded illogical (earlier) has become logical today. I don't like it, he said on Sunday referring obliquely to the current situation in the country which is often marked by protests by students and others and face-offs with the police.

The situation is not what it was a few years ago. The sense of freedom which I used to experience personally has disappeared. A sense of fear appears to have

gripped the society, Mohapatra said at a Face to Face programme of a literary festival of the SOA deemed university here.

He was awarded the Padma Shri in 2009 but had returned it in 2015 to protest against the rising intolerance in India. He had won the Sahitya Akademi award in 1981.

The 91-year-old poet walked down the memory lane and expressed his love for nature, specially sunshine.

I always wait for sunshine to light up my life, he said adding he did not like the idea of an overcast sky.

Asked about his daily routine, the poet said he spends his time learning new words, something that he did as a young-

ster too. Recalling his foray into creative writing, Mohapatra, who taught physics for long years, said he began writing short stories at the age of 22 but the editors to whom he forwarded his stories for publication had returned them. Finally The Illustrated Weekly of India under the editorship of late Khuswant Singh gave him a break by choosing to publish his writings.

I never ever wanted to be a poet, but perhaps my experience of an unhappy childhood made me a poet, Mohapatra said adding he didn't write for himself but for others.

If my works have touched ten people, I am happy, he added.

NPF to move anti-CAA resolution in Nagaland Assembly

KOHIKA, FEB 3 (PTI): Opposition Naga People's Front (NPF) has decided to move a resolution against the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA), 2019 in the ensuing budget session of the Nagaland Assembly, a senior party leader said on Monday.

The session is scheduled from February 7 to 15.

During a consultative meeting of NPF legislators with party officials held in the residence of party president Shurhohelie Liezietsu on Saturday, it was decided that the MLAs will take up the matter (CAA) in the Assembly, NPF secretary-general Achumbe-

mo Kikon told reporters. Kikon said party workers will organise dharnas against CAA outside the Assembly.

"Our legislators will give fierce arguments against the Act and move a resolution for withdrawal of CAA," Kikon said.

He said the party will also field its candidate for the post of Assembly speaker which is vacant following the demise of the sitting speaker Vikho-o Yhoshu on December 29 last year following a prolonged illness.

Kikon said a whip has been issued to all the NPF MLAs and all of them, including the seven suspended ones, will

abide by it.

Seven of the 25 NPF MLAs were suspended during the 2019 Lok Sabha elections for defying the collective decision of the party and supporting the ruling party nominee.

Though they are suspended from the party, they are still NPF legislators inside the Assembly, Kikon said, citing past court rulings.

The election of the speaker is scheduled on the first day of the session on February 7.

NPF MLA Imkong L Imchen told PTI that the party legislators have decided to nominate former speaker Imtiwapang for the post.

RBI to come out with last monetary policy for FY20 on Thursday

MUMBAI, FEB 3 (PTI): Amid slowing GDP growth and rising inflation, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) will unveil its last monetary policy for the current financial year on Thursday.

The sixth bi-monthly monetary policy statement for 2019-20 would be the last one for the current financial year.

The Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) will meet during February 4-6 for the policy review, the RBI said in a release on Monday.

The RBI said it will place the resolution of the MPC on its website before noon on February 6.

The government has estimated India's gross domestic product (GDP) to be growing at a slower pace of 5 per cent in the current financial year on the back of various factors, domestic and global, including

weakening consumption demand in the country.

In December, the retail inflation also peaked to a five-year high of 7.3 per cent, mainly due to costlier vegetables, specifically onion and tomato.

The Economic Survey 2019-20 has projected the Indian economy to grow at around 6-6.5 per cent in the next financial year beginning April 2020.

"With fiscal policy taking a growth-supportive role, on the back of monetary policy being ahead of the curve last year, the calibrated policy mix should bode well for growth.

"We look for the central bank to remain on an extended pause on rates (even as supply-induced shocks dissipate) but maintain an accommodative bias to ensure cost of capital remains

stable and favourable," Radhika Rao, senior vice-president and economist, DBS Group Research, said.

Crisil Ratings in its post-Union Budget 2020-21 comment has said, "Monetary policy has done its bit, but with moderate and slow success."

It added that the RBI cut the repo rate cumulatively by 135 basis points (bps) through calendar 2019, but lending rates tarried with just nearly 50-bps decline. "Even as credit demand has fallen, risk aversion and weak sentiment have affected the willingness to supply credit, too."

In its previous monetary policy review in December, the RBI had decided for a status quo, leaving the key repo -- the rate at which it lends to banks -- at 5.15 per cent.

NEW DELHI, FEB 3 (PTI): The Congress on Monday demanded in Lok Sabha that Union Minister Anurag Thakur be booked for egging on participants at an election rally to raise an incendiary slogan that "traitors should be shot".

The opposition party alleged that "political masters at the top" are giving directions to ministers to make inflammatory speeches.

Participating in the discussion on Motion of Thanks on President's address, Congress MP Gaurav Gogoi said that a BJP member is making remarks about shooting and terming Indian people as traitors.

Book the minister under relevant laws, he said without taking the minister's name.

He said that if people can vote BJP in, they can also vote it out.

"They think that they can rule like dictators and make such speeches. It is unfortunate," he said. Gogoi said that for this government, the students and women who are protesting against the CAA are "our enemies."

But for me, they are my brothers and friends. They are telling about values of Mahatma Gandhi and Swami



Vivekanand". Referring to the JNU incident on January 5, Gogoi said people witnessed disturbing scenes in universities.

Students and professors at JNU were bleeding due to attack and police did not do anything, he said adding, "I am not questioning Delhi Police".

Delhi Police, he said, is capable of managing everything, but "what I feel

is that political masters are dictating them and giving directions".

"In front of Delhi Police, a boy fired on the people," the Congress leader said adding "he must have been motivated by someone". "I want to know who is pulling the trigger. It's not the minister or that boy," he added.

"None of this will happen if there is

no tacit appeal from political masters. This shows the attitude of these people... the minds of young people are being polluted," he said.

He also said that a member banned by Election Commission for campaigning in Delhi was allowed to speak first in the House and "that shows the BJP's attitude towards the Election Commission and Parliament".

BJP MP Parvesh Verma was barred by the Election Commission last week for four days for his controversial remarks made during an interview and at an election meeting in Delhi.

Gogoi said the government should talk about the real problems of poverty, unemployment, and inequality as these issues are not yet over.

"The true Ravans are poverty, and inequality," he said.

He also criticised the Union Budget for 202-21 saying it does not provide anything to deal with these problems and revive private investments.

"You are full of rhetoric only," he said adding the prime minister meeting top 15 industrialists will not solve the problem of economy.

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No restraint on free communication during elections: HC

NEW DELHI, FEB 3 (PTI):

No restraint can be made on free communication during the process of election, the Delhi High Court has said while refusing to bar a person from circulating messages on a social networking platform against a candidate contesting the upcoming assembly polls.

Justice Rajiv Sahai Endlaw refused to pass an ex-parte order to direct a national daily and Internet giant Google to take down alleged defamatory content relating to the candidate from its electronic platform.

The court was hearing a plea by a BJP leader, who is contesting in the upcoming Delhi Legislative Assembly election to be held on February 8, seeking to restrain the newspaper, Google and others from publishing or disseminating the alleged defamatory material against him.

His counsel contended that a WhatsApp sender be restrained from circulating messages to the effect that the candidate was accused of the offence of rape, as he has been discharged of the charge by a court here.

The high court said though the candidate has been discharged of the offence of rape, he is still accused of the offences under Section 354 (molestation), 354A (sexual harassment), B (use of criminal force to woman with intent to disrobe) and D (stalking), 201 (destruction of evidence), 506 (criminal intimidation) IPC and Section 67 (punishment for publishing or transmitting obscene material in electronic form) of the Information Technology Act under which also the FIR has been registered.

“The court certainly cannot by its order, direct the allegedly defamatory material to be so dissected,” it said.

“It has been held that during election and campaigning for elections, a lot of claims and speeches are made and at least the candidates contesting the election cannot be bound by the promises made by them to the electorate and on the same parity, I feel that any restraint on free communication during the process of election is not envisaged under the law relating to elections,” the judge said.

The court issued summons to the parties on the suit and listed it for further hearing on February 19. The candidate has filed a suit in the court seeking direction to the newspaper to take down the offending article, published in 2015, stating that he was accused of molesting and sexually assaulting a woman.

The plea said once he has been discharged of the charge of rape, the content on the website of the newspaper to the effect that he had been booked under Section 376 of the IPC, is ex-facie defamatory of him and affects his chances in the ensuing election.

The candidate’s counsel contended that since the content of the news item also contained information which is not correct as of today, it is liable to be removed in entirety.

SRLM prepares to implement NRLM in South and West Sikkim

SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 03 FEB:

New recruits of North East Rural Livelihood Project [NERLP] under National Rural Livelihood Mission [NRLM] attended a daylong orientation program on National Livelihood Mission held today at Janta Bhawan, Gangtok.

Commissioner-cum-SMD/RDD, Dr P Senthil Kumar chaired the program. The program was attended by 93 new recruits and State Mission Management Unit staff of SRLM. During his introductory address, Dr Kumar highlighted the difference between the NERLP and NRLM, NRLM objective and its mechanism of implementation in details.

He also emphasized the role of MIS in the Mission Livelihood initiatives in achieving the objective of the mission in Sikkim. The program then witnessed a presentation on various thematic areas such as MIS Division, SISD Di-



vision, Livelihood Division, Financial Inclusion Division, HR Division, Finance Division, IBCB Division of the state mission management unit by the respective staff of the Division.

On the way forward in the Mission in West and South Sikkim, Commissioner explained various activities to be taken up by the Block Mission Management Unit.

The activities on Mission Antyodaya, Ease

of Living, Stitching of School Uniform by the SHGs and completing them in time bound manner was also discussed.

It was informed that the activities taken up under SHGs, Federations, Producer Groups, Producer Organization., etc., need to be strengthened under NRLM. During the year 2020-21, the program such as Vulnerability Reduction Program and AGEY (Ajeevika Grameen Express Yoj-

na) will be implemented in the SHGs of South and West Sikkim in addition to other SRLM activities.

The participants also had an interactive session with the resource persons and cleared their doubts on the subject. The program started with welcome address by Asst CEO/SRLM, Sium W Bhutia and ended with vote of thanks by the APO/SRLM, Mamita Chettri.

Till December 2019,

NRLM was implemented in East and North Sikkim. From January 2020, SRLM started implementation in South and West Sikkim. In South and West Sikkim, NERLP was implemented till Dec 2019. The rural Institutions such as SHGs, Federations, Producer Groups and Producer Organizations of these two Districts have now been taken over by the Sikkim Rural Livelihood Mission under NRLM.

Chota Samdong Football Club organizes Free Winter Coaching Camp



SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 03 FEB:

Chota Samdong Football Club (CSFC) organised free U-16 Boys Winter Football Coaching Camp at Chota Samdong Playground on 20 Dec, 2019, to 02 Feb, 2020, a press release informs.

CSFC successfully concluded its winter Football Coaching Camp in its GPU on 02 Feb, 2020 (Sunday), in the presence of Panchayat President, DK Subba, Panchayat Norbu, Dhi, Dambu Kumar Sawaden, vice-con-

venor of Soreng-Chakung Constituency (SKM), CK Rana, Chota Samdong School Incharge, Aita Raj Limboo, SMC Members, Dilip Gurung and Sancha Bdr Limboo.

Panchayat President and all the other members, RDA and others supported Rs. 20,000 to Chota Samdong Football Club. Chota Samdong Football Club has thanked Panchayat President, all the members of Panchayat, RDA and others for their support.

SKM Vice Convenor of

Soreng Chakung constituency, CK Rana also fully supported CSFC.

CSFC has also thanked the area MLA, Aditya Goyal, National Player, Sanju Pradhan and Birbal Limboo for their support.

The trainees also took part in a cleanliness drive and were provided free tours around the area. The trainees visited Soreng Play Ground, where Birbal Limboo provided them with lunch and further to Chakung Tankee Dara and Awganay Dara.

