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DIDN'T WANT TO MISS OPPORTUNITY OF WORKING WITH IRRFAN: KAREENA KAPOOR KHAN

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SummitTIMES

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ON TOP OF THE NEWS

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Experts cite heat, summer vacation as reasons that kept Delhities away from polling

NEW DELHI, MAY 12 (PTI): Scorching heat, summer vacations and the voting day falling on a weekend were the main reasons that, experts said, kept people away from polling booths in the national capital.

Delhi recorded a voter turnout of 60.34 per cent, five per cent less than during the 2014 Lok Sabha polls which recorded 65.22 per cent polling.

Delhi Chief Electoral officer Ranbir Singh said the turnout this year was the second-highest in the last 30 years.

"It is never possible to compare two different polls, but in 2014, the elections were on April 10, which was not peak summer or vacation time. Even schools were open then.

"This time, elections were on a Sunday and with Saturday being a holiday, people might have gone on a vacation to nearby hill stations to escape the heat," he said. Traditionally Delhi has seen low voter turnouts and the voting percentage would usually be in fifties. The city clocked the highest percentage in 1977, after the Emergency ended.

Former chief election commissioner of India SY Quraishi also concurred with Singh and attributed "Modi wave" as a reason for a record turnout in 2014.

"I feel it is only the weather. That time, the elections were in April and this time they were in May. Between these two months, the weather becomes hotter. At that time, there was a Modi wave. Plus there was a lot of mobilisation by the AAP and a strong anti-incumbency wave against the Congress. This time, it seems, there was less enthusiasm among the voters," he told PTI.

31-year-old Tibetan electrocuted at guest house in north Delhi

NEW DELHI, MAY 13 (PTI): A 31-year-old Tibetan died after being electrocuted at a guest house in north Delhi's Majnu Ka Tila area, police said Monday.

The deceased, Dolkar, was a receptionist at a guest house here. He used to stay at nearby Aruna Nagar in Majnu Ka Tila area, they said.

According to a senior police official, the incident occurred on Saturday night when Dolkar had gone to fill water in a cooler in one of the guest house room.

He came in contact with an open wire of a cooler placed in one of the galleries and was electrocuted, he said.

Police were informed about the incident by other staffers.

Dolkar was rushed to

A number of voter awareness activities were carried out then and this time also the poll body carried out awareness campaigns.

"This year's turnout was much better than what was recorded before 2014 when the voting percentage would be in fifties," he stressed.

A former official with the Delhi CEO, requesting anonymity, claimed that people were not very confident about the Election Commission's functioning, which could have been the reason why voters stayed away.

"The Supreme Court had also expressed displeasure over the Election Commission not taking quick action against politicians for communal and hate speeches during the Lok Sabha campaigning and that probably created a level of mistrust among voters," the official said.

The official also said the voter engagement activities were similar to what were carried out by the Delhi poll panel in 2014 but the poll body in Delhi should have focussed on "innovative campaigns".

In this context, the official said social media should have been used widely to reach out to woo young voters.

The official said the weather might have been a factor but stressed that Sunday's weather was better than the other days.

In the 2009 Lok Sabha polls, the overall voting percentage was recorded at 51.81 per cent, which increased to 66 per cent in the 2013 Delhi Assembly election in December in 2013.

The highest ever turnout Delhi witnessed was in the Lok Sabha polls after Emergency was lifted in 1977, at 71.3 per cent.

a nearby hospital where he was declared brought dead, he added.

He was working with the guest house for the last two years. A case has been registered against the owner for negligence at the Timarpur police station. Further investigation is going on, police said.

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HISSEY LHAMU BHUTIA/ SUNAKSHI SUBEDI

GANGTOK, 13 MAY:

Sikkim Cricket Association [SICA] celebrated its 32nd foundation day by honouring and felicitating its founding and former members, officials and players for their contributions to the sport and the association in the State. Interestingly, this is also the first time that the association celebrated its foundation day since its inception in 1987.

The foundation day celebration was held at Namgyal Institute of Tibetology here at Deorali on Monday and had Governor Ganga Prasad as the chief guest.

On the occasion, SICA presented the Life Time Achievement Award to founding members As-

win Oberoi and Namgyal Wangdi for their selfless contributions to the association since its inception in 1987 and acknowledged them as the 'Longest Serving Members' of SICA.

The association also honoured former general secretary of SICA, the late Tenzing Yuthok, for his leading role in getting the SICA affiliated with the Board of Control for Cricket in India [BCCI]. This In-Memoriam was received by family members of the late Mr Yuthok.

Further, SICA also felicitated the Secretary, Sports & Youth Affairs Department, Commandant of Sikkim Armed Police and Additional Secretary CMO for their contributions towards the development of cricket in the State.

Departments meet to discuss plastic waste management



GANGTOK, 13 MAY (IPR): A meeting chaired by the Chief Secretary was held at the Conference Hall of Tashiling Secretariat on 13 May, 2019 to discuss plastic waste management issues in the state.

The same was attended by Secretary, RM&DD, PCE RM&DD, concerned officials from the line departments like HRDD, Health Care, Human Service & Family Welfare Department, Urban Development & Housing Department.

There were also representatives from State Pollution Control Board, Gangtok Municipal Corporation, Singtam Nagar Panchayat, Namchi Municipal Council, Gyalshing Municipal Council,

Jorethang Municipal Council and WWF.

The Chief Secretary expressed displeasure at the absence of HoDs invited and also on the absence of Mangan Nagar Panchayat in this meeting.

The Secretary, RM&DD, welcomed the gathering and thanked the Chief Secretary for sparing time to attend the presentation.

The Chief Secretary highlighted the following before requesting the resource person to make his presentation.

1. Sikkim is the first state to ban polythene carry bags in 1998.

2. Sikkim has also banned the use of bottled water in the gov-

Lanka police imposes nationwide curfew as communal violence spreads

COLOMBO, MAY 13 (PTI): The Sri Lankan authorities on Monday enforced a six-hour countrywide curfew as communal violence spreads to new areas in the island nation in the latest fallout from the Easter Sunday suicide bombings, which killed nearly 260 people.

"The curfew has been imposed from 9 p.m. to night to 4 a.m. tomorrow," a police spokesperson said.

Army chief Mahesh Senanayake said the troops have been instructed to deal very strictly with those who defy the curfew.

The army will shoot on sight if anyone defies

the order, he added.

Earlier in the day, the police reimposed a curfew, few hours after it was lifted, on four towns of Kuliyapiya, Bingiriya, Dummala-suriya and Hettipola in the north western region till 4 a.m. tomorrow following a communal clash in the area.

It was later extended to the entire North Western Province as violence continued to spread.

Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe also appealed for calm after the unrest broke out, especially in Kurunegala district targeting Muslims, and appealed to the public not to be swayed by

The association has awarded senior men's Ranji team and senior women's one-day team of Sikkim with the Best



Performing Team of the year recognition, while the South District Association received the Best District award for active

Sikkim Pragya Pratisthan condoles Dr Ratna Kamal Dewan's passing away



SUMMIT REPORT GANGTOK, 13 MAY: Sikkim Pragya Pratisthan [SPP] has conveyed deep condolences on the demise of Dr Ratna Kamal Dewan. The late Dr Ratna Kamal Dewan was a respected and renowned singer, musician, lyricist, theatre artist, writer, painter and



doctor of Sikkim. He was passed away at the age of 97 on 05 May at Central Referral Hospital, Tadong.

Sikkim Pragya Pratisthan held a condolence meeting here on Monday and also observed a two-minute silence to pray for the peace to the departed soul.

The condolence meeting was chaired by SPP president, Anita Niroula, and discussed the contributions of Dr Dewan in the field of music and literature. The SPP president also highlighted the life and contributions of the auteur and members paid rich tribute to his life and works.

Around 25 flights delayed at Kolkata airport as Internet server goes down

NEW DELHI, MAY 13 (PTI): Around 25 flights have been delayed at Kolkata airport as its Internet server has gone down since 5.30 pm on Monday, a senior official of the Airports Authority of India (AAI) said.

The airlines, therefore, have been issuing boarding passes manually since 5.30 pm, the official added.

The AAI owns and manages more than 100 airports - including the Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose International Airport in Kolkata - across



the country.

"The Internet server has been down since 5.30 pm and it is likely to start working from 10.30 pm today (Monday). Around 25 flights have been delayed in be-

tween 5.30 pm and 9 pm by an average time of 20-25 minutes," said the AAI official.

The official added that the IT team of the AAI is working diligently to resolve the issue.

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South holds preparatory meeting for counting



NAMCHI, 13 MAY (IPR): A preparatory meeting for counting of votes with representatives of various political parties was held at the conference hall of DAC today. The meeting was chaired by ADC (South), Satyen Pradhan and attended by SDM (HQ), Hemant Rai and other officials.

Addressing the gathering, Mr Pradhan briefed about the import-

ant guidelines issued by the Election Commission of India (ECI) that needs to be followed on the day of counting. He also informed that there will be a total number of three counting halls which is located at Namchi Senior Secondary School.

Additionally, ADC updated that candidates need to obtain required identity cards for the designated agents only



then will these agents is permitted in the counting hall. He also underlined that the strong room placed in the school will be opened in the morning of the counting day in the presence of the representatives from political parties, returning officer and various other officials and that the counting process will commence from 8.00am onwards.

Speaking during the

meeting, SDM (HQ) explained about the security arrangements which will be manned by SSB, IRB and district police in and around the school complex.

He also added that during the day of counting the candidates and their agents will be put up in a room in the school premises which has already been identified by the officials.

Heuma Kavita organized at Gurudongmar

SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 13 MAY:

In a unique initiative in the field of literary activity in Sikkim, the team of Chiya Kavita organised 'Heuma Kavita 2019' on 11 and 12 May at an altitude of 17800 feet above sea level at Gurudongmar in North Sikkim. The two-day literary event had the participation of poets from Sikkim and Darjeeling.

Earlier, Chiya Kavita team had organised this same event at an altitude of 11693 feet at Yumthang in North Sikkim and now the Chiya Kavita team has set a new record by organising the event 17800 feet, informs a press release.

On the first day of the event, a Kavita Gosthi



was held at Chungthang Gurudwara premises which was participated by poets and litterateurs from Sikkim and Darjeeling. Poets also deliberated on the present state of poetry in the region.

The main highlight of the second day's event at Gurudongmar was the poetry recitations

by poets from Sikkim and Darjeeling. Speaking about motive and activities of Chiya Kavita, its coordinator, Prabin Khaling stated that the main objective of such events is to organise literary activities amidst nature, bringing it out of closed rooms. Chiya Kavita has been getting encourag-

ing response and people have been connecting with it, he added.

The Chiya Kavita team has expressed its deep gratitude to a poet in the Indian Army, Amrit Chettri and other army personnel, Chungthang Police and Gurudwara Managing Committee for their support.

EC orders re-polling at Faridabad booth after BJP polling agent caught trying to influence voters



NEW DELHI, MAY 13 (PTI): A BJP polling agent was arrested for allegedly trying to influence voters at a polling booth in Haryana's Palwal after a video of the purported act went viral, prompting the Election Commission to order re-polling.

In a statement on Monday, the poll panel said, "On enquiry by the Observer, the complaint was found to be true. Commission has therefore ordered a fresh poll at this polling station on May 19."

The incident took place at Asawati village in the Faridabad parliamentary constituency where polling was held on May 12.

The EC also placed the presiding officer concerned under suspension for dereliction of duty and initiated criminal action against him.

