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ON TOP OF THE NEWS

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STATE DAY MESSAGE FROM CM Let's celebrate 25 Exceptional Milestones on State Day: CM

SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 15 MAY:

Chief Minister, Pawan Chamling, has greeted the people of Sikkim on the occasion of the 44th State Day. "While we celebrate the State Day, it is my pleasure to reflect on the tremendous improvement we achieved in wide ranging sectors including Education and Health. In fact, I seek to celebrate our unique footprints under the broadly defined "25 Exceptional Milestones" achieved during the 25 years of Sikkim Democratic Front government since 12 Dec, 1994. This has been possible due to our deep commitment and hard work and for the intensely innovative and imaginative development programs that we embarked upon during these years," the CM has said.

The CM goes on to recall the state's achievements in various sectors under the 25 Exceptional Milestones.

"Fellow citizens, these are only some of the historical achievements we accomplished during the last 25 years. There are still more to be done socially, economically, educationally and culturally so that the aspirations of our forefathers are fully met and their decision to join the Indian mainstream are fully respected and vindicated," he states.

The CM has congratulated all voters for exercising their franchise in the recently held Lok Sabha and Parliamentary elections. He has also congratulated all the Awardees under different categories to be awarded on the occasion of State Day.

"Fellow Sikkimese, based on the democratic tradition of this great Nation and our unrelenting commitment, let us renew our determination and efforts to take Sikkim to greater heights and glory. At the same time, let us continue to promote peace, harmony and brotherhood for which the State is well known across the region and the nation at large," the CM has said.

The 25 Exceptional Milestones are as follows:

1. The SDF Government has fully restored democracy and firmly established rule of law. There is complete freedom of expression and freedom of movement and there is not a single case pending against any political adversary and not a single political prisoner.

2. During the last 25 years, there is complete peace and security and Sikkim is today the most peaceful State in India. There is no communal strife, no crime and terrorism and Sikkim is truly transformed into an oasis of peace.

3. During the last 25 years, people have consistently remained the masters of their destiny. In all spheres of socio-economic activities like employment, panchayati raj, municipalities and State assembly, the people of Sikkim are leading by exceptional example.

4. Complete protection and equal treatment of all sections of communities in Sikkim through provision of seat reservation in panchayats, higher studies etc. No one is outside the purview of reservation;

5. Complete protection and safeguard of Sikkim Subject document, Rule 4.4 and all old laws as per safeguards provided under Article 371 (F) of the Indian Constitution;

6. Sikkim is the only State in India where Basic Minimum Needs of people are fully addressed. Sikkim is the first Hunger & Poverty free State; the first State to provide Free Housing to all and which is fully covered by clean drinking water supply, electricity, roads, education and health;

7. Sikkim is the first State to allocate 70 % budget under Rural Development. Ever since the formation of SDF Government in 1994, seventy percent of plan budget is earmarked for rural development;

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UDHD begins dismantling Star Hall, tenants protest



SAGAR CHETTRI

GANGTOK, 15 MAY:

Urban Development & Housing Department [UDHD] began the dismantling process of the seven-storied Star Cinema Hall Building here in

New Market, MG Marg on Wednesday afternoon. However, except for one shop, the department could not continue with the dismantling process following protest from tenants and shop owners

in the complex.

It has to be mentioned here that UDHD issued a public notice on 08 May 2019 regarding the demolition of the said building on 15 May. Following the same, a

team of UDHD officials reached Star Hall building this afternoon with a dismantling team but faced a strong protest from tenants and shop owners of Star Hall complex.

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POCSO accused Govt Teacher placed under suspension

SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 15 MAY:

Subhendu Nath, a graduate teacher at Namchi Senior Secondary School, was placed under suspension by the Human Resource Development Department today following his arrest and detention for more than 48 hours in a Protection Of Children from Sexual Offences Act.

The accused teacher was taken into custody on 08 May 2019 following allegations for which he was booked under the POCSO Act.

The HRDD order on his suspension explains that the teacher in question was placed under suspension in terms of Rule 8(a) of SGS (Discipline and Appeal) Rules 1985 and shall remain suspended until further orders.

The HRDD order further directs that during the period of his suspension, the suspended teacher will report to the office of the Additional Director, HRDD (South), and shall not leave the headquarters without obtaining prior permission of the Additional Director, HRDD (South).

The offence in question was allegedly committed during a tuition class that the government teacher conducts in the evenings. There is also a standing order of the HRDD issued in the year 2016 which explicitly forbids government teachers from taking tuition classes in private coaching centres, education societies etc. The accused teaches mathematics.

Former PNGS Principal Miss Ritchie passes away

SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 15 MAY:

Isabelle M. Ritchie, who headed the Paljor Namgyal Girls' School as Principal for 30 years since 1966 passed away on 14 May, 2019, a press release informs.

"On receipt of her sad demise, immediately school flag was flown at half-mast as a sign of mourning and PNG Family assembled for special prayer assembly and followed by two minute silence to pay homage to her dedicated life for PNG School," the release states.

Ms Ritchie was born at Dunfermline, Scotland, in a humble background and had a burning desire



to work in the field of education. She worked for 10 years in Wilson College, Mumbai, before she was called upon to join as Principal of the Paljor Namgyal Girls' School

by Scottish Mission after Miss Martha Hamilton retired as the Principal, the release mentions.

During her tenure of 30 years as Principal, she made tremendous



contribution in many activities of the School, the noteworthy being opening of a special course for differently-abled children in 1981 for which she was awarded the Order of Brit-

ish Empire in 1982. She is also credited with introducing Girls' Guide and NCC in the school. She left in the year 1996.

Even after she left for her country, she vis-

ited the school when she came to Sikkim from time to time.

She passed away on 14 May, 2019 at her native place Dunfermline, Scotland, UK.

Hamro Chahri to build ashram for Sikkimese in Mumbai



SHRAVAN CHETTRI

GANGTOK, 15 MAY:

A meet and greet 'bhet-ghat' programme was organized here at Nepali Sahitya Parishad Bhawan by Basi Biyalo today. The event was attended by delegates of Hamro Chahri, Sakul Singh Rai, Swastika Chettri and Kamal Singh from Mumbai, along with other members of Basi Biyalo.

Hamro Chahri is an offshoot of Basi Biyalo and an initiative launched in Mumbai which focuses on solving personal and social issues for the people of Sikkim and neighbour-

ing hills who are residing in Mumbai.

Addressing the gathering, Swastika Chettri said, "Cities like Delhi and Kolkata have a bha-wan for people of Sikkim and neighbouring hills, but being one of the biggest cities, Mumbai doesn't have one and people face various problems there. We have been helping people from Sikkim and other areas for a long time and we have planned to construct an ashram for the needy ones there in Mumbai."

Speaking further she said, "The construction

turn to pg02

In unprecedented action, EC curtails West Bengal campaigning after Kolkata violence

NEW DELHI, MAY 15 (PTI): In the first such action in India's electoral history, the Election Commission on Wednesday ordered campaigning in nine West Bengal constituencies to end at 10 PM on Thursday, a day before its scheduled deadline, in the wake of violence between BJP and TMC workers in Kolkata. In a hurriedly-convened press conference, Deputy Election Commissioner Chandra Bhushan Kumar said it was for the first time that such an action has been taken using constitutional powers of the poll panel.

The Election Commission (EC) also ordered the removal of Principal Secretary (Home) Atri Bhat-tacharya and Additional Director General, CID, Rajiv Kumar from their postings in West Bengal.

The EC's action came a day after parts of Kolkata witnessed wide-spread violence during BJP president Amit Shah's massive road show in Kolkata. A bust of 19th century Bengali icon Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar was also vandalised during the violence,

"This is for the first time such a measure has been taken using the EC's constitutional powers. But this is not going to be the last," Ku-



mar said, referring to curtailment of campaigning period.

The EC also expressed "deep anguish" over the vandalism of the bust and hope that the culprits will be arrested soon.

The EC invoked Article 324 of the Constitution to curtail the campaigning for the last phase of the election on May 19.

The constituencies where campaigning has been curtailed are -- Dum Dum, Barasat, Basirhat, Jaynagar, Mathurapur, Diamond Harbour, Jadavpur, Kolkata Dakshin and Kolkata Uttar.

The order on curtailment of the campaigning was signed by Chief Election Commissioner Sunil Arora and fellow commissioners

Ashok Lavasa and Sushil Chandra. The vandalism of Vidyasagar's bust and clashes during Shah's road show in Kolkata on Tuesday triggered a fierce blame game between BJP and the Trinamool Congress. Shah, at a press conference here, alleged that Mamata Banerjee's TMC was involved in vandalising the bust and unleashing violence during his roadshow in Kolkata on Tuesday as part of a "conspiracy" to blame the BJP.

On its part, the TMC released videos to claim that "BJP goons" damaged the statue of Vidyasagar and said the videos not only establish what the saffron party did, but proved that Shah is a "liar" and a "dhokebaaz" (betrayer).

Summit Times in Nepali

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MUSS Golden Jubilee Car Rally from Ravangla to Pakyong

**SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 15 MAY:**

The second phase of Golden Jubilee Car Rally commemorating 50 years of Manav Dharma propagation in Sikkim culminated at Pakyong, East Sikkim on Sunday, a press release informs. The Car Rally flagged off from Ravangla, South Sikkim on Saturday was led by Sadhvi Mahatma Akhilesh Baiji, Manav Uthan Sewa Samiti (MUSS) Incharge for North East region.

A similar two-day Car Rally was organized from Melli, South Sikkim to Daramdin in West Sikkim in the month of February.

The second Car Rally flagged off from Ravangla Bazaar on Saturday covered Rayong, Damthang, Namchi, Bhanjyang, Namthang before making



a halt at Rangpo. The Car Rally covered Rorathang, Rhenock, Rongli and Machong before culminating at Pakyong Bazaar on day two.

During the Rally, the Sadhvis addressed peo-

ple at different places and appealed to them to adopt Manav Dharma for the betterment of mankind.

The Car Rally is aimed at spreading this message of Satpalji Maharaj, the founder of

MUSS among the masses, informed Sadhvis during their address to the people during the course of the rally.

Satpalji Maharaj and his mother Mata Rajeshwari Devi started

preaching Manav Dharma in Sikkim and Darjeeling Hills in the 70s. Today there are lakhs of people following the path of Manav Dharma in these regions, the release mentions.

Consumer Affairs Secy meets State Govt officials



GANGTOK, 15 MAY (IPR): Secretary, Consumer Affairs, Government of India, Avinash Srivastav, met with Chief Secretary AK Shrivastava today and was briefed about the various ongoing projects of

the Government of India. Secretary, Food & Civil Supplies Department, Sarala Rai, also placed different proposals with him during the meeting. Mr Srivastav assured to consider the proposals.

