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SummitTIMES

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ON TOP OF THE NEWS

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Maghey Mela begins in Jorethang, CM underlines focus on promoting sporting culture

Jorethang, 15 Jan (IPR): The five-day Jorethang Maghey Sankranti Mela, themed, 'Hamro Sanskriti Hamro Gaurav', was inaugurated by Chief Minister PS Tamang [Golay] today. The CM was accompanied by his spouse, Saradha Golay, Cabinet Ministers, MLAs, Lok Sabha MP Indra Hang Subba, Political Secretary to the CM, Chairpersons, Advisors, Chief Secretary, Government Officials, Mela Committee members, and public at large.

At the outset, the CM offered prayers at the Trikaleshwar temple and visited the departmental stalls located at Jorethang Volleyball Ground. Thereafter, he inaugurated the Sikkim SARAS Trade Fair.

Addressing the gathering, the Chief Minister extended his best wishes on the auspicious occasion of Maghey Sankranti and spoke at length about the importance of this event and informed that this day is particularly observed as the ending of Paush and the beginning of Magh month according to Hindu lunar calendar.

He added that during the Sankranti festival most of the households use ban and other types of tarul as the main com-



ponent to mark the festival.

This year, the State Government had planned to celebrate the Jorethang Maghey Sankranti Mela in a different manner by inculcating a sense of sportsmanship by organizing different tournaments such as the 9th All India Chief Minister's Gold Cup International Football Tournament and Inter-Constituency Football Tournament.

The Chief Minister highlighted that Sikkim should produce talents particularly in the field of sports and reach gold-

en heights and bring laurels to the State and the country.

He added that Jorethang should be transformed into a must-visit tourist spot in due course of time as this place has strong connectivity towards the South and West district.

He urged the officials to work in tandem with the locals and change Jorethang into the most sought after destination.

The CM also brought to light that this mela should attract business opportunities

for the locals and the budding entrepreneurs in order to earn profit.

Speaking about infrastructural development, the CM said that a state-of-the-art Hospital, College and Nepali Sanskriti Bhawan will be set up in the area. The budget for the same will be allocated in the next financial year.

Speaking on the occasion, the area MLA, who is also the chief patron of the Mela Celebration Committee, Sunita Gazmer, highlighted the various features of Jorethang Maghey Sankranti Mela.



She said that the public can select from a variety of attractions like adventure games (paragliding), football competition, cultural and musical nite, SARAS Fair, departmental stalls, and many more.

Ms Gazmer also informed that this year the mela will incorporate an open for all walkathon which will highlight the issue of child sexual abuse.

During the program, the CM distributed golden cards to five beneficiaries under the Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojna (PMJAY).

Zoom-Salghari wins the Inter-Constituency Football Tournament

SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 15 JAN:

Zoom-Salghari has emerged the champion of the Inter-Constituency Football Tournament 2019-20. A goal by Dilliram Sanyasi on the 60th minute ensured that Zoom-Salghari edged past Barfung 1-0 in the contesting final match played at Jorethang ground in South Sikkim on Wednesday.

Sanjeev Rai of Zoom-Salghari was adjudged the Man of the Match. With this victory, Zoom-Salghari has earned direct entry into the next Chief Minister's and Governor's Gold Cup Tournaments.

The final match had Chief Minister PS Tamang [Golay] as the chief guest accompanied by Minister for Sports & Youth Affairs, Kunga Nima Lepcha, as the guest of honour.

Another highlight of the final day was an exhibition match between Chief Minister's XI and Chief Secretary's XI, in which the CM's squad defeated the latter 3-1. Karma Loday Bhutia, RK Gajmer and Bhim Hang Limboo scored a goal each for CM's XI while the lone goal of CS XI was scored by Bikram Tamang.

On the occasion, the CM announced that a state-level football team will be put together by taking the best players from this tournament.

SDF Govt's disinterest delayed work, but Bhaichung Stadium will be ready by March: Jacob Khaling

ARPAN PRADHAN
GANGTOK, 15 JAN:

Political Secretary to the Chief Minister, Jacob Khaling, today blamed the irresponsible work-culture of the previous government for the nearly ten years that sportspersons in South Sikkim have been left without a proper playground owing to the upgradation works at Bhaichung Stadium in Namchi which have been beset with delays. Stressing that the SKM Government was taking up promotion of sports on priority, he said that the stadium will now be made ready by March 2020.

Speaking to Sum-

mitTimes on the sidelines of a function here recently, Mr Khaling said that a generation of sportspersons has been denied due to the stalled project.

"The delay in completion of construction work at Bhaichung Stadium has not only destroyed the ground but has also killed the dreams of many sports enthusiasts," he said.

The SDF government did not nurture sports properly and this misplaced priority was why the construction work of such an important stadium was delayed, he added.

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Bank unions call two-day strike from Jan 31

KOLKATA, JAN 15 (PTI): Bank unions on Wednesday called for a two-day nationwide strike on January 31 and February 1 after talks over wage revision failed to make headway with the Indian Banks' Association (IBA).

The United Forum of Bank Unions (UFB), which represents nine trade unions, said they will also hold a three-day strike from March 11-13.

"From April 1, we have decided to go on an indefinite strike," UFB state convenor Siddhartha Khan told PTI.

UFB is seeking at least a 15-per cent hike, but the IBA has capped the raise at 12.25 per cent, he said.

"This is not acceptable," Khan said.

The last wage revision meeting was held on January 13.

China makes fresh bid to raise Kashmir issue in UNSC

NEW DELHI, JAN 15 (PTI): China has made a fresh pitch to raise the Kashmir issue in a closed-door meeting of the UN Security Council in New York on Wednesday, but the attempt is likely to fail as all other member countries of the body are set to oppose it.

French diplomatic sources said France has noted the request of a UNSC member to raise the Kashmir issue once again in the powerful body and it is going to oppose it like it did on a previous occasion.

The closed door meeting of the UNSC has been called to discuss an issue relating to an African country.

China has made a request to deliberate on the Kashmir issue under the agenda of "Any Other Business Points". The sources said France's position has not changed and is very clear -- the Kashmir issue must be settled bilaterally. This has been stated on several occasions and will continue to be reiterated to partners in the UN Security Council, they added.

Last month, France, the US, UK and Russia had foiled an attempt by China to discuss Kashmir at a closed-door meeting of the UNSC.

China has been critical of India's reorganisation of Jammu and Kashmir.

Army Day celebrated at Sherathang



SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 15 JAN:

The 72nd Army Day was observed by all ranks of the Indian Army stationed at Sherathang War Memorial on 15 Jan.

In a solemn ceremony, wreaths were laid at

the memorial in honour of soldiers of the Indian Army who have made the ultimate sacrifice in the defence of the motherland, an official press release informs.

The Watershed War Memorial at Sherathang, established at

an altitude of 13,000ft, stands tall as a remembrance for the selfless sacrifices made by the Indian Army and its unflinching commitment to guard the honour and territorial integrity of the country, the army release states.

State mourns passing away of Pemayangtse's chief abbot

SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 15 JAN:

The State Government is mourning the passing away of the Chief Abbot of Pemayangtse Monastery who breathed his last on 05 Jan.

Expressing profound sorrow on the passing away, a government notification issued on 14 Jan, also announces that as a mark of respect to the departed soul, all state government offices and educational institutions in West Sikkim will remain closed on

the day of the funeral, Friday, 17 Jan.

Governor Ganga Prasad has also expressed deep sorrow on the sudden demise.

An official communiqué from Raj Bhavan conveys that in his condolence message, the Governor said, "The news of sudden and unfortunate demise of Ven. Dorje Lopen has come as a shock to me. Late Ven. Dorje Lopen made immense contribution towards the State and Nation in his various ca-

pacities. The people of Sikkim and well-wishers will always remember him for his noble initiatives and works of compassion towards preservation and promotion of Buddhism. It is not just a sad moment for the Buddhist community, but a severe loss for all of us in the State." The Governor has joined the people of Sikkim and extended solidarity with the Buddhist community of the State and the entire Himalayan region and prayed for the eternal peace of the departed soul.

Assam CM shown black flags by anti-CAA protesters

DIBRUGARH (ASSAM), JAN 15 (PTI): Assam Chief Minister Sarbananda Sonowal was shown black flags by All Assam Students' Union (AASU) activists protesting against the Citizenship

Amendment Act (CAA) in Dibrugarh district on Wednesday. The chief minister had landed at Dibrugarh airport and was on the way to his hometown Chabua in the district to celebrate

'Bhagali Bihu' harvest festival with his family when a group of AASU activists rushed towards his convoy in Mohanbari Tiniali area, waving black flags and raising slogans against him and the Act.

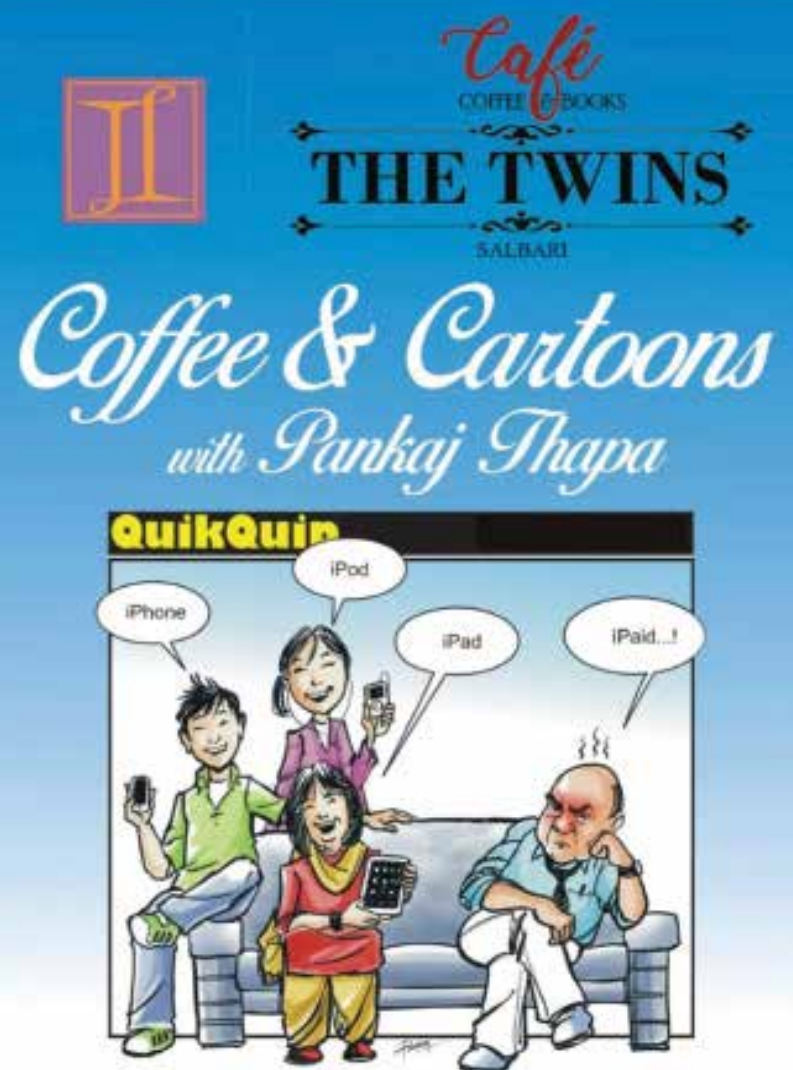
The protestors were heard shouting 'Sarbananda, Go Back', 'Sonowal Murdabad', 'CAA aami na maanu' (We do not accept CAA) and 'Jai Aai Asom' (Glory to Mother Assam).

Police overpowered

the protestors and prevented them from reaching the convoy.

This is the second incident in a fortnight of anti-CAA agitators showing black flags to the chief minister.

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Maghey Mela concludes at Mangshila



WANGCHUK BHUTIA MANGAN, 15 JAN:

The organising committee of Maghey Mela at Mangshila in North Sikkim today felicitated Rajya Sabha MP, Hishey Lachungpa, and former area MLA [Dzongu], Sonam Gyatso

Lepcha, on the occasion of Makar Sankranti.

The final day of the festival had the MP as chief guest accompanied by the former Dzongu MLA accompanied by the present MLA, Pintso Namgyal Lepcha.

The area MLA, re-

marked that such festivals should be organised as mega events and extended his best wishes to the people.

He also said that infrastructure like a public ground and a botanical garden are being developed at Mangshila-Tibuk

GPU and informed that a memorandum for the same has been submitted to Union Minister, Kiren Rijiju.