The re-polling was ordered for violation of secrecy of voting.

An FIR was lodged under Indian Penal Code sections 171 C (undue influence at elections) and 188 (disobedience to order duly promulgated by a public servant) and section 135 of RP Act 1951 against the polling agent,

Giriraj Singh, it said.

"The presiding officer Amit Atri has been placed under suspension for the dereliction of duty and criminal action is also being initiated against the presiding officer. Micro observer Sonal Gulati has not reported the incident correctly for which the commission has barred her from any election related work for three years," it said.

Taking a serious note of failure to take immediate action on the incident, the poll body said the Returning Officer 10 of Faridabad constituency has been transferred out from present posting and it has directed the state government to send a panel of three suitable officers immediately for replacement.

The polling agent was arrested following a complaint by the Election Commission and subsequently released on bail.

In the video clip, the polling agent could be seen going near the enclosure meant for casting votes and trying to influence voters.

Krishan Pal Gurjar of the BJP is seeking re-election from Faridabad.

Goa govt probe into dustbin purchase irregularities complaint

PANAJI, MAY 13 (PTI): The Vigilance department of the Goa government began a probe into a complaint that funds were released to a private firm for dustbins at beaches despite none of them being purchased.

Sub Inspector Vijaykumar Chodankar said the statement of complainant Inacio Domnick Pereira of NGO Hope Foundation was recorded Monday morning.

Pereira said, "The dustbins were not purchased but funds were released to Drishti Life Saving Services Private Limited, a private firm, without any proper bills

or floating any tender, thereby putting the government at loss."

Pereira has named Goa Tourism Minister Manohar Ajgaonkar, officials of the Tourism department as well Drishti Lifesaving Services Private Limited in his formal complaint.

"The state Tourism department has paid an amount of Rs 63.84 lakh to Drishti Life Saving Private Limited without floating tenders. The matter comes under the Prevention of Corruption Act," he claimed, adding that he had submitted RTI replies along with his complaint.

Nine dengue cases in Delhi

NEW DELHI, MAY 13 (PTI): At least nine dengue cases have been reported in Delhi this year, even though the vector-borne disease is usually reported between July and November, according to a municipal report released Monday.

Last year, 2,798 dengue cases and four deaths were recorded by the South Delhi Municipal Corporation (SDMC), which tabulates data on vector-borne diseases in the city.

According to the report, a case was reported in May, two in April, four in March and one each in February and January this year.

Cases of vector-borne diseases are usually reported between July and November, but the period may stretch to mid-December.

Four cases of malaria have been reported till May 11 -- three in May

and one in April, and five cases of chikungunya have been recorded this year, two in February and one each in March, April and May.

The dengue victims last year included a minor boy. Three of the victims were identified as Aman Tiwari (13), Sanskriti (21) and Gagan (23).

Doctors have advised people to take precautions to ensure that there was no breeding of mosquito larvae around them and urged them to wear full-sleeves and use mosquito nets.

Water coolers should be dried up when not in use as dengue infection-carrying mosquitoes breed there a lot, a doctor said.

Civic bodies had also recently organised a workshop on the prevention of vector-borne diseases.

Mosquito-breeding has been reported from

Mamring School inaugurates upgraded library

SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 13 MAY:

Mamring Senior Secondary School in collaboration with Wandering Souls of Sikkim organised the opening ceremony of the upgraded School Library. The library was upgraded with books and infrastructure by Wandering Souls of Sikkim, an NGO based in Sikkim, a press release informs.

District Magistrate East Sikkim, Kapil Meena, the chief guest on the occasion, inaugurated the library and urged the students to use it regularly.

Welcoming the chief guest and gathering, Principal of the school, Prahlad Sharma, placed the annual report of the school, its achievements and problems.

Various activities such as Community Reading by the students of class V and VI, rhymes by LKG-UKG students and songs by primary students, traditional dances by upper primary students were also held.

Albert Gurung, a product of CM's Meritorious scholarship scheme delivered a speech on the importance of reading and motivated the students



to read books.

A debate competition on the topic "Banning of chemicals has boosted the agricultural sector in Sikkim" was also held between secondary students of Mamring SSS and Amba SS where Amba SS emerged victorious speaking against the motion while Lata Lepcha of Mamring SSS was chosen as the best speaker.

The debate competition was conducted by Co-founder of WSOS, Pranay Khatiwara. In his address, Mr. Khatiwara expressed his views on the Mission Library initiative and also thanked those who have supported the initiative.

During the program, school topper of CBSE 2019, Nawaraj Bastola Class XII and Lokesh Dulal Class X were also

felicitated and awarded prizes. The prizes were sponsored by R. Giridharan [GT Maths] and CL Dulal [Lab Assistant of the school].

Speaking as chief guest, Mr. Meena lauded the Principal and staff for the progress of the school. Responding to demands placed by the Principal, he assured to provide funds for the construction of a trussed roof hall in the school. He also appreciated Mr. Khatiwara's efforts for the installation of library in schools. Mr. Meena advised the students to inculcate reading habits, study all subjects and start preparing for civil service examinations while in school.

In the latter half of the program, a parent-teacher-SMC meeting was held wherein a new SMC was formed. Welcoming the

new SMC, the Principal reminded them of decisions taken by the former SMC for the development of school.

The meeting also discussed various issues of the school to be solved by the new SMC. Absenteeism of students was one of the major issues discussed in the meeting. The Principal thanked all the contributors and urged the parents to remain connected with the school for better co-ordination which helps school to perform better.

Also present were Tshering Kee Chingapa [JD East HRDD], NK Subba [Assistant Director HRDD Pakyong BAC], Binod Bhattarai [Assistant Professor, Sikkim University], Mahendra Sharma [HM Amba SS], local Panchayats, SMC, parents, teachers and students.

Guj govt orders inquiry into police lathicharge on journalists

AHMEDABAD, MAY 13 (PTI): The Gujarat government Monday ordered an inquiry into the lathicharge by police on reporters covering elections of a temple trust in Junagadh town, around 320 kms from here.

The incident took place on Sunday outside Swaminarayan Temple in Junagadh when the election of the temple trust was underway, and was captured on camera.

In one of the videos of the incident aired by news channels, policemen, including some in civil uniform, can be seen pushing away a cameraman and then hitting media crew with batons. A policeman can also be seen slapping a TV channel cameraman.

Demanding immediate suspension of three policemen involved in thrashing cameramen

and reporters of television news channels, several mediapersons of Saurashtra region staged protests at the office of Junagadh Superintendent of Police Saurabh Singh.

Gujarat Minister of State for Home Pradeepsinh Jadeja said he had ordered an inquiry.

"I have learned that police hit mediapersons during the election of temple trust. I have asked the district SP to conduct an inquiry and go through the video footage to check who was at fault. I have asked the SP to submit his report," said Jadeja.

Following the incident in Junagadh, mediapersons in different parts of the state staged protests and submitted memorandums to concerned district authorities demanding action

against the policemen.

In Ahmedabad, several reporters gathered at Vastrapur Lake to register their protest and said a memorandum in this regard would be given to Gujarat Chief Minister Vijay Rupani in coming days.

After the attack Sunday, media personnel confronted Junagadh Superintendent of Police Saurabh Singh.

Reporters claimed police hit them when they were covering a confrontation between two persons over some election related issue in the premises of the Swaminarayan Temple.

Singh reportedly told reporters he will take action against the erring policemen after conducting an inquiry.

Unhappy over his assurance, several medi-

apersons have been sitting on a protest outside the SP office since Sunday night.

"The video footage clearly shows a police inspector, a sub inspector and constable hitting mediapersons with batons.

We demand their suspension. Our protest will continue until our demands are met," said a local reporter.

Singh, however, said he cannot take action just on the basis of video footage.

"An inquiry has been ordered. I have been asking these mediapersons to record their statements so that I can start my inquiry and take appropriate action but they're insisting video footage is enough to take action. I am trying to convince them to come forward and record their statements," said Singh.

Court to record Atishi Marlena's statement in her plea against Gautam Gambhir

NEW DELHI, MAY 13 (PTI): A Delhi court Monday directed AAP leader Atishi Marlena to record her statement in her complaint against BJP rival Gautam Gambhir alleging that he was enrolled as a voter in two Assembly constituencies in Delhi.

Metropolitan Magistrate Viplav Dabas directed Marlena to appear before the court on May 31, the next date of hearing.

The court had earlier asked Marlena to prove her locus standi for filing the petition against Gambhir.

The plea, filed by advocate Mohd Irshad, al-

leged that Gambhir has enrolled "deliberately" and "illegally" as a voter in Karol Bagh and Rajinder Nagar Assembly constituencies.

Marlena is pitted against Gambhir in the East Delhi parliamentary constituency, where polling was held on Sunday.

NOTICE

In view of ensuing counting for Lok Sabha/Assembly Election 2019, this is to inform to the General Public that all the public related official work will be suspended from 13/5/2019 till 25/5/2019.

By Order.


DISTRICT COLLECTOR/EAST

Kolkata company to launch ayurvedic products in Sikkim

SHRAVAN CHETTRI
GANGTOK, 13 May:

A Kolkata-based Ayurvedic company, Fredora International Private Limited, has announced the launch of its products in Sikkim. This was announced by CEO and Managing Director of Fredora, Rajendranath Nedungadi in a press conference held here at Press Club of Sikkim on Monday.

"After getting encouraging response on the products from the people of neighbouring hills, the company will now launch its perfumed deodorant pit powder and perfumed foot powder in Sikkim," he said.



Speaking further in the press conference, he stated that these are Ayurvedic products for foot odor removal and armpit whitening powders as of now and the company is working on

bringing new products for chilblains and freckles soon.

"We have specially targeted people residing around hill areas because of the weather conditions. It's not about hygiene, it's about

bacteria that grows and causes problems like these. We focus on the root cause and the result is instant, no matter how chronic the problem is. Fredora products have proved their worth," Mr Nedungadi said.

He stated that presently products are in the powder format and the company has been working to bring them in gel format as well. He added that these products have been brought out after long research and it is affordable for everyone.

fordable for everyone.

"These are purely ayurvedic products and give instant results," he said.

The CEO informed that the company has already launched products in Darjeeling and Kalimpong with more than 460 counters in which 75 percent counters have already placed repeat orders.

"We seek long term relationships rather than profit because we don't compromise in our products and, we assure our buyers positive results. Our products are made to fit the budget of an ordinary man who would be able to get the desired results," he added.

CS meets HUDCO Chairman



GANGTOK, 13 MAY (IPR): Chairman and Managing Director, HUDCO, M Ravi Kanth had a meeting with the Chief Secretary, AK Shrivastava and Additional CS, VB Pathak who is also the Principal Secretary Finance at the chamber of the Chief Secretary, Tashiling today. They were accompanied by Secretary, SHDB, Sara-la Rai and other senior officers of HUDCO.

The meeting included topics on Chardhaam whose consultant is also HUDCO, CMRHM, Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and other Housing

and infrastructure development projects in the state.

The Chairman and Managing Director, HUDCO also inspected few CMRHM house construction at West Sikkim and expressed his overall satisfaction at the ongoing rate of work in the state. He also expressed his happiness on his visit to the state and lauded the state government's efforts for its various policies and developmental schemes.

The Chief Secretary on behalf of the state government thanked M

Ravi Kanth for his visit and thanked him for all the financial support being extended to the state. He also requested for grant of additional funds for construction of cobbler shed at Singtam and Gangtok. Pr Secretary, Finance, Pathak requested to send a copy of all CSR project in the state.

