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SummitTIMES

Vol 04 | Issue 238 | Gangtok | Thursday | 05 September 2019

ON TOP OF THE NEWS

RNI No. SIKENG/2016/69420

Pages 8 | ₹ 5



Manjusri students renovate Upper Tanak school classrooms

SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 04 SEP:

Manjusri Public School students and Homeroom teachers (Sonam Dugyal Bhutia and Rochak Mukhia) of Grade IX A took the initiative to paint and decorate the LKG classroom of the Government Primary school in Tanak, Tarku, South Sikkim.

The LKG class was also provided with new tables and chairs, floor carpets, play equipment and learning resources. Rs.50,000 was raised

by students and teachers who organized a school fete, and the project itself was part of the school work education program.

The work of cleaning, painting and decorating was distributed among the twenty-three students, supervised by the two Homeroom teachers. The renovated classroom was handed over to the government school on 02 Sept, 2019 in the presence of the School In charge and students from both the schools.

Sikkim girl bags 13 medals at Uttarakhand Shooting C'ship

SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 04 SEPT:

Sikkim's shooting talent Devanshi Agarwal bagged a rich haul of thirteen medals for Ecole Global International Girls' School, Dehradun in the 18th Uttarakhand Open State Level Shooting Championship, a press release informs.

The championship was held at Jaspal Rana Shooting Range, Dehradun, from 25 to 31 August. Her medal tally included two gold, six silver and five bronze medals. She was declared the highest individual medalist of the school.

Tussita Rai, another Sikkimese girl at the same school went on to bag three gold, silver and a bronze; a total of 5 medals. Sanket Agarwal, father of Devanshi Agarwal at Singtam, has praised the efforts of the school for making a big impact at the event.



The participating students

of Ecole went on to grab 98 medals in 22 events they had participated. The proud father added that he is pleased with her daughter's effort and congratulated HOD, Lal Dogra, Sports and Shooting Coach, Ecole Global International Girls' School for his enthusiasm and motivation towards the shooting team.

Distinguished guests present at the event included Jagdeep Singh, Director, Sports Department, Haryana, Mayor Sunil Uniyal 'Gama', Vice President, Sushma Singh, Indian Rifle Association and Narayan Singh Rana of the State Rifle Association, the release mentions.

Governor's greetings on Teacher's Day

SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 04 SEPT:

Governor of Sikkim, Gan-ga Prasad has extended warm greetings and good wishes to the people of Sikkim and teaching fraternity of the State on the occasion of Teacher's Day, a Raj Bhavan release informs.

In his message the Governor has said, "The day commemorates the birth anniversary of one of the greatest educationists, philosopher and a teacher of modern India Late Dr Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, who despite reaching the pinnacle of public life and serving the nation as its second President, always took pride on being called a teacher.

Teaching as a profession is deeply ingrained in the civilisation of human kind. The ultimate source of wisdom

in any progressive society, teachers are epitome of dedication, devotion and sacrifice. Teaching is not merely a profession but a lifelong responsibility towards nation. Since times immemorial, our culture has taught us to revere and worship teachers as deity which reflects deep philosophy within our rich tradition.

No matter how far the turn to pg02

Indian teens selected for Nobel Peace Centre climate conference

LONDON, SEPT 4 (PTI):

Two Indian teenagers have been selected to address a new annual peace and climate conference organised by the Nobel Peace Centre at the Norwegian capital to draw up a set of recommendations for the UN's Climate Action Summit later this month.

Ajay Prakash, 15, and Aman Sharma, 16 were selected to address the Oslo Pax conference in Oslo whose final communiqué will be presented to the UN Secretary General António Guterres during the Climate Action Summit on September 23. While Sharma addressed the conference on Wednesday, Prakash will do it on



Thursday. "I think it's really nice that I got access to such a big forum from where I raised my concerns on environment degradation, globally. It was an opportunity to spread the movement that we've been leading in India and around the world, while joining forces with global young

leaders, Sharma, an avid wildlife photographer, said on the opportunity to speak at the Oslo Pax through video-conferencing from here.

Similarly, Ajay Prakash, now a student of Class IX and formerly a child labourer who climbed up the education ladder following his grooming at the Bal Ashram a long term rehabilitation centre founded by Nobel Peace Laureate Kailash Satyarthi, will also address the conference.

The Oslo Pax conference has been chaired by Christiana Figueres, a former UN diplomat who was a driving force behind the Paris Agreement of 2015.

Sikkimese filmmaker begins shooting for Hindi serial

REBYNA RANA
GANGTOK, 04 SEPT:

Award winning film director Tribeny Rai from Sikkim has started shooting a Hindi serial of 13 episodes for Doordarshan Arunprabha channel. She is making the Hindi serial based on a script for children.

The shooting started at Nandok village from 03 September. She is planning to wrap up the shooting within a month's time and then do post-production before submitting to Arunprabha channel.

The shooting will be mostly done in Nandok, Ranipool, Assam Lingzey and Gangtok. All the cast members are local actors. The crew is also mostly local with only few hired from outside for technical work.