The former Dzongu MLA, Sonam Gyatso Lepcha, in turn remarked that there has been massive development in the area and appealed to the people to remain united for continued development.

He further appealed to the law enforcement personnel for strict law and order maintenance in North Sikkim.

The chief guest, in his address, said that the Manghim at Mangshila was one of the earliest infrastructures developed by the previous government. Elections come and go, but we

should not get divided, he said.

The MP added that government officials should treat all people equally and avoid nepotism and favoritism.

A colourful culture programme was also presented by the different dance troupes.

Ram Bahadur Limboo, president, Celebration Committee, extended gratitude towards all well-wishers on behalf of the committee members for making the festival a grand success.

Also present in the function were Up-Adhakshya North, Theney Bhutia, ASP North, Mahendra Subba, Zillab and panchayat members and the general public.

Economy has to be built on principles: Book

NEW DELHI, JAN 15 (PTI): Playing ducks and drakes with canons of finance is a short-term game which will rebound with adverse consequences like bank failures, industry stagnations and resultant individual privations, warns a new book.

It also says that economy has to be built on principles and its ethics have to be adhered to honestly and sincerely.

“Below value collaterals, doctored appraisals of project costs, loan dispersals against diving goodwills, etc., mercurial fiscal regimes, notional disinvestment policies, all will come home to roost someday,” writes Raj Liberhan, who was the director of India Habitat Centre (IHC) here and served in the government of India's financial services for 30 years.

His book “Urban Ethos and Pathos”,

brought out by Har-Anand Publications, looks at the country's social, political and governance challenges and their possible resolutions.

He says that inflated taxation demands locked in contention for long years, corporate dispute resolutions taking endless time are all converging to make our economic slowdown worse than ever before.

“The ecosystem of governance is sending out signals of alarm. In fact, it is the bells tolling in continuous peals that the economy needs immediate rescue acts. There is a whole chorus of voices out there advocating reforms of one kind or another,” he writes.

Liberhan says that there may be a whole gamut of suggestions pouring in on a daily basis like tax concessions

for one sector, lowering of GST for another, subsidies for yet another sector or easing liquidity for everyone but coherence of policy initiatives is the need of the hour.

“This coherence has to be underwritten by the integrity of the process, irrespective of the results that show up. Our collective efforts to manage results of the economy to merely show great spectacles will not endure beyond the temporary. Sustainability, however, needs ethical purpose and ethical means. That is real progress,” he says.

The author seems to be frustrated by the use and often abuse of public spaces by fellow citizens, and why people are not more civil and conscious of the fact that one's right to swing arms ends where the other fellows' nose begins.

The book, launched recently, is a product of Liberhan's interface with people, conversations and happenings in and around his world; many of them being his opinions, some perspectives and some even his yearnings for his surroundings to be better.

He is of the view that mounting non-performing assets, cost overruns and delays in completing projects, misuse of legal recourse to defeat contractual obligations between Indian and foreign corporate and policy misadventures have all hurt growth.

He also stresses that governments must learn to tell the truth and not hype the lies.

“Most times, we are handed out lofty slogans by our leaders and for governance, we get deaf ears or inept

management pleading scarce resources for non-delivery of public services,” he says.

According to Liberhan, the history of our times is witness to a growing disenchantment, somewhat with the past, and more pointedly, the present.

“The counterpoints seem to have taken over all discourse, whether in politics, economics, or sociology. To conform to a code, be it of decency or ethics or one that is imposed by the institutional allegiance of the time, is to be a wimp or without belief,” he says.

“To demonstrate a servile willingness to cheer those in power has always been the courtier's way. And don't we all covet the courtier's role, although we revile and disown it in public pronouncements,” he adds.

Budget Session of Parliament to commence on Jan 31

NEW DELHI, JAN 15 (PTI): The Budget Session of Parliament will commence on January 31 and subject to the exigencies of government business, is likely to conclude on April 3 with a recess in between, an official communication said on Wednesday.

President Ram Nath Kovind will address a joint sitting of both the

Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha in the central hall of Parliament at 11 am on January 31.

“The President has summoned the Rajya Sabha to meet on Friday, January 31, 2020, at New Delhi. Subject to exigencies of business, the Session is scheduled to conclude on Friday, April 3, 2020,” the communication from the

Rajya Sabha secretariat said.

To enable the standing committees to consider the demands for grants of various ministries and departments and prepare their reports, the House will adjourn on February 11 to meet again on March 2, a communication from the Lok Sabha secretariat said.

Vaishno Devi shrine's old cave opens for pilgrims

JAMMU, JAN 15 (PTI): The old and natural cave of Vaishno Devi shrine in Trikuta hills opened from Wednesday for pilgrims to pay obeisance, officials said.

The old cave is opened only during January and February when rush is very less, while for rest of the months, the pilgrims had to pass through newly-constructed caves to reach

to the sanctum sanctorum.

Every year, the natural cave is opened for pilgrims after Makar Sankranti, an official said.

“The cave has been opened for the visiting pilgrims for darshan now,” Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Shrine Board chief executive officer Ramesh Kumar said.

To avoid any incon-

venience to the pilgrims, the sub-divisional magistrate has been authorised to regulate the darshan through old cave after considering the rush and congestion, the official said.

The CEO said normally pilgrims are allowed from the natural cave when the daily pilgrimage comes below the 10,000 mark.

Ernest Mawrie elected as new Meghalaya BJP president

SHILLONG, JAN 15 (PTI): Amid protests against the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA), Ernest Mawrie was elected as the president of the BJP's Meghalaya unit on Wednesday.

Agitators of the Confederation of Meghalaya Social Organisation (CoMSO), an outfit that has been leading the anti-CAA stir in the state, staged a protest march stopping short of the BJP's state office here.

Mawrie succeeded Shibun Lyngdoh, who is now the national executive member of the BJP from the state.

He was unanimously elected in an election overseen by Union

minister Sanjeev Kumar Balyan and BJP national secretary Sunil Deodhar, party sources said.

AL Hek and David Kharsati, who were also in the fray for the post, withdrew their nominations and supported Mawrie's candidature, Deodhar said.

“His election to the top post of the party in the state is crucial as it is during his term that Meghalaya will go to elections in 2023,” the BJP national secretary said.

The election of Mawrie, who is a tribal and a Christian, will help the party boost its image, which has been portrayed by opposition

parties as ‘anti-tribal’ and ‘anti-Christian’, a senior BJP leader said.

Mawrie, speaking on CAA and the Inner Line Permit (ILP) during his maiden press meet as the state BJP president, said, “I will have to speak to my party and see where we stand though it has always been in our manifesto.”

BJP leaders Balyan, Deodhar and Mawrie later met CoMSO leaders and assured them of fixing a meeting with Union Home Minister Amit Shah.

The state Assembly had in December last year passed a resolution seeking implementation of the ILP in the state.

Gokulam Kerala thrash East Bengal 3-1

Kalyani (WB), Jan 15 (PTI): East Bengal on Wednesday paid a heavy price for their defensive lapses, going down to Gokulam Kerala 1-3 ahead of Sunday's I-League derby.

Playing without their centre back Borja Gomez, East Bengal conceded their first goal in the 21st minute when an unmarked Henry Kisekka cut in from the edge of the box to slot it past goalkeeper Lalthuamawia Ralte.

The red-and-gold conceded a second by an own goal by Marti Cres-

pi in the 45+1st minute while trying to clear a Marcus Joseph shot.

Their defensive woes continued as Kerala's star forward Marcus Joseph sealed the issue after being set up by Kisekka in the 65th minute with defender Asheer Akhtar and Ralte caught napping.

East Bengal's solitary goal came in the 27th minute when Kassim Aidara slotted it home from a rebound off the post.

The hosts are missing their 31-year-old



Spaniard who has returned home to be with his family as his younger son is suffering from a serious ailment.

For East Bengal, this was their second suc-

cessive defeat, ahead of Sunday's much-anticipated derby clash against arch-rivals Mohun Bagan.

East Bengal lost to Churchill Brothers away

in their last outing as they now have eight points from six matches to be placed behind Gokulam Kerala who climbed to fourth with 10 points from six outings.

Guj: Seven booked for extortion under new GCTOC Act

AHMEDABAD, JAN 15 (PTI): In a first case registered under the Gujarat Control of Terrorism and Organised Crime (GCTOC) Act, seven persons have been booked for extortion, police here said on Wednesday.

The offence has been registered against gangster Vishal Goswami and six of his aides under provisions of the GCTOC Act that came into force on December 1, 2019, an official said.

While Goswami and his two aides, Ajay and Rinku, are currently lodged at Ahmedabad Central Jail, four other gang members were arrested on Wednesday, special commis-

sioner of police Ajay Tomar said.

The accused formed “an organised crime syndicate” to run an extortion racket using mobile phones smuggled inside the jail, he said.

“Acting on a tip-off, a team from the city crime branch arrested four members of the gang who were working at the behest of Goswami,” Tomar said.

The three jailed accused conspired with the four others outside and targeted businessmen using mobile phones smuggled into the jail premises, he said.

They would threaten their targets through WhatsApp calls and messages,

the senior official added.

The police have recovered three mobile phones, two SIM cards, a notebook with phone numbers and a pin to insert SIM cards from the jailed accused, he said, adding that 20 mobile phones, Rs 50,000 cash, a pistol, 40 cartridges, a motorcycle and a car were seized from the others.

The jailed accused are serving a seven-year term in Ahmedabad Central Jail for a crime registered in 2012, Tomar said.

More than 50 cases have been filed against Goswami and his gang across Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh,



Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh, Tomar said, adding that the accused would also threaten witnesses deposing against them in courts.

Apart from the GCTOC Act, the seven accused have also been booked under relevant sections of the Indian Penal Code and Prisoners Act, he said.

Meanwhile, Tomar said one of the key

features of the GCTOC Act is that intercepted telephonic conversations would now be considered as legitimate evidence.

The bill, earlier named as the Gujarat Control of Organised Crime (GUJCOC) Bill, had failed to get the presidential nod thrice since 2004 when Prime Minister Narendra Modi was the chief minister of the state.

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Srijana Samaj Samiti extends financial support for treatment of local lad



**SAGAR CHHETRI
GANGTOK, 15 JAN:**

Sichey-based social organization, Srijana Samaj Samiti [SSS], has extended financial assistance for the treatment of ailing Swadip Subba of 6th Mile, Tadong.

Swadip Subba is undergoing treatment for major head injuries at Central Referral Hospital here and his family is in desperate need of around Rs 1.50 lakh to complete his treatment.

A team of executive members of SSS handed over financial support of Rs 58,000 to Sumitra Subba, Swadip's elder

sister, at CRH on Tuesday evening.

The SSS team comprised of legal advisor-cum-executive member, Wangmu Bhutia, president Mani Kumar Gurung, general secretary, Deepak Rai, treasurer, Andrew Chettri and executive members Bimal Chettri, Bhim Poudyal and Daniel W Chettri.

They also took an update on the present condition of the patient.

Executive members of the organization inform that the amount given for the treatment of Mr Subba was the remaining amount from

funds raised by SSS last year for the treatment of a six-year-old Ansuia Portel.

SSS had collected Rs 2.13 lakh last year for Ansuia's treatment.

"The child was referred to AIIMS, Delhi, for further treatment but she was returned immediately by the hospital saying that it was too late for treatment and she passed away a week after coming back to Gangtok," they inform.

It is informed that out of Rs 2.13 lakh raised for Ansuia, an amount of Rs 50,000 was spent during her

treatment at AIIMS and Rs 72,000 on her cremation and last rites and Rs 30,000 handed over to her parents who come from a very weak financial background and Rs 3,000/- was spent in miscellaneous expenses.

SSS had recently received a letter from the state unit of the International Human Rights Council seeking financial support for the treatment of Swadip Subba. Responding to this request, the SSS executive team has handed over the remaining amount of Rs 58,000 to Sumitra Subba for the treatment of her brother.

Kerala govt to set up digital varsity, to moot ordinance

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, JAN 15 (PTI): Kerala is set to get a digital university soon as the state government decides to upgrade the present Indian Institute of Information Technology and Management-Kerala (IIITM-K) here to varsity status.

A Cabinet meeting, chaired by Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan, on Wednesday decided to recommend to the Governor Arif Mohammad Khan to issue an ordinance in this regard.

The new digital university would be known as "The Kerala University of Digital Sciences Innovation and Technology," an official press release said here.