West District being a dynamic district of the state, CMD put forth suggestion to include projects for West as well. It was also informed that HUDCO will be taking up funding of CMRHM phase 02 shortly.

Departments meet...

He also reminded the house about disastrous role and aftermath of poor management of plastic wastes by quoting examples of flood in Kerala and Himachal Pradesh providing enough reasons to take the menace of plastic waste seriously.

He emphasized that the problem due to plastic wastes arises by being discarded merely after use of hours or days. This issue can be resolved by increasing the longevity of plastic products. He further explained the process of recycling of the plastic wastes, which included following steps:-

- Waste Materials collection.
- Thermoplastic Waste Sorting/ Sizing.
- Water turbulence assisted cleaning process.
- Drying by Air blower.
- Mechanical Shredding to make small pieces.
- Small pieces fed to TWIN SCREW EXTRUDER.
- Extruded Polymeric Pellets obtained.
- Pellets fed to SINGLE SCREW EXTRUDER for melt flow.
- Polymer melt is casted into thin film under FILM CASTING MACHINE.
- Thin film and selected fiber are processed under THERMOFORMING process with desired mold of products.
- Thermoplastic molded products will be manufactured.

He further explained the Mechanical Property of Virgin Thermoplastics and Recycled Thermoplastics materials. The incorporation of fibers obtained from coconut, banana, jute and bamboo can increase the tensile strength of recycled thermoplastics, said Mr Bhowmick.

The Multilayered plastics can be pulverized to obtain powder which can be further mixed with concrete to obtain plastic composite bricks having higher strength but lighter in weight than traditional bricks.

He concluded the presentation by providing the possible outcomes of this technology as removable and recycling of plastic wastes, minimizing of deforestation and also improvement in economy by generating employment.

The next session was discussion and deliberation on problem of plastic waste unique to Sikkim. This session also saw those present raising various queries related to composite bricks made out of plastic waste which were answered by the resource person.

Mr Bhowmick said that such bricks have more longevity and can be treated to be non-flammable. He also spoke about the feasibility of such an initiative in the state of Sikkim.

The meeting concluded with Vote of Thanks by Special Secretary, RM&DD.

Sikkim Cricket Association...

He congratulated SICA for the development of cricket in the State and taking local players to the national level. He remarked that the State association receiving full-fledged membership of the BCCI and the ongoing infrastructural development for cricket in the State were good signs for further development of the sport here.

He also conveyed his best wishes to all cricketers of the State to play well and shine. He also called on the youth to deliver on their responsibilities towards society and take Sikkim ahead on all fronts.

SICA president, Lobzang G Tenzing, appreciated the tireless efforts and initiatives of the founding and former members of the association for bringing the cricket to this level. He also spoke about the contributions and achievements of former bodies of the association for the development of cricket here.

He also expressed gratitude towards the State government and the BCCI for their support to SICA and for development of cricket to this level in the State and thanked the Chief Minister for extending the lease of Rangpo Mining Ground for another 33 years.

"There were many challenges before us when we took over the association in 2016 and we worked hard to make SICA a vibrant and active association in a short time. We established a good rapport and relationship with the State government and the BCCI for the development of cricket and welfare of cricketing fraternity," Mr Tenzing said.

He also spoke about the various achievements of the present body of the association and said that the association has been working for development of game and infrastructures for local players.

He shared that SICA has plans to develop two more grounds and establish a full-fledged cricket academy to train human resource for all aspects of the sport. He further informed that the association plans to host talent hunts and cricket tournaments at the school and other levels.

Earlier, SICA general secretary, Sonam Palden Bhutia, presented the annual report of SICA.

He informed that cricket was first played in Sikkim in the valleys of Lachen in North Sikkim by a British Everest expedition team led by Eric Shipton travelling to Tibet in the year 1938. He informed that SICA, in collaboration with India Post, also released a special cover celebrating 80 years of the first cricket match played in Sikkim on 25 May 2018.

Mr Bhutia informed that the first cricket tournament, Snow Lion Cricket Tournament, was played in 1975 at Pakyong in East Sikkim with six teams participating. He added the SICA was formed on 08 May 1987 and became an associate member of the BCCI on 1991 and after long time it became the full fledged member of BCCI last year and has been taking part in all BCCI tournaments and programmes.

The function started with the welcome address by the celebration committee chairman, Gyaphel Tshering Bhutia and concluded with the vote of thanks by SICA vice president, Gopal Sharma.

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Contact Numbers – 8170005757 / 8145837898 / 9593268469

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- Aadhar Card
- Passport size photograph
- E-mail ID (your own email ID)
- Your mobile number (for OTP)

Sd/
Col D N Bhutia
Secretary

Sikkim University clarifies

GANGTOK, 13 MAY (PIB): Sikkim University has issued a rejoinder pertaining to a news item which was published in some Nepali and Hindi newspapers on 10 May, 2019 regarding the permanent campus of Sikkim University at Yangang being functional in two to three years.

Sikkim University clarified that the Vice-Chancellor, Prof Avinash Khare had called

for a Press Conference on 09 May, 2019 in the Administrative Block of the University located at 6th Mile to give information regarding the celebration of National Technology Day that the University was organizing for the first time on 11 May, 2019 at Chintan Bhawan. The press conference was not intended to discuss on the issues of the University campus construction at Yangang.

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The 49th day Kutse Shegu of our beloved mother Late Pempa Bhutia who left for her heavenly abode on 26.03.2019 falls on 13.05.2019. All friends, relatives & well-wishers are requested to join us in offering prayers for the departed soul at our residence at Tin Taley, Metro, Lower Tadong. We also take this opportunity to thank all those who stood by us during the time of bereavement.

PEOLO LEPCHA (HUSBAND), BHAICHUNG LEPCHA, RINCHEN LEPCHA (SONS), TASHI ONGMU LEPCHA (DAUGHTER-IN-LAW), TSHERING DOMA LEPCHA (DAUGHTER), PHUCHUNG NAMCHANGKORPA (SON, IN-LAW), GRAND SONS & GRAND DAUGHTERS.

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For Education

Figure out why... the how will then follow

The definition of literacy in India is grossly under-achieving. Anyone with an elementary knowledge to read and write is counted as literate; at times, even just being able to write and read their names is considered enough, but that is hardly what literacy should be about. If this were the yardstick to measure literacy, then handing over smartphones to the unlettered will get the job done. It is after all not rare to find preschool toddlers who have figured out how the play and pause commands on video games look different and work their way around it.

So, aiming for literacy is really aiming too low.

The aim has to be to deliver learning even if it does not include reading and writing so that the quality of human resource is improved. Governments choose the easier option of literacy when the more productive and necessary approach should be to create better educated citizens. Do that, and one need not even worry too much about employable skills, because if education does its job well, it will infuse an inquisitiveness and a confidence which will make the “educated” ready for every job and every challenge. And this has to be approach with which the education policy is approached. Sikkim is thankfully on track since there are deep meditations and consultations already underway to understand what is missing from its schools, what works and what needs to be done to inject quality into the school system here.

Education has been held up as a thrust area of governmental engagement, with ‘quality’ as the watch word. It is heartening for Sikkim to learn that education is receiving a relook. The density of schools in Sikkim leaves no room for complaint and the free textbooks and uniform scheme of the government ensure that at least the tools required to remain in school are in place. Schemes like the mid-day meal are pegged as incentives to keep students in school, but the only effective incentive long-term will be the quality of education that is imparted in the classrooms, not the quality of food served during breaks or the quality of uniforms.

That said, enrolment is handsome in Sikkim’s schools and kids here can complete education if they so desire. But what also needs to be accepted that nowadays, most kids are in school because their parents don’t know what else to do with them... because sending children to school is the done thing. Wor- ryingly, most enroll in colleges for much the same reason (or rather, the lack of one). Not too many of us have really figured out why we send children to school. There are vague notions of “a better future” and employment, but come on, we should not be signing off the first two decades or more of our lives for pursuits without any clear idea of why. Hence, the first task for any enquiry into how schools can be improved should be to build consensus on why we have schools, and let’s scratch employment from the reasons because imparting “employable skills” does not require such a long time – you can prepare people for most jobs with a basic 3-month course and the rest they can learn on the job. Once Sikkim has figured out “why”, the how will be easy to work out.

WRITE US:

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Mail us at: news@summittimes.com

Cyclone Fani recovery offers the world lessons in disaster preparedness

MANOJ DORA & ARABINDA KUMAR PADHEE
theconversation.com

Fani, a rare summer cyclone in the Bay of Bengal, hit eastern India on May 3. It is one of the strongest cyclones to have hit India in the last 20 years, according to the Indian government’s meteorological department. Storm surges and powerful winds reaching 125mph blew off roofs, damaged power lines and uprooted countless trees.

But the worst-affected state, Odisha, has been successful in keeping the loss of life and numbers of affected people to a minimum. This is the result of a very effective strategy of disaster preparation and quick responding.

The United Nations office for Disaster Risk Deduction (UNISDR) and other organisations have hailed government and volunteer efforts that have ensured the levels of destruction have been kept to a minimum. According to official estimates, 64 people lost their lives due to the devastating cyclone Fani. But considering the power of the cyclone, it is remarkable that more lives have not been lost.

To put the death toll in perspective, the 1999 Odisha cyclone (which had 155mph winds) killed 9,658 people and caused US\$2.5 billion in damages in the state. It was this super cyclone in 1999 that led the state to become better prepared for future cyclones.

The government’s “zero casualty” policy for natural disasters and the near accuracy of the India meteorological department’s early warning system have helped reduce the possibility of deaths from cyclone Fani. A record 1.2m people (equal to the population of Mauritius) were evacuated in less than 48 hours, and almost 7,000 kitchens, catering to 9,000 shelters, were made functional overnight. This mammoth exercise involved more than 45,000 volunteers.

The statistics are striking when



compared to the impact of recent big weather events around the world. When Hurricane Maria hit Puerto Rico in 2017 with wind speeds of 175mph, it caused a death toll of 2,975. The same year, Hurricane Harvey struck Texas with winds of 130mph and caused devastating flooding. There was US\$125 billion in damage and at least 68 direct storm-related deaths reported in Texas. Most recently, cyclone Idai hit Mozambique on March 14 and ripped through Madagascar, Malawi and Zimbabwe, with more than 1,000 people feared dead.

So the Indian state of Odisha’s ability to put such an effective disaster management plan in place and save thousands of lives is a template that the world can learn from. This, after all, is a state where the average income is less than US\$5 a day. We identify four key takeaways from Odisha.

1. BUILD A RELIEF INFRA-STRUCTURE

Until 1999, Odisha didn’t have a well laid out plan for disaster management. Two months after the cy-

clone hit, the Odisha State Disaster Management Authority was set up and plans put in place. Around 900 cyclone shelters have been built in vulnerable pockets of the state, with systems in place for the evacuation of hundreds of thousands of people. By 2001, Odisha Disaster Rapid Action Force was also set up to conduct rescue operations and distribute relief.

There is a clear command and control structure for disaster relief and there are clear protocols in place for carrying out relief operations. These were successfully used in managing cyclone Phailin in 2013 (a storm five times the size of hurricane Katrina), cyclone Hudhud in 2014 and cyclone Fani.

2. ACCURACY OF EARLY WARNING SYSTEMS

The India Meteorological Department has built an effective service to predict accurate timings of cyclone formation in the Bay of Bengal and when it will make landfall along India’s coastline. This early warning system enables the state to be disaster

ready and minimise loss of lives. It’s then crucial that people follow the protocols in place when the warnings come in.