"We are starting our shoot today. This is a



13-episode serial and a commissioned programme for Arunprabha channel which is for Sikkim and Arunachal Pradesh. Majority of my crew comprises of local talent, main characters are two kids Abhishek Rai and Chitiz Rai. Hopefully we will wrap up the shooting

in a month's time," said Tribeny Rai.

The main protagonists are played by Chitiz Rai (14), a student from United Academy, Daramdin and Abhishek Rai (14) from Nandok, near Ranipool.

Chitiz Rai expressed his happiness in taking part in the serial.

"Lots of excitement is there but I am also nervous. I have acted in plays but this is the first time acting in a serial. I have been learning Hindi since childhood. I was interested in acting since childhood," said Chitiz.

"The story is written by national award winning Director, Pradip Kurbah from Shillong. It is about two brothers who migrate from a rural village to an urban setup," said Tribeny.

Tribeny Rai's short films have been featured in several national and international film festivals. She recently participated in the 2019 Fajr International Film Festival (FIFF) at Tehran.

Tribeny hails from Nandok, near Ranipool and is a product of the prestigious Satyajit Ray Film and Television Institute, Kolkata.

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Sikkim's chance to join the 'Cycle Around the Globe' initiative of the International Association for Suicide Prevention (IASP) to raise awareness on the risks of suicide.

MG Marg, Gangtok Sikkim



Chinese army veteran gets visa to visit his family in India

KJM VARMA

BEIJING, SEP 4 (PTI): An 80-year-old Chinese army veteran, who was captured on the Indian side of the border in 1963 and later returned to China, has been granted visa to visit his Indian wife and children, officials here said on Wednesday. Wang Qi, said to be a surveyor of the People's Liberation Army, (PLA) was caught when he entered Indian territory shortly after the China-India war in 1962.

Convicted for spying, Qi was in Indian jails for six years.

After his release from prison, Qi settled in Tirodi village of Balaghat district in Madhya Pradesh where he married a local woman and had four children.

Since then, Qi has made three more visits to China.

His last visit to China was in October 2018 and he was unable to return to India due to no Indian visa, his son Vishnu Wang, 38, had said.

"My father applied for visa with the Indian embassy in Beijing in April this year but was unable to get the same for reasons better known to the authorities," Vishnu had told PTI from Tirodi.

However, Indian officials here on Wednesday confirmed that Qi has been given his visa to visit India.

HSP expands its publicity wing

**SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 04 SEPT:**

Hamro Sikkim Party (HSP) has appointed Sonam Sherpa as publicity secretary and Neeraj Adhikari as spokesperson on ad-hoc basis to the expanded publicity wing of the party as decided in a meeting held recently, a press release informs.

Metro brings in international experts to prevent further damage to houses

KOLKATA, SEP 4 (PTI): International and in-house experts are working on a war-footing to prevent further damage to houses in a part of Central Kolkata where tunnel boring for the East West Metro corridor led to collapse of some buildings and appearance of cracks in several others, a senior official said on Wednesday. The Kolkata Metro Railway Corporation Ltd (KMRCL) has brought in four international experts to assist the operations to stop further ingress of water and ground settlement that caused extensive damage to the buildings at Bowbazar area. KMRCL General Manager (administration) A K Nandy said, "Work is on in full swing at the site to prevent any further damage."

Several buildings at Durga Pituri Lane and Syakra Para Lane have partially collapsed or developed cracks owing to the incident of August 31, when an aquifer broke during tunnel boring and water and silt gushed in, leading to a severe ground loss in the vicinity. At least 44 houses have been evacuated and residents of eight more buildings in the area may have to be moved out, the official said, adding that 381 persons have been shifted to various hotels.

Nandy and KMRCL chief engineer, civil, Deewanjee said some results have been obtained from filling the tunnel boring machines with cement slurry grouting, which is continuing.

They said, as per the advice of the experts, the frontal part of the affected tunnel is being filled up with water by creating a bulkhead to create counter-active water pressure to stop water ingress inside the tunnel.

Claiming that geotechnical investigation was done to assess the condition of the sub-soil, they said, "The sub-soil in the tunnelling horizon comprises silty sand with water bearing strata, and the possibility of encountering a high pressure-high volume aquifer cannot be ruled out." The international experts and design consultants will review the tunnelling parameters in the affected zone to determine methodology for safe tunnelling in future.

Tunnel boring for the East West Metro corridor has been stopped and will be restarted only after the Calcutta High Court gives its nod, KMRCL lawyer told a division bench presided by Chief Justice T B N Radhakrishnan in connection with a PIL against tunnelling work in the congested areas of the city.

Krishi Mela under Jal Shakti Abhiyan at KVK South Sikkim

**SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 03 AUG:**

Krishi Vigyan Kendra, South Sikkim, organized a two-day Krishi Mela under Jal Shakti Abhiyan on 03 to 04 Sept, 2019. MP Lok Sabha, Indra Hang Subba was present as the chief guest and Area MLA, Sanjit Kharel-cum-Minister was the special guest.

