



SDF BEGINS CAMPAIGNING IN NORTH SIKKIM

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THE COLLAPSE OF THE US-RUSSIA INF TREATY MAKES ARMS CONTROL A GLOBAL PRIORITY

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SummitTIMES

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ON TOP OF THE NEWS

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Dog-bite cases on the rise in Singtam

YOGEN THATAL

SINGTAM, 09 JAN:

Even as seasonal illnesses keep the staff at the district hospital here busy, what is also developing as a worrying phenomenon is the rise in number of dog-bite cases from Singtam and surrounding areas.

These numbers have risen noticeably, and added to the mix are reports of people coming in with cat and monkey bites as well.

"It is a very serious situation and we are scared to go out even for a walk and every time we are scared that our children could become the next victims of street dogs," complained a mother whose son was bitten by a street dog in Singtam bazaar recently.

PM plays local newspapers for giving prominence to other issues than development

CHANGSARI (ASSAM), FEB 9 (PTI): Prime Minister Narendra Saturday took a dig at the local newspapers saying that instead of highlighting development works they were giving prominence to other issues.

"When I saw today's newspapers in the morning, I thought there is something.....but people are still coming in thousands to attend this rally," the Prime Minister ambiguously said about the prevailing situation in the state.

"People are still coming in thousands and next time a bigger field has to be arranged. In recent times, I have addressed four rallies in North East recently and the enthusiasm in Assam is increasing with each rally breaking its earlier record but today's mammoth gathering has broken all previous records", Modi said as he began his speech.

"I am, however, confident that the papers published from Guwahati tomorrow will not carry any of these details. You must be knowing the reason why," he chuckled.

"The reporters present here are working very hard but their newspaper owners will not allow their hard work to bear result," he said.

"The love and blessings, I receive in Assam is due to Ma Kamkhya and nothing is possible without her benevolence," he added.

The Prime Minister, peppering his speech with sentences in Assamese, paid rich tributes to states icons Srimanata

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Unemployed Agri and Horti graduates demand vacancies; No direct recruitments in 23 years, they complain

Accuse Department of flouting service rule

SAGAR CHETTRI

GANGTOK, 09 FEB:

Sikkim Unemployed Agriculture and Horticulture Graduate Association [SUHGA] today alleged that no direct recruitments have taken place under the Agriculture and Horticulture Departments for the past 23 years. They said this with particular reference to posts of Horticulture/Agriculture Inspectors, Agriculture Development Officer, Horticulture Development Officer and Watershed Development Officer.

The Association has also accused the department of flouting Sikkim Service Rules.

Addressing a press conference, a SUHGA representative, Bikash

Subba, said that as per the Sikkim Agriculture Service Rule 1994 and Sikkim State Subordinate Service Rule 2001, any vacancy in agriculture and horticulture department has to be filled in the ratio of 50-50 which means 50% vacancies by promotion and 50% by direct recruitment.

On the same, he stated that 57 inspectors were promoted to ADO, HDO and WDO ranks even though they did not even meet the eligibility criteria. There was no matching direct recruitment of 57 inspectors.

More recently, 77 VLWs were promoted to the post of Agriculture and Horticulture Inspectors with no direct recruitment in this case as



well, he added.

The Association is therefore demanding creation of vacancies for more than 77 posts of Horticulture and Agriculture Inspectors and 40 posts of ADO, HDO and WDO.

"We are not asking for jobs but want ser-

vice rules to be followed strictly and vacancies to be created for us. Even in the recent posts of agriculture marketing assistants created under One Family One Job scheme, no technical persons have been appointed," said Mr Subba.

This despite the fact

that 800 Agriculture and Horticulture graduates continue waiting for recruitments to be announced.

He further informed that when approached, the Department said that new vacancies were not possible because of the regularization of employ-

ees who have served for more than 5 years.

"If you are looking at vote banks, 800 is a larger number than 77," he added.

It is due to these reasons that BSc, MSc and PhD holders in agriculture and horticulture have not been getting op-

portunities to use their technical knowledge for the welfare of the society, Mr Subba further said.

The Association has also submitted a written memorandum on its demands at a meeting held on Friday between Secretaries, officials of Agriculture and Horticulture Departments and representatives of the association.

The department has assured to provide the minutes of the meeting to the association on Monday.

Mr Subba said that the future course of action of the association depends upon the decision of the concerned departments.

The department has assured of a positive response and to make a proposal on the demands which will be forwarded to the Department of Personnel.

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SKM smells SDF conspiracy to use bureaucracy to reject Golay's nomination papers

SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 09 FEB:

Sikkim Krantikari Morcha spokesperson Jacob Khaling today cast aspersions that the SDF was plotting a conspiracy to have the candidature of SKM party president, PS Tamang [Golay], rejected during the scrutiny process.

He insisted that Mr Tamang can contest the elections as per law, but the ruling party could conspire to have his candidature rejected in the scrutiny by using a Returning Officer of its favour and influence.

Addressing a press conference here today, Mr Khaling claimed that SKM has supporting doc-

uments and facts on Mr Tamang's right to contest the elections despite his having served jail in a corruption conviction.

He went on to allege that SDF spokesperson KT Gyaltsen has been trying to mislead the people on this issue by misinterpreting the law.

He also referred to comments by other SDF leaders that Mr Tamang's nomination papers would get rejected by the Returning Officers during scrutiny.

Such statements by SDF leaders, he argues suggest of a constitutional emergency situation where SDF will use bureaucrats of its influence.

Bailey bridge over Mantam lake collapses



SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 09 FEB:

The Bailey bridge constructed over Mantam Lake, Dzongu in North Sikkim collapsed on Thursday night following rainfall throughout the evening. Local residents learnt of the collapse on Friday morning.

The end of the bridge towards Tingvong side has collapsed. The bridge was inaugurated in March last year, two years

after a landslide at Shyok Bhir on 13 Aug 2016 had created the Mantam lake and cut off 11 villages under Sakyong-Pentong and Tingvong GPUs.

The motorable Bailey bridge was constructed by Roads and Bridges Department. Prior to that, motorized rafts were plying supplies and villagers across the artificial lake.

The villagers have alleged poor quality of work for the bridge collapse.

Kunga Nima threatens legal action if Dahal does not prove how SKM MLAs have thwarted LT seats



SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 09 FEB:

Sikkim Krantikari Morcha acting president, Shyari MLA Kunga Nima Lepcha, has challenged Sikkim Democratic Front party spokesperson, Bhim

Dahal, to prove his allegation that SKM MLAs were responsible for the delay of securing seat reservation for Limboos and Tamangs within 24 hours.

He has threatened to take legal action against Mr Dahal if he fails to prove his allegations within the stipulated

time frame.

Addressing a press conference here today, Mr Lepcha demanded that the ruling party spokesperson prove his allegations or face the legal challenge.

He insisted that SKM has been working for the immediate reservation of seats for LTs in the State Assembly. He informed that SKM MLAs have been requesting the Centre for an early resolution to the reservation demand and added that the Sangha MLA even

requested the Prime Minister on 16 April 2018 to bring a Bill in Parliament for Limboo and Tamang seats.

The condemnation was also echoed by SKM vice-president Birendra Tamling who has counter-alleged that the SDF government was fully responsible for the delay instead.

On the same, he claimed that the State government had not shown any interest when the Delimitation Commission asked the State

government about LT seats during the delimitation of constituencies process in 2006.

He added that the SDF government has not passed any resolution on the seat reservation issue in the State Assembly to send to the Centre till date.

Mr Tamling stated that state government has not been sincere on the seat reservation issue. He informed that in a letter to the Union Home Minister in 2007, the

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SKM demands grow to 35; Submitted to CS along with 25 Feb deadline

Demands also posted to CM and Governor

SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 09 FEB:

A Sikkim Krantikari Morcha delegation led by its acting president, Kunga Nima Lepcha, submitted a 35-point list of demands of the party with the Chief Secretary on Saturday. The party has also sent copies of its demands through registered post to the Governor and Chief Minister.

Addressing a press conference here today, SKM spokesperson Jacob Khaling mentioned that five more demands have been added in the list of

30 demands raised by the SKM president, PS Tamang [Golay] with the State government.

"We also tried to submit the list of demands to the Chief Minister's Office but we were asked to first submit the list to the Chief Secretary but even after the submission of the demands to the CS, the CMO refused to take our demands," he informed.

He claimed that the CMO was afraid to accept an official memorandum from a registered political party and insisted that this proves that the government does not have sound political ethics.

"SKM is compelled to place these demands with the gov-

ernment because of the false assurances of the SDF government and for always blaming the opposition for its failure in fulfilling the demands of the people," Mr Khaling explained.

He read out the charter of 35 demands and reiterated the ultimatum served to the government to fulfil by 25 February failing which the SKM will call for a state-wide bandh from 26 February.

"The call for a bandh is not new to Sikkim as SDF party had called a strike in 1993 when in the Opposition and again in 2012 when it was in the government," he said.

On the same, he added that SKM also wanted to use this

democratic weapon to secure justice for different sections of the State.

"If the SDF party does not try to suppress our movement through violence and other forceful acts, our state-bandh will be very peaceful. In case of any unrest and violence during the bandh, the State Home Minister will be fully responsible for trying to suppress our movement," he said.

He added that it was a test for SDF to check whether the ruling party was peace-loving or violent. He added that the period of the strike would depend on the situation created by the government.

Kargil on warpath over its demand for equal share in divisional status for Ladakh

JAMMU, FEB 9 (PTI): Cutting across party lines, prominent politicians from Kargil district of Jammu and Kashmir Saturday threatened mass agitation if the governor administration did not review its decision to permanently post the divisional commissioner and inspector general of police (IGP) headquarters in Leh.

The decision to submit resignations en masse from all democratic institutions and hold protests in Kargil, Jammu and Delhi was announced jointly by Chairman Legislative Council Haji Anayat Ali, Chief Executive Officer of Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Council (LAHDC) Feroz Khan and former MLA Haji Asgar Ali Karbalia at a press conference here.

In a major decision, the Jammu and Kashmir administration Friday sanctioned creation of a separate administrative and revenue division for Ladakh, with its headquarters at Leh.

Ladakh will now have a separate divisional commissioner and an inspector general of police (IGP) with a full administrative and revenue division at par with Kashmir and Jammu divisions.

The people of Kargil are demanding that divisional commissioner and IGP offices function on rotational basis in Kargil during summers and in Leh during winters.

“We are not against the divisional status to Ladakh region comprising both Leh and Kargil districts. We are against posting the divisional commissioner’s headquarters along with IGP office permanently at Leh,” Khan, a senior National Conference leader, said.

He said the demand for divisional status for Ladakh was first raised by the people of Kargil but the governor administration ignored their request for rotating the divisional commissioner and IGP offices between the two districts for six months each.

“The people of Kargil are united in support of the demand for rotation of headquarters in Kargil during summer and in Leh during winter. If our demand is not met, we will resign en-mass from the posts we are holding in the democratic institutions, whether it is chairman of the legislative council, councilors in the LAHDC or panchayat institutions.

“We will also go for general strike and pour on the roads in the entire district besides Jammu and Delhi till our genuine demand is met,” Karbalai, a senior Congress leader said,

He added, “The decision in this regard was taken at a joint meeting of all political parties, including the Congress, the NC, the PDP and the BJP, religious parties and social groups in the district.”

Echoing the sentiment, Ali, a PDP leader, said, “The people of Kargil are gentlemen by nature but will not allow anyone to strangle them.”

SDF begins campaigning in North Sikkim

WANGCHUK BHUTIA
DZONGU, 09 FEB:

Sikkim Democratic Front has begun campaigning in North Sikkim for the upcoming election starting from Sangtok ward of Lum/Gor/Sangtok GPU under Dzongu constituency on Friday.

Election campaigning began under the leadership of Campaigning Chairperson cum Dy Speaker, Sonam Gyatso Lepcha who was accompanied by North District SDF president, Pintso Namgyal Lepcha, Secretary [Organization] of SDF North District, Ugen Lepcha, Zilla Members, Panchayats and supporters.

In a meeting, Ugen Lepcha said that people must support whoever gets the SDF ticket and work as a unit. North District SDF president, Pintso Namgyal Lepcha said that SDF will win the upcoming 2019 election by 95 % margin of votes in Dzongu Constituency.