3. CLEAR COMMUNICATION PLAN

Roughly 2.6m text messages were sent to locals in clear language before cyclone Fani hit, keeping those potentially affected alert. Regular press briefings were made by officials to update people of the approaching cyclone. People were repeatedly advised over all forms of media not to panic and given clear “do and don’ts”. This helped in the record evacuation of 1.2m people to safe buildings.

4. EFFECTIVE CO-ORDINATION OF GROUPS

Preparations to fight the onslaught of Fani involved a number of government agencies, as well as local community groups and volunteers working together. The government’s disaster response forces were pre-positioned in vulnerable locations, food packets for air-dropping were made ready for air force helicopters to drop to people. Senior state officials and police officers were sent to the affected districts to co-ordinate efforts of various agencies.

Cyclone Fani has, however, left a fury of damage to properties and public infrastructure. The post-cyclone recovery will be a daunting challenge to the administration in Odisha, demanding a lot of resources. In the aftermath of the 1999 super cyclone, the state relied on a number of community-based groups and volunteers to help rebuild communities. The same goes for today, but they are in a much better position thanks to the disaster preparedness and risk mitigation followed before the storm hit.

[Manoj Dora is Reader in Operations & Supply Chain Management, Brunel University London; Arabinda Kumar Padhee is Director, Country Relations and Business Affairs - New Delhi, ICRI-SAT, CGIAR System Organization]

Climate change: seeing the planet break down is depressing – here’s how to turn your pain into action

CAMERON BRICK
theconversation.com

Environmentalism can feel like a drag. People trying to reduce their environmental impact often feel stressed and inadequate, and those who aren’t can feel judged and resentful.

There are thousands of articles explaining why we need to act. This one is different. As a psychologist who studies motivation and decision making in climate change, I will explain how our negative feelings prevent us from making effective changes, and suggest how a change in perspective could improve the planet and our well-being at the same time.

SUFFERING AND REGRET

When we learn about damage to the environment, we suddenly have two issues to deal with: the damage itself, and our own feelings about it. When negative, these feelings can have surprisingly large consequences, both for ourselves and the environment. Faced with the scale of environmental challenges, we can often get trapped in two key negative emotions: suffering and regret.

When we reflect on climate injustices, and the suffering that will be felt by millions in the coming decades, we often take on suffering ourselves. Stories we tell ourselves about how none of this should be happening, or of how wrong the world is, can yield a sense of powerlessness that is harmful and difficult to avoid. And when we learn that the mechanisms of global warming were well understood in the 1890s and apparent from atmospheric measurements by the 1960s, it’s also natural to feel tremendous regret.

It’s vital to understand that these feelings are okay. There is often relief in the mere acknowledgement and acceptance of pain and regret. Give yourself permission to grieve about sinking islands, dying coral reefs, disappearing rainforests, and the fact that all of these were avoidable.

The pitfall is staying with these emotions. Lingering suffering and regret can get us stuck in misery, despair, judgement, outrage, or righteousness, all of which can foster inaction. When attempting to cope with our personal suffering and regret, we may forget that engaging in pro-social behaviours focused on others can provide relief.

The fix is pleasantly simple. Imagine classifying all events in your life as “over” and “next”. What happened is over. We can accept tragedies and injustices without approving of them. We must look to what comes next, and fight current battles in-



stead of reliving old ones. If you pay attention, it’s amazing how much effort people give to fighting events that have already occurred.

What if you’re concerned about the environment, but it seems too hard to make a life change? First, ask yourself whether that change is objectively too hard, or whether it is merely a perception that helps you to manage your suffering and regret. If there’s a conflict between what we think is right and what we see ourselves doing, the easiest solution is to adjust our attitudes and feel like a good person again. But if we can be brave enough to try to change our behaviour, accepting what we failed to do before and what we haven’t done yet, each small step we take can bring ecological and personal benefits.

While actions that serve the climate and our communities may seem difficult before we try them, much of that perceived effort lies in the conservative inertia of our current habits, and how much we believe that we can change.

For example, I used to drive to most places. I imagined a change to cycling as an inconvenience, as just more work. But once I began cycling to work, it changed my life in unexpected and lovely ways. I’m fitter, more alert, happier, and work more effectively — as is the case for millions of other cyclists. If cycling were a new drug with the same benefits, it would make the front page of every newspaper. I’m not the best environmentalist, but what I once saw as a difficult sacrifice now seems like an easy change that’s only improved my

quality of life.

FROM CONSUMERISM TO COMMUNITY

At a societal level, consumerism is depleting nature’s resources and producing unimaginable amounts of waste, too much of which ends up in oceans and landfill. However, consumerist behaviour doesn’t just cause significant harm to the environment — it’s also strongly associated with multiple negative emotions and mental health problems, including anxiety, depression, low self-esteem, and problems with intimacy. These can manifest regardless of age, income, or culture.

Freeing ourselves from consumerism is part of the solution to resolving the climate apathy and disillusionment brought by these emotions. Once we recognise that tying our well-being to possessions is harming both our health and our planet, this liberates us to find solutions. Reaching a new consensus on societal priorities could enable us to create new communities that fulfil and nourish us, and free us to implement the urgent changes needed to transform our relationship with nature.

It’s painful to watch our societies pollute land, water, and air. But we have power to combat climate breakdown through politics, diet, transportation, and perhaps most importantly of all: communication. Talk about your struggles with others, and share your victories. Transforming pain into action can be infectious, and together we can still tip the balance.

[The writer is Postdoctoral research associate, University of Cambridge]

Rs 1 crore in cash seized in Asansol, two arrested

KOLKATA, MAY 14 (PTI): Two persons, one of whom claimed he was a personal assistant of West Bengal BJP chief Dilip Ghosh, were arrested from Asansol railway station on Monday, following the seizure of unaccounted cash amounting to Rs 1 crore from their possession, railway police sources said.

Gautam Chattopadhyaya and Lakshmikanth Shaw were intercepted by the railway police at Asansol station, when they were trying to board a train to Kolkata, they said.

Chattopadhyay, after his arrest, said

he worked as an assistant to Ghosh.

“They were carrying a huge bag with them and were moving suspiciously at Asansol station when the officers spotted them. When we searched the bag, we found cash amounting to Rs 1 crore,” they said.

During interrogation, both admitted that they were taking the cash to Kolkata, the sources added.

A couple of days ago, the state police had seized over Rs 1 lakh from BJP’s Ghatal candidate and former IPS officer Bharati Ghosh’s vehicle.

Modi greatest danger to the country: Mamata



METIABRUZ/BIRLAPUR/ NAMKHANA, MAY 13 (PTI): West Bengal Chief Minister and Trinamool Congress supremo Mamata Banerjee on Monday called Prime Minister Narendra Modi the “greatest danger” to the country and said she will give her life to ensure that no riot takes place in the state.

She alleged that BJP is targeting her nephew and Diamond Harbour Lok Sabha Trinamool Congress candidate Abhishek Banerjee and is ready to splurge to orchestrate a riot in the area.

“It is Modi’s target to start a riot at Diamond Harbour. He is ready to splurge any amount for the purpose,” Banerjee said at a poll rally in support of her nephew at Metiabruz in the south western part of the city ahead of the ultimate round of polls in the state.

“Where will the country go if Narendra Modi comes to power again? He is the greatest danger of the country. West Bengal is a place where all religions co-exist. I will give my life to see that no riot takes place in the state”, she said.

Hitting out at her detractors who have blamed her for minority appeasement, Banerjee said “People accuse me of appeasing the Muslims. What do you mean by appeasement? The Muslims are also people of the state. What nasty politics is BJP doing?”

Metiabruz is a predominantly Muslim area, historically the place where the last Nawab of Awadh Wajid Ali Shah was exiled by the British. Known as the second Lucknow, it is famous for its large tailoring community who supply readymade garments to traders across east India.

She alleged that BJP is after her nephew and is spreading canards about him. “What wrong has he done? He is just a member of my family and is engaged in politics.”

At Birlapur in South 24 Parganas, she said that Modi should be “thrown out of power” to save the country. “We (TMC) want all the 42 seats in West Bengal so

that TMC can have a say in the formation of the Delhi government”, she said.

Banerjee has been claiming for sometime that her party will play an important role at the Centre and in the formation of the new government after the general elections.

Speaking at yet another rally at Namkhana in the Sundarbans in South 24 Parganas, Banerjee asked voters not to give a single vote to Modi as the country will be destroyed by him. Modi had not done anything for the country for the past five years, she claimed.

“If you choose the ‘chowkidar’ as Prime Minister, the country will be destroyed by him. The voters can oust him by not giving a single vote to BJP”, the Trinamool Congress supremo said.

“BJP has killed and lynched minorities, advisasis and journalists also”, she alleged.

“There is nothing to get afraid of by BJP. Don’t vote for it. Also, if a single vote goes to CPI-M and Congress, it will strengthen BJP’s hands”.

Banerjee attacked Modi for demonetisation, which she alleged, had “killed” three crore jobs in the country and affected farming practices.

Prices of petrol, gas, diesel has risen over the last five years, she said.

Referring to West Bengal, she blamed the BJP government for going back on its words to construct the Tajpur port.

The state will develop the Tajpur deep sea port on its own as the Centre did nothing to start work on the project in the past three years, she had declared in January.

Banerjee said the TMC government has been able to bring down unemployment in the state by about 40 per cent, while demonetisation had taken away three crore jobs across the country.

“We have also decided to mobilise Rs 1000 crore in the next three to four years to build a bridge over Muriganga river in Gangasagar for which detailed project report has to be made”, she added.

Shah’s rally cancelled in Bengal, TMC denies any role

KOLKATA/NEW DELHI, MAY 13 (PTI): BJP chief Amit Shah’s scheduled rally in Jadavpur was called off Monday after the West Bengal government, the saffron party claimed, denied him permission to land his chopper and address the public meeting in the Lok Sabha constituency.

Accusing the West Bengal government of “replacing democracy with dictatorship”, the BJP said the Election Commission has become a “mute spectator” to the Trinamool Congress’s alleged undemocratic means to target the party. The TMC, however, rebutted the allegations, claiming the BJP had cancelled the rally fearing a low turnout.

“The allegations are completely baseless. We have nothing to do with it. They themselves have

cancelled the rally as they were afraid that the rally might turn out to be a flop show,” TMC secretary general Partha Chatterjee said.

According to BJP national general secretary Kailash Vijayvargiya, the district administration had unnecessarily delayed the permission to land Shah’s chopper claiming that they were yet to get a clearance from the Public Works Department.

“The district magistrate has been acting as a party cadre of the TMC. They kept on denying us permission for Shah’s chopper. Later, they also denied us permission to hold the rally. This is not only undemocratic but also shows the TMC’s authoritarian mindset,” Vijayvargiya said.

According to Bengal BJP sources, the BJP had



planned to go ahead with the Baruipur rally despite the state government’s denial of permission, but the land owner, who had rented out his property for the meeting, withdrew his consent at the last minute.

“It was due to pressure from TMC that the owner withdrew his consent,” a state BJP leader said.

The party’s media head and Rajya Sabha MP Anil Baluni asserted

that he along with other workers and members will hold protests and move the EC against TMC’s “atrocities”.

Following the cancellation of the rally, clashes broke out between the workers of the two rival parties in Baruipur.

State BJP chief Dilip Ghosh said his party workers were thrashed by TMC activists.

