



**INDIAN-ORIGIN ARTISTES
CREATE SPECIAL EFFECTS
WAVES IN HOLLYWOOD**

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SummitTIMES

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ON TOP OF THE NEWS

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Offended by categorization in govt publication, DSA demands its ban



SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 21 JUL:

Denzong Sherpa Association has called on the government to ban a book published by one of its departments on the grounds that it carries an incorrect depiction about the Sherpas of Sikkim which the association finds hurts the sense of identity of the community. The association has sought that after banning the current edition, a new edition be commissioned with appropriate corrections and then re-released afresh.

The association has also "reiterated and exhorted" Government agencies and individuals intending to publish materials on the Sherpa community of Sikkim to seek prior consult and consent of the association.

These were decided at an executive meeting of the DSA held at Bhojogari here on Saturday in the presence of its chief patron, Sangay Sherpa, and president, Pema Wangchuk Sherpa.

The book in question is, "The Splendour of Sikkim – Cultures and

Traditions of the Ethnic Communities of Sikkim," published by the Cultural Affairs & Heritage Department in the year 2017.

The association is upset that the book categorises the Sherpas of Sikkim as part of the Sikkimese Nepali constellation "whereas it is officially known fact recognized and clearly defined under the Bhutia Community at large."

The association is also convinced that the categorization in the book was "politically motivated, fabricated and mitigated which the DSA contemplates as a conspiracy to cease the identity of the Sherpa community in Sikkim, such derogatory attempts are very indigestible, hence, the Sherpa Community condemns."

Clearly offended by the description, a DSA press release adds: "Time and again, the Sikkimese Sherpa community is being targeted and humiliated either through such publication or other forms which the DSA always stands firm, resists and condemns."

Taking billion dreams to Moon, Chandrayaan-2 to be launched Monday

SRIHARIKOTA (AP), JULY 21 (PTI):

India's second moon mission Chandrayaan-2 seeking to explore the uncharted Lunar south pole by landing a rover will be launched onboard its most powerful rocket GSLV-Mk0III-M1 from here Monday, a week after the lift-off was aborted due to a technical snag.

The Rs 978 crore mission, which has been rescheduled for Monday after scientists corrected the glitch in the rocket, will be launched at 2.43 p.m from the second launchpad at Satish Dhawan Space Centre here, over 100 km from Chennai.

The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) scientists, who aborted the previous

launch with 56 minutes left for the countdown to end on July 15, have taken quick remedial action based on an analysis carried out by a team set up to look into the snag and announced the rescheduled launch three days ago.

A 20-hour countdown for the launch began at 6.43 pm Sunday, ISRO announced.

Chandrayaan-2 comes 11 years after ISRO's successful first lunar mission Chandrayaan-1 which scripted history by making more than 3,400 orbits around the Moon and was operational for 312 days till August 29, 2009.

"Chandrayaan 2 is ready to take a billion dreams to the Moon now stronger than ever before!"

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Sunil Chhetri is FPAI Indian Player of the Year, again

**REBYNA RANA
GANGTOK, 21 JUL:**

Sunil Chhetri, the Indian football team captain and who wears the Bengaluru FC colors for the domestic club circuit, was today conferred the Indian Player of the Year award for the second consecutive year.

The awards ceremony, instituted the Football Players Association of India and hosted in Gangtok by the Football Players Association of Sikkim today, drew a handsome attendance at Paljor Stadium with the audience also treated to an exhibition match played between FPAI and Sikkim Stars.

As for the highlight of the day, the other awardees were: Foreign Player of the Year award to Ferran



Coromimas of Goa FC;

Young Player of the Year for Lallinzuala Chhangte; a Special Award for Bhaichung Bhutia;

Coach of the Year, Elcos Chatterji of North East United FC; Fans Player of the Year award for

Shahal Abdul Samad.

Sunil Chhetri could not attend the awards ceremony and his award was collected by Renedy Singh on his behalf today.

The exhibition match was keenly con-

tested and entertainingly fought with regulation time ending in a 1-1 draw.

Sikkim Stars drew first blood, pulling ahead in the 35th minute when Sanju Pradhan scored the opener

of the match.

The second half went in FPAI XI's favour with Surchandra Singh of FPAI scoring the equaliser in the 65th minute. The 90 minutes of regulation time ended 1-1.

When even the

tie-breaker could not throw up a winner, the match proceeded to a penalty shoot-out which was conclusively won by FPAI. FPAI converted four of its 5 penalties while Sikkim Stars scored only one. FPAI won 5-2.

The event had Governor Ganga Prasad as chief guest accompanied by Chief Minister PS Tamang [Golay] as guest of honour.

In his address, the Governor appreciated the initiative taken by FPAI and while congratulating the organisation called on it to continue working for the interest of footballers and also help nurture players from Sikkim.

"Sikkim has many skilled players who deserve support to explore their talents further," the Governor said.

The function also included a cultural program.

CM meets sports executives and enthusiasts



GANGTOK, 21 JUL [IPR]: Chief Minister Prem Singh Tamang [Golay] chaired a meeting with dignitaries, and officers and staff of Sports & Youth Affairs Department, concerned sports associations and Sikkim Olympic Association at the conference hall of Paljor Stadium today.

Present for the meeting were Ministers LN Sharma, Arun Upreti, Sandup Lepcha and Karma Loday Bhutia as well.

Secretary CMO, SD Dhakal, Secretary Sports RK Tamang, Commissioner GMC, SOA president BK Roka, vice president Kuber

Bhandari, general secretary Jas Lal Pradhan, treasurer Dawa Tamang, alongwith other executive members, dignitaries of Sports Academy, Director Sports, SP East, ADC East, senior sportspersons, sports enthusiasts and persons associated with Sikkim sports were also present at the meeting.

The concerned dignitaries placed many demands and suggestions towards the proliferation and flourishing of games and sports in Sikkim.

Various improvement-oriented points towards the augmentation of SOA as well as sports at large in the state as a

whole were discussed.

The members of the sports organizations also placed many demands related to their respective disciplines which were patiently listened to by the Chief Minister and he assured all possible support for the progress of the youth career building games and sports in the state.

He also underlined that despite many hurdles and shortcomings, the organisation and the department managed to render maximum support to the young minds building their careers through exposure in national and international arenas.

Rx: A red nose, a coloured wig, and a medical clown

MANISH SAIN

NEW DELHI, JUL 21 (PTI): Replacing the big top for a hospital ward, men and women of varying ages clown around, dressed in colourful frills and ruffles, coloured wigs and red noses, dancing and prancing as they look for smiles in the aisles.

They are the Clownselsors, a group of volunteers who are out to tell us that clowning around can be more than just fun. It can also be therapeutic, helping

the young and old deal with the stresses and pain of their illnesses.

They are part of the increasing trend of 'clown carers' in cities such as Delhi and Bengaluru who spread cheer and dispel the gloom of ill health and old age.

Every weekend, the Delhi-based Clownselsors heads to a hospital, old age home or medical centre to perk up the place with their antics.

On a recent Saturday, the

Clownselsors were at the cancer ward of the Chacha Nehru Bal Chikitsalaya. As they danced, made faces, fell over each other and performed various other antics, 14-month-old Shivam Pandey's big round eyes followed one clown with a red nose, pink wig and a sock puppet in her hand.

"We have been here for the last five months and they come every Saturday. The mood of the entire ward changes when they are here. It also distracts from

the depressing environment," said Shivam's mother Seemla, adding that it helps her de-stress as well.

Hospital authorities agreed. "The entire mood of the place changes. Everyone gets cheerful, the children, their parents, even the staff. Children forget the pain of the surgery and start playing with them. Parents also feel relieved," said Dr Mamta Sengar, professor, paediatric surgery at the Chikitsalaya.

turn to pg02

SummitTIMES IN NEPALI

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Watch our Nepali news broadcast every evening on Facebook at the Summit Times Daily Page. Please like, Share, Comment and let us know how we can improve. Thank You



Screening of BTS performances

Games & Activities

- Dance Offs
- Cham Cham
- Chinese Whispers with a Twist!
- Quiz Competition
- ...And lots more!

Date: 27th July 2019

Venue: Thuendel, Sichey.

Time: 4:00 pm to 8:00 pm

Use our official hashtag #ouryouniverse

Don't forget to tag us and for any inquiries message us on Instagram

@Sikkim_army

@kpopers_sikkim

SNACKS AND DRINKS ARE NOT SPONSORED BY US

Free Homeopathic camp at Reshi

SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 21 JUL:

Dr VK Prasad, a Homeopathy Physician from Lal Bazar, Gangtok, conducted a free medical check-up, treatment and awareness programme at Reshi Bazaar in West Sikkim on 20 July, a press release informs.

The medical camp, held on the theme, "Mission Disease Free Sikkim," was supported by Reshi Bazaar Committee, Panchayat, Trinity Boys Club and Sri Satya Sai Samiti.

139 patients from Reshi and nearby vil-



lages such as Suldung, Kamling, Zeel, Sikip and Subuk were examined and provided free medicines.

The camp was organised on a haat day from 9AM till 5PM and this ensured a wider outreach. The release adds

that the Reshi camp recorded the highest attendance for similar camps held by Dr Prasad across the State.

visit us at
www.summit-times.com

Taking billion dreams...

Join us for the launch on Monday 22 July, 2019 at 2:43 PM IST," ISRO had tweeted on July 18 while announcing the rescheduled launch.

On the eve of launch, ISRO Chairman K Sivan said all preparations were on and the glitch had been rectified.

"Whatever technical snag we observed on July 15 has been rectified. The vehicle is in good health... The (pre-launch) rehearsal has been successfully completed," he told reporters at the Chennai airport on brief a stopover enroute here.

The 43.43m tall three-stage rocket dubbed 'Baahubali' for its ability to carry heavy payloads would blast-off carrying Chandrayaan-2 and inject the spacecraft into Earth orbit about 16 minutes later.

After lift-off, the 3,850 kg Chandrayaan-2, comprising an orbiter, lander and rover, will undergo 15 crucial manoeuvres before landing on the Moon, expected by the first week of September, Sivan said.

Scientists would make soft landing of the lander in the South Pole region of the Moon where no country has gone so far, the ISRO chief said.

Billed as the most complex and prestigious mission undertaken by the ISRO since its inception, Chandrayaan-2 will make India the fourth country to soft land a rover on the lunar surface after Russia, the United States and China.

About 16.20 minutes after the lift-off, the GSLV rocket will inject Chandrayaan-2 into 170 km x 39059 kms Earth orbit.

From then onwards, the mission will witness a series of manoeuvres by scientists to carry out different phases of the mission over the next 48 days.

Subsequent to the rescheduling of the launch, the space agency has tweaked the orbital phases, increasing Earth-bound phase to 23 days as against 17 days planned originally.

At the end of the Earth-bound phase, the orbit of the spacecraft will be finally raised to over 1.05 lakh km before nudging it into the Lunar Transfer Trajectory taking it to the proximity of Moon in the next two days.

Then gradually over the next few days it will be brought to 100 X 100 km circular orbit when the lander will separate and after another few days of orbiting it will make a soft landing at a chosen place on the Lunar surface.

The soft landing of the lander - Vikram carrying rover 'Pragyan', one of the toughest phases of the mission and described by the ISRO chief as "15 minutes of terror (filled moments), would be attempted between September 6-8.

"Chandrayaan-2 is the next leap in technology as we attempt to soft land

close to South Pole of Moon. The soft landing is extremely complex and we will experience approximately 15 minutes of terror," he had said earlier.

The mission, which carries a total of 13 payloads, including three from the Europe, two from the US and one Bulgaria, seeks to improve understanding of the Moon which could lead to discoveries that will benefit India and humanity as a whole.

