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Summit **TIMES**

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ON TOP OF THE NEWS

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All is not well with the SKM-BJP 'alliance'

ARPAN PRADHAN
GANGTOK, 21 FEB:

All is not well with the SKM-BJP alliance and the recent appointment of Martam-Rumtek MLA, Sonam Venchungpa as chairperson of Denzong Cooperative Society Limited has further deepened the cracks.

While leaders of both parties refused to make any official comments on record, they have hinted at souring of the SKM-BJP relationship.

The two parties are unhappy about the other

disregarding the conditions laid down when the alliance was forged prior to the 2019 by-polls.

According to sources, BJP has not taken well to only Mr Venchungpa, an SKM leader loaned to BJP as a result of the alliance, being given government office. Also appointed advisors to state government departments were Em Prasad Sharma and GT Dhungel, the two SDF MLAs who had parted from their colleagues and joined SKM instead of going to BJP like the rest.

A senior BJP leader raised questions about why the rest of the BJP MLAs were ignored by the SKM government.

BJP, even though it now has 12 MLAs, has only one from its own ranks in YT Lepcha, who has been with the BJP for some years now and who won the Gangtok by-election. The remaining 11 BJP MLAs comprise of 10 who won on SDF tickets and then switched sides and Mr Venchungpa who was loaned by SKM to the saf-

ron party to contest the by-election on a BJP ticket.

"BJP is not happy with the SKM Government appointing only one MLA from BJP in the post of chairman. They could have at least appointed YT Lepcha who won the by-election as the SKM-BJP pre-poll alliance candidate," said one BJP Leader.

The by-election was held in three constituencies of Gangtok, Martam-Rumtek and Poklok-Kamrang, last October.

The SKM-BJP pre-poll alliance helped BJP register wins in two constituencies for the first time in the history of Sikkim politics while alliance partners SKM did not field any candidates in these two constituencies.

In the third constituency of Poklok-Kamrang, SKM fielded PS Tamang while BJP did not field any candidate, thus ensuring two-way contests between the BJP-SKM and SDF in all three constituencies.



GANGTOK GETS VERSE: In an evening of conversations about poetry, Tashi Chopel's debut anthology of poems titled 'How to collect a folktale' was launched at Rachna Books on Thursday. Mr Chopel was in conversation with journalist Anuradha Sharma where he talked about his craft and inspirations. The book has been published by Rachna Books and Publications and features 54 poems written over the past 15 years. Apart from being a poet, Mr Chopel is Additional Secretary, Department of Personnel, Government of Sikkim. [Photo Courtesy - Karchoong Diyal]

Andhra vigilance dept unearths Rs 404 cr scam in ESIC

AMARAVATI (AP), FEB 21 (PTI): The Vigilance and Enforcement Department of Andhra Pradesh has claimed to have unearthed a Rs 404.86 crore scam in the Employees State Insurance Corporation during the period between 2014 and 2019, when the Telugu Desam Party was in power.

Three directors of the Insurance Medical Service (IMS) implementing the ESIC scheme -- B Ravi Kumar, C K Ramesh Kumar and G Vijaya Kumar -- have been found guilty of large-scale irregularities, a report by the vigilance department said.

Besides the three directors, at least five joint directors and several other staff members have been named as culpable in the irregularities, it added. State Labour Minister G Jayaram said action would be taken against all those involved, based on the vigilance report.

He said former labour minister in the Chandrababu Naidu cabinet, K Atchannaidu, and top officials of the department would be brought to book and the swindled amount would be recovered.

"We will not hesitate to send them to jail," Jayaram said in a video statement.

Atchannaidu, who is currently deputy leader of the Telugu Desam Legislature Party, denied any wrongdoing and claimed he merely implemented the directives of Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

"In 2016, the Prime Minister convened a meeting of ESIC and wanted the states to introduce tele health services and the Centre wrote a letter to all states in December 2016 on the same.

We had decided to implement that and I asked our officials to follow Telangana model and issued a note," Atchannaidu said in a video message from his village in Srikakulam district. Maintaining that all relevant records were available and could be verified, the former minister said he was ready to face any inquiry.

The vigilance department said that the three directors were the "kingpins of the procurement scam in the ESI, where gross irregularities were committed in purchase of drugs, medicines, lab kits, surgical items and furniture between 2014-15 and 2018-19, causing a loss of over Rs 151 crore to the state exchequer". Of the total Rs 975.79 crore worth of purchases made during the period, the three directors, along with other staff, violated all procedures and guidelines of the government and ESIC and caused "huge wrongful loss to the exchequer", the vigilance report prepared by Director General K V Rajendranath Reddy said.

While the total budget allocation for the purchase of drugs and medicines during their tenure was Rs 293.51 crore, they made purchases worth Rs 698.36 crore, an excess of Rs 404.86 crore, in violation of procedural guidelines, the report said.

Of this, Rs 51 crore was found to be paid in excess as the drugs were purchased from non-rate contract firms, in clear violation of guidelines, it said. An excess of Rs 85.32 crore was paid to three private firms on purchase of laboratory kits and another Rs 10.43 crore on surgical items, it said.

"The directors purchased furniture worth Rs 6.62 crore without calling for open tenders and, when compared to randomly with the market prices, the purchases were made at 70 per cent excess than market prices. "This caused a loss of Rs 4.63 crore to the government," the Vigilance report noted.

"The above acts of the officers and staff (of ESIC and IMS) and proprietors of various firms attract the provisions of criminal misconduct under Prevention of Corruption Act and cheating, criminal breach of trust, forgery for the purpose of cheating and using forged documents as genuine and other offences under the Indian Penal Code," the vigilance report said and recommended suitable action.

Sikkim is ready for filmmakers: SFCS



REBYNA RANA
GANGTOK, 21 FEB:

The much awaited Global Cinema Festival is taking place in Gangtok from 28 Feb to 01 March. It is the first ever film festival of this scale to be held in Sikkim and is being organised by the Sikkim Government in association with Film Federation of India and Sikkim Film Co-operative

Society [SFCS].

Preparations are on full swing to have a successful film festival and the State government is planning to announce the film policy of the State government during the festival.

Among the organisers, the SFCS was established in November 2019 for the welfare of filmmakers and artists

of Sikkim while also to work towards the development of the regional film industry, uplift local talents of the state, as well as to organize film festivals, informed SFCS president, Deependra Mohra. The Global Cinema Festival Sikkim, 2020 is SFCS's first project.

According to SFCS, Sikkim has great potential

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HC allows Bhim Army to hold meeting at ground near RSS HQ

NAGPUR, FEB 21 (PTI): The Nagpur bench of the Bombay High Court on Friday allowed the Bhim Army to hold a meeting of its workers at Reshimbagh Ground here on February 22, but imposed certain conditions.

A division bench of Justices Sunil Shukre and Madhav Jamdar said the petition of the Dalit outfit, seeking permission for the conclave, is allowed with conditions.

Bhim Army chief Chandrashekar Azad is scheduled to address the meeting.

On Tuesday, the HC had issued notices to

the Maharashtra government and the Nagpur police commissioner on the petition filed by a Bhim Army functionary.

The sprawling ground is close to the headquarters of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) and the Kotwali police had earlier denied permission for the gathering, citing law and order issues.

After denial of permission, the Dalit group moved the high court here.

The petition, filed by Bhim Army Nagpur district chief Praful Shende through his lawyer Firdos Mirza, said the outfit

had got permission from the CP and Berar Education Society, which controls the Nagpur Improvement Trust-owned ground, for the meeting.

However, the Kotwali police station, under whose jurisdiction the ground falls, denied permission for the meet, citing law and order issues, the petition said.

The plea sought direction from the HC to the state government and the police commissioner to grant permission to the Bhim Army to hold its workers' meeting.

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Training of Field Trainers for Census 2021 concludes

House listing to begin on 07 Apr

GANGTOK, 21 FEB (IPR): Five-day training programme of Field Trainers (FT) of East and North District for the 1st Phase of Census 2021 and updation of National Population Register (NPR) concluded at the conference hall of District Administrative Centre here at Sichey, today.

The field trainers training was organised by Directorate of Census Operations, Sikkim from 17 to 21 Feb.

Present during the concluding day of the training program were Director of Census Operations, Sikkim, Yasodha Bhandari along with Master Trainers, Yadav Sharma and Santosh Das, officials from Census of India and trainees at large.

The trainers were trained on census Trainer Development Skills (TDS) to



further impart training to the next level - Master Trainers. After acquiring the training, these FTs will train the enumerators and supervisors of the districts and also assist the respective charge officers.

The 1st Phase of the House Listing and Housing Census has been notified for conduct in Sikkim. The census 2021

will be conducted in two phases. The 1st phase will include House listing operations along with updation of National Population Register from 07 April 2020 to 22 May 2020 while the 2nd phase of actual population enumeration would commence from 09 February 2021 to 28 February 2021 followed by revision

round from 01 March to 05 March 2021.

On the concluding day of the training, Director, Mrs. Bhandari spoke on the importance of census and its impact on the planning process. She listed details of various activities to be accomplished in advance.

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Summit Times in Nepali

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SACAA to approach Governor on CAA and ILP

SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 21 FEB: In order to expedite the demand of exemption from Citizenship Amendment Act and implementation of Inner Line Permit in Sikkim, a meeting of Sikkim Against Citizenship Amendment Act (SACAA) was held today in Gangtok, a press re-

lease informs.

During the meeting it was observed that the state government is yet to take any concrete step on these issues. The meeting decided to approach both Governor and State Government soon to apprise them with the dangers of CAA and the importance of ILP implementation in Sikkim.

Int'l Mother Language Day observed at Lingi Payong School



SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 21 FEB: The International Mother Language Day was observed at Lingi Payong School on Friday. The programme witnessed speech, poems and songs by students of different classes in their mother tongue, a press release informs.

Student, Sneha Rai read out the Preamble of the Constitution of India in Nepali and administered the same to the

teachers and students. Earlier, teacher, Yog Kumar Bhandari delivered the introductory speech on the importance and objective of the day.

One of the main attractions of today's programme was delivery of dialogue by students in 12 different languages spoken by different communities of Sikkim including Hindi and Nepali. The programme was hosted by student of Class X, Uttam Nepal.

Global Cinema Festival press meet at HHI Kolkata

GANGTOK, 21 FEB (IPR): A press conference took place at HHI Kolkata on 20 Feb as a precursor to the Global Cinema Festival Sikkim.

Secretary IPR, Namrata Thapa and Special Secretary, Commerce and Industries, Government of Sikkim represented the State in the conference.

The conference was

organised by Film Federation of India and attended by others including prominent director, Arindam Sil, fashion designer, A Paul, actor, Arijit Dutta and actress, Gargi.

There was a presentation on behalf of the state and investments were beckoned in the area of entertainment and creative industry.

Sikkim is...

to become a film shooting destination and many of Bollywood's biggest blockbusters have been shot in Sikkim in past like the The Jewel Thief. Recently, the State served as a location for Hindi movie Qarib Qarib Single.

Mr Mohra also mentioned that Sikkim has a rich resource of manpower and talent required for film-making along with its famous hospitality and the State offers a range of beautiful backgrounds.

Sikkim at present has around 45 local production houses which are working on various projects and are equipped to take larger projects and also do collaborations, said Mr Mohra. Sikkim has a whole line up of artists, actors and other technical experts in the field of film-making, he added.

With a line of production houses that are equipped to handle short and feature-length films - commercial and otherwise, Sikkim is the perfect platform for those who are looking for resource and services, he further stated.

HC allows...

"Permission granted with conditions. It will be a workers' meet only. It shall not be converted into a demonstration or protest.

"There should be no inflammatory speeches and the atmosphere should be peaceful. Besides, Chandrashekhar Azad should give an undertaking on the above conditions," the court said in its operative order on Friday.

Any violation of the conditions will invite criminal action and contempt of court proceeding, the bench warned.

The police department, in its affidavit filed in the court on Thursday, said the organisation is seeking permission to stage a protest against the Citizen (Amendment) Act and the National Register of citizens at a location which is near the RSS headquarters.