The proposed university is part of the LDF government's various initiatives to promote and develop information technology industry and digital technology.

The core objective behind the setting up of the university is to promote innovative research and entrepreneurship and



strengthen industry-educational cooperation in the broad field of digital technology.

The university is envisaged to give thrust upon new technologies such as artificial intelligence, data analytics, block chain, cognitive science, the Internet of Things and augmented reality, the release said.

The varsity would also help to develop quality human resource, it said. Five schools - the

School of Computing, the School of Electronics Design and Automation, the School of Informatics, the School of Digital Bio-Science and the School of Digital Humanities - would be set up with the aim of addressing the shortage of high-quality manpower in the digital sector, it said.

The focus of the proposed university would be on research in the areas of digital technology and graduate and under-

graduate-level education.

The Cabinet also decided to acquire 1,351 acres of land as part of extending the Kochi-Bangalore Industrial Corridor to Kochi via Coimbatore, the release said.

The proposed land would be acquired through Kerala Infrastructure Investment Fund Board (KIIFB) and Rs 1,038 crore is the estimated expense for the ambitious initiative, it added.



BIG SCREEN TAMBOLA: For the first time in Singtam bazaar, Tambola is being played with the added embellishment of a projector and big screen. The game, being conducted by unemployed youth of Aadarsh Gaon carries a bumper prize of Rs 2 lakh on the last day of Maghey Mela here - 25 Jan. [from YOGEN THATAL]

Integrated battle groups concept being given shape in 17 Corps: Army commander

KOLKATA, JAN 15 (PTI): The concept of Integrated Battle Groups (IBG) is being given shape in the newly-raised 17 Corps to meet the current challenges in the northern borders, Eastern Command chief Lt Gen Anil Chauhan said on Wednesday.

He said the Army has done a few exercises to validate the concept of IBGs as to what should be the organisation and structure of it, which the 17 Corps, the country's first Mountain Strike Corps, performed.

The 17 Corps carried out 'Him-Vijay', a mega exercise at a height of around 15,000 ft in Arunachal Pradesh in October last year.

"To meet the current challenges in the northern borders, we are organising ourselves in the form of integrated battle groups," Lieutenant General Chauhan, General Officer Commanding-in-Chief, Eastern Command, told reporters.

"What we are looking at is the organisation of formations which are more deployable, more employable and more capable to perform the tasks," he said.

Chauhan said that the Indian Army structures are more a legacy of the British Army and they were probably organised to fight in the longest kind of wars in distant lands.

To meet the present day challenges and take care of India's geostrategic needs, the first reorganisation was carried out in the 1980s when the infantry division, which contains combat and logistic support elements, was reorganised into a rapid division, that included some portions of mechanised infantry.

Following a status quo thereafter, the Army has again embarked upon reorganising its formations, he said after a solemn wreath laying ceremony on Army Day at the Eastern Command headquarters, Fort William, here.

"We are looking at 17 Corps primarily in the initial phases, we have

done some exercises to validate this concept of IBGs - what should be the organisation, structure and that has been done," he said.

Chauhan said that as far as the operational situation is concerned, the northern border has remained quiet last year due to the Wuhan summit of April, 2018 and the Chennai summit in October, 2019.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chinese President Xi Jinping held their first informal summit in Wuhan to exchange views on issues of bilateral and global importance and reviewed developments in India-China relations from the strategic and


long-term perspective.


They held their second informal summit in Chennai where they exchanged views on outstanding issues, including on the boundary question.

"Peace is being maintained without compromising our legitimate claims or position at the Line of Actual Control (LAC)," the Eastern Command chief said.

India shares nearly 4,000-km-long border with China in the north.

Troops of India and China were locked in a 73-day standoff in Doklam from June 16, 2017 after the Indian side stopped building of a road in the area by the Chinese Army.

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		Sd/- Deepak Kumar Pradhan Director, PGIPF State Pension Nodal Office
R.O. No. 325/IPR/Pub/Classi./19-20dt. 13.01.2010		

 GOVERNMENT OF SIKKIM DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION GYALSHING, WEST	
Memo No: 581/EDN/W	Dated: 07/01/2020
TENDER NOTICE	
<p>Sealed tender (two bid) are hereby invited on behalf of Government of Sikkim for supplies of groceries and related items to KGBV, Labing, West Sikkim for a period of 01(one) year for academic session 2020-21. With a provision for extension upto two years based on performance. The supplies to be made as per the supply order of the department.</p>	
<p>Terms & Condition:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Any local registered Grocery shop/supplier/Catering firm having following documents may apply; <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Sikkim Subject/COI Valid Certificate of registration of firm/trade license. Valid GST registration. Latest GST clearance from commercial taxes. Solvency Certificate of Rs.10.00 lakhs. The interested party may collect the tender form (Technical & financial) and other Terms & Conditions in Appendix - I, from the office of Addl. Director, Education Department, West Sikkim from 11 am to 2 pm on any working day w.e.f. 10.01.2020 to 17.01.2020 on production of BR of Rs.1,000 duly creited to Major Head 0202-800-other receipts. The duly filled up tender form in sealed cover should reach the office of Addl. Director, District Education Office, West accompanied by self Attested documents as mentioned in Sl.No. 1 above with TDR (refundable) of Rs. 1,00,000(one lacs only) drawn in favour of Additional Director, Education Septt., West from SBS Gyalshing before 12:00 noon of 21.01.2020 tender received after 12:00 noon of 21.01.2020 will not be entertained. The sealed tender will be opened on 21.01.2020 at 1PM in the office of DC(W) in presence of tender committee, tenderers & authorized representatives present. Incomplete tender are liable to be rejected. The department confers the right to accept or reject any or all tender without assigning any reason thereof. 	
Sd/- District Collector DAC, Rabdentse Govt. of Sikkim West District.	
R.O. NO. 322/IPR/Pub/Classi./19-20 Dt. 9.1.2020	

Schengen visa application fee hike to Euro 80 from Feb 2

**ASHWINI SHRIVASTAVA
NEW DELHI, JAN 15 (PTI):** A trip to much of Europe will be more expensive from next month with Schengen visa fees set to increase to Euro 80 from the current Euro 60, officials said. A Schengen visa is needed for 26 European countries, including Austria, Denmark, France, Germany, Greece, Switzerland and Spain.

The new fees will come into effect from February 2.


The visa fee will increase to Euro 80 (for applicants not only from India, but from all countries except those with which the EU has a visa facilitation agreement), a European Commission spokesperson told PTI. The increase in the visa fee comes as an updated Schengen Visa Code will apply from February 2, 2020,

he said.

Children aged 6 to 12 will have to pay Euro 40 instead of Euro 35, as it is currently, the spokesperson said. According to exchange rates on Wednesday, a Euro is equivalent to Rs 78.93.

There will be no fee for infants and children below six years of age as there is no change in this regard in the updated regulations.

The cost of applying for a Schengen visa had remained unchanged since 2006. A moderate increase of the fee to Euro 80 will ensure that we have sufficient financial resources to maintain a wide consular coverage worldwide, upgrade IT equipment and software and provide faster and user-friendly procedures for visa applicants," the spokesperson said.

 GOVERNMENT OF SIKKIM SOCIAL JUSTICE AND WELFARE DEPARTMENT GANGTOK	
No: 237/SJ&WD/CPD/2019-2020	Date: 13/01/2020
NOTICE	
<p>Applications are invited from interested local persons for appointment as members in the Sikkim Commission for Protection of Child Rights. The applicant should be a graduate degree holder having experience in the field of:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Education Child health, care, welfare or child development. Juvenile justice or care of neglected or marginalized children or children with disabilities, Elimination of child labor or children in distress, Child psychology or sociology and Laws relating to children, as prescribed by section 17(2) (b) of the Commission for Protection of Child Rights Act, 2005. 	
<p>Retired government employees are also encouraged to apply. Upper age limit is 60 years of age. The applicant may submit their resume along with relevant documents and certificate in the above mentioned fields. For further details; they may contact Dy. Secretary (CPS)/ Under Secretary (CPS) Social Justice & Welfare Department on or before 22.01.2020 by 4.30 PM.</p>	
<p>Honorarium of the member will be as prescribed by the rules.</p>	
<p>This is continuation of our previous notice vide no: 40/SJ&WD/CPS/2019 dated 12/11/2019</p>	
<p>NOTE: This Notice is also available in the departmental website www.sikkimsocial-welfare.gov.in.</p>	
Sd/-	
R.O. No. 326/IPR/Pub/Classi./19-20 Date: 13.01.2020	
Additional Secretary-cum- Director (CPS) Social Justice & Welfare Department	

Finnish First

Let's learn some things from Finland

Finland is today (as ranked by independent agencies on a range of international indices), the most stable, the safest and the best governed country in the world. With a population of 55 lakh, it is also ranked the third wealthiest, the third least corrupt, the second most socially progressive and the third most socially just. Its judicial system is recognized as the most independent and the highest levels of personal freedom is lavished on its citizens, and hence it should come as no surprise then that in these times of shrinking trust and ugly profiteering, Finland's police is the most trusted, its banks the most stable and companies the second most ethical. Sitting as it does, among a clutch of Scandinavian countries which ace these rankings, this is a major achievement for Finland because geography has been harsh to the land and history rather vicious to its people. The last ever famine in Europe was 150 years ago, and in Finland, then a backwater under the Russian empire, the famine wiped out 10% of the population. This must have been a staggering setback and the country has been independent only for a 100 years, meaning, it could begin pulling itself out of its privations only a century back, a time by when its neighbours had leaped ahead while Finland's human resource was at its lowest. And yet, the country has done so handsomely well for itself and its people.

Most people, Sikkim included, look at Finland and see its primary school education system and want to learn from it, which is good, but rather incomplete. When one looks at Finland, its experience and its indices, one realizes that excellence does not come in isolation or piecemeal. Once the right environment has been created to install the best primary education systems in place, it is not just schools that are touched but everything else benefits as well – from the environment to social justice to democracy. Yes, that last one as well. Finland, did we mention, is the third most gender-equal country in the world and has the second freest elections.

Researchers and other societies have been trying to get a handle on what makes Finland so excellent. Even accepting that the Finnish experience cannot be replicated, understanding it will at least tag the societal instincts necessary to deliver so well. One does realize that these things are not packaged and delivered top-down and are instead manifestations of how the larger community behaves and responds to situations. Tarja Halonen, Finland's president from 2000 to 2012, was quoted in a recent report as saying, "We live in a cold, harsh and remote place. Every person has to work hard for themselves. But that is not always enough. You have to help your neighbours." He was responding to a query on what contributed to the Finnish Miracle. But it is not just instinctive co-operation, but also perseverance and complete commitment to common pursuits. Their geography and challenges are not kind to fickleness and the Finns clearly know this well. They also have a name for the "dogged, courageous persistence regardless of consequence" that defines them – "sisu".

A historic manifestation of "sisu" was in 1939-40, when 3.50 lakh Finnish soldiers twice fought off Soviet forces three times their number, and inflicted losses five times heavier than those they sustained. And this attitude has served them well in peaceful times as well. Their survival has traditionally depended on working together, collaborating, but interestingly, not by subsuming individuality, but by allowing equal expression and representation. The Finns have leveraged the absence of traditional hierarchies (within themselves) to ensure that while collaborations and community participation was quick and genuine, ideas can be freely shared and individuality safely expressed without running the risk of being judged or scoffed. This attitude celebrates excellence and allows ideas to germinate and merit an expected outcome. In such environments, while mediocrity is tolerated, it is not celebrated as is common in more feudal settings of even democratic societies; people believe in each other and are not second-guessing every gesture and don't allow their prejudices to rule their judgment. Such a people look ahead and not stare into the past. That is a nice place to be. And it is not as if everyone is happy and smiling all the time in Finland. Their free society means that free expression is genuinely on offer and criticism, even ridicule, is frequent and harsh. But there is also trust and faith.

Think Twice Before Shouting Your Virtues Online – moral grandstanding is toxic

JOSHUA B. GRUBBS
THECONVERSATION.COM

In an era of bitter partisanship, political infighting and ostracization of those with unpopular views, Americans actually agree on one thing: 85% say political discourse has gotten worse over the last several years, according to Pew Research.

The polarization plays out everywhere in society, from private holiday gatherings to very public conversations on social media, where debate is particularly toxic and aggressive.

For psychologists like myself, who study human behavior, this widespread nastiness is both a social problem and a research opportunity. My colleagues and I have zeroed in on one specific aspect that might help explain America's dysfunctional discourse: moral grandstanding.