“TMC activists had been taunting our party men over the cancella-

tion of the rally. When our party workers protested, they were beaten up by the ruling party cadres,” he alleged.

Denying the charge, a senior TMC leader said, “The saffron party’s claims are bereft of truth. It was the BJP workers that ransacked one of our local offices and attacked our party men.”

A state government official said a huge police contingent has been stationed in Baruipur to

thwart any untoward incident.

Earlier in the day, senior BJP leader and Union minister Prakash Javadekar said Banerjee’s dictatorship is on full play in the state.

“This is murder of democracy. The EC should take cognizance of the matter. If important leaders are not allowed to hold rallies, what is the meaning of elections,” he told reporters in New Delhi.

Javadekar also slammed the state police for arresting a BJP youth-wing worker, who shared a social media post mocking Banerjee.

TMC leaders such as Derek O’Brien have shared “uglier” posts but no action was taken against them, he claimed.

Nine seats will go to polls in the last phase of the general election on May 19.

Protesters lock the office of Neigrihms director



SHILLONG, MAY 13 (PTI): Activists of the influential Khasi Students Union (KSU) demanding the removal of the director of the North Eastern Indira Gandhi Regional Institute of Health and Medical Sciences (Neigrihms) here on Monday locked his office, officials said.

KSU president Lamokstar Marngar said the KSU protested at the administrative block of the institute demanding immediate removal of the director D M Thappa from his post following a stand-off between him and the cardiology department head in the institute which affected surgeries.

“The government should immediately remove him from his post. He is playing with the lives of patients and we cannot allow this institute to accommodate murderers,” Marngar told PTI.

After the protesters left, a magistrate and senior police officials reached the institute to open the office of the director which was locked by the protesters.

Superintendent of

Police, City, Steve Rynjah said the police have taken suo moto action in this regard and security cover of Neigrihms has been upped.

“We have taken a suo moto action in this case. We have tightened security in and around the premises,” Rynjah said.

While no FIR was lodged, the SP said the police has launched an investigation into the matter and the people involved in the protests have been identified.

Last week, the Meghalaya High Court, hearing an PIL had directed the director and head of the department of cardiology to resolve their differences amicably and to ensure that patient requiring surgeries are not affected.

On May 9, additional chief secretary R V Suchiang chaired a tri-partite meeting which was attended by Union Health Ministry joint secretary Gayatri Mishra, Neigrihms director Dr D M Thappa and Cardiology department head Dr Animesh Mishra and representatives from the Amrit pharmacy.

Three surgeries were

performed on Friday last.

The Meghalaya High Court had also directed the Neigrihms authorities to work out a formula and ensure surgeries in the cardiology department is resumed and to come up with long term solutions so that patients are not affected.

Neigrihms authorities had seized stents worth Rs 20 lakh from a private vendor under director’s order that stents should be procured from AMRIT pharmacy and not from private suppliers as the cost is higher.

According to the cardiology department head, AMRIT pharmacy does not have readily available stocks of stents meant for heart surgeries.

Following the seizure of stents from a private vendor, about 34 surgeries were delayed and a 52-year-old patient had died last week due to the non-availability of the surgical materials, according to officials at the institute.

Neigrihms spokesperson Dr K Pandita was not available for comments.

Odisha LS results to come late due to assembly vote counting

BHUBANESWAR, MAY 13 (PTI): The declaration of election results of Lok Sabha in Odisha is likely to be delayed compared to other states since votes for assembly polls will also have to be counted, a senior election official said Monday. Besides, voter verifiable paper audit trail (VVPATs) will also have to be counted and that will also take some time, state Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) Surendra Kumar said.

The votes will be counted across the country on May 23. “The vote counting in Odisha will require more time as the state is conducting simultaneous polls for both the Lok Sabha and

the assembly,” Kumar said while addressing a training programme of Returning Officers here.

While the counting of Lok Sabha votes will be held in 14 tables across the country, in Odisha it will be 7 tables each for the Lok Sabha and the state Assembly, the CEO said adding that declaration of results will take time in Odisha for this reason.

Kumar said for the first time, the VVPATs are to be counted along with the votes in the EVMs.

As per a Supreme Court order, the VVPAT slips of five EVMs in every constituency need to be counted. The VVPAT will be selected

on a random basis through a transparent lottery system, the CEO said.

He said at least 45 minutes are required to complete the process of such sequential counting of VVPATs.

In view of the prevailing heat wave condition in the state, counting halls across the state will be air-conditioned for the first time, Kumar said.

Polling for 21 Lok Sabha constituencies and 147 assembly was held in the state in four phases on April 11, 19, 23 and 29. The EVMs are now in the safe strong room since completion of the fourth phase of elections.

Scientists to visit Mizoram to study outbreak of FAW: Minister

AIZAWL, MAY 13 (PTI): Mizoram Agriculture minister C Lalrinsanga Monday said a group of scientists would soon visit Mizoram for on the spot study of the outbreak of the Fall Army Worm (FAW) which has left a trail of destruction in the maize fields across the state.

Lalrinsanga said that the first case of FAW incidence was identified at Nghasih area near Lunglei town on April eight and had

spread to all the eight districts in the state.

Combating the outbreak was undertaken at a war-footing by the state Agriculture department, he said.

This has prompted the state government to constitute the Rapid Response Team which made efforts to mitigate the losses of the maize cultivators by using pesticides and also educating the farmers how to use the pesticides, Lalrinsanga said.

Queen’s University in Belfast signs MoU with Tezpur varsity for doctoral programmes

NEW DELHI, MAY 13 (PTI): Queen’s University Belfast, one of the leading varsities in UK and Ireland, has signed a MoU with Tezpur University in Assam to jointly supervise doctoral programmes in the next five years.

It will enable scholars from Tezpur University to commence PhD study at Queen’s in September this year. The collaboration will also offer opportunities for student and staff exchange for the purposes of study, research and teaching.

The MoU was signed here between the Vice-Chancellor of Tezpur

University, Vinod Kumar Jain, and Ian Greer, the Vice-Chancellor of Queen’s University Belfast.

According to the MoU, primarily, the scope of collaboration will be in research and aligning with the strengths of both the institutions.

Initially, identified research areas of interest are primarily within the engineering field. However, it is expected that research areas from other faculties will be explored at a later stage.

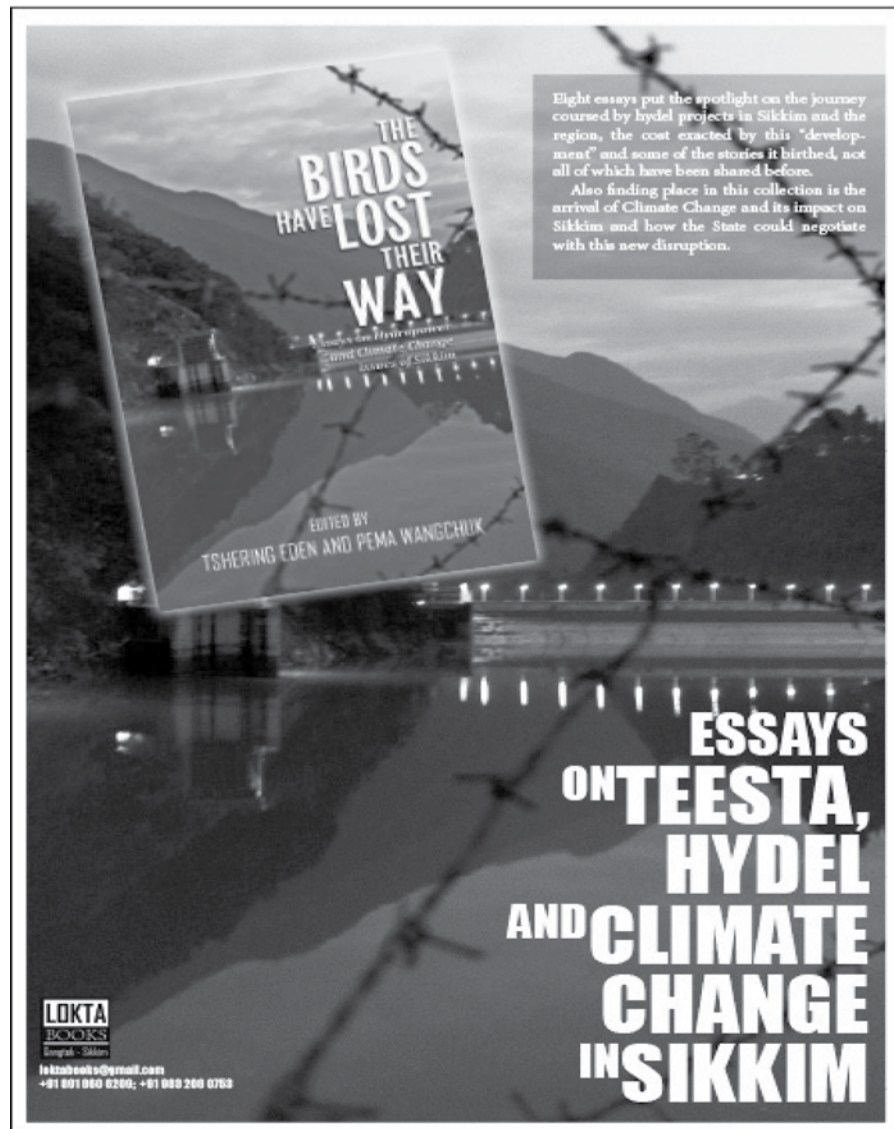
“We have a long-standing relationship with India and are committed to assisting Indian students in real-

“The FAW multiplied rapidly forcing us to use all our resources to combat the menace,” the minister said, adding that the social organisations were asked to cooperate with the Agriculture department in implementing the action plans to fight the outbreak.

As per the latest report, 2,189 hectare of maize cultivation area was under FAW infestation which has affected 5,636 families engaged in maize farming.

ising their career aspirations. In line with this vision, we are pleased to roll out this capacity building project with Tezpur University in Assam. Our focus in India includes preparing students for leadership and citizenship in a global society, recognising that each country and region has its own strategic development priorities,” Greer said.

Greer, along with his delegation from Belfast, was on a three-day visit to India. He met with representatives from a number of institutions and corporates in the country.



Man City batter Brighton to retain Premier League title

BRIGHTON, MAY 12 (AFP): Manchester City held off a titanic challenge from Liverpool to become the first side in a decade to retain the Premier League title by coming from behind to beat Brighton 4-1 on Sunday.

A 14th straight league win ensured Pep Guardiola's men pipped Liverpool by a solitary point as the Reds' long wait to win the league continued despite a 2-0 victory over Wolves at Anfield that saw them post the third highest points tally in Premier League history.

City remain on course to complete the first ever domestic treble in English football in the FA Cup final next weekend as goals from Sergio Aguero, Aymeric Laporte, Riyad Mahrez and Ilkay Gundogan saw the visitors recover from Glenn Murray's shock opener.

For 83 seconds Liverpool fans were able to



dream, but City showed why they are champions and have racked up a remarkable 98 points, just two shy of their record century of points last season.

Liverpool applied as much pressure as they could with their own nine-game winning run to end the season and went in front early against Wolves to raise the tension inside the Amex Stadium.

City had not conceded in their previous four

games, but Brighton were playing on their nerves as they sought revenge for defeat in their FA Cup semi-final last month.

Ali Jahanbakhsh flashed a shot just wide of Ederson's right-hand post before the moment that was celebrated as wildly 270 miles north at Anfield as it was on the south coast.