SPCC greets Sikkim on State Day

**SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 16 MAY:**

Sikkim Pradesh Congress Committee has extended best wishes to the people of Sikkim on the occasion of State Day. "Forty-four years have gone by since Sikkim became India's 22nd state on 16 May, 1975, ending more than 300 years of monarchy, and having been assisted by the government of India to realise the democratic aspirations of the people of Sikkim," an SPCC press release recalls.

The release, after detailing the events leading to the merger and recounting the aspirations of the people and com-

mitments of the Government of India, stresses that the ethnic Sikkimese "must get their due rights as enshrined in the Constitution and the SPCC is strongly committed to realising this."

"However, this does not mean that the non-Sikkimese communities are totally excluded. The other non-ethnic communities residing in Sikkim also deserve their rights as citizens of this country, within the ambit of the country's constitution," the release states while adding that "uncontrolled and/or illegal influx is a serious issue that needs to be checked."

Ty Burrell to star in animated family comedy 'Duncanville'

LOS ANGELES, MAY 9 (PTI): "Modern Family" star Ty Burrell is set to feature in animated family comedy, "Duncanville".

The show from Fox already has Amy Poehler on board, who will also serve as executive producer on the project with her Paper Kite Productions. According to Deadline, Burrell is cast as series regular opposite Poehler. The show centres around an average 15-year-old boy Duncan (voiced by Poehler) with a rich fantasy life, and the people in his world.

Burrell will lend his voice to Duncan's father and husband to Annie (also voiced by Poehler), Jack. He is a classic-rock-obsessed plumber who is determined to be a better dad than the one he had. An-

nie is a parking enforcement officer who dreams of someday being a detective, lives in perpetual fear that her teenage son is one bad decision away from ruining his life and will do anything to stop him from doing so.

"The Simpsons" alumni Mike Scully and his wife Julie Scully are the creators and are writing the script.

Dave Becky of 3 Arts Entertainment is also attached to executive producer. Already announced as part of the recurring cast are Rashida Jones and Wiz Khalifa. Additional casting will be announced soon.

Twentieth Century Fox Television and Universal Television are producing. The show is slated to air during the 2019-20 season.

North holds second round briefing on counting of votes

MANGAN, 15 MAY (IPR):

The second round briefing on Counting of Votes to the Officers who have been entrusted with counting task was held at conference hall of District Administrative Centre, Mangan today.

The District Election Officer (DEO)-cum-District Magistrate, Raj Yadav chaired the meeting and briefed the gathering about the counting process involving Counting Supervisor (CS), Counting Agents (CA) and Micro-Observers (MO). The DEO told the counting officers to be more cautious and there will be no room for error during counting of votes. He also urged all counting officers to co-operate and maintain the decorum during the day of counting.

Present in the meeting were, Sr Superintendent of Police, Kunzang Dorjee Shangderpa, North, Sub-Divisional Magistrate, Samdup Bhutia, Mangan, Sub-Divisional Magistrate, Mahesh Sharma, Kabi, Sub-Divisional Magistrate, Subash Ghimire, Chungthang, Sub-Divisional Magistrate, Norbu Tshering Bhutia, Dzongu, Kabi, Under Secretary, Santosh Pradhan, Election Department and the officials vested with the task of vote counting.

The EVMs will be taken out at 7:30 am from strong room in the presence of all political parties and Counting of votes pertaining to Assembly Constituencies i.e. 29-Kabi-Lungchok, 30-Dzongu, 31-Lachen-Mangan, 32-Sangha and no. 1-Sikkim Parliamentary constituency will take place from 8:00am on 23 May in hall no. 1 and hall no. 2 at Strong Rooms, District Administrative Centre, Mangan.

The Postal Ballot will be counted first. There will be twelve counting tables, six each for Parliamentary and State Legislative Assembly.

Counting of votes pertaining to assembly segments of Sikkim parliamentary constituency and assembly constituencies shall be done in hall no. 1 and hall no. 2 respectively.

Each candidate shall be allowed to appoint 8 numbers of counting agents; 6 for counting



table + one postal ballot table + one for computation or returning officer table to witness the counting process for Assembly Constituencies.

Similarly, each candidate shall be allowed to appoint 7 numbers of counting agents; 6 for counting table + 1 for computation or returning officer table for parliamentary constituencies.

All such counting agents have to appoint under law, in Form-18 before 20 May. Photo ID cards will be issued to all counting agents by the returning officer and without photo ID cards they shall be denied entry into the counting hall.

SP North briefed about the security arrangements of the counting day. Identification Cards will be needed to enter the DAC. The venue for parking place of vehicles of belonging to the political parties will take place in Mangan Public Ground. A vehicle pass will be given to vehicles granted by the Election department and only the vehicles with those pass will be allowed inside the DAC for pick and drop.

To ensure tight security arrangements 100 meter periphery around a counting premise / campus should be demarcated as "pedestrian Zone". No vehicle shall be allowed within this perimeter accept for official vehicles of ECI Observers; RO/AROs and SSP/District Police Officers for law and order reason.

Three tier cordoning system should be set up in all counting centers to prevent entry of unauthorized persons inside the counting center. The first or outer cordon shall be at the start of the pedestrian zone and it shall be manned by the state police force.

Identity of persons wanting to in has to be established at this stage. The second or middle cordon shall be at the gate of the counting prem-

ise/campus and it shall be manned by the state armed police. Proper frisking should be made by the state police force personnel only to ensure that no prohibited items like match box, arms etc. are carried inside. Women shall be frisked only by women police personnel/women home guards. The forces responsible for enforcing second cordon shall also ensure that no one is loitering outside the counting halls and using mobile phones or other communication equipments. The third or inner cordon shall be at the door of the counting hall. This will be manned by central armed police forces. There will be frisking arrangements at this stage too to ensure that no mobile phones and other prohibited items are carried inside the counting hall.

Observers of the ECI are allowed to carry their mobile phone inside the counting center and DEO/RO is allowed to use his mobile phone from designated rooms at the counting center.

The persons allowed in the counting hall are; counting supervisors/assistance and micro observers, Persons authorized by the ECI and observers, Public servants on duty in connection with the election and candidates, their election agents and counting agents.

During the meeting, it was also informed that the Additional Returning Officer (ARO) and Returning Officer (RO) will be in-charge of all the operations on the Counting day. The decision made by the Returning Officer (RO) will be final on the counting day. The ARO and RO will be there to address any confusion concerning the counting process.

The DEO informed everyone that the results of VVPAT slips will prevail if the number of vote tallies between VVPAT machine and Control Unit does not match.

Let's celebrate...

8. The SDF Government has achieved great success to fulfill many of the pending political demands of the people of Sikkim which include- implementation of Mandal Commission Report in Sikkim on 12.12.1994; Sanyasis and Thamis given OBC status on 06.12.1999; Jogi and Dewan given OBC status on 04.04.2000; Bahun, Chhetri and Newar communities recognized as OBC at state level on 22.09.2003; Sikkim became 8th Member of North Eastern Council on 23.12.2002; Limboo & Tamang communities recognized as STs on 05.04.2003; Lepcha recognized as Primitive Tribe on 26.02.2005; Central Income Tax exemption secured for domiciled Sikkimese people with effect from 10.05.2008; Nathu-La Trade route reopened for trade on 06.07.2006 which had been closed for 44 years; Kailash Mansarovar Yatra commenced through Nathu-La on 18.06.2015;

9. Sikkim- the first State to undertake social measures and introduce comprehensive safety net for senior citizens, differently-abled etc;

10. Sikkim- first State to successfully initiate empowerment of women at all levels;

11. Sikkim Democratic Front government brought about Industrialization in Sikkim by framing the first Industrial Policy on 18.12.1996. As a result, there are more than 50 pharma units in Sikkim, over 20 hydropower projects and many educational institutions in Sikkim;

12. Sikkim achieved Energy Security through hydro-power generation by utilizing the 8000 MW hydro-potential of the State. The State Government is earning good revenue annually from its hydro power projects and will earn more when all the ongoing hydro projects are commissioned in the State;

13. Sikkim is the only state with Environment-friendly policies since 1994; consequently forest area has increased by over 4 percent;

14. Sikkim has become the First Organic State in the country and the world. The name and fame of Sikkim has traveled far and wide fetching premium price for the organically-grown agriculture products;

15. All Dialects/languages spoken by local population have been recognized as State Languages, duly reviving the dying linguistic heritage of Sikkim. On April 3, 1995 the State Government recognized Tamang, Gurung, Rai, Sherpa, Mangar and Newar as State Languages and

Hamro Chahri...

of the ashram along with the registration of the organization is supposed to happen by August this year. We have got support from the neighbouring hills and we hope

UDHD begins...

Soon, SDM Gangtok and other officials from the District Administration and Police team also came to the spot.

Speaking to media persons, aggrieved tenants and shopkeepers argued that they should be relocated to an alternate location before the demolition process is started. It is informed that 25 families and three shops are presently in the Star Hall complex.

"We are here in this complex for more than 60 years now, how can they remove us to dismantle the property by giving a few days' notice?" they said.

It may be mentioned that other families who were residing in the property have been relocated to Arithang. Today's protestors, however, said that the four buildings provided by the department in Arithang have already been occupied by people from other parts of the State and all families from Star Hall cannot be accommodated in those buildings. They also alleged that flats in those buildings are of inferior quality and size of house is smaller than the ones in Star Hall complex.

They alleged that UDHD had promised proper rehabilitation by giving them the same size house in proper location before starting the dismantling process. They further alleged that the department never consulted or took them into confidence regarding their rehabilitation but was only threatening to dismantle the property since many years.

After a lengthy discussion, SDM Gangtok said that the department will open the seal of the building to allow shop owners to take their belongings from the shop otherwise the department would make inventory of items in the shops and take them to their godown. On the same, the protestors said that they do not have any problem with this process of making inventory

later on October 15, 1996, Sunuwar language was also recognized as State Languages.