MORAL GRANDSTANDING

The term may be unfamiliar, but most people have experienced moral grandstanding.

Examples of moral grandstanding include when a friend makes grand and extreme proclamations on Twitter about their deepest held values regarding climate change, for instance, and when a campaigning politician makes bold – but clearly untrue – ideological claims about immigration.

Philosophers coined the phrase to describe the abuse of so-called "moral talk" – an umbrella term encompassing all conversations humans have about our politics, beliefs, values and morals.

Usually, people engage in moral talk to learn from, connect with or persuade someone else. They might say of their decision not to eat any animal products, for example, "I am vegan for environmental and animal rights reasons."

Moral grandstanding occurs when people use moral talk, instead, to promote themselves or seek status. So a moral grandstander might say, "I am vegan because it is the only moral decision. If you care about the planet, you can't eat animal products."

For moral grandstanders, conver-



sation is a means to an end – not a free exchange of ideas.

A desire for respect from our peers is normal in humans, as are the desires for safety, love and belonging. Social scientists have traced the evolutionary origins of status seeking to prehistoric times.

Moral grandstanding, however, is a special kind of status seeking. It implies that someone is using conversations about important or controversial topics solely to get attention or impress others.

SEVERED TIES AND BROKEN RELATIONSHIPS

Just because someone touts their virtues – whether on Twitter or in conversation – does not mean they are morally superior to everyone else.

In a recently published study conducted with a team of other psychologists and philosophers, we asked 6,000 Americans a series of questions about who and why they share their deepest moral and political beliefs with. People who reported sharing beliefs to gain respect, admiration or status were identified as grandstanders.

Almost everyone indicated they had some history of grandstanding, but only a few – 2% to 5% – indicated they primarily used their moral talk to promote themselves.

We found that moral grandstanders were more likely to experience discord in their personal lives. People who reported grandstanding more often also reported more experiences arguing with loved ones and severing ties with friends or family members

over political or moral disagreements.

People who indicated using their deepest held beliefs to boost their own status in real life also reported more toxic social media behaviors, picking fights over politics on Facebook, for example, and berating strangers on Twitter for having the "wrong" opinions.

Philosophical accounts of grandstanding strongly suggest that moral grandstanders behave less morally than other people in other ways, too. They are more likely to rudely call others out for not being virtuous enough, systematically disparage entire groups of people and hijack important conversations to serve their own purposes.

When the natural human desire for respect leads people to seek status in situations when they would be better served by listening, it seems, this behavior can drive friends, family and communities apart.

OTHER REASONS FOR DISCORD

The rise of moral grandstanding isn't the only reason discourse in the United States has taken a turn for the worse.

Politics have grown extraordinarily polarized, which is both a cause and effect of social polarization. Politically active people feel more animosity and less trust toward "the other side" than they have in generations.

Social media itself seems to accelerate conflict, creating echo chambers of likeminded people that are galvanized against others and driving cycles of outrage that quickly escalate and stifle public participation in

important conversations.

So ending moral grandstanding won't magically fix the public debate in the United States. But tamping it down would lead the country in a more productive direction.

HOW TO HANDLE MORAL GRANDSTANDING

Consider assessing your own conversation style, reflecting about what you say to others and why. When you enter into contentious territory with someone who differs in opinion, ask whether you're doing so because you're genuinely interested in communicating and connecting with your fellow human – or are you just trying to score points?

Thinking honestly about your engagement on social media – ground zero for moral grandstanding – is particularly important.

Do you post controversial material just for likes and retweets? Do you share social media posts of people you disagree with just to publicly mock them? Do you find yourself trying to one-up the good deeds of someone else to make yourself look good to people whose respect you crave?

If so, then you may be a moral grandstander.

If not, you can still fight moral grandstanding by recognizing and dissuading these behaviors in others. Given that moral grandstanders crave status, respect and esteem from others, depriving them of the attention they seek is probably the best deterrent.

[the writer is Assistant Professor, Bowling Green State University]

Being Copycats Might Be Key to Being Human

CONNOR WOOD
THECONVERSATION.COM

Chimpanzees, human beings' closest animal relatives, share up to 98% of our genes. Their human-like hands and facial expressions can send uncanny shivers of self-recognition down the backs of zoo patrons.

Yet people and chimpanzees lead very different lives. Fewer than 300,000 wild chimpanzees live in a few forested corners of Africa today, while humans have colonized every corner of the globe, from the Arctic tundra to the Kalahari Desert. At more than 7 billion, humans' population dwarfs that of nearly all other mammals – despite our physical weaknesses.

What could account for our species' incredible evolutionary successes?

One obvious answer is our big brains. It could be that our raw intelligence gave us an unprecedented ability to think outside the box, innovating solutions to gnarly problems as people migrated across the globe. Think of "The Martian," where Matt Damon, trapped alone in a research station on Mars, heroically "sciences" his way out of certain death.

But a growing number of cognitive scientists and anthropologists are rejecting that explanation. These researchers think that, rather than making our living as innovators, human beings survive and thrive precisely because we don't think for ourselves. Instead, people cope with challenging climates and ecological contexts by carefully copying others – especially those we respect. Instead of Homo sapiens, or "man the knower," we're really Homo imitans: "man the imitator."

WATCHING AND LEARNING

In a famous study, psychologists Victoria Horner and Andrew Whiten showed two groups of test subjects – children and chimpanzees – a mechanical box with a treat inside. In one condition, the box was opaque, while in the other it was transparent. The experimenters demonstrated how to open the box to retrieve a treat, but they also included the irrelevant step of tapping on the box with a stick.

Oddly, human children carefully copied all the steps to open the box, even when they could see that the stick had no practical effect. That is, they copied irrationally: Instead of doing only what was necessary to get their reward, children slavishly imitated every action they'd witnessed.

Of course, that study only included three- and four-year-olds. But additional research has showed that older children and adults are even



more likely to mindlessly copy others' actions, and young infants are less likely to over-imitate – that is, to precisely copy even impractical actions.

By contrast, chimpanzees in Horner and Whiten's study only over-imitated in the opaque condition. In the transparent condition – where they saw that the stick was mechanically useless – they ignored that step entirely, merely opening the box with their hands. Other research has since supported these findings.

When it comes to copying, chimpanzees are more rational than human children or adults.

THE BENEFITS OF FOLLOWING WITHOUT QUESTION

Where does the seemingly irrational human preference for over-imitation come from? In his book "The Secret of Our Success," anthropologist Joseph Henrich points out that people around the world rely on technologies that are often so complex that no one can learn them rationally. Instead, people must learn them step by step, trusting in the wisdom of more experienced elders and peers.

For example, the best way to master making a bow is by observing successful hunters doing it, with the assumption that everything they do is important. As an inexperienced learner, you can't yet judge which steps are actually relevant. So when your band's best hunter waxes his bowstring with two fingers or touches his ear before drawing the string, you copy him.

The human propensity for over-imitation thus makes possible what anthropologists call cumulative culture: the long-term development of skills and technologies over generations. No single person might understand all the practical reasons behind each step to making a bow or carving a

canoe, much less transforming rare earth minerals into iPhones. But as long as people copy with high fidelity, the technology gets transmitted.

Ritual and religion are also domains in which people carry out actions that aren't connected in a tangible way with practical outcomes. For example, a Catholic priest blesses wafers and wine for Communion by uttering a series of repetitive words and doing odd motions with his hands. One could be forgiven for wondering what on Earth these ritualistic acts have to do with eating bread, just as a chimpanzee can't see any connection between tapping a stick and opening a box.

But rituals have a hidden effect: They bond people to one another and demonstrate cultural affiliation. For an enlightening negative example, consider a student who refuses to stand for the Pledge of Allegiance. Her action clearly telegraphs her rejection of authorities' right to tell her how to behave. And as anthropologist Roy Rappaport pointed out, ritual participation is binary: Either you say the pledge or you don't. This clarity makes it easily apparent who is or isn't committed to the group.

SURPRISE SECRET INGREDIENT THAT MAKES US HUMAN

In a broader sense, then, over-imitation helps enable much of what comprises distinctively human culture, which turns out to be much more complicated than mechanical cause and effect.

At heart, human beings are not brave, self-reliant innovators, but careful if savvy conformists. We perform and imitate apparently impractical actions because doing so is the key to learning complex cultural skills, and because rituals create and sustain the cultural identities and solidarity we depend on for survival. Indeed, copying others is a powerful way to establish social rapport. For example, mimicking another's body language can induce them to like and trust you more.

So the next time you hear someone arguing passionately that everyone should embrace non-conformity and avoid imitating others, you might chuckle a bit. We're not chimpanzees, after all.

[the writer is Visiting Researcher in Theology, Boston University]

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AMU seeks registration of FIR against police excesses

ALIGARH, JAN 15 (PTI): The Aligarh Muslim University has sought registration of an FIR against the police for allegedly indulging in excesses after entering a hostel on the night of December 15, officials said on Wednesday.

The move comes a month after violent clashes took place at the AMU.

AMU spokesperson Rahat Abrar told PTI, "The police is yet to register our FIR, although we have filed our complaint."

When asked to clarify, he said, "We have been told by the police that since the High Court has already ordered a probe into the incident, any

further action cannot be taken as the matter is subjudice."

He said, "We will review our options in this matter, since our complaint is yet to be registered."

University authorities said they have sought an FIR in this connection because they are of the opinion that the "police exceeded" its mandate when it forced its way into a university hostel on December 15.

In a statement issued on Wednesday, AMU vice-chancellor Prof Tariq Mansoor said, "We had only asked the police to bring normalcy by clearing the main road and had not given per-

mission to enter any hostel."

In their statements before some human rights groups, a number of students who were seriously injured on the night of December 15 have accused the police of forcibly entering a hostel in Aftab Hall and the university's VIP guest house and indulging in excesses leading to serious injuries to a large number of students.

Meanwhile, the university has re-opened on January 13. However, students are completely boycotting classes and have demanded postponement of all exams, according to a spokesman of students' coordination committee.

Art Institute declares 2-day shutdown after graffiti controversy



BENGALURU, JAN 15 (PTI): Srishti Institute of Art, Design and Technology here has decided to remain shut for two days after a group of BJP workers wiped out graffiti on its outer walls claiming it as anti-Modi and allegedly warned them against any anti CAA agitation there.

According to sources, the group led by Yelahanka MLA S R Vishwanath allegedly even towed away some vehicles of students and faculty parked in front of the institute alleging that they were blocking the road and causing inconvenience to the local people.

Some students have alleged that they were threatened by BJP work-

ers and also the institute's authorities regarding the graffiti and the blocking of road using traffic police.

They even claimed that BJP workers warned them against organising any anti NRC or CAA protests.

A few local residents are also said to have joined the BJP workers and raised complaints about the conduct of the institute's students.

According to local BJP workers, the MLA and a few party men had gone near the institute on receiving complaints from locals about vehicles parked there blocking the road, and when they came across the graffiti they painted it with saffron

paint to avoid any controversy, and there was no altercation as being alleged.

However, there is no clarity on who drew the graffiti regarding Modi, which according to BJP workers allegedly depicted the PM in poor light.

The institute has declared holiday on Thursday and Friday to avoid any further escalation, keep the interest and safety of students in mind, sources said.

Interestingly, on Tuesday graffiti had appeared overnight on the shutters of some shops and walls on the Church Street here against Modi, CAA and NRC, following which city police have launched investigation.

IPS officer Maheshwari takes over as new CRPF DG

NEW DELHI, JAN 15 (PTI): IPS officer Anand Prakash Maheshwari on Wednesday took over as the new director general of the CRPF, the world's largest paramilitary force.

The 1984-batch IPS officer of Uttar Pradesh cadre was appointed the new CRPF chief on January 13 after its earlier DG R R Bhatnagar retired on December 31.

Maheshwari took over the charge from

ITBP Director General S S Deswal who was given the additional charge to head the CRPF.

Maheshwari was handed over the ceremonial DG baton at the CRPF headquarters at Central Government Offices (CGO) complex at Lodhi Road here, a senior officer said.

He will retire in February next year.

The new chief was also accorded a guard of honour by force

personnel, the officer said.

Maheshwari, serving as special secretary (internal security) in the Ministry of Home Affairs till now, has earlier worked in the CRPF as inspector general (IG) and deputy IG.

He has also headed the Bureau of Police Research and Development (BPRD) and served as an additional DG in the Border Security Force.