"The organisation of the petitioner holds an ideology which is different, contrary and diverse to the ideology being professed by the RSS," the affidavit said.

In such a scenario, the possibility of law and order situation being created at the centre of the protest cannot be ruled out, the police said.

Five-day training for Census 2021 concludes



NAMCHI, 21 FEB (IPR): A valedictory program for the five-day training of Field Trainers (FTs) of South and West Districts for Census 2021 was held at the State Institute of Rural Development, Karfector, today.

The farewell program had the presence of ADC cum District Census Officer (South), Satyen K Pradhan, SDM (Yangang) cum Master Trainer, Sangay Gyatso alongside Master Trainer cum Statistical Inves-

tigator, Vimlesh Kumar and Deputy Director, Dr Bishwa Jyoti Das Gupta from Directorate of Census Operation, Sikkim alongside Field Trainees.

A total of 15 FTs were trained during the five-day training. They were also presented with the course completion certificates. These FTs will further impart training to the field functionaries such as the Enumerators and the Supervisors at the sub-district level in

coming months.

These FTs will do house-to-house enumeration at designated places in the districts. At the onset, field exercise with regards to the census was conducted under the guidance of the Master trainers, following that, quiz and feedbacks from participants were received to ensuring seamless execution of the Census 2021.

On the occasion, Satyen Kr Pradhan extended his congratulations to

the participants for being a valuable part of the programme.

Further, he requested them to actively execute the knowledge of training efficiently.

He also assured to provide assistance from the District and Directorate for successful conduct of the Census 2021.

A short refresher course to review the training for field functionaries before execution of census will be held soon.

Srimad Bhagwat Mahapuran in West Sikkim



SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 21 FEB: A week-long Srimad Bhagwat Mahapuran concluded today in a fruitful manner here at Karthok Namrek, Lower Rinchenpong in West Sikkim, a press release informs. The puran was organized by Srimad

Bhagwat Mahapuran Committee of Lower Rinchenpong.

Today, Deputy Director (Horticulture) Soreng, D K Gurung was invited as the chief guest. SDPO Soreng, Roshan Gurung was invited as the special guest and BJYM president, Laten Sherpa was present

as the guest of honour.

A huge number of devotees attended the puran.

It may be mentioned here that Srimad Bhagwat Mahapuran had started from 15 Feb. The Committee had provided SNT buses and light vehicles as transportation service for the devotees.

Asian markets fall on fears over spreading virus



HONG KONG, FEB 21 (AFP): A spike in new virus cases outside China spooked Asian markets Friday after Wall Street pulled back from record highs as more companies warned earnings could be hurt by the epidemic. More than 2,200 people have died from the novel coronavirus, which has infected over 75,000 people, mostly in China, and spread panic around the world.

While Beijing claims its epidemic control efforts are working, the rising death toll and number of new infections abroad have rattled investors.

A batch of warnings from companies over the impact of the virus on bottom lines -- including Danish ship operator Maersk and Air France-KLM -- also fanned anxiety and dented hopes it would have only a short-term impact on earnings and economic growth.

"It took Apple to do what the coronavirus couldn't -- make stocks feel a little queasy," said Stephen Innes of AxiCorp, referring to the tech giant's warning Monday that it would miss its quarterly revenue forecast because of the illness.

"The market seemed to absorb the initial Apple shock in its typically pleasant manner, but it's the aftershocks when corporate America starts waving the warning flags in tandem that could prove to be the biggest gut check."

Seoul's Kospi index fell 1.2 percent after the country confirmed 52 more

virus cases, taking its total to 156 -- the second highest national toll outside China. Japan's benchmark Nikkei 225 index was down 0.3 and Sydney was off 0.3 percent.

Mainland China's key Shanghai Composite Index was flat following central bank efforts to cushion the impact of the virus on the world's second-largest economy where manufacturing activity has been hit hard.

China reported Thursday a big drop in the number of new infections after it once again changed the method of counting patients with the virus.

It was the second revision of criteria in just eight days and the flip-flopping "did not help the mood" of investors, noted Rodrigo Catril of National Australia Bank.

The National Health Commission reported 889 new cases on Friday, up from the previous day. Demand for gold, which is considered a safe haven in times of uncertainty, has benefited from the spreading virus as investors reduce their risk exposure.

China is the world's biggest importer and consumer of oil -- and prices have been particularly sensitive to the epidemic affecting dozens of countries and territories.

Both main contracts were lower on demand fears, with Brent Crude off 0.6 per cent and West Texas Intermediate down 0.6 per cent.

Delhi govt to help Maharashtra in education reforms

NEW DELHI, FEB 21 (PTI): Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Friday said his government will provide all possible help to Maharashtra in implementing education reforms, describing it as cooperative federalism at its best.

Kejriwal's statement comes hours after Maharashtra Higher Education Minister Uday Samant met Delhi Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia here to discuss various initiatives taken under the AAP government's education model.

"Delhi govt will provide all possible help to Maharashtra govt to implement edu reforms in their state. This is cooperative federalism at its best. Both states can learn so much from each other," Kejriwal tweeted.

After meeting Sisodia, Samant said he also shared about the Maharashtra government's efforts to bring a positive change in the state education model.

"I came here with a lot of curiosity to know more about Delhi's education model. It is so successful and I would like to take ideas from here and adopt in our education system," Samant was quoted as saying in an official statement.

"I also shared about our efforts to bring a positive change in Maharashtra's education model. We should also think of a tie-up between the two states and pick good things from each other's education models," he said.

Sisodia, who is also the Education minister, said the Maharashtra government has started with some new programmes in the field of education and he would like to learn and adopt it in the city.

"We want to take the journey of bringing about a revolution in education ahead by adopting and implementing best learning programmes and practices for our children.

Training of...

Further, she asked the FTs to train the field workers efficiently emphasizing that the success of the census enumeration depends upon the efforts and capacity of the field trainers.

She added that the central officers were mostly the facilitators but the state government officials were mainly responsible for providing a wholesome and accurate census. She further urged the gathering to focus and concentrate more on urban municipal areas. She also informed that showing of documents is not mandatory and added that no documents will be asked from the citizens.

She emphasized the field trainers to approach the individual householder in a friendly manner and added that officials are not supposed to force or pressure the individuals to furnish the data. Further, she stated that individuals must provide all information as a citizen of the country according to the norms of the act.

She lastly highlighted on the importance of Census data in terms of administration, policy framing and planning process and added that the Indian Census is the most credible source of information on Demography (Population characteristics), Economic Activity, Literacy and Education, Housing & Household Amenities, Urbanisation, Fertility and Mortality, Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, Language, Religion, Migration, Disability and many other socio-cultural and demographic data.

Also speaking during the concluding day, Master Trainer, Yadav Sharma encouraged the participants to have an in depth understanding of the training module with efficient manner as they will be solely responsible to train the field workers for census 2021.

He further briefed the participants to refrain from answering any hypothetical questions and further suggested them to maintain smooth coordination and focus mainly on related subject during the process of census enumeration.

Lastly, he thanked the Director for her presence and providing invaluable inputs during the course of the meeting. He further thanked the FTs and MT respectively for their lively participation and extended his best wishes for the grand success of the entire enumeration process of Decennial Census 2021 in the state of Sikkim.

A total of 24 enumerators which included 19 enumerators from East District and 5 enumerators from North District successfully completed the field trainers training on the 1st Phase Census 2021 and NPR updation held at the conference hall of DAC, Sichey.

Overall, a total of 39 field trainers and 4 master trainers participated in the five day long training program held at DAC, Sichey for North and East District and State Institute of Rural Development (SIRD),Karfector, Jorethang for South and West Sikkim respectively.

The meeting also saw open house questionnaire sessions among the master trainers and field enumerators wherein all the important agendas relating to census were discussed at length.

AFFIDAVIT

IN THE COURT OF SUB-DIVISIONAL MAGISTRATE, WEST DISTRICT, GYALSHING .

.J,Mani Kumar Rai, son of Harka Man Rai ,resident of Melli-Aching ,Police station Gyalshing,west sikkim do hereby affirm and declare my oath as under.

1. That my father's actual name is recorded as Harka Man Rai in my all official document except my father's Old Sikkim Subject Certificate.
2. That,my father's name has been inadvertently recorded as Hari Chandra Rai in his Old Sikkim Subject Certificate vide Sl. No. 1018, Vol.No.XII,under block Martam, West Sikkim.
3. That, the purpose of this affidavit is to declare that Harka Man Rai and Hari Chandra Rai are the names of the same and single person i. e my father.
4. That, this affidavit is made bona fide.

Whatsoever declare by me are true to the best of my knowledge and belief and no information has been concealed. I have signed this affidavit in the court of Addl .District Magistrate, West District, Gyalshing on 20th September, 2017 in the presence of the below mentioned witness.

DEPONENT.

~ SummitTIMES ~ CLASSIFIEDS

GENERAL LAND FOR SALE

General land 30X40 (3 Plots) available for sale at Tadong 6th Mile next to Harka Maya College. Flat Land no cutting required. Price 27 Lakhs (negotiable).

Contact: 9800201335

LAND FOR SALE

A land measuring an area for 50x32 1/2 at Roadside just below housing colony is for sale. It is just a one minute walking distance from Namchi bazaar taxi stand. Interested party may contact 9593373387 and 9434406761

LAND FOR SALE

An area measuring 1 acre at Sadam South Sikkim near Loretto Convent School at Gupti road. Price negotiable any one interested can contact: 78640-04501,62970-03235, 98320-48410



SAATHI outreach programme held at Mamring school

SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 21 FEB:

The SAATHI unit of Government Senior Secondary School, Mamring, conducted an Outreach Programme for the community on issues such as alcohol abuse, addiction and importance of mental health at Gaushala premises in Mamring village, East Sikkim, today. A press release informs that the programme started with briefing about SAATHI 2.0 to the community as well as personnel from

other departments by SAATHI peer educator, Pragya Sharma. Principal of the school, Prahlad Sharma addressed the gathering emphasising on the importance of mental health awareness which may be the root for addiction and other related issues. He also highlighted the role of each and every individual living in a society in ensuring a healthy living environment for nurturing the future generation. He concluded by pleading the

community to take active part in the upcoming initiatives taken by the team. The program was attended by Panchayat President, Durga Lal Sewa, Sr. VAA, officials and employees working in different offices in Mamring, parents, local public and youths, SAATHI peer educators, SAATHI coordinators of the school. Household survey by the teacher coordinators is also going on under SAATHI 2.0, the release mentions.

CBI arrests MD in ponzi scam probe case

NEW DELHI, FEB 21 (PTI): The CBI has arrested the MD of a firm in connection with its probe in an alleged ponzi scam to the tune of over Rs 9 crore, an agency spokesperson said on Friday.

He said Siddhartha Nag, Managing Director (MD) of Seba Real Estate Limited, was arrested in connection with a chit fund probe case and was produced before a local court here on Thursday for obtaining a transit remand for Siliguri in West Bengal. "Nag and other directors of the company had illegally collected Rs 9.13 crore from gullible investors under various fraudulent schemes on assurance of paying high returns on such investments on maturity," the spokesperson said. The agency had filed a case in this context in 2017.

Blood donation and cleanliness drive at Paljor Stadium



SAGAR CHETTRI
GANGTOK 21 FEB:

The third day of the ongoing Inter Institutional Camp on Leadership and Personality Development for National Service Scheme [NSS] volunteers witnessed a voluntary blood donation and cleanliness drive here at Paljor Stadium complex on Friday. On the occasion, 50 NSS volunteers in the camp donated their blood to Blood Bank of

STNM Hospital under Shramadan programme. A Senior Consultant from STNM Hospital, Dr CM Sharma also took a counselling and sensitization session on the importance of blood donation for participants in the ongoing camp. Likewise, NSS volunteers in the camp also took part in the cleanliness drive conducted in Paljor Stadium complex today. This five-day Inter

Institutional Camp on Leadership and Personality Development is being organized by NSS Cell of Sports & Youth Affairs Department, Government of Sikkim and funded by Regional Office Guwahati under Ministry of Youth Affairs & Sports, Government of India. A total of 200 NSS volunteers from 100 educational institutions from different parts of the State are taking part in this residential camp.