16. Youth Centric government with Youth First policy giving free education; capacity building; start-up program; local employment under the One Family One Job scheme;

17. Sikkim- a Secular State in the true sense of the term. Every religious faith and belief is respected and honoured in the state and fully patronized by the state government to address all needs and requirement of religious institutions;

18. Sikkim recorded increase in Life Expectancy by over 11 years. This is the most solid indicator of development that is made possible by the prevailing peace, security and happiness among people;

19. Sikkim is surrounded by three international borders and shares national border with the state of West Bengal. Sikkim has been successful to maintain cordial relationship with bordering district of the neighboring Indian State and all the neighboring countries;

20. Sikkim has recorded the highest Growth Rate in India recording annual growth rate of upto 22 percent growth which is the best in the country. The annual GSDP increase is over 5454 percentage;

21. The first Airport in Sikkim at Pakyong was inaugurated on September 24, 2018 by duly introducing Sikkim in the air map. First Sikkim Tourism Policy was drafted in 2010;

22. Sikkim the only State to develop/construct Char Dham, Statue of Guru Rinpoche, Buddha Park and Chen Rejjig, Limbu Study Centre, Bharubhakta Study Centre, statue Shrijunga and statue of Bhagwan Parsuram besides huge array of religious sites and religious centres;

23. State-of-the-art Tashiling Secretariat; State-of-the-art New STNM Hospital have been constructed in Sikkim;

24. As against only one College in 1994, today Sikkim has a total of 28 colleges and 07 universities in the state;

25. Sikkim developed into fully Welfare State in the true sense of the term by putting in place adequate safety net for the weaker and deprived section of population, through a large number of welfare schemes to cover all people including students, women, differently abled and senior citizens

for the same from the people of Sikkim."

The delegates are on a fifteen-day schedule organizing forums around Sikkim and neighbouring hills.

and taking belongings but demolition should be stopped.

They asserted that the matter of relocation should be settled before the demolition begins and the notice period should be longer. They also questioned the demolition being initiated while the model code of conduct period is on.

After opening the seal, UDHD officials started visiting the sealed shop to make a list of the items in the shop while hoardings and boards of different shops were removed from the wall. In the meantime, workers also dismantled a shop in the complex with the consent of the shop owner but they did not proceed further following the protest from other tenants and shop owners.

The public notice issued by UDHD on 08 May 2019 stated that the seven storied Star Cinema Hall Building was constructed during 1960's and as per the technical report submitted by the head of Department of Engineering, Jadavpur University and also authenticated by the Authorised Committee of Officers constituted by the Building & Housing Department, government of Sikkim, it has been advised to replace the building with control dismantle from repair feasibility consideration as the building has been declared unsafe for human habitation and dangerous to human lives and properties.

"And, whereas in order to prevent any loss of life and properties and other collateral damages, the department has decided to demolish the said seven storied Star Cinema Hall on 15 May 2019 by adopting all necessary procedures as per the law-in-force. Therefore, in order to ensure safety and as a precautionary measure, the general public is hereby informed/directed to maintain optimal diligence/care and refrain from using/entering or occupying the Star Cinema hall building," the notice states.

Golay greets Sikkim on State Day

SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 15 MAY:

Sikkim Krantikari Morcha president, PS Tamang [Golay], has conveyed best wishes to the people of Sikkim on the occasion of the 44th State Day of Sikkim.

While reiterating that the people of Sikkim feel proud to be a part of the Indian Union, Mr Tamang has further expressed gratitude towards the country for having provided special safeguards to the State through Article 371F.

In his message, Mr Tamang also goes on to allege that despite receiving a sizeable annual budget, development here has not been satisfactory due to poor financial management. He blames this on the present government and goes on to contend that a new government in Sikkim would deliver justice to the people.

National Dengue Day observed in Dikchu

SUMMIT REPORT

MANGAN, 15 MAY:

NSS volunteers of Govt Senior Secondary School, Dikchu, observed National Dengue Day in collaboration with National Vector Borne Disease Control Program, District Hospital, Mangan, today.

Renuka Pradhan sensitised the gathering about the symptoms and how to prevent Dengue, while Program Officer, Arjun Pradhan, spoke on preventive measures. The NSS volunteers, led by Abhishek Chettri, also performed a short skit on dengue at Dikchu bazar followed by NSS Chief Prefect, Tikaram Sunwar, presenting a self-composed song.

A rally, participated in by more than a hundred NSS volunteers was also taken out from Dikchu Bazar to the PHC Dikchu.

In morning assembly, NSS volunteer, Sanjana Bega, delivered a short speech on National Dengue Day. The programme was also attended by ASHA PHC, Dikchu, Pasang Lhamu Lepcha and Bed Maya Sharma.

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Take pride in Sikkim's progress, says Governor on State Day

SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 15 MAY:

Governor of Sikkim, Ganga Prasad has extended warm greetings and good wishes to the people of Sikkim on the occasion of State Day 2019, a Raj Bhavan press release informs.

In his message to the people of Sikkim, the Governor has said, "I convey my felicitations and best wishes to the people of Sikkim on this historic day, which we celebrate as the State Day. The state of Sikkim became a part of the largest democracy of the world on 16 May, 1975. The journey so far has been fruitful and fulfilling.

Despite having geographical and connectivity constraints, Sikkim has managed to emerge

as one of the best all-round performing States in the country within four and half decades of becoming a part of the Indian union. Today, Sikkim stands tall and is working with even more zeal and enthusiasm to emerge as a model state in the country.

The State Day is a joyous occasion when we recall with pride, enthusiasm and satisfaction, the multifarious and significant achievements made by the State during the past years. It is a day for introspection as to what we have achieved so far and to evolve a strategy to achieve our much desired status of a prosperous and advanced State for a secured tomorrow. We have



to look back and take pride in the progress we have made. This can be attributed to the collective effort of Sikkimese people.

On this auspicious day, let us also remember our leaders who were the architects in ushering democracy in the State and those who strived hard to create an environment that reflected the aspirations and the identity of the people of Sikkim. We

have to fulfill the dreams envisioned by our founding leaders by making an agenda for the future. It should be an outline that helps the people of Sikkim to constructively and positively contribute to the growth and development of this beautiful Himalayan Organic State and also contribute to the process of Nation building, at the same time.

Sikkim is a true example of national unity, integrity and patriotism. Since the past few decades, the tiny Himalayan state has seen a major transformation, ranging from agriculture, tourism, health, education, mode of communications (air and road connectivity) and other key sectors. Sikkim has been able to make its

presence felt not only in the country but also in the outside world.

I appeal to the students, youth, women, farmers and workers of the State to be creative and open to the new opportunities provided by the Government. There are plenty of opportunities, which must be harnessed.

On this happy occasion, I once again extend my greetings to the people for their personal well-being, happiness. Let us work in unison to take Sikkim to greater heights of progress and prosperity. I congratulate all the award winners. May your success today inspire others to work hard and contribute more towards Nation building."

Free Stem Cell Therapy OPD in Gangtok next month



SUNAKSHI SUBEDI/HISSEY LHAMU BHUTIA

GANGTOK, 15 MAY:

NeuroGen Brain & Spine Institute, Navi Mumbai, Maharashtra, has announced plans to organize a free Stem Cell Therapy OPD consultation camp on 02 June in Gangtok.

The Institute is organizing the camp for the first time in Sikkim and it is aimed to address patients with neurological disorders in the North East Region.

Addressing a press conference here this evening, Head of Surgical Service Neurogen Brain and Spine Institute, Dr Richa Bansod, explained, "Stem Cell Therapy is an easy one week procedure which includes rehabilitation after surgery. This therapy has recorded positive outcome in patients. They are able to walk, do things naturally

without any support. After the therapy their life span also increases."

She added that 09 to 75 years old patients can undergo this treatment which is offered only at the institute in Navi Mumbai.

The press conference was also addressed by 21-year-old Shrabana from Silliguri, who is suffering from Cerebral Palsy and underwent stem cell therapy.

"We came to know about this therapy from the internet and immediately took our daughter for the treatment. She could not eat, walk or sit by herself and needed help and support but after this therapy she has improved and now she can walk sit and eat without help," Shrabana's mother, Ms Pushpita shared.

NeuroGen public relations incharge, Push-

kala Scaria informed that NeuroGen Brain and Spine Institute has treated over 8,000 patients from 60 different countries. It is informed that in the process of the treatment stem cells was taken from the patient's own bone marrow with the help of a needle which is processed for six hours and later injected back in their spinal fluid after processing. It is added that for the treatment a patients has to go through 7 day treatment which is residential treatment.

"This camp is being organized to facilitate the patients as NeuroGen understands that patients with spinal cord injury, muscular dystrophy, autism, cerebral palsy and others travelling is extremely difficult all the way to Mumbai for just consultation," she explained.

FLAT AVAILABLE FOR RENT

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

For further details please

Contact: 943417687 / 9083826462

Mother's Day celebrated at Kitam School



SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 15 MAY:

Mother's Day was observed at Kitam Senior Secondary School playground today. The program was chaired by two special guests - Deputy Director, HRDD, PL Sharma, and Sumitra Rana. Also in attendance were students and their mothers.

The objective behind organising the celebration was to pay tribute to the mothers and reinforce the everlasting mother-child bond, a press release informs.

The programme be-

gan with Ms Rana lighting the ceremonial lamp and the chanting of hymns.

Following a welcome address by Geeta Dulal and a welcome song by Kitam SSS teachers, a special ceremony was held in which the students offered khadas to their respective mothers. This was an emotional moment and the mood was lightened with a colourful programme which featured skit performances, poetry recitals, song/ dance, mothers' ramp walk and some sport activities.

NOTICE

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

By Order.

DISTRICT COLLECTOR/EAST

HIGH COURT OF SIKKIM GANGTOK

No. 2524/JudL/HCS. Date: 14.5.19

WP(C) No.05 of 2019

M/s. Balchand Udairam ...Petitioner

Versus.

Shri Nareesh Subba & Ors. ...Respondents.

NOTICE

To

Shri Thinlay Karma Peter Topden,
S/o Late Karma Topden,
R/o Martam House, Bhanu Path,
P. O. & P. S. Gangtok, East Sikkim.

Whereas a petition under Article 227 of the Constitution of India wherein you have been joined as a respondent and of which a copy is enclosed herewith has been filed before this Court;

You are hereby informed that the above cited matter has been listed on 10.06.2019 at 10:30 A.M. and that if you wish to urge anything in reply to the petition, you may appear before this Court on that day either in person or through advocate duly instructed;

A copy of Order dated 10.05.2019 passed in the above cited matter is enclosed herewith for your information.

Given under my hand and the seal of the Court this 14th day of May, 2019.

By Order.

DEPUTY REGISTRAR (J)

HIGH COURT OF SIKKIM GANGTOK

No. 2524/JudL/HCS. Date: 14.5.19

WP(C) No.04 of 2019

Shri Ong Tshering Bhutia ...Petitioner

Versus.

Shri Nareesh Subba & Ors. ...Respondents.