Pascal Gross's dangerous in-swinging corner was powered home by veteran striker Mur-

ray at the near post on 27 minutes.

This was the first time City had failed to score first in a league game since early December and the first time they had trailed at all in the 14-game winning run that has carried them to the title.

However, Brighton's lead and Liverpool's hope lasted just over a minute.

-Aguero leads City recovery- Aguero scored the sensational last-gasp goal that ended City's

own 44-year wait for the title in 2011/12 and his goals have been a constant of their now four Premier League triumphs in eight seasons.

David Silva's wonderful flick freed the Argentine in behind the Brighton defence and Aguero made no mistake with a powerful low finish.

The brief shock of going behind sparked City into life as Mathew Ryan was then forced into saves at his near post from Bernardo Silva and Mahrez.

However, Brighton were undone from a simple set-piece when Mahrez's corner found Laporte completely unmarked to head City in front seven minutes before half-time.

The champions still had nervy moments to see through as Ederson only just scrambled Lewis Dunk's dipping free-kick over the bar with the last action of the first half.

And the Brazilian

goalkeeper was lucky not to concede a free-kick yards from the City goal line when he collected a back pass from Laporte.

Yet, 27 minutes from time they had the breathing space they desired in a moment of magic and redemption for Mahrez.

The Algerian has failed to make a big impact in his first season since joining for a club record Euro 60 million from Leicester.

Until now his most noteworthy moment was a late missed penalty in a 0-0 draw at Anfield in October that could easily have cost City the title.

Instead, he scored the goal to ensure Liverpool were denied at the end of a remarkable title tussle by cutting inside Dunk before firing into the top corner on his weaker right foot.

Nine minutes later Gundogan added the icing on the champions' cake with a glorious free-kick from 25 yards.

We were passing trophy to each other: Dhoni

HYDERABAD, MAY 13 (PTI): It was funny game in which the two teams kept passing the trophy to each other is how Chennai Super Kings skipper Mahendra Singh Dhoni described the IPL final, in which Mumbai Indians prevailed by one run.

The see-saw game kept the fans enthralled as the winner-takes-all contest went to the wire and was decided in the last ball of the tournament on Sunday.

Initially, it was CSK which had an edge but Mumbai Indians came back in middle overs. Again it was Shane Watson who seemed to have tilted it in CSK's favour but incredible pace bowling by Jasprit Bumrah and Lasith Malinga finally swung it in Mumbai's favour.

"Today was one game we should've done slightly better. It was quite a funny game, we were passing the trophy to each other. Both committed mistakes, and eventually the winning team was the one that committed one mistake less," said Dhoni after CSK fell

short by just one run, chasing 150.

Dhoni has led the CSK to eight finals but he was far from a contended skipper.

"As a team we had a good season. But we need to go back and reflect. Wasn't one of those years where we played very good cricket. Middle order never clicked, but somehow we managed," he said.

"Our bowlers did really well. It was not a 150 wicket, but the bowlers kept us in the hunt. They kept getting wickets when it was really needed. Batting, someone kept chipping in and we kept winning. To be consistent next year, we will have to really think hard," he added.

The charismatic Dhoni said the focus will now shift to World Cup in England.

"It's too early to say right now (about next year's plans). Up next is the World Cup. That's the first priority. After that, we will chat about CSK. Nothing against the bowlers, but the batsmen could've done better. Hopefully yes, we'll see you next year," he said.

Pandya, Rahul back in form; Warner sends warning to WC rivals

NEW DELHI, MAY 13 (PTI): Hardik Pandya and K L Rahul's stellar show drowning their off-field distractions, David Warner sounding a warning bell to his World Cup rivals and a 40-year-old Imran Tahir turning the clock back were some of the takeaways from the just-concluded IPL.

While Mahendra Singh Dhoni's 'Dad's Army' nearly did an encore, Mumbai Indians' consistency on the big day paid off again during a season where there were more than 30 last-over finishes.

In a World Cup year, it was imperative that the focus would be on international stars and the contenders for the silverware have had the form and fitness of their stars analysed threadbare over 50 days.

For tournament favourites India, the foremost gain has to be Hardik and Rahul's performance.

The enormously gifted Hardik and the very stylish Rahul seemed to have channelised all their energies on the field during the past seven weeks to produce results that will augur well for India in the upcoming World Cup in England.

Back after serving a temporary ban for their trash talk, IPL was a platform for the best friends to get their focus back in the game, and they did so in a glorious fashion.

Kings XI Punjab couldn't make it to the play-offs but Rahul did his bit opening the innings, scoring 593 runs and finishing second behind David Warner (692) in the run-scorer's list.

His approach was classical and the six fifties and one hundred will certainly keep him in high spirits if the team management expects him to bat at No. 3 or 4 in the mega event.

Rahul's skipper Ravichandran Ashwin wasn't exactly happy with his

Having a squad of match-winners, honest team selection reason for consistent success: Mahela



BHARAT SHARMA HYDERABAD, MAY 12 (PTI): The presence of multiple match-winners and a penchant for making "honest" team selection led to the consistent success of Mumbai Indians in the IPL, feels coach Mahela Jayawardene.

The mighty Mumbai Indians have been the team to beat in IPL history and the Sri Lankan great says they have worked hard on building a "culture of success".

While leggie Mayank Markande did well for them last year, they replaced him with Rahul Chahar who repaid the faith with some match-winning performances.

An injured Lasith Malinga was the team mentor last year but this season he is one of the main bowlers. The team was also not afraid to drop veteran Yuvraj Singh for the young Ishan Kishan.

The others who can win the game for Mumbai Indians on their day are captain Rohit Sharma, Hardik Pandya, his brother Krunal, Kieron Pollard, Jasprit Bumrah, Suryakumar Yadav and opener Quinton de Kock, who has been their leading-run getter this season.

"That (multiple match-winners) is something we spoke about at the beginning of the season. It takes pressure off key players as well. When you have 7-8 guys who can win those little battles for you out there, it creates opportunities to win games. You require that in a tournament like this.

"Another factor is that opposition finds it difficult to plan when different guys are performing. That has helped us this season," said the former Sri Lanka captain ahead of the final here on Sunday.

On making tough selection calls, Jayawar-

dene said: "Start of the season we started with Mayank but everyone thought Rahul was bowling better and we went with that option. The same way Lasith was injured last year, this year we felt he was back in form and was a great foil for Bumrah especially at the back end.

"It is a collective decision we make and sometimes it is not the easiest of decisions but as long as you are honest about it, it makes things easier."

Having invested in their group of players has also helped immensely, said Jayawardene, who was appointed Mumbai coach in November 2016.

"We have created that culture over the years and we try to keep the core group of player so they have the identity and passion to play for the team. And whenever the youngsters have been introduced, they walk into that culture as well. It is a unique transition for them and they play fearless cricket which is important in a tournament like this.

"We have also made a conscious effort to bring in players, both local and foreigners who can fit in with the core group. Individuals can win you games but good teams win you championships."

Talking about the progression of Hardik over the years, Jayawardene added: "Three years ago Hardik was a talented cricketer but he was finding his way in IPL cricket. Since then he has played for India including Test cricket. Spending time with the group of India players here (at MI), naturally you will learn a lot from that.

"Last year it was tough for him but it can happen. He is a confident player and we use him as an all-rounder. If everything goes well for him in a game, it is brilliant for us.

Kieron Pollard fined 25 percent for showing dissent

HYDERABAD, MAY 13 (PTI): Mumbai Indians all-rounder Kieron Pollard was fined 25% of his match fee for showing dissent at an umpiring decision during the IPL final against Chennai Super Kings on Sunday.

Pollard admitted to the Level 1 offence 2.8 of the IPL Code of Conduct for Players and Team Officials and accepted the sanction.

For Level 1 breaches of the IPL Code of Conduct, the Match Referee Javagal Srinath's decision was final and binding.

During the final over of the innings, an annoyed Pollard, to everyone's astonishment, took strike near the tramline before nearly leaving the pitch, attracting the ire of the match officials.



Bowling the final over of the MI innings, Dwayne Bravo, finding birthday boy Pollard shuffle repeatedly towards the off-stump from his one-leg guard, cleverly bowled fuller deliveries outside the 'tramline' (marked for wide balls) for three successive dot balls.

On all three occasions, straight umpire

Nitin Menon didn't signal wide as expected by Pollard, the reason being the burly batsman's big trigger.

After the third dot delivery, Pollard's frustration was evident as he flipped his bat in the air even though he didn't utter a word.

Just as Bravo got into his stride to bowl the

fourth delivery, Pollard, in a mock gesture, left the stumps open and kept walking towards the side of the crease.

The umpires immediately intervened as Ian Gould, from square leg, and Menon, walked towards him to reprimand the senior player for his gesture, which was against the spirit of the game.

There wasn't any verbal protest from Pollard as he just heard them and then went about his business. He, however, had something to smile in the ensuing moments, hitting Bravo for two successive boundaries off the last two balls to take MI to 149 for eight. Pollard made a 25-ball 41 and was the top scorer for his side.

India's "first extremist" was a Hindu, says Kamal Haasan

ARAVAKURICHI (TN), MAY 13 (PTI): Stoking a controversy, actor and Makkal Needhi Maiyam founder Kamal Haasan has said free India's first "extremist was a Hindu" -- Nathuram Godse who killed Mahatma Gandhi.

Haasan's comments drew sharp reaction from the state BJP, which slammed him for indulging in "divisive politics".

However, the Congress and Dravidar Kazhagam, a rationalist organisation floated by Dravidian veteran, the late E V R Periyar, came out in support of the MNM leader.

Addressing an election campaign here on Sunday night, Haasan said he was one of those "proud Indians" who desires an India of equality and where the "three colours" in the tricolour, an obvious reference to different faiths, "remained intact."

"I am not saying this because this is a Muslim dominated area, but I am saying this before a statue of Gandhi. Free India's first extremist was a Hindu, his name is Nathuram Godse. There it (extremism, apparently) starts," he said.

Haasan said he was a "self-assumed great-grandson" of Gand-

hi and that he had come here "seeking answers for that murder," referring to Gandhi's assassination in 1948.

"Good Indians desire for equality and want the three colours in the tricolour to remain intact. I am a good Indian, will proudly proclaim that," he added.

BJP state President Tamilisai Soundararajan said the whole nation was shocked when Gandhi was killed and none can justify it, and that Godse was hanged for the "heinous" crime.

She said it was "strongly condemnable" that Haasan used the phrase "Hindu extremism" in a Muslim-dominated area.

"Though he talks of taking forward a new kind of politics, he also indulged in the old, mischievous, poisonous and divisive vote bank politics," Soundararajan said in a statement.

She said his remarks amounted to inciting "communal violence".

In an apparent reference to the deadly Easter bombings in Sri Lanka which left over 250 dead, she asked whether persons like Haasan were vocal in discussing the issue "despite being known that perpetrators were Muslims."

Soundararajan said



Haasan's remarks in a Muslim-dominated area were "mischievous and agenda-driven."

"Therefore such persons" campaigning should be banned. Police should take action since there is an effort to create tension," she said.

Taking a swipe at his earlier statement of threatening to leave the country when his multi-million venture 'Vishwaroopam' faced release time issues from Muslim groups over the portrayal of the community, the state BJP chief said "It is brazen acting that he is now talking about the country, Gandhi and patriotism."

Actor Vivek Oberoi slammed Haasan's remarks, saying both art and terror "have no religion" and asked if Godse's faith was mentioned to corner Muslim votes.