Vinesh, Sindhu, Mary Kom among nominees for BBC Sportswoman of the year award

NEW DELHI, FEB 3 (PTI):

Star wrestler Vinesh Phogat, badminton queen PV Sindhu and boxing great MC Mary Kom will compete for the inaugural BBC Indian sportswoman of the year award after being nominated for the honour with two other athletes.

Sprinter Dutee Chand and para-badminton player Manasi Joshi are the other nominees for the award, the winner of which will be announced on March 8.

The winner will be decided on the basis of public voting, which will be open till February 18 on six BBC vernacular websites.

Vinesh had won a bronze at the 2019 World Championship in Nur Sultan to secure a quota for the Tokyo Olympics while Sindhu became the first Indian shuttler to become world champion last year.

Manasi became a world champion after

winning gold at the para world championship while Mary Kom is the only Indian boxer to win eight world medals, including six gold.

Dutee had won a 100m silver at the 2018 Jakarta Asian Games.

Rupa Jha, the Head of BBC Indian languages, informed that the nominees were picked up by a panel of 40 eminent sports journalists. “We had asked our panel members to pick their candidates. The five athletes who got the maximum number of votes, were eventually selected as the final nominees,” Rupa said while addressing a press conference.

“We will cover their journeys, the societal attitude towards them and their lives beyond sport. A research is being conducted on this, simultaneously,” she added.

Upcoming wrestler Sonam Malik, the two time world cadet champion, was asked to open

the voting.

Sonam had recently defeated Rio Olympic bronze medallist Sakshi Malik to secure her place in the senior Indian women team for the Asian Championship.

The 18-year-old, who idolises Vinesh Phogat, urged parents to support their girl child and not to marry them off at a young age as is the tradition in villages.

Rupa said that in sports women’s journey is comparatively tougher than their male counterparts, so they thought of honouring their achievements.

“We feel that though, of late, the media has started taking interest in women athletes, still they are not promoted as male athletes. Since 2000, of the 13 Olympic medals, 5 are won by women but we feel the recognition they should have got, is not there. That was the thought behind starting this award,” she said.

Uttarakhand governor honours 11-year-old braveheart

DEHRADUN, FEB 3 (PTI):

Uttarakhand Governor Baby Rani Maurya on Monday honoured National Bravery Award winner Rakhi who had risked her own life to save her younger brother from a leopard attack.

The governor gave the braveheart a cheque for Rs 10,000, describing her as an inspiration for everyone in the country despite being so young.

Rakhi, who hails from a village in Uttarakhand’s Pauri district, had saved her four-year-old brother from a leopard on October

4, 2019, sustaining serious injuries. The act of courage by the 11-year-old earned her the National Bravery Award on the Republic Day this year.

“Rakhi’s fearless act shows her ability to stay calm in adverse circumstances and her capacity for quick thinking. Despite being so young, she is an inspiration for everyone, especially young girls,” the governor said.

She also asked the State Child Development Council to regularly monitor Rakhi’s education and medical treatment.

Two hospitalised for symptoms of coronavirus in Kottayam

KOTTAYAM (KERALA), FEB 3 (PTI):

Two persons, who returned from coronavirus-hit China two weeks ago, have been admitted to the isolation ward of the Government Medical College Hospital here for symptoms of cough and cold, government officials said here on Monday.

Health workers who reached the house of the two for a routine check-

up for the virus found them with the symptoms and took them to the hospital, the officials said.

Samples taken from the patients have been sent to the National Institute of Virology, Alappuzha, for testing, they added.

India has so far reported three cases of the novel coronavirus, all of them from Kerala.

Plea by 11 Independent candidates against nomination rejection: HC seeks EC, Centre stand



NEW DELHI, FEB 3 (PTI):

The Delhi High Court on Monday sought responses of the Election Commission (EC) and the Centre on a plea by 11 Independent candidates challenging rejection of their nominations for the upcoming Delhi Assembly polls.

A bench of Chief Justice D N Patel and Justice C Hari Shankar issued notices to the Centre and the EC seeking their stand on the candidates’ plea, which also challenges a single judge or-

der declining to entertain their petition against rejection of the nominations.

The division bench said it will hear the matter on February 5.

The returning officer (RO) had rejected their nominations on the last date for filing the same.

The plea challenging the rejection was dismissed by a single judge of the high court on January 28 by saying that only an election petition was maintainable after the poll process has started.

AAP likely to release manifesto on Tuesday

NEW DELHI, FEB 3 (PTI):

The AAP is likely to release its election manifesto on Tuesday, party leader Sanjay Singh has said.

In the last three days of election campaigning, AAP will intensify its campaign through 500 members of its frontal organisations.

“In the next three days, 15,000 meetings will be held. In the last phase, we would use the slogan ‘acche honge

paanch saal - Delhi mein toh Kejriwal’ (five years will go well - Kejriwal should be there in Delhi),” Singh said on Monday.

He also said party leaders will meet the Chief Election Commissioner Monday evening and seek a ban on Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath from campaigning in the national capital over his alleged provocative speeches.

Political masters...

“You have wasted first five years and you are going to waste these five year also,” Gogoi said.

“You may threaten us, or shoot us, but people will not be afraid,” he said.

He said that it was very unfortunate that members are absent when such an important discussion is going on in the House.

Gogoi added that “I feel proud that Indian people are on the streets”.

Speaking during the discussion, T R Baalu (DMK) wondered if the President had gone through his speech before reading it during the joint sitting of Parliament.

He said that Budget has not provided anything to boost investment in agri sector.

On Citizenship Amendment Act, he asked the government about the compulsion under which they came up with this law.

“You want to discriminate among people,” he alleged.

Opposing the motion, Trinamool Congress’ Mahua Moitra said the government is betraying the people who have voted for them.

“You have betrayed the tribal people in Gujarat on whose land you built a statue,” she said.

She dubbed the National Population Register (NPR), National Register of Citizens and the CAA as the “biggest betrayal” of people of India.

“People who voted for you in 2014 are horrified,” she said adding, “Today, you put a person banned by Election Commission to speak in parliament”.

She also said that the state of economy is abysmal and the finance minister was fearful in giving the target for the real GDP.

“You have rubbished all economists, but your own former CEA appointed by you” is raising question marks on government data, she said.

PV Midhun Reddy (YSRCP) said that his party was opposed to the NRC and the NPR and the government should not do anything which creates a sense of insecurity among minorities.

He also demanded that the government honour all the commitments made by it at the time of division of Andhra Pradesh.

Vinayak Raut, member of former NDA constituent Shiv Sena, dared the BJP to give Bharat Ratna to Hindutva ideologue Vinayak Damodar Savarkar.

He also wanted to know how many Indians have gone to Kashmir after abrogation of Article 370.

He also asked the government what was being done to generate employment and reduced poverty.

Raut said that Shiv Sena is opposed to the NRC.

BJD leader Pinaki Misra said that Odisha was not getting sufficient funds from the Centre to deal with recurring problems of cyclones and other natural calamities.

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National Defence College delegation meets Chief Secretary



GANGTOK, 03 FEB (IPR):

A 15-member delegation comprising of Course Members of National Defence College, New Delhi called on Chief Secretary of Sikkim, SC Gupta, at Tashiling Secretariat in the capital today wherein the CS accorded a warm welcome to the team and briefed them about the socio political aspects of Sikkim.

The delegation from National Defence College, New Delhi comprising of Faculty-in-charge, Neeta Bhushan, Tour Coordi-

nator, Amarendra Parida, Brigadier, Vikas Rohella, SM, Dr Arvind, AFHQ-CS, Air Commodore, S Jacob, Brig VK Gudi, Brig LCR Jayasuriya RSP psc (Sri Lankan Army), Brig Deepak Singh Bisht, SM, Brig Irvinnder Singh Gill, Brig Mohit Seth, VSM, Captain Ian Herbert Lynn (UK Navy), Air Cmde PS Wadodkar, Cmde Aditya Hara, Captain Ali Al Hosni (Oman Navy), and Brig SP Vishwasrao, SM are in the State from 02-07 Feb as a part of their Socio

Political Study Tour.

A meeting was also convened in the conference hall of Tashiling Secretariat under the chairmanship of the CS which was attended by the National Defence College delegates along with representatives and dignitaries of various departments of the State government.

During the meeting, presentations were made by various departments namely Forest, Tourism, Education, Police, Agriculture/Horticulture,

Planning & Development, Rural Development and Commerce & Industries.

The State government representatives gave a brief overview of the policies and schemes implemented by their concerned departments for the development of the State while also underlining various achievements and accolades earned by the State at national level.

The presentation session was followed by brainstorming interaction between the visit-

ing team and the State government representatives wherein queries raised by the guests were promptly tended to by the concerned officials.

The vote of thanks was delivered by Brig SP Vishwasrao, SM, wherein he commended Sikkim's achievements and lauded the efforts of the State government towards the progress and prosperity of its citizens. He further extended gratitude to the Chief Secretary and his team for hosting the delegate and hoped for further interactions in the coming days to discuss future prospects for the development of the State and the country.

The meeting concluded with the presentation of mementos to the Chief Secretary, the Additional Chief Secretary (Education) and the Principal Secretary cum PCCF (Forest) by the National Defence College delegation.

Sikkim Women's U23 team on winning streak



SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 03 FEB:

Sikkim's Women U23 team has created history by winning four matches in a row in the ongoing Women's U23 One Day Trophy 2019-20, which is being played at Odisha, a press release informs.

So far Sikkim has played four matches and won all of them against Meghalaya, Nagaland, Manipur, and Mizoram. They will be playing nine matches in the league round of the plate group in the tournament.

They beat Mizoram on 02 Feb by a huge margin of 238 runs at KIIT Cricket Stadium, Bhubaneswar, Odisha. The toss was won by Sikkim and seeing at the ground condition they decided to bat first. Nandika Kumari and Rinki Rajak gave a good start to the team by playing a partnership of 76 runs but the opening partnership was broke by Puipuii - the strike bowler of

Mizoram, who took the wicket of Nandika.

After the first dismissal the captain Sarojini Giri took the charge and played outstanding innings and adding 185 runs to the board where she scored 73 runs. Rinki scored her first century of the tournament in this match, which she missed by 10 runs in two of the early match where she was out at 90. She remained 185 not-out in this match and Aruna Barman was not-out at 16 runs. Sikkim scored 316 runs with the loss of 2 wickets in 50 overs.

Mizoram had the target of 317 runs against the standard bowling line-up of Sikkim. From the beginning of Mizoram's innings, Sikkim made the pressure by taking early wickets and not giving chance to the opponent to get settled. The wickets fall in regular intervals and Sikkim got them all out in 32.3 overs with just 78 runs on the

board. Aruna Barman of Sikkim took 5 wickets, Pranita Chettri (2), Mariam Subba (1), and Rinki Rajak (1).

Sikkim earned 4 Point(s) for the win and is at the second-ranking of the Plate Group with total 16 Point(s). Rinki Rajak is leading the table of most runs all over India in this tournament with 419 runs, Aruna Barman is at 4th position of most wickets, Pranita Chettri is at number 3 for most maiden overs bowled (17 overs) and also at number 7 of best economy rates with an average of 1.42 per over.

President of the Sikkim Cricket Association (SICA) met the team after the match and congratulated them for their successive wins. He also wished good luck for the remaining matches and assured the players that they will be rewarded if they keep the winning momentum and bring glory to the State, the release mentions.

Trump impeachment trial to resume for final arguments

President Donald Trump's impeachment trial resumes for final arguments Monday before an expected acquittal later in the week that Democrats have said will be invalid because no witnesses testified.

The president was impeached in December for abuse of power over pressure on US ally Ukraine to announce investigations that would have helped him politically, including into Joe Biden, a leading challenger for this year's presidential ballot.

Biden is among the candidates Monday in the Iowa caucuses that choose the state's Democratic nominee and mark the official start of election season.

The selection process in largely rural Iowa, coinciding with final impeachment arguments in Washington, will be closely watched as a sign as to which of 11 Democratic candidates are gaining early momentum to challenge Trump in November's election.