A Laser Retroreflector Array (LRA) of US space agency NASA is among the payloads and is aimed at understanding dynamics of Earth's Moon system and deriving clues on Lunar interior.

Sivan Sunday said Chandrayaan-1 revealed the presence of water molecules and similarly there were possibilities of the latest mission returning successful scientific experiments.

"It is because of these reasons that Chandrayaan-2 has attracted attention not only from the Indian scientists but also from global scientists," he said.

ISRO encountered the snag on July 15 when the liquid propellant was being loaded into the rocket's indigenous cryogenic upper stage engine.

Veteran scientists heaped praise on ISRO for calling off the launch rather hurrying into a major disaster.

President Ram Nath Kovind was present here on July 15 to witness the launch.

The launch of Chandrayaan-2 had missed its date earlier too when it was fixed for the first week of January. But it was shifted to July 15.

According to ISRO, the lunar South Pole is an interesting surface area which remains in shadow than North pole. There is a possibility of the presence of water in permanently shadowed areas around it, the agency said, adding craters in the South Pole region have cold traps and contain fossil record of the early solar system.

The lander 'Vikram', named after father of Indian space research programme Dr Vikram A Sarabhai, carrying the rover 'Pragyan', will be landed in a high plain between two craters at a latitude of about 70 degrees South of the moon.

Then the 27-kg 'Pragyan' meaning 'wisdom' in Sanskrit and a six-wheeled robotic vehicle, will set out on its job of collecting information on lunar surface.

A safe site free of hazards for landing would be decided based on pictures sent back by the camera onboard the lander and after touchdown the rover will carry out experiments for 14 Earth days, equals one Lunar Day.

The launch would be witnessed by nearly 5,000 people who will be accommodated at a viewing gallery, located a few kms from the launch pad, thrown open to the public by the ISRO in May last.

Health Ministry bans sale, distribution of antibiotic Colistin for food producing animals

NEW DELHI, JULY 21

(PTI): The Health Ministry has banned the manufacture, sale and distribution of antibiotic, Colistin and its formulations for food producing animals, poultry, aqua farming and animal feed supplements in a bid to preserve the drug's efficacy in humans.

The ban has been imposed under provisions of the Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 1940 and a notification in this regard has been issued by the Centre.

According to the notification, it was brought to the notice of the Central government that the use of the drug Colistin and its formulations for food producing animals, poultry, aqua

farming and animal feed supplements is likely to involve risk to human beings.

Following which the Drug Technical Advisory Board (DTAB), the government's top advisory body on technical matters related to drugs in the country considered the matter and recommended prohibiting the said drug, the notification stated.

"The Central Government is satisfied that it is necessary and expedient in public interest to prohibit manufacture, sale and distribution of the drug Colistin and its formulations for food producing animals, poultry, aqua farming and animal feed supplements.

"Now, therefore, in exercise of powers conferred by section 26A of the Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 1940 the government hereby prohibits manufacture, sale and distribution of the following drug with immediate effect, Colistin and its formulations for food producing animals, poultry, aqua farming and animal feed supplements," the notification read.

The ministry also directed that manufacturer of the drug and its formulations shall label the container of the drug and mention the words not to be used in food producing animals, poultry, aqua farming and animal feed supplements in conspicuous manner on the package

insert and promotional literature of the said drug and its formulations.

According to a ministry official, the antibiotic is being used as a last resort for treatment of patients suffering from infections caused by drug-resistant bacteria.

"Colistin is an antibiotic for therapeutic purpose in veterinary. But the drug is highly misused in poultry industry as a growth promoter for prophylactic purpose. One of the reasons for antibiotic resistance in India is due to unwanted use of Colistin in poultry industry. This notification will prevent use of the drug for prophylactic use," the official said.

TMC rally: Mamata says rail services curtailed, Rlys refutes charge

KOLKATA, JUL 21 (PTI):

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee Sunday claimed rail services were curtailed to stop people from attending her rally, even as the Railways maintained that it was running a number of special trains in addition to the ones scheduled for the day.

Speaking at the annual Martyrs' Day rally here, she asserted that "nothing, however, could prevent her supporters from attending the programme".

"The Railways has curtailed services to stop people from attending the rally. We do not have enough resources to hire a rake... Several people were thwarted from coming to the city today. Nothing, however, prevented my supporters from joining the programme," she said.

The TMC supremo had also on Saturday accused the central government of trying to foil the rally by operating only 30 per cent of the trains usually run on Sundays.

"I have heard that the railways will not operate the usual number of

trains tomorrow at the behest of the BJP. I have information that they will run only 30 per cent of the trains usually run on Sundays. This is not right," Banerjee had said.

However, the Kolkata-headquartered Eastern and South Eastern Railway, which operate train services in West Bengal, said they were providing additional services, anticipating the rush of passengers.

An Eastern Railway official said several special trains were being operated in the Sealdah and Howrah divisions.

"In Sealdah division, eight special trains and a pair of Sunday-exempted train were scheduled for the day, in addition to the extension of a Sealdah-Sonarpur local up to Diamond Harbour," he said.

In Howrah division, 11 special trains were plying in different sections and four Sunday-exempted trains have been put into service, he said.

"Moreover, two nine-coach EMU trains have been kept ready at Sealdah main and central to respond to any exigencies," the official said.

~ SummitTIMES ~ CLASSIFIEDS

URGENTLY REQUIRED:
Urgent Recruitment for a waiter with atleast 3 years experience and one kitchen helper. Contact: Hotel Paramount, Dentam, West Sikkim- 9735909625 / 8348285444

WANTED
HOUSEKEEPER/BABYSITTER.
Contact: 9933443442/9800500696.

GENERAL INFORMATION

This is for general information of all concerned that Hotel Parasol Residency, Panihouse, Deorali East Sikkim shall remain closed for a period of six months for carrying out necessary repairs. All concerned tour operators and clients are requested to refrain from booking or deal with any sort with regard to Hotel Parasol Residency, Panihouse, Deorali, East Sikkim.

Mr. Subash Lama
Proprietor
Hotel Parasol Residency,
Panihouse, Deorali, East Sikkim

BUILDING FOR SALE

A 5 storied building with 3 floor completed having a land area of 30x70 at DABUWA, Melli road (2km from Namchi) is for sale. Rate reasonable. Interested party please contact: **6296370905, 9733284142, 8597088755.**

Four & half Storied building on SALE, behind Hotel Agarwal at Pani House, Gangtok, East Sikkim. Interested parties may also buy flats - 2 flats - 1650 sq.ft, 1 Flat - 1186 sq.ft & 1 Flat on top (1 & half)- 3000 sq.ft. Contact: -9434751150

MISSING:



Name : Divya Sharma
Age : 17 yrs.
D/O : Chandra Prasad Sharma
Height : 4'5" (approx)
Complexion : Fair
Wearing apparel : Blue colour jeans pant & Shirt, black & pink colour Nike shoe.

Missing since : 22.01.2019 from Lossing Machong, East Sikkim.
CID PS case FIR NO. 06/2019 date 08.07.2019 U/S 363/363/IPC. 1860 at CID, Police HQ, Gangtok, East Sikkim. Contact No. 03592 202087(0) 204297(F), Email: spcid@sikkimpolice.nic.in

Rx: A red nose...

Assessing the impact of the Clownselors, she said children don't usually come for follow-ups but everything feels better and more positive when the clowns are in the room.

Sheetal Agarwal, the founder of Clownselors, said it all started in 2016 when she saw medical clowns in Baroda. The wish to be a reason for someone else's smile took root and inspired her to take on the persona of a clown.

"The term medical clowns got stuck in my head, I had grown up watching a lot of circus, so I knew about circus clowns but had never heard of medical clowns. So I came back, saw a few videos, and also the Robin Williams' movie 'Patch Adams', she said.

The Hollywood film, which also inspired Rajkumar Hirani's "Munna Bhai MBBS", is based on the life story of American doctor-comedian Patch Adams, arguably the first person to have come up with the alternative treatment model of clown therapy, or clown care.

According to Nimesh Desai, director of the Institute of Human Behaviour and Allied Sciences (IHBAS), clown therapy is essentially the sum of "drama therapy and humour" and it should be welcomed as an additional method of treatment.

"Basically, any alternative and additional methods of treatment are in principle welcome... By themselves alone or in conjunction with professional treatment they can be helpful, there is no doubt.

"It is well known that humour helps biological systems and immune responses... There is evidence that humour and laughter therapy can affect both internal and external aspects, biological as well as psychological," the psychologist said.

This is demonstrated when Agarwal and her six volunteer clowns, a mix of housewives, businesspersons, and students, enter the room. When they exit after their performance, they leave behind smiling faces and diminished stress levels.

According to Agarwal, their acts change depending on the audience.

"People's reaction is not always the same. It's more difficult to clown in hospitals and there are also times when children get scared. In old age homes, the clowning is different..."

"When we're performing in old age homes we try to connect more with them, hug them. We take a little leverage with voices, singing songs and dancing, but in hospitals we mostly do mime," the 33-year old former sociology teacher said.

Agarwal quit her job in November 2018 to clown full time. The group takes money from private hospitals such as Apollo but not from government establishments.

The group has done gigs across the National Capital Region, including in Safdarjang hospital, Noida's Kailash hospital, for cancer survivors in Gurgaon's Medanta hospital as well as old age homes and orphanages.

Clownselors is not the only group.

A similar wish to spread smiles moved Harish Bhuvan to start 'Compassionate Clowns' in Bengaluru in 2013 when a close friend succumbed to cancer.

"After the first smile there was no looking back," he said.

"I realised there were some people in the world who were already doing it, but none in India so far. So we started it and kept doing it and it got momentum. And then I travelled all across India spreading this, now we have over 2,000 volunteers with us," Bhuvan, a former research assistant at IIT Bombay, said.

Spreading smiles among those in pain can sure be rewarding, but Bhuvan believes it is the confusion of who is getting healed that is the most rewarding aspect of clowning.

"When a clown goes inside a hospital to cheer patients up, it's the clown who also gets healed."

"Are we, the clowns, making an impact or are the children or caretakers making an impact in a clown's life?" he asked.

The question hangs in the air. But no one really wants an answer.

Pema Choden crowned Glam Miss Sikkim



SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 21 JUL:
Pema Choden Bhutia was crowned Glam Miss Sikkim 2019 during the grand finale of Glam Miss Sikkim 2019 held Saturday evening at Man-an Kendra. Bindhya Dhamala was adjudged first runner-up with Chimi Yaden

Bhutia as second runner-up. Meanwhile, the Glam Miss Teen 2019 title went to Tanushri Thapa with Anjali Luitel as runner-up and Roshna Gurung second runner-up. The event was organised by the Siana Glam World.

Team Voice follows up on planted saplings



SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 21 JUL:
Team Voice was at Jaubari and Namchi Central Park on a plantation drive today. The team had plant-

ed saplings around Jaubari around two weeks back, and while there are many who plant saplings, Team Voice has been checking on the sap-

lings to ensure a high survival rate. Today they also put up banners at Namchi Central Park urging people not to litter and pol-lute the environment.

Darthawma, Mizoram’s lone surviving INA member, dies at 99

AIZAWL, JUL 21 (PTI): Darthawma, the lone surviving Mizo member of Subhash Chandra Bose’s Indian National Army (INA), died of multi-organ failure in south Mizoram’s Lunglei on Sunday morning, his family said. He was 99. The freedom fighter’s last rites were performed at Lunglei, 170 km from here, this afternoon. It was attended by representatives from the district administration, Army, paramilitary forces, non-governmental organisations and Ex-Servicemen. He is survived by six children, 19 grandchildren and 28 great grandchildren. Two years after joining the INA, Darthawma was captured by the British in 1944 but was released from Lucknow Jail on January 15, 1945 following the intervention of Mahatma Gandhi. The Indian government awarded him the ‘Tamrapatra Award’ in 1972 for his role in the struggle for Indian independence.