The programme was attended by BDO Namthang, officials from line departments and farmers from various blocks of South District.

At the very onset, MP Lok Sabha, Mr Subba inaugurated the Krishi Mela and visited stalls as well as KVK farm. Senior Scientist and Head, Indra Prasad Shivakoti, KVK South Sikkim briefed the gathering about Jal Shakti Abhiyan.

The Resource Per-



sons - Dr Raghavendra Singh, Principal Scientist (Agronomy), ICAR-NOFRI presented a detailed power-point presentation on the various technologies suitable for Sikkim state with respect to water management and in situ moisture conservation.

Professor, CAEPHT,

CAU Ranipool, Dr BC Kusre highlighted about Water Resources of South Sikkim, constraints and prospects. Dy Director (Research) ICRI, RRS, Spices board, Gangtok, Bharat Gudade, informed farmers about organic package and practices of large cardamom.

In the closing re-

marks, chief guest, MP Lok Sabha, Indra Hang Subba appreciated the initiative taken up by KVK for awareness on Jal Shakti Abhiyan and Water Conservation strategies. Mr Subba stressed on the need to encourage youth and drop outs towards farming as an enterprise.

The MP urged the farmers to take up farming on commercial basis and meet the production demand. Mr Subba also gave emphasis on need of up-liftment of economic status of the people of Sikkim. The programme ended with vote of thanks proposed by Ambika Bhattarai.

RBI makes it mandatory for banks to link retail loans with external benchmarks from Oct 1

MUMBAI, SEP 4 (PTI): The RBI has made it mandatory for banks to link all new floating-rate loans for housing, auto and MSMEs to external benchmark like repo from October 1, a move aimed at ensuring faster transmission of policy rate cuts to borrowers.

Industry and retail borrowers have been complaining that banks do not pass on the entire RBI's policy rate (repo rate) reduction to them.

In a circular issued on Wednesday, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) said it has been observed that due to various reasons, the transmission of policy rate changes to the lending rate of banks under the current marginal cost of funds based lending rate (MCLR) framework has not been satisfactory.

Therefore, it has now decided to make "it mandatory for banks to link all new floating rate personal or retail loans and floating rate loans to MSMEs (micro, small and medium enterprises) to an external benchmark effective October 1, 2019", the circular said.

In 2019, the Reserve Bank has already reduced the repo or short-term lending rate by 110 basis points, but the banks have reportedly passed on only up to 40 bps to borrowers.

The external benchmarks, to which the banks will be required to link their lending rates, could be repo, 3-month or 6-month treasury bill yield, or any other benchmark published by the Financial Benchmarks India Private Ltd (FBIL).

The banks have also been asked to reset the interest rate under external benchmark at least once in three months.

"In order to ensure transparency, standardisation, and ease of understanding of loan products by borrowers, a bank must adopt a uniform external benchmark within a loan category; in other words, the adoption of

multiple benchmarks by the same bank is not allowed within a loan category," the RBI added.

The circular further said while the banks are free to decide the spread over the external benchmark, the credit risk premium "may undergo change only" when borrower's credit assessment undergoes a substantial change.

Further, other components of spread including operating cost could be altered once in three years.

Existing loans and credit limits linked to the MCLR/Base Rate/BPLR shall continue till repayment or renewal, as the case may be.

The decision of the RBI assumes significance amid clamour for reducing borrowing cost to push consumer demand, which is one of the major reasons for slowdown in the economy.

High frequency indicators like significant drop in auto sales and other consumer non-durable are pointing towards demand slowdown.

The government has announced a slew of measures like liquidity support to the NBFC sector to further push credit disbursal.

The RBI had earlier asked the banks to link the rates to external benchmark from April 1, but it was deferred as the lenders wanted more time.

The State Bank of India had become the first bank to link its certain loans to repo. Later, a host of other banks too started linking their loan products to repo or other external benchmarks.

In August 2017, the RBI had constituted an Internal Study Group (ISG) to examine the working of the MCLR system that was put in place in April 2016.

The ISG had recommended the move over to an external benchmark based lending rate system.

SABA to represent Sikkim at Jr Women's Boxing Championship



**SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 04 SEPT**

An eight-member team of Sikkim Amateur Boxing Association [SABA] will be representing Sikkim at the 3rd edition of Junior Women's Boxing Championship to be held from 08 to 13 September at the National Boxing Academy, Rothak in Haryana.

The team will be leaving for the championship on Thursday. The State team members are: Yasika Rai [46 kgs], Sarathi Mukhia [48 kgs], Simron Pradhan [50 kgs], Ganga Biswakarma [52 kgs], Tenzing Palmu Bhutia [54 kgs], Muskaan Khatoon [57 kgs], Deepa Rai [60 kgs] and Yangchenla Lama Sherpa [63 kgs]. The team will be accompanied by Sunita Chettri as team coach, Vabiya Gurung as assis-

tant coach and Roshni Subba as team manager, Pritam Shilal from Sikkim will also serve the championship as referee/judge.