NOTICE

To

Shri Thinlay Karma Peter Topden,
S/o Late Karma Topden,
R/o Martam House, Bhanu Path,
P. O. & P. S. Gangtok, East Sikkim.

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Given under my hand and the seal of the Court this 14th day of May, 2019.

By Order.

DEPUTY REGISTRAR (J)

~ SummitTIMES ~ CLASSIFIEDS

Required for Summit Times

Two field reporters for Gangtok (East) and one for West District. Should be fluent in english. Have basic knowledge in journalism. Walk in interview:

Summit Times office
Church Road, Gangtok
03592-208698

URGENTLY REQUIRED:

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

PLOT FOR SALE:

Vacant plot measuring 0.38 Acres for sale at Amdo Golai, Deorali. Contact: 09717191985/097474651223

INTERESTED TO BECOME A YOGA TEACHER?

CRITERIA – Academic qualification of minimum higher secondary pass

Complete yoga syllabus will be provided by SYVC Gangtok absolutely free of cost. After one year of basic training and service (karma yoga)/ volunteering in the Centre, the candidate would be sent for Yoga Teacher Training Course at Shivananda Yoga Ashram. After TTC, the candidate would be appointed on part time basis at the Yoga Centre in Gangtok. College students can also apply. If required, food and accommodation would be provided.

Interested candidates may contact

: Deepa Yoga Centre at

Mob: +91 7432043719/ +91 8170953919.

LAND FOR SALE

A vacant plot measuring 0.38 Ha. (16552.80 sq – ft) is for sale at Amdo Golai (above the main road), Gangtok. For more information please contact – 9717191985/9474651223.

Yangyang BAC organizes menstrual hygiene awareness



SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 15 MAY:

A daylong sensitization program on menstrual hygiene was organized by Yangyang BAC in association with ESS India on 13 and 14 May at Lingmoo Senior Secondary School and Yangyang Senior Secondary School respectively. Students from nearby

Junior High Schools and Secondary Schools also attended the sessions.

The program was addressed by the BDO, Kishore Thapa, AD, CB Dahal and the respective school principals. The team talked about menstrual hygiene and solid waste management while the BDO-Yangyang urged students to share

the knowledge received today with people of the village to help female members of society.

The main idea behind organizing the meeting was to create wider awareness and break the myths and taboos regarding menstruation along with informing the girls about environment-friendly alterna-

tives to the traditional sanitary pads.

The ESS members also shared tips on how to avoid various health issues that can occur due to continuous use of sanitary pads.

The awareness program was well received by the audience which included students of both genders and teachers.

HIGH COURT OF SIKKIM GANGTOK

No. 2523/JudL/HCS. Date: 14.5.19

WP(C) No.06 of 2019

M/s. Ramjilal Tarachand ...Petitioner

Versus.

Shri Nareesh Subba & Ors. ...Respondents.

NOTICE

To

Shri Thinlay Karma Peter Topden,
S/o Late Karma Topden,
R/o Martam House, Bhanu Path,
P. O. & P. S. Gangtok, East Sikkim.

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Given under my hand and the seal of the Court this 14th day of May, 2019.

By Order.

DEPUTY REGISTRAR (J)

Community Engagement

More needs to be done in response to Extend collaborations to reinforce quality governance

What is worse? A society that is ill-informed and at times intentionally ignorant, or one that is dismissive and disinterested? They are both bad, and what is worse for Sikkim is that both conditions exist at large in almost equal measure.

Sikkim has a continuing problem with substance abuse, suicides, even child labour and also, of late, of sexual abuse of minors. And yet, even as these stories make frequent headlines, one is yet to see any coherent societal engagement to address any of these issues. Yes, the government appears to be attempting interventions, but it is not rare to hear of people reading of drug busts and commenting that the right palms must not have been greased, or others subscribing to ill-informed and shallow explanations for the suicides or crimes or unemployment. What should worry Sikkim is that in the absence of civil society interventions to address social challenges, one is left with the government stepping in and experimenting with possible solutions. Such interventions, while welcome in the absence of any other alternatives, are also woefully incomplete because they compromise the public participation quotient of effective governance and seed the beginnings of big-brother administration.

Take the now effectively in place ban on firecrackers through Diwali. Sikkim would have been counted among the most enlightened of societies if the ban had been enforced by children convincing elders not to blow up money on this excess. Unfortunately, several such efforts in the past years had failed until the cops stepped in and took to public address systems to warn of “strict action”. The fire-cracker ban was effective, but was the capitulation of the society towards its responsibility to come together and unanimously ban firecrackers voluntarily, a healthy development? Or for that matter the force-feeding of organic produce courtesy of the government banning non-organic imports.

What Sikkim should consciously remind itself is that democracy demands people’s involvement more often than the once-every-five years elections. An uninvolved people is not healthy for anyone, not the people and definitely not governance. Quality of governance, it is universally accepted, is reinforced by longstanding traditions of civic engagement. Voter turnout is only part of it, and other signs of civic engagement manifest in such indicators as newspaper readerships, (involved) membership in social organisations, sports clubs, school management committees, neighbourhood clubs etc. Such organisations exist in Sikkim, but most are staffed, at least at the executive levels, by government officers or nominees. For more people to be involved in these groups, they need to be made for genuinely representative, and dare we say, democratic. If that happens, they become hallmarks of a successful region. In fact, historical analyses suggest that these networks of organisational reciprocity and civic solidarity, far from being a result of socioeconomic and socio-cultural modernization and growth are a prerequisite for it.

Admittedly, the solutions are not simplistic and straightforward, and hence cannot be directed by law, but what they can, and should, receive is nurturing. Mechanisms through which civic engagement and social connectedness produce such results as better schools, faster economic development, lower crime and more effective governance are multiple and complex. Such networks of civic engagement facilitate coordination and communication, amplify representation/ concerns and allow dilemmas to be resolved through dialogue and timely interventions. These engagements also help resolve points of conflict because when social connectedness becomes instinctive, economic and political negotiation becomes embedded in diverse networks of social interactions. These are engagements in which an enlightened society becomes good at because it lays the foundations for a strong sense of belonging and provides the template for future situations and challenges. If these become too complicated organisations to form, then let’s just begin by celebrating rationality and from there alone several solutions and networks will be born.

Community engagement, when genuinely crafted, automatically leads to spontaneous involvement. And one is not referring only to substance abuse and suicides in this regard. Look at how consistently silent the people and their organisations have remained in Sikkim through its several challenges and travails. The only voices that engage are politically inspired and hence “vested”, and the lay citizens remain aloof because they have not cobbled together organisations which are not only not politically compromised, but also forceful and forthright. In this vacuum, issues are manufactured and forced on the people and genuine confusions remain unaddressed.



How intolerance can persist in democratic countries: the case of Indonesia

**JIMMY DANIEL BERLIANTO OLEY
& YUDI FAJAR M WAHYU**
theconversation.com

Is tolerance among different groups a prerequisite for democracy?

Indonesia’s case shows that it’s not. Democracy, a system of government based on elected representation, is thriving in the world’s most populous Muslim country. Democratically elected presidents have governed Southeast Asia’s largest economy since the fall of Soeharto’s authoritarian regime in 1998. The country has just carried out elections in April.

At the same time intolerance of minority groups is widespread.

The capital, Jakarta, and former capital, Yogyakarta, located about 500km southeast from Jakarta, are top of the list on the Indonesia Democracy Index. But they are also listed as the most intolerant cities, according to human rights advocacy group Setara Institute. Its latest report indicates that this is due to poor regulation and governance in response to intolerant practices in both cities.

Referring to these cases in Jakarta and Yogyakarta, we argue that democracy and tolerance are independent of each other.

Democracy can still perform in Indonesia despite intolerance of minority groups. To ensure that consensus as a prerequisite for a democratic society can be reached, the minority has no choice but to keep silent and succumb to the power of the majority.

DEMOCRATIC BUT INTOLERANT IN YOGYAKARTA AND JAKARTA

Last year, Indonesia’s Statistics Agency published a report showing the Indonesian Democracy Index improved in 2017, compared to 2016. The index rates each province in Indonesia based on its civil liberties, political rights and democratic institutions.

Yogyakarta, the seat of the Javanese monarch Hamengkubuwono X, has always secured top spot in the index in the past few years.

However, Yogyakarta’s tolerance index was the sixth-lowest compared to 93 other cities in 2017.

The Centre for Religious and Cross-cultural Studies identified around 66 violent conflicts in Yogyakarta between 2011 and 2016. In the latest case this year, 11

wooden crosses at a Christian cemetery in Yogyakarta were destroyed. A village in Yogyakarta also recently barred a non-Muslim from living in their village.

A similar pattern can be found in Jakarta.

The capital was rated Indonesia’s most democratic city for three years: 2014, 2015 and 2017.

In 2016, Jakarta lost that title due to a combination of acts of communal violence by sections of society and a poor response from the local administration in handling these violent cases. Jakarta ranked 24th out of 34 provinces in 2016.

However, similar to Yogyakarta, Jakarta scored the lowest in the tolerance index in 2017.

Jakarta gained its status as an intolerant city after intolerant practices by Muslim conservatives marred its gubernatorial election in 2017. In the end, the conservative groups ousted Christian-Chinese incumbent Basuki “Ahok” Tjahaja Purnama.

BETWEEN DEMOCRACY AND TOLERANCE

There are at least two conditions to have a democratic society. First, it must ensure equality for all actors to participate in decision-making processes.

Second, when conflicts arise, society can manage them within defined and universally accepted boundaries.

For example, imagine that you are attending a public forum or discussion to choose a leader for your community. The organiser announces that each one of you has the same right to participate and you are delighted to hear that. As the debates continue between different sides defending their arguments, you realise that things may become uncontrolled as no one wants to compromise and no one wants to lose.

Hours later, everybody is tired, and someone finally says: “Let’s remember that each one of us should have the same right to participate, therefore, let’s ask each one of us who is the better leader, then the one who has the most support wins.”

There you have the ideal condition that most democracies imagine today: participation and manageable conflict.

Let’s turn to tolerance. We define tolerance as putting up with those we disagree with, dislike, or who are different from us, without coercion. Don’t forget that the act of tolerance means that one side (the one that tolerates) accepts the other side (the one that is tolerated) so it masks unbalanced power relations.

Therefore, in the context of plural communities, tolerance from both sides is needed.

From the conceptual exercise, we can argue that tolerance is highly relevant in democracies because disagreements, dislikes and differences are inevitable in plural communities.

INTOLERANT PRACTICES IN THE DEMOCRATIC SPHERE

It is also important to note that consensus in a democratic society can be reached through domination by the majority that silences the minority.