ED attaches Rs 1.32-cr assets of Bihar liquor mafia

NEW DELHI, FEB 21 (PTI): The ED has attached assets worth Rs 1.32 crore, including plots and bank deposits, of a Bihar-based 'liquor mafia' under the anti-money laundering law, the agency said on Friday.

A provisional order under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) has been issued against Sanjay Pratap Singh and his wife Kiran Devi.

"Singh is a liquor mafia of Ara and Bhojpur districts," the Enforcement Directorate (ED) said in a statement.

Bank deposits of Rs 30,757 kept in the name of Singh and Maa Construction have also been attached, it said.

The ED said Singh faces charges of culpable homicide, cheating and criminal conspiracy among others and the federal probe agency took cognisance of Bihar police FIRs and charge sheets to slap a money

laundering case against him. "Singh was also involved in the illegal manufacturing and selling of spurious liquor which resulted in the death of 21 persons. He has been convicted to life imprisonment by a trial court," the ED said. The accused had invested the proceeds of crime generated through illegal trade of liquor for acquiring immovable properties in his and his wife's name, the ED alleged.

His wife has no independent source of income, it added.

"In 2011, Singh created an unregistered firm Bhojpur Wine Traders with an intention to legalise his tainted income," it said.

"The accused has used the proceeds of crime in the construction business where ill-gotten money has been used to acquire and construct immovable property," the ED said.

4th SMIT Global Alumni Meet



SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 21 FEB:

Sikkim Manipal Institute of Technology [SMIT] hosted the 4th Edition of SMIT Global Alumni Meet at the college campus today.

As per a press release, over 100 alumni were part of the event which had Vice Chancellor, Lt Gen (Dr) MD Venkatesh, SMU as the chief guest. The event was also attended by Registrar, Prof (Dr) KS Sherpa, SMU, Director, Prof (Dr) Ashis Sharma, SMIT and other dignitaries.

The day started with all the alumni interacting with the students of their departments and sharing their experiences in the corporate world. The formal meet started in the evening wherein Dr Venkatesh highlighted

the importance of such meets and encouraged the alumni to stay connected with their alma mater. Dr Ashis, in his address, expressed his happiness in organizing the meet in the campus for the first time. Amidst cultural performances in the evening which included traditional Lepcha folk music and Snow Lion Dance, the evening was also dedicated to Alumni Awards 2020 to recognize the excellence achieved by the alumni in different categories.

The awardees were Kunal Munshi (Entrepreneurship), Gaurav Shukla (Technology and Innovation), Ananta Chettri (Arts, Music, Literature and Sports) and Nilesh Agarwal, Anirudha Barooah, Shashank Gaurav (Public Service- Alma Mater).

A panel discussion titled 'Colours of Engineering' was chaired by eminent alumni of the institute who discussed the current trends in engineering. A platform titled 'Alum.Connect' provided students with the opportunity to connect with the alumni. With fun-filled games and quizzes to take the alumni down the road of nostalgia, the evening ended with a band performance by 'Liquor Chai', led by Rajarshi Goon, an alumnus himself.

Talking to the media, president, SMIT Alumni Association, Prof (Dr) NK Bhattacharya, informed that the meet was successful and assured that the Alumni Association will organize more such events to keep the alumni connected to the college.

Kerala bids adieu to bus mishap victims

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, FEB 21 (PTI): Kerala on Friday bid a tearful adieu to the victims of the ghastly road mishap involving state-run KSRTC bus and a container lorry in neighbouring Tamil Nadu. The bodies of all the 19 passengers killed in the mishap on Thursday had been brought to the state after post-mortem and 15 of them laid to rest, state Transport Minister A K Saseendran said.

Nineteen passengers were killed and 27 injured when a tile-laden container lorry crossed into a wrong lane and rammed into the oncoming Ernakulam-bound Kerala State Road Transport Corporation (KSRTC) bus on the Salem-Kochi highway at Avinashi, 40 km from Coimbatore, around 4 am.

Tamil Nadu Chief Minister K Palaniswami had on Thursday told the state assembly that 20 people were killed and 28 injured in the accident. According to the transport officials here, two passengers escaped unhurt.

Saseendran said the government arranged for ambulances to bring the bodies of the victims to

their hometowns. "A total of 19 persons lost their lives in the accident.

The last rites of many (15) have been completed," he told PTI. Crime Branch Police ADGP Tomin Thachankary, a former Managing Director of KSRTC, visited the family of Gireesh, the driver of the ill-fated bus.

"It's a very sad day. I had honoured both Gireesh and Baiju (conductor) for their selfless services in the past. They were an asset to KSRTC. This is a great loss to their family and to KSRTC," Thachankary told reporters. Girish and Baiju were honoured by the KSRTC management for assisting a woman passenger who took ill during a trip to Bengaluru from Ernakulam in June, 2018.

The then KSRTC Managing Director Thachankary had issued a letter to both commending them for taking care of the ailing passenger. Meanwhile, the Motor Vehicles Department of Kerala said a report based on its inquiry into the accident will be submitted on Saturday to the state government by the Palakkad Enforcement Regional Transport Officer Shivakumar.



Government of Sikkim
Health & Family Welfare Department
New STNM Multispecialty Hospital
Sochakgang, Gangtok

Ref.No. 83/S1NM Dated: 20/2/2020

NOTICE INVITING QUOTATION

The sealed quotations are invited from the interested and Registered Medical shop located at Gangtok for the supply of Emergency Medicines and Consumables for the Year 2020-2021 for New STNM Hospital, Sochakgang, Sichey.

Date of issue of Quotation : 3rd March 2020 to 5th March 2020 11AM to 3 PM
Date of submission of Quotation : 19th March within 12:00 PM
Date & Time of tender opening : 19th March 2020 at 2.00 PM

Terms and condition:

- The quotation form can be obtained from the office of Senior Accounts Officer, New STNM Hospital on any working days from 3rd March 2020 to 5th March 2020 from 11 AM to 3 PM on production of State Bank of Sikkim Challan of Rs.2000/- duly signed by Senior AO, New STNM Hospital credited under head 0210-01-800 other receipt from 11AM to 3PM
- The interested Firm should produce COI/Sikkim Subject/Residential Certificate, Valid Drug License, Valid Registration Firm, Valid Trade License, GST Registration and clearance certificate, Experience certificate and full address of the shop at the time of submission of quotation form.
- The quotation should accompany TDR of Rs.1,000,00/- (One Lakh) against the supply of Emergency medicines and consumables from the State Bank of Sikkim in favour of Senior Accounts Officer, New STNM Hospital, Sochakgang. The department will not be liable to pay the interest on the said amount.
- The Tender Committee reserves the right to accept or reject any or all quotation without assigning any reason of reasons thereof and reserve to award the work to any bidder found competent.

For further information, visit or contact to the office of the undersigned.

R.O No. 373/IPR/Pub/Classi./19-20
Date: 21.02.2020

PCC Cum Medical Superintendent
New STNM Hospital, Sochakgang

20th Annual District Conference of Lions Club International



SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 21 FEB:

A 20-member delegation of four Lions Clubs of Sikkim namely Rangpo, Singtam, Ranipool and Gangtok will be attending the two-day 20th Annual District Conference of Lions Club International 322F MUSKAN-2020 at Siliguri on 22 and 23 Feb, a press release informs.

More than 1800 delegates and members from 100 Clubs of North

Bengal, Sikkim, Dooars, Darjeeling, Kalimpong and Bhutan are going to participate in the conference.

Conference chairman Lion Nirmal Gidra, District Governor Lion Sanjay Agarwal, Conference Secretary Lion Gitesh Tibreywal, District Media Incharge Lion Bishnu Kedia, Cabinet Secretary Lion Neeraj Chaudhary, PRO Lion Bikash Bansal, Service Coordinator Lion Suresh Singhal, Joint Coordinator Lion Rajendra

Garg and Lion Kamal Mitra in a press conference mentioned that.

1st International vice president of Lions Club International, Douglas X Alexander shall be present as the chief guest. PID, AP Singh and PID, GS Hora shall be present as the guest of honour.

PMCC, Dwarka P Jalan shall be present as the guest speaker while Sangeeta Jetia shall be present as the Keynote Speaker.



What is Novel Coronavirus - nCoV?

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

Symptoms of nCoV

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

Precautions to Prevent nCoV

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

Treatment

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





If you seek help, you may call :

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

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & FAMILY WELFARE
GOVERNMENT OF SIKKIM

Civil Works vs Civic Aspirations

Time to move beyond just packed with construction-related demands

The government and its departments are invariably inundated with memorandums seeking facilities which require contracts and construction works. In most cases, these demands, even when placed by the people, are “contractor-driven” and not necessarily “needs-driven.” Go over any list of demands from anywhere in the State and they are always packed with construction-related, contractor-requiring “urgent requests”; a footpath here, a road there, a building, retaining walls, parking lots, even places of worship etc. While one accepts that infrastructure is something, which, given its scale, requires state-funding, Sikkim should take a pause and wonder sometimes why its aspirations are almost always civil-engineering related.

A part of the answer might be in the staggering number of contractors that Sikkim has. There is a standing quip in Sikkim that if one were to pick up a pebble and throw it, it will hit a contractor. For those who need specific data, try this – a few years ago, the office of the Comptroller and Auditor General of India worked out that the Roads & Bridges Department alone had 18,591 contractors registered with it! That worked out to one contractor for every 26 citizens in Sikkim!! This is not to demean the profession, but to highlight how big this industry is. Unfortunately, most of them are not industrious enough which explains the litter of incomplete projects and the black hole of cost overruns.

This number more than explains why demand lists are so “contractor-driven” in Sikkim, and the more worrying evidence it brings forth is about the suspected “cartelization” (CAG’s inference which rings uncomfortably true) that has cemented in this sector. It transpires that even though there are such a huge number of people qualified to respond to Notices Inviting Tenders, in 90% of the cases, only the bare minimum number of bids, enough to meet the required by law specifications, are received. When this is viewed against the established trend of how the lowest bids are also almost always higher than the projected cost, speculations arise about connivance.

While it might be okay for those in the business to work through the loopholes and play the system so long as no specific laws are being broken, it is not okay for the people to allow themselves to be so consistently played. They have to be able to see through this misdirection and occasionally also aspire for things less material like quality education through proper faculty in their schools, more meaningful CSR by investors placed around them, better delivery by public servants, more engagements in the social sector and its challenges...



Feelings: what’s the point of rational thought if emotions always take over?

EYAL WINTER
theconversation.com

I have long sought to make radical changes to my life, such as leaving a toxic workplace and losing weight. Yet I never get around to it. I am scared to leave work and sad about being overweight – and I eat when I feel that way. To what extent are humans driven by fear and emotion? What’s the point of rational thought if it keeps getting overridden by emotions? Ed, 42, London.

One of the most famous brain injuries recorded in history was that suffered by Phineas Gage. Having had a large iron rod driven through his head, Gage lost a major part of his prefrontal cortex, which among other things facilitates interaction between reasoning and emotions. Gage survived his injury and maintained most of his cognitive functions. He could do maths, but he failed to make almost any decisions – especially those involving social interactions.

That’s because decision making is a complex matter involving both reasoning and emotions. Even the most emotional person uses rational thought when deciding, and even the most rational person is affected by emotions when making decisions. Yet we often, as you do here, tend to highlight the negative role of emotions in decision making.

It may seem like life would be easier if we could be entirely rational. But evolution has supported the development of feeling and thinking exactly because we need them both. Feelings take care of our desires and needs now, while rationality is defending our interests and wellbeing in the future. I call these two entities that live in us Tod (today) and Tom (tomorrow).

If Tom didn’t exist, we would definitely be in a bad shape. Just imagine a world without reasoning – we would lose interest in anything that doesn’t provide us with instant pleasure. We would avoid learning, producing and protecting ourselves. We would simply sink into a life of addiction that would kill us even before we managed to breed.

But without Tod we wouldn’t survive either.

Tod is providing us with immediate decisions when danger is imminent. If we spot a car coming towards us while crossing the street, Tod will stop us. Tom might be able to calculate velocities and distances to tell whether or not we are in danger, but by the time he’d come up with the answer, it would be too late.