18 lakh pilgrims take holy dip at Ganga Sagar on Makar Sankranti

SAGAR ISLAND (WB), JAN 15 (PTI): Around 18 lakh pilgrims from different parts of the country, and neighbouring Bangladesh and Nepal took holy dip at the confluence of the sacred Ganga and the Bay of Bengal here on the occasion of Makar Sankranti on Wednesday.

Over 30 lakh people have gathered here for the pilgrimage, breaking all previous records, a senior official of the state government said.

"Till 8 am, around 18 lakh people have taken

dips in the holy waters. Several lakhs are waiting," he said. Every year on Makar Sankranti, lakhs of Hindus flock the Sagar Island in West Bengal's South 24 Parganas district to take the holy dip and offer prayers at the Kapil Muni temple. "Last year, we had a record number of 20 lakh pilgrims visiting the island. This year, that record has been broken as we have witnessed over 30 lakh pilgrims arriving. It was peaceful and the pilgrims have also appreciated our arrangements,"

the official said.

Security has been beefed up in the island, around 100 km from Kolkata, and Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee is monitoring the situation, officials said.

Besides deploying senior officers, around 10,000 police personnel and civic volunteers have been posted for the gathering -- the Ganga Sagar Mela.

Security officials are also keeping a watch on the waters and patrolling is being done, they said.

Arjuna's arrow had atomic power: West Bengal governor

KOLKATA, JAN 15 (PTI): Despite the sharp criticism from various quarters for claiming that the arrows of Arjuna in the epic Mahabharata had atomic power, West Bengal Governor Jagdeep Dhankhar Wednesday refused to budge from his stand and asked his critics to delve into Indian history and culture.

Dhankhar said he sincerely believed that India was the world leader 4000 years ago, the time which is believed to be portrayed in the epic.

He has been castigated by academicians for his comments and joins a long list of politicians who have in recent years given bizarre interpretations linking mythology to science.

"Sir try to read Indian history, Indian culture. I can join issues with anyone. It is so easy to say it is unscientific. We have given to the world which the world never had. I believe in my speech, I believe in my background of science. Our country has a rich culture which is over 4000/5000 years old," he told reporters at the sidelines of a programme here on

Wednesday.

Dhankhar said he respects the views of his critics but has the right to disagree. "Some people may take Lord Ram to be a mythological figure, but I don't".

Speaking at the 45th Eastern India Science Fair and 19th Science and Engineering Fair, Dhankhar had on Tuesday claimed that flying objects existed during the time of Ramayana.

"It is said that the plane was invented in 1910 or 1911. But if we delve into our scriptures, we will see in the Ramayana that we had the 'uran khatola' (aircraft)," he said.

"Sanjaya narrated the entire war of Mahabharata (to the Dhritarashtra) not from the TV. The arrows of Arjuna in Mahabharata had atomic power in it," Dhankhar said, asserting that the world can no longer afford to ignore India.

In the Mahabharata, Sanjaya had narrated the fierce war fought between the Kauravas and the Pandavas at Kurukshetra to Dhritrashtra, the blind Kaurava King,



though he was away from the battlefield.

Dhankhar, who has been in the news for frequent face offs with the Mamata Banerjee government ever since he assumed office in July last year, joins politicians such as Tripura Chief Minister Biplab Kumar Deb and Uttar Pradesh Deputy Chief Minister Dinesh Sharma in giving odd interpretations to mythology.

While Deb had claimed that the internet existed during the time of Mahabharata, Sharma had suggested that Sita in the Ramayana was a test tube baby.

Recently, Puducherry Lt Governor Kiran Bedi was trolled online for sharing a doctored video that claimed "NASA recorded sound of sun -- Sun chants Om".

back the country to the middle ages. This statement is not an isolated one, but a calculated move towards that objective," he added.

Indologist Nrisingha Prasad Bhaduri when asked said governors appointed by the BJP-led government at the Centre behave "as if they are know-all".

"They fail to understand one thing - that great writers have very strong powers of imagination," Bhaduri said.

Scientist Sandip Chakraborty said such comments only hurt scientific progress in India at the global forum.

"The ancient writers described all these things based on their imagination. It is true that India had made a lot of progress during the ancient period, but such comments only damage the progress made by our scientific community (in modern times)," he said.

Nuclear physicist and Padma Bhushan awardee Bikash Sinha said he is afraid that such statements can have a negative impact on the society.

Three new frog species dicovered in Arunachal Pradesh

Shillong, Jan 15 (PTI): Three new species of tiny frogs have been discovered in Arunachal Pradesh's Lower Subansiri district by scientists of Zoological Survey of India, according to a recently published journal.

The frogs are so small in size that one can sit on a coin, ZSI scientist Bhaskar Saikia told PTI.

The new species discovered from Talle Valley Wildlife Sanctuary (WLS) have been named as 'Liurana himalayana', 'Liurana indica' and 'Liurana minuta', he said.

The specimens of the new frog species were collected by Bikramjit Sinha, another scientist of ZSI in Itanagar during 2015-16 as part of the documentation of faunal diversity in the protected area. A study, co-authored by Saikia and Sinha, has been published in a science journal, the Records of the Zoological Survey of India, which confirmed that the species are new discoveries. Earlier, Saikia and Sinha had also found a rare frog species, Megophrys pachyproctus, from Talle Valley Wildlife Sanctuary.

Case against 150 unidentified people after Left students 'gherao' Mamata

KOLKATA, JAN 15 (PTI): A suo motu case has been registered against 150 unidentified people after Left students' activists "gheraoed" Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee at an anti-CAA rally in Kolkata on January 11, sources said on Wednesday.

The case includes non-bailable sections of causing damage, criminal intimidation, as well as assaulting a public servant from discharging duty, said a source at the Hare Street Police station where it was registered

on Monday.

Banerjee faced protests by Left students for meeting Prime Minister Narendra Modi and allegedly "diluting the fight against the CAA".

The top brass of the Kolkata Police was tight-lipped about the matter.

After meeting Modi, Banerjee had gone to the sit-in demonstration being held by the TMC's students' wing when scores of Left students' activists reached the spot and shouted slogans seeking an ex-

planation from her over the meeting.

Banerjee had termed the meeting a "courtesy visit" and said that she raised the issue of financial assistance that the state is yet to receive from the Centre.

Modi was on a two-day visit to the city to participate in the 150 years celebrations of the Kolkata Port Trust, amid massive protests against the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) and the proposed nationwide NRC.

Soren's intervention brings welcome relief for elderly accident victim

RANCHI, JAN 15 (PTI): The kind intervention of Jharkhand Chief Minister Hemant Soren has brought a welcome relief for an elderly accident victim from Bihar, who was allegedly left untreated at a government hospital in Koderma for two days.

After being shifted to Rajendra Institute of Medical Sciences (RIMS) here on Tuesday from Koderma on the CM's order, the 60-year-old Shastrughan Sao is properly attended by the doctors and is likely to undergo an operation for his fractured leg on Saturday, an official said on Wednesday.

Sao faced apathy of the Koderma Sadar hospital which kept him waiting for two days till his relatives were traced by the police and brought to the hospital from Bihar.

The CM had taken a strong exception to the conduct of the hospital management, where the patient was admitted nearly a fortnight back.

Instead of giving him priority treatment, the hospital waited for his relatives to reach there,

the chief minister had said after receiving a complaint from the patient's family.

"This attitude has been there for last few years.

Instead of taking the responsibility to solve the problem - every officer wants to shift it. This is really sad, but the situation will change now. This attitude will no longer be tolerated," Soren said in a tweet.

The CM directed the management of all (government) hospitals to treat patients with sensitivity.

"The police has the responsibility to locate relatives of unknown while the doctors should focus on the treatment of the patients," Soren said in his tweet.

The chief minister instructed the RIMS management to treat Sao and asked Ranchi Deputy Commissioner Rai Mahimapat Ray to arrange for sending him to his home at Ekangar Sarai in Bihar's Nalanda district after the treatment.

Ray informed the CM on Wednesday, "Sir, the patient suffering from fracture of Left femur is undergoing investigations and is stable.

If all is confirmed normal, operation (internal immobilisation like nailing or plating) is expected on Saturday. Dr. L. B. Manjhi unit Civil Surgeon is monitoring the case closely."

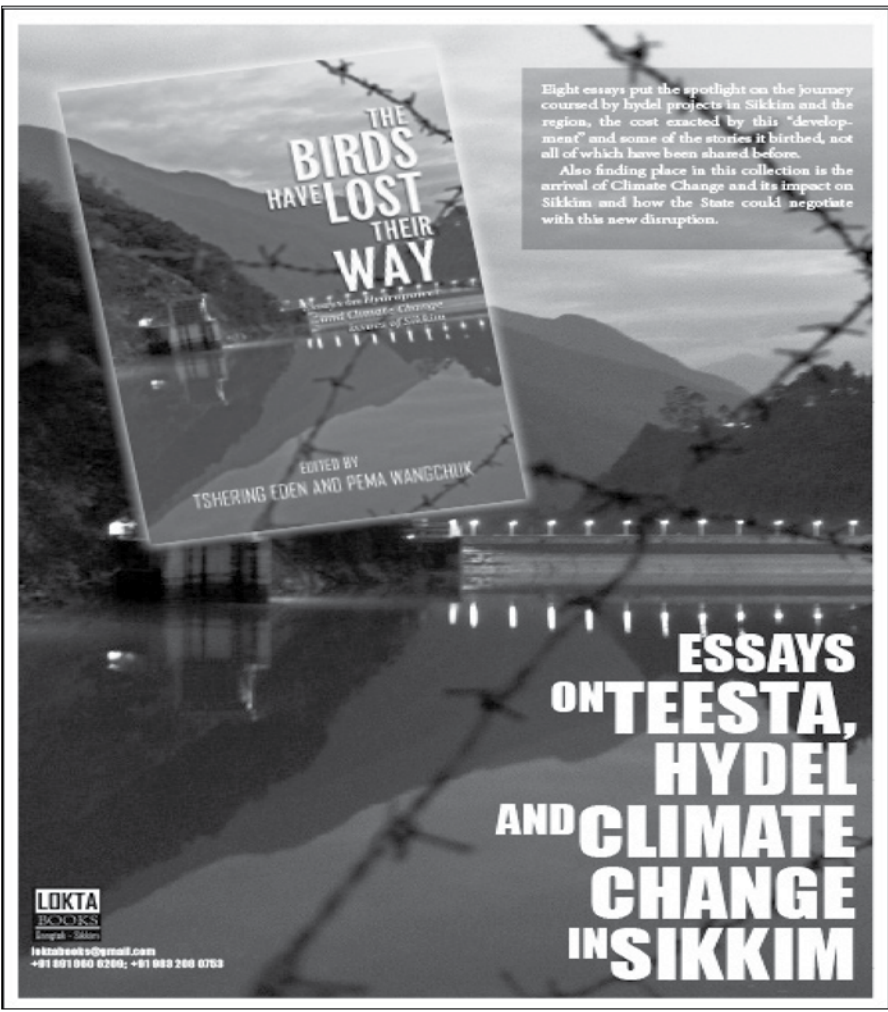
Sources in the Koder-

ma hospital said, after the police took Sao to the facility 14 days ago, the elderly man could not properly tell anything about himself.

The police found a nephew of his after two

days and he started staying with him, they said.

The sources also claimed that the Koderma hospital does not have the specialist orthopaedic required to treat Sao.



The Chelsea academy has a new generation of talent on the way

GAVIN WILLACY
THEGUARDIAN

The 522 minutes that Danny Drinkwater played for Chelsea in the Premier League cost the club more than £50m over three years. At least the club's similarly lavish investment in their academy is paying out higher dividends. During the hectic festive season, Frank Lampard again dipped into the club's Under-23s to give a debut to local 19-year-old right-back Tariq Lamptey.

After two decades with hardly a home-grown player to keep John Terry company, a dozen Chelsea academy products have made appearances in Lampard's team this season. Fikayo Tomori (22), Reece James (20), Mason Mount (21) and Tammy Abraham (22) have all returned from excellent seasons on loan in the Championship to play in the Premier League, reuniting with their former

Under-23 teammate Calum Hudson-Odoi, still only 19 himself.

Chelsea have 26 players out on loan, including valuable assets such as Ethan Ampadu (who is struggling to play any more at RB Leipzig than he did at Chelsea), Tiémoué Bakayoko, Kenedy and Victor Moses, who is now on his fourth loan – this time at Fenerbahçe – having played just 87 league games in eight years at the club. That group of loanees now includes Under-23s captain Marc Guehi, an athletic rather than domineering centre-back who was born in the Ivory Coast, joined Chelsea at the age of eight and has now graduated to the England Under-21s. Guehi signed on loan for Swansea City this week and will be given his first serious taste of senior football in the Championship.