Elizabeth Noelle-Neumann, a leading German researcher on public opinion, calls the process a “spiral of silence”.

From the “spiral of silence framework”, we can see how an idea takes hold in society.

We can see how this concept works through analysing how the rejection of Ahok, which was based on racial and religious grounds, could be accepted.

Ahok’s rejection was made possible through a mainstreaming of Islamic values via popular culture and daily lives. This process is called “normalisation”.

As a result of this normalisation, it is difficult to counter the intolerant narratives without being accused of being anti-Islam. Living in a Muslim-majority country, people fear the anti-Islam label.

A similar thing also happens in Yogyakarta. The minority tends to accept mistreatment by the majority as they feel the power of the majority is so big that it doesn’t leave any option for the minority but to succumb. They also feel that their fight against intolerant practices will be useless as those in authority and legal enforcers tend to defend the majority.

Both processes of mainstreaming and normalisation are arguably part of efforts to push ideas belonging to the majority to dominate the public sphere, while at the same time suppressing opposing ideas belonging to minority groups.

Democracy in Indonesia, then, seems to allow the majority to rule over the minority. What is happening in Jakarta and Yogyakarta shows that consensus in a democratic setting can be continuously achieved, but it will not always be a tolerant one.

[Jimmy Daniel Berlianto Oley is Junior Researcher, SMERU Research Institute; Yudi Fajar M Wahyu is Senior Researcher, SMERU Research Institute]

How to end Afghanistan war as longest conflict moves towards fragile peace

ALEXANDER GILLESPIE
theconversation.com

The longest-running war appears to be coming to an end.

The Taliban has been running an armed rebellion in Afghanistan since being dislodged from power in a US-led invasion following September 11 2001. Recent high-level negotiations between the two sides in the 18-year war did not produce a breakthrough, but “significant progress”, leading to “improved” conditions for peace.

The fact that the primary belligerents, the Taliban and the United States, are talking directly is essential. Any peaceful pathway going forwards without their direct involvement is impossible. But to end the killing, all sides are going to have to give up something, to achieve their greater goals.

LONGEST-RUNNING CONFLICT

Although the losses in the Afghanistan war are not as bad as either the American war in Vietnam (just over 58,000 military casualties and between 1 and 3 million civilians or enemy) or the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan (maybe 1 million civilians, 90,000 Mujahideen, 18,000 Afghan troops and 14,500 Soviet soldiers), the record in Afghanistan is still difficult reading. The American death toll is a little over 2,200, while the wider losses (civilians and enemy) are well over 100,000.

Reliable estimates suggest more than 45,000 Afghan military have been killed since 2014 alone. The annual civilian death toll continues to climb, with 3,804 deaths recorded in 2018. At the same time, the amount of territory that

rebel groups control (14.5%) or is contested (29.2%) or under government control (56.3%) is an unexpected result, given nearly two decades of combat.

The significance of talking to the Taliban directly cannot be overstated. When the Mujahideen were not directly involved in the Geneva Accords that ended the Soviet conflict in Afghanistan, the results were a disaster. No sooner had the Soviets left the country, the Mujahideen denounced the agreement (even though Pakistan had been negotiating on their behalf), saying they were not part of it. Their forces then took three years to overrun most of the country.

NEGOTIATED PEACE

The fact that it will be a negotiated end to the conflict, as opposed to an imposed and unconditional one, is significant. Negotiated and conditional agreements are often cast as “peace with honour”, whereby the side that wants to exit the most prioritises what it is willing to give away while still appearing to be in control.

For example, with the end of the American involvement in the Vietnam war, the core of the Paris Peace Accords of early 1973, the primary goal of the North Vietnamese was the withdrawal of all US and allied forces from the region. The primary goal for Nixon was the return of 1,056 prisoners of war.

When the Geneva Accords ended the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan, the primary exchange was about an exit of Russian soldiers, in return for mutual commitments from the governments of Afghanistan and Pakistan not to interfere in each other’s country. In both instances, a swag of secondary consid-

erations formed part of the package.

In the case of Vietnam, there were supplementary provisions for a ceasefire that was to be monitored by independent countries and a National Council of Reconciliation and Concord to implement democracy and organise free elections in the south. In the case of the Geneva Accords, the return of Afghan refugees was an important consideration, as were mutual commitments “to prevent any assistance to ... or tolerance of terrorist groups, saboteurs or subversive agents against the other High Contracting Party”.

MAIN CONSIDERATIONS

In the current deliberations, the most important thing the Taliban want is the exit of all foreign troops from Afghanistan. This is possible, with both the Paris and Geneva accords providing precedents. The most important thing the Americans want is not only an exit of their troops, but a commitment that the Taliban will not, again, host any groups involved in terrorist activities against the US.

This demand is consistent with the original American war aims and the Geneva precedent is useful. The harder part will be working out the assurances that such promises are kept.

Where negotiations will get much more difficult is with the plethora of secondary considerations. In the context of Afghanistan, this will cover issues such as direct dialogue with the Afghan government and a comprehensive ceasefire. This is easier said than done as it will require the Taliban to accept the legitimacy of the Afghan political system (and whichever government

is in power) and the democracy that placed them in power.

The flip side of this, both nationally and internationally, is that the Taliban will have to lose their “terrorist” classification, which the UN Security Council has applied consistently since the end of the 20th century. This designation has placed strong military, financial and diplomatic restrictions on the Taliban, which made them outlaws in the eyes of the international community. This will have to be reversed, as the declared terrorists of yesterday become the legitimate powerbrokers of tomorrow.

The agenda should cover commitments to the most basic human rights (women’s rights in particular), what to do about almost 2.5 million refugees from Afghanistan, and how to deal with the fact that Afghanistan is now the world’s leading (and rapidly expanding) producer of illegal opium.

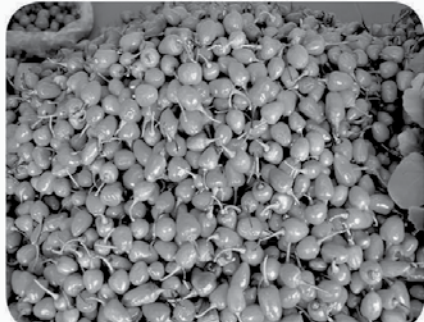
The opposing sides need to work out how to ensure a comprehensive ceasefire, as well as its links to ongoing economic, diplomatic and military support for any future governing regime in Kabul, especially if the ceasefire is breached.

When the Americans exited Vietnam, they promised their allies in South Vietnam that American support in all other avenues would continue. But once the Americans returned home and their country became engrossed in other matters such as Watergate, the promises were forgotten. Saigon fell, a few years later, to the very enemy they had negotiated a peace treaty with.

[the writer is Professor of Law, University of Waikato]



Sikkim takes the lead in multi-faceted development and progress in the country



Department of Information & Public Relations
Government of Sikkim

AIFF appoints Igor Stimac as Indian football team coach

NEW DELHI, MAY 15 (PTI): Croatian World Cupper Igor Stimac was Wednesday appointed head coach of the Indian football team for a two-year term.

The national team has been without a coach since the departure of Stephen Constantine in January, following the creditable show at the AFC Asian Cup.

The appointment was made by the AIFF's executive committee.

The 51-year-old Stimac, who was part of Croatia's 1998 World Cup squad that finished third in France, comes with an experience of over 18 years in coaching, structuring, and developing football and players back home, and internationally.

As a coach, Stimac's major achievement was guiding Croatia to qualify for the 2014 FIFA World Cup in Brazil. During his tenure as the national coach of Croatia, he handed debuts to the



likes of Mateo Kovacic, Ante Rebic, Alen Halilovic, and Ivan Perisic, amongst others.

He also played a pivotal role in developing the likes of Dario Srna, Daniel Subasic, Ivan Strinic, Kovacic, Perisic, and other players. The centre-back has made 53 appearances for the national team.

His last assignment was with Al-Shahania Club in Qatar. As a play-

er, he was part the of the Croatia team that finished third in the 1998 World Cup, and a member of the national squad which qualified for the quarterfinals of the UEFA European Championship 1996 (Euro) in England.

Besides, he was also a part of the Yugoslavia U-19 national team which won the FIFA U-20 World Cup in 1987.

Welcoming Stimac to Indian football, AIFF

president Praful Patel said, "Igor is the right candidate to coach the Blue Tigers. I welcome him on board. Indian football is going through a transition, and I am confident his vast experience will guide us to higher echelons."

General secretary Kushal Das added, "Indian football would benefit immensely under Igor Stimac. "His credentials as a coach and experi-

ence as a player are sure to add immense value to the players, and the Indian football ecosystem. The momentum gained needs to be sustained."

Technical committee head Shyam Thapa, a former India international, said, "Mr. Stimac's recommendation was unanimous."

"All the members of the technical committee including the AIFF technical director Mr. Isac Doru were immensely impressed, and convinced about him being best suited for the job. He is a World Cupper, and has guided Croatia to World Cup as a coach. Who else could have been a better candidate?" he quipped.

"He also impressed us with his extensive research on Indian football."

Stimac's first assignment will be the Kings Cup in Buriram, Thailand where the Blue Tigers play Curacao in their first match on June 5.

I have taken the decision to leave Atletico: Griezmann

MADRID, MAY 15 (AFP): French striker Antoine Griezmann has told Atletico Madrid he will leave them in the close season, the Spanish club said on Twitter.

The 28-year-old Griezmann has a contract until 2023 with Atletico, but has a buy out clause of 120 million euros (USD 134 million) and has been the target of several approaches from La Liga rivals Barcelona.

"Antoine Griezmann has told the club he will not continue as a Rojiblanco (red and white, the club's colours) next season," the club said on Tuesday.

Within a few moments the player then posted a video explaining himself.

"After speaking with Cholo (club coach Diego Simeone), then with Miguel Angel and the people in the hierarchy of the club I wanted to speak with you, the fans, who have always



given me a lot of love," said Griezmann, wearing a plain black t-shirt in front of a simple white background behind him.

"I wanted to tell you I have taken the decision to leave," said the French 2018 World Cup winner.

"I have had five wonderful seasons here and you will always be in my heart," said the affable forward known for doing dances from the video game Fortnite, when celebrating his goals.

"The truth is it has been difficult to take this route but it is what I feel I need and I would like to thank all of you for the love you have shown me

during these five years."

With 133 goals in 252 games at Atletico the attacker has been ever-present and has rarely been unfit or injured.