Tod is also facilitating our social interactions, not only with his positive habits, such as love and empathy, but also with nasty ones. Studies show that people who can evoke a certain degree of anger and insult during bargaining and debate do better than measured people.

A WORLD WITHOUT FEELINGS

But beyond all this, there is one crucial reason why we should never be sorry for Tod being part of us. My friend Tali Tishbi, an eminent artificial intelligence (AI) researcher, believes that, in a few decades, AI will manage to do away with death and grant us all eternal life – albeit digitally. Here is how it is going to work: during our regular life – phase 1 – a database will store all the decisions, views, comments and ideas we have ever made, together with the circumstances in which they were made.

Machine learning (a type of AI) techniques will then analyse this data and generate software that can produce decisions in hypothetical circumstances based on those we took in our life. When our phase 1 life eventually terminates, we will enter phase 2 of eternal life, through this software. Our bodies will be dead at this stage, and this data from our minds will instead be located in a computer.

We would feel or experience nothing, but for all other purposes, we’d be there. This version of ourselves can resume our job as a chief executive because the machine would make exactly the same decisions that we would have done had we been in phase 1 of our life. It would also still be able to offer advice to our children when they are in their 90s, and be able to comment on our grand-grand-grandchild’s new girlfriend in 2144.

But let’s now go back to Tod and Tom. Life without Tod would look pretty much like what my friend calls phase 2 of life – and what I call death

with an advanced photo album. Had our decisions been ruled solely by Tom, we wouldn’t be humans – we would be algorithms.

For you, it sounds like Tod is ruling the day in your life, leaving little space for Tom. After all, you can always start a diet or quit your job tomorrow – right now, though, you’d rather relax. People may differ in how much they rely on rational thought, but everybody ultimately uses both – even you. You have, after all, identified a goal that you want to achieve.

So how can we have a better balance between the Tod and Tom? Several psychology studies show that our patience with Tom is depleted rather quickly. This is not surprising, since he is the one who tells us to do those unpleasant things, such as staying away from croissants. When we were kids it was the role of our parents to help us to invite Tom in. But even when we are independent, we need help in a similar way from time to time.

One way of doing this is to ask our partner or friends to support us in achieving our goals. Another is inviting Tom to comment on someone else who is in a similar situation to us. We don’t like Tom to tell us what to do, but we are curious to hear what he has to say. So with a little bit of self-deception we might be able to take the perspective of an “impartial spectator”, which will make it harder to ignore him.

Tod and Tom are better friends than we tend to believe. They feed and reinforce one another. The best rational decisions take feelings into account. If you want to go on a diet, the best option is not always picking the one with the smallest calorie intake, but the one that you like the most and can stick with. For some people, it will be eating only boiled potatoes, while for others it will be a low-carb diet.

So don’t be scared to let Tod have a say. And get some help with inviting Tom in. It is ultimately together that they work best.

[The writer is Andrews and Elizabeth Brunner Professor of Behavioural/Industrial Economics, Lancaster University]

Why we need more than speeches about the problem of whiteness

MYRIAM FRANÇOIS
theGuardian

In *The Origins of Cool in Postwar America*, Prof Joel Dinerstein traces the word “cool” to its earliest usage, by legendary jazz musician Lester Young. During the segregation era, white America wanted to consume black entertainment, often without recognising black humanity. In fact, despite endemic anti-black violence, African-American artists were expected to perform on stage for white audiences – with a smile. Smiling, it turns out was a requirement of the job – probably to make the white audience feel more comfortable with the incongruity they’d created.

But what made Young an icon of cool, it turns out, was that he refused to smile. And to remove his shades. When asked to do so, he responded: “I’m cool.”

Young’s act of resistance to the rules of a game set by white supremacy elevated him from musical virtuoso to an icon of defiance against racism.

I was reminded of him this month as I watched one of the few black presenters from my childhood have his own “cool” moment. Andi Peters made a name for himself in the 1990s presenting a kids’ show from a “broom cupboard” with his sidekick, “Wilson the butler”. He now presents the competition segment on GMTV, where he smiles exuberantly as he plugs the latest prize, a task we assume to be below the pay grade of GMTV’s main – all white – hosts.

But this month Peters did the unthinkable: he didn’t smile. Not for a whole minute. Instead, clearly exasperated by Piers Morgan’s “confusion” as to why there were no black or brown nominees at the Baftas – for a second year running – he revealed a truth we’re usually shielded from. “Take a look around,” he said, pointing to the film crew, “I am the only black person in this room,” a fact that seemed to shock his co-hosts.

Whiteness is often spoken of as “invisible” to people racialised as white – which is why it is entirely possible that no one else in the room had either noticed, or felt this was an issue. The fact a case has to be made for diversity is itself a symptom of whiteness.

Yet, as Peters continued talking, it was his subsequent exposure of his personal frustrations that really struck me. “I have been working in this industry for 30 years. I may not have my own show in a prime-time slot but I have been on telly for 30 years.”

Despite his years in the game, Peters is often cast as a cheerful sidekick. Smiley enough to allay viewer stereotypes – just enough diversity on GMTV to hold off the human resources department – but without getting the big TV jobs, when many white presenters from his generation have had their own prime-time shows.



Despite racism frequently being the subject of TV debates, we rarely think of ourselves, our teams or our offices as being part of the problem. The problem is at the Baftas, or the Oscars, or the football terraces, not in the room you’re currently working in.

But last week, a traditional British institution did exactly that. Members of the Church of England synod backed a motion to apologise for racism, and to “stamp out conscious or unconscious” racism – with the archbishop of Canterbury conceding that the church is “still deeply institutionally racist”.

The admission stands in contrast to wider discussions of racism within our society, especially in the broadcast media – typically with bullish white presenters grilling a black or brown expert on racism on

the veracity of their statements. This is a power play intended to portray the very existence of racial discrimination as something to be “debated”, rather than believing the experiences of people of colour.

Modern Europe was forged by an ideology of white supremacy that – regardless of our politics – is the mood music of our culture. Historically, it informed the direction of science, assumptions in philosophy – and, crucially, what constitutes valuable or noteworthy art. The Church of England has begun to recognise that. And it’s not alone. A growing number of white voices are vocalising the problem of whiteness.

Joaquin Phoenix’s speech at the Bafta awards this month was heralded as a landmark moment for the British film industry. “I think that it is the obligation of the people that have created and perpetuate and benefit from a system of oppression to be the ones that dismantle it,” he said. Indeed, the motor behind the study of “whiteness” has been, from the start, to encourage those in positions of power to be active participants in not only recognising those structures but ending them.

After his Oscar win last week, Phoenix continued on a similar theme: “The greatest gift that [the film industry] has given me ... is the opportunity to use our voice for the voiceless.” Yet the truth is, there is no such thing as the voiceless, only the “deliberately silenced or the preferably unheard”, as Arundhati Roy reminds us. People can be silenced by many things – missing invitations, closed meetings and of course the social and economic implications of denouncing racism in the industry that represents your bread and butter. It took powerful white men to denounce whiteness at the Baftas, largely because if you’re Joaquin Phoenix, or even Prince William, there’s little to lose by speaking out. You might actually stand to gain.

Power-endowed white men are the group most able to commit to diversity pledges, investing in educating staff and monitoring biases and their impact. But there is a very real risk, as society becomes increasingly aware of the social pitfalls of explicit racism, that instead of making

space at the table, or of making real change, we hear little more than a white lament.

These “confessions” (as opposed to pledges to take real meaningful action) provide a cathartic, yet largely illusionary, sense that change is happening. And we risk acknowledging the existence of a problem, yet always pointing elsewhere to locate it. Such as Morgan denouncing the Baftas’ lack of diversity in the studio he shares with Peters.

Challenging whiteness involves talking about it – and a little introspection, for sure – but, more than that, it involves concrete, remedial action.

Beyond the grandstanding is a battle for survival for minorities no longer content with the crumbs. Struggling artists churning out epic work, only to be overlooked – by those seemingly so keen to perpetuate cultural inertia – or, at best, relegated to the “urban” category.

Will this be the year we see ethnic-minority bishops in senior positions? Will Phoenix’s next choice of a director to work with be one currently unrecognized in the awards lists? And, as the president of Bafta, does Prince William intend to remedy the judging selection process?

This struggle is not just an academic debate – it is about whose stories and histories get told, whose ideas are recognised, who gets to speak with authority and who takes real action. This informs the stories that create our national sense of self, the ideas shaping our culture, and the debates over whose history becomes our common mythology. The conversation about whiteness may be under way, but earnest words shouldn’t become a convenient distraction from concrete action.

[The writer is a journalist and research associate at the Centre of Islamic Studies, Soas University of London]

5 die as car hits dumper in West Bengal

KOLKATA, FEB 21 (PTI): Five persons were killed and one injured after their car collided with a dumper truck at Birpara area in West Bengal's Alipurdar district on Friday, police said.

The MUV they were travelling in was left in a mangled state following the accident that took place around 3 am, they said.

All the six men were rushed to a local hospital, where four were declared brought-dead and another succumbed to injuries later, a police officer said.

The condition of the injured person is stated to be critical, he said.

Police said the cause of the incident is being investigated.

ITBP DG embarks on 100-km march with message for fitness

NEW DELHI, FEB 21 (PTI): ITBP chief S S Deswal on Friday embarked upon a 100-km speed march between Bikaner and Jodhpur in Rajasthan to spread the message of 'Fit India' for his troops and others, officials said.

Deswal, 58, is a walking and fitness enthusiast and has undertaken numerous such treks in the past.

"The Director General has embarked on the latest speed march on Friday from Bikaner in Rajasthan. It will culminate on Saturday in Jodhpur. Senior officials of the force are accompanying the chief in the march which will have halting points at various locations over the 100-km route," a senior ITBP officer said.

The march, he said, aimed at promoting the 'Fit India' mission of the government and also to encourage force personnel and the youth to engage in physical exercises and remain fit, he said.

Deswal, a 1984-batch Indian Police Service officer of the Haryana cadre, has earlier undertaken such treks along the Bhriku lake at over 14,000 feet and Sangla Valley in Himachal Pradesh, Amarnath Yatra, Lipulekh pass at the height of over 17,000 feet in Uttarakhand, a 42-km trek with personnel under training at the forces' academy in Mussoorie and Puri-Konark sea beach walk of 52 kms among others.

The about 90,000-personnel strong Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) is a border guarding force with the primary task of guarding the 3,488-km Line of Actual Control (LAC) with China. It functions under the Union Home Ministry.

New twist to Gumnami Baba mystery!

KOLKATA, FEB 21 (PTI): The mystery shrouding the identity of Gumnami Baba, who many claimed was Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose in hiding, has deepened further with CFSL, Kolkata saying the electropherogram of the reclusive sadhu's teeth was not available with it.

An electropherogram shows a sequence of data that is produced by an automated DNA sequencing machine and is used for deriving results from genealogical DNA testing.

Replying to an RTI query by Sayak Sen, a Netaji enthusiast, B P Mishra, the chief public information officer of CFSL said, "The electropherogram report of this case is not available at CFSL Kolkata."

In the reply dated February 4, 2020, he said, "The appeal, if any, may be made before di-



rector, appellate authority, CFSL-Kolkata in this regard within 30 days from the date of receipt of this letter."

The Vishnu Sahai Commission looking into the mysterious death of

Netaji had cited a report of the Central Forensic Science Laboratory (CFSL), Kolkata, to claim that Gumnami Baba was not Bose.

"The disclosure by CFSL has a direct bearing

on the finding of Justice Vishnu Sahai Commission that Gumnami Baba was not Netaji. Justice Sahai in his just-released report used the CFSL report to the hilt to reject outright the view that

Baba was Netaji," Sen said in a statement, annexing the reply to his RTI query.

Sen claimed Justice Sahai merely cited Justice Mukherjee Commission's 2005 report in his own

report, rather than order a fresh test as demanded by many.

"In view of accusations of foul play, I wanted to consult independent DNA experts to verify the test by the CFSL, and hence I filed this RTI application," said Sen.