At only the third impeachment trial of a US president, Trump is all but assured of being acquitted Wednesday, the day after his annual "State of the Union" speech, which the president said will carry a "very, very positive message."

Republicans hold 53 seats in the Senate to 47 for the Democrats, but a two-thirds majority, or 67 senators, is needed to remove him from office.

Adam Schiff, the leader of the House prosecutors, known as impeachment managers, told CBS on Sunday that it was "pretty remarkable" that senators on both sides had acknowledged that Democrats proved their case against the president.

"But I'm not letting the senators off the hook. We're still going to go

into the Senate this week and make the case why this president needs to be removed. It will be up to the senators to make that final judgment, and the senators will be held accountable for it."

Republican Senators Lamar Alexander and Joni Ernst on Sunday said Trump's behavior was troubling but not impeachable.

Alexander, of Tennessee, suggested Trump had been naive in asking a foreign ally to look into Biden and his son Hunter's business dealings in Ukraine, which Republicans have claimed without evidence were corrupt.

But he added: "The bottom line: it's not an excuse. He shouldn't have done it."

- Just two Republicans -

Ernst said it was "up to the American people" to decide on Trump's behavior, adding that she would vote Wednesday to acquit the president.

"I think generally speaking, going after corruption is the right thing to do, but he did it in the wrong manner... I think that he could have done it in different channels," she told CNN.

Trump is also accused of obstruction of Congress for ordering officials not to comply with subpoenas for documents and testimony as part of the impeachment inquiry.

On Friday, just two Republicans -- Mitt Romney of Utah and Susan Collins of Maine -- joined Democrats in voting to introduce witnesses, a practice they said was followed at every other impeachment trial in US history.

- 'Wrong manner' - A narrow majority of Americans believe Trump abused his power and obstructed Congress by withholding documents and testimony

during the impeachment inquiry, according to a new NBC/WSJ poll.

But they remain divided on whether he should be kicked from office, with 46 percent hoping to see him removed and 49 percent saying he should keep his job.

Democrats had been eager to hear from Trump's former national security advisor John Bolton, acting White House chief of staff Mick Mulvaney and other key administration figures caught up in the scandal.

Bolton reportedly says in a forthcoming book that Trump told him military aid to Ukraine was tied to Kiev's investigating Biden -- corroborating the central claim against the president.

After the failure to call witnesses, Senate Democratic leader Chuck Schumer said the chamber "did not live up to its responsibilities, turned away from truth and instead went along with a sham trial."

Four contenders for the Democratic nomination -- Senators Bernie Sanders, Elizabeth Warren, Amy Klobuchar and Michael Bennet -- are required to be back in Washington Monday at the impeachment trial even as the Iowa caucuses take place.

"The Senate is the jury today but we are the jury tomorrow," Pete Buttigieg, who is running third in Iowa, told CNN.

"And we get to send a message at the ballot box that cheating, lying, involving a foreign country in our own domestic politics, not to mention abuse of power more broadly and bad administration, that that's not okay, that we can do better," he said.

Trump, though, on Sunday complained again, in a Fox News interview that he has been treated unfairly "from the day I won."

Clean My Campus drive at SMIT



SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 03 FEB:

All Core Computer Engineers Students Society (ACCESS), the student's society of Computer Science and Engineering Department of Sikkim Manipal Institute of Technology, organized a 'Clean My Campus' drive in and around the premises, a press release informs.

With participation from students, faculty, NSS volunteers and NCC cadets, the drive was conducted after the marathon - 'Run with SMIT'.

The run aimed at promoting healthy mind and body but a clean environment is yet another dimension to living a healthy life, said Prof. (Dr.) Kalpana Sharma, HOD (CSE).

**GOVERNMENT OF SIKKIM
FINANCE DEPARTMENT
TASHILING SECRETARIAT
BLOCK-B, GANGTOK.**

No. 653/FIN/ADM Dated: 28.1.2020

TENDER NOTICE
N.I.T No. 649/FIN/ADM Dated: 28.1.2020

Sealed tenders are hereby invited from the bonafide Internet Service Provider (ISP's) having Infrastructure Provider-1 (IP-I) License and ISP License holders with credential 80% of the similar nature of work for at least last 3(Three) Years and having existing Optical Fibre Connectivity in the specified locations. The others details relating to the tenders can be downloaded from www.sikkimfred.gov.in under the link "OFC N.I.T Details". The last date for submission of tenders is on 27.02.2020 up to 4.00 PM.

Sd/-
Secretary Revenue
Finance Department
Government of Sikkim.

R.O. No. 347/IPR/Pub/Classi./19-20 Date: 29.1.2020

**GOVERNMENT OF SIKKM
OFFICE OF THE SR.SUPERIN-
TENDENT OF PRISONS
STATE CENTRAL PRISON
RONGYEK**

Memo No: 15/J/97(Pt-III)478 Dated: 29.01.2020

CORRIGENDUM

With reference to Tender Notice issued vide R.O. No. 334/IPR/Pub/Classi./19-20 Dated: 22.01.2020, regarding supply of Ration Grocery and Other Vocational items to the State Central Prison, Rongyek and District Prison, Namchi, the last date for receiving of quotation shall be on 03.03.2020 at 10 am. Further, the Tender Committee shall open the Tender in the office of the Sr. Superintendent of Police/Prison, Rongyek at 11 am on the same day in presence of the Tenderers and their authorized agents.

Sd/-
Sr. Superintendent of Police
State Central Prison, Rongyek

R.O. No. 350/IPR/PUB/Classi./19-20 Date: 29.01.2020.

**SOCIAL JUSTICE & WELFARE DEPARTMENT
CHILD PROTECTION SCHEME
GOVERNMENT OF SIKKIM**

No. 284/SJ&WD/CPS/2020 Dated: 03/02/2020

EMPLOYMENT NOTICE

Applications are invited from eligible local candidates for filling up the following posts on contractual basis for a period o three years under the Child Protection Scheme sponsored by the Ministry of Women & Child Development, Government of India. The details of posts and eligibility criteria area as under:

Sl.No.	Name of the post	No. of post	Educational Qualifications	Salary
1	Pro-gramme Officer	01	* Graduate in any discipline. * Preference will be given to: i) Degree holder in Sociology/Social Work/ Law AND/OR ii) Having experience in the field of Child Rights/ Welfare/ Protection and in Advocacy, Research, Documentation, Training & Capacity Building.	Rs.26,250/- per month.
2.	Pro-tection Officer	04	* Degree holder in Sociology/ Social Work/ Law * Preference will be given to those having experience in the field of Child Rights/ Welfare/ Protection.	Rs. 21,000/- per month.
3.	Le-gal-cum-Probation Officer	02	* Degree holder in Law. * Preference will be given to those having experience in the filed of Child Rights/ Welfare/ Protection.	Rs. 21,000/- per month.
4.	Accoun-tant	01	* Degree Holder in Commerce. * Preference will be given to those having experience in Accounting and computer skills	Rs. 14,000/- per month.
TO-TAL POST		08		

TERMS AND CONDITIONS:

- Selection will be done through written examination and viva-voce.
 - Only those candidates fulfilling the above eligibility criteria as prescribed against each post should apply.
 - Must be in good health and physically fit to discharge his / her duties.
 - The successful candidates are liable to be posted in any districts of the State.
- Those fulfilling the eligibility criteria must submit their application along with documents addressed to Additional Secretary-cum-Director, CPS on or before 28.02.2020 latest by 4.30 p.m.

OTHER REQUIREMENTS:

- Attested copy of mark sheet and degree certificates of academic qualification.
- Attested copy of Sikkim Subject Certificate/ Certificate of Identification from the authorized attestation Authority.
- Attested copy of valid Local Employment Card.
- No Objection Certificate from the Head of Department in case of any temporary employee serving in Government Departments.
- Experience Certificate duly certified by the relevant Authority.
- Medical fitness certificate from a Government Medical Officer.

Applications with attested documents shall only be entertained. Social Justice & Welfare Department reserves the right to reject any application not found fulfilling the above terms and conditions.

Note: This notice is also available in the departmental website www.sikkimsocial-welfare.gov.in.

**R.O. No. 354/IPR/Pub/Classi./19-20
Date: 03.02.2020**

Sd/-
Additional Secretary -cum- Director, CPS.

**to book advertisements in SummitTimes
call 03592-208698, 9734152541, 9647102692,
advertise@summittimes.com,**

Ambition in Women

Don't support that, and everything else is just tokenism

Funds permitting, expect some awareness programmes, messages, maybe even some seminars or workshops and some more tokenism at the national and state level starting off soon with beti padhao-beto bachao superficiality, leading up to Women's Day still a month or so away. Do not, however, expect the larger issues to be addressed or even "noticed" in the drum-roll of unbridled male chauvinism which continues to drown out all matters of significance. Expect promises of protection and care, those traditional umbrellas offered to keep women in their place and hobble them from, for want of a better term, reaching their potential. And that is how this will remain because unless the society accepts ambition in women as a normal progression of initiatives like the "beti padhao" undertaking, everything will remain superficial lip-service. The relegation of women as second-class citizens with limited access to identity, ownership, and, yes, even ambition, is unfortunate because that is not how things began and there is no reason why they should be allowed to remain so.

Women have had an eventful march through history. At the start of humankind, women were edified and almost all prehistoric legends refer to a Mother Goddess as the Creator, as their God. We find this in Sikkim too with the Lepcha legend of genesis which speaks of Itbu-Debu Rum, the Mother, the great Creator and sustainer who created everything on earth including 'Mu-tanchi-Rong kup', [the Mother's Loved Ones] - the Lepchas. Power was first worshiped as a Female Force - Shakti - even before the Hindu pantheon was fleshed out, and women, because they were blessed with the power to give birth, were loved and respected, even feared. But man remained a hunter-gatherer at heart and as civilization grew, he started embodying the idea of god with traits of himself. Soon, everything that could not be understood was given a female form, perhaps because most aspects of womanhood remained inscrutable to men. It followed soon after that whatever mankind could not understand, it applied a negative female force to. Soon, the woman started getting seen as the corruptor.

This image sustained itself through centuries and at a subconscious level, continues to influence many minds, especially when even the slightest hint of ambition or even self-preservation creeps in. If we were to look at even the modern Sikkimese history, women have been painted in very poor light. Take for example, Pende Ongmu, the half-sister of the third Chogyal of Sikkim, Chagdor Namgyal, who, history tells us, schemed his assassination. While aspirations for the throne would have been more acceptable in a man, in Pende Ongmu's case, she was reviled as the reincarnation of a wicked queen of Tibet because she desired power. More recently, two important figures, Hope Cooke and Elisa-Maria Langford [wife of the first Chief Minister of Sikkim, LD Kazi], have been portrayed in less than favourable light by successive writers. Few have even bothered to give credit where it was due. Hope Cooke for example tried to modernise education in Sikkim and reinforce Chogyal Palden Thondup Namgyal's plans to give the Sikkimese a stronger sense of Sikkimeseness. It was her conviction to motivate Sikkim to celebrate its uniqueness that made India suspicious and her growing prominence must have made some in Sikkim insecure as well. Similarly, Kazini was an important support to LD Kazi's fight for democracy. Neither story ended too well, and both have been victims of male prejudice.

It is this prejudice that occasions like the International Women's Day should strive to eradicate. It has had but limited success and more often than not, ended up celebrating stereotypes instead. This, despite the fact that women are not demanding much. They do not want to be returned to their original position of reverence. All they ask for is an equal standing, but even that is proving difficult. The problem is not with the people at the work-place alone or men at large, it is the manner in which the role of women has been stereotyped even at home that holds women back when so many of them have also internalized the stereotype. It is this stereotype that needs to be broken. Ambition should not be seen as an unwomanly trait. Then, we would be looking at real change and begin the process real empowerment.

WRITE US:

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

As the World Loses Faith in Democracy, Leaders of Vision Are Desperately Needed

DAVID OLUSOGA
theGuardian

“Across the globe, democracy is in a state of malaise.” That is the bleak assessment of a report from the Centre for the Future of Democracy at Cambridge University. Here in the UK, three out of five of us – 60.3% of the voting population – are unhappy with the functioning of our democracy. The last time we saw comparable levels of dissatisfaction with the way we are governed was during the “winter of discontent” in 1978-79.

