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# SummitTIMES

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ON TOP OF THE NEWS

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## Bhaichung goes all out against Chamling and SDF Govt

**SUMMIT REPORT  
GANGTOK, 02 JAN:**

Hamro Sikkim Party vice president, Bhaichung Bhutia has said that he has made a long-term commitment to serve the people of Sikkim by taking active part in the state politics.

"Yes, my commitment to stay in state politics is long-term and I am also going to contest the forthcoming Sikkim Assembly polls, besides fulfilling any responsibility that my party, Hamro Sikkim Party (HSP), entrusts on me," said Mr Bhutia in conversation with Summit Times.

On Chief Minister, Pawan Chamling's assurance to give government jobs to 20,000 unemployed youths months before the election, he said,

"What has he been doing all these years for eradication of unemployment in Sikkim which is the second highest in the country?"

"It is his inability to create jobs which has led to a lot of unhappiness and alarming rate of suicide in Sikkim," Mr Bhutia alleged.

He added that this scheme was just an election gimmick to remain in power as he went on to claim that the SDF was losing its hold in South and West districts.

The SDF government has broken all rules and never bothered about financial implications of the CM's decisions, as

a result the state government does not have money to pay arrears of its employees after implementation of 5th Pay Commission report, Mr Bhutia added.

"Chamling is only good at winning elections. He knows how to play vote bank politics and get into power," Mr Bhutia contended, adding that it is more important to work for the people after winning elections.

He added further that it does not matter how long Mr Chamling has been in office Sikkim but what matters is how much work he has done in all these years.

"What I know is that Mr Chamling has left a huge debt of upto Rs 60,000 crore on Sikkim by taking various populist and short-sighted decisions meant for his own political survival all these years," said Mr Bhutia.

**On Pre-Election**

Mr Bhaichung said that he has chosen to take the plunge into Sikkim politics to usher in a change of government with other like-minded parties because the Sikkim Democratic Front (SDF) government led by the Chief Minister has proved to be a disaster for the people.

"Chamling is an elect-

ed dictator who behaves like a monarch...he is also big-time corrupt," the 44 year-old Mr Bhutia said, adding that his continuation in office will be injurious to democracy, governance and the economy of Sikkim.

The HSP vice-president also alleged that the Chief Minister has kept a vice-like grip on his party, not allowing any colleague to grow up and emerge as a leader.

"There has never been a second person or leader in the SDF in its 25 years' existence. It is Chamling and Chamling alone," Mr Bhutia said.

In the functioning of

the government too, the Chief Minister takes all decisions, big or small, on his own rendering his ministerial colleagues and bureaucrats without any real power or freedom, Mr Bhutia alleged.

On electoral prospects of an opposition alliance to take on SDF at the hustings, Mr Bhutia said that a serious deliberation was going on with BJP and like-minded parties and a coalition will be ready soon.

He said that his party may contest upto 18-20 assembly seats, with he himself being a candidate from one of those seats.

Mr Bhutia said that protection and preservation of the rights of the three indigenous communities - Lepcha, Bhutia

**turn to pg02**

## SDF constitutes Monitoring and Campaign Committee for East



**SUMMIT REPORT  
GANGTOK, 02 JAN:**

Sikkim Democratic Front has constituted a committee to counter the political strategies of opposition parties in the East district. The campaign committee was constituted after deliberations with Chief Minister and party president, Pawan Chamling.

Tourism Minister, Ugen T Gyatso today said that the party has appointed key persons to counter the opposition's strategies and to ensure SDF's victory in the 2019 election.

The State Assembly election is due in April this year along with Parliamentary election.

On the last day of 2018, the party appointed Chairpersons In-charge of Constituency Level Monitoring and Campaign Committee in East District which has started functioning from today itself, Mr Gyatso said.

Minister Gyatso said this before stepping into his new office at the newly inaugurated Secretariat building.

In the 2014 Assembly election, out of 12 Assembly seats in East Sikkim, the opposition Sikkim Krantikari Morcha had won 8 seats.

To be put in BOX: SDF Constituency Level Monitoring and Campaign Committee

• 16 Tumin Lingee: Am

Prasad Sharma [president DWC, East].

• 17 Khamdong Singtam: Manita Mangar [vice president - Panchayat Cell].

• 18 West Pendam: Bhim Dhungel [vice president - Students Front].

• 19 Rhenock: KT Gyaltsen [vice president - Legal Cell/Spokesperson].

• 20 Chujachen: Mingma Tsh Sherpa [vice president].

• 21 Gnathang Machong: KB Chamling [senior vice president - Political Affairs].

• 22 Namcheyong: Kunga Zangpo Bhutia [Chairperson ST Welfare Front] and Sonam Dupden Lepcha [vice president].

• 23 Syari: Neeru Sewa [vice president Chelli Morcha (HQ)].

• 24 Martam Rumtek: DB Thapa [senior vice president Incharge, East].

• 25 Upper Tadong: Norzang Lepcha [vice president- ASDLF, East & North].

• 26 Arithang: OT Bhutia [vice president - Organisation, East].

• 27 Gangtok: NK Pradhan [vice president In-charge Traders Front] and Rinzing Dorjee Bhutia [general secretary organization].

• 28 Upper Burtuk: Menlom Lepcha [vice president Organisation East].

## Sikkim team's Milind among All-Time Top-5 run scorers of Ranji Trophy Season



**SUMMIT REPORT  
GANGTOK 02 JAN:**

Milind Kumar, wearing Sikkim's colors, secured a place in the All-Time Top 5 run-scorers in a Ranji Trophy Season today after scoring 117 runs in the first innings and 127 not-out in second innings against Meghalaya in Round 8 of a Plate Division Ranji Trophy match played at KIITS Cricket Stadium, Bhubaneswar, Odisha.

He beat Wasim Jaffer's record of 1,260 runs in a season by a run

and finds himself in fifth position. VVS Laxman is leading with 1,415 runs, Shreyas Iyer (1,321), Priyank Panchal (1,310), Vijay Bharadwaj (1,280), Milind Kumar (1,261). Milind is 154 runs short from breaking all past records with one more match to play before the Ranji Trophy Season ends for Sikkim.

So far, Sikkim has played seven matches and won three, one drawn and lost three matches with Milind

**turn to pg02**

## GSSS students and teachers clean up Gerethang bazaar



**NITESH R PRADHAN  
GYALSHING, 02 JAN:**

What better way to start the New Year than contributing to the local village.

Students and teachers of Gerethang Senior Secondary School (GSSS), West Sikkim held an impromptu cleanliness drive on 01 Jan in and around Gerethang bazar. "Education should be applied towards making the society.

The day we find transformation within ourselves,

our thoughts, words and deeds is the day we learn to be happy in every little thing and that day should be celebrated as a New Year," says teacher from GSSS, Deepak Chettri.

Deepak Chettri, Jeewan Limboo, Biswas Rai, Puja Tamang and Arpana Subba along with a host of students stormed the market and cleaned every nook and corner of Gerethang bazar.

Another teacher from GSSS, Jeewan Limboo shared the theme,

"Let's start 2019 with our change in behavior, Disposing Garbage Properly" making people aware and realising students responsibility in society making. Such a drive was conceived for the New Year which can instill a positive note in the beginning of the year with each small step adding to the overall image of the state and in over all nation building, he says.

This cleanliness drive started at 8am and continued till 3pm in and around

Gerethang bazaar covering all the malas, jhoras and the school compound.

In a one of a kind, 'promise burning' programme that was conducted after the cleanliness drive all students wrote their bad habits and burned it. This was followed by a promise by all to leave behind their negative behaviour and approach the New Year with a fresh enthusiasm to make clean, green and self sufficient Sikkim.

## Two young women enter Sabarimala, finally

**SABARIMALA/THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, JAN 2 (PTI):** Cloaked in black veils and shrouded in early morning darkness, two women of menstruating age group made history on Wednesday when they stepped into the Sabarimala temple of Lord Ayyappa, breaking a centuries-old tradition defying dire threats from the Hindu right.

The development sparked violent protests across Kerala by the BJP and Hindu right outfits, with the state secretariat turning into a veritable war zone for nearly five hours as the ruling CPI(M) and workers of the saffron party clashed, pelting each other with stones.

Police used water canons and burst teargas shells to bring the situation under control.

Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan's effigy was burnt at Malappuram and four activists of the BJP's Mahila Morcha were arrested when they forced their way close to the chief minister's office

in the secretariat complex. The two dauntless women—Kanakadurga and Bindu—aged 44 and 42, stepped into the hallowed precincts guarded by police three months after the Supreme Court's historic judgement lifting the ban on entry of girls and women between 10 and 50 years of age into the shrine of Lord Ayyappa, its "eternally celibate" deity.

The duo, draped in black and their faces covered in veils, entered the temple at 3:38 am, a day after over 35 lakh women stood shoulder-to-shoulder across the national highways in Kerala, creating a 620 km-long human 'wall' from the northern end of Kasaragod to the southern tip in Thiruvananthapuram as part of the state-sponsored initiative to uphold gender equality.

As the news spread like wildfire from the hill shrine, protests erupted at several places, with Hindu right-wing activists blocking highways and forcing closure of shops

and markets. The ruling CPI(M)'s offices were vandalised at several places causing tension, police said.

State-owned KSRTC buses were damaged at Konni and Kozhencherry in Pathanamthitta district where the temple is located besides several other places. Devaswom Board offices attached to temples across the state were also locked up.

Several policemen were injured in the violence.

People from media were also attacked by BJP activists in front of the secretariat, officials said.

Sabarimala Karma Samithi, an umbrella organisation of various pro-Hindutva groups, spearheading protests against the Supreme Court's September 28 verdict, and Antarrashtriya Hindu Parishad (AHP), have called a state-wide shutdown on Thursday, when the Congress-led UDF said it would observe a "black day".

**turn to pg02**

# NEW FRIENDS SNOOKER CLUB

## 5TH WINTER OPEN SNOOKER CHAMPIONSHIP 2019

This tournament is organised to promote and experience the beauty of the game, and also inspire the younger generation to learn and excel.

Players from: Delhi, Nepal, Bhutan, West Bengal & Assam

Venue: New Friends Snooker Club, Bhutia Busty, Namchi

Date: 5th to 9th January 2019

\*Lodging free for out station players

**Winner :**

85,000/- + Trophy

**Runners Up :**

42,000/- + Trophy

**High Break :**

10,000/- + Trophy

**Best Player :**

8,000/- + Trophy

SummitTIMES



## Gangtok on Thursday, 03 Jan

Temp: 09°C/03°C  
Forecast: Sunny to partly cloudy with a little rain in the evening, then a shower in spots

Sunrise: 07:01 AM  
Sunset: 03:49 PM

## HAVE A STORY TO SHARE?

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com

## DRI seizes nearly 17 kg elephant tusk in West Bengal

**SILIGURI (WEST BENGAL), JAN 2 (PTI):** The Directorate of Revenue Intelligence (DRI) has seized nearly 17 kg elephant tusk near here, according to an official statement issued Wednesday. The recovery was done from a Kolkata-bound vehicle at Ghoshpukur in the outskirts of Siliguri.

The tusks in four pieces were being secretly transported in the vehicle, which was loaded with a consignment of black tea, from Guwahati, it said. On interrogation, the driver of the impugned vehicle admitted that the elephant tusks were handed to him in Baihata Chariati town for transport to

Kolkata, the statement said. "Preliminary investigation has revealed that the tusks were extracted from poached elephants in the forested areas of Assam and were being carried to Kolkata for ultimate export to south east Asian countries via Bangladesh," it said.

Consequently, the tusks, valued at about

Rs 1.69 crore in the international market, were seized, the statement added. The DRI has detected a series of cases involving trafficking of elephants tusks in the past.

In four such cases, a total of 38.6 kg of elephant tusks were seized by the DRI last year. Eight people were arrested in these cases.



### Two young women...

Fed up with the frequent shut-downs in Kerala, quite a few trade bodies and merchant organisations have decided to defy the call and keep their establishments open.