CFSL, Kolkata had performed DNA test on three teeth of Gumnami Baba, who lived in Faizabad town of Uttar Pradesh and died on September 16, 1985. Two teeth were tested at CFSL, Hyderabad, and the result was inconclusive, while that of CFSL, Kolkata, said the DNA sample did not match Netaji's.

"We have been saying that the DNA report relied upon by the Mukherjee Commission was fudged. The DNA report submitted to the commission did not have electropherogram, a

must to analyse the DNA. Now the truth has been proved," Sen said.

Netaji's grandnephew and BJP leader Chandra Kumar Bose rubbished the allegation.

"The RTI reply is saying that electropherogram report of this case is not available at CFSL, Kolkata. That doesn't mean that it doesn't exist. It is a baseless allegation," Bose said.

The report of the one-member Vishnu Sahai Commission was tabled in the Uttar Pradesh assembly in December last year and it said Gumnami Baba was not Subhas Chandra Bose in disguise.

Bose was said to have died in a plane crash on August 18, 1945 in Taiwan. However, a section of people believes he survived the crash and went into hiding to escape the British.

AIMIM to seek explanation from Pathan over his remarks



AURANGABAD, FEB 21 (PTI): The All India Majlis-e-Ittehad-ul-Muslimeen (AIMIM) will seek explanation from its leader Waris Pathan over his alleged '15 crore Muslims can be heavy on 100 crore' remark he recently made in Karnataka, a party leader said here on Friday.

Pathan had made the purported remarks while addressing an anti-Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA) rally at Kalaburagi in North Karnataka on February 16.

"We have to move together. We have to take

Azadi (freedom), things that we don't get by asking, we have to take it by force, remember it... (We may be) 15 crore, but are heavy on 100 (crore), remember it," Pathan can be heard purportedly saying in a video of his speech that has gone viral.

Talking to reporters here, AIMIM's Maharashtra unit chief and Aurangabad MP Intiyaz Jaleel said, "Our party does not support the statement made by Waris Pathan. The party will seek an explanation from him over the remarks." "If needed, we will come out with

a set of dos and don'ts for the party workers to be while giving speech," he said.

"BJP leaders Anurag Thakur and Yogi Adityanath had also given some hateful statements, but none questioned them about it," Jaleel added.

On Thursday, a young woman had raised "Pakistan Zindabad" slogan in Bengaluru during a protest against CAA, NRC and R, where AIMIM chief Asaduddin Owaisi was also present. Owaisi had denounced her action.

Talking about the incident, Jaleel said, "That

event was not organised by the AIMIM. It was organised by JD(S) and leaders of all parties were there. Asaduddin Owaisi stopped the woman and also condemned her act. But it is being projected that it was AIMIM's stage."

Meanwhile, the BJP and the Raj Thackeray-led Maharashtra Navnirman Sena (MNS) held protests in Aurangabad against Pathan, seeking stern action against him.

The BJP protested in Gulmandi area and burnt an effigy of Pathan.

"Waris Pathan has hurt the feelings of 100 crore people. He has tried to divide the people of the country. The state government should take action against him and send him out of Mumbai," BJP MLA Atul Save said.

The MNS took out a symbolic funeral procession of Pathan and raised slogans against the AIMIM.

"The language of Waris Pathan was disgusting. He should be banned from giving public speeches in the state and also be arrested," MNS leader Prakash Mahajan said.

ATK look to continue domination over Bengaluru in ISL



BENGALURU, FEB 21 (PTI): Former champions ATK would look to continue their domination over Bengaluru FC when they take on the title holders in their return Hero Indian Super League match at the Sree Kanteerava Stadium here on Saturday.

The Kolkata outfit beat Bengaluru FC 1-0 in December last year, wherein they dominated the game from start to finish.

With both the teams having qualified for the play-offs, in all likelihood both the coaches would opt to give rest to several of their first team players.

Bengaluru FC haven't been in a good run of form as they picked only a point from their last two away games in Chennai and Kerala. In

between in the AFC Cup qualifying fixture in Maldives, the Blues suffered a 1-2 defeat against Maldives' Maziya.

The good news for Bengaluru is that Sunil Chhetri and Juanan are back in contention for a start as they have served their suspension. However, Albert Serran is ruled out after having picked up his fourth yellow card.

"If you remember, ATK are the only champions to reach the play-offs after winning the title. All the other teams have struggled after winning the trophy. But, here we are -- three seasons, three playoff spots," said Bengaluru FC coach Carles Cuadrat.

Meanwhile, ATK will look to bounce back after their 1-3 defeat on home soil against Chennaiyin FC

last weekend. Antonio Habas, the ATK coach, would want his team to return to winning ways ahead of the crucial play-offs.

The bad news for the Kolkata side is that experienced centre-back Anas Edathodika has been ruled out for six months owing to an injury he picked up in the last match.

Attacking midfielder Javier Hernandez too is suspended which means David Williams could be handed a start.

"We have to win tomorrow. The mentality does not change. Bengaluru is a big club. They are the champions. It will be difficult for us. We respect the opponent."

"No special plans for Sunil (Chhetri). My plan is against Bengaluru FC and not just one player," said ATK coach Habas.

WB Transport Dept to reintroduce double-decker bus



KOLKATA, FEB 21 (PTI): The West Bengal Transport Department is set to reintroduce the iconic double-decker bus on city roads, a senior official said here.

He said that the new double-decker buses will hit the roads in March. The bus bodies have been designed in-house by transport department and two of these are being readied for service, West Bengal Transport secretary N S Nigam said.

"These will be open roof and if the design is successful, we can look at the options of making more such buses," he told PTI. He said that two open roof double-decker buses will

be used for tourist services.

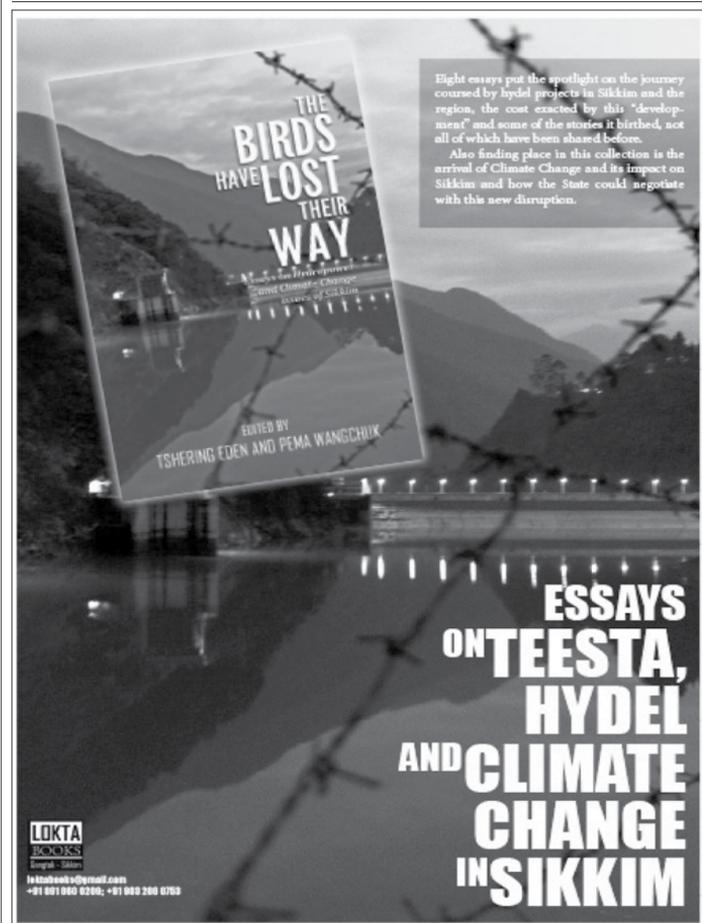
"We have to develop them as there is no standard design, we have developed our own design," Nigam said when asked whether double-decker buses will be introduced for public transportation on city routes. Nigam said that after the introduction of open roof buses, the transport department will try to develop the design of bodies of these buses more to take the project forward for public transportation.

Double-decker buses had made it to the city roads during the Raj era and the red and white-coloured behemoths had been part

of Kolkata's public transportation till the mid- 1990s, before these were phased out owing to high maintenance costs.

The Calcutta State Transport Corporation (CSTC), which is now known as WBTC following the merger of three state transport undertakings, also used to run trailer double-deckers in a few routes, with the most popular being the iconic L-9.

The only city in the country that now has double-decker buses in its public transportation fleet is Mumbai, with transporter BEST plying around 50 of these at present.



Eight essays put the spotlight on the journey caused by hydel projects in Sikkim and the region, the cost exacted by this 'development' and some of the stories it birthed, not all of which have been shared before.

Also finding place in this collection is the arrival of Climate Change and its impact on Sikkim and how the State could negotiate with this new disruption.

**ESSAYS
ON TEESTA,
HYDEL
AND CLIMATE
CHANGE
IN SIKKIM**

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English - 150pp
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Amandeep win fourth leg of Hero WPGT

BENGALURU, FEB 21 (PTI): Amandeep Drall overcame a card of three-over 73 to beat Vani Kapoor (74) by three shots in the fourth leg of the Hero Women's Pro Golf Tour here on Friday.

Amandeep's previous win on the Hero Tour came in July last year when she held a share of the lead after the first round and went on to win. This time she was the sole leader through the first three rounds.

Starting with a two-shot lead, Amandeep dropped a shot on the first and a double bogey on Par-3 fifth, but with her nearest rival Vani, dropping shots on third and fourth, the Panchkula golfer stayed ahead by one.

It was from the sixth that Amandeep pulled away as she had three birdies in four holes from



sixth to ninth.

Her lead over Vani had extended to four shots. Amandeep again had a lapse as she dropped a double bogey on Par-4 11th and a bogey on 12th, but Vani traded a birdie and a bogey on 10th and 11th.

Vani dropped further shots on 14th and 16th, while Amandeep birdied 15th to get a solid four-shot cushion and she could afford to drop a shot on 18th and still win by three shots as Vani totalled 216 to Amandeep's 213. For Vani, it was her

best result since her runner-up finish behind amateur Sneha Singh in the 11th leg in Hyderabad last year.

Amateur Asmitha Sathish shot 73 to finish third at 218, while Khushi Khanjau (73) was fourth at 221.

Neha Tripathi (75) and Oviya Reddi (77) were tied for fifth as Saaniya Sharma (75) was seventh and amateur Sneha Sharan (75) was eighth. Gursimar Badwal (78) and Anousha Tripathi (79) completed the top-10.

Manika Batra stuns World No. 26; Sathiyian too wins at Hungarian Open

BUDAPEST, FEB 21 (PTI): Commonwealth Games gold medallist Manika Batra notched up a stunning win over World No. 26 Chen Szu-Yu to enter the prequarterfinals of the 2020 ITTF World Tour Hungarian Open here.

India No. 1 Gnanasekaran Sathiyian too made it to the pre-quarterfinals with a 4-0 (11-6, 11-6, 11-9, 11-2) drubbing of World No. 61 Noshad Alamiyan of Iran in men's singles.

The 24-year-old Manika, who is placed at 67th in the ITTF world rankings, dug deep and held her nerves to edge out Chen 4-3 (9-11, 4-11, 7-11, 12-10, 11-9, 11-7, 14-12) in a dramatic match at the Olympic Hall here.

In a resilient display, the Indian qualifier fought back after being three games down and facing a match point in the fourth to win the next four games, leaving her much-fancied 11th seeded Chinese Taipei opponent shell-shocked.

Batra faces World No. 11 Hirano Miu next in her quest for a quarter-final berth.

World No. 30 Sathiyian, who was simply brilliant against Alamiyan, will take on World No. 5 Harimoto Tomokazu of Japan in his round of 16 match.

Sathiyian will also be in contention for a semi-final berth in men's doubles as he and his partner Achanta Sharath Kamal faces Hungary's World No. 132 Adam Szudi and World No. 142 Nandor Ecseki in the quarter-finals.

Manika and Sharath Kamal, meanwhile, have got a walkover into the mixed doubles semi-finals and they will now take on the German combination of Patrick Franziska and Petrisa Solja.