He was a Champions League runner up in 2016, after France lost in the final to Portugal at the European Championships and was a huge presence as Les Bleus romped to a memorable World Cup win at Russia 2018 after which he also

Guardiola beats Klopp to manager of the year award

LONDON, MAY 15 (AFP): Manchester City boss Pep Guardiola edged out Jurgen Klopp to a trophy for the second time in three days as the Catalan claimed the League Managers' Association manager of the year. Guardiola's City retained the Premier League title on Sunday, beating Klopp's Liverpool by a single point at the end of a thrilling title race.

Having also won the League Cup earlier in the

campaign, Guardiola's side could complete a first ever domestic treble in English football when they face Watford in the FA Cup final at Wembley on Saturday.

Guardiola topped the vote ahead of Jurgen Klopp, Tottenham manager Mauricio Pochettino, who has led Spurs to their first ever Champions League final, and Nuno Espirito Santo of Wolves, who finished seventh in their first season back in the top flight.

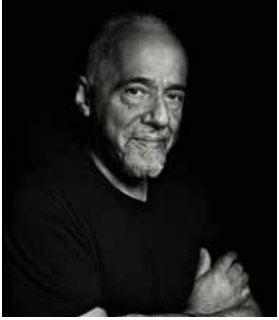
My parents did not encourage me to become a writer: Coelho

NEW DELHI, MAY 15 (PTI): Celebrated author Paulo Coelho says his parents did not encourage him to become a writer as they thought that he would starve to death.

As a young boy, when he told his mother about his aim in life, she referred to his father saying as an engineer, he is a logical and a reasonable man. In a tweet on Monday, Coelho recalled, It took me 40 years to write my first book. When I was a child, I was not encouraged to follow the career of a writer because my parents thought that I was going to starve to death. Born in 1947, Coelho published his first book Hell Archives in 1982 which did not do well. His first novel was The Pilgrim-age (1987). He came out with his magnum opus The Alchemist in 1988.

Coelho had also mentioned about his youth in a post on his blog a year ago. When I was young, my parents sent me to a mental institution three times (1966, 1967 and, 1968). The reasons in my medical files are banal. It was said that I was isolated, hostile and miserable at school. I was not crazy but I was rather just a 17-year-old who really wanted to become a writer, he wrote.

Because no one understood this, I was locked up for months and fed with tranquilisers. The therapy merely consisted of giving me elec-



troshocks. I promised to myself that one day I would write about this experience, so young people will understand that we have to fight for our own dreams from a very early stage of our lives, he recalled.

When in 1998, Coelho released his book Veronika Decides to Die, a book that was a metaphor of his experience in the lunatic asylum, the press started asking him if he forgave his parents. In fact, I did not need to forgive them, because I never blamed them for what happened. From their own point-of-view, they were trying to help me to get the discipline necessary to accomplish my deeds as an adult, and to forget the dreams of a teenager, he wrote in the blog.

Coelho has sold more than 150 million books worldwide. His work is published in 80 languages and he is one of the most translated authors in the world. He also has an enormous digital media presence.

The Alchemist has been cited as an inspiration by people as diverse as Malala Yousafzai and Pharrell Williams.

India's World Cup squad is one quality pacer short, says Gambhir

MUMBAI, MAY 15 (PTI): Cricketer-turned-politician Gautam Gambhir feels the Indian World Cup squad is "one quality fast bowler" short. Two-time winners India begin their campaign with a big-ticket match against South Africa on June 5 in Southampton.

"I feel Indian team lacks one more quality fast bowler: (Jasprit) Bumrah, (Mohammed) Shami and Bhuvni (Bhuvneshwar Kumar) need more support. You may argue that India has two fast bowling all-rounders in Hardik (Pandya) and Vijay Shankar but I am not convinced. In the end it boils down to getting the team combination right and sticking to it," Gambhir said. The former India World Cup winner said so



while giving the keynote address at the CEAT Cricket Rating (CCR) International awards 2019 here. Gambhir is contesting the Lok Sabha elections from the East Delhi constituency from a BJP ticket.

On the ICC showpiece, the left-handed batsman said, "This will be a well contested tournament as all the teams play each other. This format will give us the real world champion and I think ICC should

stick to this format for all future World Cups." Talking about the teams to watch out for in the tournament, Gambhir picked Australia, England and New Zealand along with India.

"Besides India I will be keenly watching Australia as they are a side to beat. They have most well rounded bowling attack in the competition. I will also be watching New Zealand and hosts England.

Over 3,000 vapers petition to PM to legalise e-cigarettes

NEW DELHI, MAY 15 (PTI): Amid a raging debate over banning of Electronic Nicotine Delivery Systems (ENDS) in the country, including e-cigarettes and flavoured hookah, more than 3,000 users of these devices have written to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, requesting him to legalise them.

In their petition, they claimed their health has improved significantly after they switched to vaping from smoking conventional cigarettes.

"I am 51 and have successfully quit a 20-year habit of smoking over 40 cigarettes a day with the help of vaping, also known as e-cigarettes. I have regained stamina, my heart condition is better and there is no smoker's cough. There are thousands like me whose lives have been positively impacted," said Jagannath Sarangapani, a professional from Hyderabad.

Sarangapani, who initiated the petition to counter the misinformation surrounding ENDS, said smoking is among the toughest habits to give up, with almost every smoker trying to quit but failing and stressed that they need more options to wean away from deadly cigarettes and ENDS are now the most effective means of doing so.

"A ban will force me back into smoking," he added.

In August last year, the Union Health Ministry issued an advisory to all states and UTs to stop manufacture, sale and import of ENDS after the Delhi High Court took strong exception to the Centre's delay in coming up with appropriate measures to tackle the "new emerging threat" of e-cigarettes.

The advisory was subsequently challenged in Delhi High Court which ruled it to be non-binding on states and government bodies.

However, 13 states in India Punjab, Karnataka, Kerala, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Jammu & Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra, Puducherry, Jharkhand and Mizoram have already banned use and sale of e-cigarettes, Vape and E-Hookah.

Professor Rajesh Sharan from North-Eastern Hill University in Shillong, who recently published a meta-analysis of 229 studies on ENDS, said, "Within the limits of available information, our study indicates that these devices pose minimal health and safety concerns when compared to conventional cigarettes.

"Our study establishes that new generation ENDS may serve as an efficient means of meeting the nicotine demand of a person addicted to smoking, without the grave health

consequences of conventional cigarettes. Rational policies are required to extend the benefits of ENDS to smokers, while preventing their misuse, especially by adolescents and non-smokers."

A major year-long clinical trial into e-cigarette use published in peer-reviewed New England Journal of Medicine in January found that ENDS are twice as effective as traditional nicotine replacement therapies (NRTs) such as gums and patches in helping smokers quit.

According to market research agency Euromonitor, over 40 million smokers across the world have switched to ENDS in less than a decade.

Dr Rohan Sequeira, cardio-metabolic physician at Jaslok Hospital in Mumbai, said authorities should understand vaping is much less harmful than smoking. A number of countries have done research and found the toxicological profile to contain significantly lower harmful substances than in cigarette smoke.

"The so-called dangers of ENDS are grossly exaggerated and misrepresented. E-cigarettes should be embraced as another effective NRT and should be legalised and regulated instead of imposing a ban," Sequeira said.

Harm reduction advocate

and director of Association of Vapers India Samrat Chowdhery said the Indian government is pushing for a ban on vaping while the world's 65 most advanced nations such as the US, 28 EU countries including the UK, along with Canada and New Zealand have embraced e-cigarettes.

A ban will deprive our country's 12 crore smokers of an effective means to reduce tobacco harm while ensuring continued revenue for the tobacco industry by killing off competition to cigarettes that cause nearly 10 lakh annual deaths in India.

"The government should put the lives of people before industry profits," Chowdhery said.

"Teen uptake is a problem across risk behaviours, from alcohol use to underage driving, and most significantly with smoking as nine out of 10 current smokers began when they were minors. This issue needs to be tackled through sound regulation, but it should not be as an excuse to deny millions of citizens a pathway to avoid tobacco-related mortality and morbidity," he stated.

The government action against e-cigarettes has also faced resistance from some NGOs. The Information Technology ministry in January

proposed to ban information related to ENDS on online platforms. Over 30 civil society and industry organisations, including Amnesty, Internet Freedom Foundation, FICCI and COAI, opposed the amendment stating the ban would be arbitrary, unjustified and in violation of constitutional laws.

However, a group of doctors, students and civil society organisations urged the Prime Minister to enforce a ban on ENDS before it becomes an "epidemic in India", especially among the youth.

A sub-committee group constituted by the ministry, on health effects of ENDS, considered 251 studies/reports and concluded that there is evidence to prove that ENDS and its variants, are harmful to users.

This committee of doctors from AIIMS, NCDIR and public health experts have concluded that ENDS are as harmful as any another tobacco product in terms of causing premature deaths and morbidity.

According to the committee, there is no evidence to show that they are less harmful, safe and helpful towards cessation efforts. The medical communities across the globe have also questioned the acceptance of ENDS as a harm reduction or tobacco cessation strategy.

Saudi Arabia says its oil pipeline was hit by drones



DUBAI, MAY 15 (AP): An oil pipeline that runs across Saudi Arabia was hit Tuesday by drones, the Saudi energy minister said, as regional tensions flared just days after what the kingdom called an attack on two of its oil tankers near the Persian Gulf.

While both US President Donald Trump and Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei said they were not planning for conflict, the volatility was felt in oil markets with benchmark Brent crude trading over USD 71 a barrel, up more than USD 1 on the day.

The pipeline that runs from the kingdom's oil-rich Eastern Province to a Red Sea port was shut down, but Saudi Energy Minister Khalid al-Falih Al-Falih vowed that the production and export of Saudi oil would not be interrupted.

The Houthis, who are at war with Saudi Arabia, said earlier Tuesday they launched seven drones targeting vital Saudi installations, without elaborating. They later claimed responsibility for the pipeline attack in comments broadcast by Houthi military spokesman Brig. Gen. Yahya Sari.

In a statement carried by the state-run Saudi Press Agency, al-Falih called the pipeline attack

"cowardly," saying recent acts of sabotage against the kingdom were targeting not only Saudi Arabia but also the safety of the world's energy supply and global economy.

The attacks demonstrated the increased risks in a region vital to global energy supplies amid heightened tensions following the Trump administration's withdrawal from the 2015 nuclear deal between Iran and world powers, and the subsequent re-imposition of US sanctions to cripple the Iranian economy.

Iran has since said it would begin enriching uranium at higher levels by July 7 if world powers failed to negotiate new terms for the deal.