Soon after some local TV news channels aired visuals of the two women trekking to the hilltop temple, Chief Minister Piranayi Vijayan, whose Left Front government is weathering a storm of protests by headline Ayyappa devotees over his determination to enforce the apex court verdict, announced they had indeed offered prayers at the shrine.

"Earlier, women were not able to enter the temple due to certain hurdles. They may have entered the shrine today because they would not have faced any issues. It is a fact that the women have entered Sabarimala. Police have given them security," a visibly pleased Vijayan said.

The development did not go down well with the temple authorities, with the head priest ordering devotees out of the premises and closing doors to the sanctum sanctorum. He performed a "purification" ritual for an hour before the doors were opened again.

The women were whisked away from the temple by police soon after 'darshan'.

They were brought to Pathanamthitta from where they left for an

## ASKCBKS thanks CM for including Teej in list of holidays

**SUMMIT REPORT**  
**GANGTOK, 02 JAN:**

A meeting of the Akhil Sikkim Khas Chhettri-Bahun Kalyan Sangh [ASKCBKS] was held here on Tuesday.

The meeting, chaired by Sangh president Tek Bahadur Basnet, had RMDD Minister SB Subedi as chief guest and was attended by executive committee members from all four districts.

An ASKCBKS press release informs that the meeting discussed various agenda points of the organization and thanked that State Government and Chief Minister Pawan Chamling for declaring a State holiday for the festival of Teej.

The release adds that such an initiative of the CM was evidence of his liberal and inclusive policies and an exam-

ple of his work for the preservation and welfare of all religious and cultural practices.

The organisation president, Mr Basnet, maintained that instead to just making assurances and announcements, the government made the effort to bring out a notification for the same.

He mentioned that this initiative of the

government was a big moment for the Khas Chhettri-Bahun community for the preservation of their religious, cultural and social practices.

He asserted that welfare measures for the community would only be successful while working in the close co-ordination of the State government.

The release states that the RMDD Minister

mentioned that this initiative of the CM clearly reflects his honest intention, harmony and equality towards all communities, gender and social and cultural sections.

It is informed that the meeting was also attended by Upper Burtuk MLA, DR Thapa, who is also a former president of the organisation, and Upper Tadong MLA, Timothy William Basnet.

## Rural farmers and youth trained on mushroom cultivation at ICAR

**GANGTOK, 02 JAN (IPR):** Twenty-one women and rural youth from Marchak, Ranipool, East Sikkim were trained on organic mushroom and spawn production technology providing them an opportunity to carve out a livelihood option for themselves.

ICAR-National Organic Farming Research Institute, Tadong under the leadership of Joint Director, Dr. RK Avasthe, has been playing a pivotal role in developing and popularizing scientific organic oyster mushroom and its spawn production technology among the farmers of Sikkim. The premier institute conducted a three-day organic oyster mushroom production training for entrepreneurship development for the rural youth and women folk of Sikkim from 26-28 Dec 2018.

The training was organized in several technical sessions where the participants got an overview of the current scenario and scope of mushroom production in Sikkim. They also had hands on exposure to preparation of mushroom cultures, production of mushroom spawn and beds. Besides, there were technical sessions on pest and disease management, maintenance



and storage of mushroom beds, post-harvest processing and value addition in mushrooms.

The trainees also had an opportunity to visit the ICAR Research Farm where they were briefed about the ongoing agricultural research and technologies developed at the ICAR-NOFRI.

The training program was inaugurated by chief guest Principal Director, H&CC DD, Dawa Lhamu on 26 Dec, 2018. She enlightened the participants on the organic oyster mushroom cultivation in Sikkim and emphasized on the economic and social importance of mushrooms in the communities of Sikkim and called upon the farmers to take up mushroom cultivation as a good option for sustaining a healthy livelihood.

During the programme, Scientist (Plant Pathology) and Co-ordinator of the training, Dr. Shweta Singh detailed about the various activities to be undertaken

during the training. She also explained the crop production and management of oyster mushroom cultivation and the spawn production technology developed at ICAR-NOFRI.

The management of pests and diseases hampering mushroom production was illustrated extensively by Scientist (Plant Pathology), Dr. Chandramani Raj. Senior Scientist (Horticulture), Dr. Ashish Yadav, emphasized on the post-harvest processing of mushroom and the benefits that can be accrued from it.

An elaborate explanation of the infrastructure development and economics for profitable cultivation of oyster mushroom cultivation was dealt by SMS (Agronomy), KVK, East Sikkim, Dr. Manoj Kumar. At the end of the training, the participants were provided with necessary inputs like spawn packets, plastic bags and other small resources so as to promote them to take up mushroom cultivation.

## Govt tables bill to allow voluntary use of Aadhaar for SIMs, bank a/c

**NEW DELHI, JAN 2 (PTI):** The government Wednesday introduced a bill in the Lok Sabha that will allow individuals to voluntary offer biometric ID Aadhaar as a means of identity verification for obtaining services like opening a bank account and getting a mobile phone connection.

The bill, which seeks to amend three separate laws governing Aadhaar, telecom sector, and banking regulation, also gives a minor an option to opt out of the 12-digit identity scheme on attaining the age of 18 years.

It also provides for stiff penalties for violation of norms set for the use of Aadhaar.

The Aadhaar and Other Laws (Amendment) Bill 2018, moved by Law and IT Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad in the Lok Sabha, bans storing of core biometric information as well as Aadhaar number by service providers in cases of individuals who have voluntarily offered the national ID as a means of authentication.

It also makes it clear that anyone not offering Aadhaar cannot be denied any service, be it a bank account or a SIM card.

The bill seeks to amend the Aadhaar (Tar-

geted Delivery of Financial and Other Subsidies, Benefits and Services) Act, 2016, the Indian Telegraph Act, 1885 and the Prevention of Money-laundering Act, 2002.

The legislation proposes telecom service providers, apart from using Aadhaar for authentication, can also leverage offline verification, use of passport, or any other officially valid document or modes of identification as notified by the central Government.

The amendments, according to the objects and reasons for the Bill, will "provide for 12-digit Aadhaar number and its alternate numbers to be generated" in a manner so as to conceal the actual Aadhaar number.

It would also "permit the entities performing authentication only when they are compliant with the standards of privacy and security," it said. The Bill also seeks to lay down the procedure for offline verification of an Aadhaar number holder, and confers enhanced regulator-like power on Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI) to give directions as it may consider necessary to any entity in the Aadhaar ecosystem.

It says that every

## On first day of 2019, estimated 395,000 babies born worldwide, most in India: UNICEF

**YOSHITA SINGH**  
**UNITED NATIONS, JAN 2 (PTI):** More than 395,000 babies were expected to have born around the world on New Year's Day, with India estimated to record the highest number of these births at nearly 70,000, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) said.

As the calendar flips to 2019, about 395,072 babies will be born around the world.

Over half of these births are estimated to take place in eight countries, including India, China, Pakistan, United States and Bangladesh.

India is expected to register 69,944 of these births, followed by China (44,940), Nigeria (25,685), Pakistan (15,112), Indonesia (13,256), US (11,086), The Democratic Republic of Congo (10,053) and Bangladesh (8,428).

As the clock struck midnight, Sydney greeted an estimated 168 babies, followed by 310 in Tokyo, 605 in Beijing, 166 in Madrid, and 317 in New York.

The first babies were born in Fiji in the Pacific,

and the US will most likely deliver its last.

As the world enters a new year, UNICEF called on nations to meet every newborn's right to health and survival. The agency's Deputy Executive Director, Charlotte Petri Gornitzka, asked the world to join UNICEF in "making a resolution to fulfill every right of every child, starting with the right to survive".

The agency warned

that in several countries many babies will not even be named as they won't make it past their first day. According to UNICEF, in 2017, about one million babies died the day they were born, and 2.5 million in just their first month of life.

Most died from preventable causes such as premature birth, complications during delivery, and infections like pneumonia, in what the agency called 'a violation of their basic right to survival'. "We can save millions of babies if we invest in training and equipping local health workers so that every newborn is born into a safe pair of hands," Gornitzka added.

### Bhaiching goes all...

and Sikkimese Nepalese - enshrined in Article 371F will be his party's top agenda in the upcoming elections.

### On Corruption Charges

The Hamro Sikkim Party leader also charged the Chief Minister with committing huge corruption in power projects and claimed that Mr Chamling had sanctioned 36 power projects despite non-viability of most of these projects.

"Not for nothing, most of the files related to power projects have got destroyed in a mysterious fire at the Power department building recently," he claimed.

He said that if his party or a coalition government minus Mr Chamling is voted to power, an inquiry will be launched into the mysterious fire in the record room as well as corruption in the power sector.

The next government will ask the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) to take up probe into various corruption charges against Mr Chamling, said Mr Bhutia.

### On Organic Farming

Poking holes in Sikkim's Organic Mission, the HSP vice president said that food production has gone down by 65 per cent in Sikkim and land meant for agriculture has cut down by half during Mr Chamling's over two-decade rule.

"Sikkim relies on outside for food and to centre for money," he stated.

"Mr Chamling has simply failed to make Sikkim a self-sustained state by generating own revenues to meet its various needs," Mr Bhutia rued.

### On Improvement of Sports

Sikkim needs small infrastructures to improve sports in rural area and not Rs 40-50 crore infrastructures, said the former Indian football skipper, adding that the huge infrastructures which have been under construction for years is not taking any shape.

There is no improvement of sports in the state as the environment has to be created to encourage young minds in sporting arena, he believes.

Mr Bhutia said that he will try to create an environment to encourage the Sikkimese youth to take up football in a big way like Mizoram whose 70-80 young footballers are playing for various top clubs across the country.

Improving education and sports infrastructure will be another key agenda to overcome high suicide rate in Sikkim as studies and games will keep younger generation engaged in life, he said.

### Sikkim team's Milind...

scoring 261 against Manipur, 224 against Nagaland, 133 against Uttarakhand, 13 & 13 against Bihar, 96 & 77\* against Puducherry, 139 against Mizoram and 117 & 127\* against Meghalaya.

"I would like to thank Sikkim Cricket Association for giving me the opportunity to represent the State in Ranji Trophy Season of 2018-19 and am happy that I am being able to deliver what they expected of me. My only target in each match is to be on the crease for as long as I can, build a partnership and make maximum runs. I am happy to be in the top five of most runs in Ranji Trophy Season list," says Milind Kumar.

Sikkim managed to draw its match against Meghalaya today with decent batting from the players where Captain Nilesh Lamichaney scoring 70 runs, Ashish Thapa (43), Milind Kumar (127\*) and Karma Thinlay (14\*). It was Milind and Karma who took the match to the end with Sikkim scoring 304/4 in the second innings where Meghalaya took an innings lead and shared the point Sikkim (1) and Meghalaya (3).

With this, Sikkim earned 20 points and is standing in 5th place of Plate Division Points table, ahead of Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Mizoram, and Nagaland.

Sikkim will be playing its last match of Ranji Trophy Season 2018-19 on 07 Jan, 2018 at DN Singha Stadium, Goalpara, Assam.



# Mamring Senior Secondary School lifts state-level Indian Election Quiz Trophy

## SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 02 JAN:

The four months of intervention of the Indian Elections Quiz 2018 conducted by the Office of the Chief Electoral Officer, Sikkim, culminated with a grand finale at the auditorium of Modern Senior Secondary School, Gangtok on 28 Dec 2018.

The state level quiz competition, arguably the biggest quiz competition with a direct intervention reaching out to more than 8,500 students, had the Deputy Chief Election Commissioner, Election Commission of India, New Delhi, Chandra Bhusan Kumar as the chief guest for the finals.

The state level finals had four schools competing for the coveted trophy - Mamring Senior Secondary School representing East Sikkim, Khechuperi Senior Secondary School representing West Sikkim, Hee-Gyathang Senior Secondary School representing North Sikkim and Namchi Girls Senior Secondary School representing South Sikkim.



representing West Sikkim, Hee-Gyathang Senior Secondary School representing North Sikkim and Namchi Girls Senior Secondary School representing South Sikkim.