The championship is being organized by Haryana Amateur Boxing Association under the aegis of Boxing Federation of India [BFI].

Addressing a press conference here this afternoon, SABA president, Jaslal Pradhan, informed that selection trials for the State team were held here on 20 August and eight pugilists shortlisted out of around 30.

He mentioned that except Sarathi Mukhia, Ganga Biswakarma and Simran Pradhan, the rest will be participating in a national-level championship for the first time. He expressed hope that the State team will perform

well and win medals and laurels for the State.

Mr Pradhan informed that SABA has been sending State teams to national and regional level championships on a regular basis.

Pemlaki Bhutia in youth women and Krishna Kailash Rai in youth men from Sikkim have been selected for the national coaching camp and two Sikkimese coaches, Sandhya Gurung [senior women's team] and Mukesh Rai [sub-junior men's team] are in the National Panel for National Coaching Camp, he informed.

It is also informed that the State also has three International Boxing Association Star certified coaches in Sandhya Gurung [Star II coach], Mukesh Rai [Star II coach] and Anoj Pradhan [Star I coach].

Tree plantation at SMIT Majhitar



**SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 04 AUG:**

A Tree Plantation campaign was organized for students who visited SMIT campus during their Study Tour at (Sikkim Manipal Institute of Technology) SMIT on 30 Aug, 2019, a press release informs.

Special effort was made to collect plants from a nursery outside the State. 100 Ashoka plants

were planted by students.

Around 40 students from Sir TNSS School, Development Area, Gangtok, 20 students from West Point Sr Sec School, White Hall, Gangtok, 20 students from Sec School, Bardang and 10 students from Enchey Sr Sec School, Dechenling Area, Gangtok took active part in the tree plantation.

Students were made aware of the importance of

tree plantation in conservation of water and pollution free environment and advised to become ambassadors to work towards making Swachha Bharat and Green India.

Ministry of Human Resource Development is observing Swachhta Pakhwada, 2019 and as part of this drive SMIT has begun conducting various activities to mark the occasion.

Mehbooba Mufti's daughter moves SC against detention of her mother

NEW DELHI, SEP 4 (PTI) Daughter of former Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Mehbooba Mufti on Wednesday moved the Supreme Court seeking directions to the authorities to allow her to meet her mother, who is under detention following the abrogation of Article 370 from the state.

Ittija has submitted that she is concerned about her mother's health as she has not met her in a month.

Her petition is listed for hearing on Thursday before a bench comprising Chief Justice Ranjan Gogoi and Justices SA Bobde and SA Nazeer.

Her advocate Aa-

karsh Kamra said the relief sought in the petition is similar to what CPI(M) general secretary Sitaram Yechury was granted by the apex court on August 28 to meet his ailing party colleague Mohammed Yousuf Tarigami.

The apex court would Thursday also peruse the affidavit filed by Yechury in a sealed cover about his visit and meeting with Tarigami on August 29.

The top court had allowed Yechury to visit and meet Tarigami under security with a condition that he would only discuss with him his health condition.

Raj HC strikes down law for life-long govt house, 10-member staff to ex-CMs

Jaipur, Sep 4 (PTI): The Rajasthan High Court on Wednesday struck down a 2017 law that provided government accommodation and a staff of 10 to former full-term chief ministers for their entire lives. A division bench of Chief Justice Ravindra Bhat annulled the Rajasthan Ministers' Salaries (Amendment) Act, 2017 giving the "extra facilities" to former chief ministers, on a petition by journalists Milap Chand Dandiaya and Vijay Bhandari.

"There can be no question of life-time allotment of residential accommodation to former chief ministers, irrespective of their tenure of office, whether it was for one term or less than a term of five years, the bench said in its judgment.

The court held that section 7BB and 11 (2) of the Act, which gave former chief ministers a life-long entitlement to a free government accommodation, a telephone and chauffeur-driven car along with a team of 10 staffers to serve them

were "arbitrary" and "contrary to Article 14" (the right to equality) of the Constitution.

Accordingly, the provisions of the impugned law is "unconstitutional", the bench ruled. The court, however, said it would be open to the state to enact a law to provide former chief ministers the services of one secretarial staff or to sanction an amount for hiring one such personnel.

The two journalists had argued in their petition that Rajasthan being a "financially backward" state, cannot afford to provide such extravagant facilities to former chief ministers at the cost of a heavy burden on the state exchequer.

The Rajasthan Ministers' Salaries (Amendment) Act, 2017, aimed at providing for a free government accommodation and various other facilities to the state's former chief ministers, who served the state for a full five-year term, was enacted during the previous BJP government led by Vasundhara Raje.

Governor's...

technology and modern living has influenced our lives today, teacher remains the most important factor in the process of learning, be it in school, colleges or any other institutions.

On this occasion, let us all acknowledge and pay tributes to the teachers who transformed our lives. Let us join the nation to pay our sincere homage and respect to all those great souls who led us in the path of progress and laid a strong foundation of a vibrant and enlightened society. I call upon the teaching fraternity to take greater pride as a teacher and creator of nation's future. Let us all endeavour to preserve the sanctity and purity of this noble profession by our action and build a responsible citizenry."

