



GOVT SCHOOL HEADS MEET

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SummitTIMES

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ON TOP OF THE NEWS

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Soreng-Chakung in semis of Inter-Constituency football tourney



SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 12 JAN:

Soreng-Chakung has also secured a berth in the semi-final round of the ongoing Inter-Constituency

Football Tournament 2019-20.

Playing the last quarter-final match at Jorethang Ground on Sunday, Soreng-Chakung outplayed Upper

Tadong 2-1. It will now take on Barfung in the semis. The first semi-final match of the tournament will be played between Zoom Salghari and Melli on Monday.

Indian Oil downs Darj XI to reach semis of CM's Gold Cup



SUMMIT REPORT

JORETHANG, 12 JAN:

Indian Oil today reached the semifinals of the 9th All India Chief Minister's Gold Cup International Football Tournament 2020 after beating Darjeeling XI by a solitary goal 1-0.

Today's match had Tourism Minister BS Panth as the chief guest accompanied by area MLA Sunita Gajmer as guest of honor along with South District Football Association members. Milan Bahumarty

of Indian Oil scored the solitary goal of the match while his team-mate Si-rendip Moran was adjudged the "Hero Of the Match" which carries a cash prize if Rs 10,000. S DFA also felicitated the chief guest and the guest of honour today.

SMTWA foundation day on 21 Jan

YOGEN THATAL SINGTAM, 12 JAN:

Sikkim Motor Transport Workers Association is gearing up to celebrate its 46th foundation day on 21 Jan here at the Singtam ticket counter. The association also plans to continue its practice of felicitating some of its dedicated members for their relentless efforts and contributions towards the growth of the association, informs the SMTWA president, Tinku Adhikari.

DDA inflated prices of houses for EWS beneficiaries: AAP

NEW DELHI, JAN 12 (PTI): The AAP on Sunday alleged the prices of houses for economically weaker section (EWS) beneficiaries were inflated by Delhi Development Authority from its original cost as part of a "scam".

AAP leader Sanjay Singh claimed flats should have been made available for Rs 6.90 lakh and Rs 11 lakh in easy installments. "(But) after years of struggling, those beneficiaries are told to arrange Rs 19 lakh and Rs 24 lakh, which means three times more than they claimed and promised."

"My question is when you (DDA) put out advertisements of the scheme and claimed the flats are ready, then why should anyone pay Rs 19 lakh, 20 lakh and 15 lakh," he asked. "My other question is why did beneficiaries not get their flats for Rs 6.9 lakh? What scam did you do," Singh asked. He demanded a thorough inquiry by CBI and CVC and said he has written to senior officials in the two department on the matter.

The DDA said the EWS flats being referred to have been built by private developers the cost indicated in the brochure

was "tentative". "Private developers have to build EWS flats mandatorily whenever they develop a housing colony. 50 per cent of EWS flats developed by private developers are transferred to DDA at price linked with CPWD index," the DDA said in a statement. Thereafter, these flats are offered by DDA to eligible beneficiaries. The price charged by DDA is based on actual cost and the formula is approved by the authority. The price indicated in the brochure in 2014 was tentative, the DDA added. "Thereafter detailed calculation was done in 2019 and the cost worked out was communicated to the beneficiaries. Thereafter on request of beneficiaries DDA decided not to charge interest and therefore price was reduced," it said. "The flats are of different sizes and parking is also included. It is multi-storey construction, the costing has been done in transparent manner and shown to beneficiaries. Most of the beneficiaries have taken the flats. DDA accounts are subject to audit and can be verified," the DDA said.

Maghey Mela begins at Mangshila

WANGCHUK BHUTIA MANGAN, 12 JAN:

Maghey Mela got underway at Mangshila in North Sikkim today. The 4-day event will on 15 January, Maghey Sankranti.

The mela was inaugurated by Sikkim Krantikari Morcha in-charge for Dzongu constituency, Chungkipo Lepcha, as chief guest accompanied by SDM [Mangan], KT Bhutia, as special guest.

Maghey Mela here has traditional stalls, display of tubers, organic vegetables, traditional games etc.

The chief guest, in her address, appreciated the organising of Maghey Mela in traditional fashion and urged the



youngsters to foster their inheritance in terms of culture and traditions and celebrate heritage

with more pride.

Earlier, the organising committee president, Ram Bahadur Limboo,

delivered the welcome address.

The inaugural function winded up with

vote of thanks proposed by Dilliram Limboo, the panchayat vice president of Mangshilla Tibuk GPU.

PM renames KoPT after Syama Prasad Mookerjee, draws criticism from oppn

KOLKATA, JAN 12 (PTI): Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday rechristened Kolkata Port Trust after Jan Sangh founder Syama Prasad Mookerjee, drawing criticism from the opposition camp, which said he was more of a "name-changer" than a "game-changer".

Modi, while addressing the 150th anniversary programme of Kolkata Port Trust, invoked Mookerjee and BR Ambedkar and said their contributions had led to the development of the country post Independence, but suggestions made by them were not implemented after they resigned from the government. "I announce that the Kolkata Port Trust will now be known as Dr. Syama Prasad Mookerjee Port. He was the father of industrialisation in India,

a man who made sacrifices for one nation and one Constitution," Modi said, while addressing the ceremony at Netaji Indoor Stadium here.

Hinting at a change of guard in 2021 Assembly polls, he said the West Bengal government was not implementing central schemes as it did not help "syndicates" (cartels), but people in this state would not have to miss out on the benefits for long.

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, who was scheduled to attend the port trust programme, was conspicuous by her absence. None of the Trinamool Congress ministers were also present at the event.

"When there is no syndicate or cut money involved, why would someone implement central government

schemes? I don't know whether they (state government) would give approval for central schemes such as Ayushman Bharat Yojana, PM Kisan Samman Nidhi, but if they do, people of Bengal will be able to enjoy their benefits," he said.

The prime minister also claimed that he was pained to see that the poor in the state was not getting the benefits of the Centre's welfare schemes.

"Eight crore farmers across the country are getting benefited (due to the central schemes). But there will always be pain in my heart (about the schemes not being implemented in Bengal). I will always pray to god for the welfare of farmers and poor patients. May god give them (Bengal govern-

ment) good sense...

"However, I have a feeling that the people of West Bengal will not remain deprived of central schemes for long," he insisted.

Modi, who released a commemorative stamp on the occasion, said his government at the Centre was making every possible effort to develop Bengal, its poor, underprivileged and exploited sections.

He also inaugurated and laid foundation of infrastructure projects for the expansion and modernisation of the Kolkata Port.

"Development of waterways has improved Kolkata Port Trust's connectivity with industrial centres in east India, made trade easier for our neighbouring countries, Bhutan, Myanmar and Nepal.

"Our country's coasts are gateways to development, the (central) government has started the Sagarmala programme to improve connectivity," Modi added.

Criticising the prime minister's move to rename the port, CPI(M) politburo member Mohammed Salim said Modi had turned into a "name-changer" rather than being a "game-changer", contrary to what the saffron camp had claimed when it came to power in 2014.

"When Narendra Modi came to power, we thought his government will be a game-changer. Now we see that the government is more of a name-changer. This name-changing, however, will not have any material impact on the port's performance," Salim said.

109 children sexually abused every day in India in 2018

UZMI ATHAR

NEW DELHI, JAN 12 (PTI): As many as 109 children were sexually abused every day in India in 2018, according to the data by the National Crime Record Bureau, which showed a 22 per cent jump in such cases from the previous year.

According to the recently released NCRB data, 32,608 cases were reported in 2017 while 39,827 cases were reported in 2018 under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act (POCSO).

POCSO Act, 2012 is a comprehensive law to provide for the protection of children from offences of sexual assault, sexual harassment and pornography. It requires special treatment of cases relating to child sexual abuse such as setting-up of special courts, special prosecutors, and support persons for child victims.

As many as 21,605 child rapes were recorded in 2018 which included 21,401 rapes of girls and 204 of boys, the data showed.

The highest number of child

rapes were recorded in Maharashtra at 2,832 followed by Uttar Pradesh at 2023 and Tamil Nadu at 1457, the data showed.

Overall crimes against children has increased steeply over six times in the decade over 2008-2018, from 22,500 cases recorded in 2008 to 1,41,764 cases in 2018, according to the NCRB data from 2008 and 2018.

In 2017, 1,29,032 cases of crime against children were recorded.

Priti Mahara, Director of Policy Research and Advocacy at CRY Child Rights and You (CRY) said, that while on the one hand, the increasing numbers of crimes against children are extremely alarming, it also suggests an increasing trend in reporting which is a positive sign as it reflects people's faith in the system.

"It also provides a direction in which government interventions must be made and evidence needs to be created. While some major efforts have been taken to ensure child protection, a lot more is needed to see expected results on the

ground," Mahara said.

In percentage terms, major crime against children during 2018 were kidnapping and abduction which accounted for 44.2 per cent followed by cases under POCSO, which accounted for 34.7 per cent, the data showed.

A total of 67,134 children (19,784 male, 47,191 female and 159 transgender) were reported missing in 2018. During the year 2018, a total of 71,176 children (22,239 male, 48,787 female and 150 transgender) were traced, the NCRB data said.

As many as 781 cases of use of child for pornography or storing child pornography material was also recorded in 2018, more than double that of 2017 when 331 such cases were recorded, the data showed.

The state-wise segregation of crimes against children reveals Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Delhi and Bihar accounted for 51 per cent of all crimes in the country, the data said.

While Uttar Pradesh tops the list with 19,936 recorded crimes against children (14 per

cent of total crimes), Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra are the close second and third with 18,992 and 18,892 crimes registered respectively.

The report also showed that cases of sexual harassment in shelter homes against women and children reportedly increased by 30 per cent, from 544 cases recorded in 2017 to 707 cases in 2018.

Mahara suggested that financial investments must be adequately increased with a focus on prevention of crimes against children and the identification of vulnerable children and families.

"Strengthening community level child protection system is also a key to prevention. While there is growing evidence of the precarious lives that children in India are leading, it is essential that this evidence is used to effectively inform policy and programme initiatives," she said.

As many as 501 incidences were also recorded under The Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, a 26 per cent jump from 2017 when 395 cases were reported under the Act.\

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Rock Garden hosts Maghey Mela at Rimbi

Deputy Speaker Shri Sangay Lepcha officially inaugurates the Rimbi Maghey Mela 2020 at Rimbi, West Sikkim.

GYALSHING, 12 JAN [IPR]: Deputy Speaker, Sikkim Legislative Assembly, Sangay Lepcha, inaugurated Rimbi Maghey Mela at the Sewaro Rock Garden at Rimbi, Yuksam, West Sikkim. Mr Lepcha is also the chief patron of the Mela Organising Committee and was accompanied by ADC- West Karma L Lepcha; ADC [Dev] Milan Subba; SDM Yuksam Jimmy W. Bhutia; SDPO Sonam Wangdi along with HoDs of line departments, offi-

cial and other dignitaries.