“We must work to-



gether to make our party stronger no matter who gets the party ticket without making any groupism within the party and we must respect the decision taken by the party high command,” he added.

The Deputy Speaker, SG Lepcha in his speech supported the statements of the North District president and Sec-

retary Organization. He added that in 2014–2019 the maximum budget was given to Dzongu Constituency compared to any other constituency of Sikkim which is a big achievement for the public of Dzongu.

“We are lucky to have such a great leader like Pawan Chamling who has been working hard for

the development and for the safety of Dzongu and its people. Since development has taken place in Dzongu and more is to come, it is high time for all of us to support Pawan Chamling and his party,” said Mr Lepcha.

Campaigning for Lachen Mangan also began today at Naga ground, North Sikkim.

The meeting was chaired by former MLA cum Chairperson of Campaigning Committee, Lachen-Mangan constituency, Kunga Zangpo Bhutia who was accompanied by vice president In-charge state level, Anil Lachenpa, SNT Chairperson cum District SDF president, Pintso Namgyal Lepcha, amongst others.

Sikkim’s BJP Yuva Morcha prez to join HSP



SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 09 FEB:

President of the Sikkim BJP Yuva Morcha, Laten Sherpa, is expected to soon join Hamro Sikkim Party. A formal meeting was convened between Mr Sherpa and HSP working president, Bhai-

chung Bhutia and HSP vice president DS Limboo to the discuss the matter, it is informed. Mr Sherpa, it may be recalled, has acquired substantial social media stardom with his frequent videos carrying scathing critiques of the State Government.

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Kunga Nima threatens...

Chief Minister requested that LT seats be carved out from the existing 32 seats and now seeking the Assembly strength to 40 to accommodate LT seats was only interim relief.

PM flays local...

Sankardeva, Madhavdeva, Azan Fakir, Chaolung Sukapha, Lachit Barphukan, Gopinath Bordoloi and Dr Bhupen Hazarika.

He said the previous governments had failed to honour these icons and it was the BJP government who took the initiative of conferring the Bharat Ratna on Assam’s first Chief Minister Gopinath Bordoloi during Atal Behari Vajpayee’s term and now to music legend Dr Bhupen Hazarika.

The Prime Minister profusely quoted Hazarika in his 40-minute speech and ended with an ode to the state on the banks of the mighty Brahmaputra by the legendary musician.

Unemployed Agri...

“If all our demands are not fulfilled by the concerned departments, then we would be compelled to take out a mass rally and pursue other steps to get justice,” he added.

Other demands of the Association include amendment of Sikkim State Subordinate Agriculture Service Rule 2001, service rules to be followed for the recruitment of subject matter specialists, establishment of State Agriculture & Horticulture University and National Organic Research Institute in order to take the organic mission to the next level and to immediately start BSc courses in agriculture and horticulture from the session of 2019-20 in the upcoming Sikkim State University.

CMRHM house inaugurated at Zoom

Zoom, 09 FEB (IPR): IPR Minister-cum-MLA of Saghari Zoom constituency, Arjun Kumar Ghatani inaugurated a newly constructed house under Chief Minister’s Rural Housing Scheme at Central Zoom under Zoom GPU today. He handed over the house to the beneficiary, Mohan PK Rai, on the occasion. Additionally, Mr Ghatani congratulated the family members of the beneficiary



and also highlighted the various pro-people policies and programmes of the state

government under the leadership of the Chief Minister, Pawan Chamling.

SC seeks response from Centre on fresh plea against 10 pc quota to general category poor



NEW DELHI, FEB 8 (PTI): The Supreme Court on Friday sought response from the Centre on a fresh plea challenging its decision to grant 10 per cent reservation in jobs and admissions to general category poor candidates.

A bench headed by Chief Justice Ranjan Gogoi also made it clear that there shall be no stay on the decision to grant quota to general category poor candidates.

The apex court, which had earlier issued notice to the Centre on similar petitions, Friday ordered tagging of the fresh plea of Tehseen Poonawalla with pending ones.

Petitions have been filed by parties, including ‘Janhit Abhiyan’ and NGO ‘Youth For Equality’, challenging the Centre’s decision.

The petition, filed by Youth For Equality through its president Kaushal Kant Mishra, has sought the quashing of the Constitution (103 Amendment) Act, 2019, saying that the economic criterion cannot be the sole basis for reservation and that the bill violates basic feature of the Constitution as reservation on economic grounds

cannot be limited to the general category and the overall 50 per cent ceiling limit cannot be breached.

In the present form, the upper limit of quota goes up to 60 per cent which violated the decisions of the apex court.

Referring to the nine-judge bench decision of the apex court in the landmark 1992 Indira Sawhney case, the petition said the latest amendment completely violated the Constitutional norm that economic criterion cannot be the only basis of reservation.

It also said that the amendments fail to consider that Articles 14 and 16 form the basic feature of equality, and that they have been violated with the doing away of the restraints that were imposed on the reservation policy, i.e. the 50 per cent ceiling limit and the exclusion of economic status as a sole criterion.

Later in a press release, the organisation said in principle it’s a welcome step and that deprivation and not caste has been made the basis of protective discrimination.

“However, the limit of total reservation is

increased to 60 per cent. This will open a Pandora’s box. Now more and more political parties/caste groups will claim for increased percentage of reservations, both at the Centre and state level,” it said.

The fresh filed by businessman Poonawalla has sought quashing of the bill, saying that backwardness for the purpose of reservation cannot be defined by “economic status alone”.

The top court had earlier refused to stay the Modi government’s decision to grant the reservation but agreed to examine the validity of the constitutional amendment which paved the way for this quota.

In poll year, the Modi government has come out with the constitutional amendment bill giving quota benefits to the poor among general category candidates.

The quota will be over and above the existing 50 per cent reservation to SCs, STs and Other Backward Classes (OBCs).

The Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha cleared the bill on January 8 and 9 respectively, and has been signed by President Ram Nath Kovind.

IHRC Sikkim executive body formed

SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 09 FEB:

International Human Rights Council Sikkim State announced names of members of its executive body today, a press release informs. State president, Ganesh Sharma of IHRC informed that Karma Choda Bhutia and Dr Ashish Lama are the

vice presidents, Mahindra Adhikari is Transport In charge, Ngawang Choden Bhutia and Kiran Thapa are joint secretaries.

According to Mr Sharma, they have taken the responsibility and started working as well. More members shall be added in the council in the coming days, it was informed.

Yogi govt curbs hit Kanpur leather industry, 12 tanneries shifting to Bengal: Trade bodies

KANPUR, FEB 9 (PTI): Twelve tanneries have been allotted land by the West Bengal government to shift from Kanpur, following restrictions imposed on them by the Uttar Pradesh government ahead of the Kumbh Mela, business representatives said.

The applicants were told by West Bengal authorities two weeks ago to collect their allotment letters on Friday, Javed Iqbal, Regional Chairman, Council for Leather Export (Central Region) said Saturday.

UP Leather Industries Association vice-president Iftikharul Ameen said he got his own letter during the Bengal Global Business Summit, which ended Friday.

This is the first phase of approval of applications by the West Bengal government and more are expected to get their letters soon, Iqbal said.

About 80 industrialists had applied for land in the Bantala leather industry cluster near Kolkata.

According to Iqbal, the Kanpur industrialists will together invest about 1,000 crore there.

There are 400 tanneries in the leather industry hub in Kanpur and 40 in neighbouring Unnao district.

The BJP government had issued a directive to shut these tanneries from December 15 last year for three months to stop waste disposal in the Ganga, claiming this was necessary to keep the river clean during the Kumbh now on in Allahabad.

Reacting to the development, UP Industries Minister Satish Mahana said only Kanpur can provide the excellent environment for the industry. “In Kolkata, there is no favourable atmosphere for the tannery industry.

West Bengal has the

worst political system in the whole country, he charged, suggesting that the ruling Trinamool Congress workers are goons ,

But Iqbal said Kolkata is a better bet than Kanpur-Unnao.

What will the industrialists produce and what will they sell as the tanneries here have been asked to remain closed till March 15?” he asked.

UP Leather Industries Association (UPLIA) president Taj Alam said since the change of government in the state, business has been hit hard.

He claimed the tanneries being falsely accused of polluting the Ganga.

Foreign businesses have also started looking at nations like Pakistan, Bangladesh and China for leather, Alam claimed.

According to Iqbal, each applicant has been allotted a plot measuring 3,000 square metre in Bantala. The allotment letters were issued by that state’s Micro, Small & Medium Enterprises and Textiles Department

The land has been provided at a low price of Rs 2,700 per square metre, he said.

UPLIAs vice-president Iftikharul Ameen said he had applied for 5,000 sqm of land and was allotted a 3,000 sqm plot during the business summit.

The rate of Rs 2,700 per square metre includes the cost of a common effluent treatment plant to be build soon, he said.

We chose to shift our tanneries to Kolkata as there was a threat of complete closure of tanneries here, Taj Alam said.

In addition, he said, Kolkata is a metropolitan city with an international airport. Skilled and unskilled workers are easily available, he added.

CBI grilling of Rajeev Kumar likely to continue till 9 pm

KOLKATA, FEB 09 (PTI): The questioning of Kolkata Police Commissioner Rajiv Kumar in connection with the Saradha chit fund scam by a CBI team in Shillong is likely to continue till 9 pm, a senior official of the agency said on Saturday. The marathon questioning began at 11 am this morning at the highly secured CBI office at Oakland in Shillong as per the directions of the Supreme Court, the official said.

Kumar was the functional head of the special investigation team (SIT) formed by West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee to probe the case before it was handed over to the CBI by the apex court. Three senior CBI sleuths reached Shillong from Delhi on Friday for the questioning. The Supreme Court had on Tuesday direct-

ed the Kolkata Police chief to appear before the CBI and “faithfully” cooperate in the investigation of cases arising out of the Saradha chit fund scam.

It chose Shillong as the neutral meeting place “to avoid all unnecessary controversy”, while making it clear that Kumar will not be arrested. On February 3, a team of CBI officials had gone to Kumar’s residence in Kolkata to question him, but their attempt was thwarted by the police, following which Banerjee had staged a three-day sit-in. The central investigating agency had said that its officials had wanted to question Kumar to plug the holes in the Saradha scam probe as he was allegedly in possession of certain key documents as a member of the SIT.

Father and family sit on hunger strike at TNA demanding that son's choice of subjects not be changed forcefully

REBYNA RANA
GANGTOK, 09 FEB: Convenor, Sikkim Subject Committee, Nawin Kiran, has been on an indefinite hunger strike outside Tashi Namgyal Academy here along with members of his family demanding that his son, who is now in class IX at TNA be allowed to study science and mathematics. The school has begun a practice which begins segregating students into science and humanities streams in class IX itself based on the marks they secure on class VIII. Mr Kiran informs that of the 180 students in class IX, only 90 are allowed to take science and



mathematics in IX and X. This is based on a cut-off list based on marks secured in the previous class. Because his son did not make it to the "merit list", he is being refused

the chance to study these subjects now. Mr Kiran sees this as unfair, suggesting that what is offered by the Board as an option [which offers choice] is

being implemented at the school as a rule in which the students and parents have no say. "The rules are general. It's up to the students whether they want to

study mathematics and Science or not. It's not up to the school authorities to order and make that decision for them. Education is a fundamental right and is being compromised through actions of the TNA school management," he stresses. He goes on to add that even the Sikkim Commission of Protection for Child Rights has endorsed his demand that his son be allowed to study science and mathematics till class X. The school management and board have, however, ignored this order forcing him to sit on an indefinite hunger strike to get his point across.

Govt amends significant beneficial owners rules under companies law

New Delhi, Feb 9 (PTI): The government has amended the significant beneficial ownership rules for companies, putting in place a more clear regulatory framework that would also help identify entities that might be controlled from outside the country, according to an official.

The corporate affairs ministry has issued amendments to the significant beneficial owners rules under the Companies Act, 2013. Apart from providing more clear definitions for determining whether an individual or an entity has significant beneficial ownership, corporates will be required to provide the details in a more elaborate manner to the ministry.

For the first time, the ministry issued the rules pertaining to significant beneficial owners in June 2018. The official said the amended rules are clear, precise and "all forms of control" that could be exercised in the affairs of a company are being captured.