The Saudis did not immediately assign blame for the drone assaults, which targeted two oil pumping stations west of the capital supplying the pipeline that runs from the east of Saudi Arabia to the Yanbu Port on its western coast.

Still, al-Falih in his statement named Yemeni rebel Houthis as a group that must be internationally confronted and accused them of being backed by Iran, Saudi Arabia's regional rival.

Saudi Arabia has been at war with the Houthis and their allies in Yemen

since March 2015, targeting the Iranian-allied rebels with near daily airstrikes.

"This is a message to Saudi Arabia: Stop your aggression," Houthi spokesman Mohammed Abdel-Salam told The Associated Press.

"Our goal is to respond to the crimes they are committing everyday against the Yemeni people."

Saudi Aramco, the government-controlled oil company, said that as a precaution, it temporarily shut down the East-West Pipeline and contained a fire, which caused minor damage to one pumping station.

It added that Saudi Aramco's oil and gas supplies were not affected.

Saudi Arabia said the two petroleum pumping stations that were struck by drones are located in the greater region of Riyadh, home to the landlocked capital.

The stations, targeted around the same time early Tuesday, are located in al-Duadmi and Afif, about 200 kilometers (125 miles) west and 400 kilometers (250 miles) west of Riyadh city, respectively.

Saudi Arabia built its pipeline in the 1980s amid fears that the Iran-Iraq war would cut off shipping through the

Strait of Hormuz.

The 1,200-kilometer (746-mile) pipeline is actually two pipes that have a total capacity of 4.8 million barrels of crude oil a day, according to the U.S. Energy Information Administration.

The two oil pumping stations are over 800 kilometers (500 miles) from Yemen's northern border with the kingdom. The drone strikes reflect how the Houthis have tried to expand their capabilities during the four-year war.

The rebels have targeted Riyadh with missiles and used drones to disrupt air traffic at Saudi airports near the Yemen border.

Iran has been accused by the US and the UN of supplying ballistic missile technology and arms to the Houthis, which Tehran denies.

In Washington, Trump told reporters he would "absolutely" be willing to send troops to the Middle East, but that he's not planned for that and hopefully won't have to plan for that.

While Trump dismissed a report in The New York Times that the White House is reviewing military plans against Iran that could result in sending 120,000 US troops to the Middle East if Iran attacks American

forces or steps up work on nuclear weapons, he said if the US was going to get into a military conflict with Iran, "we'd send a hell of a lot more" troops.

Khamenei, Iran's supreme leader who has final say on all state matters, was quoted by state TV as telling senior officials that his country won't negotiate with the United States, calling such talks "poison."

But he also said, "Neither we, nor them is seeking war. They know that it is not to their benefit." At a Tuesday evening gathering, he reportedly added: "This is not a military confrontation, because no war is going to happen."

Washington recently deployed an aircraft carrier, the USS Abraham Lincoln, and B-52 bombers to the Persian Gulf to counter alleged, still-unspecified threats from Tehran.

The US has recently warned ships that "Iran or its proxies" could be targeting maritime traffic in the region.

Meanwhile, the details around alleged acts of sabotage to four oil tankers, including two belonging to Saudi Arabia, off the coast of the UAE's port of Fujairah remain unclear.

Satellite images obtained Tuesday by the AP showed no visible damage to the vessels, and Gulf officials have refused to say who they suspected was responsible. The MT Andrea Victory, one of the alleged targets, sustained a hole in its hull just above its waterline from "an unknown object," its owner Thome Ship Management said in a statement.

Images of the Norwegian ship, which the company said was "not in any danger of sinking," showed damage similar to what the firm described.

India had world's highest child mortality rate in 2015: Lancet study



WASHINGTON, MAY 15 (PTI): India had more deaths among children under five than any other country in 2015, with large disparities in the child mortality rate between richer and poorer states, a Lancet study has found.

The researchers at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health in the US analysed state-level Indian data on the causes of death among children under five for the years 2000-2015.

They found that India made great progress during the period, reducing annual mortality among children under five from 2.5 million in 2000 to 1.2 million in 2015 -- which was still the highest in the world.

However, among India's states, great disparities remained: The highest mortality rate in Assam was more than seven times that in Goa.

Although most under-five deaths were due to preterm complications, preventable infectious diseases featured prominently as causes of death in higher-mortality states.

"India can accelerate its reduction of under-five mortality rates by scaling up vaccine coverage and improving childbirth and neonatal care, especially in states where mortality rates remain high," said Li Liu, PhD, assistant professor at The Bloomberg School.

Using data sources from Indian government health surveys, the team assessed total mortality, mortality rates and causes of mortality for children under five in 25 states.

United Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDG) set in the year 2000 was to reduce the under-five mortality rate in 2015 to one-third of the 1990 figure.

For India that would have meant reducing the under-five mortality rate to 39 deaths per 1,000 live births.

The analysis showed, however, that despite great progress since 1990 -- and even since 2000 when the under-five mortality rate was 90.5 deaths per 1,000 live births -- India in 2015 was still well above the MDG target, at 47.8 deaths per 1,000 live births.

Most (57.9 per cent) of deaths among Indian children under five in 2015 occurred in the first four weeks of life -- the neonatal period.

Countrywide, the leading cause of death for children under five was preterm birth complications, which accounted for 27.5 per cent of the mortality total.

However, second on the list for cause-of-death was pneumonia (15.9 per cent of deaths), and infectious illnesses were more often among the top causes in the poorer,

high-mortality states.

"Noncommunicable diseases such as preterm birth complications and congenital abnormalities were usually the leading causes in states with low under-five mortality," Liu said.

Although progress in reducing the under-five mortality rate has been occurring throughout India, the period from 2000 to 2015 saw widening disparities among richer and poorer states -- ranging from Goa's 9.7 under-five deaths per 1,000 live births to Assam's 73.1.

Liu used as a basic indicator of overall disparity the ratio of the highest regional mortality rate (Northeast region) vs the lowest (South region), and found that that ratio increased from 1.4 in 2000 to 2.1 in 2015.

To accelerate India's progress against child mortality, the team recommends more extensive use of childhood vaccines, particularly against pneumonia- and meningitis-causing Streptococcus and H influenzae bacteria.

They also advocate -- especially for higher-mortality regions -- a scaling up of standard care strategies for newborns, including "kangaroo care" in which the baby rests against the mother's skin, thermal care to reduce hypothermia and early initiation of breastfeeding.

Hafiz Saeed's brother-in-law arrested in Pakistan

BY M ZULQERNAIN

LAHORE, MAY 15 (PTI): Outlawed Jamaat-ud-Dawa's top leader and Mumbai attack mastermind Hafiz Saeed's brother-in-law Hafiz Abdur Rehman Makki has been arrested for hate speech and criticising the Pakistan government, police said on Wednesday.

Makki, head of JuD's political and international affairs wing and in-charge of its charity Falah-e-Insaniat Foundation (FIF), was arrested during a government crackdown against the outlawed organisations.

Punjab police spokesperson Nabila Ghazanfar confirmed Makki's arrest. She, however, did not explain the charges under which he was arrested.

Sources said Makki has been arrested for making a hate speech in Gujranwala city, some 80-km from Lahore.

The sources also said his arrest should be seen in connection with the government's steps to comply with the requirement of the Financial Ac-

tion Task Force (FATF).

The US Department of the Treasury has designated Saeed as a Specially Designated Global Terrorist, and the US, since 2012, has offered a USD 10 million reward for information that brings him to justice.

Saeed is keeping a low profile and currently living at his Lahore residence under high security. For the first time in two decades, Saeed was not allowed to enter and deliver weekly sermon at JuD headquarters in Lahore since early this March. The JuD and its sister organization Falah-i-Insaniat (FIF) leadership has already gone underground in the wake of the government's action against the proscribed organizations.

In February, Paris-based international terror financing watchdog FATF decided to continue the 'Grey' listing of Pakistan for its failure to stop funding of terrorist groups such as the Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM), the Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) and the JuD.

Iran's supreme leader makes uranium enrichment threat

DUBAI, MAY 15 (AP): Iran's supreme leader issued a veiled threat in the same speech in which he stated that "no one is seeking war," saying it wouldn't be difficult for the Islamic Republic to enrich uranium to weapons-grade levels amid rising tensions with the US, state media reported Wednesday.

Ayatollah Ali Khamenei's comments late Tuesday came after Yemen's Houthi rebels launched a coordinated drone attack on a critical oil pipeline in Saudi Arabia. A satellite image obtained by The Associated Press shows one of the two pumping stations attacked by the drones apparently intact.

The drone assault is just the latest incident in the Mideast to shake global energy markets, as authorities allege oil tankers anchored off the coast of the United Arab Emirates were targeted by sabotage. Benchmark Brent crude prices remained around 71 a barrel in early trading Wednesday.

Meanwhile, the US is deploying an aircraft carrier strike group and B-52 bombers into the region in response to a still-unspecified threat from Iran, further ramping up tensions a year after President Donald Trump withdrew America from Tehran's nuclear deal with world powers.

Speaking Tuesday night in Tehran at an iftar, the traditional dinner Muslims have when breaking their daylight fast during the holy month of Ramadan, Khamenei's reported comments first focused on him downplaying the chances of a wider

conflict in the Mideast with America.

He reportedly told senior officials that his country won't negotiate with

they could reach 20% enrichment within four days. Though Iran maintains its nuclear program is for



the United States, calling such talks "poison." But he also said, "Neither we, nor them is seeking war. They know that it is not to their benefit." In Wednesday's edition, the state-run IRAN newspaper carried his comments on the nuclear program, his first since Iran announced it would begin backing away from the accord itself.

Tehran is threatening to resume higher enrichment in 60 days if no new nuclear deal is in place, beyond the 3.67 per cent permitted by the current deal between Tehran and world powers. Iranian officials have said that

peaceful purposes, scientists say the time needed to reach the 90 per cent threshold for weapons-grade uranium is halved once uranium is enriched to around 20 per cent.

"Achieving 20 per cent enrichment is the most difficult part," Khamenei said, according to the newspaper. "The next steps are easier than this step." It was a telling remark from the supreme leader. Iran is not known to have enriched beyond 20 per cent previously and it's unclear how far Tehran is willing to go in this process.

Khamene spoke just after Yemen's Houthi rebels, who are at war with

Saudi Arabia and are believed by the West to receive weapons from Iran, said earlier Tuesday that they launched seven drones targeting vital Saudi installations. That included two pumping stations along its critical East-West Pipeline, which can carry nearly 5 million barrels of crude a day to the Red Sea.