The chief guest spoke on the importance of the festival and its significance to the Rimbi Rock Garden.

He appreciated the traditional stalls which help showcase and revive the cultural diversity of Sikkim. He urged the people to patronize the Mela and help maintain peace through the duration of the event.

Cultural programs, traditional and departmental stalls along with



musical performances by various singers and bands from Nepal, Dar-

jeeling and Sikkim are the chief attractions of Rimbi Maghey Mela this

year. The Mela is scheduled to continue till 17 January.

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Hyderabad FC appoints Albert Roca as the new head coach

HYDERABAD, JAN 12 (PTI): The bottom-placed ISL outfit Hyderabad FC named Albert Roca as their new head coach for the 2020-21 season on a two-year deal.

According to an ISL media release, Roca, who had earlier coached Bengaluru FC to the AFC Cup finals, will advise the new coaching staff for the remainder of the season and will take full charge from the beginning of next season.

“I am delighted to go back to the ISL. The road ahead is a challenging one and I am excited to get started at Hyderabad

FC and build a strong team for next season and beyond. The intent from the club is strong and we will put our best efforts and compete to be at the top next season,” Roca said.

Varun Tripuraneni, co-owner of Hyderabad FC said, “We are extremely delighted that Albert Roca has signed with the club. He has tremendous experience across the world and in Albert, we have one of the best coaches to have coached in India. We are looking forward to work with Albert and his team and provide him the best support.

US to expel a dozen Saudi trainees after base attack probe: media

Washington, Jan 12 (AFP): The United States will expel at least a dozen Saudi military students accused of extremist links and child pornography, after an investigation into a shooting rampage by a Saudi officer in Florida, media reported Saturday.

In December, Mohammed Alshamrani, who was in the United States as part of a Saudi military training program, opened fire in a classroom at the Pensacola Naval Air Station, killing three sailors and wounding eight other

people before being shot dead by police.

While the dozen or more trainees are not accused of aiding Alshamrani, some were found to have connections to extremist movements or be in possession of child pornography, CNN reported.

The probe, which was carried out by the FBI, also found that several had not reported the assailant’s disturbing behavior before the attack, according to The Washington Post.

In mid-December the Pentagon said it had

conducted background checks on all Saudi military personnel currently training in the United States and found no “immediate threat scenario.” Defense Department officials halted operational training for Saudi Arabian military students in the United States following the attack, though classroom instruction continued.

The 21-year-old gunman, a lieutenant in the Saudi Royal Air Force, was armed with a lawfully purchased Glock 9mm handgun, and is reported to have posted a mani-

festo on Twitter before the shooting denouncing America as “a nation of evil.”

According to the Washington Post, the FBI asked Apple to help access Alshamrani’s two iPhones, but the company is resisting governmental requests to alter encryption.

Apple said it had already helped the agency by sharing related data in its cloud storage.

Some 5,000 international military personnel are undergoing training in the United States, including approximately

850 Saudis among all branches.

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AAP changed country’s politics to an extent: Kejriwal

NEW DELHI, JAN 12 (PTI): Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Sunday said the Aam Aadmi Party has changed the politics of the country to some extent and based it upon the work done by its government. “People used

to tell me, ‘Kejriwal ji, elections are not won on the basis of a government’s work, election politics is different’. And we used to say that we have come to change this. The politics of the country has changed to an extent,” he

said in a tweet.

The chief minister’s remarks came ahead of the Delhi Assembly elections, which will be held on February 8.

The counting of votes will take place on February 11.

Bhagwant Mann, others booked for rioting, assaulting police during protest

CHANDIGARH, JAN 12 (PTI): AAP’s Punjab unit president Bhagwant Mann and some party legislators from the state have been booked on charges of rioting, assault and obstructing police from performing their duties during a protest here against power tariff hike, a police official said on Sunday.

Around 800 unnamed AAP supporters have also been booked.

Rejecting the claim that AAP workers had assaulted police personnel on duty, Leader of the Opposition in Punjab Assembly Harpal Singh Cheema slammed the Chandigarh Police for registering the case.

The FIR was filed on Saturday against the Sangrur MP, around seven-eight legislators and others on the statement of a woman constable here, who complained that AAP activists had pelted stones and assaulted her and some other police personnel during the protest on Friday last.

The SHO of Sector 3 Police Station, Inspector Jaspal Singh, said the FIR has been registered here against Mann and others under various Sections of the IPC including rioting, voluntarily causing hurt to deter public servant in discharge of his duty, disobedience to order promulgated by public servant.

The protesters created law and order problem and violated the district magistrate’s order under Section 144 in the area, police said.

Police had used water cannons on Friday last to stop the Aam Aadmi Party leaders and workers protesting against the hike in power tariff in Punjab from moving towards Chief Minister Amarinder Singh’s residence here.

The main opposition party in Punjab was also seeking scrapping of power purchase agreements signed during the previous SAD-BJP regime with private plants.

Police said at least six of their personnel were injured when unknown AAP supporters allegedly started throwing stones on them during the protest.

Police had detained and released AAP functionaries who were trying to march towards the official residence of the Punjab Chief Minister here.

Criticising the Chandigarh Police for registering the case, Cheema said, “We will continue to raise the voice of the people of Punjab. We do not fear from going to jail. Being in opposition, we have to play our role and raise people’s voice.”

After the protest here, the AAP in a statement had claimed that

When will you get ten heads for one: Cong asks PM, HM

New Delhi, Jan 12 (PTI): The Congress on Sunday attacked Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his government for their “silence” on Pakistan’s BAT decapitating an Indian porter, and asked when will they get ten heads for one as promised by the prime minister earlier. Congress chief spokesperson Randeep Singh Surjewala tweeted, “Why is the Modi government silent on Pakistan’s barbarism? Pakistani forces have decapitated an Indian porter, and martyred two soldiers. And prime minister and home minister are silent. The media is also silent.”

“Are stories of martyrdom of Indians at the hands of Pakistan printed keeping the nature of government in power? When will there will a retort to Pakistan’s cowardly acts? When will we see ten heads for

one,” he asked.

Pakistan’s Border Action Team is suspected to have decapitated a porter, who was among two civilians killed along the Line of Control (LoC) in Poonch district on Friday, and taken away the head, officials had said.

This is the first time that any civilian has been beheaded by the BAT, which comprises Pakistani army regulars and terrorists, though similar incidents involving security personnel have taken place in the past, they said.

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GENERAL LAND FOR SALE

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

FLAT FOR RENT/LEASE

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

GENERAL LAND FOR SALE

General land 30X40 (3 Plots) available for sale at Tadong 6th Mile next to Harka Maya College. Flat Land no cutting required. Price 30 Lakhs (negotiable).

LAND FOR SALE

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

LAND FOR SALE

An area measuring 1 acre at Sadam South Sikkim near Loretto Convent School at Gupti road. Price negotiable any one interested can contact:

Man seeks Rs 1.5 cr from mother for abandoning him 38 yrs ago

MUMBAI, JAN 12 (PTI): A 40-year-old man has moved the Bombay High Court against his biological mother and sought a compensation of Rs 1.5 crore from her for abandoning him in Mumbai when he was two years’ old and later refusing to accept him as her son.

The petitioner, Srikanth Sabnis, a make-up artist, has said he underwent a life full of agony and mental trauma after being intentionally abandoned in an unknown city, for which his

mother Aarti Mhaskar and her second husband Uday Mhaskar (Sabnis’s step-father) need to compensate.

As per the plea, Aarti Mhaskar was earlier married to one Deepak Sabnis. The couple had a child, Srikanth Sabnis, in February 1979 while residing in Pune.

As per the plea, the woman was ambitious and wanted to move to Mumbai to work in the film industry. In September 1981, she took the child along with her and

left for Mumbai.

Once they reached Mumbai, the woman abandoned her son in a train and left, the plea alleged, adding that the child was found by a railway officer and sent to a children’s home.

In 1986, Srikanth Sabnis’ maternal grandmother succeeded in getting his legal custody.

He initially lived with his grandmother, but was later brought up by his maternal aunt.

The plea stated that in 2017, Srikanth Sabnis learnt about his biological mother.

After procuring her number, he contacted her in September 2018 when she accepted he was her son and that she had to abandon him due to unavoidable circumstances, the petition said.

He later met his mother and her second husband, but they asked him not to disclose his real identity in front of their children, it said.

“The plaintiff, who

has already undergone a dreadful life seeking shelter at relatives’ place and wandering from fake parents to observation home, was totally devastated by this unacceptable condition,” the plea said.

In his plea filed before the high court recently, Srikanth Sabnis sought a direction to his mother to declare he is her son and that she had abandoned him when he was two years old.

“The defendants (Aarti and Uday Mhaskar)

Govt school heads meet



SUMMIT REPORT

RANGPO, 12 JAN:

The Association of Heads of Secondary and Senior Secondary Schools of

Sikkim convened a meeting in Gangtok today, a press release informs.

The meeting resolved to work with the govern-

ment for the upliftment of students, school heads and teachers in the state.

The association also resolved to collaborate with

stakeholders, officers and the ministry to put forward issues pertaining to the formation of a state board for secondary education.

National Youth Day at Satam

SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 12 JAN:

Satam-based Bha-Svi Safalta Club in South Sikkim observed the 157th birth anniversary of Swami Vivekananda as National Youth Day on the theme "Channelising youth power for nation building" in grand manner at Satam village under Rangrang-Yangang constituency on Sunday.

The celebration featured speech, singing, dance and poetry recital competitions.

The celebration, which was attended by youth from in and around of Satam, had Rangrang-Yangang gram panchayat president, Deokumar Rai, as the chief guest and PhD scholar from Sikkim University, Passang Tamang, present as resource person.



Theatre workshop at Barfung-Jarrong

SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 12 JAN:

A 9-day theatre and acting workshop conducted by Subhashis Ranjan Das concluded today at the Barfund Jarrong Gram Prashasan Kendra in South Sikkim.

The final day had Zilla Panchayat member, Tika Maya Chettri, as the chief guest.

The day included a demonstration by the participants who also spoke about their experience of the workshop.



Youth Congress carries out 'peace march' in Delhi

NEW DELHI, JAN 12

(PTI): The Congress' youth wing carried out a 'peace march' in Delhi on Sunday to express solidarity with those who have raised their voices against various issues despite facing police "brutality".

The Youth Congress organised the march at Lutyens' Delhi to commemorate Swami Vivekananda's 157th birth anniversary, which is also observed as Na-

tional Youth Day.

The march started from Mandi House till the Youth Congress office on Raisina Road with some of the volunteers dressed as Swami Vivekananda.

According to the Youth Congress, the march was in solidarity with the "brave citizens" who have been raising their voices against various contentious issues even in the face of police "brutality" across the country.

HAVE A STORY TO SHARE?