ANTHYESTI KRIYA

The anthyesthi Kriya of Late Hemlata Basnett who left for her heavenly abode falls on 7th of September 2019 at Gom, South Sikkim. All relatives, friends and well wishers are requested to join us in offering our prayers for the departed soul on 7.09.2019 at Gom, South Sikkim.



Family Members

Sankar Das Rai (Husband), Roshan Rai (son) & Rushma Rai (daughter)
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Sports & Games to add colour to Pang Lhabsol at Rabong

SAGAR CHHETRI

GANGTOK, 04 SEPT:

Pang Lhabsol Celebration Committee [PLCC], Rabong, is all set to host a series of sporting activities as part of the 36th Pang Lhabsol Celebration. The committee is organizing sports competitions in different disciplines along with a marathon and traditional sports.

Addressing a press conference here today, PLCC sports' wing general secretary, Lhendup Dorjee Bhutia, informed that the celebration this year will include Open Monsoon Marathon for men and women, arm wrestling, traditional sports and other sporting activities.

He mentioned that like every year, national and state level volleyball tournaments will run side by side and added



that women's volleyball was an added highlight this time around.

Mr Bhutia informed that the main objective behind organizing these sporting events was to provide a better platform to talented sports persons to showcase their skills. The different com-

petition also provided an opportunity to spot promising athletes.

Marathon Man of Sikkim, Amar Subba, in turn, mentioned that a 16 KM open marathon for men and a 14 KM marathon for women will be held on 11 September. The marathon will take off

from Tathagata Tsal gate and will have the participation of long distance runners from different parts of the State and neighbouring hills.

It is informed a promising runner from Sikkim will be shortlisted from the competition to prepare for a national level marathon

under Amar Subba. The marathon also carries cash prizes along with medals and certificates.

National arm wrestler from Sikkim, Ganesh Kumar Subba, who is also the vice-president of a national body of Arm Wrestling, mentioned that the celebration will also feature an arm wrestling championship in open category.

He stated that a selection committee will identify a promising local competitor from the championship to be further trained under experts to represent Sikkim at the upcoming national arm wrestling championship to be held in Itanagar in Arunachal Pradesh in 2020.

The celebration committee has invited the people to support local athletes with their presence and brighten the celebration even more.

SSA swamps Unicorn FC 7-0 in Premier Div Sikkim League



SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 04 SEPT:

State Sports Academy secured three points from its big victory on Wednesday at the ongoing Premier Division Sikkim League 2019 here at Paljor Stadium on Wednesday. Four goals by Karma Bhutia contributed in a big way to help SSA humble Unicorn Football Club 7-0.

SSA players maintained constant pressure Unicorn FC, but it was only in the second half that the

defence was breached when Sagar Gurung scored the first goal of the match in the 50th minute.

Soon after, Karma Bhutia added another goal to the SSA tally in the 58th minute and then extended the lead to 3-0 in the 75th minute.

While Unicorn FC players were playing their hearts out to bounce back into the match, Lensong Lepcha extended the lead of SSA to 4-0 in the 79th minute. Karma Bhutia completed

his hattrick in the 85th minute and took SSA to 6-0 with his fourth goal in the 90th minute. Finally, Lakpa Sherpa sealed a 7-0 victory for SSA with a goal in the injury time of the match.

Before the match, a two-minute silence was observed in the memory of former Chief Secretary ND Chingapa who passed away recently.

Earlier on Tuesday, Kumar Sporting Football Club had outplayed Boys Club, Gangtok, 2-0.

SFA announces U-13 and U-16 boys tourneys

SAGAR CHHETRI

GANGTOK, 04 SEPT:

Sikkim Football Association is organising U-13 and U-16 Boys Football Tournaments in coordination with Sun Feast India Limited from 19 to 24 September here at Paljor Stadium. Winners of each category will represent Sikkim at the zonal round of the tournament to be held in Guwahati.

SFA president, Menla Ethenpa, informed today that schools and football clubs from within and around

Gangtok have been invited to the tournament.

He added that the main objective of the tournament was to provide a platform to young footballers and also to bring out strong U-13 and U-16 teams from the State.

Mr Ethenpa mentioned that this tournament provided a good opportunity for local footballers to show their potential and talent and if can impress selectors, they stood a good chance to receive scholarships, sponsorship and access to better training.

Sikkim University signs MoU with Biotech Prak Lucknow

GANGTOK, 04 SEPT (PIB):

The School of Life Sciences, Sikkim University organized a one-day series of special lectures by eminent scientists of National Academy of Sciences, India (NASI) Allahabad and Biotech Park Lucknow on "Omics to Bio-Economy through Skill Development Innovation" at the Conference Hall, Barad Sadan, 5th Mile, Tadong on 04 Sept, 2019.

On this day a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed between Sikkim University and Biotech Prak Lucknow. COE, Padma Shree Prof Pramod Tandon, Biotech Park Lucknow was present on the occasion and also presented a lecture on "Bio-Economy and Entrepreneurship in Nation Building".