Centre proposes ‘Metrolite’ train for small cities

Bunty Tyagi

NEW DELHI, JUL 21 (PTI): The Centre has proposed light urban rail transit system - ‘Metrolite’ - in small cities and towns having lower projection of ridership, with each train having three coaches and a restricted speed of 25 kmph. The Union Housing and Urban Affairs Ministry has issued standard specifications of the ‘Metrolite’ system which will be developed on surface and elevated stretches. According to the ministry, the ‘Metrolite’, which can be developed at a lower cost in comparison with existing metro system, will also act as feeder system to high capacity Metro. The three-coach train will have capacity of carrying 300 passengers. Sources said the government would provide financial assistance to states to implement the light urban rail transit system. The ‘Metrolite’ system will have a dedicated path separating the road traffic with it. For segregation with road traffic, fencing can be provided on either side of network. The ministry stated that metro rail system being developed at present is of high capacity which is required for bigger cities with very high ridership. Seeing the success of existing metro system, several small cities and towns want rail-based mass rapid transit system, which could be fulfilled by light urban rail transit system. In its manifesto, the BJP had promised to expand the coverage of the metro network to 50 cities. The ‘Metrolite’ system will have shelter platforms. Metrolite platforms will not have AFC gates, platform screen doors, X-ray and baggage scanner. “Ticket validators could be installed inside the Metrolite train and shelter with NCMC /other ticketing systems. “With random checking, heavy penalty shall be levied on passengers without a valid ticket in the system,” the standard specification of Metrolite stated. It also stated, “Elevated Metrolite system will be planned only when At-Grade system (surface) is not possible. “Road space occupied at the median shall be maximum 2.2 m for piers.” The ‘Metrolite’ train will comprise three non-separable coaches with low floor height of about 300-350 mm. Unit length should be of minimum 33 m.The car structure material will be stainless steel or aluminium. “The maximum operational speed of the Metrolite is 60 KMPH.. In any case, even with failure of On-board signalling, the speed is restricted to 25 Kmph,” it also stated.



GOVERNMENT OF SIKKIM

RURAL MANAGEMENT & DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT GANGTOK

NO. 27/RM&DD/E-TEN

Dated: 15/7/19

INVITATION FOR BIDS

1. The Rural Management & Development Department, Government of Sikkim on behalf of the Governor of Sikkim, invites percentage rate tender under single cover system from the eligible class of contractors enlisted with the SPWD for execution of work as detailed below:

Sl.No.	Name of work	Cost of Bidding documents	Bid security 2.5% of the bid value	Bid value
1.	2	3	4	5
1.	Construction of Office of Gram Vikash Kendra at Chumbung under Soreng-Chakung Constituency, West Sikkim.	Rs. 30,000/-	Rs. 5,69,993.00	Rs. 2,27,99,702.00

The date and time of tender and submission of completed document are as under:
i) Uploading of bidding documents in e-procurement portal by the Department : 22/07/2019
ii) Last date for submission of bids online by the Bidders : 26/08/2019 14:00 hours.
iii) Date of opening of bids : 27/08/2019 10:30 AM onwards.

2. Eligible Contractors having experience in the construction of building works and consider themselves capable to undertake execution of the project may download the details and bidding documents from the e-procurement portal i.e. www.sikkimtender.gov.in w.e.f. 22.07.2019.

3. The completed tender documents must be uploaded in the e-procurement portal on or before 23/08/2017, 1400 hours. All the relevant papers as per the bidding documents along with the cost of tender document and Earnest Money Deposit (EMD) in the form of challan/ demand draft and TDR respectively drawn in favour of Sr. Account Officer. Rural Management & Development Department, Government of Sikkim should be uploaded in the portal.

4. The department reserves the right to accept or reject any bid without assigning any reason thereof.

Sd/-
Additional Chief Engineer (S/W)
Rural Management & Development Department

R.O. No. 98/IPR/Pub/Classi./19-20 Date 19.07.19



GOVERNMENT OF SIKKIM

SOCIAL JUSTICE, EMPOWERMENT AND WELFARE DEPARTMENT

INTEGRATED CHILD PROTECTION SCHEME GANGTOK

No: 668/SJE&WD/ICPS/2019

Dated: 18/07/2019

NOTICE

Reference Employment Notice No. 449/SJE&WD/ICPS/2019 dated 14/2/2019, the following candidates have been selected for the posts indicated against their name(s) on contractual basis for the period of 03(three) years under the integrated Child Protection Scheme (CSS), Social Justice Empowerment and Welfare Department, Government of Sikkim.

Sl.NO.	Name of Candidate(s)	Name of post
1	Dipa Rai	Data Analyst
2.	Sonam Choden Sherpa	Counsellor
3.	Rabina Chettri	Counsellor
4.	Maha Deo Sharma	Counsellor
5.	Dependra Rai	Counsellor
6.	Roshan Subba	Social Worker
7.	Christina Rai	House Mother
8.	Laxmi Sharma	House Mother
9.	Priyanka Pradhan	Data Entry Operator
10.	Sikha Pradhan	Data Entry Operator
11.	Susanjeeta Tamang	Data Entry Operator
12.	Tshering Keepa Lachenpa	Outreach Worker
13.	Palmula Bhutia	Outreach Worker
14.	Saroj Rai	Outreach Worker
15.	Sunita Pradhan	Outreach Worker
16.	Suren Gurung	Craft Instructor.

The candidates are directed to report to the Office of the undersigned within 15 days from the date of issue of this Notice. If they fail to report to the undersigned within 15 days, their selection shall be cancelled and the offer of appointment will be given to the candidate in the panel list (in order of merit). The terms of the appointment shall be as per Employment Notice No. 449/SJE&WD/ICPS/2019 dated 14/2/2019.

Sd/-
Additional Secretary-cum-Director, ICPS
Social Justice Empowerment & Welfare Department
Government of Sikkim

R.O. No. 96/IPR/Pub/Classi./19-20
Date: 18.7.2019

Keeping Children Safe

The rash of POCSO Act cases should have attracted wider social engagement

SReaders would have noticed the unnerving frequency with which reports have been arriving about sexual offences being perpetrated on minors.

That said, it also needs to be recognized that it is not as if sexual predators who prey on the young have suddenly been unleashed on Sikkim. It is more likely that now that there is a specific law – Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act – to charge such offenders with, the statistic is standing out more prominently now. What have also helped expose such violations are the awareness and sensitization sessions held at the school level where children are informed about the laws in place to help them and what kind of behavior is now considered a criminal offence. These sessions are necessary because in most instances, the victims don't even understand that they are being abused or that there is an escape available for them. Speak to the cops who address such sensitization programmes and most of them will confirm that reporting of such crimes invariably goes up once the children learn that there is protection available to them from sexual offences.

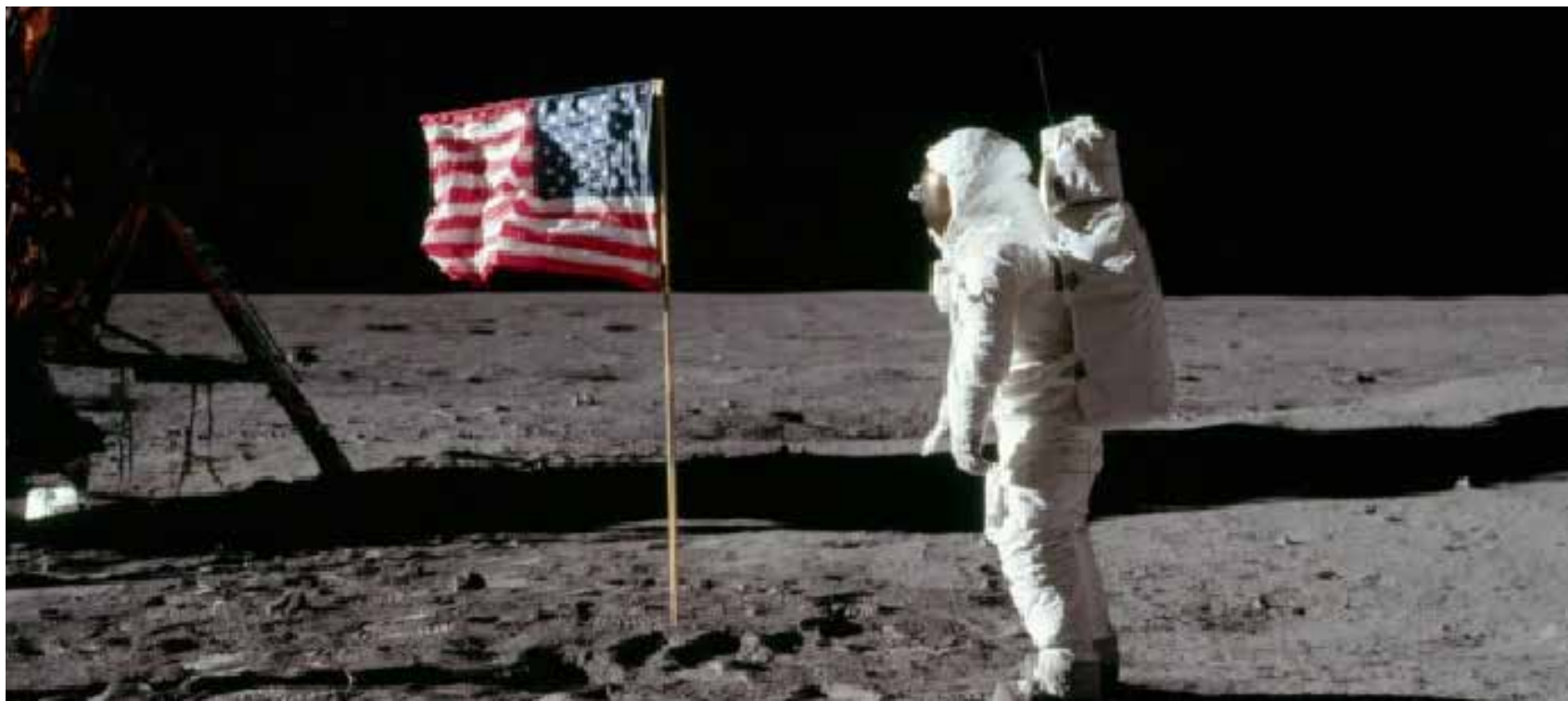
It is also possible that more of such cases are getting reported to the police than earlier, when they would either not be noticed at all or would be ignored or, worse still, settled. Readers would have also noticed that in several instances, it has been the teachers who have noticed the crime, rescued the child and reported the offence, and the society needs to collectively thank such teachers for looking out so earnestly for the young and for getting involved in their care beyond the confines of the classrooms. One needs to look at options of strengthening the hands of teachers more in handling such episodes and offering them more awareness sessions and training on how to handle such traumatic situations. It is also necessary now to establish a more robust counselor role/ post in schools across the state so that stronger defenses by way of proper awareness and counseling are provided to the young. With the right training, inspiration and support, these counselors can also become the first responders to best care for victims and their families.

Yes, Sikkim has child protection officers now, but a teacher at the school, because s/he has been with the children and their families for longer, enjoys more trust which is essential in situations like these.

It is also important for all those responsible for the care and protection of children to realize that most often – in up to 90% of the cases - sexual predators are people known to the kids; very often they are family members or people who have weaseled themselves close to the family to a level that others do not think twice before leaving children unattended around them. Uneasy and disturbing though it may be, accept that all children, including yours, are at risk primarily because society has preferred to look the other way when victims have been minors and the perpetrators someone with influence (within the family or in the society at large). This needs to change, and can happen only if a child's safety is put first – above everything else.