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TENDER NOTICE

Sealed tenders are invited for Mahindra Holidays and Resorts India Ltd., Unit Club Mahindra Gangtok from reputed parties for the supply of following products & service for the period 1st April 2020 -31st March 2021.

*Milk & Milk products *Ice Cream *Snacks *Indian Sweets *Local Breads *Vegetables *English Vegetables *Organic Vegetables *Fruits *Mutton *Chicken *Eggs *Local Chicken *Groceries *Provisions *General Cleaning items *Chemicals *Gel Fuel *Printing & Stationary *Souvenir Shop *Spices *Travel Desk *Condiments *Dry Fruits *Engineering (Electrical, Plumbing, Hardware etc.) *Soft Beverages *Hard Li-queueur *AMC for LPG servicing *AMC for DG Servicing *Pest Control *Security Service.

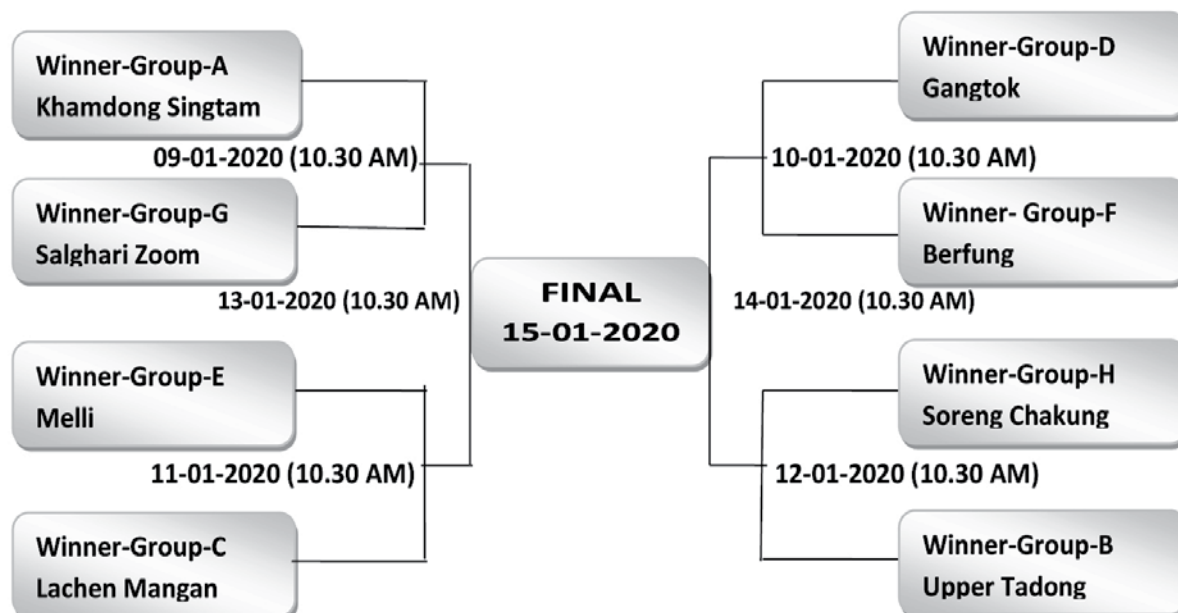
Applications should be collected from the materials office on any working day between 10.00 A.M. - 5.00 P.M. with-in 25th January 2020. The management reserves the right to accept /reject any tender without assigning any reason whatsoever Sealed Tenders should reach the following address by 25th January 2020, 5.00 P.M.

Finance Department, Cell No- 9832344451
Club Mahindra, Gangtok
Pin No - 737103.

GOVERNMENT OF SIKKIM DEPARTMENT OF SPORTS & YOUTH AFFAIRS

FINAL ROUND OF THE INTER CONSTITUENCY FOOTBALL TOURNAMENT 2019-20 VENUE -JORETHANG PLAYGROUND

FIXTURE- III Final Round



Organized by:
Department of Sports & Youth Affairs
Government of Sikkim



SIKKIM STATE LEGAL SERVICES AUTHORITY Development Area, Gangtok: Sikkim Phone: 03592-207753, Fax : 03592-207753

"MESSAGE".

Sikkim State Legal Services Authority is organizing National Lok Adalat on Saturday the 08th February, 2020 for the following types of pre-litigation and pending cases viz:

Pre-Litigation

- (i) N.I Act cases under Section 138;
- (ii) Money Recovery cases;
- (iii) Labour disputes cases;
- (iv) Electricity and Water Bills (excluding non-compoundable)
- (v) Maintenance Cases.

(vi) Other (Criminal Compoundable and other Civil dispute).

Pending in the Courts (which are reflected on National Judicial Data Grid)

- (i) Criminal Compoundable Offences;
- (ii) N.I. Act cases under Section 138;
- (iii) Money Recovery cases;
- (iv) MACT cases;
- (v) Labour disputes cases;
- (vi) Electricity and Water Bills (excluding non-compoundable)
- (vii) Matrimonial disputes (except divorce);
- (viii) Land Acquisition cases;
- (ix) Service matters relating to pay and allowances and retiral benefits;
- (x) Revenue cases (pending in District Courts and High Courts only);
- (xi) Other civil cases (rent, easmentary rights, injunction suits, specific performance suits) etc. (please specify the category).

Any individual or any department having such matters either pending in Courts/Tribunals/Departments or in pre-litigation stage may approach directly before the Sikkim SLSA, District Lok Adalats or Taluk Lok Adalats for settlement on or before 29.01.2020 at the following address:

1. Sikkim State Legal Services Authority, Development Area, Gangtok, East Sikkim. E-mail: sikkim_slsa@live.com Phone No.03592-207753.
2. High Court Legal Services Committee, Development Area, Gangtok, East Sikkim. E-mail: sikkim_slsa@live.com Phone No. 03592-207753.
3. District Legal Services Authority (East) District Court's Complex, Sichey Gangtok, East Sikkim. Phone No. 03592 284462.
4. Taluk Legal Services Committee (East), District Court's Complex, Sichey, Gangtok, East Sikkim. Phone No. 03592 284131.
5. District Legal Services Authority (North) District Court Complex, Mangan, North Sikkim. Phone No. 03592 234502.
6. Taluk Legal Services Committee (North), Court of Civil Judge-cum-Judicial Magistrate, Pentock, Mangan, North Sikkim. Phone no.03592 234383/234514.
7. District Legal Services Authority (South) District Court Complex, Namchi, South Sikkim. Phone No. 03595 264356.
8. Taluk Legal Services Committee (South), Court of Civil Judge-cum-Judicial Magistrate, District Courts Complex, Namchi, South Sikkim. Phone no.03595 263145.
9. District Legal Services Authority (West) District Court Complex, Kyongsa, Gyalshing, West Sikkim. Phone No. 03595 250061.
10. Taluk Legal Services Committee (West), Court of Civil Judge-cum-Judicial Magistrate, Kyongsa, Gyalshing, West Sikkim. Phone no.03595 250061.
11. Taluk Legal Services Committee, Court of Civil Judge-cum-Judicial Magistrate, Chungthang, Sub-Division, North Sikkim.
12. Taluk Legal Services Committee (West), Court of Civil Judge-cum-Judicial Magistrate, Soreng, Sub-Division, West Sikkim. Phone n o: 03592-253200.

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Season 2
GRAND FINALE
12TH JANUARY 2020
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Converts and Supporters

The people are important, always

Politicians in our country, as also in Sikkim, live in the make-believe world of sycophants and appearances for far too long to be able to see realities unless strained through the reassuring filters that suit and surround them. In their defence, it is not just politicians who take on such imagined sense of power, significance and influence, and one sees such attitudes among government officials, social and religious organisations, and yes, even in the media. It is however only the politicians who need to routinely lobby for direct endorsement of the people to remain of consequence and also stand a chance of deciding policy, hence it becomes important for their priorities to be aligned properly and political-speak nuanced with a better sense of proportions and pragmatism. Force-feeding the demolition of a State into splinters of union territories, the promulgation of citizenship laws despite widespread reservations, demonetizing of currency notes, suspension of internet services, demonising of student leaders, and the list can go on about all the madness that manifests when leaders won't confer.

One could argue that selective perceptions would affect only individual fates and political careers, but it becomes important to marshal the debate on the right course when these impressions begin hogging public engagement. Take for instance the practise of claiming turncoats, a gimmick which gains currency every time an election comes calling and then again after the victors have been crowned. These are fine as campaign-trail asides, but rankle when they become the centrepiece of announcements and the crutches for political significance. While these displays may be necessary to send out a signal of increasing popularity or resurgence, they are not ladders on which political futures can be reached. To begin with, commitments so fickle that they the whiff of access can signal an ideological shift can hardly be considered endorsement strong enough to power change. Anyone who has followed politics in Sikkim long enough will know how easily camps are changed and how conveniently khadas exchanged. Agreed, there are some crossovers which are politically significant in that they help open some un-reached pockets, but to believe these to have the potency of changing political fortunes is misplaced and in fact demeaning to the intelligence of the people. They see through the smokescreen.

To believe that the people cannot see through the political opportunism reflects an inexcusable disconnect from how people think. The media might play along and ignore the obvious sour grapes/ bountiful opportunism syndrome which defines a bulk of political positions in Sikkim, but that does not mean that the people do not see through these developments. What is important though is to catch the attention of the people, an attention span that should then be held with policy and programme initiatives and building consensus.

At the end of the day, governments need to perform, not dictate. Governments need to work with the people, not believe in their own PR and get drunk on power reposed in them by the people. And no, chamchas and bhakts do not have neither the motivation nor the confidence to speak truth to power, for that, governments need to listen to the people sans filters. Converts and sycophants have their priorities mixed up, the real supporters, the real people don't, and they have always been important.

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Killing of Soleimani evokes dark history of political assassinations in the formative days of Shiite Islam

DEINA ABDELKADER
THECONVERSATION.COM

Gen. Qassem Soleimani, who promoted the religious and political influence of the Iranian regime across the Middle East with covert military operations, was an important figure in the Iranian government.

But that's not the only reason his targeted killing by the United States has elicited explosive grief and outrage in Iran.

Soleimani's killing is also roiling Iran – including some people who don't necessarily follow military affairs – for religious and cultural reasons related to the country's Shii Muslim history.

VENERATION OF MARTYRDOM

Islam, the world's second largest religion, has two main denominations: the Sunnis and the Shiites. Iran is about 95% Shiite.

While these two branches have the same basic beliefs, they differ somewhat in their interpretation of the Quran and whether imams are seen as divinely guided leaders.

Nonetheless, as I teach the students in my courses on Islam and politics, the main conflict between the Sunnis and Shiites is a political one. A power struggle between the two sects have long created tensions in the Middle East. Today, it plays out in a growing competition between the Sunni kingdom of Saudi Arabia and Shii-majority Iran and Iraq.