Oberoi, who played Narendra Modi in a biop-

ic on the Prime Minister, said no one "should divide the country."

"Dear Kamal sir, you are a great artist. Just like art has no religion, terror has no religion either! You can say Godse was a terrorist, why would you specify Hindu? Is it because you were in a Muslim dominated area looking for votes?," he said in a tweet.

"Please sir, from a much smaller artist to a great one, lets not divide this country, we are one Jai Hind..#AkhandBharat #UnDividedIndia," he added.

Haasan, however, found support from the Congress and DK, whose leaders said they found nothing wrong with the actor-politician's remarks.

TNCC President K S Alagiri said he concurred with Haasan "1000 percent", while DK chief K Veeramani said Godse trained with RSS.

China broke trade deal with US: Trump

LALIT K JHA
(Eds: UPDATING WITH MORE QUOTES, BACKGROUND)

WASHINGTON, MAY 13 (PTI): US President Donald Trump has defended his tariff policy and blamed China for breaking the trade deal, asserting that the negotiations are “right where we want to be” as the world’s two largest economies remain locked in a bruising trade war after the latest round of talks ended without an agreement.

After the near collapse of trade talks with China last week, Trump on Friday imposed punitive duties on USD 200 billion worth of Chinese imports, raising them to 25 per cent from 10 per cent, and asked for a similar increase on tariff on the rest of the

Chinese import of over USD 300 billion.

In a series of tweets, Trump on Sunday indicated toughening of his stand against China.

“We are right where we want to be with China. Remember, they broke the deal with us and tried to renegotiate,” Trump said, justifying his decision to impose a hefty tax on Chinese products, including fish, handbags, clothing and footwear.

The new taxes would result in hefty revenue to the US, he said.

“We will be taking in tens of billions of dollars in tariffs from China. Buyers of product can make it themselves in the USA (ideal), or buy it from non-tariffed countries...,” he said.

“We will then spend (match or better) the



money that China may no longer be spending with our Great Patriot Farmers (Agriculture), which is a small percentage of total tariffs received, and distribute the food to starving people in nations around the world! GREAT! #MAGA,” Trump said.

The US President later asserted that China’s sudden change in policy was mainly because it thought that leaders from the opposition Democratic party would be able to replace him in the White House after the 2020 presidential elections.

By doing so, China was dreaming, he said.

“China is dreaming that sleepy Joe Biden, or any of the others, gets elected in 2020. They love ripping off America!,” Trump said.

Appearing on Fox News, Trump’s top economic advisor Larry

Kudlow said the consumers of the United States would pay the increased taxes.

“It’s not China that pays the tariffs, it’s the American importers, the American companies that pay what, is in fact, a tax increase,” he said.

“Fair enough. In fact, both sides will pay in these things, and of course it depends,” he said when asked “if it’s a tariff on goods coming into the country, the Chinese aren’t paying?”

Congressman Warren Davidson sought to impose sanctions on China on Sunday for walking away from good faith negotiations.

“If China walks away from good faith negotiations, we could minimise collateral damage to US consumers and economy by using targeted

sanctions against specific companies using subsidies, dumping, or stolen IP. Multiply allies instead of multiplying enemies,” Davidson said.

Trump new move to raise tariffs came as China’s top trade negotiator, Vice Premier Liu He, on Friday concluded his two days of trade talks with the US team led by US Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer.

The 11th round of talks in Washington ended Friday with no deal, but the Chinese vice premier said the negotiations had not broken down.

“Negotiations have not broken down. Quite the opposite. I think they are normal. Small setbacks are inevitable in bilateral negotiations. Looking ahead, we are cautiously optimistic

about the future,” Liu was quoted as saying by the Hong Kong-based South China Morning Post.

China believes tariffs are the starting point of the bilateral trade disputes. If a deal is to be reached, the tariffs should all be eliminated. This is the first point, Liu said.

The second is related China’s promise to buy more goods from the US, he said

Trump has been demanding that China reduce the massive trade deficit which last year climbed to over USD 539 billion. He is also pressing for verifiable measures for protection of intellectual property rights (IPR), technology transfer and more access to American goods to Chinese markets.

Millions vote in Philippine elections crucial to Duterte

MANILA, MAY 13 (AP): Filipinos began casting their vote Monday in midterm elections highlighted by a showdown between President Rodrigo Duterte’s allies who aim to dominate the Senate and opposition candidates fighting for checks and balances under a leader they regard as a looming dictator.

Nearly 62 million Filipinos have registered to choose among 43,500 candidates vying for about 18,000 congressional and local posts in the high-stakes elections in one of Asia’s most ram-bunctious democracies.

Many see the elections as a crucial referendum on Duterte’s rise to power with a brutal crackdown on illegal drugs that has left thousands dead, his unorthodox leadership style, combative and sexist joke-laden outbursts and contentious embrace of China.

“President Duterte’s name is not on the ballot but this is very much a referendum on his three years of very disruptive yet very popular presidency,” Manila-based analyst Richard Heydarian said.

The outcome of the polls would show whether the Filipino populace affirms or rejects Duterte’s authoritarian-style leadership in an Asian bastion of democracy, Heydarian said.



The most crucial race is for 12 seats in the 24-member Senate, which Duterte wants to fill with allies to bolster his legislative agenda.

That includes the return of the death penalty, lowering the age for criminal liability of child offenders, and revising the country’s 1987 constitution primarily to allow a shift to a federal form of government, a proposal some critics fear may be a cover to remove term limits.

Military and police forces were on full alert to respond to any violence, especially in security hotspots that include the entire southern region of Mindanao, and help prevent cheating amid intense local political rivalries.

Two suspected grenade blasts were reported in southern Maguindanao province, including one shortly before voting started at 6 a.m.. There were no reported injuries from the explosions.

Commission on Elec-

tions spokesman James Jimenez said the elections season has been peaceful so far compared to past years. Police say 20 people have died in poll-related violence, out of 76 reported casualties.

In Manila’s financial district of Makati, former Vice President Jejomar Binay protested after his ballot was rejected by an automated counting machine, one of several similar complaints. At least two mayoral candidates have been put in police custody elsewhere, including one for alleged elections fraud.

Opposition aspirants consider the Senate the last bastion of checks and balances given the solid dominance of Duterte’s loyalists in the lower House of Representatives. Last year, opposition senators moved to block proposed bills they feared would undermine civil liberties.

Duterte’s politics and key programs, in-

cluding his drive against illegal drugs that has left more than 5,200 mostly urban poor suspects dead, have been scrutinised on the campaign trail and defended by close allies running for the Senate, led by his former national police chief Ronald dela Rosa, who first enforced the crackdown when the president took office in mid-2016.

Aside from the drug killings, Duterte’s gutter language and what nationalists say is a policy of appeasement toward China that may undermine Philippine territorial claims in the South China Sea, have also been the cause of protests and criticism.

A May 3-6 survey by independent pollster Pulse Asia showed 11 of Duterte-backed senatorial candidates and four other aspirants in the winning circle, including only one from the opposition.

The survey also showed some favorites had narrow leads and a considerable number of voters were undecided, indicating a probability the results could change. The survey of 1,800 respondents had a margin of error of plus or minus 2.3 percentage points.

Duterte himself remains hugely popular based on independent ratings surveys.

Divided, cash-strapped and without a unified leader, opposition aspirants are fighting an uphill battle to capture the few Senate seats they need to stymie any hostile legislation.

Many Filipinos seem more open to authoritarianism due to past failures of liberal leaders, Heydarian said. Such a mindset has helped the family of former dictator Ferdinand Marcos to make a political comeback.

Among many dirt-poor Filipinos, however, the concern is day-to-day survival.

“Martial law is scary but we’re more afraid of dying in hunger,” Arturo Veles, a jobless father of six, told The Associated Press.

Wiping away tears, Veles spoke outside his family’s shanty in the humid squalor atop Smokey Mountain, a long-closed dumpsite in Manila’s Tondo slum that remains a symbol of the country’s appalling poverty.

His asthma-stricken wife, Agnes, said that not one congressional candidate had treaded the fly-strewn and trash-littered path to their cluster of crumbling huts, probably because of the smell and filth.

Arturo Veles said the poor always suffer the most, indicating he and his wife would not vote for administration candidates.

Iran calls UAE ship attacks ‘alarming’, urges probe

TEHRAN, MAY 13 (AFP): Iran on Monday called attacks on ships in the Gulf “alarming”, after the UAE and Saudi Arabia said several vessels including oil tankers were damaged in acts of sabotage off the Emirati coast.

“The incidents in the Sea of Oman are alarming and regrettable,” Iranian foreign ministry spokesman Abbas Mousavi said in an English-language statement on the ministry’s



website, calling for a probe into the attacks and warning of “adven-

turism” by foreign players to disrupt maritime security.

Saudi Arabia says 2 oil tankers damaged by sabotage attacks

Dubai, May 13 (AP): Saudi Arabia said Monday two of its oil tankers were sabotaged off the coast of the United Arab Emirates in attacks that caused “significant damage” to the vessels, one of them as it was en route to pick up Saudi oil to take to the US.

Khalid al-Falih’s comments came as the US issued a new warning to sailors and the UAE’s regional allies condemned the reported sabotage Sunday of four ships off the coast of the port city of Fujairah. The announcement came just hours after Iranian and Lebanese media outlets aired false reports of explosions at the city’s port.

Emirati officials have declined to elaborate on the nature of the sabotage or say who might have been responsible.



However, the reports come as the US has warned ships that “Iran or its proxies” could be targeting maritime traffic in the region, and as America is deploying an aircraft carrier and B-52 bombers to the Persian Gulf to counter alleged threats from Tehran.

Tensions have risen in the year since President Donald Trump withdrew the United States from the 2015 nuclear deal between Iran and world powers, restoring American sanctions that have pushed Iran’s economy into crisis. Last week,

Iran warned it would begin enriching uranium at higher levels in 60 days if world powers failed to negotiate new terms for the deal.

In his statement, al-Falih said the attacks on the two tankers happened at 6 a.m. Sunday.

“One of the two vessels was on its way to be loaded with Saudi crude oil from the port of Ras Tanura, to be delivered to Saudi Aramco’s customers in the United States,” al-Falih said.

“Fortunately, the attack didn’t lead to any casualties or oil spill; however, it caused significant damage

to the structures of the two vessels.” Saudi Arabia did not identify the vessels involved, nor did it say whom it suspected of carrying out the alleged sabotage.

Underling the regional risk, the general-secretary of the six-nation Gulf Cooperation Council described the alleged sabotage as a “serious escalation” in an overnight statement.

“Such irresponsible acts will increase tension and conflicts in the region and expose its peoples to great danger,” Abdulatif bin Rashid al-Zayani said. Bahrain, Egypt and Yemen’s internationally recognized government similarly condemned the alleged sabotage.

A statement Sunday from the UAE’s Foreign Ministry put the ships near the country’s territorial waters in the Gulf of Oman,

east of the port of Fujairah. It said it was investigating “in cooperation with local and international bodies.” It said there were “no injuries or fatalities on board the vessels” and “no spillage of harmful chemicals or fuel.”

The US Navy’s 5th Fleet, which oversees the region, did not immediately offer comment. Emirati officials declined to answer questions from The Associated Press, saying their investigation is ongoing.

Earlier Sunday, Lebanon’s pro-Iran satellite channel Al-Mayadeen, quoting “Gulf sources,” falsely reported that a series of explosions had struck Fujairah’s port. State and semi-official media in Iran picked up the report from Al-Mayadeen, which later published the names of vessels it claimed were involved.