"The whole principle of proportional calculation has been done away with. It is very clear on how significant beneficial owners would be identified in various circumstances... The rules seek to lift the corporate veil," the official added.

Significant influence in a company could be exercised through various means, including through voting, access to dividends and control over key management decisions. The changes to the rules also come at a time when the government is continuing with efforts to clamp down on corporate entities suspected to be used as conduits for illicit fund flows. The ministry, which is implementing the companies law, has already deregistered lakhs of companies that have not been carrying out business activities for a long time.

The official also said the changes made to the rules are also part of an effort to crackdown on those companies that are controlled from elsewhere by either corporates or individuals who are not there in the radar. "If there are companies that are controlled from across the shores, then we would like to identify them. Within the country also, every company is duty bound to identify their significant beneficial owners," the official added.



Flower Show at NHPC-Balutar

SUMMIT REPORT
SINGTAM, 09 FEB:

A flower show began here at the NHPC, Balutar complex today. Organised by NHPC, the 2-day

flower show was inaugurated by NHPC GM, Sahadev Khatua. Around 21 flower-growers from Sikkim and West Bengal are participating in the show, it is informed.

Citizenship bill won't not harm interests of people of Assam, NE: PM

CHANGSARI (ASSAM), FEB 9 (PTI): Greeted with protests and black flags in Assam over the citizenship bill issue, Prime Minister Narendra Modi Saturday sought to allay fears about the controversial legislation claiming that it will in no way harm the interests of the people of the state and the Northeast.

Addressing a public rally in this assembly constituency of Assam Health Minister and BJP-led NEDA convener Himanta Biswa Sarma, he said the NDA government is committed to protecting the language, culture, resources, hopes and aspirations of the people of Assam and the Northeast. This was his first visit to Assam after the citizenship bill was passed by Lok Sabha on January 8. It awaits the approval of Rajya Sabha, where the ruling coalition is short of numbers.

"It is a national commitment to the people of the Northeast that they will not be harmed in

any way and citizenship will be only granted after due investigations and recommendations of the state governments," he said. Modi asserted one should understand that there is a difference between those who forcefully entered the country and those who were "forced to flee their homes to save their lives due to their religion. Both are not the same."

"We are committed to providing shelter to those minorities - Hindus, Christians, Parsis, Jains and Sikhs- in Pakistan, Bangladesh and Afghanistan- who had to leave everything due to atrocities inflicted on them. They have come to our country who have faith and embraced the idea and ethos of Mother India," he added.

The bill which seeks to provide Indian citizenship to non-Muslims from Bangladesh, Pakistan and Afghanistan, has triggered widespread protests in Assam

and other northeastern states, including those under the rule of BJP and its NEDA allies.

Modi's visit saw nude protests, a bandh, raising of flags and burning of effigies by AASU, KMSS and other organisations agitating against the bill.

Six KMSS activists protested nude in front of Janata Bhawan, the state secretariat, and were taken into custody by the police while the Tai Ahom Yuba Parishad called a 12-hour Assam bandh to protest against the prime minister's trip. The impact of the bandh was felt in the upper Assam districts of Tinsukia, Dibrugarh, Sivasagar, Lakhimpur and Jorhat.

The Asom Gana Parishad (AGP), which recently snapped its ties with the BJP government in Assam over the citizenship bill, held protests after Modi's arrival in Guwahati Friday

night by taking out a torchlight procession. Modi said that the BJP was fully committed to implement the 36-year old Assam Accord and committee on the implementation of the Clause 6 of the accord is a step in that direction. "The BJP-led NDA government is committed to protect the language, culture, resources, hopes and aspirations of the people of Assam and the committee will take these into consideration while drafting its report," he said.

Without naming the Congress, Modi alleged that it was "not sincere in implementing the accord".

"The accord was signed 36 years ago but is yet to be implemented. They have done injustice to the people of Assam. Let me assure you that our government will implement the accord in letter and spirit," he added.

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formed by West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee to probe the case before it was handed over to the CBI by the apex court.

Three senior CBI sleuths reached Shillong from Delhi on Friday for the questioning.

The Supreme Court had on Tuesday directed the Kolkata Police chief to appear before the CBI and "faithfully" cooperate in the investigation of cases arising out of the Saradha chit fund scam.

It chose Shillong as the neutral meeting place "to avoid all unnecessary

controversy", while making it clear that Kumar will not be arrested.

On February 3, a team of CBI officials had gone to Kumar's residence in Kolkata to question him, but their attempt was thwarted by the police, following which Banerjee had staged a three-day sit-in.

The central investigating agency had said that its officials had wanted to question Kumar to plug the holes in the Saradha scam probe as he was allegedly in possession of certain key documents as a member of the SIT.

Highlight 'burning issues' of farm distress and unemployment: Rahul to Congress office-bearers

NEW DELHI, FEB 9 (PTI): Congress president Rahul Gandhi on Saturday asked office-bearers of the party to raise the Modi government's "dictatorial style" of governance and "burning issues" such as farm distress and unemployment in the Lok Sabha poll campaign.

Two days after meeting All India Congress Committee (AICC) general secretaries and state in-charges, Gandhi held a meeting with state Congress Committee presidents and Congress Legislature Party (CLP) leaders here and discussed the party's strategy for the upcoming Lok Sabha polls. In the meeting,

the Congress chief said the candidate selection process should be more inclusive and participation of maximum party stakeholders and workers should be ensured.

He also instructed the leaders to complete the candidate selection process as soon as possible, according to a statement released by the Congress general secretary in-charge of organisation.

Gandhi urged state unit chiefs and Legislature Party leaders to expose the "anti-farmers, anti-youth, anti-women and anti-people" policies of the Modi government.

He stressed on highlighting in the party's campaign the "burning issues

of unemployment, farmers distress, sabotage of constitutional bodies, misuse of the institutions and investigative agencies". Gandhi stated during the meeting that the "dictatorial style" of governance should be highlighted in the campaign, the statement said.

He also emphasised that the pro-people policies proposed by the Congress party such as the minimum income guarantee programme should be taken to the people across the country. The state unit chiefs were asked to focus on state-oriented major issues and to suggest them to the AICC Manifesto Committee, the statement said.



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SummitTIMES

ON TOP OF THE NEWS

The NE Club

An idea whose time has come

People of the North-East are seen as one group by the mainland. Of course, this grouping-together is not political or issue-based, but results from profiling as “chinkis”. And while we rant often about this “racial” attitude, we continually fail to leverage this recognition of people from the region as one group to secure better privileges for the states of the North-East. Efforts have been made in the past to find common ground to engage with Delhi, but these have too half-hearted and half-baked and have thus failed to deliver anything of any consequence.

The region continues to ignore a huge opportunity by failing to unite at least for some common causes. The region has had the North East Council since 1971 and a full-fledged Department for Development of North East Region as well, and even as these institutions have brought funds and infrastructure to the NE, the parochial suspicions of the member states have somehow held the region back from developing together and pursuing larger goals. One could blame petty politics for this lack of cohesion, but the differences obviously run much deeper than that. This, however, should not mean that the NE cannot cobble together a common minimum programme, a set of unanimously endorsed agenda points that the region can pursue with New Delhi. In this regard, Sikkim, the state initially seen as an aberration in the NEC in that it was not contiguous to any North East State, could play a major role. Since Sikkim does not have any shared ‘history’ with the rest of the NE states, it does not even have any points of conflict with any of them either. It is also a very small state, so it is not even in any serious contention for larger shares of NE funds. It is thus ideally positioned as the mediator to bring the region to collaborate more effectively. And this was even attempted some years ago when the North East Members of Parliament Forum met in Gangtok and passed a set of around a dozen resolutions on matters of common concern. The NEMPF had been around for a while before that meeting, but the Gangtok meet was perhaps for the first time that they formalised a common cause and agreed to present a united lobby in New Delhi to get the region heard in Parliament. The fact that the Members of Parliament were meeting on the neutral ground of Sikkim must have facilitated a more intense exchange of ideas and aspirations. But that was all that was achieved and the initiative lost momentum from thereon.

May be some MPs should have taken a more proactive role to keep the club together and then the initiative might have grown in strength. The Gangtok meet of 2010 was after all only the first such meeting and if the resolutions adopted then had been pursued in one northeastern voice in New Delhi, a strong lobby would have been created. The eight states send 37 MPs to the Parliament, including, until Modi happened, even the Prime Minister. In the fractured mandates of the recent times (save the 2014 BJP sweep), this is a strong presence. Mamata’s TMC has only 34 MPs, CPM 9, Congress 45 and DMK 37, and look at the kind of muscle they command in Parliament despite the record-shattering 274 MPs that wear the BJP colours in the Parliament. Granted, the MPs from the North East belong to different parties and espouse conflicting ideologies, but if they could agree on a common set of goals for the region and formalize an action plan on how to raise it in Delhi, the Centre will be forced to listen. These issues have to be about more than more funds and investments, they have to be about ensuring more participation in the planning process. The region also has a common complaint against the mainstream media and its ignorance of the region. When 37 MPs speak together and do so often enough, even the mainstream media will be forced to sit up and pay attention, it will be forced to learn about the region as well. And then there is the tiresome charade of lip-service paid to the region as the gateway to southeast Asia, and in Sikkim’s case, to Tibet. Nothing substantial has come of it because thus far the interest has remained limited to individual states. Should the gateway actually open, at a scale more effective than Nathula, the entire region will benefit, but that can happen only if the people of the northeast are taken into confidence in the decision making process. A united body of 37 MPs can ensure that. But they have make a concerted effort first. Should such a collaboration be practiced often enough, even the inter-state issues that trouble the region could at least get discussed in a language more civilized than blockades and staredowns...

The collapse of the US-Russia INF Treaty makes arms control a global priority

RAMESH THAKUR

theconversation.com

On October 20 2018, US President Donald Trump announced he intends to withdraw from the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty (INF) – an arms control treaty with Russia that contributed to the end of the Cold War.

Secretary of State Mike Pompeo confirmed this decision last week, while Trump reiterated his commitment to withdrawing from the treaty in his State of the Union address yesterday.

Russia followed suit and reports say it is aiming to create new land-based missiles within the next two years. Reports also say the US is allocating funds for the research and development of such missiles.

So, what is the INF Treaty? And will its collapse lead to an increase of global nuclear tensions that marked the Cold War?

WHAT IS THE INF?

The INF Treaty took seven years to negotiate, contributed to the end of the Cold War and ushered in three decades of strategic stability.

US President Ronald Reagan and Soviet General Secretary Mikhail Gorbachev signed the treaty on December 8 1987 to give effect to their declaration that “a nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought”.

The treaty prohibited the development, testing and possession of ground-launched cruise and ballistic missiles with a range of 500km to 5,500km, whether armed with nuclear or conventional warheads.

A joint statement from Reagan and Gorbachev noted:

“This treaty is historic both for its objective – the complete elimination of an entire class of US and Soviet nuclear arms – and for the innovative character and scope of its verification provisions.”

It entered into force on June 1 1988. By its implementation deadline of June 1 1991, 859 US and 1,752 Soviet missiles had been destroyed.

Reflecting the dominant Cold War architecture of nuclear arms control, the INF Treaty was bilateral. US National Security Adviser John Bolton, writing in 2011 as a private citizen, conceded the treaty had successfully “addressed a significant threat to US interests”. The threat was a surprise Soviet/Russian nuclear attack in Europe using missiles in the 500-5,500km range.

But the arms control architecture began fraying when US President George W. Bush pulled out of the Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty in 2001. Signed in 1972, the ABM controlled systems designed to counter “strategic” ballistic missiles, such as intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs).

With the INF Treaty now dead and another arms control treaty, New Start, set to expire in 2021, the world will be left without any limits on the two major nuclear arsenals for the first time since 1972.

WHAT NOW, FOR EUROPE?

Since 2014, under the Obama administration, Washington has accused Russia of deploying nuclear-capable ground-launched missiles with a 2,000km range (the SSC-8) in Europe that are non-compliant with INF Treaty obligations.

The US decision to pull out of the treaty will deepen the strains in the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation



(NATO). Baltic countries insist Russia’s violations of the INF Treaty demand robust diplomatic and military counter-measures. The UK has lined up firmly behind Washington, blaming Russia for the breakdown.