One should not be required to spell it out, but given that too many prefer to ignore this responsibility, here we underline it again – the safety and self-esteem of a child are more important than anyone's embarrassment, inconvenience, or offense. Every time a child molester is allowed to get away without a police case, those who "arranged" the compromise become complicit to the molestation or worse of the next victim. That is how this crime and culpability need to be projected for children to be kept safer. There is a lot more that we can do as families and a society to look out better for our children, but that can be easily Googled. What is important is for everyone to realize that too many children are falling in harms' way for this to be left as a law & order situation. Societal involvement needs to be brought in, wider awareness generated and with that, stronger protections erected to keep the children safe.

How moon landing conspiracy theories began and why they persist today



PETER KNIGHT

Bill Kaysing was a former US Navy officer who worked as a technical writer for one of the rocket manufacturers for NASA's Apollo moon missions. He claimed that he had inside knowledge of a government conspiracy to fake the moon landings, and many conspiracy theories about the Apollo moon landings which persist to this day can be traced back to his 1976 book, *We Never Went to the Moon: America's Thirty Billion Dollar Swindle*.

The basic template of the conspiracy theory is that NASA couldn't manage to safely land a man on the moon by the end of the 1960s as President John F Kennedy had promised, so it only sent astronauts into Earth orbit. Conspiracy theorists then argue that NASA staged the moon landings in a film studio and that there are tell-tale signs on the footage and the photos that give the game away. They claim that NASA has covered up the elaborate hoax ever since.

Moon landing sceptics point to supposed clues such as photos that appear to show the astronauts in front of cross hairs that were etched on the camera glass, or a mysterious letter C visible on a moon rock. These and many other seeming anomalies have been debunked, but moon landing conspiracy theories have persisted in the popular imagination.

In the US, opinion polls indicate that between 5-10% of Americans distrust the official version of events. In the UK, a YouGov poll in 2012 found that 12% of Britons believed in the conspiracy theory. A recent survey found that 20% of Italians believe that the moon landings were a hoax, while a 2018 poll in Russia put the figure there as high as 57%, unsurprising given the popularity of anti-Western conspiracy theories there.

READY TO DISBELIEVE

That Kaysing's conspiracy theory took hold in mid-1970s America is in large part due to a wider crisis of trust in the country at the time. In 1971, citizens read the leaked Pentagon Papers, showing that the Johnson administration had been systematically lying about the Vietnam War. They tuned in nightly to the hearings about the Watergate break-in and subsequent cover-up.

A series of congressional reports detailed CIA malfeasance both at home and abroad, and in 1976, the House Select Committee on Assassinations concluded – in contrast to the Warren Commission more than a decade earlier – that there was a high probability that there had been a conspiracy to kill Kennedy. These revelations had helped fuel a wider shift in conspiracy thinking since the late 1960s, from a belief in external enemies, such as Communists, to the suspicion that the American state was itself conspiring against its citizens.

Moon landing conspiracy theories have proved particularly sticky ever since. To understand their popularity we need to consider their cultural context, as much as the psychological dispositions of believers.

As with the Kennedy assassination, they formed a new kind of conspiracy theorising. These theories reinterpret the publicly available evidence, finding inconsistencies in the official record, rather than uncovering suppressed information. Visual evidence is crucial: for all their scepticism, their starting point is that seeing is believing. In the realm of photo evidence, the assumption is that everyone can be a detective. In the conspiracy theory communities that emerged at the tail-end of the 1960s, the self-taught buff became central.

CONSTRUCTED REALITY

The moon landing conspiracy theories also brought to the mainstream the notion that significant events are not what they seem: they have been staged, part of an official disinformation campaign. The idea that tragic events are created by "crisis actors" employed by the government has become the default explanation for many events today, from 9/11 to mass shootings. This type of conspiracy theory is particularly harmful – for example, parents of children killed in the Sandy Hook elementary school shooting have been relentlessly hounded by internet trolls claiming they are merely paid stooges.

However, the story that the lunar landings were staged also resonates with the more plausible notion that the space race itself was as much a Cold War spectacle as a triumph of the human spirit.

The 1978 Hollywood film *Capricorn One* did much to popularise moon landing conspiracy theories. Based on Kaysing's book, it imagined that a Mars landing was faked in a film studio, tapping into conspiracy rumours that the moon landings themselves had been directed by Stanley Kubrick. This suggestive myth is based in part on the idea that special effects had become much more sophisticated with Kubrick's 1968 film 2001 *A Space Odyssey*, although still far from the capabilities that the conspiracy theories suppose.

Even if they are far-fetched in factual terms, moon landing conspiracy theories nevertheless call up the more plausible possibility that in our media-saturated age reality itself is constructed, if not actually faked.

[the writer is Professor of American Studies, University of Manchester]

What's not to like? Instagram's trial to hide the number of 'likes' could save users' self-esteem

JOANNE ORLANDO
theconversation.com

Instagram is running a social media experiment in Australia and elsewhere to see what happens when it hides the number of likes on photos and other posts.

If you have an Instagram account, you'll get to see the numbers but your followers won't – at least, not automatically. They will be able to click and see who liked your post, but will have to count the list of names themselves.

The trial is taking place right now in six countries: Australia, Brazil, Canada, Ireland, Italy, Japan and New Zealand. Canada has just finished its trial.

It's a bold move by Instagram, but arguably a necessary one. There is growing concern about the effect of social media on young people's mental health and self-esteem.

Instagram explained: "We want your friends to focus on the photos and videos you share, not how many likes they get."

Likes, and their public tallying, have become the heart of Instagram and many other social media platforms. By hiding them, does Instagram risk devaluing a crucial currency?

Receiving loads of likes can feel like getting a gold star. It's a public affirmation that you're doing good work – a useful bit of quantitative feedback on your photographic skills or creativity. Under the new trial you'll still get the gold star, but in private, and without broader recognition.

Nevertheless, the mental health



repercussions of counting likes cannot be ignored. The design of social media promotes social comparison. You don't have to spend long on Instagram to find a plethora of people who are evidently better-looking, more successful, and more glamorous than you.

As a result, young people can be left feeling inadequate and unworthy. Teens report that social media makes them feel closer to friends (78%), more informed (49%), and connected to family (42%). Yet many teens also report feeling pressure to always show the best versions of themselves (15%), overloaded with information (10%), overwhelmed (9%), or the dreaded "fear of missing out" (9%). These positive and negative reactions can see-saw, depending on a person's particular mindset at the time.

WILL COMMENTS BECOME THE NEW LIKES?

Without a public tally of likes, it is likely that comments will become an even stronger indicator of how people are interacting with a particular Instagram post.

Of course, comments can consist of anything from an emoji to an essay, and are therefore much more varied and adaptable than likes. Yet they can still affect users' emotions and self-worth, particularly because (unlike likes), comments can be negative as well as positive.

The reaction among Australian Instagram users has so far been mixed. Many are disgruntled about the change, feel manipulated by the platform, and argue that the change will reduce Instagram's appeal, particularly among those who use it to support their business.

But others have applauded the move on mental health grounds, while others still have reported that

they are already feeling the difference that the experiment is designed to deliver.

Nevertheless, people could potentially move away from Instagram if they don't feel it benefits them in the way they want. This could conceivably leave the market open for new social media platforms that unabashedly count likes for all to see.

Finally, there is the question of whether this is nothing but a PR stunt by a global mega-brand.

It's perhaps natural to be sceptical where the social media industry is concerned. But if this is a genuine move by Instagram to ameliorate the negative mental health effects of social media, then it's a valuable experiment, and the results may be very beneficial for some. Let's hope so.

[the writer is Researcher: Children and Technology, Western Sydney University]

'Floating cattle' smuggling prompts BSF to deploy more troops, boats along Bangla border in WB

NEW DELHI, JUL 21 (PTI): A sudden rise in "floating cattle" in West Bengal meant for smuggling across the Bangladesh border has alarmed the BSF which has deployed additional troops, motor boats and surveillance gadgets to curb the crime, officials said Sunday.

"Hundreds of cattle are being smuggled through the rivers which are in spate along this border. We are increasingly intercepting cattle that are being cruelly tied to banana trunks and set afloat in the stream so that they can be collected across the border in Bangladesh by smugglers," a senior BSF official said.

Over 1,200 cows and buffaloes have been seized in just over a week by the border guarding force, they said, adding that the cost per cattle head has gone upto Rs 1.4 lakh, from the earlier Rs 80,000, in anticipation of the Bakrid festivities in August.

The seizure is only one-third of what is being actually smuggled and hence the BSF has ordered deployment of additional troops, mo-



tor boats and hand-held thermal imagers to better mount vigil and check the menace of cattle smuggling that is rearing its head again after it was curbed over the last few years, officials said.

They said the sudden spike in the smuggling of cattle is leading to an increasing number of clashes between the border guards and the smugglers but the force is still using non-lethal weapons like pump action guns to thwart smugglers and even save their own lives in case of attacks.

At least a dozen Border Security Force personnel have been injured in these skirmishes in the last few weeks with one trooper losing his hand

after smugglers lobbed crude bombs at him in the middle of night at the Angrail post in North 24 Parganas district.

The troops have been asked to maintain an "aggressive posture" and ensure that the crime of cattle smuggling is effectively checked, a senior official in the south Bengal frontier of the force said.

Additional thermal imagers, which detect human and cattle movement through body heat signatures in pitch dark environment, have been sent to BSF posts in Malda, Murshidabad, Nadia and North 24 Parganas to check the crime, he said.

The India-Bangladesh International bor-

der area in West Bengal is divided by the BSF into South Bengal and North Bengal frontiers, the former being more vulnerable due to riverine areas. The South Bengal front is about 915 km out of the total 4,096 km Indo-Bangla IB that runs along other states like Assam, Tripura, Mizoram and Meghalaya.

The modus-operandi of smuggling of cattle by dropping them in large numbers into the river in the night on a daily basis is being seen regularly from villages on the banks of Ganga like Pahaghati, Fultala, Lalpur, Dhangra, Dhulian, Chhotapur Shivpur, Bada Shivpur,

Disco Mor and Daulatpur, another official in the Home Ministry said.

This is posing a big challenge to civil administration, the police and the BSF. In fact, the resources that can be used to check other border crimes has been diverted by the BSF to check cattle smuggling, the Home Ministry official said.

Top BSF commanders also met the West Bengal director general of police a few days back and sought the assistance of local police in checking the crime.

"The only effective solution to stop this menace is by stopping the entry of overloaded trucks carrying cattle into the border villages that fall along Bangladesh. The police in various states need to check these movements.

"Also, stringent action needs to be taken against cattle smugglers on the Indian side who are mushrooming in border areas since many years and they regularly aide Bangladeshi smugglers to commit the crime," the home ministry official said.

Tight security arrangements for Tripura panchayat polls



AGARTALA, JULY 21 (PTI): Tight security arrangements have been made for Tripura panchayat elections and more than one thousand polling booths have been identified as "sensitive", a senior police officer has said.

Elections to the three-tier panchayat polls in Tripura would be held on July 27. Ballot papers would be used in the rural polls.

Tripura State Rifles (TSR) personnel and 17 companies of BSF and CRPF would be deployed in all the 1,848 polling booths of which 1,172 have been identified as sensitive, Deputy Inspector General of Police (DIG), Arindam Nath told a press conference here on Saturday.

The DIG said 17 cases of poll violence have been registered in the state till July 20.

The BJP has won 85 per cent of the seats uncontested in the panchayat polls in Tripura.

"Of the total 6,646 seats comprising gram panchayats, panchayat samities and zilla pari-

shads, the BJP has won 5,652 seats uncontested," secretary of the state Election Commission (SEC), Prasenjit Bhattacharya has said.

Polling will now be held for around 850 gram panchayats, 85 panchayat samities and 80 zilla parishad seats, Bhattacharya said.

Tripura has a total 591 gram panchayats having 6,111 seats, 35 panchayat samities with 419 seats and eight zilla parishads having 116 seats, he said.