The five round final had the audience on tenterhooks with each school giving its best. Eventually, Mamring Senior Secondary School

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## 24 candidates complete Referee Clinic at Paljor Stadium



## SAGAR CHHETRI

GANGTOK, 02 JAN:

Twenty-four candidates from different parts of the State successfully completed a Referee Clinic held from 26 to 30 December here at Paljor Stadium. The five-day clinic was conducted by Sikkim Football Association [SFA] in close coordination with All India Football Federation [AIFF], New Delhi.

A press release from SFA president, Menla Ethenpa, informs that Maria Rebello from Asian Football Confederation and Suresh Srinivasa and Anup Kumar from AIFF conducted the clinic. The release adds that out of 60 applicants, 24 eligible candidates were shortlisted for the clinic.

The valedictory function of the clinic was held at Paljor Stadium

representing West Sikkim, Hee-Gyathang Senior Secondary School representing North Sikkim and Namchi Girls Senior Secondary School representing South Sikkim.

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## Free Winter Coaching for classes X to XII

### YOGEN THATAL

SINGTAM, 02 JAN:

Area MLA, Agriculture Minister, Somnath Poudyal, appreciated the initiative taken by the SDF Students' Front in setting up a Free Winter Coaching programme for students of classes X to XII here. Mr Poudyal encouraged the students to grasp this opportunity and make full use of it.



The programme was held today at the Archigos Preparatory Academy which is also

a location where the Free Winter Coaching camp is to be held.

## SBJM wishes Governor on New Year



### SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 02 JAN:

Sikkim Bihari Jagran Manch newly elected central committee along with other committees of different areas visited Raj Bhawan to wish the Governor of Sikkim, Ganga Prasad a happy and prosperous New Year.

## FLAT AVAILABLE FOR RENT

Fully furnished, 3 Bedroom flat available for rent at Church Road, Near Diesel Power House. Conveniently located by the roadside and a 5-minute walk from M.G. Marg. Suitable for Corporate Office and Guest House.

For further details please

Contact: 9434117687 / 9083826462

## Yashwant Sinha, Arun Shourie move SC seeking review of Dec 14 Rafale verdict

NEW DELHI, JAN 2 (PTI):

Former Union ministers Yashwant Sinha and Arun Shourie, and advocate Prashant Bhusan Wednesday moved the Supreme Court, seeking review of its December 14 verdict dismissing all PILs alleging irregularities in the procurement of 36 Rafale jets from France.

In their review plea, they alleged that the judgment "relied upon patently incorrect claims made by the government in an unsigned note given in a sealed cover" to the apex court.

They have also sought that the plea be heard in

an open court.

The Supreme Court had on December 14 last year dismissed the pleas challenging the deal between India and France for procurement of 36 jets, saying there was no occasion to "really doubt the decision making process" warranting setting aside of the contract.

The top court had rejected the pleas seeking lodging of an FIR and the court-monitored probe alleging irregularities in the Rs 58,000 crore deal, in which both the countries have entered into an inter-governmental agreement (IGA).

## Bitter war of words between govt, Opposition in LS over Rafale

NEW DELHI, JAN 2 (PTI):

The Opposition and the government were involved in a bitter war of words on the Rafale issue in Lok Sabha on Wednesday, with Rahul Gandhi saying that Prime Minister Narendra Modi "does not have guts" to face questions in Parliament and Finance Minister Arun Jaitley accusing the Congress chief of peddling "lies" and "falsehood".

The lower house witnessed frequent adjournments as barbs flew from both sides and Opposition Members tried to disrupt speeches of rival leaders during a near three hour debate.

The discussions ended abruptly midway after Speaker Sumitra Mahajan suspended 24 AIADMK members for five days due to the "grave disorder" they caused with their protests in the Well of the House.

In an embarrassment to the Narendra Modi government, its ally Shiv Sena also supported the Opposition's demand for a joint parliamentary committee (JPC) into the Rafale deal, claiming that people say the aircraft is good but the deal is bad.

Following Gandhi's hard-hitting attack on the government, Jaitley

led the government's charge in a scathing counter-attack as he referred to alleged defence scams during the Congress rule and said "conspirators" of past defence scams had the "audacity" to target the Modi dispensation.

He also ruled out a JPC probe- a demand made by most opposition leaders, including Gandhi- saying there was no need for it as the Supreme Court has already satisfied its "conscience" on the issue.

Targeting Gandhi, the BJP leader said he would have played in the lap of 'Q', an apparent reference to Ottavio Quattrocchi allegedly involved in the Bofors case.

Jaitley also mentioned the recent disclosure allegedly made by AgustaWestland accused Christian Michel and referred to terms like "Mrs G" and "the Italian lady" and "her son" to attack the Congress leadership.

Attacking the Congress president, he said "There are some people who have a natural dislike for truth. Every word spoken for the last six months on this subject, including in this House (by them) are false....He has a legacy of speaking falsehood".

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# SummitTIMES

ON TOP OF THE NEWS

## Care for the Children

*Yes, they continue to be employed even before they are 14*

It is now twelve years since a ban was imposed in October 2006 [under Child Labour (Prohibition & Regulation) Act, 1986] against employment of under-14 year olds in “any” kind of work. At that time, spirits were high as one expected the prohibition of employing u-14’s in “any” work would clear out the grey areas under which we had continued to put children at risk. Unfortunately, we also underestimated the wickedness of our society, because thirty years since we sought to save children from laboring, and a full 12 since we clarified that they could not even be engaged as domestic servants, we continue to bond them into labour.

The Act had already been in place for 20 years before employment of minors even as domestic servants or helpers in restaurants and tea shops was banned. Ideally, expanding the definition of work and widening the net to include more “employers” into the criminal bracket if they continue to engage child labour should have come after the original act had delivered exceptional results and the safety nets had been reinforced to catch the newly liberated. These had to be backed with the right legislations and trainings to enforce this important law. Thirty years on, it is with a heavy heart that one highlights that none of these happened. Yes, under-14-year-olds are occasionally rescued from hazardous places of work, but those rescues were taking place earlier as well and even before child labour was “prohibited and regulated”. How many private citizens has one heard of getting hauled to court for having employed minors at home?

The Act was never implemented in earnest in any of its forms and protection hence remains only on paper. While most of the focus on child labour, in Sikkim at least, has revolved around their employment as domestic servants, albeit without any real effect or even embarrassment, fact remains that many minors continue to work hazardous and much more strenuous occupations as well. Children who do not look more than 12 years old, and many, who appear to be borderline 14 year olds, can be seen employed at work sites, some even government sanctioned projects, and recently, some were even rescued from some shops in Singtam. The bonded-labour tendencies of the employers or their selfish intent to maximise profits by employing minors [since they can be paid less and fired at will], are not the only reasons why child labour continues to confront Sikkim at home and outside; a larger share of the blame lies with whichever authority it is that is shouldered with the responsibility to inform the people and enforce the ban.

No genuine attempt has been made to educate and police against the continued abuse of the law. Had such an attempt been made, there would not have been such avoidable conundrums as figuring out how or which agency is supposed to establish the age of an illegally employed child. When it comes to children who choose a depressing workplace over school, it is too much to expect them to circulate their CVs with their birth certificates attached. It will also be impractical to expect employers to prove the lawful age of their workers. So who does it then? And how? One could theorise on this aspect here, but the best people to work out an implementable guideline would be those who have worked at enforcing the ban. Only they would know the limitations of the existing rules, provided of course, they have worked at implementing it. Children continue to fall through the gaps which can only get plugged once some hands-on experience is on call. There does not appear to be much of that available. Such a scenario thirty years since the Act was promulgated and a full decade since it was expanded is not how childhoods can be saved.

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MYRIAM RENAUD  
*theconversation.com*

Fully half of Yemen’s population – 14 million people – are on the brink of starvation. Some analysts blame their inability to access basic foodstuff on escalating conflict between two religious factions: the country’s Sunni Muslims and its Houthis. The Houthis belong to the Shiite branch of Islam.

Saudi Arabia, which shares a border with Yemen and is predominantly Sunni, has been helping Yemen’s government forces try to regain control over Houthi-held parts of the country. For several weeks, a Saudi-led coalition has unleashed near-continuous airstrikes on Houthi strongholds including access points for the majority of humanitarian aid coming into country.

What are the Houthis’ religious beliefs?

#### ROOTS OF HOUTHİ MOVEMENT

Just as the Protestant tradition is subdivided into Methodists, Presbyterians, Congregationalists and others, Shiite Islam is also subdivided. Houthis belong to the Zaydi branch.

From the ninth century onward, or for a thousand years, a state ruled by Zaydi religious leaders and politicians existed in northern Yemen. Then, in 1962, Egyptian-trained Yemeni military officers toppled the Zaydi monarchy and replaced it with a republic. Because of their ties to the ancient regime, Zaydis were perceived as a threat to the new government and were subjected to severe repression.

Nearly three decades later, in 1990, the region known as south Yemen merged with north Yemen to become the Republic of Yemen. Zaydis remained a majority in the north and west of the country, and also in the capital city of Sanaa. However, in terms of the overall population, they became a minority.

According to a 2010 CIA estimate, 65 percent of Yemen’s people are Sunnis and 35 percent are Shiites. The majority of those Shiites are Zaydis. Jews, Bahais, Hindus and Christians make up less than 1 percent of inhabitants, many of whom are refugees or temporary foreign residents.

To reduce the dominance of Zaydis in the north, government authorities encouraged Muslims belonging to two Sunni branches with links to Saudi Arabia – Salafis and Wahhabis – to settle in the heart of the Zaydis’ traditional territories.

#### START OF HOUTHİ INSURGENCY

Contributing to this trend, in the early 1990s, a Yemeni cleric founded a teaching institute in the Zaydis’ heartland. This cleric, educated in Saudi Arabia, developed a version of Salafi Islam.

His institute proselytized with the goal of reforming Muslims through conversion. It educated thousands of Yemeni students and, in less than three decades, the new religious group grew large enough to compete with older groups such as the Zaydis.

According to scholar Charles Schmitz, the Houthi insurgency began in the early 1990s, spurred, in part, by Zaydi resistance to growing Salafi and Wahhabi influence in the north.

Hussein Badreddin al-Houthi, son of a prominent Zaydi cleric, gave the grassroots movement its name. He coalesced support among his followers around a narrative of Houthis as defenders and revivers of Zaydi religion and culture.

#### SUNNI VS. ZAYDI SHIITE BELIEFS

What beliefs set Zaydis apart from Sunni Muslims? That is an old story, dating back to the seventh century when the Prophet Muhammad died.

Shiites and Sunnis disagree about who should have been selected to succeed Muhammad as head

## Digital Earth: the paradigm now shaping our world’s data cities

DAVINA JACKSON  
*theconversation.com*

Today’s smart cities rely on networks: squillions of semiconductor devices that constantly pulse electromagnetic waves (light and radio frequencies) through telecommunications satellites.

Another genre of satellites, equipped especially for Earth observations, is accelerating a more advanced form of urbanism: data cities. These realms are not only “smart and connected” but also increasingly responsive to electronic evidence revealing real situations and challenges.

In various publications and a new book, Data Cities: How satellites are transforming architecture and design, I explain how this century’s Earth observation science paradigm is destined to transform traditional practices among built environment professionals. That includes land surveyors, architects, engineers, landscape designers, property developers, builders and urban planners.

#### HOW DO ALL THE SATELLITE DATA AFFECT URBAN DESIGN?

In essence, much more detailed and accurate information about local environmental conditions will be supplied to development teams before new building concepts are designed. This should be more informative and less time-wasting than current routines. At present, planning authorities determine building proposals based on environmental impact assessment reports prepared after the design phase.

Architects and engineers already share the on-screen construction of building information models. They should benefit from obtaining more site-specific information earlier than is now usual. This would allow them to calculate more useful parameters, and receive more accurate performance predictions, for their virtual buildings and landscapes.

Earth observation satellites carry sensor and scanner systems that bounce different signals to and from the Earth. These systems constantly monitor and display many environmental conditions that normally are invisible to humans.