But Germany’s foreign minister, Heiko Maas, urged Washington to consider the consequences of withdrawal for Europe and for the future of nuclear disarmament. And the EU foreign policy chief, Federica Mogherini, said:

“The INF contributed to the end of the Cold War and constitutes a pillar of European security architecture.”

NATO stands to lose more from the INF Treaty collapse than Russia. Russia will be able to move ahead rapidly with the development and deployment of short and medium-range ground-launched nuclear-capable missiles. But, unlike in the 1980s, the US would face difficulty in finding allies in Europe prepared to station such missiles on their territory.

Also, would the host countries have a voice or veto on launching them and in choosing targets?

WHAT ABOUT THE ASIA-PACIFIC?

In addition to alleged Russian violations, the US exit is motivated by China’s growing challenge to US dominance in the Pacific. China and North Korea have been developing missile-delivery capabilities.

“To reduce the threat from INF-range missiles,” Bolton concluded back in 2011, “we must either expand the INF Treaty’s membership or abrogate it entirely so that we can rebuild our own deterrent capabilities.” Trump has done the latter.

As a non-signatory, China is unconstrained by INF Treaty limits. About 95% of its missiles are in the prohibited range. This enables it to target US ships and bases from the mainland by relatively inexpensive conventional means.

Without INF restrictions, the US could develop and station ground-launched intermediate-range cruise missiles across the Asia-Pacific, which would force Beijing to divert significant military resources to defend its homeland.

China’s nuclear stockpile has remained relatively stable over many years despite the fluctuations in the Russian and US numbers. It is below 300, compared to nearly 7,000 and 6,500 Russian and US warheads, respectively.

This signifies a policy of deliberate restraint in China despite substantial growth in economic and technological capability since its first nuclear test 55 years ago.

The collapse of the INF Treaty and deployment of China-specific US missiles could compel China to institute counter-measures –

such as rapidly expanding its warhead numbers and missile-delivery systems – to protect vital security interests, including nuclear assets deep in its interior.

China’s response in turn may trigger re-adjustments to India’s doctrine of credible minimum deterrence and could produce matching re-adjustments by Pakistan. The nuclear arsenals of both these countries is presently limited to under 150 each.

In a worst-case scenario, China, India and Pakistan could engage in a sprint to parity with the US with a rapid expansion of warhead numbers and missile-delivery capabilities, and perhaps even move to keeping a stock of nuclear weapons on high alert just like Russia and the US.

However, economic and technological limitations will constrain India and Pakistan’s ability to engage in an open-ended nuclear arms race.

EXPANDING ARMS CONTROL

The sensible alternative would be to begin urgently multilateralising the Cold War bilateral structure of nuclear arms control regimes. This means involving more countries than just Russia and the US in arms control treaties, and in particular involving China. Chinese nuclear expert Tong Zhao’s conclusion holds for the whole world, not just China: “... the era of relying on the US-Russia bilateral arms control structure is at its end.”

Multilateralising the arms control negotiating process and resulting structure will avoid a free-for-all nuclear arms race and instead anchor strategic stability in arms control agreements.

Meanwhile, thanks to Donald Trump and John Bolton, we shall continue to live in interesting times.

[the writer is Professor of International Relations, Australian National University]

How metrics are changing editorial decisions in African newsrooms

DR ADMIRE MARE & DUMISANI MOYO

theconversation.com

New digital technologies such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and WhatsApp have significantly shaped news production, distribution and consumption practices around the world. This has led to changes in the ways in which news is gathered by citizens and professional journalists as well as the ways in which it’s consumed.

This “new media” environment has also allowed journalists to gather new forms of information about their audiences. Newsrooms in Africa, like their counterparts around the world, are embracing new media tools like analytics or editorial metrics to aid in the editorial decision-making process.

Large amounts of data are gathered by the inclusion of third party measurement systems into a website. This is often a small piece of code that seamlessly collects and directs information to the third party. In addition, newsrooms use metrics from content aggregators such as Chartbeat, Omniture, Parse.ly, comScore, Nielsen NetRatings, and Google Analytics.

All this data allows newsrooms to monitor, observe, quantify, and predict the performance of stories in real time. Often, this information is used to make decisions about what to publish and not to publish.

This is a significant development. Editors and journalists are increasingly making editorial decisions based on granular information about the performance of specific headlines and news articles.

While editorial analysis of data collected from various sources is extremely beneficial to newsroom decision makers, there is a downside. In

particular, an overemphasis on the use of metrics can favour what’s popular over what’s in the public interest.

Very few studies have looked at how readership data are used in the production and distribution of news in Africa. To fill this research void we carried out a study to understand how journalists determine what to publish.

HOW WE DID IT

To gather our data we relied on interviews with online editors and journalists from newsrooms in Zimbabwe, South Africa, and Kenya between 2017 and 2018. A total of 21 respondents took part in the study via face-to-face interviews as well as interviews via email.

In Zimbabwe we interviewed six people, in Kenya six and in South Africa nine.

We looked at news production and distribution and examined the relationship between editorial analytics and how journalists made decisions about what news to share. Content aggregators like Chartbeat and Google Analytics measure indices such as click through rate, time-on-page, social sharing, conversions, impressions, scroll depth, scroll speed, returning visitors and pageviews. Data mostly in quantitative format is collected through these metrics.

We wanted to find out if online editors and journalists were incorporating editorial metrics (such as Google Analytics, Chartbeat, Facebook Insights and others) in their work.

We also wanted to observe how they were doing it.

While our sample is too small to yield findings that can be generalised across the continent, they suggest that it is sufficient to point towards emerging trends on the phenomenon we call “analytics-driven journalism”.

Research in this area in the US,

Europe, Australia and Asia has found that few news organisations have developed “editorial analytics”. This refers to approaches to analytics that move beyond generic use of off-the-shelf tools and techniques to developing tailored approaches aligned with the specific editorial priorities and organisational imperatives of a particular news organisation.

Our findings can be used to reflect on the future of journalism and the changing nature of news and news values in Africa.

WHAT WE FOUND

We found that the use of analytics has become widespread and entrenched in East and southern Africa newsrooms. There are three major ways in which analytics is used:

To track stories. The newsrooms we surveyed employ a range of online analytic tools such as Chartbeat, Google Analytics, Content Insights; Facebook insights; Eco-box, Alexa, Bright Cove and Disqus. These editorial metrics allow editors to tell which stories generate the most or least reader interest. In some cases, management uses this information to make editorial decisions. They also use it to reward performance.

Compared to other analytic tools, we found that Google Analytics was the most widely used in the newsrooms we surveyed.

Engaging and interacting with their audiences. Some of the major benefits of analytics-driven journalism include an enhanced understanding of audiences, and how they interact with content. Online journalists have been able to quantify the numbers of ‘eyeballs’ attracted to each story, how long they stay, and how far they scroll down.

To generate quantitative data. This is used to aid editorial decisions. Questions about which stories to pur-

sue, which angles to take, and what emphasis to place on different aspects are answered based on the analytics information. This information is also gleaned from social media. Journalists routinely check what’s trending on these platforms before putting together their story ideas and news articles.

THE DANGERS, AND SOLUTIONS

The problem with using data to make news judgements is that this is followed by a desire to manipulate the news for business and marketing purposes. In turn, this manipulation of the news gaze feeds into the proliferation of fake news, misinformation, and cyber-propaganda, as well as the growth of sensational blogs.

For instance, the mainstream media is increasingly using clickbaiting (headlines designed to hook readers into clicking on a hyperlink) to mislead and misinform audiences about the ‘real’ content of their stories. This is worrying.

Our study recommends that ‘what interests the public’ should not override the production of content that is in the public interest. Journalism must continue in its mission to educate, inform and entertain.

And to restore trust in the media at a time when audiences are sceptical about mainstream content, analytic tools must be used to produce quality and accurate news content.

Audiences must also become better aware of the ubiquity of clickbaiting, sensationalism, fake news and misinformation.

[Dr Admire Mare is Senior Lecturer of Journalism and Media Technology, Namibia University of Science and Technology; Dumisani Moyo is Associate Professor, Department of Journalism, Film and Television, and Vice Dean Faculty of Humanities, University of Johannesburg]

Bagan is a garden of temples



CK LEPCHA

Bagan sunrises are not to be missed, we had been told. So, we woke up early to a drizzly morning and made way to the electronic bike rental nearby. The guy at the counter was already up and gave us our ebikes for the day. These ebikes cost about 4000 kyat (less than 200 Indian rupees) a day and can be brought back to recharge in case you think its battery is dying. We asked the guy if he could help us locate the best temple for Bagan sunrise and he mentioned how a lot of temples have now been closed by the government to preserve them but we could still find a few that were open as he pointed to a map to show where to go. We were off on our ebikes down the main highway and soon found ourselves in the company of fellow ebikers/ travelers on the same path that morning. Some of them came prepared with

raincoats and a few local guides followed us asking if we wanted directions to the best place for sunrise. We didn't seek local help because the showers still persisted and there would be no point if we reached the temple and there was no sunrise and he would demand a lot of money. But we trusted google maps and soon reached the Shwe San Daw Pagoda to a cold and rainy entrance. We were too early. It was still dark and even the vendors by the temple who set up shacks selling souvenirs and food were still asleep. But they woke up and made us coffee; and as we waited for the rain to stop, we learned that one could not climb this particular temple. So we went looking for a temple to climb and between the rain and the temple search, we had missed the "sunrise" and instead found a pale sky behind us at some point in the morning. But we were not disappointed because we were in Bagan for two days and we still had the next

morning to catch the sunrise. The day was dampened by rain but we explored around. Bagan is actually divided into three townships; Nyaung-U, Old Bagan and New Bagan. We spent most of our afternoon in Nyaung-U at the Mani Sithu market where we bargained for souvenirs and I also got myself a copy of Burmese Days by George Orwell. It was one of those pirated books with blank pages in between pages so I went back and exchanged my copy. Nyaung-U is also where we our boat arrived when we came from Mandalay to Bagan. One of the first things we did after reaching Bagan was to pay an entry fee of 25,000 kyat (approximately Rs. 1158/-) for the 'Bagan Archaeological Zone'. There are more than 2000 temples and pagodas here and most were concentrated in Old Bagan. There was a time when they boasted of about 10,000 pagodas but the earthquakes and the rains have been taking a toll in these ancient structures so the government

is proactive in preserving them. In this safeguarding mission, people of old Bagan were rehabilitated to New Bagan –a settlement that started in 1990s and is fast becoming a major tourist destination. New Bagan is where we stayed and spent some time at the up-and-coming night market that evening. The next morning, there was a reluctant sunrise and we found a temple to climb but we had miscalculated our plans. We didn't realize that the whole point of sunrise in Bagan was part of the hot air balloon rides that add to magical mornings in Bagan. The temple we found was far from the balloons and the sunrise, and we could faintly see the balloons like tiny dreams in the air. Thankfully the day was clearer and we explored a lot more than the first day. We actually found temple hopping to be an educational exercise. We were told that there is a difference between temples, pagodas and stupas although almost everyone uses

them simultaneously. One of the most interesting finds had to be the only Hindu

temple. It was very interesting as she talked about Vishnu, the



temple among the 2000 Buddhist temples in Bagan. Nan Hpayay is the only temple with Hindu gods inside and the Burmese lady-guide approached us, asked where we were from and started

paintings on the wall and how it has been damaged today. But what impressed me most was what happened after she finished showing us around the temple. She gently coaxed us to buy something from her shop nearby and we gladly obliged. How could we not? She had spent more than 15 minutes explaining the details of Nan Hpayay, the least we could do was buy something from her shop. It was noble I thought. It was subtle and very much part of a reciprocal exchange of information and souvenir to be taken from Bagan. We had a very enriching second day in Bagan and actually found a wonderful temple to climb to watch the sunset. But that was probably what the other fifty travelers and ebike riders thought as well as we all climbed this ancient temple and faced westward. It was a regular sunset but against the changing colors of the setting sun and the pointy silhouettes of these pagodas, we finally understood why Bagan was the garden of temples.