The emergence of Chelsea's academy play-



ers has coincided with the club's transfer ban. With that ban now lifted, Lampard could be tempted to close the window of opportunity for academy players. But his management team is full of former academy coaches – including Jody Morris, Eddie Newton, Joe Edwards and Chris Jones – who are fully aware of the talent at the club.

The club's Under-23s

are also in familiar hands. These youngsters are being nurtured by Andy Myers, whose own career offers a good example of how to progress at the club. Myers joined Chelsea as a boy, progressed through the academy and made more than 100 appearances for the club, winning the FA Cup and Cup Winners' Cup in the process.

His new-look Un-

der-23s side are currently top of Premier League 2. They beat Tottenham 1-0 last week in Stevenage, where Henry Lawrence was as good as anyone on the pitch. Lawrence excelled at right-back against Spurs, getting up and down the flank impressively, sprinting back into defensive positions rapidly, making good decisions, intercepting well

and tackling hard. The 18-year-old is sinewy now, but has a frame that suggests he will bulk up quickly. Naturally a midfielder, Lawrence filled in for Lamptey at right-back and looked happy to have the whole right wing to himself when Myers changed to three at the back. Having only turned 18 in September, he has played for the Under-18s, 19s, 21s and 23s already this season. The final step is the biggest, of course.

The first half of the game at Stevenage was anaemic, typifying the worst aspects of elite academy football. Two technically sound but lightweight teams played sterile football in a dull atmosphere, watched in near silence by friends, family and scouts. There was none of the intensity seen on the same pitch a few days earlier, when the EFL's bottom club Stevenage battled with

10 men to win a point against Colchester, let alone the dynamism or vision needed to earn a look-in with Lampard or Spurs boss José Mourinho.

Central midfielder George McEachran, even slighter than his older brother Josh – who made 11 league appearances for Chelsea in five years and is now at Birmingham City – looked like he had no intention of touching a Spurs player, never mind making a tackle.

Myers knew the game needed a kick up the jacksy and stirred things up by bringing on Jon Russell. Taller and heavier than most of his opponents, Russell looked like a man among boys – as Ruben Loftus-Cheek did when playing for Chelsea's second team five years ago – throwing his weight around behind the front two. His repeated fouling earned him a yellow card but that ag-

gression brought more passion to the game and his physicality upset the Spurs midfield. Even McEachran started charging around midfield and flying into tackles.

Russell and Lawrence combined with Armando Broja – Chelsea's most promising forward, an 18-year-old from Slough with Albanian roots – down the right for Chelsea's late winner.

Lampard has given first-team debuts to a series of academy players, including former Rangers midfielder Billy Gilmour, England Under-19 midfielder Tino Anjorin and Dutch defender Ian Maatsen. Meanwhile, Conor Gallagher, an exciting 19-year-old midfielder is in great demand due to his excellent form on loan at Charlton. This is an extraordinarily productive period for Chelsea's academy, going a long way to make up for two barren decades.

Dhawan says ready to bat anywhere



NIKHIL BAPAT

MUMBAI, JAN 15 (PTI): Regular India opener Shikhar Dhawan says he is ready to bat anywhere after skipper Virat Kohli's move to drop himself down at No. 4 to accommodate him and K L Rahul backfired in the first ODI against Australia.

The visitors crushed India by 10 wickets in the first of the three-match series, chasing down a 256-run target with plenty to spare here on Tuesday.

"If they ask me to bat at No.3, of course I'll do it. Anything for my country, for sure," Dhawan said after the game in which K L Rahul came in at the critical position.

"You have to be mentally strong, all the boys are mentally strong, that's why they've been playing international cricket and it's part of the journey, sometimes you've to switch numbers as well."

The senior player said it was completely the captain's decision to drop himself down at No.4 from his usual No.3 slot.

"See that is a captain's choice, KL is batting well, he did well in the last series and he played really well and he played well today.

"I feel it is the captain's choice where he wants to play and he has done amazing at No. 3, maybe I feel, he will think about it to go at number three again," he said.

After the game, Kohli said he might have to rethink his plans going into the second and third ODIs.

Dhawan blamed the loss of four wickets in the middle overs for the mauling.

David Warner and

Aaron Finch slammed unbeaten tons to power the visitors to a convincing win at the Wankhede Stadium.

"We handled those first 10-15 overs very nicely. We lost four wickets in a go, that is where the game changed for us, then we were behind and then we were trying to cover it, so that is where we went wrong," said Dhawan, who made 74 off 91 balls, said.

Australia pulled things back to bowl India out for 255 and Warner (128 not out) and Finch (110) then did the rest.

India lost five quick wickets after Dhawan and K L Rahul (47) added 121 for the second wicket.

"KL (Rahul) got out. That time we planned to accelerate and those four wickets we lost, that's where we lost the momentum. We were targeting 300 runs but we ended up scoring less runs. In bowling, we could not take early wickets. They outplayed us," admitted Dhawan.

Asked whether the Indian batting was too dependent on him, Kohli and Rohit Sharma, Dhawan said, "See it is just one bad day in office. We played really well against West Indies, there all the batsmen did well.

"Shreyas (Iyer) has been doing so well and he is a young lad, one-odd innings is going to go here and there, but we as a team back each other and we don't focus or put too much on one loss."

"They played really well, we were bit unlucky as top-edges went here and there and not in the hands (of the fielders)," he said.

Dhawan also showed praise on Warner.

Bumrah's yorkers, bouncers surprise Warner

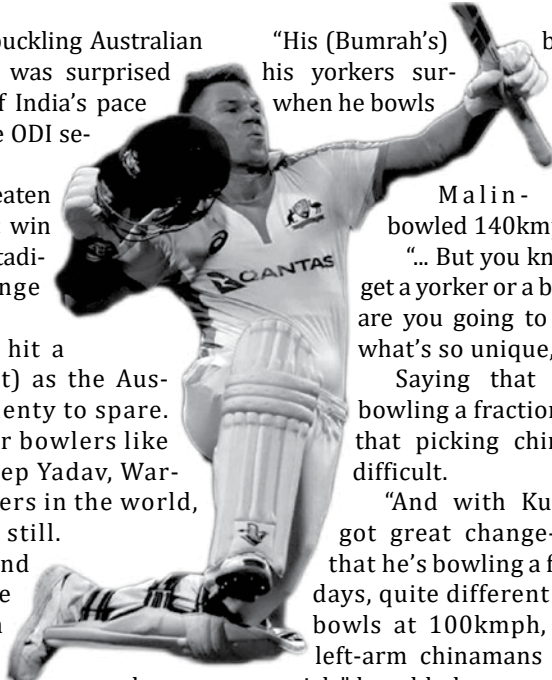
MUMBAI, JAN 15 (PTI): Swashbuckling Australian opener David Warner says he was surprised by the yorkers and bouncers of India's pace spearhead Jasprit Bumrah in the ODI series-opener here.

Warner, who remained unbeaten on 128 in his team's 10-wicket win against India at the Wankhede Stadium, negated Bumrah's challenge well on Tuesday.

Skipper Aaron Finch also hit a blazing hundred (110 not out) as the Australians romped home with plenty to spare.

Asked how he prepares for bowlers like Bumrah and chinaman Kuldeep Yadav, Warner, one of the best left-handers in the world, said it was all about keeping still.

"It's about being nice and still. I can't imagine someone like Brett Lee running in from almost the boundary and just sort of staggering in there and all of a sudden bowl 150kmph, it takes a while to get used to and that's great skill from Bumrah.



"His (Bumrah's) yorkers surprise you, when he bowls

bouncers surprise you, prise you and then the change-up it's very, very difficult, it's like when Lasith Malin-

ga at his prime, he bowled 140kmph and swung them.

"... But you knew you were going to get a yorker or a bouncer but it was how are you going to play that and that's what's so unique," added Warner.

Saying that he finds Kuldeep's bowling a fraction slower, he admitted that picking chinaman bowlers was difficult.

"And with Kuldeep (Yadav), he's got great change-ups as well. I find that he's bowling a fraction slower these days, quite different to Rashid Khan who bowls at 100kmph, under lights I think left-arm chinamans are very difficult to pick," he added.

Both Bumrah and Kuldeep had an off day at the Wankhede and would be raring to go when the two teams face off each other at Rajkot.

I feel like a kid again, says 36-year-old Bravo WI comeback

PORT OF SPAIN, JAN 14 (PTI): The battle-hardened Dwayne Bravo, at 36, returns to the West Indies squad "feeling like a kid", more than three years after playing his last international.

For Bravo, who fell out with his board following a bitter dispute over the then pay structure in 2014 leading to his eventual phasing out, the path back into international cricket was an arduous one.

The flamboyant all-rounder played his last match for West Indies in any format in September 2016.

"It's a great feeling. I feel like a kid again when

I first get a call from (West Indies' chairman of selectors Roger Harper) that welcome back to the team and play international cricket and they were looking forward to have me back," Bravo said in a radio interview with Trinidad's '1955 FM'.

He is the oldest member in West Indies' T20 squad for the assignments against Ireland.

Bravo said he has been thinking about the Ireland series since coming out of retirement in December.

"It is something that was always on my mind since the change of leadership and stuff. So just happy I get the oppor-

tunity to represent the region again and I am looking forward to doing my best."

Bravo announced his retirement from international cricket in October 2018 but continued playing franchise cricket.

Later, in December 2019, he came out of T20 International retirement to make himself available for selection in the lead up to the 2020 ICC men's T20 World Cup, which will take place in October-November.

He believes that West Indies lack a proper death-overs specialist and he could fill that void.

"Recently that is

where West Indies did falter," Bravo said.

"If you look at the 50-overs World Cup, if you look at the series in India, both in T20Is and in ODIs, we lack a really, really proper death-overs specialist."

Asked about the prospect of sealing a spot in West Indies' T20 World Cup squad, Bravo said he's not thinking too far ahead.

"There's this series and there's a Sri Lanka series right after," he said.

"I guess if I do well in this series, chances are I might be selected for the next series. It is just a matter of playing it by ear, series by series.

Magnus Carlsen breaks record for longest unbeaten streak in chess history

**PAUL MACINNES
WIJK AAN ZEE [NETHERLAND], 15 JAN [THEGUARDIAN]:** Magnus Carlsen completed another record-breaking achievement when he stretched his unbeaten record to 111 successive games. The 29-year-old world champion drew against Jorden van Foreest in the fourth round of the Wijk aan Zee tournament to edge past the 110 classical games unbeaten, set by the Russian Sergei Tiviakov in 2005.

Carlsen's record was achieved against a higher calibre of opponent than Tiviakov, with an average Fide rating of greater than 2700 compared with the 2476 faced by the Russian.

Previously Carlsen had suggested he might consider the streak truly broken only after another two matches, as he was disinclined to count two victories he had registered in the Norwegian league. But asked after his victory whether he still held that position, Carlsen demurred.

"I'm all for [claiming the streak] too," he said.

"I consider my streak against elite opposition is 109 and against good opposition is 111 and I am happy about that."

Observers had been speculating that the pressure of securing the streak had begun to get to Carlsen after he drew the first three games of this 13-match round-robin tournament. Against Van Foreest the world champion went for a more aggressive approach, which almost backfired.

Playing black, Carlsen chose the Morphy variation of the Two Knights defence as his gambit but his Dutch opponent got the upper hand amid an exchange of queens.

"I was in definite

trouble," Carlsen said afterwards. "I was trying to bluff him a bit in the opening and I thought I'm getting these positions with bishops and some initiative with a pawn. Then he went g4 [to take Carlsen's queen] and I realised I was lost."

Carlsen fought back and, with the option to play an exchange sacrifice, Van Foreest played cautiously, letting the champion back in the game. "He played pretty well but he should have enacted the exchange," Carlsen said. "I would have been in huge, huge trouble."

FA Cup draw: Shrews leave it late to seal fourth-round date with Liverpool

LONDON, 15 JAN [THEGUARDIAN]: Aaron Pierre scored an 89th-minute winner to give League One Shrewsbury a 1-0 victory over the Championship side Bristol City in their FA Cup third-round replay and set up a meeting at home to the Premier League leaders, Liverpool. Sam Ricketts, the Shrews' manager, is going in with a positive mindset, and said: "They have weakness like any team. We will have to ride our luck and, when we get chances, have to try and take them."