Altogether, 12,03,070 voters, including 6,16,893 male and 5,86,176 women will exercise their franchise at 2,623 polling stations between 7 am to 4 pm on the polling day.

"White ballot papers would be used for gram panchayat polls, pink ones for panchayat samities and green papers for zilla parishads," the SEC secretary said.

The opposition CPI(M) and the Congress have alleged that their candidates were "threatened and attacked" by "BJP-backed goons" and prevented

from filing nomination in the pachayat polls.

About 121 CPI(M) candidates were forced to withdraw their nomination papers on the last day of withdrawal on July 11, the party claimed in a statement.

Vice-president of the state Congress unit Tapas Dey also accused the BJP of reducing the election into a "farce".

"They (BJP) did not allow many of our (Congress) candidates to file nominations and launched physical attacks on them and our supporters during filing of nominations. We were forced to withdraw 124 candidates from the fray in the face of terror by BJP goons," he said.

Refuting the allegations, BJP spokesperson Nabendu Bhattacharya said candidates of the two opposition parties did not file nomination because they have "lost their support base."

"They (opposition) have lost their support base and could sense their defeat in advance. So they did not file nominations," he added.

Central agencies threatening TMC leaders, asking them to join BJP: Mamata

KOLKATA, JUL 21 (PTI): West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee Sunday alleged that central agencies are threatening TMC leaders and elected representatives with prison in chit fund scam cases if they don't get in touch with the BJP.

The Trinamool Congress (TMC) supremo, addressing the Martyrs' Day rally here, also said the party will launch a statewide protest on July 26,

demanding return of black money "siphoned off" by the BJP.

"Central agencies are threatening our leaders and elected representatives over chit fund scams, asking them to get in touch with the BJP or face prison," Banerjee said.

The chief minister accused the saffron party of luring TMC MLAs with money and other perks.

"The BJP is offering Rs 2 crore and a petrol pump

to our MLAs to switch over... Just like in Karnataka, the BJP is indulging in horse trading everywhere," Banerjee alleged.

She said the BJP government at the Centre would not last for "more than two years", considering the way it is functioning.

"Credit for the smooth conduct of Parliament goes to opposition parties, not those in power," the TMC chief said.



KOLKATA, JUL 20 (PTI): West Bengal Education Minister Partha Chatterjee Saturday said the government cannot raise the pay scale of agitating primary school teachers to the level demanded by them as it will incur a huge expense on the state exchequer.

The indefinite fast of a section of primary school teachers demanding pay hike entered the seventh day Saturday.

Urging the agitators to call off their hunger strike, Chatterjee said Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee is sympathetic to their demand.

"Effecting a hike as demanded by the agitating teachers will incur huge expenses which is beyond the capacity of the state government," the minister told reporters after meeting representatives of Usti Primary Teachers' Association.

But the state government can certainly look for some increase in the primary teachers salary, he said.

The minister lamented that the teachers went ahead with the fast despite his request to the association not to go for such an agitation.

He said the fast should be called off as the students were suffering.

Chatterjee said he did not go to the venue of the hunger strike as

it was being frequented by leaders of opposition parties.

While CPI(M) had done precious little when it was in power to effect a rise in the salary of primary teachers, the BJP should see if it can ensure the Centre bears the financial burden if the demands of the fasting teachers are met in toto, he said.

The agitating teachers are demanding that they be paid on a par with their counterparts in other states, which they claimed is "substantially" higher.

A member of the association said primary teachers are paid between Rs 9,300 and Rs 34,800 elsewhere in the country, while in West Bengal they have been receiving a salary in the pay scale of Rs 5,400-Rs 25,200 for years.

On the demand for revocation of recent transfer orders of 14 primary teachers to faraway places, the minister said hundreds of transfers had been made to have a proper student-teacher ratio in different schools.

However, if there was any unfair transfer, he will personally set that right, the minister promised.

The agitating primary teachers are also demanding revocation of the recent transfer order of 14 of their colleagues.

Newly appointed Chinese envoy Sun Weidong arrives; vows to work for better Sino-India ties



NEW DELHI, JUL 21 (PTI): Newly appointed Chinese envoy to India Sun Weidong arrived here Sunday, and resolved to work for building better ties between the two Asian giants.

Sun's immediate priority will be to coordinate with the Indian government for the second informal summit between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chinese President Xi Jinping in India in October.

"Just arrived at Delhi with my wife Bao Jiqing. Sincere greetings to the #Indian people. Look forward to working with #Indian government and friends from all sectors for building better #China-#India relations," he tweeted soon after arriving here.

A seasoned diplomat, 53-year-old Sun succeeds Luo Zhaohui, who returned home one-and-half months back after being appointed vice minister in the China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Known to be an expert on South Asia, Sun had served as China's

ambassador to Pakistan from 2013 to 2017.

During an interaction with a group of Indian journalists in Beijing on Friday, Sun said with two strong leaders at the helm in both the countries, the ties are set to reach new heights.

Under the strategic guidance provided by Xi and Modi at their first informal summit in Wuhan last year, China-India relations have gathered a "very good and sound momentum of development", he said.

"This year the two leaders are going to hold another informal meeting. I believe, this will be a top priority in our bilateral relations which will surely take our relations on to new heights," he said.

Luo, who started his stint in India in 2016, played a crucial role in normalising ties between the two countries following the Doklam standoff in 2017.

Meanwhile, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar is expected travel to China next month to prepare ground for the

second informal summit between Modi and Xi.

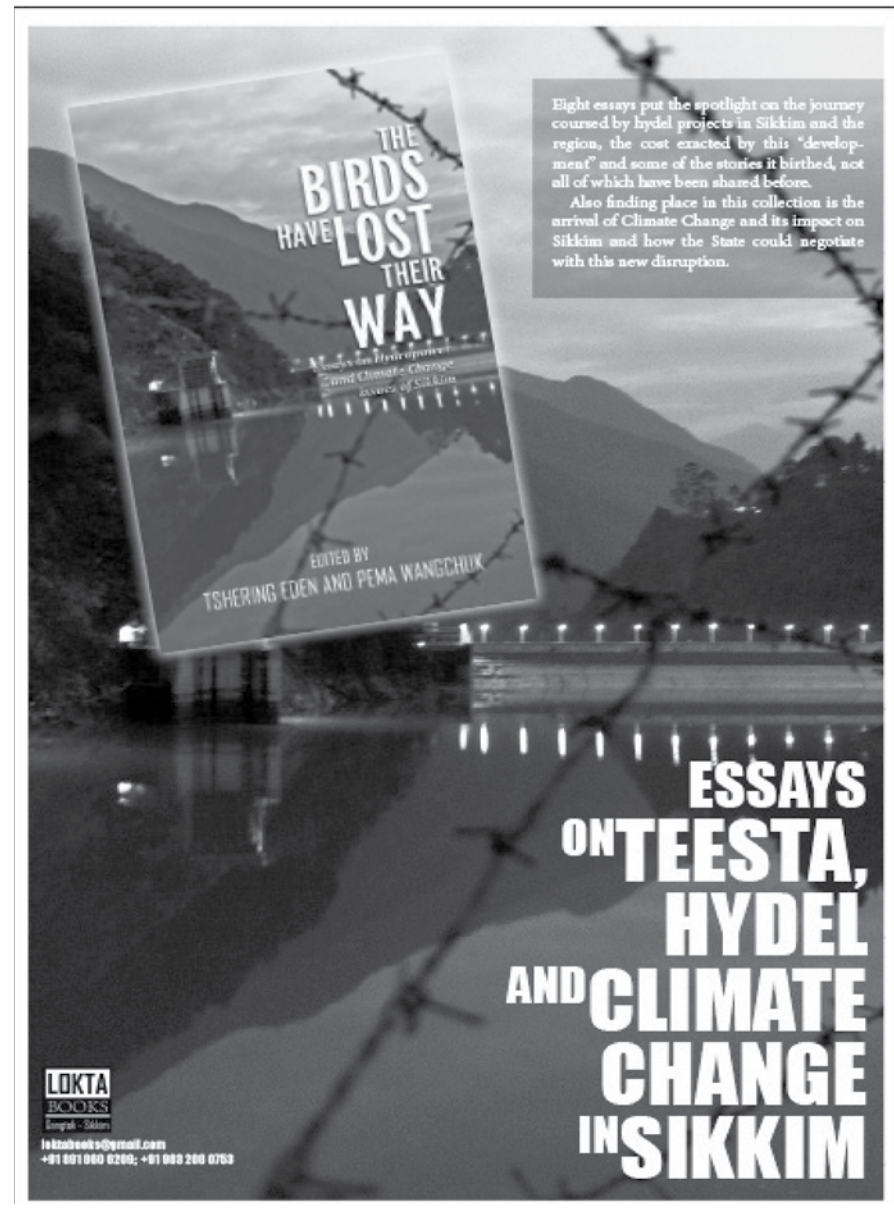
In Beijing, Jaishankar will hold wide-ranging talks with State Councilor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi covering various aspects of bilateral ties besides delving into key regional and global issues, sources said.

The primary objective of the visit will be to prepare ground for the second informal summit between Modi and Xi which is likely to be held in the second week of October, they said.

Modi and Xi held the first informal summit in April last year in Chinese city of Wuhan, months after bilateral ties came under severe strain following the 73-day standoff between the armies of the two countries in Doklam.

In the Wuhan summit, Modi and Xi decided to issue "strategic guidance" to militaries of the two countries to strengthen communications to build trust and understanding, a move aimed at avoiding a Doklam-like situation in the future.

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First blood to Sun in world swim grudge match

GWANGJU, JULY 21 (AFP): China's controversial champion Sun Yang topped qualifying in the 400 metres freestyle at the world swimming championships Sunday to set up a final that will be bubbling with hostility.

American stars Caeleb Dressel and Katie Ledecky also looked in peak condition on the first day of the pool competition in Gwangju, while Britain's Adam Peaty limbered up for an assault on his own 100m breast-stroke world record.

Triple Olympic champion Sun shrugged off fresh claims from a leaked FINA doping panel report that he smashed blood samples with a hammer when visited by testers last year, easing home in his heat in a time of 3min 44.10sec.

Australian rival Mack Horton, who labelled Sun a "drug cheat" over a previous three-month suspension before pipping the Chinese giant to gold in the 2016 Rio Olympic final, could only manage fifth fastest, well over a second slower.

"The first race is always difficult," Sun told reporters.

"My goal this morning was just to make sure I did what I needed to make the final and give myself some confidence. I've trained so hard this year and want to show my best in every race." World record holder Ledecky qualified fastest for the women's 400m freestyle final in 4:01.84 with Australian teen Ariarne Titmus, the Commonwealth champion, second fastest in 4:02.42.

"I just wanted to get the first one out of the way," said Ledecky, a five-time Olympic gold medalist with 14 world titles to her name.

"I'm right where I wanted to be so feeling good moving forward." - Peaty power -

Dressel, who swept to seven gold medals at the 2017 world championships in Budapest, topped the men's heats in the 50m butterfly with Ukraine's world record holder Andrii Govorov in a time of 22.84sec.

Peaty turned a fraction under world record pace in the 100m breast-stroke heats but opted to conserve energy over the last 25m to clock 57.59sec -- over a second faster than Belarusian Ilya Shymanovich.

"I just felt good, very similar to Olympics weirdly," said Peaty, who could target his world best of 57.10 in the evening's semi-final.

"I can't go out there hunting it," added Britain's Olympic king, referring to break the magic 57-second mark.

"If it comes to me naturally down that first 50 and I put the pressure on that back end it's going to come." Sweden's world and Olympic champion Sarah Sjöström looked in total control as she chases a record fifth world title in the women's 100m butterfly, qualifying fastest in 56.45sec with Australian Emma McKeon almost half a second back.