Most relevant to the killing of Soleimani – but absent from most analysis of Iran's response to the United States' military action – is that Shiism as a separate sect was born of political assassinations.

Following the death of the Prophet Muhammad in 632 A.D., in Medina, one group believed that leadership of the community should go to Abu Bakr, Muhammad's father-in-law, a trusted friend and one of the first converts in Islam.

A second group disagreed: They wanted Muhammad's cousin Ali to become caliph, or leader. This group became known as Shi'at-'Ali – partisans of Ali – or "Shi'a."

Eventually, Ali did assume leadership of the Muslim community, becoming Islam's fourth caliph. Four years later, he was murdered by his political rivals. Because Ali had agreed to arbitration to resolve Shiite differences about the future direction of the Muslim community, followers saw his assassination as an act of high treason.

Ali was succeeded by his two sons Hasan, who was later poisoned, and Hussein, who was also murdered. Hussein's martyrdom is remembered each year on the Shiite Muslim holiday of Ashura.

So when a prominent leader like Soleimani – who joined the Iranian Revolutionary Guard at age 24 after Iran's 1979 revolution, expanding Shiite influence across the Middle East for four decades – is killed in a targeted attack, the death necessarily recalls this dark history of assassinations in the Shiite culture.

EXTREME AND CRUEL INJUSTICE

Another element of Shiite historical memory relevant to Soleimani's killing is the concept of extreme injustice, or "zulm."

Zulm is an Arabic word that in Shii Islam may be used to describe everything from a false ac-

cusation to government tyranny.

According to the Shiite scholar Ayatullah Dastaghaib Shirazi, zulm refers to "various kinds of oppressions [that] include insulting, abusing, degrading or imprisoning a person."

Shirazi, who was imprisoned by the shah of Iran several times for preaching against his rule, before the 1979 revolution, was intimately familiar with this form of zulm.

"Another form of oppression is to usurp someone's property," Shirazi writes in his book "Greater Sins," or "to forcefully occupy a position reserved for someone else."

This is the "supreme injustice" committed against Muhammad's cousin Ali, his sons and their descendants, Shiites believe. Their right to lead Islam was repeatedly usurped.

Because Soleimani's death is widely seen by Iranians to have been unprovoked, it is likely to evoke memories of extreme injustices past. Soleimani had run military operations targeting Americans, but the Trump administration has offered no evidence that he presented a direct threat to the United States when he was killed.

Acute awareness of injustice is a defining feature of the Shiite faith, according to the Columbia University professor Hamid Dabashi. Millions of Iranians have turned out to mourn Soleimani in recent days, calling him a martyr and vowing revenge for his killing.

UNITY IN DISSENT

Such public support for the government is not necessarily common these days in Iran.

Mass youth-led protests in 2018 and 2019 demonstrated a clear backlash against the regime of Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei. When the government cracked down on dissent in No-

vember 2019, Soleimani himself was in charge of the Revolutionary Guard forces that killed up to 1,500 protesters.

But when the Iranian people agree that an extreme injustice has occurred, history shows, they can become powerfully united in opposition to it. Several scholars point to the 1979 Iranian Revolution as an example of an uprising inspired by zulm.

By the late 1970s, the Shah of Iran was abusing his absolute power both politically and economically to create a huge gap between the ruling elite and the Iranian people. Iranians understood these actions as tyranny, Dabashi argues.

When they rose up in revolt, overthrowing the monarchy to establish an Islamic republic, Dabashi says, Iranians were invoking "qiyam" – meaning to rise in one's defense. Zulm and qiyam are "thematically related in the moral universe of Shi'i political culture," he writes in his 2011 book "Shiism: A Religion of Protest."

Those who died in the revolution are considered martyrs.

The Iranian Revolution succeeded not because "all Iranians thought the same way," according to the late British academic Michael Axworthy, "but because for a brief time a large majority, despite differences between the social and ideological groups to which they belonged, came together."

Today, the religious and cultural symbolism of Soleimani's killing appears to have inspired Iranians once again to set aside their differences, at least temporarily, to mourn a new martyr.

[the writer is Associate Professor of Political Science, University of Massachusetts Lowell]

Destroying cultural heritage is an attack on humanity's past and present – it must be prevented

PETER STONE
THECONVERSATION.COM

There was a horrified reaction around the world when US president Donald Trump tweeted, at the height of America's ongoing dispute with Iran, threatening Iran's unparalleled cultural heritage. He wrote that the US had identified 52 sites, including important historical buildings and artefacts, that would be targeted if Iran retaliated against the killing of its top military commander Qassem Soleimani on January 3.

After Trump's advisors – including the Pentagon – told him this would be illegal he pulled back from that position. But why the fuss? Historic buildings and places are damaged and destroyed during conflict through collateral (or accidental) impact, and historic artefacts get looted. That's war. For hundreds, if not thousands, of years, armies were paid by being allowed to loot and run riot after winning a battle. The military mind cared little about anything other than winning the war and going home richer.

There are many cultural and academic reasons for trying to protect heritage during armed conflict, most of them irrelevant to those doing the fighting. We need to realise that cultural property protection (CPP) will only be effective if militaries and their political masters take it seriously.

Perhaps surprisingly, CPP has a long history in military law. The earliest surviving code of discipline for an English army, the 1385 Durham Ordinances, was drawn up for Richard II's invasion of Scotland. It included an article not to damage religious or other cultural buildings. More recently, and ironically given Trump's tweet, the USA is accepted as the first country to make CPP part of its military policy through the 1863 "Lieber Code" written for Federal forces during the American Civil War.

Today, the intentional targeting of cultural and religious sites that are not military objectives, have no military function, and make no contribution to military action, is prohibited specifically in international humanitarian law, most notably in the 1954 Hague Convention on the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict and its Second Protocol drawn up in 1999.

CPP is also an integral part of the 1977 Additional Protocol I to the Geneva Conventions, the 1998 Rome Statute and UN Security Council Resolution 2347. Whether any specific country has ratified one or all of the above, CPP is increasingly regarded as "customary international law" and applies to all sides in any conflict.

And it works. Military commanders were found guilty and imprisoned for deliberately attacking cultural heritage under the International Criminal



Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia. Meanwhile, Ahmad al Faqi al Mahdi, a member of Ansar Dine, an extremist group associated with al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb, was sentenced to nine years' imprisonment in 2016 and given a significant fine by the International Criminal Court for the deliberate destruction of cultural heritage in Timbuktu, Mali.

HEARTS AND MINDS

Since Sun Tzu wrote The Art of War in China in the sixth century BC, military writers have argued that to destroy the cultural heritage of your enemy is bad military practice. It gives the first reason for the next war and often makes a defeated population harder to govern. On the other hand, protecting the cultural heritage of a population you have conquered shows them respect and they are easier to govern. This is what modern soldiers often refer to as a "force multiplier", something that makes their main job of winning a conflict that much easier.

The UK established a CPP Unit in 2018. At its first training course, developed in partnership with the UK national committee of the Blue Shield (an advisory body to UNESCO regarding CPP), members of the British unit were joined by colleagues from six other countries all of which are setting up, or enhancing, similar units.

PARTNERSHIP IS CRUCIAL

The military cannot be expected to deliver good CPP on its own – if we want to protect cultural property, it's important that those in the heritage sector develop a close partnership with armed forces over the protection of cultural property. This does not mean heritage experts need to support any particular side in a given conflict, but they must be ready to work with all sides.

This partnership needs to be developed over time – it's not good enough to start thinking about it once a conflict has begun. The Blue Shield has identified four points at which this partnership

needs to exist: long-term and ongoing education; immediately pre-deployment, providing an understanding of the heritage in a specific area of operation; during conflict itself; and post-conflict.

Often after actual fighting is over, the military is frequently the only organisation with the resources to protect cultural heritage. This can range from engineering support to stabilise a building, to providing troops to protect sites or museums from looting, to liaison with local heritage professionals, and the evacuation of collections to safer and more stable locations.

These are all different and may require different expertise. As more countries develop a military capability regarding CPP, such units may begin to take the lead on protecting heritage during and after conflict, although they will still require significant support from the heritage community.

LOWERING THE THREAT

It is also clear that cultural heritage is not only threatened by collateral (accidental) damage but by a range of other accidental or deliberate actions. The Blue Shield has identified eight risks to cultural heritage that, if addressed, might significantly lower the threat. Those risks are: lack of planning, lack of military awareness, accidental damage, deliberate targeting, looting, deliberate reuse of sites, enforced neglect and development.

Cultural heritage is what makes us human. It gives us a sense of place, and identity. On occasion it is used as a weapon to show difference, as in the targeting of minority religious groups and their buildings, such as the Yazidi in Iraq by Islamic State. But it can and should be used to explain and explore a common human past – what makes us the same. We can't do that if cultural heritage is destroyed, or worse deliberately targeted, during war.

[the writer is UNESCO Chair in Cultural Property Protection and Peace, Newcastle University]

Mizoram seeks UN's help to boost horticulture

AIZAWL, JAN 12 (PTI): The Mizoram government has sought assistance from the United Nations to boost horticulture in the state, official sources said on Sunday.

Mizo National Front (MNF) MLA F Lalnunmawia, who is the vice chairman of the state horticulture development board, paid a visit to UN's Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) regional office in Bangkok last week and met its officials, official sources said.

During his meeting with the FAO regional coordinator for Asia and Pacific Xiangjun Yao and other officials, Lalnunmawia urged the UN agency to extend technical support to Mizoram in order to augment fruits and vegetables production and set up processing

units and markets, they said.

Lalnunmawia also informed the UN officials about the state's efforts to successfully implement the flagship programme -- Socio-Economic Development Policy (SEDP) -- and sought better cooperation from the UN agency.

The FAO officials suggested Lalnunmawia to submit concept paper through Union ministry of agriculture and the FAO office in India, official sources said.

They also told the legislator their willingness to hold talks for future cooperation, the sources added.

Lalnunmawia was accompanied by Mizoram Youth Commission chairman Vanlaltanpuia and state planning secretary C Lalsangzuala, among others.

PM Modi pays tribute to Swami Vivekananda at Belur Math

KOLKATA, JAN 12 (PTI): Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday paid tribute to Swami Vivekananda on his birth anniversary at the Belur Math, the headquarters of Ramakrishna Mission.

Modi, who became the first prime minister to stay overnight at the Math in neighbouring Howrah district, woke up early on Sunday and visited the temple of Swami Vivekananda to pay respect to the spiritual leader, Mission officials said.

Swami Vivekananda's birth anniversary is also observed as the National

Youth Day.

The prime minister then visited the main temple building and paid tribute to Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa, they said.

Modi is scheduled to take part in the morning prayer meeting around 9.30 am at the Math premises, officials said.

The prime minister was received by senior monks of the order after he reached Belur Math on Saturday evening, taking the river route from Kolkata.

The PM is on a two-day visit to the city.