Watford will play three games in six days following the postponement of their FA Cup third-round replay at Tranmere due to heavy rainfall.

The match has been rescheduled for Thursday 23 January. Before then they play two Premier League games: on Saturday against Tottenham and then Tuesday's pivotal game against Aston Villa.

Tranmere had no option but to postpone the replay after heavy rain over the last three days had left the Prenton Park pitch unplayable.

A club statement read: "Although the surface of the pitch is removed and re-sowed every year, the underlying sub-structure is around

30 years old. Despite its age, until this season the pitch has coped admirably, even with Liverpool U23s (and latterly LFCW in place of the U23s) playing on the pitch, because since 2015 we have invested in putting fibre into it every season to make the surface more durable, and have used pitch lights to enable the grass to grow in areas where the natural sunlight is poor [mostly in front of the Kop Stand].

"In order to give us the best chance of getting the Watford game on, we also hired in an additional specialist pitch covering which allows air to circulate underneath it to dry the pitch. Unfortunately, even this was not enough in the face of Storm Brendan.

Nor is it an issue of money. We have spent many tens of thousands of pounds on pitch covers, a new verti-drainer to allow the more regular verti-draining of the pitch and new grow-lights. We have also had the grounds staff working sometimes through the night as needed to allow games to go ahead. We are of course very disappointed that our pitch is not what it should be this season, but we hope this will enable people to better understand what the problem is and how it will be dealt with."

Tvesa, Ananya share lead after first round

MUMBAI, JAN 15 (PTI): Tvesa Malik and Ananya Datar shot a one-over 71 each to share the lead at the end of the first round of the second leg of the Hero Women's Pro Golf Tour, here on Wednesday.

Making her first appearance in 2020, Tvesa had three birdies against four bogeys, while Ananya after one birdie and three bogeys picked a second birdie on the 18th to draw level with the former.

The pair is one shot ahead of the experienced Neha Tripathi (72) while Saaniya Sharma (73) is lying fourth.

Trimann Saluja and Siddhi Kapoor shared the fifth place with cards of 74 each, while amateur

Pranavi Urs, runner-up in Pune last week, had a disappointing front nine with a triple bogey and two bogeys as she carded 75 in the first round.

Pranavi, Shriya Vivek and Ishvari Prasanna are Tied-seventh, while Afshan Fatima and Oviya Reddi are Tied-10th with 76.

Tvesa had a good start with one birdie and no bogeys till she came to the eighth tee. She dropped a shot on eighth but birdied the ninth to turn in one-under. She slipped on the back nine with bogeys on 12th and 15th.

A birdie on Par-5 16th got her back to even only to give that shot away with a bogey on 17th.

Iran's Rouhani calls for 'national unity' after jet downing

President Hassan Rouhani on Wednesday called for "national unity" and flagged the need for changes to the way Iran is run after the accidental downing of a Ukrainian airliner.

Demonstrations have been held for four successive days in Tehran after the armed forces admitted to shooting down the Boeing 737 in a catastrophic error last week.

The air disaster claimed the lives of all 176 passengers and crew on board, mostly Iranians and Canadians and including many students.

Rouhani also said Iranians want "diversity" as he urged the electoral authorities to refrain from disqualifying would-be candidates for a February 21 general election.

"The people are our masters and we are its servants. The servant must address the master with modesty, precision and honesty," Rouhani said after a cabinet meeting.

"The people want to make sure that the authorities treat them with sincerity, integrity and trust," he said in the remarks aired live on state television.

Rouhani also said the armed forces should "apologise" and fully explain what happened in the air disaster, which came hours after they fired a wave of missiles at US troops stationed in Iraq.

The missile attack was launched in retaliation for a US drone strike that killed Iran's most prominent general, Qasem Soleimani, who headed the Revolutionary Guards' foreign operations arm.

At least 59 mourners were trampled to death at a funeral procession for Soleimani in his hometown of Kerman, in south-east Iran, on January 7.

Hong Kong protest shoppers show their true colours

Seven months of unrest have taken a heavy toll on many Hong Kong businesses, but pro-democracy protesters are now seeking to reward shops and restaurants that support their cause by building a "yellow" economy.

In contrast, "blue" pro-government and pro-China businesses are frequent targets for vandalism or boycotts.

At Fu Kee Noodles in Wan Chai, diners slurp wonton under the watchful gaze of a gas mask-wearing Pepe the Frog, which has become a mascot of the pro-democracy movement.

"This is a yellow shop, the boss supports the protesters, so we decided to come," said a 47-year-old advertising employee calling himself Gilbert.

"The most important thing in Hong Kong now is that we need to help each other, especially when the government does not help us."

Posters and post-it notes with pro-democracy messages cover the wall by the cashier.

Owner Kwong Chun-hin, 30, told AFP he hopes the yellow-blue tagging will become a trend "be-

US, China set to sign vital trade truce

The world's two dominant economic powers, the United States and China, are poised to sign a trade truce Wednesday that will allow businesses around the globe to breathe a sigh of relief.

Although tariffs on hundreds of billions of dollars of two-way trade will remain in place, likely at least until after President Donald Trump faces reelection in November, some of the uncertainty will go away.

And just as he is about to face an impeachment trial in the US Senate, Trump will be able to crow about a victory with his "phase one" agreement that includes pledges from China to beef up purchases of American crops and products, at least in the short term.

That has boosted stock markets worldwide in recent days, as

it takes the threat of new tariffs off the table for now.

"He's delivering on all his promises, and he is building a great economy for American companies and American workers," Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin said late Tuesday on the eve of the signing.

"I think phase one is an enormous step in the right direction," he said in an interview on the Fox Business network.

However, the most difficult issues remain to be dealt with in "phase two" negotiations, including massive subsidies for state industry and forced technology transfer.

And even the achievements in the deal take the relationship back to where it was before Trump took office, restoring elements he scrapped.



- Whither tariffs? -

"The US-China phase-one deal is essentially a trade truce, with large state-directed purchases attached," economist Mary Lovely said in an analysis. "The truce is good news for the US and the world economy."

Still, the trade expert with the Peterson Institute for International Economics, cautioned that "we will continue to see the impact of this in slower investment and

higher business costs."

US officials have said they will release details of the agreement set to be signed at a White House ceremony on Wednesday.

After announcing the deal December 13, the US canceled a damaging round of new tariffs that were due to kick in December 15, and promised to slash in half the 15 percent tariffs on \$120 billion imposed September 1, on consum-

er goods like clothing.

Mnuchin dismissed a Bloomberg report that the initial agreement could include provisions to roll back more tariffs on China after the election.

"The tariffs will stay in place until there is a phase two. If the president gets phase two quickly, he will consider releasing tariffs. If not, there won't be any tariff relief," Mnuchin said on Bloomberg TV.

Philippines struggles to keep evacuees away from volcano

Philippine authorities were struggling Wednesday to keep thousands of evacuees from returning to homes in areas threatened by a feared massive eruption of Taal volcano.

Some 40,000 people have taken refuge in shelters since the volcano let loose a towering burst of ash and jets of lava on Sunday.

Police subsequently set up no-go zones and mandatory evacuations in at-risk towns around Taal, which is about 65 kilometres (40 miles) south of Manila.

But days later locals

are losing patience and demanding access, even as the nation's seismological agency warns the volcano could unleash a more powerful eruption at any time.

Melvin Casilao said he and his neighbours in the town of Talisay need to feed their livestock, remove the thick ash from their roofs and pull their boats from the water.

Their community is on the shore of a vast lake that rings Taal, a popular tourist attraction despite being one of the nation's most active volcanoes.

"It has nothing to do with the election or anything else."

- What's in a deal? -

Washington said Beijing agreed to import, over two years, \$200 billion of US products above the levels in 2017, before Trump launched his offensive.

Trump has repeatedly touted the trade pact as a boon for American farmers, saying China will buy \$40 to \$50 billion in agricultural goods.

US farmers were hit hard by the tariff war -- notably on soybeans which saw exports to China plunge to just \$3 billion from more than \$12 billion in 2017. The Trump administration paid out \$28 billion in aid to farmers in the last two years.

But many economists question whether they have the capacity to meet that demand.

And Lovely raised a question about the wis-

dom on relying so heavily on the Chinese market.

"It also means Chinese retaliation could be reinstated, dampening farmers' willingness to invest to meet the very hard export targets in the deal."

US and Chinese officials say the agreement includes protections for intellectual property, and addresses financial services and foreign exchange while including a provision for dispute resolution, which Mnuchin said will be binding for the first time.

Trump in August formally accused China of manipulating its currency to gain an advantage in trade and offset the impact of the tariffs.

The label was removed earlier this week.

The deal also restores a twice-yearly dialogue process that previous administrations conducted regularly but that Trump scrapped.

Bushfire smoke hits Australian Open again, but rain raises hopes

Bushfire smoke disrupted the Australian Open build-up Wednesday for a second straight day to deepen concerns about the fate of the year's first tennis Grand Slam, but a cool change late in the day raised hopes of rain soaking the blazes.

The toxic haze that descended on Melbourne, where the Australian Open is due to begin next week, drifted down from out-of-control fires that have endured for months in eastern and southern Australia.

The bushfires, unprecedented in their duration and intensity, have claimed 28 lives while raising awareness about the type of disasters that scientists say the world will increasingly face due to global warming.

In Melbourne, a picturesque bayside city famed as one of the most liveable in the world, the bushfire smoke raised pollution levels to "hazardous" at the start of the week.

The bleak conditions continued on Wednesday, with residents donning face masks while dozens of flights were cancelled at Melbourne airport because of poor visibility.

Australian Open organisers pushed ahead

with qualifying rounds on Tuesday.

But dramatic scenes of players dropping to their knees and choking, and one retiring due to the smoke, led to complaints about them being forced to stay out on court.

With the air still tasting and smelling of smoke on Wednesday morning, organisers suspended qualifying rounds until 1:00 pm (0200 GMT) on Wednesday.

Racing Victoria also cancelled two horse race meetings on Wednesday. With the pollution levels improving slightly, Australian Open organisers restarted play on Wednesday afternoon under better but still hazy conditions.

- Rain hopes -
Thundery weather then swept in late on Wednesday afternoon, bringing heavy rain that forced play to be cancelled for the day but

raised expectations of clearer air for Thursday.

There were also hopes that the rain would extend to other parts of southern and eastern Australia where dozens of fires are still raging out of control and threatening to devastate many more rural towns.

Some bushfire and drought-hit areas could see 50-100 millimetres (2-4 inches) of rain, the Bureau of Meteorology said.

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THE WESTS! The couple, Kim Kardashian & Kanye West spends time court side at the Los Angeles Lakers and Cleveland Cavaliers game at the Staples Center in Los Angeles.

Documentary on Legendary 1970s L.A. Session Musicians Coming From ‘Wrecking Crew’ Director

Director Denny Tedesco scored with his 2008 film “The Wrecking Crew,” his critically praised documentary on the legendary session musicians of the ‘60s who performed with everyone from the Beach Boys and Phil Spector to Frank Sinatra and Elvis Presley — so it makes perfect sense that he’s begun work on a film about legendary 1970s session musicians called “Immediate Family.”

This crew, which backed Linda Ronstadt, James Taylor, Jackson Browne, Warren Zevon and countless others, includes guitarists Danny Kortchmar and Waddy Wachtel, bassist Leland Sklar, drummer Russ Kunkel and others.

Kortchmar, Sklar and Kunkel made up three-quarters of The Section, known for their studio and live work in support of some of the top selling singer/songwriters and solo singers of the era, as well as their own instrumental albums. (They were later joined by Wachtel.) Individually or together, in addition to the artists listed above, the musicians worked with Carole King, Keith Richards, Neil Young, David Crosby, Graham Nash, Don Henley, Phil Collins, Bonnie Raitt, Stevie Nicks, Bryan Ferry, Lyle Lovett and Jimmy Buffett, and producers Lou Adler and Peter Asher — many of whom have already been interviewed for “Immediate Family.” In the documentary, many

of these artists talk about their history with these musicians and what they brought to their songs.

And while the doc does look back, all of these musicians remain active, five decades into their careers — in fact, Kortchmar, Sklar, Kunkel and Wachtel have again teamed up, joined by guitarist Steve Postell, to perform live and record as The Immediate Family.