Brilliant Pacquiao downs Thurman to capture WBA crown

LAS VEGAS, JULY 21 (AFP): Filipino legend Manny Pacquiao rolled back the years to become the oldest welterweight champion in boxing history with a thrilling split decision victory over WBA champion Keith Thurman on Saturday.

The 40-year-old Pacquiao, 10 years older than the previously undefeated Thurman, delivered a vintage performance at the MGM Grand Garden Arena to leave the sell-out crowd of 14,356 roaring its approval.

Pacquiao floored Thurman with an electrifying combination in the first round and remained on the front foot throughout a pulsating 12-round duel.

Although the bloodied Thurman rallied in the later rounds to narrow Pacquiao's lead, the judges scored it in the Filipino's favour. Two judges scored it 115-112 for Pacquiao with the third scoring it 114-113 for Thurman.

A jubilant Pacquiao punched the air as the arena erupted after the victory was confirmed.

"It was fun," Pacquiao said afterwards. "My opponent is a good fighter and boxer. He was strong." Thurman had riled Pacquiao in the build-up to the fight by vowing to "crucify"



his deeply religious opponent, and later promising to send the Filipino icon into retirement.

Pacquiao, who improved to 62-7-2 with 39 knockouts, was gracious in victory.

"I'm not that kind of boxer who talks a lot; we were just promoting the fight," he said.

"He's a good boxer and he's strong. I was just blessed tonight." Pacquiao, who earned an estimated 20 million from Saturday's fight, is now a major player in the competitive welterweight division once again after capturing Thurman's WBA welterweight 'super' champion belt.

The eight-division world champion said he will now return to the Philippines to resume

his work as a senator before deciding on his next move inside the ring.

"I think I will fight next year," he said. "I will go back to the Philippines and work and then make a decision." - No complaints - =====

Thurman meanwhile had few complaints in defeat, embracing Pacquiao after the final bell in recognition of an epic contest.

"I knew it was too close," Thurman said. "He got the knockdown so he had momentum in round one.

"This was a beautiful night of boxing. I wish I had a little bit more output to go toe to toe. I felt like he was getting a little bit tired, but he did have experience in

the ring. I would love the rematch."

Earlier, a pumped-up Pacquiao had danced into the ring to the strains of Rocky movie anthem "Eye of the Tiger" to bring the crowd to its feet.

Deafening chants of "Manny, Manny" rolled around the packed arena as Pacquiao immediately set about building an advantage.

Towards the end of the round, the crowd erupted as Pacquiao sent Thurman crashing to the canvas, uncorking a left to the ribs before detonating a right hand on the American's jaw.

That set the tone for the early rounds, with Pacquiao urging Thurman on before using his superior hand-

speed and footwork to bamboozle his rival.

A dazzling combination wobbled Thurman again at the end of the second, and Pacquiao delighted the crowd with an Ali shuffle as the round closed.

Although Thurman improved, Pacquiao was able to control the tempo and had Thurman in trouble again in the fifth round with blood pouring from his mouth.

Thurman though was in no mood to surrender and he came back into the fight, snapping Pacquiao's head back with a right cross left jab combination in the seventh round.

The younger Thurman appeared to be gaining momentum as the fight drew on, backing up Pacquiao with a clean combination in the eighth.

But again, Pacquiao responded strongly, swarming forward in the ninth round to have Thurman rattled again.

With Pacquiao leading after the 10th and 11th rounds, Thurman came out for the final round knowing he probably needed a knockout to win.

But Pacquiao drew on all of his experience, skipping out of range cleverly to keep Thurman at bay and score a famous win.

Alpinist Porter decries commercialisation of mountaineering, calls for making it a way of life

ASHISH AGASHE MUMBAI, JUL 21 (PTI): There is a need to distinguish mountaineering from the "commercial circus" that happens on the Everest where people crowd the peak in a quest for personal fame, opines the noted Alpinist John Porter.

The president of the Alpine Club in Britain which is the oldest mountaineering club in the world, is not against people pursuing their passion for the mountains.

"Mountaineering is seen now as whatever happens on the Everest and the Everest has become a commercial circus. People think they can buy a ticket to the summit, he told PTI in an interview over the weekend here.

You need to distinguish between adventure tourism, and mountain-

eering or Alpinism, Porter avers.

Porter, who along with a few other mad men made a name for themselves by pioneering the art of Alpinism, was in the city to attend the 18th Giritra Sammelan, an annual congregation of mountaineers in the financial capital.

At the event, he was introduced as among the last survivors of a breed which almost climbed its way into extinction, in a reference to some of his closest friends who perished following their pursuits.

In the comments that come after the world was shocked to see a long queue near the summit of the Everest during this years climbing window, Porter says depending on all sort of support from the Sherpa to climb a peak, is not mountaineering.

One needs to put in the time and energy in the pursuit, and gain relevant experience which helps in taking better decisions in the future to be a mountaineer, he proffers.

Referring to the practice of the Sherpas setting up fixed ropes right from the base camp to the summit, he has the following to offer: As soon as you unclip from the rope, then you're climbing."

Elaborating on Alpinism, the discipline Porter has pioneered, he says mountaineers take excess risk by spending more time on the mountains, thus they develop the concept of climbing light and fast after necessary study of a peak.

The more you can cut down your weight, the faster you can go up remain safer atop. That is the joy of climbing. Come

back in the nick of time safer, he says.

Porter also advises that if something goes wrong, the mountaineer should have the presence of mind to hold onto safety as the paramount interest and turn back.

He also lists amongst the list of absolute necessities the need to take a relook and recounts the climbs completed sans any tents or hammocks or even sleeping bags, where the climbers expose themselves to two uncomfortable nights using only down-jackets for warmth.

Asked if this is the most puritan way of climbing, he answers in the affirmative saying, its certainly spiritual, but there are no holy grails in climbing. The most important thing is to come back."

He says there is also a need for mountain-

eers to learn the art of suffering, thanking a few Polish climbers for helping him understand the same.

On the Indian mountaineering scene, Porter says the country always had strong climbers and recounted a joint expedition he had with the city-based explorer Harish Kapadia in the Himalayas way back.

He also feels development of sport climbing bodes well for climbing and will help the discipline of mountaineering.

Porter, however, also rues that a few Indians are advertising themselves as mountaineers by achieving a few feats but admits that such self propagation is a world-wide problem today.

You need to make mountains and mountaineering a way of life, he signs off.

Sindhu loses to Yamaguchi in Indonesia Open final



JAKARTA, JULY 21 (PTI): PV Sindhu's hopes of breaking a seven-month title drought came crashing down as the Indian lost in straight games to Akane Yamaguchi in the finals of Indonesia Open BWF Tour Super 1000 tournament here Sunday.

Seven months after becoming the first Indian to win the season-ending BWF World Tour Finals in December, Olympic silver medallist Sindhu had an opportunity to finally lay her hands on another crown only to squander, losing 15-21 16-21 to the Japanese in a lop-sided summit clash that lasted 51 minutes here.

Playing her first final of the season, Sindhu looked a bit anxious and failed to match the brilliance of the 22-year-old Yamaguchi, whom she had beaten in the last four meetings.

"She played really well and there were long rallies. I was leading in the first game by 2-3 points but I made a few mistakes and then she finished it off. If I could have won the first game, it could have been a bit different," Sindhu told reporters.

"In the second I gave her a huge lead like 5-6 points and was left to cover it. But overall, I think it was a good tournament for me and I hope I can take the confidence going forward. Next I am playing Japan and I hope to do well there."

This was Sindhu's fifth loss to Yamaguchi in 15 meetings. The last time the Indian lost to the Japanese was at the semifinals of the All England Championship last year.

The defeat added to Sindhu's list of runners-up finishes, which include silvers at the World Championships, Asian Games, Commonwealth Games, Thailand Open and India Open last year.

It was Yamaguchi's third title of the season after claiming crowns at German Open and Asian Championship.

Prior to this in 2019, Sindhu reached the semifinals of Singapore Open and India Open.

Sindhu had a forgettable start in the opening game as she lagged 0-3 but soon the Indian controlled the proceedings, making Yamaguchi run across

the court and finishing with her precise returns to take a 5-4 lead.

Yamaguchi took the lead at 7-7 when Sindhu went wide. But the Indian managed to grab a three-point advantage at the break after the Japanese went wide twice.

Yamaguchi then displayed good retrieval skills and grabbed three straight points when Sindhu miscued her strokes.

A delicate net short took Yamaguchi to 12-13 but she again missed the line. The Japanese levelled par at 14-14 when the Indian went long.

Yamaguchi attacked Sindhu's long backhand corner and soon eked out a 16-14 lead. An attacking game helped the Japanese to widen the gap as Sindhu once again sent a shuttle wide.

A lapse in backhand defence and then one shot going long from Sindhu gave Yamaguchi six game points. The Indian saved one before a smash to a return of serve helped the Japanese to seal the opening game.

In the second game, Yamaguchi made a good start again, moving to a 4-1 lead before stretching it to 8-5 with Sindhu struggling to control the shuttle. The Indian won a few points because of unforced errors by Yamaguchi.

The Japanese sent one at Sindhu's body during a flat exchange before entering the interval with a 11-8 advantage, when the Indian hit out.

Sindhu unleashed a cross court smash and pushed one at the backcourt to leave Yamaguchi off balance, but the Japanese rode on the Indian's unforced errors to move to a 15-10 lead.

At 15-11, the duo played a 51-shot rally that ended with Sindhu making a judgement error.

Two unforced errors by Yamaguchi took Sindhu to 13-16 before she moved to 15-18. After a treatment on her right knee, Yamaguchi was back on the court and produced a smash to make it 19-15.

The Japanese held four match points when Sindhu went long and she sealed it with another smash to claim the biggest title of her career.

Nikhath Zareen advances in Thai boxing tourney



NEW DELHI, JUL 21 (PTI): Former junior world champion Nikhath Zareen (51kg) Sunday advanced to the second round of the Thailand Open International boxing tournament with a comfortable opening win in Bangkok.

The boxer from Hyderabad prevailed 5-0 over New Zealand's

Tasmyn Benny in the first round of the tournament.

However, former youth world champion Shashi Chopra (60kg) bowed out of the competition early.

The Haryana-boxer went down to local favourite Sudaporn Seesondee in her opening clash, making it a mixed day for India.

Hima returns to 400m run, grabs 5th gold in July

NOVE MESTO (CZECH REPUBLIC), JULY 21 (PTI): Indian sprinter Hima Das extended her sensational run by claiming her fifth gold of the month as she returned to her pet 400m competition with a season-best time of 52.09 seconds here.

The timing on Saturday slower than her personal best of 50.79 seconds, which she managed at the Jakarta Asian Games and she also narrowly missed out on the World Championships qualifying mark of 51.80.

However, it was better than the timing of 52.88, which she managed earlier in the sea-

son.

It was Hima's fifth gold medal since July 2 when she ran her first competitive race in Europe.

In her first competitive 200m race of the year, she clocked 23.65 on her way to gold at the Poznan Athletics Grand Prix in Poland on July 2. After that, she won her second 200m gold at the Kutno Athletics Meet, also in Poland, on July 7 with a time of 23.97.

On July 13, she won her third 200m gold at the Kladno Athletics Meet in Czech Republic with a time of 23.43 while her fourth gold

came at the Tabor Athletics Meet in the same country on Wednesday.

It was the first competition in 400m for the 19-year-old from Assam, fondly called the 'Dhing Express', since she struggled to finish the Asian Athletics Championship in April this year because of a back issue.

Meanwhile, MP Jabir also won a gold in the 400-metre hurdles race, clocking 49.66 but Mohammad Anas settled for a third-place finish in the 200m with a timing of 20.95 seconds.