Student stuck in snow dies in Uttarkashi, six others rescued

UTTARKASHI, JAN 12 (PTI): A student stranded in heavy snowfall in Radighati in Uttarkashi district died while six others were rescued by police and SDRF personnel, officials said on Sunday.

18-year-old Anuj Semwal died on way to a hospital in Badkot on Saturday after being rescued, SHO, Badkot, DS Kohli said, adding the rest of the students are safe.

A group of seven students of ITI Badkot had got stranded in snow in Radighati when they were on their way home, he said.

The roads were blocked due to heavy snowfall and they de-

cided to walk to their homes in Uttarkashi not realising that they were risking their lives, the official said.

The students got stuck in heavy snow around one km ahead of Radi Top. They sought the help of police on phone and a joint team of police and SDRF personnel was immediately rushed to the spot.

The team reached the spot at 12 in the night by which time Anuj had already fallen sick due to extreme cold.

The students were rescued past midnight and were being brought to a hospital in Badkot when Anuj died in the early hours of Saturday, the official said.

One more illegal high rise demolished in Kochi

KOCHI, JAN 12 (PTI): One more illegal lake-side apartment complex here was demolished on Sunday using controlled implosion method, complying with a Supreme Court order.

The 55-meter high Jain Coral Cove, built in violation of Coastal Regulation Zone norms in Maradu Municipality, was brought down at around 11.03 am with the area in a 200 metre radius kept out of bounds for people and all kinds of traffic.

In a precise sequence, the over 350 kgs of explosives filled in the structures were blasted in a controlled manner at the end of the third warning siren and

the concrete colossus came crumbling down in seconds, triggering mammoth 'clouds' of dust.

Just in a few seconds, the towering building, whose interior walls had been removed in pre-demolition work over the past weeks leaving it a concrete shell, became mounds of debris.

The stunning spectacle was witnessed by a large number of people who perched themselves on top of houses and other buildings in vantage points just outside the 200m radius evacuation zone even as police and district officials kept a vigil.

Residents in the neighbourhood moved

out and Section 144 of CrPC come into force at 8 am in the evacuation zone ahead of the demolition to ensure there was no untoward incident.

With this, three of the four luxury complexes ordered to be demolished by the apex court for CRZ violations have been razed down.

"It was a perfect implosion. Not a single debris have fallen in the lake," Ernakulam District Collector S Suhas said after visiting the site along with city police commissioner Vijay Sakhare after the demolition.

Sakhare said the operation was executed as planned.

"It was an absolute

success. No damage has happened to the building adjacent to the demolished one. And no harm to any human life or any animal life. No properties in adjoining area damaged," the police officer said.

Another building of the same height will be demolished at 2 pm, marking the completion of implementation of the court order passed last year. On Saturday, two complexes -- H20 Holy Faith and the twin towers of Alfa Serene -- abutting the bakwaters were destroyed in the similar implosion method in which explosives filled in the structures blasted in a controlled manner. Mumbai-baed Edific-

es Engineering carried out the explosion with the assistance of experts from South Africa-based Jet Demolition.

A total of 343 waterfront flats were built in the complexes, violating the Coastal Regulation Zone norms.

The Supreme Court had in September 2019 directed demolition of the apartment complexes within 138 days after the Kerala government submitted the time line for carrying out the operation.

The owners of the flats, for whom the apex court had ordered an interim compensation of Rs 25 lakh, had vacated the premises in October first week after a last ditch protest to prevent the demolition ended in vain.

NEELABH SRIVASTAVA

NEW DELHI, JAN 12 (PTI): After effecting a major VIP security cut and withdrawal of SPG cover from the Gandhis, the Union government has now decided to completely remove NSG commandos from this task, official sources said.

This will be after over two decades that the 'black cat' commandos of the elite counter-terror force will be taken out from VIP protection duties, a task not originally charted for it when the force was conceptualised and raised in 1984.

The force provides proximate and mobile security cover commandos armed with sophisticated assault weapons under the top 'Z+' category to 13 'high-risk' VIPs that entails about two dozen personnel for each one of them.

Officials in the security establishment told PTI that the protection duties of NSG, which include giving security to Defence Minister Rajnath Singh and Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, will soon be transferred to paramilitary forces.

The other NSG pro-

tectees include ex-CMs Mayawati, Mulayam Singh, Chandrababu Naidu, Parkash Singh Badal and Farooq Abdullah, Assam Chief Minister Sarbananda Sonowal, BJP leader and former Deputy Prime Minister L K Advani.

Official sources said the Union Home Ministry "is of the view" that the National Security Guard (NSG) should concentrate on its original charter of handling specific tasks of counter-terrorist and anti-hijack operations and that the

task of securing high-risk VIPs was proving to be a "burden" on its limited and special capabilities.

"The NSG needs to go back to its original mandate of counter-terror and anti-hijack duties. That is the reason behind the latest move," a senior official in the security establishment said.

The removal of VIP security duties from the NSG will result in freeing about 450 commandos, who will be used to enhance the fighting components of the force

that is spread across five hubs in the country and a main garrison in Gurugram near Delhi, officials said.

As per a plan being worked out, the security of the VIPs under NSG cover could be handed over to paramilitary forces such as the CRPF and the CISF which already provide security to about 130 prominent persons jointly.

The CRPF was recently handed over the security of five ex-SPG protectees former PM

Manmohan Singh and his wife, Congress President Sonia Gandhi and her children Priyanka and Rahul apart from securing Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla.

The Central Reserve Police Force is well suited for handling the new task, officials said.

The Central Industrial Security Force protects VIPs like NSA Ajit Doval and RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat among others, they added.

The plan to relieve NSG from VIP security tasks has been in

the making since 2012 when NSG commanders foresaw an event where simultaneous terror attacks could be witnessed at one time on multiple centres in the country and the commandos will have to be rushed in different directions.

"The 26/11 Mumbai attack involved some 400 NSG commandos over three days. Considering we have multiple terror hits at one go, NSG needs to have a good number of fighting commandos and some in the strike reserves to replace them," a senior official had then said.

After a major security review by the Modi 2.0 government in July last year, 1,300 commandos had been freed as the Centre removed or scaled down the security cover of as many as 350 politicians and former and present lawmakers.

The charter of the elite force states that it is a combat unit "specially equipped and trained to deal with specific situations and is therefore, to be used only in exceptional circumstances to thwart serious acts of terrorism.

Kaushik Ganguly's Nagarkirtan wins big in WBFJA



KOLKATA, JAN 12 (PTI): Kaushik Ganguly's Nagarkirtan was adjudged the 'Best Feature Film' by the West Bengal Film Journalist Association at its award ceremony held here on Sunday.

Ganguly, who had won national award and IFFI Goa award for several of his films, was also adjudged the 'Best Director' for Nagarkirtan that deals with transgender issues and sexuality.

Bengali superstar Prosenjit Chatterjee was adjudged the 'Most Popular Actor' for his portrayal of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose in Gumnaami which he shared jointly

with Dev for his role of a youth from rural belts in the film Sanjibati.

Adventure-fantasy 'Durgeshgorer Gupthodhan' was awarded the 'Most Popular Film', while Ritwick Chakraborty was adjudged the 'Best Actor in Negative role' for Vinci Da.

The jury award for the 'Best Actor in Leading Role - Female' went to Subhasree Ganguly for Parineeta, while actor Riddhi Sen got the crown as 'Best Actor in Leading Role - Male' for Nagarkirtan.

"I am still learning. The word best does not apply to me. And I owe

this honour to Kaushik Ganguly, and my parents (Kaushik Sen and Chitra Sen)," Riddhi said after receiving the award.

Actor Rudranil Ghosh was awarded for 'Best Actor in Supporting Role' for Kedara.

The 'Best Background Score' award went to music composer Debojyoti Mishra for his music in Robibar and Prabuddha Banerjee for his score in Nagarkirtan.

Tuhina Das got the 'Best Promising Actor - Female' award for portraying Bimala in Aparna Sen's 'Ghawre Baire Aai'.

Lyricist-turned-director Indradip Dasgupta

got the 'Most Promising Director' award for his debut film Kedara, which was critically acclaimed in different film festivals.

Soumendu Roy, who had worked closely with maestro Satyajit Ray in 21 films including Berlin Film Festival Golden Bear-winning Ashani Sanket (1973), was given the 'Lifetime Achievement' honour.

Actor Prosenjit Chatterjee said getting awards from film journalists, who work 365 days to promote the cause of Bengali film industry, is the most defining moment for an actor.

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India finish 2019 as number one shooting nation in world



NEW DELHI, JAN 12 (PTI): On the back of its sparkling show through 2019, India finished the year as the top shooting nation in the world, leap-frogging Olympic heavy-weights China and the USA.

In terms of overall medals, the tally stood at 21 gold, six silver and three bronze as India topped all the Rifle-Pistol World Cups and Finals in a forgettable year.

A delighted National Rifle Association of India (NRAI) president Raninder Singh tweeted a screenshot of the International Shooting Sport Federation's (ISSF) overall rankings for 2019.

"Well done Team India," he wrote.

While India leads the standings with 30 medals overall, China is second with 11 gold, 15 silver

and 18 bronze for a total of 44 podium finishes.

The USA is placed third with 15 medals (six gold six silver and three bronze).

The number of Olympic quotas, which now stands at a record 15, is not a only reflection of the country's rapid rise in the sport over the last one year but also sets up the shooters nicely for a record haul at the Tokyo Games, after the meltdown at Rio de Janeiro.

Besides the shooters, the federation has also worked extensively towards bringing the sport to where it is today.

Indian shooting's best show at the Olympics remains the two medals won at London in 2012, but if the shooters' exploits in recent months are anything to go by, the country can easily emulate or better that in Tokyo.

Jones looks forward to contest between Rohit and Warner



NEW DELHI, JAN 12 (PTI): Former Australia batsman Dean Jones says both Rohit Sharma and David Warner have huge appetite for runs and looks forward to the contest between the two finest ODI openers of recent times in the upcoming three-match series.

Prior to their face-off, Virat Kohli's India crushed Sri Lanka 2-0 in a T20I series, while the visiting Australians had whitewashed New Zealand 3-0 in Tests at home.

"Rohit Sharma and David Warner are good at both sides of the ground. If you shut one side of the ground, they will find a way to get runs on the other side of the ground," Jones told 'Game Plan' on Star Sports.

"These guys are not

Sania-Nadiia pair to open campaign in Hobart against Oksana-Miyu team

HOBART, JAN 12 (PTI): Sania Mirza and her partner Nadiia Kichenok have been drawn to meet Oksana Kalashnikova of Georgia and Miyu Kato of Japan in their opening round at the Hobart International, the first tournament the Indian ace will compete in her comeback bid.

The unseeded Indo-Ukrainian team may run into Spanish fourth seeds Georgina Garcia Perez and Sara Sorribes Tormo in the quarterfinals.

The Spanish players had reached three WTA tour finals in 2019 season and won two of them.