Some innovations in sat-imaging include: the patterns of street lighting that reliably map different cities at night; thermo-imaging (infrared) of the surface temperatures and energy losses of buildings; and high-res overviews of areas affected by drought, flooding, fires, chemical spills, eruptions, wars and other disasters.

Earth observation satellites are not new. In 1946, a camera aboard a V-2 (aka A-4) missile launched from New Mexico took the first picture of Earth from space. The first satellite weather map was broadcast through small black-and-white television screens in 1960.

Today, more than 650 Earth observation satellites operate beyond the Earth’s atmosphere. Some orbit the planet to allow scanning in swathes. Others hold geostationary positions above specific places.

These satellites also operate at different distances from the Earth. And they carry different types of scanning and sensing equipment. As a result, they produce a diverse range of image resolutions, styles and scales of ground coverage.

The satellites record various kinds of environmental information, depending on which waves of the electromagnetic spectrum are used. These data are analysed and processed using precise algorithms.

A common example is data visualisations – often 2D or 3D video maps recorded over time. Typically, bright colours are applied to highlight contrasting conditions. For example, temperature data are colourised to show heat islands in cities. The same thing is done with aerosol data to depict patterns of carbon pollution.



Supporters of Shiite Houthi rebels attend a rally in Sanaa, Yemen, in 2017.

of the Muslim community. Two groups emerged after his death. One group of the Prophet’s followers – later called Sunnis – recognized four of his companions as “rightly guided” leaders. In contrast, another group – later called Shiites – recognized only Ali, the fourth of these leaders, as legitimate.

Ali was the Prophet’s first cousin and closest male blood relative. He was also married to Fatima, Muhammad’s youngest daughter. For these and other reasons, Shiites believe that Ali was uniquely qualified to lead. In support of this claim, they cite sources describing Muhammad’s wish that Ali succeed him. Shiites consider Ali second in importance only to the Prophet.

Over time, further divisions took place. Allegiances to different descendants of Ali and his two sons, Hassan and Hussein, split Shiites into sub-branches. A grandson of Hussein called Zayd gave the Zaydis their name. To them, he is the fifth imam after Muhammad, giving the Zaydis their other name: “Fivers.”

Zayd earned the respect of his followers when he rose up against the powerful Muslim rulers of his time, whom he believed to be tyrannical and corrupt. Though his rebellion was ill-fated, his fight against oppression and injustice inspires Zaydis to actively resist.

A key Zaydi belief is that only blood relatives of Ali and Fatima are eligible to serve as religious leaders, or imams. In Yemen, these relatives form a notable class of people called Sada. Hussein al-Houthi, the first leader of the Houthis, came from a prestigious clan of Sada.

#### IMPACT OF SECTARIAN DIFFERENCES

Not all Zaydis have a favorable view of Sada elites. When north and south Yemen merged in 1990, the republican government, led by a Zaydi president sought to reduce their outsized influence and limit their privileges.

Some members of the Sada reacted to the country’s changing political landscape by joining electoral politics to secure honor and exercise power. This path was initially followed by Hussein al-Houthi but, after he decided it was ineffective, he abandoned it.

Other members of the Sada, particularly the youth, reacted by pledging to teach and promote Zaydism

among their peers who had forgotten their ancestors’ religion. To accomplish this, they founded the Believing Youth organization and set up a cultural education program based on a network of summer camps in the north. Hussein al-Houthi joined this organization in the early 2000s and later transformed it into a political movement critical of the Yemeni government’s ties to the West.

Security forces sent to arrest Hussein al-Houthi touched off the first war with the Houthis. Hussein was killed during the conflict and leadership passed to Hussein’s father and then to Hussein’s youngest brother, Abdul-Malik Badreddin al-Houthi. Abdul-Malik helped transform the Houthi movement into a powerful fighting force.

Five additional wars followed over the next six years until, in 2010, the rebels had grown strong enough to repel a ground and aerial offensive launched against them by Saudi Arabia. During these wars, the Houthis pushed beyond their traditional base and captured vast sections of territory.

Many Yemenis, according to one expert, believe that the Houthis are fighting to restore a state like the one prior to 1962, led by imams who came exclusively from Sada families.

#### COMPLEX FACTORS TODAY

Houthis continue to focus on protecting the Zaydi region of north Yemen from state control. However, they have also forged coalitions with other groups – some of them Sunni – unhappy with Yemen’s persistent high unemployment and corruption.

A 2015 U.N. Security Council report estimates that the Houthi movement includes 75,000 armed fighters. However, if unarmed loyalists are taken into account, they could number between 100,000 and 120,000.

Sectarian tension is only one factor in the complex set of interlocking factors responsible for violence and starvation in Yemen. But it is, without a doubt, a contributing factor.

*[the writer is Principal Investigator and Project Director of the Global Ethic Project, Parliament of the World’s Religions, University of Chicago]*

#### WHAT’S AUSTRALIA’S ROLE IN THIS?

Australia does not fly satellites yet. But in July 2018 it launched the Australian Space Agency (ASA). Headed by former CSIRO director Megan Clark, it has an initial budget of A\$300 million.

The ASA is working with Geoscience Australia (GA) on a A\$225 million program to improve data positioning accuracy – to 3cm in cities with mobile coverage. Another A\$37 million is going into developing the Digital Earth Australia program for environmental data simulations.

Digital Earth, a term Al Gore coined in his 1992 book, Earth in the Balance, is an international science agenda to use Earth observation systems to update the ancient cartography ambition to “present the known world as one and continuous”.

This dream was championed most influentially in the 20th century by US scientist Richard Buckminster Fuller, with his evolving concepts for an Air-Ocean World Town Plan (1928), Dymaxion map (1943), Geoscope (a giant electronic space-frame globe, 1962) and his book, Operating Manual for Spaceship Earth (1969).

In the early 2000s, NASA (World Wind) and Google (Google Earth) launched the first internet-enabled “virtual globes”.

In 2005, major nations established the Group on Earth Observations (GEO) secretariat in Geneva to develop a globally networked administration and on-line access system for geospatial data. These data are mainly from satellites at this stage.

The Global Earth Observations System of Systems (GEOSS) program now involves more than 200 national governments, United Nations data agencies, and global science and non-government organisations.

Australia’s representative on GEO is Geoscience Australia’s environmental division chief, Stuart Minchin. Working

with Minchin, a GA team led by Adam Lewis produced the world-leading Data Cube system for rapidly analysing time-series stacks of American Landsat images covering Australia’s 40-plus zones of latitude and longitude.

European scientists are now using this method to compile a data-layered map of human settlements around the world.

Another notable advance in urban modelling comes from a public-private partnership between the Australian government’s data-marketing company, PSMA, and two global corporations: US satellite imagery supplier DigitalGlobe and business software vendor Pitney Bowes Australia. They offer information-rich online aerial imagery of Australian suburbs. Multispectral and shortwave infrared sensors aboard DigitalGlobe’s WorldView satellites are used to create these images.

Menu options enable users to clarify footprints and heights of buildings and trees, roof materials, and locations of swimming pools and solar panels. PSMA adds cadastral and other government land data, including plot areas and street addresses. This covers more than 15 million buildings over 7.6 million square kilometres.

#### SO WHERE DO PEOPLE FIT INTO THIS WORLD?

As Al Gore noted in 1992: ... no one yet knows how to cope with the enormous volumes of data that will be routinely beamed down from orbit.

But he cited the importance of machines learning to improve their methods and a global infrastructure of massive parallelism – using dispersed chips and computers to process information at faster speeds.

Where do people step into this auto-piloting system? That remains moot

*[the writer is Honorary Academic, School of Architecture, University of Kent]*



# CBI books 5 Army officers for corruption

NEW DELHI, JAN 2 (PTI):

The CBI has booked five Army personnel, including a colonel, for allegedly receiving bribes worth Rs 18 lakh from a supplier of rations for troops posted in Assam and Arunachal Pradesh, officials said Wednesday.

This is the second case in the recent past when the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) has registered an FIR against army officers for corruption in supplies.

In the latest case, the CBI has registered an FIR against Colonel Raman Dahda, Lieutenant Colonel Mahendra Kumar, Subedar Devender Kumar, Havildar Abhay Singh, Subedar Sahuran Sahu and supplier K K Yangfo for criminal conspiracy.

Dahda was the then Commanding Officer of the 556 Army Supply Corps and Mahendra Kumar a platoon commander.

They have been also booked under provisions of the Prevention of Corruption Act.



It is alleged that the officers received Rs 18 lakh in cash from civilian contractors in regard to procurement of fresh and dry rations for troops deployed in Assam and Arunachal Pradesh.

The action was taken on the basis of a complaint from the Army.

It is alleged that Dahda misused his official position and received Rs 4.15 lakh from

supplier Yangfo through two transactions in the account Dahda's father.

According to the complaint, Mahender Kumar, who was responsible for quality check, misused his official position and took Rs 1 lakh as bribe.

Subedar Devender Kumar allegedly took a bribe of Rs 2.04 lakh, Havildar Abhay Kumar Rs 98,000 and Subedar Sahuran Sahu Rs 7.65 lakh in three

transactions from Yangfo. Yangfo, a civilian contractor in Arunachal Pradesh's Tawang, supplied ration for the Army between 2015 and 2017.

The CBI carried out a preliminary inquiry which revealed that undue advantage was paid to an entire chain of officials and unit representatives involved in checking of quality and quantity of items being

supplied by Yangfo.

Following the inquiry the agency has registered an FIR against the suspects.

The agency had registered a similar FIR against Lt Col Amit Sharma and Lt Col Sutikshan Rana, officers of the Army Service Corps, who allegedly received bribes worth Rs 82 lakh between 2012 and 2016 from a supplier of ration in Nagaland.

## 9th All India Police Commando Competition begins in Assam

DIPHU, JAN 2 (PTI): The ninth All India Police Commando Competition, organised under the aegis of Assam Rifles was inaugurated by Meghalaya Governor Tahagata Roy at Karbi Anglong Sports Association (KASA) Stadium at Karbi Anglong district headquarters here in Assam, officials said.

Speaking on the occasion, Roy said the competition's main aim is to improve the standard of professional performance of the police forces of the country.

Appreciating the endeavour of the Assam Rifles for organising the competition, Roy said the country's oldest paramilitary force has lived up to its credo of being 'Friends of the North East'.

A total of 22 teams - eight central armed po-

lice forces (CAPF) teams and 14 state police force teams are participating in the event, an Assam Rifles official said.

A team of 21 paratroopers displayed their skills at the programme, he said.

A Traditional Manipuri Musical Band also performed at the programme, he added.

The Chief Executive Member of Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council, the district Deputy Commissioner and Superintendent of Police were also present at the inaugural ceremony.

The closing ceremony of the 9th All India Police Commando Competition is scheduled to be held on January 9 and Assam Chief Minister Sarbananda Sonowal would be present on the occasion, the official of the paramilitary force said.

## No plans to extend Assam's NRC to other states: Govt tells Rajya Sabha

New Delhi, Jan 2 (PTI): The government has no plans to extend Assam's National Register of Citizens to other parts of the country, Rajya Sabha was informed Wednesday.

Replying to a written question, Union Minister of State for Home Hansraj Ahir said the NRC of 1951 in Assam is being updated under the provisions of the Citizenship Act, 1955, and the applications for preparation of NRC in Assam were invited in May-August, 2015.

"The exercise to update NRC 1951 is being conducted under the special provisions in respect of state of Assam under the Citizenship Rules, 2003. At present, there is no proposal to extend the National Register of Citizens (NRC) to states other than Assam," he said.

## Three-member team to visit B'desh for inland waterway project

Agartala, Jan 2 (PTI): A joint delegation of Inland Waterways Authority of India (IWAI) and the Tripura government will be visiting Bangladesh this month to study the possibility of building a new waterway connecting the two countries, an official said Wednesday.

A three-member technical team, comprising two IWAI members and an engineer from the state water resource department, will carry out spot assessment at Daudkandi area in Comilla district of Bangladesh, Additional Transport Secretary Anindya Kumar Bhattacharya said.