And there is plenty more bad news where that came from – bad news for democracy across the globe.

In the US, for the first time ever, the majority lack faith in the democratic system. That decline has been rapid and recent. Before the financial crisis, more than three-quarters of Americans were satisfied with US democracy; today more than half (55%) are dissatisfied. Worldwide, 57.5% of citizens in the nations studied indicated they were not satisfied. Back in 2005, that was just 38.7%.

Taken together, these figures amount to what the report's authors call a “global democratic recession”. The tipping point, they suggest, took place around 2005 and has led now to the “highest level of democratic discontent on record”. What is critical here is that people are growing increasingly dissatisfied not just with their political leaders but with the democratic systems that put them in place. Democracy itself is in trouble.

As with all reports built on deep analysis of large data sets (in this case, 3,500 surveys involving more than 4 million respondents), the picture painted by the researchers is complex and there are multiple factors lying behind falls in levels of satisfaction. But what is not in doubt is that we should be worried. It's harder, however, to conclude that we have any business being surprised.

In 2005, at the end of Tony Blair's second term, levels of democratic dissatisfaction in the UK stood at 32.8%, despite the Iraq war. A quick recap of the

intervening period between then and now helps explain why that figure today is 60.3% – the past 15 years weren't exactly liberal democracy's golden age.

Short-term crises, such as the expenses scandal of 2009, rocked voters' faith in our political system, but far more corrosive were the deeper, systemic failures. Millions stopped believing that democracy was functioning as it should, because the governments it produced were unable or unwilling to



address the great disaster of the age.

When the banks crashed the global economy in 2007-08, it was they who received a bailout while the rest of us got austerity. As vast reservoirs of wealth were concentrated in the hands of the 1%, governments here and abroad not only tolerated growing inequality, they accelerated it through tax cuts both for the rich and for the companies they owned. Democratically elected governments meekly requesting giant corporations to pay pitifully low levels of tax on their enormous profits is not a good look.

When liberal democratic governments refuse or are incapable of bringing about change, voters seek out populist parties and charismatic leaders who promise to tear up the rules and bring about real transformation.

Donald Trump did not cause America's democratic crisis of faith, he rode to power on it. Once in control, he and other populists discovered their room for manoeuvre was expanded by the same disillusionment that helped them into office. The trashing of democratic norms and the abuse of institutions

such as the judiciary and the press was made possible by the delegitimisation of democratic systems.

As Dr Roberto Foa, one of the co-authors of the Cambridge report, states: “Without this weakening legitimacy, it would be unthinkable for a US presidential candidate to denounce American democracy as rigged, or for the winning presidential candidate in Latin America's largest democracy to openly entertain nostalgia for military rule.” Such statements further undermine faith in democracy, creating a feedback loop.

In 2016, after Trump's election, Sinclair Lewis's dystopian novel *It Can't Happen Here*, written in 1935, suddenly surged into the Amazon bestseller list. George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* enjoyed a comparable spike in sales. Readers turned to those books – one written just before the Second World War, the other just after – to look for points of similarity between the politics of the early 21st century and that of Europe in the 1920s and 30s. One often overlooked commonality is that the political crisis of the interwar years and that of our own times followed periods of complacent overconfidence in the health of democracy.

In the years after the First World War, a conflict from which several new republics emerged, historians and political philosophers trumpeted the seemingly unstoppable rise of liberal democracy. In 1921, the British historian James Bryce claimed that democracy had become the “normal and natural form of government”. Seventy years later, at the end of the cold war, Francis Fukuyama suggested that liberal democracy had become “the final form of human government”; a transition that represented what he called “the end of history”. Both claims were overtaken by events; fascism in the 1920s, populism today.

In the 1920s and 30s, the failure of democratic governments to deal with the suffering caused by another financial crash meant that even before the totalitarian challenge arrived millions had lost faith in democracy.

History suggests that the disillusioned and the disaffected do not readily take to the streets nor man the barricades to defend a system that failed to defend them.

[the writer is a historian and broadcaster]



A world of heroes and villains: why we should challenge children's simplistic moral beliefs

MICHAEL HAND
theconversation.com

The protagonist of the deco-trum-defying but wildly entertaining new film, *Jojo Rabbit*, sees the world in black and white. The film is set in Nazi Germany and ten-year-old Jojo is a fiercely committed member of the Hitler Youth. For him, Aryans are good and Jews are bad.

His mother, Rosie, who is working with the resistance and hiding a Jewish teenager in the attic, does nothing to encourage her son's abhorrent worldview, but nor can she risk openly contradicting him. She lavishes affection on Jojo, urges him to have fun and climb trees and tells him that love “is the strongest thing in the world”.

The circumstances in which Rosie and Jojo find themselves are, mercifully, unusual. Whatever challenges most of us face in trying to support the moral development of our children, we do not have to contend with the effects of Nazi indoctrination, and we do not risk our lives in trying to undo them. Still, there is an analogue of Rosie's dilemma that is faced by more or less every parent: at what age, and how directly, should we steer our children away from the simplistic idea that people are either good or bad, virtuous or vicious, on the side of the angels or in league with the devil?

It takes a particularly perverse

form of upbringing to connect the categories of good and bad with categories of race or ethnicity. But the basic division of people into heroes and villains is hard to get away from. It is embedded in fairytales and storybooks, myths and legends, religious narratives and moral allegories, crime novels and superhero films. Children everywhere learn that there is an ongoing struggle between good people and bad, that justice is done when the bad get their comeuppance and the good live happily ever after.

There is no doubt that this picture of the world is a gross distortion. But what are we to do when our children espouse it? Should we, like Rosie, let them know they are loved and send them outside to climb trees, perhaps on the assumption that moral development takes care of itself? Or should we confront them with facts that contradict and complicate their picture, with the moral failings of their heroes and the kindly acts of their villains?

And if we choose the latter course, do we not risk undermining their moral confidence, turning the vivid blacks and whites of their moral landscape into barely distinguishable shades of grey? Might we be replacing little moral absolutists with middle-sized moral relativists?

WHAT PARENTS SHOULD DO

As I argue in my recent book about moral education, there are good answers to these questions.

Moral development does not take care of itself: parents have an obligation to guide their children's moral thinking, respond to their questions and correct their misconceptions. (Love and tree-climbing are important too, of course, but they are not substitutes for moral education.)

We should not hesitate to discourage in children the idea that people are either good or bad, and we should deliberately draw their attention to facts that confound it. Nor is there some age threshold or developmental milestone children must reach before we can safely do this. The moment children start making moral evaluations of people is the moment we can start challenging them.

The reason we can and should do this is that the proper objects of moral evaluation are actions, not people. It is bad to harm, steal, cheat and lie; it is good to keep promises, treat people fairly and help those in need. Membership of a moral community involves upholding some basic standards of conduct and standing ready to condemn violations of those standards. It does not involve assessing the state of people's souls.

Among the first of many moral lessons children need to learn is that everyone is capable of both good deeds and bad. Morality is needed to keep all of us on the right track. The supposition that some people can do no wrong and others can do no right is not just false: it deprives morality

of its very point.

So we do not risk undermining our children's confidence or turning them into relativists when we counter their division of people into sinners and saints. We just redirect their moral attention from people to actions. We help them to see that it is the things people do that are subject to moral evaluation, not the people themselves.

Of course, evaluating actions is not always straightforward. In the course of moral life, we are bound to encounter some painful moral dilemmas and difficult borderline cases. If I can help someone in need by telling a lie, should I do it? If I borrow a book and neglect to return it, have I stolen it? Difficulties of this kind are unavoidable. But they are rarer than people think, and they do not cast doubt on the wrongness of deception and theft.

Here, again, there is no need to protect our children from the truth. We need not pretend that moral rules are without exception, or deny that what they require is occasionally unclear, as long as we give due emphasis to their authority and indispensability as anchors of social life.

Rosie's dreadful circumstances make it more or less impossible for her to correct her son's simplistic moral worldview. The rest of us have no such excuse.

[the writer is Professor of Philosophy of Education, University of Birmingham]

Firing at me result of hyper nationalism: Jamia student

NEW DELHI, FEB 2 (PTI): The Jamia Millia Islamia student who was injured in a firing outside the university during an anti-CAA protest dubbed the incident “a result of hyper nationalism”.

In his Facebook post, Shadab Farooq said what happened on Thursday can be termed as “a result of hyper nationalism”.

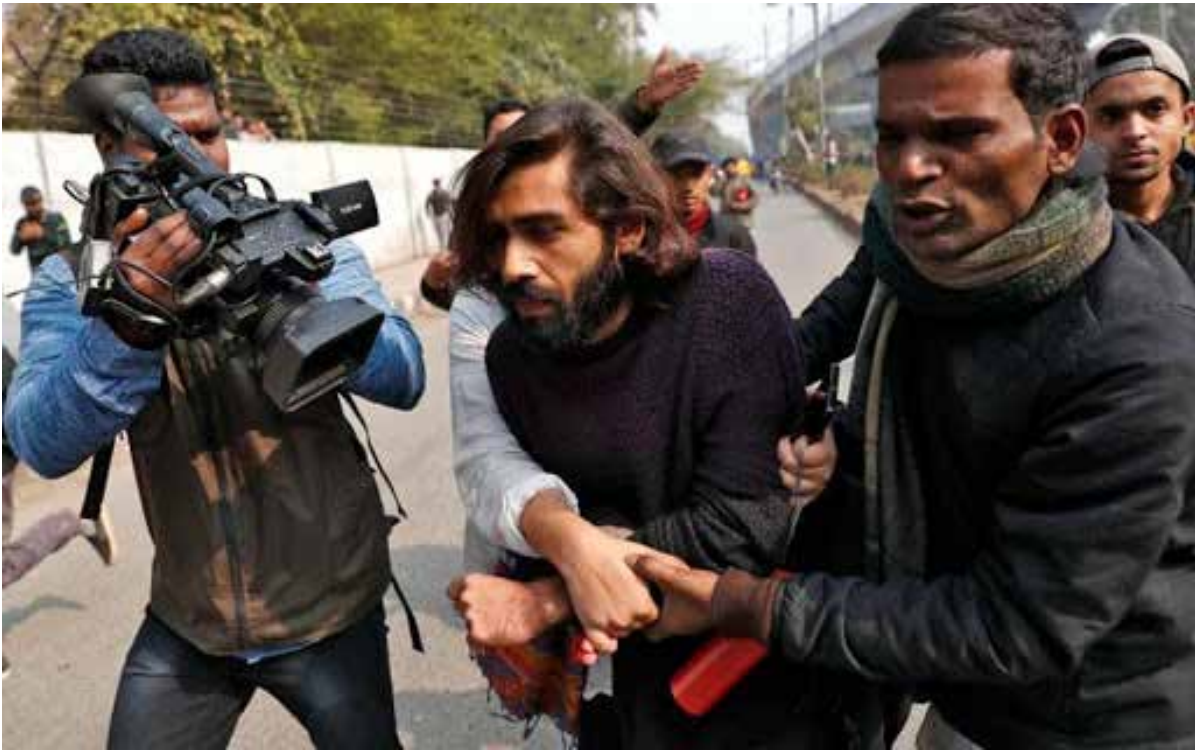
“If you want to make it a protest, make it one. Raise black flags, raise red flags,” he stated.

He further stated that the Delhi Police alone was not to be blamed for the incident.

The Jamia administration and the vice chancellor should also be blamed for it, he said.

In his post, Farooq, a mass communication student, narrated the incident and stated that the Jamia Coordination Committee had called for a Gandhi March from the university to the Rajghat on January 30.

“I was about to join the protest, waiting for



the crowd to march forward when I saw a random person holding a pistol in his hands walking towards Holy Family (Hospital). I saw some of my friends standing there, I immediately ran towards him to calm him down,” he stated in the post.