Sania is returning to the circuit after two years, having started a family with Pakistan cricketer Shoaib Malik.



Meanwhile, Sania has decided to pair with compatriot Rohan Bopanna at the Australian Open as Rajeev Ram, with whom she had originally planned to play at the first Grand Slam of the season, has pulled out. Sania and Rohan had last played in the 2016 Rio Olympics.

Bopanna began the season in splendid fashion winning the ATP Qatar Open with Wesley Koolhof.

Last year also Bopanna had begun with a title win in Pune with Jeevan Nedunchezhiyan.

Serena ends three-year title drought, gives winnings to bushfire appeal

AUCKLAND, JAN 12 (AFP): Serena Williams ended a three-year title drought and donated her winner's cheque to victims of the Australian bushfires in an emotional WTA Auckland Classic final on Sunday.

Williams raised expectations for this month's Australian Open, where she can equal Margaret Court's record of 24 Grand Slam titles, with her 6-3, 6-4 victory -- her first WTA trophy since she won in Melbourne in 2017.

But the 38-year-old tempered celebrations as she donated her US \$43,000 winners cheque to the Australian bushfire relief fund and described how the tragedy had affected her deeply.

"I've been playing in Australia for over 20 years and it's been really hard for me to watch all the news and everything that has been happening in Australia with all the fire and... animals and people that have lost their homes," she said.

"I decided at the beginning of the tournament... I'd donate all my prize money for a great cause."



It is Williams' first title since 2017 -- and her first as a mother -- since she won the Australian Open while pregnant. Her 73 WTA titles now stretch across four decades, after she won her first in 1999.

The tournament top seed slipped 1-3 behind in the first set against the unseeded Pegula, a fellow American.

But once she found her range there was never any doubt about the final result, which Williams greeted by raising her arms in triumph while her husband Alexis Ohanian and two-year-

old daughter Olympia looked on.

"It's been a long time, I think you could see the relief on my face," she said, adding she could feel her game sharpening up as she prepares to head to Melbourne.

"It definitely feels good, it feels like I was definitely improving as the week went on and obviously I needed to."

- YELLING WITH EVERY POINT -

Pegula, who has only one title to her credit, had stunned former world number one Caroline Wozniacki -- a close friend of Williams -- in a

three-set semi-final, winning every game in the deciding set.

The 25-year-old continued in the same fearless vein at the start of the final, seemingly untroubled by her heavily bandaged left thigh as she chased down everything Williams delivered and even broke Williams' first serve.

Pegula held her own serve and appeared set to break again when Williams, by this stage yelling with every point she won, fought back from 15-40 to hold her second service game on the fifth deuce.

Williams eventually

Firmino is picture perfect again as Liverpool's away-day goal monster

BARNEY RONAY LONDON, 12 JAN [THEGUARDIAN]: There was a funny moment at the Tottenham Hotspur Stadium as the TV camera team ran on to get that full-time shot, the one that frames the gurgling post-match summary. On this occasion they ran to Roberto Firmino, scorer of the game's only goal, and an ideal subject for that defining portrait: shirt off, guns out, applauding the away support in faux-pious isolation.

Except, they couldn't get it. Firmino kept disappearing, submerged by other bodies, hugging Xherdan Shaqiri, dodging the solo shot with the studied expertise of Jason Bourne evading a sniper on a crowded commuter platform. Doggedly the woman in brown boots and the man in the bobble hat lurked and lingered, shoulders slumping. Did we get that, Jez? Did we get the shot?

They did, of course -- because the correct Firmino shot is the crowd shot, the shot buried in the heart of his team. As Firmino



left the pitch a wiry figure in a black coat did finally get him on his own for a slightly lascivious full-body hug. José Mourinho -- for it was he -- knows the value of a big Firmino game. This was one. And on that two-hander the game had turned.

Two things happened here. Tottenham spent the first half playing against Liverpool's reputation, playing the ghost Liverpool, the one that comes in swinging that great gleaming red scythe, the one mothers tell their infant centre-halves about to scare them before bedtime.

Mourinho set up his team with five defenders at the start, including a revolutionary double right-back bolt.

At times Serge Aurier has been handed his own crazy-horse role under Mourinho, with the freedom to gallop forward, to leap and rear up on his hind legs, while the left side tucks in. Here he was backed up by an orthodox right-back in the shape of the 20-year-old debutant Japhet Tanganga.

In a way Liverpool were a kind of release, a team so good they gave Mourinho the luxury of being unapologet-

ically himself, of attacking only on the break, of bringing an expert note of death to the occasion.

It worked, right up until the moment it didn't work, which was two minutes in when Tanganga was forced into a wonderfully alert clearance off the line.

It was Firmino's shot that was blocked, the chance made by a brilliant chop-turn with his heel, rolling the ball inside so smartly that Christian Eriksen seemed to wander towards the corner flag, struck suddenly by its luminous beauty. This was the second thing that happened, as Firmino produced one

achieved a break of her own to level at 3-3, finding the power and precision that had deserted her until then.

With her confidence boosted, Williams held to love in the next game, broke Pegula again and then served to clinch the first set.

Pegula was down 0-40 at the start of the second set before rallying to hold serve but the strain of facing the player who has dominated women's tennis for two decades was showing.

Williams broke on Pegula's next service game and stayed in front until the end to take the title and extinguish a sequence of five defeats in finals since her 2017 win in Melbourne.

Williams, whose last tournament was the US Open in September, was looking for as much game time as possible in Auckland and an hour after winning the singles crown she was back on court partnering Wozniacki in the doubles final.

However, the pair were beaten 6-4, 6-4 by Americans Asia Muhammad and Taylor Townsend.

of those warrior-like away performances, transforming that Spurs caution into a self-fulfilling prophecy.

The only goal arrived after 37 minutes, the culmination of a period where the waves of attack had forced Tottenham's defence so far back they were almost tripping over the advert hoardings. Jordan Henderson bundled the ball forward. Firmino took it and spun left again, this time past Spurs' tyro right-back, and shot to the far corner.

Firmino is a relentless presence on days such as these, a monster of the decisive away goal. This was his ninth goal this season, all of them away from Anfield. Five have been winners, a big-game, daddy-goal, title-driving level of efficiency.

It is so easy to pick at the things Firmino is not. With 72 minutes gone Andy Robertson made an extraordinary run and somehow nodded a deep diagonal pass back across goal. Firmino wasn't there, he was instead 30 yards away thinking about some other battle, and shrugging apologetically as the ball trickled away.

Good dilemma to have: Rathour on opening combination

MUMBAI, JAN 12 (PTI): In Rohit Sharma, K L Rahul and Shikhar Dhawan, India are spoilt for choice at the top of the order, but batting coach Vikram Rathour on Sunday called it a "good dilemma" to have.

Rohit had a phenomenal 2019, having struck five centuries in the World Cup.

Dhawan, who made a comeback in the T20 side in the just-concluded three-match series against Sri Lanka, was also among the

runs, while Rahul, too, is having a great time with the bat.

"It's a good dilemma to have. Rohit is an obvious choice of course. Both of them (Shikhar and Rahul) are playing well. Shikhar has done well in one-dayers and Rahul is in great form. So we'll deal with it when we have to," Rathour said.

"There are still a couple of days to go. The management will sit down and make the choice," he told reporters ahead of the first ODI

against Australia.

The series starts in Mumbai on January 14. The second ODI will be played in Rajkot on January 17 and the third in Bengaluru on January 19.

Asked about the relevance of the series in a T20 World Cup year, Rathour said, "It's a different format and cricket is a game of confidence. So as a batter and bowler, especially when you are playing against a team like Australia, who are one of the better teams in the world, performances do make a difference. It



gives you a lot of confidence."

"We'll take it as any other series and playing against one of the better

sides in the world, we are looking to do well as a team, looking to perform and win if possible," added the batting coach.

Rathour not amused any more to answer questions on Pant

MUMBAI, JAN 12 (PTI): Batting coach Vikram Rathour, it seems, is tired of answering questions on young batsman Rishabh Pant's roller coaster journey at every media interaction.

The 22-year-old Roorkhee-born Pant, who is the team's first choice white-ball wicket-keeper, has so far played 15 ODIs, and scored only 346 runs.

He made 71 in the first ODI against West Indies in Chennai last December and followed it up with a quickfire 39 in Visakhapatnam.

"Rishabh Pant, I think we have spoken a lot about him and every press-conference I do, I face a question about him. He's a good player. Everybody agrees on that," Rathour said on Sunday.

"He's working hard on his fitness. He's played some useful innings lately. So, lot of work. He's practising hard, so hoping he comes good, becomes more consistent, Rathour added.

Rathour also lauded pacer Shardul Thakur for his batting skills, saying he gives an option in the late batting order.

Thakur played match-winning cameos in the series deciding ODI versus West Indies at Cuttack and third and final T20 against Sri Lanka in Pune.

"It's all his good work (and) I'm not doing anything. He's somebody who can bat-all of us knew that. The last couple of games he got the opportunity to show what he can do. So he gives you a great option in late order," said Rathour.

India played six different batsmen at number three position in last six T20 games.

Would the hosts follow the same in ODIs?

"We did that in T20s, because we were willing to give them some game time. So against Australia in the first game, well start with our best XI. And I think everyone will bat according to tried order. And as the series goes, well see if we can experiment and try something different," he signed off.

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A breakdown for Boeing and the FAA after years of trust

NEW YORK, JAN 12 (AFP): When Dennis Muilenburg, Boeing's ousted chief, was summoned to Washington last month, he scarcely knew he was in for a dressing-down from the head of the Federal Aviation Administration.

FAA chief Steve Dickson -- a former Delta Air Lines employee who in August took over the reins at the world's most influential aviation regulator -- had announced the day before that Boeing's 737 MAX would not return to the skies before 2020.

The plane was grounded worldwide last March after two crashes in less than five months left 346 people dead.

The meeting between the two men was tense, according to a US official.

Muilenburg had promised airlines and investors the MAX would be back in the sky by December 2019.

Ominously, he warned a delay could force a temporary halt to production, something that could inflict pain on the entire US economy.

But Dickson was unswayed, telling Muilenburg to focus on fixing the MCAS anti-stall system implicated in the crashes.

Strikingly, he also publicly accused Boeing of making statements "designed to force FAA into taking quicker action." The souring relations between the two men alarmed Boeing board members, including Larry Kellner, former head of Continental Airlines, according to people with knowledge of the matter.

The board feared a complete breakdown in the crucial relationship with the FAA.

Boeing needs the agency's support both to emerge from the unprecedented crisis, which has cost it billions of dollars, and

also to certify the airworthiness of other jets like those in Boeing's long-haul 777x aircraft line.

Ten days of talks followed. And on December 23 Muilenburg's unceremonious firing was announced in a terse Boeing statement that offered no thanks for his years of service.