Saudi Aramco, the government-controlled oil company, said that as a precaution, it temporarily shut down the pipeline and contained a fire, which caused minor damage to one pumping station. It added that Saudi Aramco's oil and gas supplies were not affected.

An image from San Francisco-based Planet Labs Inc. that the AP examined on Wednesday shows Saudi Aramco's Pumping Station No. 8 outside of the town of al-Duadmi, 330 kilometers west of the kingdom's capital, Riyadh.

The photo, taken Tuesday after the attack, shows two black marks near where the East-West Pipeline passes by the facility. Those marks weren't there in images taken Monday. The facility otherwise appeared intact, corroborating in part Saudi Arabia's earlier comments.

Details around alleged acts of sabotage to four oil tankers, including two belonging to Saudi Arabia, off the coast of the UAE's port of Fujairah remain unclear. Satellite images obtained Tuesday by the AP from Colorado-based Maxar Technologies showed no visible damage to the vessels, and Gulf officials have refused to say who they suspected was responsible.



THE ONE! The John Wick actor, Keanu Reeves shows off some Matrix moves as he is honored with a handprint ceremony at the Chinese Theatre in Hollywood.

I am not going to get into politics: George Clooney

London, May 15 (PTI): George Clooney has ruled himself out of the 2020 US presidential race, saying he does not have the appropriate "skill" for politics.

The actor-activist's frequent and public criticism of US President Donald Trump ever since he assumed the post in 2016 had led people to believe he could run for office in the 2020 elections.

However, the 58-year-old star said politics does not seem to be a logical place for him. "I am not going to get into politics. It doesn't seem like a very logical place for me to be able to apply what skills I have. I don't have to make compromise for the things that I stand for and the things I believe in like politicians do. So it is not something that interests me," Clooney said.

According to FemaleFirst, he was speaking at the "Catch 22" press conference in Rome on Tuesday. He has starred

in, co-directed and produced the Hulu series.

Clooney said he is "nervous" about people rotating towards "authoritarianism" in present times.

"It is a very nervous time



around the world. People sliding towards authoritarianism, it is something that is nerve-wrecking and that we should constantly monitor. The press do a very good job with that. I happen to be an optimist and I think that things turn around and it will hopefully head that way in the next election cycle."

M Night Shyamalan's next to have 'sci-fi bent'

LOS ANGELES, MAY 15 (PTI): M Night Shyamalan has started working on his next and the director says the feature film will have an element of science fiction.

The filmmaker made the announcement on Tuesday on Twitter.

"Outlining new film... Has a little fun sci-fi bent. Feels so good to begin a new story," wrote Shyamalan.

The director's latest film "Glass" was universally

panned by critics upon its debut in theatres in January, but the film went to rake in over USD 240 million worldwide.

Shyamalan said the criticism of the film made him cry hard. "Glass", featured Bruce Willis, James McAvoy and Samuel L Jackson, was a sequel to the filmmaker's "Unbreakable" and "Split".

Shyamalan is working on Apple series "Servant". He is also developing a feature film, titled "Labour of Love".

India moots tax breaks, refunds for foreign film units

BY SAIBAL CHATTERJEE

CANNES, MAY 15 (PTI): India is working towards making it easier for foreign film units to shoot in the country not only by overhauling clearance-granting mechanisms, but also by providing incentives like tax refunds and subsidies to international movie projects.

This was revealed by Amit Khare, the information and broadcasting secretary, during the opening function of the India Pavilion at the 72nd Cannes Film Festival.

"We are in the process of talking to film industry players here, especially those based in France, to take this new initiative forward," Khare said.

"The Indian government is keen to do whatever it takes to make it more attractive for foreign producers to film in India."

He added: "What is most encouraging is that many state governments are coming forward to offer their locations for foreign film shoots. They have realised that there is a close connection between cinema, tourism and the economy."

The Marche du Film (Cannes Film Market) head Jerome Paillard, who also addressed the opening session in the India Pavilion, said: "We hope to have enhanced collaborations with India. If we can contribute to expanding the partnership between the two countries in any manner, it will be important for us."

Discussions are on for various India-France co-productions, he added.

The opening day in the Pavilion was dedicated to the promotion of the 50th edition of the International Film Festival of India (IFFI), scheduled from November 20 to 28 this year.

A poster of the upcoming festival was launched along with the latest edition of the India Film Guide, a handbook that spells out the facilities that are available in India as a film location.

Khare referred in particular to the difference that the Film Facilitation Office, which was set up a few years ago, has made to streamlining clearances for foreign film units.

"A film crew does not have to seek separate permissions anymore to shoot in a heritage building, on a railway property or in a forest area. Single-window clearance is now an established reality."

"We now also want to incentivise foreign film units by exploring the possibility of refunding taxes and granting subsidies to them when they shoot in India," Khare said.

The inauguration of the India Pavilion was attended, among others, by Central Board of Film Certification (CBFC) chairman Prasoon Joshi, the joint secretary of the information and broadcasting ministry Ashok Kumar Parmar and veteran film producer Bobby Bedi, who moderated the session.

Cate Blanchett, Yvonne Strahovski to star in 'Stateless'

LOS ANGELES, MAY 15 (PTI):

Cate Blanchett is set to feature in Australian TV psychological drama "Stateless".

According to The Hollywood Reporter, the Oscar winner was earlier attached to make her full-fledged directorial debut with the show but will now serve as a co-creator along with Elise McCredie and Tony Ayres.

Now, Jocelyn Moorhouse and Emma Freeman are directing the series.

"The Handmaid's Tale" star Yvonne Strahovski is joining Blanchett in the show.

The limited run, six-episode series will have an all-female writing and directing team.

Based on the true story, the show follows a German Australian woman, Cornelia Rau, who in 2004 escaped a frightening cult only to be

trapped in a labyrinth of psychiatric and legal systems, landing her in Australia's notorious Baxter Immigration Detention Center.

escalating lack of faith in the political process and the deeply unsettling impact this has on individual lives."

The script is penned



Talking about "Stateless", Blanchett said, "Whilst this story centers on Australia, the dilemmas that it explores through four absorbing characters will resonate globally: the desire for personal freedom, the need for social stability, an

by McCredie and Belinda Chayko. McCredie is also serving as showrunner and executive producer. Liz Watts will executive produce too.

The series will also feature Jai Courtney, Asher Keddie, Fayssal Bazzi and Dominic West.

To attack Vidyasagar is to attack Bangla language: Mahesh Bhatt

MUMBAI, MAY 15 (PTI):

Veteran filmmaker Mahesh Bhatt on Wednesday condemned the desecration of the statue of Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar during a road show violence in Kolkata, saying the attack on the social reformer is akin to an attack on the Bengali language.

Clashes broke out between BJP supporters and student activists and those of the Left and Trinamool Congress Chatra Parishad (TMCP) during BJP President Amit Shah's road show on Tuesday.

Officials said trouble be-

gan after stones were pelted at Amit Shah's convoy as it passed through College Street and the arterial Bidhan Sarani on its way to Swami Vivekananda's residence in north Kolkata, a little over 3.5 km from Esplanade in the heart of the city, where it began.

"To attack Pandit Vidya Sagar is to attack Bangla language. To begin with, he simplified Bangla for studying through Borno Porichoy (Introduction to Letters)" Bhatt tweeted, tagging TMC spokesperson Derek O'Brien.

A college named after

Iswarchandra Vidyasagar, a key figure in the Bengal renaissance, was ransacked and a bust of the 19th century educationist was shattered. Both BJP and TMC are blaming each other for the destruction of the statue.

Through "Borno Porichoy", a series of books which is considered a classic, Vidyasagar reconstructed the Bengali alphabet and simplified Bengali typography.

He was a campaigner for remarriage of widows, which was eventually legalised on 26 July 1856 by the British government of that time.

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IF YOU ARE HAVING TROUBLE GETTING YOUR COPY OF THE SUMMIT TIMES IN YOUR NEIGHBOURHOOD, PLEASE MESSAGE OR WHATSAPP US YOUR NAME AND ADDRESS AT 7001622863 AND WE WILL ENSURE THAT THE NEWSPAPER REACHES YOU.

ARIES: With Venus on tour through Aries since April 20, you've been speeding along the romantic superhighway. Perhaps you've been pressuring your S.O. to commit to a goal, or maybe you've been in "love 'em and leave 'em" bachelor(ette) mode. Today, as la love planet slips into sensual Taurus until June 8, you'll slow your roll. The next few weeks are about appreciating the small and sensual things together, like delicious meals, conversations that connect you and ambling hand in hand.

TAURUS: Winning people's hearts and minds? You've got that dialed in starting today as your cosmic ruler, captivating Venus, grooves into Taurus until June 8. You could start your own charm school—and don't be surprised if admirers emerge out of thin air. Since Venus also rules your highest values, use these weeks to filter out the people and things you don't want in your world, from artwork you've outgrown to friends who drain your energy.

GEMINI: Cupid takes aim at your heart

and fires off his love arrows as sensual Venus sashays into Taurus and your twelfth house of fantasy until June 8. You're ready and willing to be swept away, Gemini, but don't fall for any old charmer who gallops up on a white steed. You're susceptible to illusion under this transit, so while you do need to let down the drawbridge (discerningly), you don't want to slip into that river called Denial.

CANCER: Seeking your soulmate? Look no further than your own inner circle (or your iPhone) over the next few weeks as love planet Venus makes her annual orbit through your eleventh house of friends and technology until June 8. Single Cancers could meet intriguing prospects through group hangs or a new dating app. Already attached? Lunge into spring training by doing more outdoorsy activities with your sweetie or spending more social time with your blended friend groups.

LEO: There's no other way to say this, Leo - you're in the mood for love. Tonight you may feel a strong urge to be with your

partner. If there isn't one in your life, you should take steps to correct that. You may meet someone who sweeps you off your feet. You want to be head-in-the-clouds in love, which is the only way to be!

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

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

SCORPIO: What is your dream, Scorpio?

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

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

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

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

AQUARIUS: Is Maison d'Aquarius home sweet home, or could it stand some sprucing up? Whether you just need a fresh coat of paint or a radical makeover, Venus' three-week tour of your domestic zone until June 8 is sure to call forth your interior decorator. Browsing the shelter blogs and Pinterest or just pulling paint swatches from Home Depot will set your imagination racing.

PISCES: Don't hold back, Pisces! While charismatic Venus tours your expressive third house until June 8, people will be hanging on your every word. The love planet can also help you communicate your amorous desires—because, no, people can't actually read your mind. Let your love interest know what you fancy for dinner or in the boudoir. Single and wading in the online dating pool? Upload a sexy new profile picture and start swiping right with abandon.