Pragyan Ojha retires from international cricket

NEW DELHI, FEB 21 (PTI): Veteran Indian left-arm spinner Pragyan Ojha, who snared 10 wickets during Sachin Tendulkar's farewell Test in 2013, announced retirement from international and first-class cricket with immediate effect on Friday. Tendulkar's final Test in Mumbai against the West Indies in November 2013 also became the last of the 33-year-old Ojha's career and the one in which he was named man of the match.

He went out of favour after that but did not give any reasons for his decision to call it quits now. In all, he played 24 Tests between 2009 and 2013 in which he took 113 wickets. "It's time I move on to the next phase of my life...I am writing this letter to tender my formal retirement from international and first-class cricket with immediate effect," Ojha posted on his Twitter account.

"To be an Indian cricketer and represent the country at the highest level was always a dream I cherished as a youngster.

"I fall short of words to describe how fortunate I have been to have lived my dream and earned the love and respect of my fellow countrymen," he added. From 18 ODIs, he grabbed 21 wickets. He also played six T20 Internationals.

He said the most memorable moment of his career was receiving his Test cap from Tendulkar.

"(It was like) ... accomplishing

the feat of taking 100 Test wickets. I hope to continue contributing towards the growth of Indian cricket in every capacity possible," he said.

In the early stage of his career, Ojha had a fruitful spin partnership with R Ashwin in Tests, taking 20 wickets in the 2011 home Tests against West Indies and 13 the following year against New Zealand.

"My eventful career has witnessed many ups and downs. Over time, I have realised that the legacy of a sportsperson is not just the outcome of his hard work and dedication, but also the faith and guidance bestowed upon by the association (team management), teammates, coaches, trainers and the fans," he said. "I am indebted to the BCCI for giving me this extraordinary opportunity and putting their belief in me.

"It has been an absolute honour to be associated with the Board, an association that has shaped my professional life and also enriched my personal development."

Ojha, who competed for erstwhile Deccan Chargers and Mumbai Indians in the IPL, was once reported for a suspect action in 2014. He underwent corrective rehabilitation and was cleared in 2015 but was never a very effective bowler after that, leading to his axing from the national team.

"My journey with the Indian Premier League has also been a

memorable one and the purple cap win will always be an indelible memory - a special mention of the teams Deccan Chargers and Mumbai Indians for making me a part of their legacy. "I am thankful to VVS Laxman for mentoring me like an elder brother, Venkatapathy Raju for being the role model I always looked to emulate, Harbhajan Singh for being a constant adviser and MS Dhoni for providing me with the honourable opportunity to wear the Indian cap.

He also thanked his contemporaries Rohit Sharma and Manoj Tiwary "who have shared many eventful moments with me and my Hyderabad teammate Amol Shinde". Ojha played first class and List A matches till 2018. Ojha's first-class career spanned more than 13 years between 2005 and 2018 during which he played for Hyderabad and also captained Bihar in the Ranji Trophy.

"I have been a part of the Hyderabad Cricket Association for close to 14 years, and the incredible experience I have gained will have an ever lasting impact.

"I am thankful to Cricket Association of Bengal and Sourav Ganguly for extending their unwavering support during a rough patch of my career. I also appreciate the Bihar Cricket Association for allowing me to lead their team for the short duration that I spent with them.

Women's T20 World Cup: India squander flying start to settle for 132/4 against Australia



SYDNEY, FEB 21 (PTI): India squandered a flying start to end up with a below-par 132 in their T20 World Cup opener against Australia here on Friday.

Sixteen-year-old Shafali Verma took India to 41 for no loss in four overs with a typical 29 off 15 balls but her fall derailed the innings as the other batters disappointed.

Deepthi Sharma made a composed 46-half 49 in the second half of the innings but the firepower that India needed in the death overs was

badly missing. Sent into bat, India were cruising at 40 for no loss in four overs with Shafali taking the opposition to the cleaners with five fours and a six. However, left-arm spinner Jess Jonassen (2/24) snapped two quick wickets, Smriti Mandhana (10 off 11) and Harmanpreet Kaur (2 off 5) to reduce India to 47 for three.

Deepthi then shared 53 runs with Jemimah Rodrigues (26 off 33) to bring up the hundred in the 16th over.

For Australia, Ellyse Perry (1/15) and Delissa

Kimmince (1/24) were the other wicket-takers. Earlier, India made a rollicking start with opener Mandhana blasting two boundaries in the second over off Ellyse Perry.

In the third over, Shafali also joined in, producing an inside out shot across the cover and then sending one over the long-on boundaries off Molly Strano.

Fast bowler Megan Schutt was next in the line for Shafali as she smashed four boundaries off the bowler to accumulate 16 runs in the over. Jonassen was

then introduced into the attack and she struck the first blow, trapping Mandhana. Perry then had Shafali caught by Anabel Sutherland at mid on as India slipped to 43 for 2 in 5.3 overs.

Skipper Harmanpreet too was back in the hut after she danced down to the pitch against Jonassen only to miss the ball completely.

Jemimah, who had survived a scare after DRS overruled a LBW decision, then joined hands with Deepthi as they brought up the hundred in the 16th over.

Neroca beat Gokulam 3-2 to come out of relegation zone

IMPHAL, FEB 21 (PTI): Hosts Neroca FC eked out a narrow 3-2 win over Gokulam Kerala FC in a Hero I-League match to come out of the relegation zone here on Friday.

Pritam Singh drew the first blood for Neroca FC as early as in the second minute before Shibil Muhammed restored parity for Gokulam in the 25th minute.

The visitors took the lead for the first time through Nataniel Garcia in the 40th minute.

After the breather, Neroca FC equalised in the 48th minute through Philip Adjah.

Neroca FC scored their third goal nine minutes from the end of the regulation time through Ronald Singh to register a much-needed win.

Neroca FC started pressing hard for an early lead from the start.

Neroca's initial surge paid dividends early on when a mistimed clearance by the visitors saw the ball land in front of Pritam Ningthoujam,

who made no mistake in slotting it home in the second minute. Neroca continued their pressure but Gokulam showed resilience to keep the scoreboard unchanged.

Gokulam reorganised themselves and thereafter started attacking the Manipur side.

Soon, in the 25th minute, Muhammed restored parity for the visitors after receiving a through ball from Marcus Joseph.

Gokulam then started their trademark passing game all over the pitch.

Joseph, Nataniel Garcia and Atuheire Kipson kept pressing hard for the visitors, keeping the lacklustre Neroca defence on their toes.

The Kerala outfit took the lead in the 40th minute when a short cross from Joseph found Nataniel Garcia, who slotly home with a gem of a goal to go into the breather with a 2-1 lead.

After the change of ends, Neroca pressed hard and their efforts soon paid dividends

when Sebastian's throw to Irshad was anticipated rightly by Neroca's Philip Adjah, who scored a beautiful goal in the 48th minute to cancel the visitors' lead. Neroca, thereafter, shifted the gear but the finesse in front of the opposition goal was missing.

Gokulam coach Fernando Varela introduced Henry Kisseka early into the second half. The change added pace and vigour but lacked the desired result.

Neroca boss Gift Rai Khan threw his last dice with a couple of changes in the final 10 minutes, having introduced Chanso Horam and Siam Hangal, replacing Subash Singh and Busai Atilla.

The changes yielded result for the hosts immediately when Chanso's cross, which was sloppily defended by Jestin George, landed straight into the feet of Ronald Singh, who made no mistake in finding the back of the net in the 81st minute.

PM Modi to launch first ever Khelo India University Games

CUTTACK, FEB 21 (PTI): Prime Minister Narendra Modi will launch the first-ever Khelo India University Games at the Jawaharlal Nehru Indoor Stadium here on Saturday.

The Prime Minister will launch the multi-disciplinary sporting event through a video conference facility.

As many as 3400 athletes from 159 universities across the country

will vie for top honours across 17 disciplines, including rugby which is among the six team events. Ace sprinter Dutee Chand, who is a student of KIIT, the host university, is excited to be part of the event.

"I may make the grade on the strength of my world ranking (currently no. 54 in 100m and no. 43 in 200m) but I really want to make it to the Olympic Games by

achieving the qualification standard," she said.

There are other talented athletes like Mangalore University's triple jumper Jay Shah, his team-mate long distance runner Narendra Pratap Singh, Pune University's long distance runner Komal Jagadale and Acharya Nagarjuna University's sprinter Yarraji Jyothi, who can lift the quality of competition in track and field sport.

Voting underway in Iran parliamentary election

TEHRAN, FEB 21 (AFP): Iranians began voting Friday in a parliamentary election which conservatives are expected to dominate, capitalising on public anger against moderate conservative President Hassan Rouhani over a ravaged economy, corruption and multiple crises.

State television showed the Islamic republic's supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei casting the first ballot in Tehran.

As he voted, Khamenei called on all Iranians to take part in the election "as soon as possible," saying that doing so would "guarantee the country's national interests".

The 11th parliamentary election since the 1979 Islamic Revolution comes after steeply escalating tensions between Iran and the United States and the accidental downing of a Ukrainian airliner that sparked anti-government protests.

Experts predict a low turnout with rising voter apathy that they say will serve the conservatives at the expense of Rouhani, who was re-elected in 2017 promising more freedoms and the benefits of engagement with the West.

Iran has been hit by an economic slump and high inflation following harsh US sanctions after President Donald Trump pulled out of a landmark nuclear deal with Tehran in 2018. "Iran's biggest

problem is not having stability, peace and calm," said Amir Mohtasham, who is 38 and jobless.

"Our elections are useless. Even the current parliament has 90 sitting MPs who are under investigation for financial corruption," he said.

Nearly 58 million people are eligible to vote.

Around half of the 16,033 hopefuls will contest the 290 seats up for grabs across 31 provinces after the Guardian Council barred thousands of would-be candidates, mostly moderates and reformists.

On Thursday, Washington slapped sanctions on five Iranian officials in charge of vetting candidates, including Ahmad Jannati, a powerful cleric.

"The Trump administration will not tolerate the manipulation of elections to favour the regime's malign agenda," said Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin. The Guardian Council slammed the sanctions, saying they showed the United States' disdain for democracy.

"America's regime has shown through illegal sanctions... on members of the Guardian Council that it has nothing to do with democracy," said its spokesman Abbas Ali Kadkhodae, who was among those hit with sanctions. "We are now even more determined to safeguard the people's vote," he tweeted.

On the eve of the elections, state media aired a

short clip showing votes transforming into torpedoes hitting enemy navy ships closing in on Iran.

Hessameddin Ashena, Rouhani's main adviser, warned on Twitter that abstention "increases (among other things) the possibility of a military aggression".

Turnout in Iran's past 10 elections averaged 60.5 percent, according to the interior ministry.

The Guardian Council said it expected at least 50 percent of registered voters to cast ballots. Many voters, however, have voiced disinterest.

"We voted for Mr Rouhani with a dream, and then we didn't achieve anything. So, in my opinion, people are not hopeful any more," said Mohammed, who spoke from his carpet shop and only gave one name.

"I honestly don't want to vote, because it won't fix our problems and is of no use, and this election is only a formality just so they can show to the world that they are chosen by the nation, while it is not so," said Pari Aghazadeh, a fashion designer.

In November, demonstrations over petrol price hikes spread across Iran and turned violent before being crushed in a deadly crackdown.

Tehran and Washington have nearly gone to war twice in the past seven months, most recently after the US assassinated prominent Iranian general Qasem Soleimani on January 3.

BTS releases new album with 4 million pre-orders

K-pop superstars BTS released their new album "Map of the Soul: 7" Friday, breaking records even before it came out as the country's most pre-ordered album ever and its lead single making its debut on video app TikTok.

BTS -- or Bangtan Sonyeondan, which translates as Bulletproof Boy Scouts -- have gained a huge global following, becoming the first K-pop group to top charts in the US and Britain with a string of sold-out shows in Los Angeles, Paris and London's Wembley Stadium.

Their latest effort was given a simultaneous worldwide release online at 6 pm South Korean time (0900 GMT).

Just 30 minutes later, the video for its lead single "ON" -- a song about the artists' aspirations and sense of purpose -- had been viewed by nearly half a million fans on YouTube, with more than 134,000 comments.