Former Director of CSIR-CDRI and Chairman, Dr VP Kamboj Biotech Consortium India



Ltd presented a lecture on "Skill Development: Make in India Products for Health Security".

Former Director of CSIR-IITR and NASI Platinum Jubilee Fellow, Dr PK Seth presented a lecture on "Skill Development Innovation Transforming India". Padma Shree Prof Veena Tandon, NASI Platinum Jubilee Fellow also delivered a lecture on "Omics' Technologies: Integration in Biology Today".

The programme was

attended by the University officials, faculty members, students and staff of the University. Vice-Chancellor, Prof Avinash Khare mentioned that the lecture series by such eminent scientists was an exemplary initiative to give impetus to research innovations in the University and the signing of the MoU with Biotech Park Lucknow would pave the way for more innovative research in the field of life sciences.

We have to play together and fearless to beat Oman: Gurpreet

GUWAHATI, SEP 4 (PTI):

The Indian football team's goalkeeper Gurpreet Singh Sandhu says his team has a good chance of upstaging Oman in Thursday's World Cup qualifying opener here if it plays with a fearless approach.

India are all set to take on Oman here for their first encounter of the qualifying campaign for the FIFA World Cup, Qatar 2022 and the AFC Asian Cup, China 2023. The hosts have never won against the visitors in a FIFA-recognised match.

"We play to win. We will play to our strengths, and look to keep the opposition at bay. Hopefully, we can get off to a good start and pick up the maximum points to start off the qualifiers," said the Arjuna awardee.

"We have to play together as a team, and without fear. Getting off to a good start will be really important," he added.

The last time the two teams faced off was in a friendly game in 2018, the match ending in a



goalless draw in Abu Dhabi. Gurpreet said the team draws a lot of positives from that result, but at the same time, it is vital for it to "focus on the job ahead."

"Of course, it is good to keep in mind what happened when we last faced Oman. We need to make sure we put on a good show in front of our home crowd in Guwahati," he said.

The Indians underwent a preparatory camp in Goa, which kicked off on August 20. The team has also played five international matches as build-up to the tournament since head coach Igor Stimac took over. "A lot has changed, we have a new squad, new set of

players and a different coach. On the pitch, we are trying to implement the style of play asked by the coach and put our best foot forward.

"Off the pitch, it has been pretty much the same, which is a good thing as you want to continue the good things that have been happening off the field," he said.

India will play Qatar in their second match in group E on September 10. Afghanistan and Bangladesh are the other two teams in the group.

The match against Oman will be broadcast live on Star Sports 3, Star Sports 1 Bangla and Asianet Plus. It will also be streamed online on Hotstar and Jio TV.

Over 59 % residents in Bhubaneswar physically inactive: Study

BHUBANESWAR, SEPT 4

(PTI): More than 59 per cent of over one million residents in Bhubaneswar are physically inactive, while only 16 per cent of the population practise yoga, a recent study has revealed.

The research, funded by Odisha Mining Corporation (OMC), also said that less than one-third of the population walk for ten minutes a day.

"The physical activity pattern among the city residents has been found to be very poor with 59.2 per cent of the pop-

ulation reporting that they were not active and didn't have any intention of being more active in the future," the study, conducted by Institute of Medical Sciences and SUM Hospital here, said.

According to World Health Organisation, physical inactivity is one of the major risk factors for rapidly escalating non-communicable diseases (NCDs) with an increase in healthcare costs.

"Around 10 per cent of those interviewed said that they suffered from NCDs like diabetes, high-

blood pressure and cardiovascular diseases," E Venkata Rao, who headed the first-of-its kind study in Odisha, said.

Physical inactivity has been found to be the fourth leading cause of global mortality, he said.

"NCDs account for nearly 50 per cent of all deaths in India though they are largely preventable if the risk factors involved in it are reigned in," Rao said, adding that rural communities have been found to be more physically active than their urban counterparts.

Congress losing the battle of perception against BJP: Adhir

KOLKATA, SEP 4 (PTI):

Adhir Chowdhury, the leader of Congress in the Lok Sabha Wednesday conceded that the party and others in the opposition are losing the "battle of perception" as they are being brand-

ed as anti-national and corrupt by the BJP government at the Centre, which is projecting itself as a symbol of "muscular nationalism".

He criticised BJP for trying to silence the liberal voices in the country and called for greater unity among the Congress and Left forces both inside the state assembly and outside.

It is imperative for Congress and the Left parties to put aside their ideological differences and fight together against the onslaught of TMC in the state and BJP in the country, he said.

"It is true that we (opposition parties including Congress) are slowly losing the battle of perception against BJP. They (BJP) are creating a narrative according to their own political interests in which opposition leaders and parties, who have fought for this country and its development, are branded anti-national and corrupt.

"They (BJP) are creating a perception as if only they are patriots and we the Congress are against the interests of the nation. We are unable to fight this battle of perception," Chowdhury said addressing

a felicitation ceremony organised by the Congress legislative party in West Bengal assembly.