The proposed waterway on rivers Gomati and Meghna will connect Ashuganj river port in eastern Bangladesh with Sonamura in Sipahijala district of Tripura, he told PTI.

"As a first step, dredging will have to be carried out on both sides (India and Bangladesh) to increase navigability of medium-sized vessels, which can carry at least 10 to 25 tonne of goods," Bhattacharya said.

Last month, a technical team of IWAI had visited the Sonamura to conduct a survey and decide on the possible location of a jetty for the project.

Chief Minister Biplab Kumar Deb had also met Union Minister Nitin Gadkari at New Delhi in December, seeking expedition of the project.

The waterway, once ready, will ease transportation of goods to Sonamura town of Tripura from Bangladesh, Deb had told reporters.

## High-level panel to recommend how to safeguard Assamese identity, reserve state Assembly seats

NEW DELHI, JAN 2 (PTI):

The Centre Wednesday decided to set up a high-level committee to recommend how to provide constitutional, legislative and administrative safeguards to the indigenous people of Assam, including by reserving seats in the state Assembly.

The decision has been taken at a meeting of the Union Cabinet, chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Addressing a press conference, Home Minister Rajnath Singh said the decision has been taken according to the Assam Accord signed in 1985 which envisaged that appropriate constitutional, legislative and administrative safeguards shall be provided to protect, preserve and promote the cultural, social, linguistic identity and heritage of the Assamese people.

"The committee will hold discussions with all stakeholders and assess the required quantum of reservation of seats in Assam Legislative Assembly and local bodies for Assamese people," he said.

The home minister said the panel will also assess the requirement of measures to be taken to protect Assamese and other indigenous languages of the state, quantum of reservation in employment under the Government of Assam and other measures to protect, preserve and promote cultural, social, linguistic identity and heritage of Assamese people.

"It was a very significant decision for the promotion and protection of cultural, social, linguistic identity and heritage of Assamese people," he said.

Singh said it has been felt that Clause six of the Assam Accord, which provides for protection of the rights of indigenous people of the state, has not been fully implemented even almost 35

years after the Accord was signed.

"The Union cabinet, therefore, approved the setting up of a high-level committee to suggest constitutional, legislative and administrative safeguards as envisaged in Clause 6 of the Assam Accord. The committee shall examine the effectiveness of actions since 1985 to implement Clause 6 of the Assam Accord," he said.

The home minister said the terms of reference and composition of the committee will be announced within the next few days.

"The composition and terms of reference of the committee will be issued separately by the Ministry of Home Affairs. It is expected that the setting up of the committee will pave the way for the implementation of the Assam Accord in letter and spirit and will help fulfil longstanding expectations of the Assamese people," Singh said.

## SC agrees to hear plea seeking urgent steps for rescue of trapped Meghalaya miners

NEW DELHI, JAN 2 (PTI):

The Supreme Court Wednesday agreed to hear on Thursday a plea seeking urgent steps to rescue 15 miners trapped inside an illegal coal mine in Meghalaya since December 13.

The matter was mentioned for urgent listing before a bench comprising Chief Justice Ranjan Gogoi and Justice S K Kaul.

The PIL filed by Aditya N Prasad also sought a direction to the Centre and other authorities concerned to prepare a Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for rescue operations in mining.

The rat-hole mine, located on top of a hill-ock fully covered with trees in East Jaintia Hills district, had got flooded when water from the nearby Lytein river gushed into it, trapping



the miners.

Rat-hole mining involves digging of narrow tunnels, usually three-four feet high, for workers to enter and extract coal. The horizontal tunnels are often termed "rat holes" as each just about fits one person.

The National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) had Thursday contradicted media reports which quoted it as saying the trapped miners were suspected to be dead on the basis of a foul odour that the force's divers had encountered when they went inside the mine.

It had said the foul smell could be due to the stagnant water in the mine as pumping had been halted for more than 48 hours.

A survivor of the accident said Saturday there was no way the trapped miners would come out alive.

Family members of at least seven trapped miners had already given up hope to rescue them alive and requested the government to retrieve the bodies for last rites.

## Mizoram: 2018 saw Cong losing its last fort in Northeast

HC VANLALRUATA

AIZAWL, JAN 2 (PTI): Political developments dominated 2018 in Mizoram and as the year drew to a close, the state saw installation of a new government led by rebel-turned-politician Zoramthanga, who was back with a bang after being in political wilderness for two assembly terms.

Zoramthanga's Mizo National Front (MNF) trounced the Congress to bring to an end its 10-year rule since 2008 in the state in December.

Seventy-four-year-old Zoramthanga was sworn in as the chief minister for the third time on December 15. He had earlier headed the government in 1998 and 2003.

For the first time, the swearing-in ceremony was marked by Bible reading, prayer and singing of a Christian gospel song. Mizoram is a predominant Christian state.

The Congress managed to bag only five seats while the MNF secured 26 seats in the 40-member legislature.



The Congress's slump was sharp considering the fact that it had 34 seats in the last election in 2013. Though the BJP's pet assertion of "Congress-mukt" came true in the Northeast, the party could not do much in Mizoram where it managed to win only one seat.

After taking oath, Zoramthanga said that the MNF has now no intention to leave the BJP-led NDA and the North East Democrat-

ic Alliance (NEDA) although it was under fire for joining hands with saffron forces. The state witnessed a terrible disaster on June 4 when 10 people, seven of them belonging to a family, were killed and one person was injured when a building occupied by two families was swept away by landslide caused by heavy rain in Lunglawn area of south Mizoram'sunglei town.

Thousands of homes

were destroyed, hundreds of families evacuated to safer places and hundreds of houses and large areas of cultivation lands inundated by flood due to monsoon fury forcing the state government to close down all the educational institutions for two days, due to heavy rain.

Simultaneous outbreak of the dreaded Porcine Reproductive and Respiratory Syndrome (PRRS) and the Classical Swine Fever

(CSF) from early March resulted in the death of around 4,000 pigs across the state and was only declared as contained in early August.

The PRRS had killed over 8,000 pigs and piglets in 2013 and 2017.

The Mizoram Legislative Assembly on June 28 unanimously adopted a resolution expressing opposition to the proposed Citizenship Amendment Bill, 2016.

The resolution moved by the then Congress government had said, "That this House resolves to impress upon Government of India its unequivocal opposition to the proposed Citizenship Amendment Bill, 2016 that seeks to amend the Citizenship Act, 1955 to make illegal migrants eligible to be given Indian Citizenship on the basis of religion."

"The proposed bill, if enacted could be harmful for states like Mizoram where a huge number of illegal Buddhist migrants from Bangladesh were reportedly residing," it further said.





## Emery finds it hard to put case for Gunners defence

**LONDON, JAN 2 (AFP):** Arsenal manager Unai Emery was happy with his team's attacking play after Tuesday's 4-1 victory over Fulham but admitted their defending has plenty of room for improvement.

The score suggests a straightforward win against a Fulham team who performed as poorly on the road as they usually do but it was exactly what Emery's men needed to restore confidence after their 5-1 thrashing by Liverpool. But Emery knew the score did not tell the whole story.

Ryan Sessegnon missed two good chances to give the visitors the lead in the first 20 minutes and had either gone in, Arsenal's resolve would have been sorely tested. Instead, typically slack Fulham defending allowed the unmarked Granit Xhaka to score from Alex Iwobi's measured cross after 25 minutes, and Arsenal were rarely troubled after that.

"Our challenge now is to improve defensively," Emery admitted.

"Today was the first time we could play with Sokratis, (Skhodran) Mustafi and (Laurent) Koscielny. We are very happy with the attacking players, scoring lots of goals like today.

"But we need more balance defensively, we need to work, to prepare for the second half of the season and we need to do better tactically and we are going to."

His three-man defence, though, was disrupted by a hamstring injury that forced Mustafi off the field at half-time.

Rather than replace him with Stephan Lichtsteiner, Emery changed formation and went to a back four, which suggests the search for balance is both tactical and one of personnel. Emery hinted signings are possible this month as the transfer window reopens.

"It's not easy to improve our team in the market but the club is working. Maybe we can sign one or two players," said the 47-year-old Spaniard. The scale of Arsenal's defensive difficulties is illustrated by their failure to keep a clean sheet since beating Huddersfield Town at the Emirates Stadium on December 8, but a second victory in six matches was welcome.

"We needed to win today," added Emery whose decision to take off goal-scorer Alexandre Lacazette in the second-half sparked a chorus of boos.

However, it was a moved which proved fruitful when his replacement Aaron Ramsey scored soon afterwards.

"We are behind the first four teams in the table but we want to stay close and in the near future there can be opportunities to be in the top four," said Emery. Swiss midfielder Xhaka set Arsenal on their way with his fourth goal of the season.

Lacazette added the second after 55 minutes with their momentum temporarily halted as Aboubakar Kamara pulled one back after 69 minutes.

# Sydney win will be great achievement as team started transition here: Kohli

**CHETAN NARULA**

**SYDNEY, JAN 2 (PTI):** History doesn't matter to him, asserts India skipper Virat Kohli but says winning a maiden Test series in Australia at the SCG would "definitely be big" because that's where the transition started for the team under his captaincy.

Kohli took over as India's Test captain four years ago at the same venue after MS Dhoni's shock retirement.

Ranked 7th at that point, India are now world No.1 in the format and have retained the Border-Gavaskar Trophy after taking an unassailable 2-1 lead in the four-Test series. "It's only been four years (since I have been a captain). If it happens, it's great because I have come here the third time on a Test tour and I know how difficult it is to win here," Kohli said on the eve of the fourth and final Test starting Thursday.

"... at times, you can put in a good performance in Australia but to win as a team has been the biggest challenge for us. Individual performances, honestly, are something that you don't even remember in the last two tours," he stressed.

Kohli said winning the final Test would be like step-



ping up another notch in pursuit of consistency.

"You might have your name up on the honours board but if your team doesn't win, it doesn't really matter. Till now it would definitely be a big, big series' win, not just for me, but also for the whole team purely because of the fact that this is place where we started our transition to be honest," he explained.

"At this particular venue

when MS Dhoni gave up captaincy (2014) and we had a totally young side starting at six or seven (Test ranking) in the world. We have come back here as the number one side in the world, and we want to take that legacy forward."

Kohli said India will take the fourth and final Test as a standalone match and intensity won't be lacking.

"Our year ended very well and we will try to make sure

that we start this year well too. We are taking this as a standalone Test, which we must play with full intensity and effort," Kohli said.

"We have seen in the past that the SCG wicket is good for batting for the first 2-3 days and after that reverse-swing and spin come into play. I think given the heat, the wicket will play to its true nature from day three onwards."

Kohli said his team is "ob-

essed" about winning. "If you see after the last wicket fell in the last game everyone's emotions came out, even the quietest guys... Because we understand that as a team when you push in one direction, things go well. And it has to be an obsession," he said.

"If it is an obsession it won't stop at 1-2 games. If it's something that was a goal, then it stops at one or two games." But Kohli said history doesn't matter and every one

in the team is just simply focused on the job at hand.

"If you ask me very honestly, no (history doesn't matter). We need to stay in the present and focus on the things we can do," he said.

"The reason why we want to win this Test is we understand as cricketers how difficult it is to come here and play. It's not only the team you are playing against, it's the whole nation."

Kohli will become the most successful India captain away from home if his team can seal the series 3-1 but he said there is nothing to prove to anyone.

"It's got nothing to do with proving that we want to do something that has never been done in the past. Every (Indian) team that comes here wants to win, obviously. I am sure that they would have had the same intention but the motivation has never been to change history," he said.

"...not necessarily proving something to someone or changing history. It's just crossing a hurdle and making yourself believe that you are good enough to be at this level and beat any team anywhere in the world," Kohli said.

The India skipper said wining at Melbourne has strengthened the team.

## 2019 expected to be warmer: Officials

**NEW DELHI, JAN 2 (PTI):**

The year 2018 may have ended on a chilly note, but 2019 is expected to be warmer, senior officials said, citing El Nino and the overall trend of rise in temperatures.