"We've voluntarily entered this beautiful prison," the song's lyrics read. "Even when we fall, we rise again, as we always have."



The hashtag #BTSComeback2020 trended following the release, as well as #WeON-WithBTS, with fans posting videos of themselves in tears after listening to the album.

"Can we just appreciate how perfect the choreography, those moves, those voice, and those faces? I'm speechless," one fan posted on Twitter.

Another wrote: "I've been crying listening to the songs without knowing the meanings of the lyrics... how am I gonna cope when lyric translations come out?"

- Seven years -

The album's title alludes to both the number of members in the band and the time since the group made their debut.

The song "ON" is "like

a diary of our past seven years", member RM told Apple Music before the release. "We stumble from time to time but we got back up," he said. "It's like a declaration that we have admitted our destiny."

The group had managed to "expand out musical spectrum", RM added. "In 2013 we had a performance in front of

300 people, 500 people. But now we are doing stadium tours, so everything's got bigger and happier."

"Map of the Soul: 7" was the most pre-ordered South Korean album of all time, with more than four million copies sold before its release. The group had rolled out a 30-second preview "ON" exclusively on TikTok Thursday, momentarily causing the app to crash.

They are the first band to introduce a single via the short-form video platform, and the snippet offered a challenge calling on fans to use the music to create their own videos.

More than 33,000 videos were made using the track by Friday morning, showing fans dancing to the song in classrooms, bedrooms, airport terminals and elsewhere.

But one dark cloud on the band's otherwise stellar horizon has emerged: a high-profile concert initially scheduled for March 8 in Daegu has been cancelled due to the novel coronavirus outbreak in the city.

Prez Trump now says 10 million people to welcome him in Ahmedabad

BY LALIT K JHA

WASHINGTON, FEB 12 (PTI): US President Donald Trump has made yet another tall claim about the size of the crowd that will welcome him in Ahmedabad, saying Prime Minister Narendra Modi has told him that there will 10 million people to greet him on his arrival for his maiden visit to India.

President Trump and First Lady Melania are scheduled to travel to Ahmedabad, Agra and New Delhi on February 24 and 25.

Speaking to reporters at the Joint Base Andrews in Maryland on Tuesday, Trump said that Modi told him that "we'll have 7 million people between the airport and the event."

"So it's going to be very exciting. But he says between the stadium and the airport, we'll have about 7 million people. So it's going to be very exciting, I hope you all enjoy it," he said.

On Thursday, Trump upped the crowd size by three million at a 'Keep America Great' rally in Colorado.

"I hear, they are going to have 10 million people. They say anywhere from six to 10 million people are going to be showing up along the route to one of the largest stadiums in the world, the largest cricket stadium in the world, which is brand new and beautiful," said Trump, who is seeking reelection in the November presidential polls.

But according to a top civic official in Ahmedabad, the total population of the city is only

around 70 lakh.

The authorities believe that between one to two lakh people are expected to line up along the 22-km route of the road show by Modi and Trump from the airport to the Motera cricket stadium, said to be the world's largest.

"We believe that around one to two lakh people will gather to welcome the dignitaries during the road show," Ahmedabad Municipal Commissioner Vijay Nehra said on Thursday, contradicting the claims made by the US President.

As per the road show route plan, Trump and Modi will first reach the Sabarmati Ashram, a place closely associated with Mahatma Gandhi, from Ahmedabad airport.

Addressing his supporters, Trump spoke about his India visit and said the "Namaste Trump" rally in Ahmedabad would spoil him.

"Prime Minister Modi said, we will have 10 million people greet you. Here's my problem. We have a packed house. We have a lot of people, thousands of people that couldn't get in. It's going to look like peanuts from now on," he said.

"I'll never be satisfied with the crowd. If we have 10 million people in India, how can I be satisfied when we fill up like a 60,000-seat stadium? I am getting spoiled," Trump said.

One of Trump's supporters from the audience then suggested that he build a bigger stadium.

Russia meddling in US election to boost Trump, lawmakers told

Russia is interfering in the 2020 campaign to try to get Donald Trump re-elected, US intelligence officials have warned lawmakers in a briefing that infuriated the president, who then replaced his intelligence chief, US media reported.

Trump erupted in anger at acting director of national intelligence (DNI) Joseph Maguire when he learned of the February 13 session with the House Intelligence Committee, The Washington Post and New York Times said Thursday.

Maguire aide Shelby Pierson reportedly told lawmakers Russia was once again meddling in the US election on Trump's behalf.

Trump complained that the Democrats would use the information against him, the reports said.

The president was also annoyed by the presence of Adam Schiff, the Democratic head of the investigation that led to Trump being impeached for abuse of power and obstruction of Congress, according to the New York Times.

Maguire had been a favorite to be nominated for the permanent DNI post but Trump soured on the official, The Washington Post said, when he heard about the classified election security briefing.

The president berated Maguire in an Oval Office showdown last week for the "disloyalty" of his staff, the Post reported, effectively thwarting his chances of becoming a permanent hire.

Trump announced on Wednesday he was replacing Maguire with Richard Grenell, 53, the ambassador to Germany and a Trump loyalist.

The president was impeached in December over accusations that he tried to coerce ally Ukraine into helping him win the 2020 election, withholding military aid considered vital to the former Soviet republic in its war with Russia.

Democratic congressman Bennie Thompson said that by firing Maguire over the briefing "the president is not only refusing to defend against foreign interference, he's inviting it." Schiff tweeted late Thursday that if Trump was interfering in the sharing of intelligence information with Congress, it appeared that he was "again jeopardizing our efforts to stop foreign meddling."

US intelligence concluded that Russia interfered in the 2016 election, especially through manipulation of social media, to support Trump.

The real estate tycoon-turned-president has however repeatedly called it a

"Russia hoax" and has instead promoted a debunked conspiracy theory that Ukraine intervened instead.

- Trump defender -

Trump has been at odds with much of the national security establishment since he took office and claims, without providing evidence, that a "deep state" is working against him.

Since he was acquitted by the Republican-led Senate, an emboldened Trump has been purging the Justice Department, National Security Council and Pentagon of staff he considers disloyal.

Casualties have included NSC staffer Lieutenant Colonel Alex Vindman and EU ambassador Gordon Sondland -- both key witnesses in the impeachment inquiry -- Vindman's twin brother, an NSC lawyer who wasn't involved, and Pentagon policy chief John Rood.

Democrats have voiced outrage over the appointment of Grenell, who has no relevant background or top-level management experience for the post in which he will supervise 17 agencies, including the CIA.

"He is committed to a non-political, non-partisan approach as head of the Intelligence Community, on which our safety and security depend," White House press secretary Stephanie Grisham said in a statement Thursday.

Grenell said on Twitter he would not serve permanently and that Trump would "soon" select someone else.

- 'Unquestioning obedience' -

Trump has declined to hire a permanent replacement for Dan Coats, who stepped down as DNI in August after standing firm on the intelligence community's conclusion that Russia interfered in 2016 to back Trump over Hillary Clinton.

Grenell has previously cast doubt on the extent of Russia's efforts, saying that Moscow's activities were nothing new.

Senator Ron Wyden, a Democrat on the intelligence committee, accused Trump of prioritizing "unquestioning obedience over the safety of the American people."

Grenell has cheered on the rise of right-wing populists in Europe, including hailing Austria's ultra-conservative chancellor, Sebastian Kurz, as a "rock star."

He has been unusually outspoken for an ambassador in criticizing the country where he serves, including warning German companies over Twitter to comply with Trump's orders not to do business in Iran.

New virus outbreaks in China and abroad rekindle concerns



An eruption of new coronavirus cases in South Korea, Iran and Chinese hospitals and prisons rekindled concerns Friday about the spread of a deadly disease that has killed more than 2,200 people.

The World Health Organization warned nations could face a serious problem if they fail to "hit hard now" against the virus, which has infected more than 75,000 in China and over 1,100 abroad.

China has pointed to official figures showing new cases slowing this week as evidence that its drastic containment measures are working, but fresh infections emerged at two Beijing hospitals, and more than 500 others were reported in prisons across the country.

Chinese authorities have placed tens of millions of people under quarantine in hard-hit central Hubei province and restricted movements in other cities far from the epicentre.

Many nations have banned travellers from China and airlines have suspended flights to and from the country.

But clusters and outbreaks continue to emerge, and 11 people have now died outside mainland China.

Chinese officials said a potential vaccine could be submitted for clinical trials around late April.

- South Korean sector -

The total number of cases in South Korea nearly doubled to 204 on Friday, making it the hardest-hit country outside China.

More than 120 members of Shincheonji Church of Jesus, a religious sect in the southern city of Daegu, have now been infected.

It started with a 61-year-old woman who developed a fever on February 10 but attended at least four church services before being diagnosed.

The mayor of Daegu -- South Korea's fourth-biggest city, with a population of over 2.5 million -- has advised residents to stay indoors, while access to a major US base in the area has been restricted.

Most people on the streets were wearing masks Friday, but many businesses were closed and workers sprayed disinfectant outside the church.

"With so many confirmed cases here I'm worried that Daegu will become the second Wuhan," said Seo Dong-min, 24, referring to Hubei's capital, where the virus first emerged.

North Korea, which has put itself into self-imposed isolation to protect itself from the outbreak in neighbouring China, cancelled April's Pyongyang Marathon.

Iran confirmed three new cases after two elderly men died from the virus in the city of Qom, prompting Iraq to ban travel to and from its neighbour and Kuwait's national air carrier to suspend flights.

Two Australians evacuated from the

Diamond Princess cruise ship, meanwhile, tested positive for coronavirus on their return home despite being cleared in Japan.

The two cases in Australia will fuel questions about Tokyo's policy of allowing former Diamond Princess passengers to return home after testing negative.

Two former passengers, both Japanese and in their 80s, died in Japan on Thursday.

"If we don't hit hard now using the window of opportunity we might be faced with a serious problem," WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said Thursday.

"This virus is very dangerous and it's public enemy number one and it's not being treated as such."

- Prisons and hospitals -

China reported 118 more deaths on Friday, raising the toll to 2,236, most of them in Hubei.

The National Health Commission also said in its daily update that China tallied 889 new cases.

The number is up from the previous day when it reported the lowest number of new infections in nearly a month, fuelling hopes that the epidemic is nearing its peak.

Among those, 258 were outside Hubei, ending a 16-day streak of new infections falling in the rest of the country. A 29-year-old Wuhan doctor died on Thursday, making him one of the youngest known fatalities of the epidemic and the eighth among medical workers.

New hotspots were found in prisons and hospitals.

Seven guards and 200 inmates tested positive for the virus at Rencheng prison in eastern Shandong province. Eight officials were fired over the issue.

In Hubei, 230 cases were reported at the Wuhan Women's Prison, whose warden was also dismissed, and 41 others were reported at a penitentiary in Shayan county. One suspected infection was found at a juvenile detention centre.

Another 34 cases have been found at a prison in eastern Zhejiang province, leading to the ouster of its director and another official.

In Beijing, health officials said 36 people, including medical staff, patients and their families, have now tested positive for the virus at Fuxing hospital, which has been under partial lockdown since January 31.

At Peking University People's Hospital, a patient became infected after a visit from two relatives who tested positive for the virus.

Most of China remains paralysed over fears of contagion, with people slowly trickling back to work, schools remaining closed, and Beijing ordering people returning to the city to self-quarantine for 14

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PHOTO READY! The supermodel, Gigi Hadid takes some snaps backstage at the Fendi runway show during Milan Fashion Week.

Shilpa Shetty Kundra, Raj Kundra welcome baby girl



MUMBAI, FEB 21 (PTI): Actor Shilpa Shetty Kundra and her husband Raj Kundra on Friday announced that they have become parents to a baby girl, born through surrogacy.

The couple welcomed their second child on February 15.