The Left Front legislative party leader led by Sujan Chakraborty was present at the programme.

Chowdhry said the BJP with the help of its well oiled machinery both at the grass roots level and in the social media is setting a narrative in which its is projecting itself as a symbol of "muscular nationalism".

"We have to fight this perception and win the battle for our own survival," the Congress veteran said.

Calling for the unity of CPI(M)-led Left Front and Congress, Chowdhury said both TMC and BJP have created a perception that they are fighting each other. But in reality they have helped each other at the state and center.

"The Left Front legislative party and the Congress legislative party have unitedly fought against the oppressive TMC government in the assembly. Time has come to take this unity to the streets and every nook and corner of Bengal and emerge as an alternative to TMC," he said.

Stating that the country was experiencing an unprecedented "suffocating atmosphere" under BJP, he said "Whoever does not agree with the BJP

government is either branded as corrupt or anti national. There is an attempt to silence the liberal and secular voices in the country".

Chowdhury criticised pseudo seculars, for trivializing the battle against communal forces.

He referred to the role of the central government and agencies in the arrest of Congress stalwart and former union minister P Chidambaram by CBI in the INX Media case and termed it as a blatant example of "vendetta politics".

"P Chidambaram is a noted politician of this country.

The lookout notice was issued against him just to malign him and he was arrested after much drama by CBI. The sole intention was to malign his credentials as a politician and inject a perception in the minds of the people that he is corrupt," he said.

Chowdhury's views on Left-Congress alliance was echoed by state Congress president Somen Mitra, who too felt that the tie-up is the need of the hour.

Chowdhury, has been a supporter of Congress-Left unity in Bengal. It was during his tenure as state Congress president that the party and the Left Front had forged an alliance in the 2016 assembly polls to oust the TMC.

The alliance had, however, failed in its mission.

Senior Bengal Congress leader Omprakash Mishra joins TMC

KOLKATA, SEP 4 (PTI):

Senior West Bengal Congress leader Omprakash Mishra joined the Trinamool Congress on Wednesday, claiming that it is the only party that can fight the BJP in the state.

Mishra, a former state Congress vice president, came to the Assembly along with senior TMC leader Suwendu Adhikari and met West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee.

Banerjee, who is also the TMC supremo, later announced that Mishra

had joined TMC and has been made the in-charge of the party's teachers' forum.

"I have joined the TMC as I feel that only this party under the leadership of Mamata Banerjee can fight the BJP and the RSS in West Bengal," Mishra said.

He had resigned as the Congress state vice president following the party's dismal performance in the 2019 Lok Sabha polls. The Congress' tally came down to two from four it had in the 2014 Lok Sabha polls.

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Needed - Rural Pragmatism, Not Urban Vainglory

Empower, for real, panchayats to shoot down superficial projects

So, the panchayats are changing colours again. Kind of makes one wish that panchayats elections were not held on party lines, at least then the embarrassment of overnight, en masse desertions could have been avoided. But then again, if desertions and defections were embarrassments then parties will need to be kept out of all elections, at all levels. Given the impossibility of that happening, let's see if the rural reps can make the best of the hand they have been dealt, or rather dealt themselves.

Soon, the panchayats will be done with the joining programmes and will hopefully return to what should be the busy task of Panchayati Raj. One might still read of Panchayats undergoing awareness and orientation or being told what to do, being taken through the processes on which amendments to which Acts made their [s]election possible, given the drill on the usual stuff about working for the people in collaboration with line departments etc etc. These are the basics that one expected the elected Panchayats to already know when they filed their nomination papers, but wait, too many of them were elected unopposed and had no need to understand either the Act or their tasks so long as they kowtowed right for the "ticket". But that we leave for another time. And that said, one still hopes that such sessions, beyond making Panchayats "aware" about how and why they are more empowered today and whether earnest plans are afoot to divest even more powers to them, also get reassured that they can call the shots and need not "obey" babus or other politicians when it comes to the affairs of the villages they represent.

The next progression should see them flex their muscles and shoot down scatter-brained projects and proposals that only somnolent bureaucrats can dream up. For instance, if a "file" was moved to invest 55% of an Innovation Fund to purchase plastic chairs and a PA system, they should be able to laugh it out of the Panchayat Bhawan. For those scoffing and claiming that such "projects" are not mooted, a quick read of the Annual Technical Inspection Report on PRIs and ULBs for the year ended 31 March 2014 by the office of the Principal Accountant General (Audit), Sikkim, is recommended. Apparently, in 2013-14, the East Zilla Panchayat blew up Rs 55 lakh (out of Rs 1 crore) towards purchase of plastic chairs and sound systems on the argument that these assets would help in "dissemination of information about welfare schemes" and would also "generate revenue" for the Gram Panchayats through rentals. The Panchayats might need plastic chairs and even sound systems, but such purchases cannot be called "innovative". Apparently, the Thirteenth Finance Commission had recommended formulation of District Innovation Fund "with a view to support and promote innovation for better alternatives, reducing costs, increasing the efficiency of capital assets, improving service delivery and governance". This Fund was expected to fill "vital gaps in public infrastructure already available in the district, which is not being fully utilised for want of a relatively small investment". So, how did they propose this one – they already had the floor space and needed chairs to fill it up for "full utilization" or that they had speeches ready, but needed a sound system to broadcast them? The guidelines suggested drawing up of an Annual Plan for utilisation of funds after carrying out Strength, Weakness, Opportunity and Threat (SWOT) analysis to "trigger innovative measures" with a view to make Government accountable and accessible to all section of the society. And they came up with this? The dodge must have been originally drafted and processed by babus not panchayats and the latter must have just fallen in line. Real empowerment will see them advise and demand better and be able to reject and amend.