China ‘firmly opposes’ Modi’s Arunachal visit

BEIJING, FEB 9 (PTI): China on Saturday “firmly opposed” Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s visit to Arunachal Pradesh, asserting that it has never recognised the sensitive border state and the Indian leadership should refrain from any action that may “complicate the boundary question”. Prime Minister Modi Saturday inaugurated and laid foundation stone of projects in Arunachal Pradesh worth over Rs 4,000 crore and said his government was giving a lot of importance to improve connectivity in the border state. Modi said his government was giving importance to improve the highway, railway, airway and power situation in Arunachal Pradesh, which was neglected by the previous governments. In New Delhi, Ministry of External Affairs reacted sharply to China’s remarks, saying the state of Arunachal Pradesh is an “integral and inalienable part” of India. “Indian leaders visit Arunachal Pradesh from time to time, as they visit other parts of India. This consistent posi-

tion has been conveyed to the Chinese side on several occasions,” the MEA spokesperson said in a statement. Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Hua Chunying in response to a question on Modi’s visit said, “China’s position on the China-India boundary question is consistent and clear-cut. The Chinese government has never recognised the so-called ‘Arunachal Pradesh’ and is firmly opposed to the Indian leader’s visit to the East Section of the China-India boundary.” China urges the Indian side to bear in mind the common interests of the two countries, respect the interests and concerns of the Chinese side, cherish the momentum of improvement in bilateral relations, and refrain from any action that may lead to the escalation of disputes or complicate the boundary question,” she said in her reaction posted on the Chinese Foreign Ministry’s website. China claims the north-eastern Indian state of Arunachal Pradesh as part of southern Tibet. India and China have so far held 21 rounds of talks to resolve the border dispute.

FIELDWORK REFLECTIONS

Spending a minute on the idea of sustainable development

MONGFING LEPCHA

Evolution is a complex theory which gets more contradictory the more we find clues to answer unsolved mysteries related to the very existence of humans. This may be because the more we dig into the past, the further we get from the present which is dynamic. By the time one comes out from the pit of the past with an answer, the face of the present has already changed. In order to study both, the present and the past, simultaneously, it is important to draw a bridge between the two by using a holistic and comparative approach. The subject of anthropology plays a significant role in this as it explains how, why and from where we have come to the stage where we are at present, what are the key factors associated with the categorisation of humans into different races, cultures, languages, etc. According to various definitions on humans given by various anthropologists and other scholars, what we have learnt so far is that humans are social, cultural and adaptive animals, always curious about the neighbour and the environment, gifted with a unique quality which enables us to adapt, which, in long run, has helped in surviving the extreme threats of nature and arrive to be

where we are now. In the process of evolution, now that we are living in a sophisticated society, we would probably deny the fact that in the line of evolution every other society and people was once hunters-gatherers, but it is true. Until about ten thousand years ago, all people practiced a hunting and gathering economy. In fact, we still rely on hunting and gathering, the only difference is that the mode of access is more advanced and sophisticated. With changes in climate, strategies applied by humans to overcome different barriers for survival, cognitive development which led to the advancement in technology etc. made it possible to acquire a lifestyle in which we don't have to go out into the woods every day, risking our lives looking for food like our forefathers. Although we still rely on the same foods, accessing it is not as difficult. Despite development and advancements in technology and science, many societies still live among us who are better examples of our past lives, as groups of simple and happy people from whom we learn many things related to the environment. Living in a sophisticated society, we always tend to look down upon the “under developed” sections with our own views either in a sympathetic way or

with a superiority complex, ignoring the fact that some people live for survival and some people live to maintain the advancing strategies for survival. Where the environment is concerned, we generally have this notion that people living in close proximity with nature are exploiting the forests, but this is not true. Of course, now there is not as much food as there was in early days because most of the wild areas have been exploited for so-called development by the industrialists and policy makers. Hunter-gatherers generally take only that amount of resources from the forests as is needed to maintain a healthy give and take relation with the environment which they consider to be a giving environment. As such, we can say people choosing to live alongside nature are environment-friendly and do not exploit nature like some others do to fulfil the dynamic needs. The relationship between man and nature tends to get broadened if different perspectives are taken into consideration. But the relationship is a complex one and man should not underestimate nature and try to break the bond. The focus should be more on how to mould culture in such a way that the relationship with nature can be made a healthy one. Human, Culture and Nature are the entities which are tied by the same rope and every act from one end somehow affects all. On one hand, culture is the act of humans; particularly the act adapted to survive the threats of nature, and in the other hand, human culture seem to play hard on nature which is hampering survival. It is to be understood that the act for survival should not be at the expense of causing threat to nature. As

a matter of fact, such acts in long run can hamper human survival. If we trace history, the hunting and gathering societies relied solely on nature yet they did not exploit nature until human culture evolved. The emergence of agriculture marks a transition from taking what is required for survival to exploiting nature for gaining more. The evolution of simple societies to more sophisticated ones, the growing needs of a growing population, advancements in technology, and globalization of economy, every aspect of human engagement for better survival tends to rely on putting nature at stake. If one takes from the environment, one should also give to the environment but in this fast growing world, people do not seem to look into the serious negative consequences of the present act. Because of the global warming, which has resulted in uncertain climate change, natural resources are being exhausted and it is not known for sure whether future generations will be fortunate enough to live in a natural world or not. Although some initiatives are being taken to protect nature, the growing developmental assignments are moving at much faster pace and in greater deal. It is uncertain if the beauty of nature and its resources can be preserved and left for future generations or will they survive only in pictures and stories. The choice remains in the hands of the present generation - whether it directs culture against nature and lets the future suffer or finds alternative measures to restore the long-lost friendship with nature. [the writer is a Research Scholar, Anthropology Department, Sikkim University]

CBI begins quizzing Kolkata Police chief in Shillong

Shillong, Feb 9 (PTI): The CBI began questioning the Kolkata Police chief on Saturday at highly secured agency’s office here in connection with chit fund scam cases, officials said. Kolkata Police Commissioner Rajeev Kumar, his counsel Biswajit Deb and senior IPS officers Javed Shamim and Murlidhar Sharma arrived at the probe agency’s office at 11 am, they said. Kumar’s counsel and the two IPS officers were asked to leave the CBI office within 30 minutes, they said.

Kumar is being interrogated at the highly secured CBI office at Oakland area in the Meghalaya capital where three senior CBI sleuths from Delhi reached on Friday. The Supreme Court on Tuesday had directed the Kolkata Police chief to appear before the CBI and “faithfully” cooperate in the investigation of cases arising out of the Saradha chit fund scam, while making it clear that he will not be arrested. The CBI had alleged in the Supreme Court that Kumar, who was leading the SIT probe

into Saradha chit fund scam, tampered with the electronic evidence and handed over documents to the agency, some of which were “doctored”. The apex court directed him to appear before the investigating agency at a neutral place in Shillong “to avoid all unnecessary controversy”. CBI officials had gone to Kumar’s residence in Kolkata to question him on February 3 but their attempt was thwarted by the police, following which Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee staged a three-day dharna.

Citizenship bill: Protesters again wave black flags at Modi in Assam

GUWAHATI, FEB 9 (PTI): Prime Minister Narendra Modi was shown black flags in at least two places here on Saturday for the second consecutive day over the contentious Citizenship (Amendment) Bill. Modi, who was on his way to the airport from the Raj Bhawan here, was shown black flags by protesters belonging to the Asom Jatiyatabadi Yuva Chhatra Parishad (AJYCP) at Machkhowa area. Minutes later, a group of students showed black flags to the prime minister when his huge convoy was passing through the Gauhati University at Jalukbari area.

Members of both the groups were detained, police said. On Friday evening, Modi was shown black flags in at least four different locations as soon as he landed in Guwahati and was travelling from the airport to the Raj Bhawan to spend the night. While hundreds of Gauhati University students waved black flags at Modi in Jalukbari area, activists of the Krishak Mukti Sangram Samiti (KMSS) and AJYCP did the same at Adabari and Fancy Bazar areas. Members of the All Assam Students Union (AASU) were also seen waving black flags

to the prime minister and shouting slogans as his convoy crossed the AASU headquarters on the Mahatma Gandhi Road at Uzan Bazar. The Citizenship (Amendment) Bill seeks to provide Indian citizenship to Hindus, Jains, Christians, Sikhs, Buddhists and Parsis from Bangladesh, Pakistan and Afghanistan after six years of residence in India even if they do not possess any document. The bill was passed by the Lok Sabha during the Winter Session on January 8 and has been awaiting Rajya Sabha nod.

Can Sarri take solace in Guardiola's slow start at Man City?

MANCHESTER, FEB 9 (AFP): Pep Guardiola and Maurizio Sarri share a mutual admiration and style of play, but as Chelsea visit Manchester City on Sunday, Sarri is also following Guardiola's experience of a difficult first year in England.

Long forgotten now after romping to the Premier League with a record 100 points last season, City suffered some serious growing pains in Guardiola's debut campaign.

Despite preparing for the Catalan's arrival for years with the hire of his former Barcelona colleagues Ferran Soriano and Txiki Begiristain, City scraped into the top four in 2016/17 by just three points thanks to winning their final four league games.

Sarri acknowledged on Friday a return to Champions League football next season is Chelsea's target with a 12-point gap to City and Liverpool too big to bridge for the title.

The Blues enter the weekend holding onto fourth by two points from a surging Manchester United with Arsenal just a point further back. That lead could be gone by



kick-off at the Etihad, though, with United and Arsenal visiting the bottom two sides in the division Fulham and Huddersfield respectively on Saturday.

Yet, hope does exist for Chelsea should Sarri learn the same lessons Guardiola did after his first

experience of the harsh winter months in English football.

Sarri did not suffer defeat for his first 18 games in charge until late November. A run of five losses in 12 Premier League matches, most notably a 4-0 thrashing at the hands of Bournemouth last

month, has since taken the shine off the Italian's reputation. Guardiola won his first 10 games in all competitions as City boss before things started to unravel. A 2-0 win at Everton on Wednesday night that took City back to the top of the table on goal difference

came almost two years to the day since his side were thrashed 4-0 at Goodison Park. "People believe we arrive with good players, good clubs and everything immediately must work," said Guardiola on Friday of Sarri's current predicament. "Sometimes you need more time but I think the season from Chelsea is exceptional."

"There is a gap"

Unfortunately for Sarri he may not be allowed the time Guardiola was afforded given the lengths City went to secure his signature and also the trigger happy culture at Chelsea under Roman Abramovich. "We need to work. Guardiola is in his third season in the Premier League, (Liverpool manager, Jurgen) Klopp his fourth or fifth," said Sarri on Friday.

"You have to be more competitive in the market or you need to work. We have to work and try to reduce the gap because at the moment there is a gap." The reference to the transfer market may prove another significant difference.

Guardiola was allowed over USD 323 million in transfer fees alone to transform his squad for

last season on the likes of Ederson, Kyle Walker, Aymeric Laporte, Bernardo Silva. Sarri is unlikely to be handed that sort of war chest to work with, but the former Napoli boss does finally have the striker he wanted after being reunited with Gonzalo Higuain in January.

The Argentine made an instant impact with his first two goals in just his second Premier League appearance in a 5-0 thrashing of Huddersfield last weekend to right the Chelsea ship after the Bournemouth debacle.

Higuain should not only add much needed firepower and a focal point to a Chelsea attack that had become toothless, but his presence also allows Eden Hazard to return to his preferred role on the left of the attack, from where he also scored twice against Huddersfield. "He's very useful for Eden and they are really very suitable to play together," added Sarri.

Should Higuain and Hazard continue to hit it off, it will give Sarri some badly needed breathing space to try and follow Guardiola's lead by coming good in his second season.

National Women's Party to field 13 women candidates on LS seats in Rajasthan

JAIPUR, FEB 9 (PTI): The National Women's Party will contest on all 25 Lok Sabha seats in Rajasthan and field 13 women candidates in the upcoming general elections.

In the remaining seats, the National Women's Party (NWP) may field male candidates, party president Shweta Shetty told reporters here.

She said her party will contest on 283 seats in the country in the elections. "To ensure

participation of women in the national and state politics, the party has decided to field 13 women candidates in the state in the upcoming Lok Sabha elections," Shetty said.

She said the party has chosen the 13 seats based on the dominance of women population there.

The party was registered in 2012 and has seven lakh members in southern India, Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat and Delhi.

Villarreal victory drought goes on after draw at Valladolid

MADRID, FEB 9 (AP): Villarreal remained winless in 10 consecutive Spanish league matches after a 0-0 draw at 14th-place Valladolid on Friday.