Didn't want to miss opportunity of working with Irrfan: Kareena Kapoor Khan

MUMBAI, MAY 12 (PTI): Kareena Kapoor Khan will be sharing screen space with Irrfan Khan for the first time in "Angrezi Medium" and she says she came on board the project to work with the critically-acclaimed actor.

It may be a small part, but Kareena believes it will be great a learning experience.

"It is a small part and I did not want to miss the opportunity to be working with Irrfan Khan. That box needed to be ticked in my career that I had the pleasure of working with him whether it is two scenes or three or more. As an artiste one gets to learn so much when you are part of a good film," the 38-year-old actor told PTI.

"I grabbed the opportunity and I don't know if I will get this again. We are dramatically different actors. We don't do same kind of movies. When this role



came, Homi told me do it as it is a cool part even though if it is small as I will get to work with Irrfan," she added.

Irrfan, 52, is back to work after undergoing treatment for neuroendocrine tumour in London. He had revealed his diagnosis last year in March and was

away from films since then.

Kareena will be essaying the role of a cop in "Angrezi Medium". The makers have started shooting and she will join the cast soon.

"It is a cop role and I am excited about it. I can't talk in any further about the role," she added.

The film, directed by Homi Adajania, went on floors recently and also stars Radhika Madan and Deepak Dobriyal, among others.

It is a sequel to Irrfan's 2017 super-hit comedy drama "Hindi Medium".

"Angrezi Medium" is slated to be released on April 25 next year.

SRFTI trio India's saving grace in Cannes



BY SAIBAL CHATTERJEE

CANNES, MAY 13 (PTI): The 72nd Cannes Film Festival kicks off on Tuesday with India missing from the official selection for the first time this decade. The last time the world's largest movie-producing nation drew a blank in Cannes was in 2009.

The 2019 edition of the 12-day festival (May 14 to 25) will open with the screening of Jim Jarmusch's zombie satire "The Dead Don't Die", one of 21 titles competing for the Palme d'Or.

Aishwarya Rai Bachchan, Sonam Kapoor Ahuja, Deepika Padukone and Huma Qureshi will, as always, walk the red carpet but India will have nothing to show for its massive yearly output of films in any of the main sections of the festival this year.

However, three ex-students of Kolkata's Satyajit Ray Film and Television Institute (SRFTI), who are just starting out in their careers, will ensure peripheral but genuine presence for the country in the globe's biggest cinema carnival.

Since 2010, the year Vikramaditya Motwane's Udaan made it to Un Certain Regard, India has had a film every single year in Cannes' official selection.

"Bollywood: The Greatest Love Story Ever Told" (Out of Competition, 2011), "Miss Lovely" (Un Certain Regard, 2012), "Monsoon Shootout" (Out of Competition, 2013), "Bombay Talkies" (Special Screenings, 2013), "Titli" (Un Certain Regard, 2014), "Masaan" and "Chauthi Koot" (both Un Certain Regard, 2015), "Gudh" (Cinefondation, 2016) and "The Cinema Travellers" (Cannes Classics, 2016), "Afternoon Clouds" (Cinefondation, 2017) and "Manto" (Un Certain Regard, 2018) made the Cannes cut after "Udaan" had ended a six-year drought.

In 2017, Cannes did not select any feature-length Indian film, but Film and Television Institute of India (FTII) alumna Payal Kapadia's

short film "Afternoon Clouds" made it to the festival's Cinefondation competition for film schools.

Meghalaya's Dominic Sangma, Darjeeling lad Saurav Rai (maker of the 2016 Cannes entry "Gudh") and cinematographer Modhura Palit will be in the festival this year to participate in three different official segments.

Sangma, whose debut film, the Garo-language "Ma'ama" (Moan), premiered in the Mumbai Film Festival last year, will explore co-production tie-ups for his sophomore effort, "Rapture". The under-production film is one of ten projects in La Fabrique des Cinema du Monde, a programme hosted by Institut Francais.

It invites ten directors working on their first or second features to the festival along with their producers. Sangma will participate along with Chinese co-producer Jianshang Xu, who was also involved in the making of "Ma'ama".

The up-and-coming filmmaker will receive guidance from Mira Nair, the first Indian to win the Camera d'Or in Cannes (for "Salaam Bombay", 1988). She has been named the patron of La Fabrique 2019.

Saurav Rai will pitch his debut work-in-progress narrative feature, "Nimtoh" (Invitation), in the 'HAF (Hong Kong Asia Film Financing Forum) Goes to Cannes' programme in the festival's Marche du Film (Film Market).

"Nimtoh" is among five projects selected by the HAF Work-in-Progress Lab in March to participate in a pitching session in Cannes. The film's co-producer Sanjay Gulati will be in attendance.

Kolkata cinematographer Modhura Palit will travel to Cannes to be part of the 7th edition of the Angenieux Excel Lens in Cinematography ceremony. She will receive the Angenieux Special Encouragement, which is given to a young professional.

The first winner of the Special Encouragement, introduced in 2018, was the young Chinese DOP Cecile Zhang. The recognition will entitle Palit to the use on loan of the best Angenieux lenses on her next project.

Named after the founder of the 80-year-old French company that makes high-end zoom lenses, this year's Angenieux tribute will be received by the five-time Oscar-nominated French director of photography Bruno Delbonnel.

Rohit Shetty ropes in Abhimanyu Singh as 'Sooryavanshi' villain

MUMBAI, MAY 13

(PTI): Actor Abhi-

manyu Singh has been cast as the antagonist in Rohit Shetty's cop drama "Sooryavanshi", featuring Akshay Kumar in the lead.

Abhimanyu, who has started shooting for the film, said his character is "unpredictable and deadly".

"It's an interesting role. Akshay sir and I have known each other for a while now and it has been a great shoot from the first day. It was a serious scene and we had to complete it in a day, which we did.

"It was lovely shooting with Akshay sir and Rohit sir made me feel as if we have



known each other for years," the actor said in a statement.

Abhimanyu made his big screen debut with the Rakeysh Omprakash Mehra-directed 2001 supernatural-thriller "Aks" and was

more recently seen in the Sridevi-starrer "Mom".

"Sooryavanshi" is the third film Shetty's cop universe after Ajay Devgn-fronted "Singham" and Ranveer Singh's "Simmba".

The filmmaker is also planning to make a film centred on a female cop.

Melissa McCarthy is the new host of 'Little Big Shot'

LOS ANGELES, MAY 13 (PTI): Actor-comedienne Melissa McCarthy has been roped in as the new host of NBC's "Little Big Shot".

McCarthy replaces Steve Harvey as the host of the talent competition for kids, reported Variety.

Harvey has hosted the previous three seasons of the show.

"Melissa's just an incredible performer and incredible comedian. She will bring a completely fresh perspective to it," said Paul Telegdy, NBC's co-chairman of entertainment alongside George Cheeks.

"Little Big Shots" last aired in July 2018 and is scheduled to return to NBC next winter.



The models, Kate Upton, Olivia Culpo, & Tyra Banks attend the Sports Illustrated Swimsuit On Location event in Miami.

'It: Chapter Two' to release in India on September 6

Mumbai, May 10 (PTI): The

sequel to the 2017 horror blockbuster "It" is set to release in India on September 6. Titled "It: Chapter Two", the film has been directed by Andy Muschietti and features an ensemble cast of James McAvoy, Jessica Chastain, Bill Hader, Jay Ryan, Isaiah Mustafa, James Ransone, Andy Bean and Bill Skarsgard.

The first film, also directed by Muschietti, followed the first half of Stephen King's eponymous novel, telling the story of a group of children who are terrorised by Pennywise the Clown (Skarsgard) and forced to face their own demons to defeat him.

The sequel will follow the last half of the novel, when the characters return to their hometown after 27 years as adults and face Pennywise once again.

Gary Dauberman has adapted King's novel for the film. Barbara Muschietti, Dan Lin and Roy Lee are the producers on the project.

Executive producers are Marty Ewing, Seth Grahame-Smith and David Katzenberg are the executive producers.

"It: Chapter Two" will be released in India in English, Hindi, Tamil and Telugu.

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ARIES:

You could receive some sort of windfall today, Aries. Use it wisely. Consider buying some time to figure out what you want to do with your life. It's likely that your career isn't exactly ringing your bells these days. You're ready for new challenges and opportunities. Meditate on what would make you happy and then take a systematic approach to achieving it.

TAURUS:

It's likely that you will succeed at whatever you set out to accomplish today, Taurus. If you've been held back by worries over the integrity of a relationship or the long-term prospects of a partnership, you can dispel concerns by confronting the person directly. You may find he or she has the same feelings about you! Honesty is important today.

GEMINI:

Your energy may flag a bit today, Gemini. There's nothing to worry about, though you could take better care of

your health. What happened to that exercise regimen you vowed to start? It's never too late to improve your eating habits and begin working out. Even if you only walk three times a week, you will notice a dramatic difference in your appearance and outlook.

CANCER:

Today is meant for socializing and connecting, Cancer. Your creativity is at an all-time high, so also try to work in some quiet time where you can do some writing or painting. If friends invite you out in the evening, by all means, take them up on the offer. You may meet someone who could be pivotal to your career. Be open to all possibilities

LEO:

There's no other way to say this, Leo - you're in the mood for love. Tonight you may feel a strong urge to be with your partner. If there isn't one in your life, you should take steps to correct that. You may meet someone who sweeps you off your feet. You want to be head-in-the-clouds in love, which is the only way to be!

VIRGO:

You have a generous spirit, Virgo, which could get you into trouble if you aren't careful. When you get a gift of money or even a hint of one, your tendency is to buy presents for all your friends. It's hard to fault you for this, but there are other ways to show your affection. You could bake cookies to distribute, for example. This will keep your money safe and earning interest.

LIBRA:

You're ready for a career change, Libra, or at least a change of venue. Have you considered telecommuting one day per week? That might give you the variety you seek without needing to find a new job. You may meet someone today or in the near future who will have a dramatic influence on your career decisions. Listen carefully.

SCORPIO:

What is your dream, Scorpio? Answer that question as specifically as possible today, then set about attaining that goal.

All signs indicate that whatever you begin today will pay off big time. Even though you may feel that your dreams are too ambitious, there's no need to feel overwhelmed. Vow to take things one step at a time. Keep in mind the old adage, "Once begun is half done."

SAGITTARIUS:

This may seem odd, Sagittarius, but you may not be the person you think you are. There are indications that you have hidden talents. If they come out today, no one will be more shocked than you! This could take your career in an entirely new direction. Strategize ways to incorporate this talent into your career. Your work will take on a new dynamic, and you will take a major leap forward.

CAPRICORN:

You're about to experience a major change in your life's direction, Capricorn, and it may occur today. Keep your mind open to all sorts of possibilities. You're likely to receive some important information. Of course, you may not re-

alize its importance right away. It's only with the passage of time that you will look back on this event as pivotal. Make sure you don't miss it.

AQUARIUS:

You're unstoppable today, Aquarius. It seems you can do anything. Your confidence and energy are high. There's no question that you're ready to take the world by storm. Is the world ready for you? Think carefully as you formulate plans for your new project. Whatever you do will succeed, but be sure you're doing what you really want to do rather than what others expect of you.

PISCES:

It's likely that you're being held back by certain traumatic past events. Before you can make further progress in your life, Pisces, you must address these painful memories for the last time. If it feels too frightening to do alone, seek professional help. You will find that mustering the courage to do this difficult, emotional housecleaning is more than half the battle.