Winning a silver was Nirmal Noah Tom in the 200m event with a 46.05.

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Imran Khan's party, independents lead in first-ever provincial polls in northwest Pakistan



SAJJAD HUSSAIN

ISLAMABAD, JUL 21 (PTI): Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan's Tehreek-e-Insaf party and independent candidates won five seats each in the first-ever elections in former semi-autonomous tribal region, bordering Afghanistan, that was once a stronghold of militant groups like the Taliban and al-Qaeda.

Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), where the first-ever provincial elections were held on Saturday, comprises seven districts and was merged with the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province in May 2018 after a constitutional amendment.

According to the unofficial results of 13 constituencies out of 16, Khan's PTI and independents got five seats each while Jamat-e-Islami, Jamiat Ulama-e-Islam-Fazl and Awami National Party won one seat each.

Results of three constituencies were not

available so far.

The law set aside 24 seats in the provincial assembly for the former FATA region. However, due to administrative reasons elections on those seats were not held with the general polls held in the country in July last year.

After putting in place the necessary legal and logistic wherewithal, the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) went ahead to hold the election on the 16 general seats.

Another four seats are reserved for women and one for non-Muslims and these seats will be awarded to the political parties on the basis of their share in 16 contested seats.

ECP spokesman Nadeem Qasim earlier told the media that it might take a day before the official results will be announced.

A total of 1,897 polling stations were set up, including separate pol-

ing facilities for men and women. The ECP data showed that 285 candidates were contesting for 16 general seats.

The ECP said that out of 2.80 million voters, 1.67 million are men and 1.13 million women.

Poling was held in peaceful environment as foolproof security measures were taken and government deployed 34,497 security personnel from army, police and Paramilitary Frontier Corps, Levies and Khasadar Force.

The tribal region was once known as stronghold of militants from Al-Qaeda and other groups but the rebels were killed or expelled by the army in successful military operations.

Pakistan, after a series of reforms, has also abolished the colonial era draconian Frontier Crime Regulations law, which prescribed collective punishments for the entire tribes even for minor misdemeanours.

Tens of thousands march again in huge Hong Kong anti-government rally

Hong Kong, Jul 21 (AFP): Hong Kong witnessed another huge anti-government march on Sunday with seemingly no end in sight to the turmoil engulfing the finance hub, sparked by years of rising anger over Beijing's rule.

The city has been plunged into its worst crisis in recent history by weeks of marches and sporadic violent confrontations between police and pockets of hardcore protesters.

The initial protests were lit by a now-suspended bill that would have allowed extraditions to mainland China.

But they have since evolved into a wider movement calling for democratic reforms, universal suffrage and a halt to sliding freedoms in the semi-autonomous territory.

Police have fired tear gas and rubber bullets, while the parliament has been trashed by protesters as Beijing's authority faces its most serious challenge since Hong Kong was handed back to China in 1997.

Sunday's rally is the seventh weekend in-a-row that residents have come out en-masse.

Anita Poon, 35, said she decided to join for the first time after watching a rally by elderly people earlier in the week.

"When even the granies are coming out, how can we just watch this on



TV?" she told AFP.

"The government has not responded to the voices of the people, that's why this keeps happening," she added.

Generally the marches have passed off peacefully, but some have been followed by violence between riot police and small groups of more hardcore protesters who feel years of peaceful demonstrations have achieved little.

Security was tightened in the city centre, with metal street fencing often used by protesters to build barricades removed ahead of the march, and large water-filled barriers thrown up around the police headquarters.

At the end of the march protesters occupied a major road next to the city's parliament and a large crowd gathered outside the police headquarters, which has previously been blockaded twice before.

Riot officers maintained little presence and the atmosphere was

calm, although the police said they had closed down the emergency response room at the headquarters.

The huge crowds have had little luck persuading the city's unelected leaders -- or Beijing -- to change tack on the hub's future.

Under the 1997 handover deal with Britain, China promised to allow Hong Kong to keep key liberties such as its independent judiciary and freedom of speech.

But many say those provisions are already being curtailed, citing the disappearance into mainland custody of dissident booksellers, the disqualification of prominent politicians and the jailing of pro-democracy protest leaders.

Authorities have also resisted calls for the city's leader to be directly elected by the people.

Protesters have vowed to keep their movement going until their core demands are met, such as the resignation of city leader Carrie

Lam, an independent inquiry into police tactics, amnesty and a permanent withdrawal of the bill.

They have also begun calling once more for universal suffrage.

There is little sign that either Lam or Beijing is willing to budge.

Beyond agreeing to suspend the extradition bill there have been few other concessions and fears are rising that Beijing's patience is running out.

Earlier this week the South China Morning Post reported that Beijing was drawing up a plan to deal with Hong Kong, citing sources on the mainland.

The details published suggested little appetite to defuse public anger over sliding freedoms and instead focused on shoring up support for Lam and the police.

A group of prominent activists from the leaderless movement read out a manifesto ahead of the march detailing protesters'

frustrations -- the same words that were read out during the July 1 storming of the legislature.

"For too long our government has lied and deceived and refused to respond to the demands of the people despite numerous mass demonstrations of the past month," the activists said.

On Saturday, the establishment mustered its own supporters in their tens of thousands for a rally, a gathering that was covered in detail by Chinese state media and pro-Beijing newspapers in Hong Kong.

Few see a political solution to the crisis on the horizon.

Steve Vickers, a former head of the police's Criminal Investigation Bureau before the handover who now runs a risk consultancy, said the public order situation would likely "worsen" in the coming weeks.

"Polarisation within Hong Kong society and intense acrimony between protesters and police are deepening," he wrote in a note to clients. Tensions have been further stoked after police on Saturday said they had discovered a homemade laboratory making high-powered explosives.

A 27-year-old man was arrested and pro-independence materials were also discovered.

Lanka reconsecrates St Sebastian's Church damaged in Easter Sunday blasts

COLOMBO, JUL 21 (PTI): The St Sebastian's Church in Sri Lanka's western coastal town of Negombo was reconsecrated on Sunday, three months after it was badly damaged in the Easter Sunday blasts that rocked the island nation.

A monument with the names of 114 people, who died during the church attack, inscribed on it was also unveiled during the reconsecration ceremony.

The head of the local Catholic church, Malcolm Cardinal Ranjith, attended the mass and conduct-

ed the service to consecrate the church.

A large number of people, including the victims' families, attended the ceremony.

"The Sri Lankan navy speedily reconstructed the church," Father Manjula of the church told reporters.

Over 260 people were killed and around 500 others injured when six near simultaneous and coordinated explosions, carried out by local jihadist group National Thowheeth Jamaath (NTJ) linked to

the Islamic State (IS), rocked three churches and three luxury hotels frequented by tourists in Sri Lanka on April 21.

While describing the horror scene at the St Sebastian's Church, a top priest had said that pieces of flesh were thrown all over the walls, on the sanctuary and even outside the church.

The church, built in 1946, is one of the many churches in Sri Lanka dedicated to St Sebastian who is considered a martyr in the Catholic Church

history.

Addressing the gathering after the reconsecration ceremony, Cardinal Ranjith questioned the ongoing probe into the blasts and said he fear that the investigation "will be brush under the carpet".

He had earlier urged the government to launch a "very impartial strong inquiry" into the terror attack and punish those found responsible "mercilessly because only animals can behave like that".

One giant leap: 50 years ago, humanity's first steps on the Moon

HOUSTON, JUL 21 (AFP): "That's one small step for man, one giant leap for mankind": it was with these words that Neil Armstrong became the first person to set foot on the Moon 50 years ago, an occasion celebrated by space enthusiasts globally Saturday.

The era-defining event was watched by more than half a billion people around the world, and represented one of humanity's greatest achievements.

In the US, its 50th anniversary has revived public enthusiasm for crewed space flight, as NASA charts out new missions to the Moon and on to Mars.

At 4:18pm ET (2018 GMT) on July 20, 1969, the lunar module carrying Armstrong and crewmate Buzz Aldrin touched down on the Sea of Tranquility, following a four-day journey.

NASA replayed the original CBS footage online.

"Houston, Tranquility Base here. The Eagle has landed," Armstrong said.

A little over six hours later, at 10:56pm ET (0256 GMT Sunday), Armstrong climbed out of the lunar module and uttered his immortal words -- which he later said he thought about during the flight and prior to exiting Eagle.

Aldrin followed about 20 minutes later, exclaiming: "Magnificent desolation." The pair spent about two-and-a-half hours on the surface, carrying out scientific experiments and collecting samples.

"We had the problem of the five-year-old boy in a candy store," Armstrong would later go to say. "There are just too many interesting things to do." In Houston on Saturday night, thousands of space enthusiasts descended upon the visitor area of the NASA Johnson Space Center for a countdown to the "Mooniversary," and watched a giant screen that replayed the iconic moments, before fireworks lit up the sky.

NASA has been in overdrive for several weeks to mark the anni-

versary, with exhibits and events around the country, including projecting the giant Saturn V rocket and clips from the mission on the Washington Monument.

"Looking back, landing on the moon wasn't just our job, it was a historic opportunity to prove to the world America's can-do spirit," Aldrin, 89, tweeted.

Earlier in the day, Vice President Mike Pence delivered a speech from Cape Canaveral, from where Armstrong, Aldrin and Michael Collins, the third crew member, took off.

All three men were born in 1930, and Armstrong died in 2012.

"Apollo 11 is the only event in the 20th century that stands a chance of being widely remembered in the 30th century," Pence said.

NASA has declared its intention to return to the Moon by 2024 under the Artemis pro-

gram -- the twin sister of Apollo in Greek mythology -- and this time place the first woman on its surface.

It plans to establish a lunar orbiting platform, called a "Gateway," studying how living organisms react to the radiation and microgravity of a deep space environment over a long period, as it looks ahead to a crewed Mars mission in the 2030s.

Experts doubt that the space agency can meet its current goals on time. None of the key elements -- the rocket, crew capsule, lander, or orbital station, are yet ready.

Pence used the occasion to announce that the Orion crew capsule had now been assembled, "a critical milestone." According to a release by maker Lockheed Martin, it needs several months more of testing before it is delivered for launch processing in early 2020.

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Iran says probe into seized ship depends on crew cooperation

TEHRAN, JUL 21 (AFP): Iran said on Sunday that the speed of its investigation into a British-flagged tanker depends on the cooperation of its crew, after ignoring calls to hand back the vessel.

The Stena Impero tanker was impounded with its 23 crew members on board at the port of Bandar Abbas after the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps seized it on Friday. Its crew is made up of 18 Indians, including the captain, three Russians, a Latvian and a Filipino.

The Guards on Satur-

day released video footage showing a ship with the Stena Impero's markings being surrounded by speedboats before troops in balaclavas descend down a rope from a helicopter onto the vessel.

The Islamic republic has detained the oil tanker on allegations of failing to respond to distress calls and turning off its transponder after hitting a fishing boat.

"All of them (the crew) are in full health, they are on the vessel and the vessel is... anchored in a safe place," said Al-

lah-Morad Afifipoor, director-general of the Hormozgan province port and maritime authority. "We are ready to meet their needs. But we have to carry out investigations with regards the vessel," he told Press TV. "The investigation depends on the cooperation by the crew members on the vessel, and also our access to the evidence required for us to look into the matter."

"God willing, we will make every effort to gather all the information as soon as possible," he added.



Indian-origin artistes create special effects waves in Hollywood

RADHIKA SHARMA

NEW DELHI, JUL 21 (PTI): The Indian imprint on Hollywood is acquiring -- quite literally -- new dimensions and the dazzle of special effects in films ranging from extravaganzas like “Thor: The Dark World” and “Avengers” to more intimate cinema like “The Shape of Water” and “The Handmaid’s Tale”.