The visitors, who are used to finishing much higher in the standings, stayed second from bottom with three victories from 23 games.

It was Villarreal's second straight draw since re-hiring coach

Javi Calleja in place of Luis Garcia Plaza, less than two months after he was fired.

"We have to keep trying," goalkeeper Sergio Asenjo said. "I think we played a disciplined match and there are positive things we can take from it." Villarreal faces two tough matches next: at home against Sevilla and away to Atletico Madrid.

Dzeko helps Roma win 3-0 at Chievo to go 4th in Serie A



ROME, FEB 9 (AP): Edin Dzeko is hitting top form at the right time for Roma. The Bosnia-Herzegovina forward scored one goal and set up another on Friday as his side won 3-0 at bottom club Chievo Verona.

Dzeko, who also hit the crossbar, has now netted twice in three league matches, having failed to find the net in his previous nine.

Stephan El Shaarawy opened the scoring in the ninth minute and Dzeko doubled Roma's lead in the 18th with a delightful goal, feinting past one defender on the byline before nutmegging another and firing an angled drive

into the corner.

The two scorers then combined for Roma's third goal six minutes into the second half. El Shaarawy raced down the left on the counter and picked out Dzeko, who set up Aleksandar Kolarov.

El Shaarawy also hit the woodwork after being set up by Dzeko. Roma is fourth in Serie A, the final Champions League qualifying berth. AC Milan can move back above the capital side, though, with a win over Cagliari on Sunday. On Tuesday, Roma meets Porto in a Champions League round of 16 first leg. Chievo remained nine points from safety.

Women's T20 International: India ready to salvage pride in final game



HAMILTON, FEB 9 (PTI): An improved batting performance will be foremost on skipper Harmanpreet Kaur's mind, when Indian women eyeing a consolation victory, take on New Zealand in the third and final T20 International here Sunday.

After winning the ODI series 2-1, Indian women lost momentum and subsequently the T20 series.

With an aim to build a squad for ICC World T20 in 2020, the Indian team management decided to drop team's senior batswoman Mithali Raj, who is no longer considered a force to reckon with in the shortest format.

Only time will tell whether this inspired

call pays dividends in the long run but the results have been far from encouraging in the first two matches which India lost by 23 runs and four wickets respectively.

"We are building a team. Today, we may be facing difficulties but in future we will do well as the young players gain experience. I think the future is good for the team and results will follow," skipper Harmanpreet had said after conceding the series.

In both games whether chasing or batting first, India are stuck in the less than 140-run mark, which is below-par against a top team like New Zealand.

The biggest problem has been the lack of fight from the middle-order save Smriti Mandhana and Jemimah Rodrigues, who were top scorers respectively in the first two games.

Debutant Priya Punia's lack of experience has been evident but probably what hurt Women in Blue most is skipper Harmanpreet Kaur's indifferent form.

The Indian captain scored 17 and 5 in the first two games. She has been rusty due to lack of batting time since the start of the ODI series where the visitors won quite comfortably.

"We did not win the series but more than

winning and losing, we learnt a lot. We have a very young squad, there are very few players who have played more than 30 matches. Most of the players have played less than 10 T20I matches. It is a good learning process for us," Harmanpreet has rued the lack of experience.

One of the biggest problems for Indian team has been deciding on what exactly is Deepti Sharma's role in the squad. As an off-spinner, she is neither as restrictive as left-arm spinner Radha Yadav nor an attacking option like leg-spinner Poonam Yadav.

As a left-handed batswoman, she lacks the firepower to up the ante

in the final overs of the innings. She has failed repeatedly over the last two years to change her game and it will only be fair if the team management decides where exactly she fits in.

If they are unable to find Deepti's replacement, it will reflect more about the lack of quality in the bench strength.

The White Ferns have picked their game since losing the ODI series with senior batswoman Suzie Bates scoring 57 in the final one dayer and a match-winning 62 in the second T20 International.

Squads: India: Harmanpreet Kaur(c), Smriti Mandhana, Mithali Raj, Jemimah Rodrigues, Deepti Sharma, Taniya Bhatia, Poonam Yadav, Radha Yadav, Anuja Patil, Ekta Bisht, Dayalan Hemalatha, Mansi Joshi, Arundhati Reddy, Shikha Pandey, Priya Punia.

Amy Satterthwaite(c), Suzie Bates, Bernadine Bezuidenhout, Sophie Devine, Hayley Jensen, Caitlin Gurrey, Leigh Kasperrek, Amelia Kerr, Frances Mackay, Katey Martin, Rosemary Mair, Hannah Rowe, Lea Tahuu. Match starts 7.30 am IST.

Brilliant Brandt fires Leverkusen to 5-1 rout of Mainz



MAINZ (GERMANY), FEB 9 (AP): Midfielder Julian Brandt scored twice and laid on two goals as Bayer Leverkusen shrugged off its German Cup exit by winning 5-1 at Mainz in the Bundesliga on Friday.

Leverkusen, knocked out 2-1 by second division Heidenheim on Tuesday, racked up a third successive league victory and is firmly in the hunt for European qualification.

The team is in fifth spot, four points behind fourth-place Leipzig, which hosts Eintracht Frankfurt on Saturday.

Fifth and sixth in the Bundesliga qualifies for the Europa League while the top four advance to the Champions League. It was Leverkusen's third league win from four since Dutch coach Peter Bosz took over from the fired Heiko Herrlich.

Aiming Another First: Confident India ready to take on gutsy Kiwis

HAMILTON, FEB 9 (PTI): In a season of many firsts for the Indian cricket team, Rohit Sharma's men will be aiming to become first among the equals to win a T20 International series in New Zealand when the two sides clash in the final match here Sunday.

The past three months have made for a memorable phase for the Indian cricket team, which won its first Test and bilateral ODI series in Australia followed by the biggest one-day series win in New Zealand.

A first T20 series victory in New Zealand will be the icing on the cake for the 'Men in Blue', who have far exceeded expectations during their three-month sojourn in this part of the world.

With the series locked at 1-1, there is everything to play for in the decider which promises to be a cracker of a contest on a 'Super Sunday' with a spicy Seddon Park pitch in the offing.

India will do well to re-

member the nightmare that they endured during the fourth ODI at this venue where they were shot out for 92 in the wake of some quality swing bowling from Trent Boult.

However, Sunday will be a different day and there can't be a bigger motivation than winning yet another series in challenging overseas conditions.

"We have played in Hamilton and there won't be any surprise element as far as the pitch is concerned. Also having won the second game gives us confidence going into the final match," left-arm speedster Khaleel Ahmed had said after series levelling second T20I, when asked about the Hamilton game.

"We have rectified some of our mistakes from the first game and hopefully a few which are there will also be corrected," Khaleel added.

India played the same XI in the first two games and in all likelihood, will maintain continuity unless there are

some niggles.

In case the team management gives change a thought, it could be a like for like replacement with Kuldeep Yadav coming in place of Yuzvendra Chahal as the wrist spinner.

However, a look at India's T20 playing XIs will indicate that Chahal has been their preferred shortest format bowler on most occasions.

The Indian bowling unit will look to replicate their good show from the last match where they found their rhythm after a pasting in the opener from Tim Seifert.

Krunal Pandya has once again punched above his weight with some gritty performances in the two games.

Not considered the most talented player in the set-up, Krunal makes up his with hard work and discipline. His accuracy is one of the biggest positives going into Sunday's match along with the intelligence of senior seamer Bhuvneshwar Kumar. Khaleel also

stuck to his brief in the last game where skipper Rohit Sharma had instructed him to bowl back of the length to avoid being hit for boundaries. There will be a similar plan in place on Sunday also.

The stand-in captain, who is now the world's top run-getter in T20 Internationals, will like to better the 29-ball-50 of the previous match, which can well spell doom for the Black Caps. With Shikhar Dhawan for company, a good opening will solve half the problems for the visitors as it has been the case during the last four years.

The middle-order has also shown solidity with the experience of Mahendra Singh Dhoni and the exuberance of Rishabh Pant combining well as was evident in Auckland.

For New Zealand, a better batting effort in the middle overs is what they would be looking for.

Skipper Kane Williamson has endured a quiet limited

overs series by his standards and senior batsman Ross Taylor has also blown hot and cold during the last three weeks.

Among bowlers, Tim Southee was impressive in the first game and pretty ordinary in the second along with Scott Kuggeleijn, who also went for a fair amount of runs.

Squads:

India: Rohit Sharma(c), Shikhar Dhawan, Rishabh Pant, Dinesh Karthik, Kedar Jadhav, MS Dhoni, Krunal Pandya, Kuldeep Yadav, Yuzvendra Chahal, Bhuvneshwar Kumar, Siddarth Kaul, Khaleel Ahmed, Shubman Gill, Vijay Shankar, Hardik Pandya, Mohammad Siraj.

New Zealand: Kane Williamson(c), Doug Bracewell, Colin de Grandhomme, Lockie Ferguson, Scott Kuggeleijn, Colin Munro, Daryl Mitchell, Mitchell Santner, Tim Seifert, Ish Sodhi, Tim Southee, Ross Taylor, Blair Tickner, James Neesham.

Match Starts at 12:30 pm.

Thai princess' bid for PM scuttled as party obeys royal command

BANGKOK, FEB 9 (AFP): A new Thai political party vowed Saturday to obey a command from the king blocking the candidacy of a princess for prime minister in a dramatic reversal that appeared to boost the junta's chances ahead of March elections.

The announcement effectively blocks Princess Ubolratana's unprecedented bid for the premiership and comes after an extraordinary rebuke of the candidacy by her younger brother, King Maha Vajiralongkorn.

The Thai Raksa Chart party, affiliated with the powerful Shinawatra political clan, announced the princess as their candidate on Friday morning.

The move looked to rattle the status quo and threaten the ambitions of the junta that has ruled Thailand since it toppled the administration of Yingluck Shinawatra in a 2014 coup.

But the Thai king torpedoed the bid in a sharply worded statement the same day that said bringing senior royal family members into politics is against tra-



dition, national culture and "highly inappropriate." Thai Raksa Chart responded swiftly, cancelling a campaign event on Saturday and issuing a statement saying it would respect "tradition and royal customs".

"Thai Raksa Chart party complies with the royal command", it said. Thailand has some of the most severe lese majeste laws in the world and the king's word is considered final.

Royalist Thais and celebrities praised the intervention on social media after the order, writing "long live the king".

Analysts believe the events that unfolded over the past day will help the junta consolidate power and tilt the odds in favour of coup leader Prayut Chan-O-Cha.

Prayut is standing as premier for the Phalang Pracharat party, a group aligned with the regime.

The military has "gained the upper hand", said professor Anusorn Unno from Thammasat University, adding that it is poised to perform well in the upcoming vote.

The election on March 24 is the first since the 2014 coup.

Even before Thai Rak-

sa Chart's reversal, many warned the palace statement had scuttled the princess' chances.

"The palace disapproval invalidates her candidacy," said Puangthong Pawakapan, professor of political science at Chulalongkorn University.

Thailand is a constitutional monarchy and has not had a royal run for frontline office since 1932.

The 67-year-old princess did not address the royal rebuke head-on when she thanked supporters on Saturday on her widely followed In-

stagram account, saying vaguely that she wanted Thailand to "move forward". The king did not criticise the princess directly and seemed to focus blame on political party members who brought her on board.

Thai Raksa Chart is aligned with Yingluck and her brother Thaksin, who was ousted by the army in 2006.

Both live in self-exile to avoid charges they say are politically motivated.

Observers assumed Thaksin and the party would not have taken the princess on board without royal approval.

But the bold play appears to have backfired dramatically on Thaksin.

"After last night the king's intervention had an effect of discrediting Thaksin," Anusorn said.

Ubolratana gave up her royal titles when she married an American decades ago, but they divorced and she moved back to Thailand.

The first-born of the former king is an unusually public figure for a royal, having starred in movies and dished out advice to nearly 100,000 followers on Instagram.

Trump says summit with Kim to take place in Hanoi

WASHINGTON, FEB 9 (AFP): US President Donald Trump and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un will meet for a second much-anticipated summit in Hanoi, as preparations kick into high gear for the peace talks.

Trump announced the exact location on Twitter -- only the country, Vietnam, was previously known -- for the follow-on to the leaders' summit in Singapore last year as he hailed "very productive" preparatory talks between diplomats from the two countries.