David Calhoun, chairman of Boeing's board, had finally dropped Muilenburg after having earlier assured him of his support in the face of blistering attacks from lawmakers and the victims' families.

Adding insult to injury, Muilenburg was informed just hours before the announcement, according to a knowledgeable person.

The bonds of trust between Boeing and the FAA had been fraying since October.

That month, as lawmakers intensified a probe of the 737 MAX's certification, Dickson leveled explosive accusations against Boeing.

He said the company had concealed important documents, including exchanges between employees, showing that the MCAS system, which was meant to prevent stalling, made piloting the aircraft difficult during simulator training.

"I expect your explanation immediately regarding the content of this document and Boeing's delay in disclosing the document to its safety regulator," Dickson said in a letter.

In the documents, former Boeing test pilot Mark Forkner boasted of easily convincing the FAA to approve the MCAS.

Forkner told a colleague he was "Jedi mind tricking" regulators. And the FAA ultimately approved the MCAS software without in-depth

scrutiny.

Another episode further eroded trust between Dickson and Muilenburg.

In early November, Muilenburg asked Dickson to authorize Boeing to resume deliveries of the 737 MAX -- which Boeing assembly plants were still producing at the time -- even before allowing the planes to return to service.

Dickson agreed to consider the request, according to an FAA spokesperson. But six days later, before Dickson could respond, Boeing announced it had won approval to resume deliveries before the end of 2019.

The FAA was dumbfounded and Dickson had to assure officials that he had not in fact buckled under pressure.

"Relations between Boeing and the FAA sucked," said Scott Hamilton, an analyst at Leeham.

Richard Aboulafia of Teal Group likewise told AFP that regulators have "lost confidence" in Boeing.

Calhoun, a former top executive at General Electric who is due to take over at Boeing on Monday, hopes to repair relations and win permission for the 737 MAX to return to service.

The manufacturer recently advised all MAX pilots to undergo simulator training before returning the jets back into the skies -- a concession from Boeing, which had said for years that such training was unnecessary.

But the latest release of messages between Boeing employees ridiculing the FAA could make Calhoun's job even tougher.

The MAX was "designed by clowns who in turn are supervised by monkeys," one message said in 2017.

Taiwan election: Tsai Ing-Wen wins landslide in rebuke to China

LILY KUO

TAIPEI, 12 JAN [THEGUARDIAN]: Taiwanese voters have re-elected incumbent president Tsai Ing-Wen in a landslide election that serves as a sharp rebuke to Beijing and its attempts to intimidate and cajole Taiwan into China's fold.

Winning more than 8m votes, the most any presidential candidate has garnered since Taiwan began holding direct elections for the position in 1996, Tsai easily defeated her opponent Han Kuo-yu, whose Kuomintang party promotes closer ties with China.

"This election is about whether or not we choose freedom and democracy," Tsai said, delivering her victory speech in Taipei. "We must work to keep our country safe and defend our sovereignty."

More than 14 million citizens travelled to their hometowns to vote in the presidential and legislative election on Saturday, casting ballots in schools, temples, parking lots and community centres. Tsai's party also maintained its majority of seats in the legislature.

Tsai's win, coming after major losses for her Democratic Progressive party (DPP) in the 2018 midterm elections, marks a dramatic comeback helped by a slowly improving economy, missteps by the opposition and mass protests in Hong Kong that exposed what coming under Beijing's authority might look like to many young Taiwanese.

Increased intimidation from China appears to have helped Tsai, who opposes unification with the mainland. In the run-up to the election, China twice sailed its new aircraft carrier through the Taiwan strait. In a speech addressed to Taiwan last year, Chinese leader Xi Jinping said Beijing would not rule out the



use of force to bring Taiwan under its authority.

During Tsai's first term, Beijing cut off dialogue with Taiwan, persuaded several of its few remaining allies to drop recognition of it and halted independent travel of Chinese tourists.

"This election result carries an added significance. They have shown that when our sovereignty and democracy are threatened the Taiwanese will shout our determination even more loudly back," Tsai said.

"With each presidential election, Taiwan is showing how much we cherish our free democratic way of life and how much we cherish our nation," she said.

Taiwan came under military rule by the Kuomintang (KMT), formerly the governing power of China, after its leaders fled the country in 1949 ahead of advancing communists. Since martial law was lifted in 1987, it has gradually evolved into one of the most vibrant democracies in Asia. Although Taiwan enjoys de facto independence, it is recognised as a state by only 15 other countries.

Han, Beijing's preferred candidate, conceded the election by saying he had not "worked hard enough". "No matter what happens, I still hope to see a united Taiwan ... I urge president Tsai Ing-wen to focus on giving

people a life where they can live safely and happily," he said.

Han, who had campaigned on the slogan "Taiwan safe, people rich," backed away from calls for closer ties with China after it appeared to hurt his popularity. In November, when his party released a list of pro-unification party members for at-large legislative seats, support for him dropped.

Supporters of Han, a populist candidate who has drawn comparisons to Donald Trump, were grim-faced and some were crying at the KMT's headquarters in Taipei.

"This is just a huge loss for the [Chinese communist party]. The CCP is likely to respond in terms of doubling down on their current strategy of trying to punish Taiwan as much as possible, but at the end of the day it shows its just going to push people toward a green president," said Lev Nachman, a PhD candidate at the University of California, Irvine, focusing on Taiwan. Tsai's party and those aligned with it are considered part of the "green camp".

Supporters of Tsai said the result was proof of the maturation of Taiwan's democracy. In the lead-up to the election, citizens were flooded with fake news and disinformation campaigns that many suspected to have come from China.

"This is a test of how much democracy and freedom have developed in Taiwan. People can judge right from wrong, whether the news is true or false, and whether or not they will support politicians who do little but put on a show," said Tek Dee, 36, who voted in Taipei. "It's a rejection of China's attempts to swallow up or influence Taiwan," she said.

Others believe Han was the victim of smears from the media, proof that Taiwan has become overly politicised. "This election is a battle between truth and evil. If Han loses, I will not believe in justice any more," said Xu, a lecturer at a local university in Kaohsiung who asked to only give her surname.

Many have described the election as a generational standoff, with older voters supporting Han and the KMT's policies of closer economic ties with China. Younger Taiwanese have skewed toward Tsai, who campaigned heavily on pledges to protect Taiwan's democracy.

"Tsai's victory dispels the narrative Beijing has been pushing that Taiwan's economic and political future is reliant on China," said Jessica Drun, a non-resident fellow at the Project 2049 Institute.

While Tsai has positioned herself as a protector of Taiwan's sover-

eignty, some believe she and her party have not gone far enough. Tsai has said she will maintain Taiwan's current de facto sovereignty and oppose any form of "one country, two systems" -- the framework employed in Hong Kong that has been floated as a possible model for Taiwan.

The foreign minister, Joseph Wu, said this week that Tsai's government would not disrupt the status quo with a formal declaration of independence.

"If today she said she was for Taiwan independence, I would immediately give her my vote," said 22-year-old Huang Kaicheng, who recently graduated from a university in Taipei.

Huang voted for Han but believes neither party has offered much in the way of policy proposals. "Whoever we elect, it won't make a difference," he said.

Tsai's win also comes after another election result that embarrassed Beijing: the landslide victory of pro-democracy candidates in Hong Kong's district council races in November.

Response to Taiwan's election was muted in China, with the country's state council for Taiwan affairs issuing a statement that Beijing "resolutely opposes any separatist attempt for 'Taiwan independence'" and maintains its support for "peaceful reunification."

Censors appeared to have blocked some of the discussion of the race on Weibo. But internet users left comments under a report on Tsai's win by state news agency Xinhua, accusing domestic media of misleading them.

"We can't see the real information, so the election results in Taiwan and Hong Kong are always unexpected," one wrote. "How did this happen?" another said.

Haiti to commemorate deadly quake in anger and bitterness

PORT-AU-PRINCE, JAN 12 (AFP): Haiti on Sunday will remember the thousands who died in the devastating earthquake of January 12, 2010, as grief mixes with anger and bitterness over failed reconstruction efforts and continuing political instability.

Over 35 agonizingly long seconds, a magnitude-7 quake transformed capital city Port-au-Prince and the nearby cities of Gressier, Leogane and Jacmel into dusty ruins, killing more than 200,000 and injuring some 300,000 others.

More than a million and a half Haitians were left homeless, leaving island authorities and the international humanitarian community with a colossal challenge in a country lacking either a land registry or building rules.

"It's a lost decade, totally lost," Haitian economist Kesner Pharel told AFP.

"The capital has not been rebuilt, but our poor governance is not

the exclusive responsibility of the local authorities; at the international level we have not seen a mechanism for managing aid that would allow the country to benefit."

The billions of dollars promised by international donors in the weeks after the catastrophe seem to have vanished with little to show for them, fueling the bitterness of survivors who live today exposed to the same dangers as existed before the quake.

"Ten years later, we see an even greater concentration of people in the metropolitan area," Pharel said. "If we were to have a quake of the same magnitude, the results would be the same, for there was no follow-up on most of the rebuilt homes."

"The country was never rebuilt, and we're back to Square One." The quake destroyed hundreds of thousands of homes, as well as administrative buildings and schools, not to men-

tion 60 percent of Haiti's health-care system.

A decade later, the rebuilding of the country's main hospital remains incomplete, and non-governmental organizations struggle to make up for the state's many deficiencies.

"After the quake, we saw a big influx of trauma cases because there was an enormous number of injuries. What we see today is that we had to reopen a trauma center but the injuries are not of the same origin -- unfortunately, more than 50 percent of the injured we see now are gunshot victims," said Sandra Lamarque, chief of mission for Doctors Without Borders in Haiti.

While failing to manage its physical reconstruction, Haiti has been gripped by a severe socio-political crisis that has partly overshadowed efforts at properly mourning the dead.

In the summer of 2018, corruption scandals implicating

current President Jovenel Moise and every post-quake government provoked a sharp backlash, mobilizing young protesters -- more than half the country is younger than 30 -- who live with little prospect for employment in a country marked by growing insecurity amid frequent clashes between armed gangs.

Anti-government demonstrations spread to cities across the country, paralyzing daily life from September to December of last year.

The state's weaknesses, on display for the world to see after the earthquake, have only grown worse: National Assembly elections due in November were simply not held, meaning the mandate of the lower chamber expires Monday.

With no functioning legislature, President Moise, who is reviled not only by his political opponents but by a large part of the civilian population, will now have the ability to govern by decree.

Dominic Raab warns Iran of 'pariah' status after ambassador arrest

BETHAN MCKERNAN & JAMES TAPPER

ISTANBUL, 12 JAN [THEGUARDIAN]: The foreign secretary has condemned the arrest of Britain's ambassador in Iran during anti-government protests as a "flagrant violation of international law" and said the country was marching towards "pariah status".