“People were asking the police to stop him. They were continuously shouting that he’s holding a pistol but the police didn’t listen. Instead, they kept recording videos. I kept saying put the gun down, I said it twice. He shot me on my left forearm when I said it for

the third time,” he added.

Farooq said what he did wasn’t an act of heroism as he did what he felt was right.

“I am calling for an action because I am hurt. If the administration still doesn’t take action on it and if it fails to reach out to its students, then to-

morrow there will be another Shadab standing in front of a bullet while the police keep their hands in their pockets and record videos,” he said.

“And I’ll be back to college real soon. The fight is long, but we will fight. We will win,” he added.

NPAs of PSBs stands at Rs 7.27 lakh crore

NEW DELHI, FEB 3 (PTI): The government on Monday said the Non Performing Assets (NPAs) of Public Sector Banks (PSBs) stood at Rs 7.27 lakh crore as on September 30, 2019.

Union Minister of State for Finance Anurag Thakur also said in Lok Sabha that scheduled commercial banks and select financial institutions have reported frauds to the tune of Rs 1,13,374 crore in the first half of the current financial year.

Thakur said during Question Hour that as a result of transparent recognition of stressed assets as NPAs, gross NPAs of PSBs, as per RBI data on global operations, rose from Rs 2,79,016 crore as on March 31, 2015, to Rs 6,84,732 crore as on March 31, 2017 and Rs 8,95,601 crore as on March 31, 2018.

“As a result of Government’s strategy of recognition, resolution,

recapitalisation and reforms, have since declined by Rs 1,68,305 crore to Rs 7,27,296 crore as on September 30, 2019,” he said.

The minister said systematic and comprehensive checking, including of legacy stock of NPAs of PSBs, for frauds under the framework has been taken note of by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) in its Financial Stability Report of December 2019, where it has observed that this has helped unearth frauds perpetrated over a number of years.

This is reflected in the increased amount involved in frauds of Rs. 1 lakh and above, reported by Scheduled Commercial Banks and select financial institutions, from Rs 23,934 crore in the financial year (FY) 2016-17 to Rs 41,167 crore in FY2017-18, Rs 71,543 crore in FY2018-19, and Rs 1,13,374 crore in the first half of the current financial year, he said.

FC Kolhapur City defeat Baroda FA for first win

BENGALURU, FEB 3 (PTI): FC Kolhapur City registered their first Hero Indian Women’s League (IWL) victory after overcoming Baroda Football Academy 2-0 at the Bangalore Football Stadium on Monday.

Lhingneilam Kipgen opened Kolhapur’s account on the 24th minute before Subhadra Sahu put them in cruise control on the 70th-minute mark.

The win might have arrived a little too late, with Kolhapur mathematically out for a semi-final place but Baroda had everything to play for and a win would have still kept them in contention.

Their IWL dreams were dashed, however, with the first blow arriving in the 24th minute. Kipgen capitalised on a defensive miscue and latched onto a loose ball.

With a flurry of Baroda legs closing her down, she got her shot away just in time and clinically to the keeper’s right, giving Afshan Ashiq very little chance.

Subhadra Sahu sealed the deal in the second half as she showed great instinct to react first to a rebound and followed up to double the advantage for her team.

Baroda did little to monument a comeback as Kolhapur held on for the win. Both teams swap places in the Group A standings, with the winners rising to fourth with as many points, while Baroda dropped a place below to fifth.

Going into the final group stage fixture, either side will be out of contention for a place in the semi-final but will certainly have pride to play for.

Karnataka BJP MP stokes row over freedom movement

BENGALURU, FEB 3 (PTI): In an apparent attack on Mahatma Gandhi, controversial BJP MP from Karnataka Anant Kumar Hegde has questioned the freedom movement led by the Father of the nation, and described India’s independence struggle as an “adjustment” with the then British rulers.

Freedom fighters who did not sacrifice anything made the country believe that it attained independence through ‘Upavas Satyagrah’, Gandhi’s preferred mode of agitation, and became Mahapurush (great person), Hegde said at an event here on Saturday.

In his address in Kannada, Hegde, a former union Minister known for making controversial remarks, said: “There were two types of freedom fighters, one which believed in Shashtra (arms) and another in Shashtra (intellectual

motivators).”

“There was also another category of freedom fighters which used to ask the British how to carry out the freedom struggle,” Hegde said at the event to remember VD Savarkar.

“We will abide by whatever you say simply adjustment and understanding.... like 20-20 (cricket match),” the Uttara Kannada MP said about the freedom movement.

Hegde alleged that the third category of freedom fighters had pleaded with the British to recognise their freedom struggle and requested that they be imprisoned.

“They (pleaded with the British) it’s enough if you properly take care of us, nothing more than that,” he said.

Freedom fighters who did not sacrifice anything made the country believe that India attained indepen-

dence through ‘Upavas Satyagrah’, he said, adding that the British were ‘frightened’ and gifted the nation freedom.

“Such people became Mahapurush (great people).”

“Those who sacrificed their lives and worked towards big change in the country were dumped in the dark corners of history, but those who fought in adjustment with the British became freedom fighters with certificate....”

“This is the tragedy of the country,” Hegde, known for his past controversial remarks on issues like secularism and Constitution, said.

In 2017 when he was a Union Minister, Hegde had stoked a row when he said the then BJP government planned to change the Constitution, drawing strong reactions, including from the opposition Congress.

Myanmarese drug dealer detained under NSA in Manipur



IMPHAL, FEB 3 (PTI): A Myanmarese drug dealer has been detained under the National Security Act (NSA) in Manipur’s Thoubal district, police said on Monday.

The drug dealer, Kyaw Kyaw Naing, was detained under the NSA after he got bail from a court on January 28.

Thoubal District Magistrate, N Bandana Devi, in a statement, said that based on a police report, the activities of the

Myanmarese national was found to be “prejudicial to the security of the state and maintenance of public order”.

So the NSA was slapped as “an alternative preventive measure” against the 33-year-old man.

Special Judge (ND & PS) on January 28 had ordered that Naing be “released on bail on his furnishing a personal bond of Rs 1,00,000 only with two sureties of Rs

1,00,000 each.

The court had also directed the Thoubal Police Station to return the passport so that he could “apply for extension of visa” to enable him to stay in Manipur till the disposal of the case.

Naing was arrested by the police from the gate of Imphal International Airport in August last year for his alleged involvement in supplying drugs in Manipur.

HC stays CIC direction to Assam Rifles to give info on officer’s disciplinary proceedings

NEW DELHI, FEB 2 (PTI): The Delhi High Court has put on hold a Central Information Commission (CIC) order directing the Assam Rifles to provide the details sought by an RTI applicant, a brigadier in the paramilitary force, about the disciplinary proceedings against him.

Justice Jayant Nath, while staying the CIC direction, also issued notice to the applicant and sought his stand on the Assam Ri-

fles’ plea challenging the commission’s order.

Assam Rifles, in its petition filed through advocates Rahul Sharma and C K Bhatt, has contended that the information sought by Brigadier Tek Chand Malhotra is exempted from the purview of the Right to Information (RTI) Act.

“The petitioner agency (Assam Rifles) has made out a prima facie case. Till the next date of

hearing, the operation of the impugned order dated November 22, 2019 shall remain stayed,” the court said while listing the matter for further hearing on July 16.

Assam Rifles, in its plea, has contended that the information sought by Malhotra pertains to a service matter and withholding it cannot be termed a violation of human rights, which would entitle him to the details.

Not discussing issue of women’s entry into Sabarimala temple: SC

NEW DELHI, FEB 3 (PTI): The Supreme Court on Monday resumed its exercise of framing questions relating to discrimination against women in various religions and made clear that it was not discussing the issue of entry of women of all age groups into Sabarimala temple in Kerala.

A nine-judge bench headed by Chief Justice S A Bobde has been hearing several senior lawyers on the issue of framing of larger legal questions to be deliberated upon by it relating to discrimination against women in various religions.

“The Sabarimala review case is not before us. We are not deciding Sabarimala. We are deciding the larger questions,” the bench said when senior advocates F S Nariman, Kapil Sibal, Shyam Divan and Rakesh Dwivedi opposed the hearing on the so-called larger issue relating to discrimination against women in various religions.

A five-judge constitution bench, by a majority of 3:2 on November 14 last year, had referred to a larger bench the issue of discrimination against women in religions such as denial of entry of Muslim women into mosques, the practice of female genital mutilation in Dawoodi Bohra Mus-

lim community and denial of right to Parsi women who have married outside their religion.

At the outset, Nariman said the question whether women of all age groups can be allowed entry into the Sabarimala temple has been already decided by the Supreme Court in 2018 and the subsequent review has also been dealt with and hence, this cannot be adjudicated afresh.

The bench, which also comprises justices R Banumathi, Ashok Bhushan, L Nageswara Rao, M M Shantanagoudar, S A Nazeer, R Subhash Reddy, B R Gavai and Surya Kant, said that it will also consider the objection of Nariman as one of the issues.

Nariman said the apex court cannot club other issues with Sabarimala and it cannot frame questions in a review and bring in new issues.

“Scope of review is very restricted. This will set a new precedent. How can you think about other issues in a review?” he said. To this, the CJI said, “No. We will not be deciding these issues. We will only interpret articles involved in these cases.”

Another senior advocate Kapil Sibal, appearing for the All India Muslim Personal Board, said that though Mus-

lim women are allowed entry into the mosque, the issue of essential religious practice is broad enough to be decided by this court.

The Article 25 and 26 (fundamental rights to religion) of the Constitution are part of the fundamental rights which are enforceable against state action, he said.


“A lot of petitions have been filed saying Nikah Halala is bad. Somebody is saying polygamy is bad. How the bench will decide the issue,” Sibal said.

To this, the bench said, “That is why we have set up a nine-judge bench. That is why we are hearing you.”

The bench said it was only going to decide the interpretation of those articles which have been invoked in Sabarimala.

During the hearing, which is still continuing, Sibal asked, “How do you interpret Article 21 (right to life or personal liberty), 17 (abolition of untouchability) and 14 (equality before law)? Any statement that you make will impact everyone across the country. It will impact the caste system. How do you decide?”

He further said these are the matters which will have an impact across the country and all religious denominations.



What is Novel Coronavirus - nCoV?

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

Symptoms of nCoV




- Fever
- Difficulty in breathing
- Dry Cough
- Severe acute respiratory syndrome
- Pneumonia - like symptoms

Precautions to Prevent nCoV

- Wash your hands often with soap.
- Use an alcohol based hand sanitizer
- Observe good personal hygiene.
- Avoid touching your face with unwashed hands.
- Avoid contact with people with possible symptoms.
- Avoid contact with animals and consumption of undercooked meats.
- Avoid travel to nCoV affected places.
- Wear a mask if you have respiratory syndrome and cover your mouth while coughing or sneezing.

Treatment

- Treatment is symptomatic and supportive, based on the patient's clinical condition.
- No vaccinations available as of now.
- Visit Doctor in case symptoms detected.



If you seek help, you may call :

- Toll free no. 104
- District surveillance Officer
- EAST : 7029372100
- WEST : 9593297809
- NORTH : 9641957468
- SOUTH : 7407691463
- New STNM
- AMS : 9434711402

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & FAMILY WELFARE

GOVERNMENT OF SIKKIM

Pep Guardiola takes swipe at ex-Premier League chief Richard Scudamore

JACOB STEINBERG
TOTTENHAM, 03 FEB [THEGUARDIAN]: Pep Guardiola appeared to mock Richard Scudamore after Manchester City's 2-0 defeat by Tottenham Hotspur, sarcastically questioning whether the Premier League is concerned that Liverpool are 22 points clear at the top of the league.

Guardiola all but conceded the title to Liverpool after the champions suffered another setback at the Tottenham Hotspur Stadium and he let out his frustration by appearing to refer back to Scudamore, who was the league's chief executive at the time, saying he would like "someone to get a little bit closer to City" during an interview in August 2018. City had won the title by 18 points the season before.

"Two seasons ago there was the owner of the Premier League who said that could not happen again, it's not good for the Premier League for City to win the title in that way, with 100 points," City's manager said. "Now it's Liverpool, you have to be concerned if you are the owner of the Premier League."