"My representatives have just left North Korea after a very productive meeting and an agreed upon time and date for the second Summit with Kim Jong Un," Trump said.

"It will take place in Hanoi, Vietnam, on February 27 & 28. I look forward to seeing Chairman Kim & advancing the cause of peace!" The US State Department said the special US envoy for North Korea will meet again with Pyongyang officials ahead of the Trump-Kim talks -- hours after he returned to Seoul from talks in the North on the summit's agenda.

In a statement, the State Department said talks during Stephen Biegun's three-day trip ex-



plored Trump and Kim's "commitments of complete denuclearization, transforming US-DPRK relations and building a lasting peace on the Korean Peninsula." Biegun landed at Osan US Air Base late Friday, foreign ministry spokesman Noh Kyu-duk told AFP.

The State Department confirmed Biegun agreed to meet his North Korean counterpart Kim Hyok Chol again before the leaders' talks.

North Korea has yet to provide any official confirmation of the summit and Kim Jong Un appeared to make no mention of it during a meeting earlier with the top brass of the Korean People's Army.

As reported by state media, the meeting focused on the need to modernize the military while maintaining party discipline in the ranks.

Biegun is expected to share details of his Pyongyang meetings with his South Korean counterpart Lee Do-hoon and Foreign Minister Kang Kyung-wa

on Saturday.

Attention will focus on whether the US team have offered to lift some economic sanctions in return for Pyongyang taking concrete steps toward denuclearization.

Discussions on declaring an end to the 1950-53 Korean War could also have been on the table, with Biegun last week saying Trump was "ready to end this war." The three-year conflict ended in an armistice, not a peace treaty, leaving the two Koreas still technically at war, with the US keeping 28,500 troops in the South. The US envoy was also likely to have discussed with his counterpart protocol and security matters for the upcoming Trump-Kim summit.

At their landmark summit in Singapore last year, the mercurial US and North Korean leaders produced a vaguely worded document in which Kim pledged to work towards "the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula." But progress has since stalled, with the two sides disagreeing over what that means.

Experts say tangible progress on Pyongyang's nuclear weapons will be needed for the second summit if it is to avoid being dismissed as "reality TV."

Book chronicles journey of radio presenters in India

NEW DELHI, FEB 9 (PTI): A new book celebrates the lives of 14 popular radio presenters in India - from the legendary Ameen Sayani to present-day RJs who have been entertaining us via the airwaves.

"Let's Talk On Air: Conversations with Radio Presenters" by Rakesh Anand Bakshi features interviews and career advice from these presenters. It also serves as a comprehensive guide on radio-presenting in India.

Besides Sayani, among those RJs featured in the book are Yunus Khan, Rohini, Mamta Singh, Sayema, Hrishikay Kannan, Anuraag 'picture' Pandey and Anmol.

"This book can help shed light on intricacies of radio as a medium and the RJs behind the microphones, connect fans to their favourite RJs and, eventually attract more talent to be part of the industry," says Kartik Kalla, chief creative officer at Radio City.

Indira Rangarajan, national programming head at Second Frequencies - Mirchi Love, Radio Mirchi, says a book on RJs and their journey was long overdue. "I am so glad it's out at a time when the profession is exploding."

The book, published by Penguin Random House, will be launched on World Radio Day on February 13 in Mumbai.

www.summit-times.com

American man on way to Pak to join LeT arrested at US airport



WASHINGTON, FEB 9 (PTI): A 29-year-old New York City man has been arrested while he was about to catch a flight to Pakistan to join the Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT), in a dangerous sign that the Pakistan-based terror group, which carried out the 26/11 Mumbai terror attack, has expanded its tentacles in the US.

In another instance of growing influence of the LeT in the US and radicalisation of American youths, a teenager in Texas was charged by the FBI with using social media to recruit people on behalf of the terror group and send them to Pakistan for terrorist training.

Federal prosecutors on Friday announced that they arrested the Manhattan man, Jesus Wilfredo Encarnacion, on Thursday night at John F Kennedy International Airport as he was about to board an international flight with Pakistan being his final destination.

Prosecutors say Encarnacion went online to try to join the terrorist organisation. Encarnacion allegedly told an unnamed co-conspirator in November that he wanted to hook up with Pakistani terror group which carried out the

2008 Mumbai attacks that killed 166 people.

I want to execute. I want to behead. Shoot, Encarnacion told an undercover agent, the complaint alleges.

"Encarnacion allegedly attempted to travel to Pakistan to join a foreign terrorist organisation and conspired with another individual to provide that organisation with material support," said Assistant Attorney General John Demers.

Encarnacion aka "Jihadistsoldier", "Jihadinhear", "Jihadinheart" and "Lionofthegood", plotted to travel to Pakistan to join and train with LeT, said US Attorney Geoffrey Berman.

"Encarnacion not only expressed a desire to "execute and behead people," he scheduled travel and almost boarded a plane so he could go learn how to become a terrorist," said FBI Assistant Director-in-Charge William Sweeney Jr.

In the southern state of Texas, 18-year-old Michael Kyle Sewell was charged by the FBI with using social media to recruit people on behalf of the LeT and send them to Pakistan for terrorist training.

The arrest of the New Yorker and the charges

against the Texas teenager - who do not appear to be of South Asian origin as has been the case in previous such arrests - has set the alarm bells ringing among the law enforcement agencies in the US.

The arrests have thrown the spotlight on issues of homegrown terrorism and radicalisation of American youths, a situation that authorities have dreaded post Mumbai-terrorist attack.

Based out of Pakistan, the LeT is a UN and US designated global terrorist organisation and has carried out several terrorist attacks inside India, including the Mumbai terrorist attack in 2008 that took the lives of 166 people including several Americans.

"These organisations are using the internet and social media to appeal to the most barbaric impulses in people, and train them to kill," Sweeney Jr added.

According to NYPD Police Commissioner James O'Neill, one of Encarnacion's stated motives for travelling overseas was to get the training and experience he believed he needed to someday return to the United States and carry out attacks. Meanwhile,

Sewell, who encouraged and recruited an individual to join the LeT hails from Fort Worth city and met the man.

"Sewell allegedly used social media to recruit and encourage an individual to travel overseas to join a foreign terrorist organization and conspired with that person to provide material support to that organisation," Demers said.

According to the criminal complaint, Sewell provided the co-conspirator with contact information of an individual he believed could facilitate the travel to Pakistan. Unbeknownst to Sewell and his partner, the facilitator was an undercover FBI agent, the federal prosecutors said. Sewell had even coached the co-conspirator on how to convince the facilitator that he was sincere in his desire to fight for the LeT, they added.

The teen also contacted the facilitator to vouch for the co-conspirator's authenticity and told both of them that he would kill the coconspirator if he turned out to be a spy. The co-conspirator then contacted the facilitator and made arrangements to travel to Pakistan, the criminal complaint said.

China calls for peaceful dialogue on Venezuela crisis

BEIJING, FEB 9 (AP): China insists that peaceful dialogue and political means are the "only way" toward enduring peace in Venezuela, the Foreign Ministry said, adding that it backs multinational efforts to reach such an outcome.

Ministry spokeswoman Hua Chunying's statement came in response to a question about a meeting Thursday of an "International Contact Group" led by Uruguayan President Tabare Vazquez and attended by leaders of 14 countries, including Spain, Italy, Portugal and Sweden.

China is a close ally of Venezuelan Presi-

dent Nicolas Maduro, to whom it has lent billions to help shore up his embattled regime.

Hua said China "believes that Venezuela's affairs should be resolved by the Venezuelan people under the framework of its constitution and laws and through peaceful dialogue and political means.

This is the only way toward enduring peace in the country."

However, she added that "China supports the efforts by the international community to this end and hopes that all sides will continue to play a constructive role in the peaceful resolution

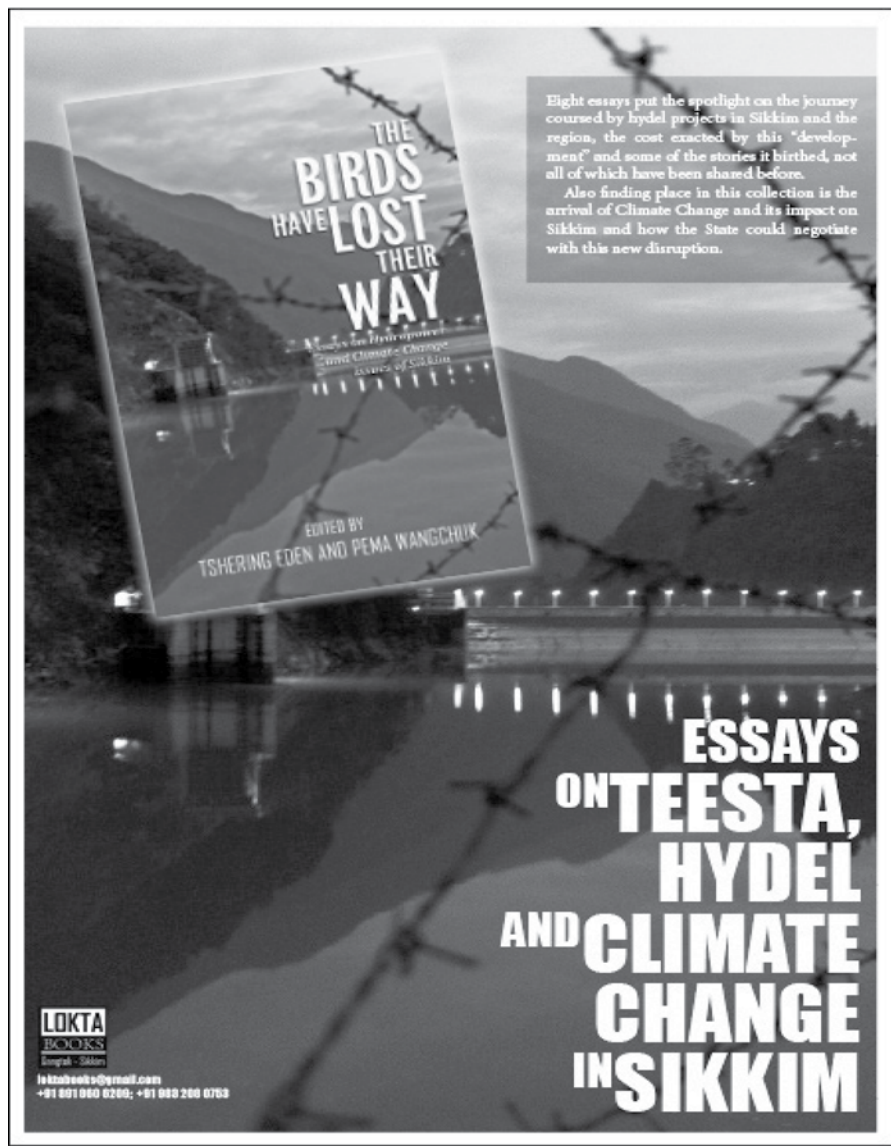
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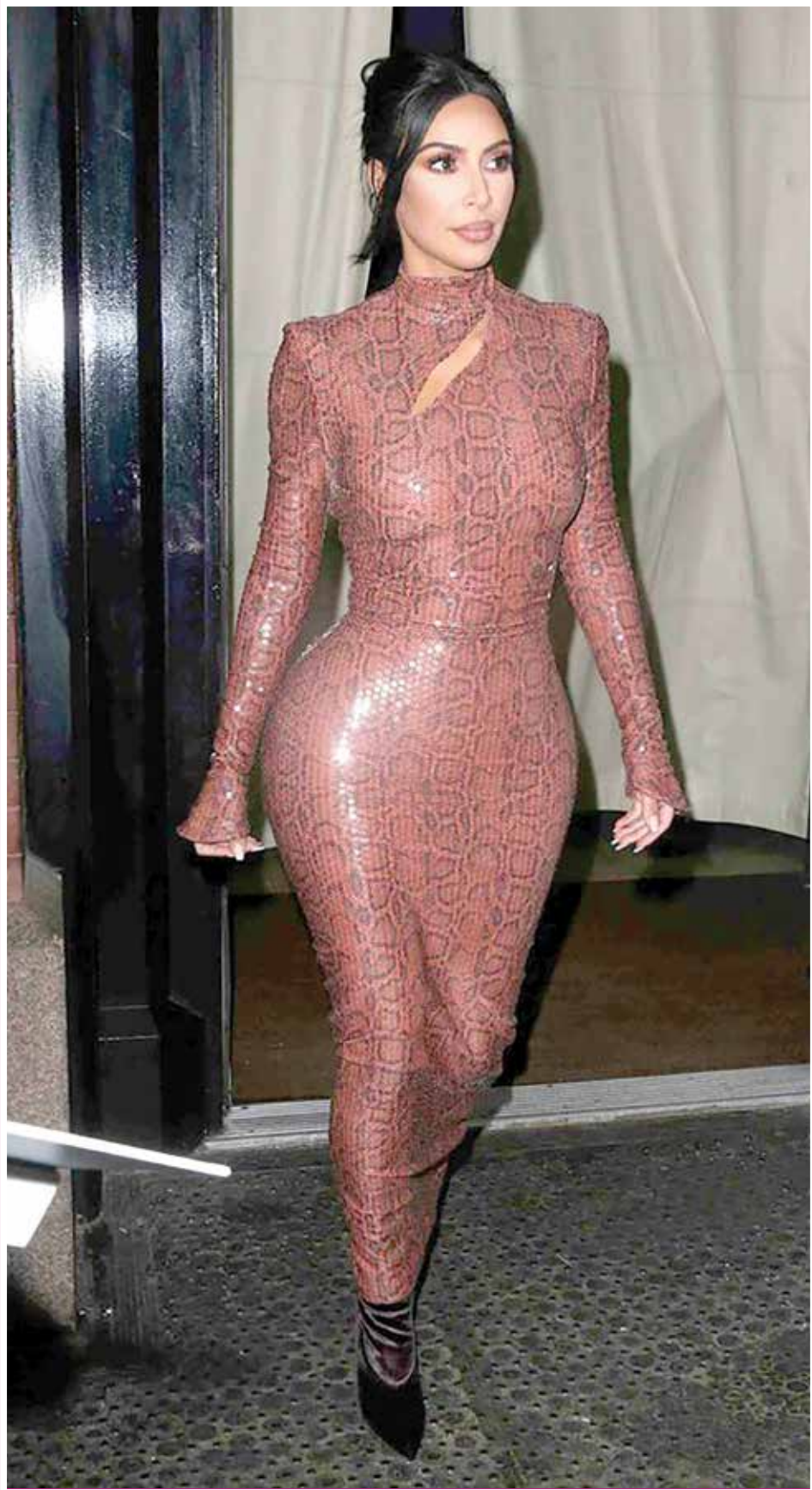
Last month, the ministry issued a statement in Hua's name saying China "opposes external intervention in Venezuela," in a rebuke to calls in the US for military action to remove Maduro.