According to the World Meteorological Organisation (WMO), the chance of a full-fledged El Nino being established between December 2018-February 2019 is estimated to be about 75-80 per cent.

El Nino is a phenomenon associated with the warming of the Pacific waters and it is largely believed to have an impact on the subcontinent's weather. The weather community is divided over the extent of its impact on the monsoon. Ministry of Earth Sciences Secretary M Rajeevan said as the year commences, the chill that covered large parts of the country is likely to dissipate.

"The temperature is likely to be above

normal. El Nino is one factor while the global warming is another. We have been witnessing above normal temperatures every day," he said.

Since 2015, every passing year has clocked high temperatures. From 2015-2017, all years were recorded to be hottest.

"In an El Nino year, summers and winters witness above normal temperatures," Additional Director General of India Meteorological Department Mritunjay Mohapatra said.

Mohapatra said it is too early to predict whether El Nino would have an impact on monsoon and how would the rainy season be. Rajeevan also noted that it would be premature to say whether the El Nino would have an impact.

"El Nino is likely to end by April-May. So, it is unlikely to have an impact on the monsoon. But it is too early to predict that," Rajeevan said.

## Barbie will soon be 60 - and is still going strong

**ESegundo (UNITED STATES), JAN 2 (AFP):** She is turning 60 this year and still doesn't have a single wrinkle.

Blonde or brunette, slender or curvy, black or white, princess or president, Barbie is a forever favourite for young girls, even if she has caused controversy over the years. The iconic doll has evolved to keep up with the times - check out her Twitter feed.

And despite fierce competition in the toy industry, 58 million Barbies are sold each year in more than 150 countries.

"In an industry where success today is three to five years, 60 years is a huge deal!" said Nathan Baynard, director of global brand marketing for Barbie. Around the world, Barbie is as universally known as Coca-Cola or McDonald's, Baynard said during a recent visit to Mattel's design studio in El Segundo, a suburb of Los Angeles.

In all, more than one billion Barbie dolls have been sold since she made

her debut at the American Toy Fair in New York on March 9, 1959.

She was invented by Ruth Handler, the co-founder of Mattel, who was inspired by her own children to create the doll.

"Her daughter Barbara was limited in the choices of her toys - the only ones were baby dolls," Baynard recounted. "The only role she could imagine through that play was caregiver, mother," whereas Handler's son "could imagine being an astronaut, cowboy, pilot, surgeon."

Barbie is, of course, a shortened version of Barbara. The doll was supposed to teach girls "that they had choices, that they could be anything. In 1959, it was a radical ideal!" Baynard said. Barbie was an instant success. In the first year, 300,000 dolls were sold, he added.

From the start, Barbie's pinup measurements didn't immediately seem all that feminist, and would spark criti-

cism for decades to come.

"In 1959, her body structure was exaggerated to match the aesthetics of the time and the fabric available," said Barbie designer Carlyle Nuera. Since the blonde beauty first hit stores, and after a torrent of complaints over what was seen as unrealistic proportions, Mattel has made many changes - introducing multiple body types and dozens of skin tones.

MG Lord, author of "Forever Barbie," also argued that the original criticisms were unwarranted. "She is what the child wants her to be. How a child sees the Barbie doll is often framed by how the mother of that child feels about the idea of femininity," Lord told AFP.

"The problem here is not an 11.5-inch plastic object. The problem is the larger culture and the idea of femininity." In 1965, four years before Neil Armstrong walked on the Moon, Barbie became an astronaut. In 1968, the first black Bar-

bie doll, a friend named Christie, hit store shelves.

Lisa McKnight, senior vice president and global general manager for the Barbie brand, said that today, 55 per cent of the dolls sold around the world have neither blonde hair nor blue eyes. Mattel has more than 100 people working in the El Segundo design studio, a massive hangar-like building wedged between Los Angeles International Airport and a freeway.

Designers begin with a simple sketch. From there on, every bit of a prototype is made by an army of experts - from sculpting the doll using state-of-the-art software and 3D printing to painting the face, styling the hair, choosing fabrics and crafting the clothing patterns.

The entire design process for a new Barbie can last 12 to 18 months. Then, the prototype is sent from the California workshop to factories in China and Indonesia for mass production.

"Sometimes, you see her on a shelf and then it gets back to you: oh yes, I designed this one!" Nuera said with a smile.

Barbie is not only a toy store success - she has a massive social media presence, and is something of an "influencer," with millions of followers. She has an actual identity: Barbie Millicent Roberts, who hails from the made-up town of Willows in the Midwest.

And now, she speaks directly to girls about her life, and important current topics. In 2018, the brand launched a sweeping campaign to help young girls close the so-called "Dream Gap" - using Barbie to teach them to believe in themselves, and not to buy into sexist gender stereotypes.

Barbie has a hair stylist, makeup artist and photographer who travel with her "for real" in the United States and abroad for Instagram photo sessions (check out @barbiestyle). The account has nearly two million followers.

## India's Balasubramaniam tames Russian GM Maxim

**Mumbai, Jan 2 (PTI):** Indian youngster Balasubramaniam Hscored a sensational win against Russian Grandmaster Lugovsky Maxim in a third round match of the EKA IIFWL Investment Managers 4th Mumbai International GM Chess Tournament 2018 here.

The 15-year-old Chennai-based Balasubramaniam starting with white played aggressively and launched a good attack after the 23-year-old Russian GM Maxim opened with the French defence, a media release said Wednesday.

The Indian teenager put his rival under a lot of pressure and then capitalised on an error from the Russian to grab his Queen on the 17th move.

With not much options left, Maxim re-

signed on the 19th move to hand the Indian a creditable victory.

Meanwhile, India's 35-year-old GM Chanda Sandipan and 20-year-old IM Visakh N R, the only two players to extend their winning streaks to three successive wins, enjoy the lead at the top with three points each. Sandipan easily defeated compatriot Sammed Jaykumar Shete, while Visakh with the black pieces maintained a cool composure to outwit his Egyptian opponent IM Ameir Moheb in 72 moves.

Top-ranked GM Aleksandro Aleksey (2590) of Belarus dropped half a point as he played out a draw with Indian IM Muthaiah Al (2408) and now has 2.5 points to be placed third.

## 2018: SC came down heavily on real estate honchos

**ABHISHEK ANSHU, MANOHAR LAL & RANJIT KUMAR SINHA**

**NEW DELHI, JAN 2 (PTI):** Corporate legal battle involving big business houses like Arcelor-Mittal and Numetal on taking over of Essar Steel and tough stand against the automobile industry on emission norms kept the Supreme Court busy in 2018 during which it also gave a body blow to real estate honchos.

Be it real estate majors United Ltd, Jaypee Group and Amrapali or others, all had to bear the brunt of the apex court for taking for ride ordinary citizens whose hard earned money was at stake.

The year gone by saw United promoters -- Sanjay and Ajay Chandra -- failing to get relief from the top court in coming out of Tihar Jail and Amrapali boss Anil Sharma and two directors being put under police surveillance away from their homes.

The Jaypee Group also had

a tough time throughout the year as investors kept up the pressure for possession of their flats which have been delayed in many cases for more than five years.

Amid the legal developments in the real estate sector, a big corporate battle was seen in the top court when steel and mining major ArcelorMittal approached it challenging the National Company Law Appellate Tribunal (NCLAT) order which had held that Numetal's Rs 37,000 crore offer in second-round bid for Essar Steel was valid.

The top court granted one more opportunity to ArcelorMittal and Russia's VTB Bank-promoted Numetal to bid for Essar Steel, provided the two pay off the non-performing assets of their related corporate debtors within two weeks.

Another embattled corporate house, Sahara Group, was also in the news in the top court throughout the year over the issue of depositing money in the

SEBI-SAHARA account for which it has been facing tough time for over six years.

The ongoing litigation on air pollution took a new turn in the 2018 when the top court hit hard the automobile industry by ordering that no Bharat Stage-IV vehicle would be sold or registered in India from April 1, 2020.

A tough stand was also taken by the top court to regulate the firecrackers and the industry involved in it got a rude shock before Diwali that only "green crackers" would be allowed to burst across the country for two hours only.

The order was not limited to Diwali but for other festivals and occasions in which people burst crackers.

The year gone by also saw the apex court delivering a significant verdict when it held that courts can scrutinise the rates of interest being charged by banks from farmers in states where debt relief laws are in place to

deal with rural indebtedness.

In a judgement having far-reaching consequences, the top court held that foreign lawyers, law firms and companies cannot practice legal profession in India.

In the aviation sector, the apex court disposed of a plea filed by no-frill carrier IndiGo, challenging a Delhi High Court order to shift its operations partially from Terminal-1 (T-1) of the IGI Airport here to Terminal 2.

Dealing with a matter related to pharma sector, the top court dismissed an appeal filed against the Delhi High Court verdict upholding an international arbitral award of Rs 3,500 crore passed in favour of Japanese pharma major Daiichi Sankyo.

The pharma major has alleged that the former promoters of India's Ranbaxy Laboratories Ltd had concealed information about proceedings against them by American food and drug department.



# Trump has not risen to the mantle of White House: Mitt Romney

LALIT K JHA

**WASHINGTON, JAN 2 (PTI):** Mitt Romney, the Republican party's presidential nominee in 2012, has slammed US President Donald Trump, saying his conduct over the past two years, particularly his actions this month, is evidence that he has not risen to the mantle of the office.

Romney, 71, who was elected as a Republican Senator from Utah in November, will be sworn in on Thursday.

"The Trump presidency made a deep descent in December...on balance, his conduct over the past two years, particularly his actions this month, is evidence that the president has not risen to the mantle of the office," Romney said in an op-ed published in the Washington Post on Tuesday.

His strong-hitting op-ed gains significance that he is unlikely to follow White House position on critical issues given that the ruling party has 53 seats in a 100-member Senate.

On some critical issues Trump would require 60 votes to get his legislative agenda passed.

Romney, notably enough, during the Republican presidential primaries in 2016, had described Trump as a con man and accused him as a fraud.

"There's plenty of



evidence that Mr Trump is a con man, a fake. Mr Trump has changed his positions not just over the years, but over the course of the campaign," Romney said in his speech at the Hinckley Institute on March 3, 2016. "Here's what I know. Donald Trump is a phony, a fraud. His promises are as worthless as a degree from Trump University," Romney had said and warned his party colleagues that Trump if nominated as the Republican nominee would never be able to defeat the then Democratic candidate Hillary Clinton.

However, Trump went ahead to earn the Republican presidential nomination by overcoming the challenge from 16 others and sur-

prised political pundits by defeating favourite Hillary Clinton in the November 2016 presidential elections.

After Trump's electoral victory, the two leaders met over dinner in New York.

The then media reports said that Trump considered him for the position of Secretary of State.

However, later Trump gave the position to Rex Tillerson.

Romney, two year later, who is known for being a successful governor of Massachusetts decided to run for the US Senate from Utah.

He who won with an impressive margin in the November elections. In the weeks thereafter, he has in-

creased his attack on Trump.

In his op-ed, Romney said that Trump cannot take his support for granted.

"I will act as I would with any president, in or out of my party: I will support policies that I believe are in the best interest of the country and my state, and oppose those that are not," he said.

He said that he would speak out against significant statements or actions that are divisive, racist and anti-immigrant.

"I do not intend to comment on every tweet or fault. But I will speak out against significant statements or actions that are divisive, racist, sexist, anti-immigrant, dishonest or destructive

to democratic institutions," he wrote.

Observing that to a great degree, a presidency shapes the public character of the nation, he said a president should unite us and inspire us to follow "our better angels."

"A president should demonstrate the essential qualities of honesty and integrity, and elevate the national discourse with comity and mutual respect," he said.

"As a nation, we have been blessed with presidents who have called on the greatness of the American spirit. With the nation so divided, resentful and angry, presidential leadership in qualities of character is indispensable. And it is in this province where the incumbent's shortfall has been most glaring," Romney added.

Noting that the world is also watching, Romney rued that several allies in Europe are experiencing political upheaval.

"Several former Soviet satellite states are rethinking their commitment to democracy. Some Asian nations, such as the Philippines, lean increasingly toward China, which advances to rival our economy and our military," he said.