City paid for their profligacy against Spurs. Hugo Lloris saved a penalty from Ilkay Gündogan in the first half and the game changed when Oleksandr Zinchenko was sent off for two yellow cards early in the second half. Spurs took control, goals from Steven Bergwijn and Son Heung-min lifting José Mourinho's side four points behind fourth-placed Chelsea, and Guardiola nodded when he was asked if there is no chance of City catching Liverpool now.

"They are unstoppable," Guardiola said. "They have a lot of points, we dropped points in the games that we played quite similar to today. Even when we played Anfield. Now it's to try to qualify for the Champions League next season."

Guardiola was unable to deliver an update on Sterling, who appeared to suffer a hamstring injury near the end, while Mourinho said he was worried about Dele Alli's ankle injury. Alli struggled after being caught by Sterling, who was fortunate not to have a yellow card upgraded to a red after a VAR review.

Mourinho also questioned why VAR took so long to award City's penalty after Serge Aurier fouled Sergio Agüero but he was delighted with Bergwijn scoring on his debut after his £25m move from PSV Eindhoven.

"It was a good goal and a very good performance," the Spurs manager said. "It was a very solid performance, very mature. He arrived on Tuesday so he had the week to work and to try as fast as possible to understand what we wanted from him."

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Hugs, a guru and a favourite tree: Djokovic's unusual route to the top

MELBOURNE, FEB 3 (AFP): A strict vegetarian diet, spiritual guru and family hugging-sessions aren't methods employed by most athletes, but they have helped Novak Djokovic turn himself into one of the best players ever -- and now Australian Open champion for an eighth time.

The Serb has distinguished himself with his willingness to turn to the unusual, from hyperbaric chambers to meditation and Spanish guru Pepe Imaz, a former journeyman player whose "love and peace" philosophy drives his teachings.

Life has been a journey for the Serbian star, who grew up in war-torn Belgrade and practised in a disused swimming pool but is now based in the millionaire's playground of Monte Carlo with more than USD 140 million in prize money -- a record -- to his name.

Djokovic faced questions over his durability earlier in his career after a series of retirements for reasons ranging from a toe blister to heat problems at the 2009 Australian Open, when he was defending champion.

But he is now more steel than snowflake -- as seen



when he won last year's record, nearly five-hour, Wimbledon final, and the 2012 Australian Open final, the longest Grand Slam decider in history, which stretched to 5hrs 53mins.

With 17 Grand Slam titles under his belt, and showing no signs of slowing down, Djokovic looks poised to overtake the great Roger Federer and Rafael Nadal, the only men ahead of him on the all-time list, by the end of his career.

- FRIENDS WITH A TREE -

While Switzerland's Federer and Nadal of Spain come across as straightforward characters, Djokovic is the most complicated member of tennis's Big Three.

His daily routine, as related to The New York Times last year, involves getting up before dawn with his family, watching the sun rise and then doing hugging and singing sessions, and yoga.

The father-of-two has dabbled in various diets including gluten- and dairy-free, and

is now a proud "plant-based athlete" -- the subject of a Netflix documentary, "The Game Changers", for which he is executive producer.

"Hopefully I can inspire other athletes that it is possible to be plant-based and to recover well, to have strength, to have muscles," said Djokovic, who has been vegetarian for four-and-a-half years.

Rather than celebrating his Australian Open wins by partying, Djokovic, who won his eighth title in Melbourne

on Sunday by beating Dominic Thiem, climbs a fig tree in the city's Botanical Gardens.

"I have a friend there, a Brazilian fig tree, that I like to climb and I like to connect with so that's probably my favourite thing to do," he said, according to reports.

Djokovic broke through for his first Grand Slam title at the 2008 Australian Open, but it would be another three years before he took control of the sport, embarking on a 43-match winning streak at

the start of 2011.

Between 2011 and 2016, Djokovic won 11 of the 24 available Grand Slam titles and reached another seven finals, freezing out the likes of Federer, who won only one Major in the same period.

The wheels came off rather suddenly for Djokovic in late 2016, when he went into a slump and then, suffering from an elbow injury, ended his 2017 campaign after Wimbledon.

In the same period Djokovic became a close follower of Imaz and appeared on stage with the spiritualist in a two-hour video featuring meditation and long discourses about the human soul.

This, according to some observers, fits a pattern where Djokovic has restlessly turned this way and that in search of perfection -- a goal he alluded to on the way to his latest Melbourne triumph.

"When I was younger I would get frustrated and impatient with small things in life, but that's how you learn," he said.

"You can't be a perfect tennis player and human being from a young age. That's why we love this beautiful thing called life.

Premier League: 10 talking points from the weekend's action

theGuardian

1) LLORIS QUICK TO DELIVER EMPHATIC REMINDER OF HIS PEDIGREE

The debutant Steven Bergwijn will rightfully claim the headlines for Spurs but the contribution of Tottenham's current third-longest serving player against Manchester City should not be forgotten. Hugo Lloris made one of the saves of the season to deny Sergio Agüero in the first half, somehow getting a big toe to turn a deflected shot on to the post, before he also denied Ilkay Gündogan from the penalty spot (the fourth spot-kick City have missed in their past six). Lloris rode his luck – he was clearly off his line when palming Gündogan's effort away and fortunate not to concede another penalty when challenging Raheem Sterling for the rebound – but his performance is a reminder that the World Cup-winning captain is a big-game player. His return to form in time for the Champions League knockouts bodes well for José Mourinho.

2) FIRMINO HELPS LIVERPOOL SWITCH INTO CRUISE CONTROL

Liverpool hit a few more milestones on Saturday – including a 20th consecutive Premier League home win that opened up a 22-point gap at the summit, the biggest lead witnessed at the end of a day's play in English top-flight history – but Jürgen Klopp took greater satisfaction from several key players hitting their stride. Fabinho rediscovered his rhythm in the second half as he continued his recovery from injury, while Mohamed Salah and Roberto Firmino flourished as an awkward afternoon became a procession. And Firmino created three of the goals to overtake Salah, Andy Robertson and Sadio Mané on Liverpool's assist list this season. "He is just exceptional," Klopp said. "But even a player like Bobby needs an address where he can send the ball. How he uses the skills of his mates is special. I do not know a player like him."

3) WHAT CAN GIROUD DO TO FORCE HIMSELF INTO LAMPARD'S PLANS?

Chelsea could have had a commanding lead in the first half at Leicester on Saturday but they were scruffy in the final third, which has been the case too often this season. If they slip out of

fourth spot then critics – and possibly Frank Lampard – will point to their failure to sign a striker last month. But is Lampard making the best use of the ones available to him? Tammy Abraham, who hurt his ankle against Arsenal, did not look in top condition at Leicester and it is hard to believe Olivier Giroud would not have been sharper. But the Frenchman, having been denied a move to clubs who would have used him, was not in the squad. He must not be impressing Lampard in training, though Abraham relishes working with him. "He's like a big brother to me," the 22-year-old said. "His attitude has been great. In training we are always doing finishing and we have a competition after training as well. He has been encouraging many of the young lads."

4) LINDELÖF CLUTCHING AT STRAWS AFTER SHAKY DISPLAY

Manchester United were again amateurish under the high ball as the Harry Maguire-Victor Lindelöf centre-back axis failed to deal with regulation crosses put in by Wolves' João Moutinho. It is a curiosity given that Maguire's forte is supposedly the basics of defending and Lindelöf's technical prowess is meant to complement this. Even stranger, then, that the Swede should talk up a display in which he and Maguire might have allowed at least three goals from aerial deliveries. Lindelöf. "He's a fantastic player – we train every day [together] and play a lot of games now so for every game that we play we get better and better. Hopefully we can keep improving. They didn't create a lot of chances, and we kept another clean sheet." Regarding the latter point: only just. And, given United's difficulty in scoring, they really have to tighten at the back.

5) IS LERMA'S REPUTATION PRECEDING HIM?

Jefferson Lerma has enough bookings to build a yellow brick road, 66 across the past four and a half years (22 in a Bournemouth shirt) and, as much as Eddie Howe would rather the Colombia midfielder was not suspended for the trip to Sheffield United on Sunday, he is equally loth for Lerma to lose his edge. Lerma was superb against Aston Villa until he received his first red card for Bournemouth after picking up the second of two cautions for fouls on Jack Grealish,

retribution which his manager felt was a consequence of the player's reputation. "I think some of the bookings this season have been very harsh," Howe said. "I think other players wouldn't have ended up with the same punishment that he has. Unfortunately for Jeff he has put himself in that position and it is very difficult I think to change people's opinions. I think referees are looking out for him."

6) BURNLEY HAVE RISEN TO A TOUGH CHALLENGE

Burnley have never beaten Arsenal in the Premier League and, perhaps more remarkable still, this was Sean Dyche's first point against them in 10 attempts. It probably felt more glass half-full than half-empty, all the more so because this fixture came at the end of a challenging sequence. Burnley could have found themselves among the relegation candidates had they failed to take anything from games against Leicester, Manchester United and Arsenal, yet they ended up with a more than respectable seven points. "That's a really healthy return and the players can have a rest now before we start again," Dyche said. "They deserve it. There's some tough challenges in the Premier League and we've shown we can hold our own against some of the best teams around."

7) O'CONNELL THE UNSUNG HERO IN BLADES BACKLINE

Dean Henderson's form in goal for Sheffield United – the clean sheet at Selhurst Park was his ninth in the Premier League this season, the joint-most in the division – has brought him international recognition with England but Gareth Southgate might well be advised to keep his eye on another member of the Blades' defensive unit. Though Henderson has excelled, clean sheets are not down to a goalkeeper alone and United are among the Premier League leaders in terms of shots against, allowing fewer than 12 per game on average. The Republic of Ireland international John Egan in the heart of defence has been key to that, but perhaps even more vital have been the contributions of Jack O'Connell on the left of the back three. The 25-year-old, excellent again in south London, surely can not be too far away from Southgate's thoughts.

China's virus death toll spikes, more than SARS

CHINA, 03 FEB: China's death toll from a new coronavirus jumped above 360 on Monday to surpass the number of fatalities of its SARS crisis two decades ago, with dozens of people dying in the epicentre's quarantined ground-zero.

The 57 confirmed new deaths was the single-biggest increase since the virus was detected late last year in the central city of Wuhan, where it is believed to have jumped from animals at a market into humans.

The virus has since spread to more than 24 countries, despite many governments imposing unprecedented travel bans on people coming from China.

The World Health Organization has declared the crisis a global health emergency, and the first foreign death from the virus was reported in the Philippines on Sunday.

In China, all but one of the 57 new deaths reported Monday were in Wuhan and the rest of Hubei province, most of which has been under lockdown for almost two weeks to stop people leaving and transmitting the virus.

The national death toll reached 361, exceeding the 349 mainland fatalities from the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) outbreak of 2002-03.

SARS, caused by a pathogen similar to the new coronavirus and also originated in China, killed 774 people -- with most of the other deaths in Hong Kong.

- Economic woes -



The virus is also having an increasingly heavy economic impact, shutting down businesses across China, curbing international travel and impacting production lines of major international brands.

Stock markets in Shanghai and Shenzhen plunged by nearly nine percent on Monday morning as investors returned from a Lunar New Year holiday that had been extended to stop people travelling around China.

Hundreds of firms tumbled by the maximum 10 percent as investors got their first chance in more than a week to react to a barrage of bad news from the spiralling outbreak. Travel and tourism shares plummeted after domestic and international travel curbs were imposed to slow the virus.

In Wuhan, which has been transformed from a bustling industrial hub into a near-ghost town, residents have been living in deep fear of catching the virus.

The city's medical

facilities have been overwhelmed, with state news agency Xinhua reporting Monday that 68 medical teams of 8,300 staff from across China had been sent to Hubei to "aid novel coronavirus control".

The number of infections in China also jumped significantly on Monday, passing 17,200.

Amid mounting pressure the government has been racing to build two new hospitals in extraordinarily quick timeframes.

The first of those, a 1,000-bed facility, was due to open on Monday, just 10 days after construction began.