Dominic Raab's strongly worded statement came after the ambassador, Rob Macaire, was arrested on Saturday during demonstrations near Amirkabir University in Tehran for "inciting" the protesters. He was held for more than an hour on suspicion of organising, provoking and directing radical actions before he was released, the Iranian Tasnim news agency said.

Raab said in a statement: "The arrest of our ambassador in Tehran without grounds or explanation is a flagrant violation of international law."

"The Iranian government is at a crossroads moment. It can continue its march towards pariah status with all the political and economic isolation that entails, or take steps to de-escalate tensions and

engage in a diplomatic path forwards."

It is understood that Macaire, a distinguished diplomat with 30 years' experience, had been attending what had been billed as a vigil for the victims of the crash.

However, the event quickly turned into a demonstration at which pointed the ambassador left. It was as he was returning to the British embassy that he was arrested, although it is not clear who he was held by.

Following a number of urgent calls to the Iranian ministry of foreign affairs he was eventually released and allowed to return to the embassy.

The new diplomatic row came as Iran's embattled regime was shaken by a wave of international condemnation and domestic criticism after admitting its forces shot down a Ukrainian passenger plane with 176 people onboard and it had lied in a bid to cover up its role in the tragedy. Facing possibly the biggest crisis since the 1979 Islamic revolution, senior clerical, political and military leaders scrambled to contain the fallout from

what President Hassan Rouhani termed a "disastrous mistake".

But the latest crisis, coming close on the heels of Donald Trump's assassination of a senior leader, Gen Qassem Suleimani, military clashes with the US in Iraq and nationwide anti-government protests in which hundreds of people have died, appeared to force the regime forced on to the defensive.

Iran's military released a statement about the plane via the official IRNA news agency in the early hours of Saturday admitting the "unforgivable mistake" of shooting down Ukraine International Airlines flight 752 on Wednesday. The mea culpa came after three days of denials from officials in Tehran, who repeatedly dismissed western intelligence reports pointing to Iranian culpability as propaganda efforts in the midst of soaring tensions with the US.

In an unprecedented move, the supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, ordered an investigation into the hitherto untouchable Islamic Revolutionary

Guard Corps, whose base outside Tehran launched the missile that downed flight 752.

A senior IRGC commander, Gen Amir Ali Hajizadeh, confessed publicly that he knew the plane had been shot down almost immediately after it happened, and asked for forgiveness. His statement was broadcast on YouTube. Hajizadeh, the head of the Revolutionary Guards' aerospace division, apologised on television and said the group took full responsibility for the disaster, saying he wished he could die when he heard about the incident.

A missile operator acting alone because of a "communications breakdown" had mistaken the plane for a cruise missile heading towards a sensitive Revolutionary Guards site, and only had 10 seconds to decide whether to fire, he said. "He was obliged to make contact and get verification. But apparently, his communications system had some disruptions. Either the 'jamming' system was the cause or the network was busy," said the general.

Joaquin Phoenix arrested in climate change protest

WASHINGTON, JAN 11 (PTI): Fresh off his win at the Golden Globes, actor Joaquin Phoenix participated in a climate change protest and was arrested by the police.

The “Joker” star took part in the weekly protests against climate change, started by Hollywood veteran Jane Fonda.

According to Variety, the 45-year-old actor also addressed the crowd of close to 300 people.

In his short speech, he took aim at the meat and dairy industry for being the third leading cause of the climate crisis.

“Sometimes we wonder what can we do in this fight against climate change, and there is something that you can do today and tomorrow, by making a choice about what you consume,” Phoenix said.

“There are things I can’t avoid. I flew a plane here today, or last night rather, but one thing I can do is change my eating habits,” he added.

Besides Phoenix, veteran Hollywood star Martin Sheen also turned up for the protest and got arrested by the police. Actors Maggie Gyllenhaal and Susan Sarandon were also present.

Capitol Police said it arrested 147 people who were charged with crowding, obstructing or incommoding. All the



protestors were later released.

Fonda, who was on stage with Phoenix, called him “one of the greatest living actors today”.

She has been protesting weekly as part of her “Fire Drill Fridays” initiative since announcing she was moving to Washington “to be closer to the epicenter of the fight for our climate.” Her participation has ended in multiple arrests.

Earlier this month, Phoenix had talked about climate change at the Golden Globes ceremony, asking Hollywood to walk the talk on the issue.

Ariana Grande to perform at 2020 Grammys



LOS ANGELES, JAN 12 (PTI): Singer Ariana Grande is set to perform at the 62nd Grammy Awards.

The “Thank U, Next” hitmaker made the announcement on Sunday.

“See you jan 26 #GRAMMYS @cbs @recordingacad,” she posted on Twitter.

The Recording Academy also confirmed the news in an Instagram post, writing: “OFFICIAL #ArianaGrande will perform at the #Grammys Jan. 26!”

The singer is also up for five Grammys this year.

Grande decided not to perform at the 2019 Grammys days before it was scheduled to take place after she and the producers could not agree on a song.

Other artistes to perform at 2020 Grammys are Lizzo, Billie Eilish, Aerosmith, Gwen Stefani and Blake Shelton.

The ceremony will take place on January 26.

Kriti Sanon to gain 15 kgs for ‘Mimi’



MUMBAI, JAN 12 (PTI): Actor Kriti Sanon will be putting on 15 kilos for her role in Laxman Utekar-directed film “Mimi”.

Backed by Dinesh Vijan, “Mimi” is based on Samruddhi Porey-directed Marathi feature “Mala Aai Vhaaychya”, which won the National Award for best feature film in Marathi in 2011.

Kriti said the film is close to her heart and she wants to give her best.

“For me, putting on so many kilos is actually a challenge as it’s very new for my body. I have to in a way fight my metabolism and increase my calorie intake to gain that much weight in a short time.

“But I’m excited to see the transformation. It’s a role very close to my heart and I want to give it everything I can, even if that means not taking up any other work in the process,” the actor said in a statement.

“Mimi” also features actors Sai Tamhankar and Pankaj Tripathi in key roles.

I hung up my guns: Robert Downey Jr on Iron Man

LOS ANGELES, JAN 12 (PTI): Robert Downey Jr may be appearing in Scarlett Johansson-led “Black Widow” as Tony Stark aka Iron Man but the Hollywood superstar insists that his Marvel journey has ended once and for all.

Downey Jr amassed fame and fan-following after his appearance as Iron Man in 10 Marvel Cinematic Universe (MCU) movies.

He ended his stint with 2019’s “Avengers: Endgame”, though he will be coming back for one last time for “Black Widow”, which is set in the past.

In an interview with Extra TV, where he appeared alongside his producer-wife Susan Downey, the 54-year-



old actor was asked whether he will be donning the suit of armour in a future Marvel movie.

“Anything could happen... As far as I’m concerned, I hung up my guns and I’m good to let it go. I also think that Marvel is on this journey now, they’re trying a bunch of other stuff and you know, I’m excited for them to see how all that goes,” Downey Jr said.

The actor will next appear in “Dolittle”, which is set to release on January 17.

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Meghan Markle Signs Deal With Disney Just Days After Royal Family Exit

Meghan Markle already has new projects in the works.

The Duchess of Sussex has reportedly signed a deal with Disney on an “unspecified project in return for a donation to an elephant charity,” Deadline reported.

The news of this partnership with Disney to help the organization Elephants Without Borders comes only days after Markle and her husband Prince Harry announced they were taking a step back from royal duties.

However, according to the publication,

the deal was “signed before the recent uproar over Markle and husband Prince Harry’s plans to disengage from the Royal Family and pursue other opportunities.” The Times of London was the first to report about Markle’s deal with Disney.

Despite the timing, the former Suits actress’s latest partnership might be a glimpse into what she and Prince Harry have in the works now that they’ll be spending less time with the Royal Family and dividing their time between North America and the U.K.

ARIES: This is a time of wish fulfilment. Get ready to receive exactly what you asked for, in the format you desire. Such is the power of manifestation. For some, this could be a time or completing a significant journey. Ready to share your masterpiece with the world? Remember, perfection is but an illusion.

Tip: This is a time of completion and fruition.
TAURUS: Putting food on the table is paramount. But do you really need to lose you mental peace and sanity to create a stable life? Beware, Taurus. You could be holding on to a false sense of security. Where does your true happiness lie?

Tip: The Universe is supplying all of your needs.

GEMINI: You are closer to your destination than you can imagine. Continue to wrap up your projects and meet

your deadlines. Spend some time at the end of the day to review your progress and adjust the sails. Clearly envision the port you want to dock and speed away. New possibilities are opening up right this minute.

Tip: Envision your destination and set sail.

CANCER: Even though the change seems frightening, you’re being asked to roll with it. Resisting it will feel a lot like rowing upstream without a paddle—impossible and exhausting all the same. You’ve survived a hundred per cent of your bad days.

Tip: Embrace the winds of change.

LEO: There is no harm in mixing business with pleasure, especially if it opens the doorway to more business and pleasure. Your wit and charm know no bounds today.

Tip: A successful partnership is on the cards for some.

VIRGO: The law of attraction works in mysterious ways, Virgo. Be cognisant of the signs and synchronicities, especially if you’ve been wanting to work in partnership with somebody. You will know if this association is worth your time and effort. On a side note, have you checked in with your body lately?

Tip: A blessed partnership is on the cards.

LIBRA: Oh, the perils of micromanaging. See how and where you need to detach. This will help you focus on what’s really important and put your best work out. Thinking about expanding the team to take the load off?

Tip: It’s to curate an A-team.

SCORPIO: Life is a giant ferris wheel and you’re on the top of it, Scorpio. Expect many breakthroughs today. The blocks that were standing

in your way will now get cleared up. Keep an eye out for signs and synchronicities as you go about your day.

Tip: The blocks are getting cleared.

SAGITTARIUS: Yes, you deserve to be where you are today. Kiss goodbye to the demons. Replace fear and self-doubt with love. Remember there is a reason you were chosen for this sacred mission. What you do need to be mindful of, however, is that there is a lot more to learn.

Tip: Put in the work.

CAPRICORN: This is a period of major movement, Capricorn. The blocks that previously held you back are now being cleared. Does that mean you will face no challenges whatsoever? No, it just means that your will to win is stronger. Remember, haters are going to hate, especially when they see you moving closer to the final destination.

tion. Don’t let that be the reason you take your sparkle down a notch.

Tip: Let the will to win be strong.

AQUARIUS: Writer’s block, what? Here’s a simple exercise to get your creative juices flowing: take a piece of paper and start journaling the thoughts that come to you. No stopping. No editing. Revisit the copy with a fresh mind. You’ll find that some of the ideas you’ve channelled are pure gold.

Tip: Give free writing a thought.

PISCES: This is a time of movement and progression. Major news is on its way to you, and it could permanently change the game. Be sure to ground your energy, Pisces. This will help you stay focused despite the endless to-do list. For some, a major business trip may be on the cards. Put your best suit on as you board the flight.

Tip: Things are finally picking up pace.