"The alternative to US world leadership offered by China and Russia is autocratic, corrupt and brutal," Romney wrote.

## India's retaliatory tariffs to hit US exports worth USD 900 mn: Congressional report

**WASHINGTON, JAN 2 (PTI):** India's proposed retaliatory tariffs against US agricultural products including apples, almonds and lentils will have an adverse impact on American exports worth nearly USD 900 million, according to the latest Congressional report.

India last year announced higher import duties on many US products like apples, almonds, walnuts, chickpeas and lentils in retaliation to President Donald Trump's decision to impose heavy tariffs on imported steel and aluminium items, a move that sparked fears of a global trade war.

However, India is the only major country which has been continuously postponing the implementation of the retaliatory tariffs despite announcing it more than six months ago.

In October last year, Trump described India as a "tariff king" as he reiterated his allegations that New Delhi has a high tariff rate on various American products.

India's proposed retaliatory tariffs is far less than that by China on more than 800 American agricultural products which accounted for approximately USD 20.6 billion in exports to the US in 2017.

China is followed by Canada (USD 2.6 billion), Mexico (USD 2.5 billion), the European Union (EU) (USD 1 billion) and Turkey (USD 250 million) in slapping retaliatory tariffs on the agricultural products from the US.

Countries have imposed tariffs on American agricultural products to retaliate against actions the Trump administration took in Marh, 2018 to protect US steel and aluminum producers and in response to Chinese intellectual property rights and technology

policies. Since then, over 800 US food and agricultural products have been subject to retaliatory tariffs from China, the EU, Turkey, Canada and Mexico, the bipartisan Congressional Research Service (CRS) said in its report 'Profiles and Effects of Retaliatory Tariffs on US Agricultural Exports'.

The CRS, an independent research wing of Congress, regularly prepares reports on various issues for the lawmakers to take informed decisions.

US exports of those products to the retaliating countries totaled USD 26.9 billion in 2017, according to the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) export data.

It all started on March 23, 2018, when the Trump administration applied a 25 per cent tariff to all US steel imports and a 10 per cent tariff to all US aluminum imports, citing an investigation that showed national security concerns.

"Canada, China, Mexico, the EU and Turkey retaliated with tariffs on imports of US agricultural and food products and other goods.

"India has proposed retaliatory tariffs on US apples, almonds, walnuts, chickpeas and lentils, but it has delayed implementation pending ongoing negotiations with the Trump administration," said the CRS.

Reports of CRS are prepared by independent experts for the lawmakers to make informed decisions and are not an official position of the US Congress.

In its report dated December 31, the CRS said in response to the tariffs the Trump administration levied on US imports of steel and aluminum from India earlier this year, India has threatened to impose retaliatory tariffs on a

handful of US agricultural and food products. The date for imposing these tariffs has been pushed back several times, and they are currently set to become effective on January 31, 2019.

"US exports of the targeted products were valued at USD 857 million in 2017, comprising 54 per cent of the USD 1.8 billion of total US agricultural exports to India. US almond growers, in particular, could feel the effects of India's threatened tariffs should they enter into force," said the CRS, a copy of which was obtained by PTI.

India ranked third as a destination for US apple exports in 2017, purchasing USD 97 million of US apples, or 10 per cent of the total exports.

"The Indian government proposes to apply a 30 per cent retaliatory tariff on imports of US apples on January 31, 2019," the CRS said. Comparatively, US apple exports to Mexico and China are now subject to additional retaliatory tariffs of 20 per cent and 40 per cent respectively, raising the total tariff rates to 20 per cent and 50 per cent respectively.

The Trump administration has taken measures to ease the downside effects of the retaliatory tariffs on farmers and ranchers through a USD 12 billion trade aid package.

Under the initiative, USDA has committed to making direct payments to farmers of selected commodities subject to the tariffs, as well as buying up surplus quantities of some commodities and providing funding for additional trade promotion efforts.

India's exports to the US in 2017-18 stood at USD 47.9 billion, while imports were USD 26.7 billion. The trade balance is in favour of India.

## 14 confirmed dead in Russia high-rise blast



**MOSCOW, JAN 2 (AFP):** Fourteen people are confirmed dead from the New Year's Eve explosion at a high-rise in central Russia, local officials said Wednesday, as rescuers continued to pull bodies from the rubble.

The local governor's office said 14 bodies had been found and that 27 people were unaccounted for following the gas explosion in the city of Magnitogorsk, nearly 1,700 kilometres (1,050 miles) east of Moscow in the Ural mountains.

Five people had been rescued from the rubble, including a baby, and 86 residents were located unharmed, it said.

"Work at the scene is continuing," it said.

Battling freezing temperatures, rescuers have been combing through piles of mangled concrete and metal and trying to stabilise what remains of the walls in the Soviet-era apartment block, which had been home to about 1,100 people.

The blast destroyed 35 apartments and damaged 10 more, leaving dozens of people homeless over the New Year -- the biggest holiday of the year in Russia.

## Shun independence, embrace 'peaceful reunification' with China: Prez Xi tells Taiwan

**BEIJING, JAN 2 (PTI):** Talking tough, President Xi Jinping Wednesday asked Taiwan to reject independence and embrace "peaceful reunification" with China on a 'one-country-two systems' basis, warning that he would not renounce the option of using military force if Taipei persists with the idea of freedom.

In a speech marking the 40th anniversary of issuing 'Message to Compatriots' in Taiwan, president Xi proposed 'one-country-two-systems' on the lines of Hong Kong for the peaceful reunification of Taiwan.

"Chinese don't fight Chinese," Xi, 65, said, asserting that the peaceful reunification is in the best interests of the compatriots across the Strait as well as to China.

"We make no promise to renounce the use of force and reserve the option of taking all necessary means," he said, delivering a strong message to Taiwanese President Tsai Ing-wen, a firm advocate of Taiwan's independence.

Xi, regarded as the most powerful leader who heads the ruling Communist Party of China (CPC), the military and the presidency, said both Hong Kong and Macau were integrated into China under the 'one-country-two-systems' basis and have retained their autonomy.

"Peaceful reunification and

one-country-two-systems is the best way to achieve national reunification. It embodies the wisdom of the Chinese people that all rivers run into the sea and is inclusive," he said in a speech telecast live all over the country.

"The concrete implementation of 'one-country-two-systems' in Taiwan will take into full account the reality of Taiwan," he said.

Xi's speech laced with a decisive message to Taiwan comes after President Tsai's Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) suffered major losses in the last month's local government elections following which she resigned as the leader of the party.

In a veiled reference to the US' growing backing of Taiwan in recent months, Xi said his message was not targeted at compatriots in Taiwan, but at the interference of external forces and the very small number of "Taiwan independence" separatists and their activities.

Last September, China demanded the US to cancel a USD 330 million arms deal with Taiwan, warning "severe damage" to bilateral ties and peace and stability in Taiwan straits separating the Chinese mainland with Taiwan.

Amid the rising tensions with China over the ongoing trade war and sanctions imposed on Chinese military procurement unit for Russian Su-35 fighter jets and S-400

missiles, the US has approved the sale of spare parts and related support for Taiwan's US-made F-16 fighters and other military aircraft.

China claims Taiwan, which was estranged from the mainland, as part of its territory and makes it mandatory for all countries having diplomatic ties with Beijing to observe One-China policy.

The US and several other countries, including India, maintain economic and trade ties with Taiwan without formal diplomatic ties. Taiwan independence goes against the trend of history and will lead to a dead end, Xi said.

"We are willing to create broad space for peaceful reunification, but will leave no room for any form of separatist activities," he asserted. The political parties and all sectors on both sides of the Strait may recommend representatives to conduct extensive and in-depth democratic consultation on the basis of the common political foundation of upholding the 1992 Consensus and opposing "Taiwan independence", Xi said.

There are no problems that cannot be solved between family members, he said.

"We sincerely hope all the compatriots in Taiwan treasure peace as much as they treasure their own eyes, and pursue national reunification as much as they pursue happiness," Xi said.

## 6 reportedly killed in Danish bridge train accident

**COPENHAGEN, JAN 2 (AP):** Six people were killed in a train accident early Wednesday on a Danish bridge linking the central islands of Zealand and Funen, according to the rail operator. Authorities said several others were injured.

Danish Railways told Denmark's TV2 that the six were passengers on a train from the city of Odense, on the central Danish island of Fyn, heading toward the cap-

ital Copenhagen.

Police did not confirm the fatalities, only saying several were killed and injured in the accident, which took place about 8 am local time.

Police spokesman Arne Gram said the passenger train "hit an unknown object," but did not further comment.

Danish media reported that a tarpaulin on a freight train hit the passenger train, which was going in the opposite di-

rection, prompting it to brake suddenly.

The Storebaelt bridge is part of a system of bridges and a tunnel linking the Danish islands.

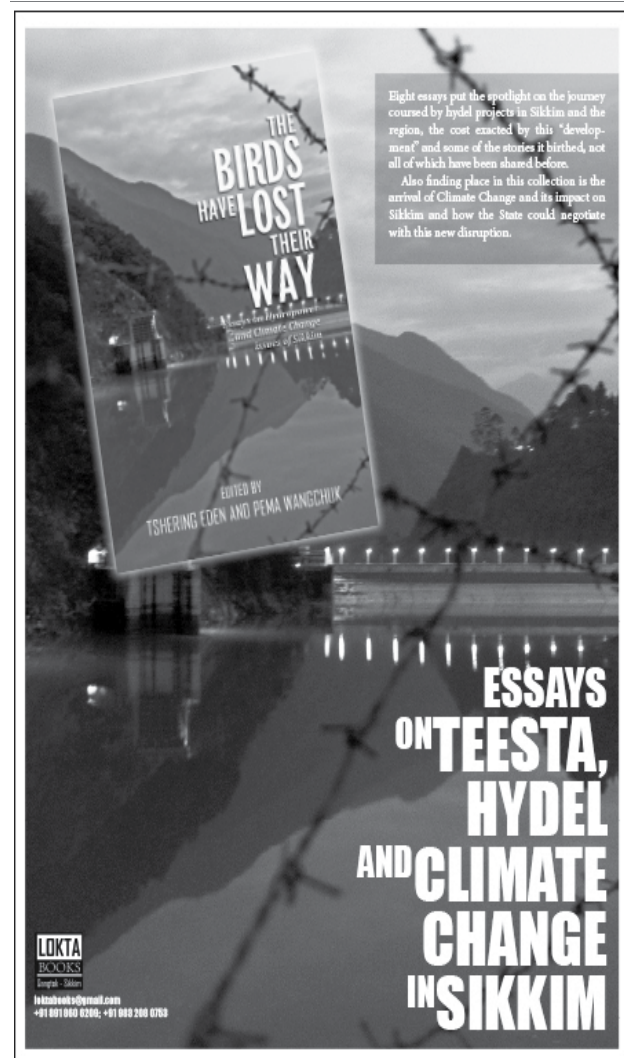
Denmark's TV2 showed images of a freight train with the tarpaulin that covered the train torn in pieces. It reported that eight people were injured.

In a statement, police urged passengers to contact next of kin to inform them of their safety

and urged people not to share photos and videos of the accident.

The accident took place on a road-and-rail bridge, part of a transport system consisting of a road suspension bridge and a railway tunnel.

The transport system was closed to cars overnight because of strong winds but trains could pass. Road traffic resumed Wednesday with a 50 kph (31 mph) speed limit.







**NEW YEAR READY:** Singer Ciara rings in the new year in a sparkly and ruffled off the shoulder dress and knee high boots at Dick Clark's New Year's Rockin' Eve.

## Vincent Cassel, Tina Kunakey expecting first child

**LOS ANGELES, JAN 2 (PTI):** French actor Vincent Cassel and his wife, model Tina Kunakey are pregnant with their first child.

The couple made the announcement Tuesday on Instagram. Cassel, 52, shared a short clip from a beach in Bahia, Brazil in which he could be seen holding and kissing Kunakey's growing baby bump.