About 1,400 military medics will treat patients at the hospital, dubbed "Fire God Mountain", according to state media.

However with the death toll surging in Wuhan and other areas of Hubei, it was not immediately clear what overall impact the hospitals would have on the virus spreading elsewhere.

In a worrying signal about it already spreading in significant numbers to other parts of

China, the eastern industrial city of Wenzhou was on Sunday placed under a similar lockdown to Wuhan. Roads in Wenzhou, 800 kilometres (500 miles) to the east, were closed and its nine million people were ordered to stay indoors.

Only one resident per household in Wenzhou is allowed to go out every two days to buy necessities, authorities announced.

- Travel curbs -

The emergence of the virus coincided with the Lunar New Year, when hundreds of millions travel across the country in planes, trains and buses for family reunions.

The holiday -- originally scheduled to end last Friday -- was extended by three days to give authorities more time to deal with the crisis.

But some major cities -- including Shanghai -- extended the holiday again, and many schools and universities delayed the start of new terms.

Road traffic on Sunday, when hundreds of millions of people would have been expected to

return to their cities of work, was down 80 percent, the transport ministry said.

Train journeys were down 74 percent on last year, according to Xinhua, with plane trips during the new year holiday down around a fifth.

In a bid to stagger the return to work, many companies offered staff the option to work from home or defer travel, or simply closed.

- Stopping the spread -

The G7 countries -- Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Britain and the United States -- have all confirmed cases of the virus.

They will discuss a joint response, German Health Minister Jens Spahn said on Sunday.

The US, Australia, New Zealand and Israel have banned foreign nationals from visiting if they have been in China recently, and they have also warned their own citizens against travelling there.

Mongolia, Russia and Nepal have closed their land borders.

Democrats make final pitch in Iowa hours before first US vote

Democratic candidates made their frantic, final campaign pitches Sunday in Iowa, on a mission to persuade undecided voters one day before the state's nominating contest officially starts the US presidential election season.

Iowa, a largely rural state of three million people, has traditionally served as a vital launching point -- or burial ground -- for presidential hopefuls.

Even as all eyes turn to the debut vote, Donald Trump's US Senate impeachment trial weighs over the Democratic kick-off, with the president expected to be acquitted just days after the Iowa contest.

"This is the most consequential election, certainly in the modern history of this country... and it all begins tomorrow night," Senator Bernie Sanders, the leading progressive in the race, told invigorated supporters at a meet-and-greet event in Iowa City.

Similar scenes played out across the state this weekend as most of the 11 remaining candidates made their final push to convince undecided voters that they are best positioned to defeat Trump.

Monday's caucuses have created an air of suspense with no clear frontrunner. Several hopefuls look to strike gold here and seize the momentum going into the next contest, in New Hampshire on February 11. Leftist Sanders holds only a narrow lead over moderate former vice president Joe Biden.

South Bend, Indiana ex-mayor Pete Buttigieg and Senator Elizabeth Warren are mere points behind.

"Tomorrow, you can ruin Donald Trump's night!" Biden said as he rallied 1,100 supporters at a Des Moines middle school.

"I promise you: if you stand with me, we will end Trump's reign of hatred and division."

Three of the leading candidates seized on a brief break from their duties as impeachment jurors to barnstorm Iowa. The senators --

self-styled democratic socialist Sanders, progressive Warren and pragmatist Amy Klobuchar -- each hosted multiple events Sunday.

The impeachment trial -- only the third in history of a US president -- created an unprecedented situation by limiting the senators' ability to campaign ahead of Iowa's vote.

They must return to Washington Monday for the trial's resumption.

Senate leaders have scheduled a Wednesday vote that will almost certainly acquit Trump on charges of abuse of power and obstruction of Congress.

- 'He's a communist' - Trump will likely claim victory over Democrats' efforts to oust him when he delivers his State of the Union speech Tuesday -- although he told reporters he would be delivering "a very, very positive message."

That did not stop him from branding Biden "Sleepy Joe" and hurling an epithet at Sanders.

"I think he's a communist," Trump told Fox News in an interview that aired before the Super Bowl got underway Sunday.

With campaigns loath to door-knock during American football's championship game, some candidates like Sanders and Klobuchar attended Super Bowl watch parties. Underdog Klobuchar argues that her Midwestern roots and propensity to work with Senate Republicans can help her win Iowa and defeat Trump.

She compared the big game to the last-gasp nature of the final weekend before Iowa's vote.

"I would call it the Super Bowl of campaigns," she told supporters in Cedar Rapids.

Turnout will be critical, as candidates seek to persuade voters on issues including health care, improving conditions for the working class and ending Washington corruption.

They were also pushing their own electability, as Buttigieg did repeatedly on the stump and during Sunday TV talk-

shows.

"I certainly think that I am better positioned to beat Donald Trump than any of my competitors," Buttigieg told CNN.

A former consultant and US Navy reservist who became a mayor at 29, Buttigieg portrays his youth as a reason voters should prefer him over the gray-haired Biden, 77, and Sanders, 78.

One in two Iowa voters claimed to still be undecided ahead of the quirky caucus process.

Among them was Kim Robinson, 67, a precinct caucus chair in Clive who said he switched support Sunday from Biden to Buttigieg.

"And I might change to Amy Klobuchar" before the vote, he told AFP. "Right now it's a matter of who I think will win" against Trump.

At 7:00 pm Monday (0100 GMT Tuesday), Democrats take part in caucuses at about 1,700 venues -- schools, libraries, churches -- to publicly declare their choice by standing under one candidate's banner.

Candidates who reach 15 percent support can earn delegates for the nomination race. If a candidate does not meet this threshold after the first alignment of caucus-goers, their supporters can shift to other candidates. At that point, the rallies and TV advertising fade away, as neighbors seek to convince and persuade the undecided, or those from unviable candidates, to align with another.

Iowans take their role as first-in-the-nation voters to heart, and their pick has a recent historical track record of becoming the Democratic nominee.

At an Iowa City home that Warren supporters were using as a base, people streamed in and out, looking for extra posters or lists of doors that still needed to be knocked on.

Ayana Elizabeth Johnson, a marine biologist, traveled from far-off New York to help Warren.

"Having a good showing in Iowa is so important to build momentum," Johnson said.

Pakistan resumes flights from coronavirus-hit China

By Sajjad Hussain
Islamabad, Feb 3 (PTI): Pakistan on Monday resumed flights from coronavirus-hit China after two planes from the country landed at the airport in Islamabad.

Pakistan had suspended flights from China till February 2 after the World Health Organisation declared the outbreak of the novel virus as a global health emergency.

The death toll in the coronavirus epidemic soared to 361 with 57 deaths on Sunday alone while the number of confirmed cases climbed to 17,205.

According to the Pakistan Civil Aviation Authority (PCCA), two flights of China Southern Airlines CZ 6007 and CZ 5241 - from Urumqi city of China landed at Islamabad International Airport.

The flights were allowed a day after Pakistan said it has received special medical kits from China to detect the coronavirus cases.

Officials said a Qatar Airlines flight also came from Doha, bringing at least 40 Pakistani students from China who had travelled to Qatar due to suspension of direct flights to Pakistan.

Assistant to Prime Minister on Health Zafar Mirza who was at the

airport to see the arrival and mandatory checks on the passengers confirmed the development.

At Islamabad airport this morning - received passengers from China along with HE Chinese Ambassador in Pakistan. We supervised implementation of Airport SOPs' and I interviewed passengers, Mirza tweeted.

Following all international protocols ensuring their health & safety as well as that of all Pakistanis. A responsible Pakistan means being emotional when needed but rational and practical in decision making as well. We support the Chinese Govt efforts to overcome CNV (coronavirus), he said.

So far, no case of the virus has been found in Pakistan.

While India, the US, Sri Lanka and many other countries evacuated their nationals from Wuhan, Pakistan has declined pleas by its stranded citizens in the city to airlift them.

Pakistan's Ambassador to China Naghmana Hashmi on Sunday said that Pakistani students should not be evacuated from Wuhan as medical facilities back home do not meet the standards required to treat a patient diagnosed with coronavirus.

Shanghai tanks on virus fears to lead fresh Asia market retreat

SHANGHAI, 03 FEB: Chinese equities plunged almost eight percent Monday as nervous traders returned from their extended Lunar New Year break, hit by fears that the coronavirus, which has killed more people than SARS, could hammer the country's economy.

The steep losses led another sell-off across Asia following a painful week for global markets with the virus death toll topping 360 people and more than 17,000 infected, and governments around the world banning flights to and from China.

Analysts have warned the outbreak could slash global growth this year, throwing a spanner in the works just as economies were showing signs of stabilising after more than a year of slowing.

Observers said that with China being a crucial part of the global trade infrastructure, other countries would also be badly hit, while major corporate names have frozen or scaled back their Chinese operations, threatening the global supply chain. The World Health Organization invoked a global health emergency last week but stopped short of recommending trade and travel restrictions that could have had a bruising effect on China.

"The situation is terrible and China's economy will be dealt a bad blow," said Stephen Innes at AxiCorp.

"As will (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) countries that have built significant trade ties with China, even more so those countries that are tourist destination spots and service providers to Chinese tourists. They will be dealt the nastiest blow of all."

Shanghai plunged almost nine percent at the open on the first day back after the Chinese New Year break as traders played catch-up with last week's global retreat.

The market had been due to reopen on Friday but authorities extended the holiday to buy time in the fight against the virus.

Monday's losses were the biggest since the 2015 market rout, though the composite index managed to pare some of the losses, helped by the cen-

tral bank's decision to pump 1.2 trillion yuan (\$173 billion) into the economy. The yuan fell about 1.5 percent against the dollar. Firms linked to tourism and travel were among the worst hit, with energy, telecoms and tech companies also well down. More than 2,600 stocks fell by their daily 10 percent limit, while the main iron ore contract fell by its maximum allowed eight percent. Copper, crude and palm oil also sank by their limit.

"The near-term impact on Chinese GDP growth is likely to be large," Oxford Economics said in a research note.

"Considering the affected areas account for just over 50 percent of total Chinese output, we think this could lead China's annual GDP growth to slow to just four percent in (the first quarter)," it added -- down from a previous forecast of six percent growth.

- Remaining upbeat -

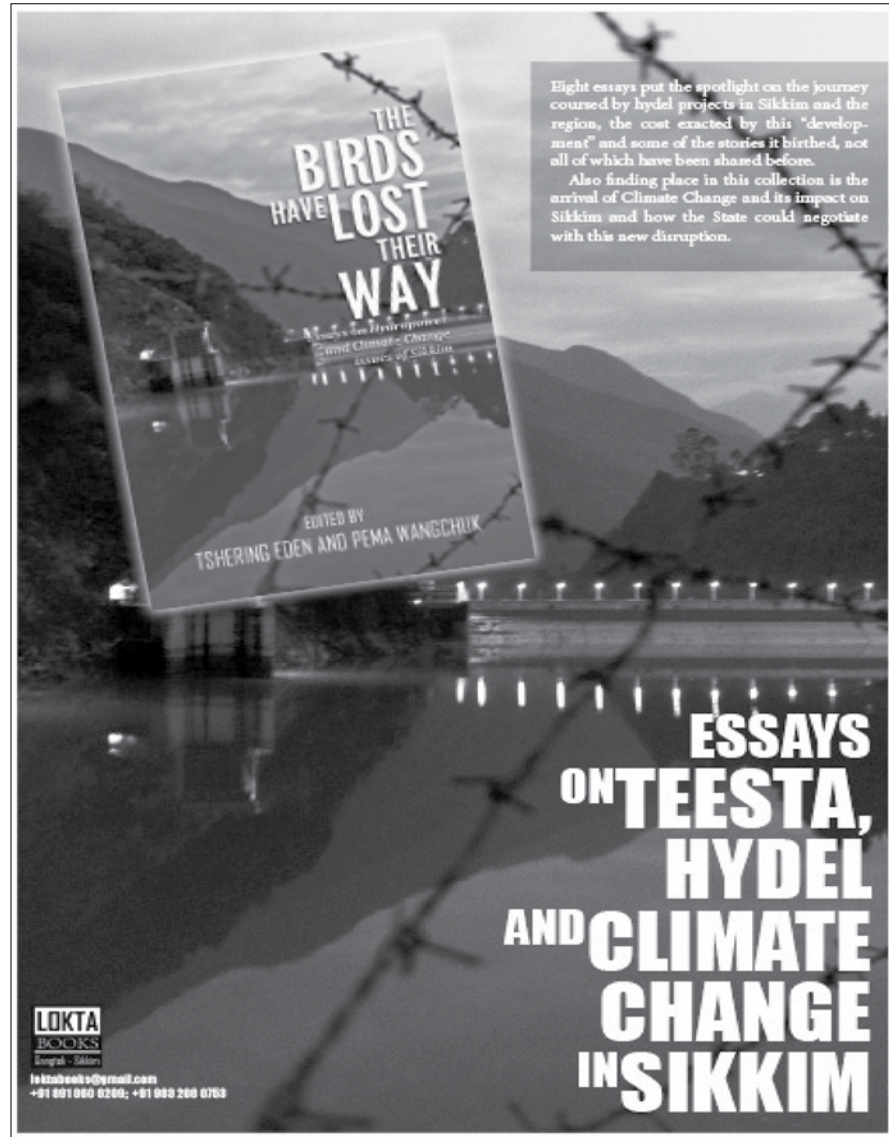
Still, JP Morgan Asset Management strategist Tai Hui remained relatively upbeat about the future.