If it weren’t for the post-credit scenes, many cinegoers would be in the dark about the number of Indians contributing to the lavishly mounted spectacle they have just watched.

It takes a village, or in this case a massive industry, and Indians are increasingly a vital part of the VFX (visual effects) credits scrolling up in the darkness of a theatre.

The reasons are many -- the comfort level of communicating in English, the ability to get the work done and cheaper costs.

“Indians are known for their hard work, dedication and cheap labour which attract the industry to hire them. Most of the people can speak and communicate well with clients and bosses, which gives them an upper hand compared to other countries,” said Harsimar Singh, who has worked on Marvel Cinematic Universe (MCU) biggies like “Avengers”, “Thor: Ragnarok” and the award-winning show “The Handmaid’s Tale”.

Singh, who works with Take 5 Productions Inc in Toronto, recalled his experience of working on “Man of Steel” when he was in India at the time.

“It was meant to be a big deal for us because the Hollywood studio approached us for labour. We used to make only 5-10 per cent of what the artistes used to make in the US and that too with no overtime pay,” the 29-year-old told PTI.

Countries like Canada, New Zealand and Singapore have emerged as major hubs for employing VFX artistes as they are equipped with animation and VFX schools that offer advanced education in various streams, explained Mumbai-based Shreeraj Nair, Senior Technical Executive, Frameboxx Animations and Visual Effect.

In Canada, The Vancouver Institute

of Media Arts and the Vancouver Film School are some of the names that provide Indians an avenue for advanced studies.

“The same goes for New Zealand

ies like Mumbai and Bengaluru.

“Thor: The Dark World”, for instance, was outsourced to Prana Studios Ltd (Mumbai) and Bengaluru-based Mr X contributed to 2018 Oscar winner “The Shape of Water”.

“This gives a lot of talented Indian artists the opportunity to work for big Hollywood banners. And, if they are good enough, they are even given an opportunity by the VFX companies abroad,” said Montreal-based Sumit Panchasara, who works with Moving Pictures Company.

According to Panchasara, whose credits include “Dumbo” and the upcoming Angelina Jolie-starrer

“Maleficent: Mistress of Evil”, while most of the CG (computer graphics) assets of Academy Award winner “Life of Pi” were developed in India, Disney’s “Tinkerbell” series was entirely created here.

Pranjal Choudhary, of Toronto’s Mavericks VFX, said the number of VFX shots in movies have gone up. And VFX companies in the West have opted to outsource a lot of work to their Indian counterparts as India easily has an advantage in terms of turnovers.

“A lot of these big Marvel movies are just not possible to make without employing thousands of Indian VFX artistes. It also allows the artistes in Hollywood to focus more on the creative aspect of the project,” said Choudhary, who worked on 2014 Best Visual Effects Oscar winner “Gravity”.

Earlier this month, many Indian and Indian-origin names, including Sherry Bharda of “Hichki” fame and Srinivas Mohan, best known for his work on “2.0” and “Baahubali: The Beginning”, were invited to the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Science (AMPAS) to represent the Visual Effects department.

Nair said it is about time Indian artistes in this field got their due.

“It’s amazing to know that such talented Indian VFX artistes have been invited to the AMPAS. Indian visual effects artistes are getting their much deserved recognition,” he said.

“It’s also an indication of exciting times ahead for the Indian visual effects sector,” he added.



ANIMAL INSTINCT: Proving to be the fashionista that she is, Korean star, Jennie, wears an oversized leopard print cardigan with a knit leopard print beanie with a gothic looking tiered dress and combat boots.

Salman Khan to produce film revolving around marriage hall

MUMBAI, JUL 21 (PTI): Actor-producer Salman Khan is planning to produce a film focusing on a marriage hall.

According to a source close to the project, Salman will back the project through his SKF banner.

“It is a story of two brothers and is set in Delhi. It is at the moment called ‘Bulbul Marriage Hall,’” the source added.

The film is said to be directed by Rohit Nayyar and the dialogues are written by Raaj

Shaandilyaa. Nayyar had earlier helmed 2009 film “Shadow” that featured Milind Soman, Sonali Kulkarni and Hrishitaa Bhatt.

The casting for the film is underway and the shoot is likely to begin in October.

As far Salman’s acting projects are concerned, the superstar is currently working on “Dabangg 3” that is set to arrive in theatres on December 20. He also has Sanjay Leela Bhansali’s “Inshallah” with Alia Bhatt an

Don't spoil our Batman movie, crowd tells Matt Reeves

LOS ANGELES, JUL 21 (PTI): Batman fans have warned director Matt Reeves to not mess up his new film on the Caped Crusader.

Reeves is helming the Warner Bros-DC project which will see actor Robert Pattinson taking on the iconic role, previously played by the likes of Michael Keaton, George Clooney, Christian Bale and Ben Affleck, among others.

In a video message, recorded by music composer Michael Giacchino, the audiences attending a panel discussion at San Diego Comic-Con 2019 (SDCC) shouted in unison, “Hey Matt! Don’t screw up our Batman movie.”

“You heard them. Don’t screw it up,” Giacchino says in the video.

Sharing the same clip on Twitter, Reeves wrote in the caption, “Nothing like a little encouragement.”

According to CinemaBlend, at the SDCC Giacchino revealed that Reeves is working hard on the new film.

“Matt and I worked on ‘Planet of the Apes’ together, we made ‘Cloverfield’. Matt is really big, Matt’s amazing. So, Matt wanted me to tell you that he’s working very hard to make a good movie...”

“I’ve actually been able to see a few things that he’s showed me that he’s working on and it’s pretty darn awesome. It looks really, really amaz-



ing” the Oscar-winning music composer said.

Reeves boarded the project after Affleck, who took on the role of Batman for “Batman v Superman: Dawn of Justice” and “Justice League”, stepped down as the film’s director in 2017.

The filmmaker has enjoyed success for films like “Dawn of the Planet of the Apes” and “War for the Planet of the Apes”.

Brandon Routh to once again play Superman in 'Arrow'-Verse crossover

LOS ANGELES, JUL 20 (PTI): Brandon Routh is returning to reprise his role as Clark Kent and his alter ego Superman in the The CW’s upcoming annual “Arrow”-verse crossover, “Crisis on Infinite Earths”.

This will be the first time Routh would play the role since the 2006 movie “Superman Returns”.

The actor currently features on CW’s “Legends of Tomorrow” as Ray Palmer/The Atom.

According to Deadline, Tyler Hoechlin, who has recurred on “Supergirl” as Superman, will also reprise his role in the crossover.

“Crisis on Infinite Earths” will bring together CW’s five DC Comics shows -- “Arrow”, “The Flash”, “Supergirl”, “Legends of Tomorrow” and the latest “Batwoman”.

The crossover, which is based on a popular DC Comics miniseries (1985-86), will premiere in December.

Angelina Jolie, Salma Hayek, Richard Madden to star in 'The Eternals'

LOS ANGELES, JUL 21 (PTI): Marvel Studios has finally put to rest the speculations of Angelina Jolie’s casting in “The Eternals” by confirming that the Hollywood star is leading the film with Salma Hayek and Richard Madden joining her as 35,000-year-old aliens.

Brian Tyree Henry, Kumail Nanjiani, Lauren Ridloff and Don Lee are also part of the cast. The revelation was made at the Marvel’s San Diego Comic-Con presentation, reported Comicbook.com.

“This movie will allow those who have never felt represented in movies, in this case superheroes, to be represented. I love my diverse family,” Hayek said on stage.

The film is scheduled to be released on November 6, 2020.



ARIES: No need to call in the glam squad under today’s bohemian mashup of the Sun and free-spirited Jupiter. Let your hair down—and allow the wild ideas to flow. What begins as a blue skies brainstorming session could yield the seeds of a promising project or a future venture! Under these social skies, an evening group hang could lead to you to some fascinating new acquaintances.

TAURUS: What’s your angle, Taurus? The savvy Sun plays ball with rosy Jupiter today, helping you see the brightest potential in every situation. Once you’ve identified your hopeful finish line, sit down for some strategic planning. Research data, check out the competition as a case study, and Google anyone who you have a meeting with today.

GEMINI: Today’s promising pairing of the Sun and Jupiter will buoy your faith in Cupid. A romantic situation that seemed to be stalling could suddenly get some fuel. Or, when you least expect it, you could meet someone who makes you feel all giddy and sparkly. Pour

yourself a cup of truth serum and be direct, Gemini—not that anyone has to twist your arm here.

CANCER: Artisanal chocolate, reclaimed wood coffee tables, homebrewed beers, oh my! Sate your love of all things sartorial today and channel your obsessive tendencies into a fervent search for obscure finds. Wander through an artist’s market on your lunch hour, meet friends for dinner at that haute gastropub, or race home after work to dive into a DIY project. Creativity, whether consumed or crafted by your own two hands, always restores your faith in human potential.

LEO: The coast is clear for a romantic gamble today. Someone who diverges from your usual type could actually captivate your interest. Don’t brush it off! Whether a white-collar superstar or humble artist, it’s the spark of ingenuity that you’ll find most attractive. And if your values don’t gel for the long haul, there’s no rule that says you can’t enjoy a little fun. In a relationship? An evening OUT is

just what the love doctor ordered. Take a disco nap after work, then, go kick up your heels with a glamorous date night.

LIBRA: CA meeting of the minds could evolve into a heartfelt connection today. Don’t rush off if you’ve plunged into a fascinating conversation. Although your FOMO could kick in, there probably isn’t a more interesting person on the other side of the bar (and even then). Stay engaged and even share a vulnerable story about yourself.

VIRGO: Your nurturing nature is at the wheel today, Virgo, but don’t confuse this for caretaking. You don’t have to zap your own energy in an effort to make others feel good. Start by asking yourself what YOU need in order to find your little patch of peace. Maybe it’s a 20-minute chair massage or an evening yoga class. There’s nothing wrong with wanting friends to share in your bliss bubble. Instead of doing favors, invite them to tag along with you for some down dogs, or a lunch hour trek to the health food store.

SCORPIO: For privacy-loving Scorpions, your home (and ideally, your office space)

must feel like a safe and sacred oasis. Today’s inspired alignment of the Sun and Jupiter guide you along any improvements that need to be made. It may be an easy fix, like pivoting your desk 180 degrees so that you can see who is walking up to you or creating a “barrier” from interoffice distractions using your monitor and a few leafy plants!

SAGITTARIUS: Use your gift of gab to your advantage today. Pitch an idea to a prospective partner and let the games begin. Since you may be a little too restless to sit at your desk or some stuffy conference room, how about meeting over lunch? (Risotto and chocolate cake, your treat!) Pay attention to time though. You could get so swept up in inspiring conversation that you miss your 3PM meeting. Tonight, invite an intriguing acquaintance to be your plus-one for an event. This could be the start of an amazing friendship!

CAPRICORN: Helpful people surround you today, but here’s the rub. Their approach may be a little “mother hen” for

your liking. Try not to react like a rebellious teen if you feel them clucking and fussing over you. There’s a message worth gleaning, and it may be sung to the tune of, “You really SHOULD take better care of yourself, Capricorn.”

AQUARIUS: Ask, believe, receive. The Law of Attraction is more than just an “woo woo” notion under today’s beneficent pairing of the Aquarius Sun and #blessed Jupiter. The trick is to hold a clear picture of your desires, no wavering allowed! When you ground yourself in that vision, it becomes shockingly easy to choose the appropriate actions to manifest your dreams!

PISCES: Your ambitious nature gets a lofty jolt from the Sun and Jupiter today, but with a twist. Rather than looking at numbers on a spreadsheet, ask yourself this: Does the work I’m doing have enough heart and meaning to keep me engaged? Am I touching people in a profound way? If not, brainstorm ways you can add more soul to your goals. If you can’t sync that up with your 9-5, look beyond the obvious.