"Bonne annee Feliz ano novo Happy new year #tellementdehance #danslavie-riennestdu #lifeismagiceverforget #goal," he captioned the video, which translates to "Happy New Year" in French and Portuguese. The model, 21, also shared a smiling photo of herself on the beach.

Kunakey posed in the nude holding a straw hat strategically while showing off her pregnant belly. "HAPPIEST NEW YEAR EVER #andifyoudontknow-

owyouknow," she wrote alongside photo. The news comes four months after the couple tied the knot in an intimate ceremony in France.



Cassel is already a father to daughters Deva, 15, and Leonie, 9 whom he shares with Italian actor Monica Bellucci.

## Kader Khan: Massy actor-writer who engineered commercial cinema's biggest hits

Kader Khan was always more than the sum of his 300-odd roles, the consummate multi-hyphenated Bollywood artiste who left his imprint on commercial cinema through not just his portrayal of characters, ranging from buffoon to bad man, but also his more than 250 writing credits. Engineer-scriptwriter-actor-dialogue writer, Khan, who died in Toronto at the age of 81 before he could see the dawn of a

Bachchan some of his career's biggest hits with memorable dialogues and writing in a series of films -- "Sharaabi", "Lawaaris", "Muqaddar Ka Sikander", "Naseeb" and "Agneepath", for which the megastar won his first Best Actor National Film Award in 1991. Khan and Bachchan were the thread that tied rivals Manmohan Desai and Prakash Mehra.

The civil engineer-turned-hit writer also helped cement Govinda's career with his sharp dialogue and screenplays in "Coolie No 1", "Raja Babu" and "Saajan Chale Sasural". The troika of filmmaker David Dhawan, actor Govinda and actor-writer Khan produced a number of hit comedies, including "Hero No 1" and "Dulhe Raja".

"He played his innings very well. I have enjoyed working with him. He was so talented," Dhawan told PTI. All the while, Khan was also acting in a variety of films. In 1973, a year after he wrote "Jawani Diwani", Khan made his acting debut with Rajesh Khanna-Sharmila Tagore's "Daag" in the supporting role of a prosecuting attorney.

He established his presence as an actor with roles in "Dil Diwana", "Muqaddar Ka Sikandar" and "Mr Natwarlal" before evolving as a performer with impeccable comic timing.

There was scarcely any potboiler from the 1990s that did not feature the actor Khan -- "Kishen Kanhaiya", "Bol Radha Bol", "Aankhen", "Coolie No 1", "Hero No 1", "Dulhe Raja", the films were many. As an actor, he will be remembered for striking a balance between comedies and dramas, sometimes exploring the grey side.

Some of his stand-out performances are as the old Sufi who guides a lost child in "Muqaddar Ka Sikandar", the Yamraj who gets tricked by a human in "Taqdeerwala", the greedy employee who kills his boss in "Khoon Bhari Maang", the Type-A controlling father in "Hero No 1" and the epic Duggal sahab who, on some days, is blind, deaf or speechless in "Mujhse Shaadi Karogi".

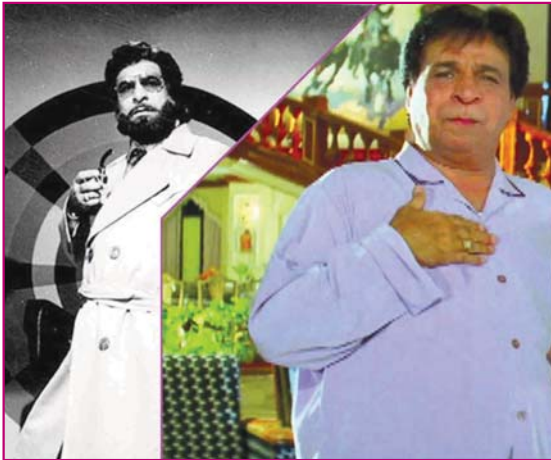
Khan was a two-time recipient of the Filmfare Award for Best Dialogue for "Meri Awaaz Suno" (1982) and "Angaar" (1993). He also won the Best Comedian Filmfare for "Baap Numbri Beta Dus Numbri" (1991).

As the years rolled by, the roles dwindled.

His last appearance on screen was in 2017 in the forgotten film "Masti Nahi Sasti". Before that, he was seen in "Tevhar" (2015). He never officially retired but, in his own words, was somewhat lost in oblivion.

"Some people refused to keep me with them. I was a little unwell. And people refused to take me back into their films."

Khan said at the trailer launch of his comedy "Hogaya Dimmaag Ka Dahi" in 2015. He had started keeping unwell by then. He said he wanted to make a comeback as a writer and could tell that there was a "difference in the level of writing". "As a writer, I feel that I should come back. I'll try my best to bring the earlier 'zubaan' (language) back and people are definitely going to enjoy talking in that 'zubaan'," he told reporters.



New Year, was all these and more.

For those who grew up in the 1980s and 1990s on a staple diet of commercial films that either featured him or were penned by him, Khan was that rare personality who was important on screen and off it too with his stamp in blockbusters such as "Amar Akbar Anthony" and "Muqaddar Ka Sikandar".

Unusually, for someone who spent so much of his life in showbiz, there was little known about his private life. Before he slipped into the skin of his characters on screen -- providing easy laughs and sometimes empathy in a range of films good and bad -- Khan took his first tentative steps in Bollywood as a back-end writer giving shape to storylines. The Kabul-born Pathan started his career as a professor of civil engineering before being pulled into the world of showbiz as a writer.

Khan was famously spotted by screen legend Dilip Kumar while he was performing in a play at his college's Annual Day function.

It was the era of grand commercial films and the romantic hero of the 1960s and the early 1970s was already ceding ground to the 'angry young man', embodied by Amitabh Bachchan. In 1972, he made his debut as a writer with the Jaya Bhaduri-Randhir Kapoor teen romance "Jawani Diwani", still remembered for its music and its portrayal of young love.

Khan went on to deliver some of Bollywood's best written screenplays and whistle-worthy dialogues in hits such as "Agneepath" and "Shola Aur Shabnam". He stepped in to help shape Bachchan's career after Salim-Javed, who wrote "Zanjeer" and "Sholay", went their separate ways in 1982. It was Khan who gave



## Netflix drops satire episode critical of Saudi Arabia

**WASHINGTON, JAN 2 (AFP):** Netflix confirmed Tuesday that it removed an episode of a satirical comedy show that criticises Saudi Arabia, after officials in the kingdom reportedly complained. The move raises new questions about the limits of free online expression.

In the episode of "Patriot Act with Hasan Minhaj", the American-born Muslim lashed Saudi Arabia after the killing of Washington Post columnist Jamal Khashoggi in the Saudi consulate in Istanbul. He specifically criticised Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, and was also critical of the Saudi-led military campaign in Yemen.

"We strongly support artistic freedom worldwide and removed this epi-

sode only in Saudi Arabia after we had received a valid legal request -- and to comply with local law," a Netflix spokeswoman said in a statement. British newspaper the Financial Times said Netflix's action came after the kingdom's Communications and Information Technology Commission said the episode violated the cybercrime law.

In December, the US Senate approved two symbolic resolutions blaming Prince Mohammed for the killing of Khashoggi, after intelligence reports pointed in that direction, and urging an end to US participation in the Yemen war. Karen Attiah, Khashoggi's editor at The Washington Post, said Netflix's action was "quite outrageous." The Saudi

Information Ministry did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

The episode can still be seen in other parts of the world -- and in Saudi Arabia on YouTube.

Online platforms and tech companies face increasing scrutiny and growing public skepticism in the face of controversies about data sharing and the steady erosion of privacy.

In October, the press freedom watchdog group Reporters Without Borders ranked Saudi Arabia as 169th out of 180 countries for press freedom, adding that "it will very probably fall even lower in the 2019 index because of the gravity of the violence and abuses of all kinds against journalists."

**ARIES:** "Free-flowing" is so NOT the way you're rolling today, Aries, as the can-do Sun fist-bumps long-range-planner Saturn in your career zone. As you dive back into work, you might be tapped for a new position that brings more money, responsibility—and prestige!

**TAURUS:** Existential crisis alert! Normally your pragmatic sign accepts that life "is what it is." But today, as the can-do Sun syncs up with Saturn in philosophical Capricorn and your expansive ninth house, you'll find yourself questioning everything! Being a jack- or jane-of-all-trades no longer satisfies you; you're craving mastery!

**GEMINI:** Thinking of a mellow NYE, Gemini? Think again! Before the stroke of midnight, firebrand Mars rushes into Aries and your eleventh house of groups, which means more will definitely be merrier. Early in the day, set some lofty intentions, perhaps writing them down in a dedicated journal or making a vision board that will inspire you on a daily basis.

**CANCER:** Upgrade to the VIP tickets, Cancer. Shortly before the ball drops on 2019, uncompromising Mars rushes into Aries and your prestigious tenth house until February 14. You've got grand plans for the year ahead, and it all starts NOW. Tonight, you practically owe yourself an upscale celebration.

**LEO:** You may still be digesting Christmas cookies, but you can start burning off those holiday indulgences now. Today, as the life-giving Sun links up with disciplined Saturn in your sixth house of wellbeing, you may find sticking to an exercise routine or a healthy-eating plan easier than ever. Exploit this planetary lift by diving in headfirst. Join a gym—or become a regular at yours—and find a class that will keep you pumped up. In the food department, experiment with cutting back on just one "evil," like sugar or processed food.

**VIRGO:** Simmer down! You want to tune out the outer world and listen for messages from your muse today, as the creative Sun winks at structured Saturn in Capricorn and your fifth house of self-expres-

sion. If you've been taking your talents for granted, it's time to get a little more about serious about them. Withhold judgment for now and just start devoting a few hours a week (and more on weekends) to pursuing your craft—whatever it may be. Romance could reach a passionate peak, but you need to know if the object of your affections is playing for keeps. Ask! **LIBRA:** You'll be in your gracious, glamorous element this NYE as passionate Mars launches a six-week tour through Aries and your seventh house of relationships (aka "the Libra house"). It's likely that you're feeling warm and fuzzy about a handful of friendships, and what better way to show how much you care than to host a pre-party party?

**SCORPIO:** This might not be the NYE that sees you dancing on the bar till dawn, but considering the year of wild growth that's behind you, a gentler pace is fine by you—isn't it, Scorpio? Thanks to your co-ruler Mars settling into Aries and your sixth house of self-care this evening, 2018 slinks out more like a kitten than a lion.

You'll be just as happy (happier, probably) bidding adieu to the year in a meditation circle, candlelight yoga class or perhaps on some sandy beach

**SAGITTARIUS:** Party costume: Check. Crazy shoes and accessories: Check! Wild hair and makeup: Up to you, Archer, but why not? This NYE gets a turbo-charge from passionate Mars. Just before midnight, the red planet bursts into Aries and your festive, flamboyant fifth house until February 14. Since the fifth house also rules fame, this NYE (and the first six weeks of 2019) could turn into one giant photo op for you and your crew.

**CAPRICORN:** How's this for a perfect NYE gameplan: Get yourself suitably dressed up; have everyone stop by just as the bubbly reaches the perfect temperature; cue up your killer playlist; and let the rest unfold spontaneously. With passionate Mars nestling into your domestic quarters shortly before the ball drops, you may relish the thought of staying home and turning your living room into

"the club."

**AQUARIUS:** Flex the muscles of your helping hands, Aquarius. You may be in particularly charitable spirits today, as the can-do Sun links up with grounded Saturn in your twelfth house of healing. Your urge to give time, money or advice to a loved one in need is admirable, but don't cross the line between compassion and fostering codependence. And remember, o' giving one: Generosity is a two-way street. When you let someone help you, you're giving THEM the gift of good karma!

**PISCES:** Your compassionate sign loves your friends and being a part of a supportive squad. But today, as the illuminating Sun collides with structured Saturn, you may realize that a certain connection could benefit from stronger boundaries. It feels awkward to have to tell someone, for instance, that you're not comfortable with their gossiping about a mutual friend or making mean-girl jokes about a colleague. But if you don't, chances are they'll never stop on their own.