"As the number of infections is still likely to rise in the weeks ahead, we would expect the Chinese onshore equity market to come under pressure," he said in a note.

"That said, we still believe that economic activities should recover swiftly once the number of new cases comes under control, and subsequently market sentiment should also improve. This could take time to play out, but this underpins our long-term optimism in the A-share market despite a challenging time ahead."

There was red on the boards elsewhere in Asia. Tokyo was one percent lower, while Sydney, Singapore, Wellington and Taipei all shed more than one percent. Jakarta lost 0.6 percent, Bangkok dropped 0.3 percent, Manila eased 0.6 percent and Seoul was flat. However, Hong Kong edged up after losing almost six percent in three days last week, while Mumbai also rose slightly.

The flight out of riskier assets hit high-yielding currencies with the South Korean won down 0.4 percent and the Indonesian rupiah losing 0.5 percent.



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SUPER BOWL FESTIVITIES! Singer, Ciara rocked a No. 3 jersey, a nod to her third pregnancy with husband Russell Wilson, at the Rolling Stone LIVE Super Bowl party in Miami.

Gaten Matarazzo's fourth surgery a 'success'

LOS ANGELES, FEB 3 (PTI): "Stranger Things" star Gaten Matarazzo says his fourth surgery for cleidocranial dysplasia (CCD) was a "complete success" and the actor hopes it would be the last one.

The 17-year-old actor underwent the procedure for CCD, a condition which affects development of the teeth and bones, on January 29.

Matarazzo shared a health update on Instagram over the weekend.

"Though my expression in this picture may not show it, the surgery was a complete success. This was such a big

one, it may be the last one I need. Hopefully at least. Those who suffer from Cleidocranial Dysplasia usually have Supernumerary teeth, which are extra teeth that grow in the gums," he said.

The actor said the surgery went on for four hours and his recovery for the past few days has been "great".

"I can't thank the team that did the surgery enough. Thank you all for your kind wishes and prayers. It means a lot. Thanks again everyone," Matarazzo added.

He also shared a picture post surgery on the photo-video sharing site.

Joaquin Phoenix calls out film industry's 'systemic racism'



LONDON, FEB 3 (PTI): Actor Joaquin Phoenix targeted the British Academy of Film and Television for overlooking "people of colour" in its nominations and urged the industry to dismantle a "system of oppression" in his Bafta acceptance speech.

The actor, who won the best actor Bafta for his portrayal in the title role in "Joker", said he felt "conflicted" receiving the award as so many of his deserving fellow actors didn't have that same privilege.

"I think that we send a very clear message to people of colour that you're not welcome here. I think that's the message that we're sending to people that have contributed so much to our medium and our industry, and in ways that we benefit from," he said onstage at the Royal Albert Hall.

Both British Academy of Film and Television and Academy of Motion Pictures Arts and Sciences were heavily criticised for the lack of representation and diversity after the nominations were announced.

The acting categories had shut out people of colour

while no women directors were recognised in the directing segment.

"I don't think anybody wants a handout or preferential treatment, although that's what we give ourselves every year. I think people just want to be acknowledged, appreciated and respected for their work. This is not a self-righteous condemnation because I'm ashamed to say that I'm part of the problem," Phoenix said.

Calling himself "part of the problem", the 45-year-old actor said more than creating a diverse working environment, the issue at hand was about understanding "systemic racism".

"I have not done everything in my power to ensure that the sets I work on are inclusive, but I think it's more than just having sets that are multicultural. We have to do the hard work to truly understand systemic racism.

"I think it is the obligation of the people that have created and perpetuate and benefit from a system of oppression to be the ones that dismantle it. So that's on us," he said.

Performance capture an egalitarian form of acting: Andy Serkis

LONDON, FEB 3 (PTI): Actor-director Andy Serkis, who was honoured at the Baftas 2020 for his pioneering work on performance capture, said this form of "egalitarian" acting is a great tool for artistes going ahead in the 21st century. He was presented the Bafta for his outstanding British contribution to cinema by veteran theatre and film actor Ian McKellen.

The actor, who met with an accident while playing winter sports appeared onstage in crutches, received a standing ovation as he accepted the trophy from his "Lord of the Rings" co-star.

Serkis has delivered powerhouse performances by playing computer-generated characters such as Gollum in the "Lord of the Rings" trilogy and the revolutionary ape, Caesar in "Planet of Apes" film franchise to name a few.

The 55-year-old actor said performance/ motion capture signifies the "end of typecasting", allowing actors to play any role they want to.

"I truly believe performance capture is an egalitarian form of acting. It's one of the great tools for actors and filmmakers of storytelling in the 21st century. It signifies the end of typecasting - anyone can play anything. It never used to be accepted as a standard industry practice, but it is now," the actor-director said in his acceptance speech.

"So a monumental thank you to all the innovators, coders, animators, the CGI artistes, companies, and the actors who continue to develop it," Serkis added.

He thanked his wife and "favourite actor on the planet" Lorraine Ashbourne and his family in his address. Serkis also thanked

"Lord of the Rings" director Peter Jackson, the team at WETA digital who did the visual effects that transformed him into Gollum.

"Thank you to Peter Jackson, Fran Walsh and Philippa Boyle for introducing me to the foresaid spandex suit, spending many years with Ian and spending wonderful characters



in your movies," he said.

In a nod to the "Planet of the Apes" team, the actor expressed gratitude to his "ape family" -- Dylan Clarke, Matt Reeves, Rupert Wyatt, Terry Notary and Michael Giacchino.

Serkis, who owns The Imaginarium, a production company linked to a digital performance-capture, thanked co-founder Jonathan Cavendish and team members for their contribution to the award.

Milla Jovovich welcomes third daughter

Los Angeles, Feb 3 (PTI): Actor Milla Jovovich and her husband, director Paul WS Anderson have become proud parents of a baby girl.

According to Us Weekly, the couple welcomed their third daughter on Sunday.

The "Resident Evil" star revealed over the weekend that the baby was due on

February 2.

"Due date is tomorrow so getting ready to go to the hospital at anytime now! It's funny because I thought having our third would be a piece of cake, but I'm actually really nervous, now that I know what to expect! Anyway, hopefully the next post I make will be a picture of our

newest little girlie girl! Wish me luck everyone," Jovovich wrote alongside a selfie.

The 44-year-old actor announced her pregnancy last August, nearly two years after she underwent an emergency abortion.

Jovovich and Anderson, 54, also share two daughters Ever, 11, and Dashiel, four.

Jennifer Lopez, Alex Rodriguez to have a summer wedding



LOS ANGELES, FEB 3 (PTI): Singer-actor Jennifer Lopez and former baseball star Alex Rodriguez are ready to exchange vows this summer.

The couple announced their engagement last March.

"They are getting married this summer," a source told Us Weekly.

Lopez, 50, and Rodriguez, 44, began dating in February of 2017.

The singer was previously married to actor Ojani

Noa from 1997 to 1998 and backup dancer Cris Judd from 2001 to 2003. She got married to singer Marc Anthony in 2004 and divorced in 2014. The two share twins Max and Emme. Lopez was also briefly engaged to actor Ben Affleck in 2002, before separating in 2004.

Rodriguez was previously married to Cynthia Scurtis from 2002 to 2008 and the ex-couple shares two daughters, Natasha and Ella.

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ARIES: Let's talk about Brandon Stanton. Did you know that he gave up a successful career in trading bonds to photograph to photograph the people of New York City that he was so fascinated by? Who gives up a great job to photograph other people, right? But then again if he hadn't, the Humans of New York would not have come into existence. Tip: Follow your heart's true desires.

TAURUS: Here's to 2am friends who offer both relationship advice alongside tequila shots to make you forget your woes, 6am friends who throw shade at you for your lifestyle choices and show up at your house with a green juice, and the nomadic ones who encourage you to be your most authentic self and join them on an adventure halfway across the world. Tip: Celebrate your soul circle.

GEMINI: This week, you're getting in touch with that weird and wonderful

energy that is unique to you. No matter how crazy an idea might seem, run with it, let it take flight, and if required, let it fail. Enterprise and risk taking are the qualities which will lead to immense transformation. Tip: Give in to flights of fancy.

CANCER: As you find yourself at a crossroads this Monday morning, remember to be kind to yourself. Reaching a higher ideal requires the sacrifice of a lesser option. Cancer. Keep your vision in mind as you make the decision to step forward. Tip: make a choice in alignment with your highest good.

LEO: Monday motivation courtesy Robin Sharma: "You need to fail to win. And the faster you fail, the more quickly you'll learn precisely what you need to do to win. So fail fast. Outfail the competition. Outfail the person you once were." No experience is futile, Leo. Trust that everything you went through has brought

you this point in your existence, the setback included. Tip: There is another way out of the maze. Think creative solutions.

VIRGO: Monday blues, who? You wake up feeling like the most optimistic version of yourself. There is a deep inner knowing that things are aligning for you. With the support of your soul circle, there is nothing you cannot get through. Tip: The road will reveal itself.

LIBRA: Oh, the magic of waking up on the right side of the bed! You are feeling like the most creative version of yourself, Libra. Channel this positivity into your many projects. Who knows? You may just find the solution you have been looking for. But does that mean you will soon have a road map or know exactly where the path is leading you to? Anything but.

SCORPIO: The only way to get out of this dead-end situation is to accept what

your inner voice is telling you. Certain projects are not meant to work out because they are not in alignment with your highest goals. If you have been investing your time and energy in things which are not reaping the rewards you seek, Scorpio, then it is time to rethink the path you have chosen. Tip: Be honest with yourself.

SAGITTARIUS: If you're a freelancer, work-at-home entrepreneur or a small business owner, this is your time to shine. Continue to create from a space of love and leave the rest to the Universe. Trust and surrender are the magic words that will help you attract opportunities that are in alignment with your highest good. Tip: Take the independent route.

CAPRICORN: What a wonderful feeling it is to be in the right place at the right time! The work you are putting in is bringing you success, recognition and

power—not to mention, the kind of financial stability that was once a distant dream. Tip: You are writing a success story.

AQUARIUS: The only way to get things done is to take charge. You have been on the sidelines for a while now, watching people trip and fall. Perhaps, it's time to step in and show them how things are done. There's no need to take an arrogant or judgemental stance though. Tip: Lead by example.

PISCES: "People are capable, at any time in their lives, of doing what they dream of." This cosmic truth revealed by Paulo Coelho is only understood by a few. Think of yourself as a chosen one who possesses the ability to transform thoughts into things. Keep the example of the alchemists in mind who turned base metals into gold. Step into your magic, Pisces. Tap into your many gifts. Tip: Have faith in your innate creativity.