Kortchmar quips, “we’re like a cover band that plays all originals,” referring to the band’s repertoire of hits they either wrote or co-wrote for artists like Browne (“Tender is the Night” and “Somebody’s Baby”), Taylor (“Honey Don’t Leave L.A.”), Henley (“Dirty Laundry” and “All She Wants to Do is Dance”), Zevon (“Werewolves of London” and “Things to Do in Denver When You’re Dead”) and others.

The Immediate Family documentary is produced by Greg Richling and Jonathan Sheldon of Pfonetic, producer Jack Piatt and co-executive producer Elmo Lovano, both of Jammcard, executive producer Cliff Burnstein, co-executive producer Caroline Hoste, and executive producers Matthew Helderman and Luke Taylor of BondIt Media Capital. Sales agents/EPs Dan Braun, Josh Braun and Ben Braun of Submarine are representing the film globally.

The Lord of the Rings TV series confirms main cast: Meet the fellowship

At long last, the main cast of the Lord of the Rings TV series has officially been assembled by the streaming platform.

EW previously reported Game of Thrones vet Robert Aramayo would star in a leading role as Beldor, and the casting was confirmed during Tuesday’s Television Critics Association presentation, along with 14 others.

A Confession’s Owain Arthur, Hotel Mumbai’s Nazanin Boniadi, The Proposition’s Tom Budge, His Dark Materials’ Morfydd Clark, The Undoing’s Ismael Cruz Córdova (last seen in The Mandalorian), The Gallows Act II’s Ema Horvath, The Cry’s Markella Kavenagh, Birdsong’s Joseph Mawle, Tyroe Muhafidin of web series Caravan, stage actor Sophia Nomvete, Wanderlust’s Megan Richards, I Am the Night’s Dylan Smith, Medici: Masters of Florence’s Charlie Vickers, and A Very English Scandal’s Daniel Weyman were also confirmed.

Production is set to commence in February. “After undertaking an extensive

global search, we are delighted finally to reveal the first group of brilliant performers who will take part in Amazon’s The Lord of the Rings series,” show-runners J.D. Payne and Patrick McKay said in a statement. “These exceptionally talented women and men are more than just our actors: they are the newest members of an ever-expanding creative family that is now working tirelessly to bring Middle-earth to life anew for fans and audiences worldwide.”

The TV series is set during The Second Age of Middle-earth, taking place long before the events of J.R.R. Tolkien’s Lord of the Rings book trilogy and the adventures of Aragorn, Gandalf, and Frodo. A Middle-earth map, released by Amazon in March, showed the lost island of Númenor, which suggests it will have some role to play in the show.



The Lord of the Rings was given an early season 2 renewal, which came with the delay of season 1 as the writers worked out the additional scripts. Jurassic World: Fallen Kingdom helmer J.A. Bayona directs the first two episodes.

Serving as executive producers alongside Payne, McKay, and Bayona are Lindsey Weber (10 Cloverfield Lane), Bruce Richmond (Game of Thrones), Gene Kelly (Boardwalk Empire), Sharon Tal Yguado, Gennifer Hutchison (Breaking Bad), Jason Cahill (The Sopranos), and Justin Doble (Stranger Things).

Through three games the Jeopardy! Greatest of All Time Tournament was everything longtime fans of the show had hoped for, as Ken Jennings, James Holzhauer, and Brad Rutter dazzled audiences with a staggering command of trivia knowledge, some big wagering, and exciting matches.

Night four was more of the same, producing one of the most dramatic moments in the show’s history as Holzhauer desperately fought to keep Jennings from a coronation on Tuesday. The result was a Final Jeopardy that will be talked about for years to come, and at the end of the day, a \$1 million prize and the title of the greatest Jeopardy! player ever for Ken Jennings.



Jennings won thanks to some big betting in the first game of the night, giving him a considerable lead he was able to hang on to despite a frantic challenge from Holzhauer, who did everything he could and actually had a chance to extend the tournament another night if he knew his Shakespeare. But before all that happened, a thrilling hour of prime time game show started with a greeting from Alex Trebek, who fully understood the weight of what could happen on Tuesday.

“If this were a sporting event I would every comfortable saying we are about to go into sudden death overtime,” Trebek said before things got underway.

We also got a shot of the trophy the winner will be given, much like when the Stanley Cup is wheeled out in a venue where an NHL team can win the title. With that on everyone’s minds, the night got underway. The first Jeopardy round featured categories that were all ABC television show names. Holzhauer went first and thought Stump Town had the Daily Double, but lost control of the board searching for it. Jennings then found it in The Good Doctor for 1,000, betting it all (3,800) and getting a tough question about the Egyptian god Imhotep correct. Brad finally got on the board halfway through the round, but Ken dominated much of it thanks to his double up, ending the first Jeopardy round with 12,800. Holzhauer was second with 4,400 while Brad was once again in third place with 2,400.

Brad went first in Double Jeopardy once again, and once again he found another Daily Double and a chance to tie James in second place with a question about British Stuff. He wagered his entire 4,800, but guessed English scientist Michael Faraday, not the correct answer, James Clark Maxwell. Once again dropped to zero and absolutely snakebit on Daily Doubles, Rutter was effectively shut out of the match once again.

Holzhauer continued to pick off questions here and there, but again it was Jennings who got the final Daily Double of the match, again beating Holzhauer at his own game. Jennings went all-in on his 15,200, drawing gasps from the crowd as Holzhauer was just behind him in second place. His question about The Rose Tattoo doubled his score to a staggering 30,400 and at the time it felt like his title may already be wrapped up, but Holzhauer kept playing and largely kept control of the board.

By the time Final Jeopardy arrived, it was a game again: Jennings had added just 2,400 to his score to sit at 32,800, while Holzhauer had come back to within striking distance at 22,800 and Rutter had 2,000. The Final Jeopardy category “It’s All Greece To Me” was tough, with Rutter getting it wrong and dropping back to zero. Holzhauer was right, with Arcadia, and bet relatively conservative to add 34,181. Jennings was right, too, and in a stunning move he went all-in once more. His 65,600 almost certainly sealed up the victory, unless Holzhauer had a huge second game and bridged the gap enough to steal a victory.

In game two, Ken found the Daily Double

with just 1,000 on the board, a huge win for him because it limited Holzhauer’s ability to gain money quickly. He didn’t get a response in before the buzzer sounded, but it was a win for him no matter what. With no way of doubling up big, he needed to get a lot of questions right and hope for the best in Double Jeopardy. He didn’t do too bad, ending the Jeopardy round in the lead with 8,200. Kennings was

close behind with 5,600 while Brad got just three questions right in the round for 1,000 points. It’s unclear whether some gamesmanship was at play here, as Holzhauer was basically the only hope to continue the match any further, but it did keep things interesting.

Brad was first again in the second Double Jeopardy of the night, and curiously went for a 400 question, perhaps another bit of gamesmanship. But Jennings immediately went Daily Double hunting, and he found it in Vice Presidents for 2,000

“There’s a case to be made for a small wager here,” Jennings said, though Holzhauer disagreed, drawing laughs from the audience. He wagered 5,000 and got the question right, upping his lead to 13,800.

Holzhauer desperately went searching for the last Daily Double to get back into the game, and finally found it in Surprise Me, Trebek for 1600. It was a question about the U.S. immigration ban in 2017. Holzhauer had no choice but to go all-in, and a pained expression came over his face when he answered the landlocked nation of Chad. He could only laugh as he seemingly surprised himself by guessing right — Holzhauer had saved his game, and potentially extended the tournament in the process.

It was far from over, though, and Holzhauer needed to keep pressing. He did, adding another 3,600 to his total while Jennings raced to make up ground. Holzhauer finished the Double Jeopardy round with a whopping 44,000 and took 34,181 from his first game into the last question. Jennings had 23,000 in game two and took 65,600 into Final Jeopardy from his first match, while Brad got a handful of questions right in Double Jeopardy, but remained largely out of the picture and took just 1,400 into Final Jeopardy total.

Final Jeopardy was a clue from the category Shakespeare’s Tragedies. With both Jennings and Holzhauer essentially needing to double up, the wagers were clear. It came down to who knew the answer. The trophy was on the podium for the question, which was: “He has 272 speeches, the most of any non-title character in a Shakespeare tragedy.”

Rutter answered first, “You’re the best, Alex!” He risked nothing, ending with 1,400. Jennings answer was Iago, which was correct. He wagered nothing, a bold strategy but one that doomed him if Holzhauer answered correctly. His 88,600 could be enough if Holzhauer didn’t get the question right. Holzhauer raised his eyebrows when the camera came to him, but he answered wrong. It was not Horatio, which he answered. He wagered it all, but it didn’t matter, and as a result, the trophy and \$1 million went to Jennings.

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Aries:

Let 2020 be a big year for you—the year you call your power back. Don’t let anybody shame you for that larger-than-life vision, Aries. You know what you are capable of and you don’t need an outsider to validate you. This week, you’re also getting in touch with that charismatic side of you, which in turn will help you inspire change and get people on your team. Remember, disappointments are a thing of the past.

Taurus:

You are in your most natural element this week: earthy and creative. Tap into the gift of transforming thoughts into things. On the career front, you may feel inspired to invest in or grow your own business. Use your problem-solving abilities to come up with practical solutions. You want to give the world a product they can use on a day-to-day basis.

Gemini:

What you are experiencing right now is a classic case of ‘glass empty syndrome’. Once again, bring your attention back to that gratitude list. Give

thanks for all the things that have been working out for you. As for the lost opportunity, know that it was not in alignment with your greatest good. Remember, happiness is our natural state of being. Becoming an observer of what’s coming up will help you rise above the storm.

Cancer:

Working with an organisation comes with its own share of ups and downs. But you don’t have to get sucked into the drama. Draw boundaries where necessary as you focus on the tasks that awaken a feeling of joy within you. The best part of this chapter: you are blessed with co-workers who understand your pain and are on the same page as you.

Leo:

“The quieter you become, the more you are able to hear.” What are Rumi’s words awakening within you? It’s time to consider a silent retreat, Leo. If you don’t have the means to escape your ‘responsibilities’, meditate and observe silence in your own space. In these moments, you will have clarity on the divine plan that’s unfolding for you. Does that mean you will find the answers to life’s most com-

plex riddles? Yes and no. But you will learn that sometimes it is best to let some things go.

Virgo:

Victory isn’t about being on the top. It’s about the sense of fulfillment you derive from doing the things you were once incapable of. This is a big breakthrough moment for you, Virgo. Trust that the right people are taking notice of your work. What you need to remember once the high wears off: you have a long road ahead of you.

Libra:

We have seven chakras in the body, starting from the base of our spine. The third chakra, also known as the ‘manipura’ or solar plexus, is situated a few inches above the navel. This is your core, Libra. The reservoir from which you draw your strength from. A good way to clear the blocks that are holding you back from embracing your own power is to visualise a ball of luminescent golden yellow light emanating from this point, and increasing in size until it forms a globe around your entire body.

Scorpio:

Everything around you may be in a state of chaos,

but that doesn’t mean you have to be. Today, you’re being asked to tap into your intellectual abilities and play the role of the mediator. Inspire the team to move past their ego selves and focus on finding a middle ground. Some of you may have to be the bearer of the bad news? If your actions are in alignment with the highest good, you have nothing to feel guilty about.

Sagittarius:

When you find yourself unable to make a decision, ask yourself the question: “Will this action bring me one step closer to my destination?” Keep the long-term goals in mind—always. Remember, you are doing this for you. There is no need to give yourself guilt over how other people will perceive this move. Some of you could be going through an energetic shift on the homefront, through a change in occupants or otherwise. Giving your studio a one-of-a-kind update may be something you’re feeling inspired to invest in.

Capricorn:

Daydreaming provides a wonderful escape from reality, nourishes the creative aspects of our minds,

and distracts us from the so-called problems. But if you’re unable to turn this vision into reality, you know there’s a loophole in your plan, Capricorn. What this chapter of your life requires you to do: break things down into small, realistic goals.

Aquarius:

Things to remember as you go about your day: #1 The gift of the gab is one of your major strengths. #2 Your ideas, like you, are unique and one-of-a-kind. #3 You are under no obligation to please the peasants. Let’s admit it, you always face resistance from those around you until they see the magic. What’s new this time around? You do you, Aquarius. Don’t be bogged down by the expectations of those who don’t share your vision.

Pisces:

Less is more, Pisces—a philosophy you are just beginning to realise. Have you been using your material possessions as a crutch to feel good about yourself? Yet again, the cards are urging you to minimise wherever necessary and let go of the things that are adding to the noise. Consciously create a life that feels purposeful to you.