"Our prayers have been answered with a miracle. With gratitude in our hearts we are thrilled to announce the arrival of our little Angel. Samisha Shetty Kundra. Born on 15th February 2020 Junior SSK in the house," Shilpa

said. Shilpa and Raj got married in November 2009 and welcomed their first child together, son Viaan, in May 2012. On work front, Shilpa is making her comeback to films after a gap of 13 years with Sabbir Khan's "Nikamma". The film stars Abhimanyu Dassani and YouTube sensation Shirley Setia. It is set to release in June this year.

She will also be seen in Priyadarshan's "Hungama 2" alongside Paresh Rawal, Meezan Jafferri and south actor Pranitha Subhash.

NBC renews 'The Blacklist' for season 8

LOS ANGELES, FEB 21 (PTI): Crime thriller series "The Blacklist" has been renewed by NBC for an eighth season.

The series features James Spader as Raymond "Red" Reddington, one of the FBI's most wanted fugitives, alongside Megan Boone, Diego Klattenhoff, Harry Lennix, Amir Arison, and Hisham Tawfiq.

"Congratulations to our incredible cast, producers and crew, all of whom continue to reach excellence week in and week out. We couldn't be more excited to continue Red and Liz's story into season eight," Lisa Katz and Tracey Pakosta, co-presidents of scripted programming at NBC Entertainment, said in statement to Deadline.

The seventh season of the show will resume on March 20 with two back-to-back episodes. There are no current plans for season eight to be the show's final season.

Oona Chaplin boards horror film 'Lullaby'

LOS ANGELES, FEB 21 (PTI): Actor Oona Chaplin, granddaughter of screen legend Charlie Chaplin, is set to star in horror movie "Lullaby".

The Alcon Entertainment project is based on the mythological figure Lilith, reported Variety.

John R Leonetti is directing the movie from a screenplay penned by Alex Greenfield and Ben Powell.

The film follows a new mother who discovers a lullaby in an ancient book and soon regards the song as a blessing but her world changes into a nightmare when the lullaby awakens the ancient demon Lilith.

Broderick Johnson and Andrew Kosove are attached as producers.

"Lullaby" is based on a uniquely original idea that draws inspiration from varied rich and often terrifying mythological accounts. We firmly believe in John's chilling vision and it's our hope to deliver a film that is as thrilling on screen as it is on the page," Johnson and Kosove said in a statement.

Chaplin recently finished the shooting of James Cameron's "Avatar 3", she will reprise her part in "Avatar 4" and "Avatar 5".

Kareena Kapoor On Break-Up With Shahid Kapoor: "Destiny Had Its Own Plan"



Kareena Kapoor, who is married to actor Saif Ali Khan, opened up about her break-up with Jab We Met co-star Shahid Kapoor and told Anupama Chopra in a Film Companion interview: "Destiny had its own plan." Shahid and Kareena dated for about three years. However, after the release of the Imtiaz Ali-directed film, the couple parted ways and Kareena started dating Saif Ali Khan, whom she later married in 2012. Speaking to Anupama Chopra, the 39-year-old actress revealed that she and Shahid Kapoor parted ways during the making of Jab We Met as Kareena fell for Saif Ali Khan, with whom she was simultaneously filming Tashan.

During the interview, Kareena talked about how Shahid Kapoor encouraged her to play the role of Geet in Jab We Met and she added: "Of course, then destiny had its own plan and life took its own course. A lot happened in the making of this film and Tashan and our lives... We all kind of went our separate ways. And this beauty of a movie came out of it."

Kareena, who has confessed in several interviews that she fell head over heels in love with Saif Ali Khan during the making of Tashan, also revealed in the aforementioned interview that Jab We Met "changed her career" while Tashan "changed her life."

She added: "I think we just had to kind of do this movie at this time when Tashan was

being made... And I met Saif. So I kind of did Tashan for that actually... When I actually thought that was gonna change my life and my career. But this (Jab We Met) changed my career and that (Tashan) changed my life. Because I did meet the man of my dreams and I did marry him. And this (her relationship with Shahid Kapoor) kind of took its own course in which both Shahid and me went our separate ways."

After dating for over five years, Kareena Kapoor and Saif Ali Khan got married in 2012 and welcomed their son Taimur in 2016. Shahid Kapoor is now married to Mira Rajput, with whom he has two children - daughter Misha and son Zain.

Earlier, in an interview to Pinkvilla, Kareena revealed that Saif Ali Khan brought up the possibility of their marriage for the first time on the sets of Tashan. "He did tell me that 'I think we should get married.' He told me that in Greece and he told me once in Ladakh as well that 'We will make a great couple.' And, at that time I was like, 'I don't know because I don't know you.' So, it was not really a 'no' but it was more like, 'I want to know you better.' I think I made the best decision of my life," she told the publication.

Other than Jab We Met, Kareena Kapoor and Shahid Kapoor have also co-starred in films like Milenge Milenge, 36 China Town and Chup Chup Ke.

Eli Roth to direct 'Borderlands' film adaptation



LOS ANGELES, FEB 21 (PTI): Filmmaker Eli Roth is set to direct the movie adaptation of videogame "Borderlands". The project has been in the works at Lionsgate for five years, reported Deadline. According to the studio, production on the film will begin later this year.

Craig Mazin, who won an Emmy for penning "Chernobyl", has written the latest screenplay draft.

Created and developed by Gearbox Software and published by Take-Two Interactive Software's 2K label, "Borderlands" is a role-play-

ing first-person shooter game. The game, launched in 2009, is set on the frontier of a sci-fi universe -- the planet of Pandora -- which has been abandoned by a mega-corporation prior to the game events.

The most recent installment, "Borderlands 3", was released last year in September. Randy Pitchford, executive producer of the video game franchise and founder of Gearbox Software, and Strauss Zelnick, chairman and CEO of Take-Two Interactive, will serve as executive producers on the film.

Lana Del Rey cancels European tour

LOS ANGELES, FEB 21 (PTI): Singer Lana Del Rey has called off her European and UK tour, a day before it was set to begin, due to illness.

The 34-year-old singer was scheduled to perform in Amsterdam on Friday, kicking off gigs in Paris, London, Manchester, Glasgow, Birmingham, Berlin and Cologne.

"Sorry to let everyone down so

last minute but this illness has taken me by surprise and have totally lost my singing voice. Dr has advised 4 weeks off for the moment. I hate to let everyone down but I need to get well," Lana said in a statement to Variety.

It is not yet known if the tour will be rescheduled.

Lana is also set to perform at Coachella music festival in April.

Megan Fox to play astronaut in thriller 'Aurora'

LOS ANGELES, FEB 21 (PTI): Actor Megan Fox is set to essay the role of an astronaut in Arclight Films' suspense thriller "Aurora". The project was announced by the banner at the ongoing Berlin International Film Festival.

According to the Hollywood Reporter, Lazar Bodroza is attached to direct the film from a script penned by Pete Bridges, Toby Gibson and Stuart Willis.

"We are delighted to continue championing stories with strong females at the helm. 'Aurora' is a beautiful, action-packed visual feast set in space and Megan is perfectly cast to play a character battling demons from her past.

"We could not be happier to be working with Jordan, Toby and Lazar Bodroza once again to bring this beautiful and mesmerizing story to life," said Arclight chairman Gary Hamilton.

The film follows a female astronaut stationed in outer space to monitor solar storms that endanger Earth.

"She discovers shock waves from solar storms are bending time, pushing her into an emotional and psychological struggle with her past and present," the plotline read.

Production is set to start in May in Serbia.

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ARIES: You know what they say, Aries? Do not argue with stupid people because they will bring you down to their level. Learn to exit situations before they start to get toxic. Want something done on your terms? Instead of bringing people down, highlight their strengths. Make them feel good about themselves. Remember, it takes a truly secure person to make another feel comfortable.

Tip: Find a way to work with rather than against people.

TAURUS: Taurus, think of yourself as a magician, an alchemist, one who is gifted with the ability to transform base metals into something precious. This chapter of your life requires you to fully awaken to your power and potential and step into your light. No more playing small or dulling your sparkle in order to make others feel comfortable. The money you desire and deserve may be slow to come to you, but that doesn't mean you are not connected to the flow of abundance. Be patient with the Universe as the Universe is with you. You are in the process of creating your best life.

Tip: Tap into the power of alchemy.

GEMINI: A well-kept secret for the believers of the law of attraction. Hold a pure thought in your mind's eye for 17 seconds in order to set manifestation in motion. The desire will be-

come stronger and stronger as it reaches 68 seconds. If what you asked for is for your highest good, trust that it will find its way to you in the physical plane of existence. PS: If the cosmic cues are anything to go by, you are in the mood to manifest something new and exciting when it comes to your life.

Tip: Ask, and you shall receive.

CANCER: Aren't you glad you didn't give up when things got tough? Aren't you glad you listened to your inner voice when everything else was uncertain? This, right here, right now, is your best life. Cancer—and it is your own conviction that has brought you where you are today. Continue to befriend courage as you take bold steps towards the future you have always dreamed of. Watch how the obstacles clear out now that Spirit has stepped in to offer additional support.

Tip: You are creating your best life.

LEO: Healthy competition is a good thing. It makes us strive for excellence. But what happens when this competition becomes obsessive? And where does one draw the line? First things first, stop comparing your journey with that of others. Your life path is completely different, Leo, so is your destination. Replace the envy with inspiration. See how you can apply their wisdom to your situation. This could com-

pletely change your perspective. PS: You have a long road ahead of you and this is just the beginning.

Tip: You are your only competition.

VIRGO: Want to hear a cliché? What doesn't break you makes you stronger. This is the week to venture into your shadows, take your demons and pour them a cup of truth tea. They have served their purpose in your life and now it's time for them to leave your side. It is your thirst for freedom that will help you break free from the shackles. But letting go isn't always easy. Neither is taking standing up for your beliefs. Be cognisant of the resistance as and where it is stemming from. Moment-to-moment awareness is the key to transcendence.

Tip: Let your search for freedom help you break free from the shackles.

LIBRA: We know you like your money where you can see it - hanging in your closet. But isn't your love for luxury putting a strain on your finances? How long do you think you will be able to go on like this? Make a clear distinction between your needs and wants as you learn to splurge within your limits. Steer clear from frivolous purchases of all sorts. Some of you may be bearing the brunt of your miscalculations in the past. Learn from these mistakes and integrate the lessons.

Tip: Be mindful of your expenses.

SCORPIO: It's not considered a failure if you've learned from the experience. Look at you integrating past lessons and making big breakthroughs! You're even working your way around the things that once made you hit the panic button. If this doesn't call for a celebration, what does? Keep in mind that we all have our own timelines. Where you are at is exactly where you need to be and progressing at the right speed. Let go of the need to compare your journey with that of others.

Tip: Celebrate both the big and small victories.

SAGITTARIUS: The thing about anger and resentment is that they block the flow of love. How and where are you unwilling to let go, Sagittarius? Are you constantly dwelling on the things that didn't work out in the past? Here's the thing: there's nothing you can do to change things now. What you do have dominion over is the present moment. So, make a conscious effort to rise above your situation.

Tip: Let the anger and resentment go.

CAPRICORN: If you've been house-hunting for a while now, get ready to find that perfect apartment - in a fancier neighbourhood, may we add! Others could be giving renovation and redecoration a thought. Work with an architect or designer who understands your aesthetic

and will commit to making your dreams a reality. Like where you are and wouldn't move a thing? The cards are urging you to spend more time in your inner sanctuary. The Zen you are looking for can be found within these four walls.

Tip: Spend more time in your inner sanctuary.

AQUARIUS: Learn to watch your emotions every time you find yourself in an unpleasant situation. Where is your attention going, Aquarius? Why are you beginning to lose patience? Thirdly, is blaming other people really going to help you solve the crisis? Take charge of your feelings as you stop blaming the external circumstances. Remember, everything outside is a reflection of what's going on inside. Consciously work on finding that inner alignment.

Tip: Take responsibility for where you are.

PISCES: You may love them to Venus and back, but you will never agree on everything or look at the world through the same lens. Celebrate the differences that add to the beauty of your relationship and challenge you to grow as individuals. Patience and understanding hold the key to a harmonious future and you, dear Pisces, are learning to prioritise this sacred union. Trust that your relationship will grow from strength to strength from here.

Tip: Be patient with the other as you are with yourself.