Over the last decade, China has given Venezuela USD 65 billion in loans, cash and investment.

Venezuela owes more than USD 20 billion.

China's only hope of being repaid appears to lie in Venezuela ramping up oil production, although low petroleum prices and the country's crashing economy bode poorly for such a possibility.





SKIN TIGHT! Reality star Kim Kardashian shows off her figure in a snakeskin dress while out for an evening in NYC.

Maisie Williams to star in thriller 'The Owners'

LOS ANGELES, FEB 9 (PTI): "Game of Thrones" star Maisie Williams has boarded the cast of Julius Berg's thriller "The Owners".

The film's script has been adapted by Berg and Matthieu Gompel from a comic book by artist Herrmann and writer Yves H, reported Variety.

The story, set in rural England in the early 1990s, follows two friends, Nathan and Terry, who are tracked down by an out-of-town sociopath Gaz and forced to rob an elderly doctor and his wife.

Williams, 21, will play the girlfriend of one of the perpetrators who is dead set against the plan, which results in a deadly game of cat and mouse.

The project marks Berg's first feature directorial. He has previously directed TV series such as "La Foret" and



"The Crimson Rivers".

Alain de la Mata at UK-based Bluelight is producing, while XYZ Films is executive producing.

The film is expected to start shooting from March in a Victorian mansion in Kent.

Williams is best known for her role as Arya Stark in HBO's hit epic fantasy show,

"Game of Thrones". The show's eighth and final will air in April.

The actor most recently appeared in "Early Man" alongside Tom Hiddleston and Eddie Redmayne. She also has Marvel's "X-Men: The New Mutants", co-starring Anya Taylor-Joy and Charlie Heaton.

"Sonchiriya" gets A certificate

Sushant Singh Rajput starrer, "Sonchiriya," has been granted an 'A' certificate after the maker incorporated three changes that were suggested by the Central Board of Film Certification (CBFC), the film's producer said on Friday.

Shot in Chambal, the film is set in the 1970s and showcases a small town ruled and dominated by dacoits played by Sushant, Manoj Bajpayee, Ranvir Shorey and others. The film contains many expletives.

"The film is censored, the obstacle has been cleared. Let's not look for controversy. They (CBFC) loved the film and they had three suggestions and that is it. The film is set in a path. There were no issues," producer Ronnie Screwvala told reporters here at the promotional event of the film.

He was responding to a question about whether the film faced any problem from the CBFC.

Director Abhishek Chaubey said, "There were no issues and problems. The film has been censored and is re-

leasing with an 'A' certificate."

The director, who has critically-acclaimed films like "Uda Punjab", "Ishqiya" and "Dedh Ishqiya" to his credit, admitted that there is always a pressure on him to deliver good content.

"That kind of pressure is there but I

Screwvala, whose last release "Uri: The Surgical Strike" turned out to be the biggest hit of the year so far, is hopeful about the fate of "Sonchiriya".

"Each film has its own karma and destiny. For everybody this film is special. It is a cult film in many ways. It is



don't think about it. Filmmaking itself is too tough but the focus is on getting it right. I have people around me who are honest and critical about my work," he adds.

a genre-breaking movie. Audience will slowly grow to like the film. We are very confident about the film," he added.

The film also stars Bhumi Pednekar in the lead and it releases on March 1.

Taapsee, Bhumi to star in 'Saand Ki Aankh'

MUMBAI, FEB 9 (PTI): Taapsee Pannu and Bhumi Pednekar will topline the biographical drama "Saand Ki Aankh".

The film, a collaboration between Reliance Entertainment, Anurag Kashyap, Nidhi Parmar and Chalk n Cheese Films, will tell the story of world's oldest sharpshooters Chandro and Prakash Tomar.

It will be directed by debutante filmmaker Tushar Hiranandani. He has earlier worked in the film industry as a screenwriter.

The film is set in the hinterlands of Uttar Pradesh and will go on floors next week in Meerut. Pednekar and Pannu have started prepping for their roles with intensive workshops and look tests.

"At a time where content is king, we believe 'Saand Ki

Aankh' will truly stand out. With a great script, versatile actors like Taapsee Pannu and Bhumi Pednekar and an immensely talented Tushar Hiranandani captaining the ship, we



are confident we have a winner on our hands," Kashyap said in a statement.

Hiranandani said, "We honestly couldn't have asked for a better cast. Both Bhumi and Taapsee have put their heart and soul into the characters right from the initial prep to the training and their

looks. The film is the perfect platform for them to reach their true potential as powerhouse performers."

Release date of the film has not been decided yet.

Sonam's 'Ek Ladki Ko Dekha...' to be part of Oscar library

MUMBAI, FEB 9 (PTI): Actor Sonam Kapoor on Saturday said she is "overwhelmed" with the news of her latest release "Ek Ladki Ko Dekha Toh Aisa Laga" being considered by Academy of Motion Picture Arts & Sciences (AMPAS) to be included in Oscar library.

The film revolves around a same-sex relationship and shows the struggles to find acceptance in the family and the society. According to reports, AMPAS has requested the makers for a copy of the film's screenplay for its permanent Core Collection.

Sonam said "Ek Ladki Ko Dekha Toh Aisa Laga" is a special film for her.

"It is my first movie with my father and also because it has a strong message that deserves to be told. I'm really happy that it was selected to be part of the Oscar library and I'm overwhelmed by the kind of love audiences have showered on the film," Sonam said in a statement.

Also featuring Anil Kapoor, Juhi Chawla and Rajkumar Rao, the film has earned around Rs 20 crore at the box office.



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ARIES: Reunited and it feels so good. Saturday's friendly angle between Mercury and Uranus could lead you back to a group you once cherished. From an indoor sports league to an activist organization to people you just like drinking IPAs with, you've been missing that bond. If you can't convene in person, set up a time to video chat.

TAURUS: Kill 'em with kindness Saturday, Taurus, and a megadose of compassion. A stressed out friend or relative could make everyone's life miserable if you don't intervene. Rather than going mutinous, get to the source of this person's angst. Maybe they feel overwhelmed or upset about a recent "failure." Preempt and prevail! Find out what support is needed before they ask.

GEMINI: Were you a little too quick to judge a group as weird or "not your thing." Gemini? Saturday, you could have misgivings about your hasty write-off. Give this cutting-edge crew a second chance. Are they really asking you to become a devotee, or are they simply

offering a fresh perspective on life? If you still find them intriguing, dip your toe in the water without fear.

CANCER: If you can't beat 'em, join 'em? This Saturday, collaborating with the so-called competition might bring the win-win you're both looking for...IF you can set aside your differences. The trick is to test the waters slowly small instead of trying to resolve every difference in one day. If you've been gasping for air—or maybe just a change of scenery—the next ten weeks could send you on some amazing adventures.

LEO: This Saturday, a refreshingly honest conversation can move the needle on a stuck relationship. Don't get hung up with saying the "right" thing, Leo; just speak your piece in a non-blaming way. And make sure you extend that open-minded courtesy to the other party as well. Of course, sometimes these sentiments are best expressed in a letter—one that you don't send, but rather write, then rip up and burn as a ceremonial release.

LIBRA: Who says February 14th gets to have all the fun? Saturday's playful pairing of Mercury and Uranus could bring an early visit from St. Valentine. A scintillating conversation could lead to a dinner date that lingers on for hours. If you're already spoken for, Saturday could be like a V-Day prequel. Reserve a table for two or pick up a pair of tickets for a raved-about show.

VRGO: Thoughts are swirling through your head this Saturday, but don't let them evolve into an epic work of fiction. With analytical Mercury getting a boost from innovative Uranus, talk to people who can help you see the situation from an enlightened perspective. Everything happens for a reason, Virgo, even if it makes zero sense in the moment.

SCORPIO: Is it a fact or just a feeling? Saturday's Mercury-Uranus mashup brings some much-needed objectivity to a situation that's been hitting all your emotional buttons. While you don't want to ignore your intuition, what's bothering you might be a result of a past trigger rather than something that's actually occurring in

the here and now. The surest way to find out? Investigate, as only a Scorpio can! Your inner bon vivant takes the wheel this Sunday as social Mercury high-kicks into Pisces and your flamboyant, fun-loving fifth house!

SAGITTARIUS: If other people are slowing you down this Saturday, no need to drag those stragglers along for the ride. Enjoy a day of independence, allowing yourself to come and go as you please without checking for approval. The dedicated alone time will refresh your feed and you'll be ready to reign as life of the party come sundown. Avoid any venues that feel stuffy or elitist!

CAPRICORN: Anyone can dazzle you with a first impression—but can they actually walk their talk? Under Saturday's convivial alignment of Mercury and Uranus, you might not be the best at separating the wheat from the chaff. Enjoy the magic moments you share with people socially, remembering that only time can tell the true story about their integrity and character. Reserve judgement, one way or

the other, because it's equally possible that someone you wrote off as annoying could start to grow on you!

AQUARIUS: Chat up strangers this Saturday, because at any moment, random banter could reveal a serendipitous spark. The fateful encounter could happen during an espresso run or while you're rolling up your yoga mat after class. One thoughtful comment on an Instagram-friend's feed could lead to a DM exchange—and one bold right swipe could swiftly evolve into a Saturday night date!

PISCES: You don't have to make excuses for other people's bad behavior, Pisces, but it's possible that you overreacted to a recent slight. You're rightfully disappointed but is this really grounds for a freezeout? Maybe you extended the benefit of the doubt a little too quickly or projected qualities onto people that were never really there. Accept their limitations then consider letting go of your anger. Going forward, you can't count on these people for certain things—but that doesn't mean you can't still be cordial.