There is another glaring evidence of civil works and expense-driven problem-solving superficiality. Apparently, the Rural Management & Development Department (RMDD) (through ZP, South) developed a water harvesting structure at Tamley lake in 1998-99 to provide potable water to the three villages of Mungram, Guptigaon, Sirubari and Rajarukgaon. It should come as no surprise that this project did not age too well, and in 2008, the villagers complained that water supply was poor. By Feb 2008, RMDD-Jorethang had a DPR for Rs 79.51 lakh ready to repair the water harvesting experiment. The funds were expended and work completed two years later. So, did the people go without potable water for two years? Thankfully, no. They repaired the existing pipes carrying water from a distant source. It cost them Rs 2.08 lakh to do this! Meanwhile, the Rs 79.51 lakh spent by the RMDD delivered repairs to a water harvesting structure that does not serve as a source of water to the nearby villages! The obvious need for more rural pragmatism to direct the development and investment priorities cannot be stressed more tellingly than this example.

One needs to understand that the reason the nation has empowered the rural voters is because all other attempts at fixing accountability have failed. When Panchayats decide, and if they decide from their own wits and not departmental chits, more projects will achieve fruition. When decisions are taken through informed and involved gram sabhas, then the whole village knows; when the whole village knows, the whole village watches and because it is about them and about facilities they and their children will use, they are also expected to monitor. When projects fail, the blame ends at the village boundaries and the buck can actually stop at the right door. When such accountability becomes real, the bastis will begin noticing real improvements. Urban naiveté and vainglory need to be played out of the villages and rural pragmatism allowed back in and supported to express itself more forcefully.

Why a new law criminalising Muslim 'instant divorce' has divided feminists

JUSTIN JONES
theconversation.com

Since a law making it illegal for Muslim men to divorce their wives by pronouncing the word "talaq" three times was finally passed by the Indian parliament at the end of July, it has been the focus of bitter argument.

The Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Marriage) Act has already been the subject of several legal challenges from Muslim religious organisations, which see the law as disproportionate and a political move against minorities.

But the Act has also divided opinion among Indian women's organisations – and Muslim women's groups in particular.

The new law is the eventual outcome of a high-profile court case filed in 2016 by Shayara Bano, a Muslim woman who fell victim to talaq-i-biddat, or "triple-talaq".

Until then, a husband's right to unilaterally and instantly divorce his wife merely by reciting "talaq" (repudiation) three times at once had been an act recognised by the law. In a landmark 2017 judgment, India's Supreme Court declared talaq-i-biddat invalid and unconstitutional, and instructed the government to legislate.

After a long series of wrangles, the government's bill finally cleared both houses of the Indian parliament, boosted by the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party's tightened grip on power after its landslide victory in India's 2019 elections.

DIVIDING OPINION

But the law is highly controversial because it criminalises the practice of talaq-i-biddat, rather than merely confirming that a divorce pronounced in this way is invalid. It means that any husband pronouncing triple-talaq – whether spoken, written or electronic – can be punished with a fine and three-year jail term. Arrests can be made without a warrant, and bail is given only at the discretion of a magistrate. And the law applies retrospectively back to September 2018, meaning that earlier transgressions can now be filed with the police.

The new law, say its critics, has consciously set

punishments for merely uttering words that, ever since the Supreme Court's judgment, have no legal meaning. Opponents see political foul play at work, arguing that the government's enthusiasm to impose criminal penalties smacks of an anti-Muslim agenda. Rather than protecting women, they argue, the government's main intention has been to make Muslim men vulnerable to arrest.

But some of the most striking divisions are those among India's many Muslim women's rights organisations. While there have always been mild differences in approach between them, the law has sown real cleavages.

In 2016-17, two Muslim feminist groups facilitated the abolition of talaq-i-biddat by acting as co-petitioners in the ongoing court case. One was Bebaak Collective, a prominent women's campaign alliance led by Hasina Khan. The other was the Bharatiya Muslim Mahila Andolan (BMMA), a national, grassroots organisation of Muslim women. Both demanded the abolition of talaq-i-biddat, and both welcomed the court ruling that invalidated it.

Since then, however, their approaches have diverged.

The Bebaak Collective, along with many other activists, signed a petition in late July condemning the new law for setting punishments for husbands. The collective argues that rather than empowering women, this law will make them vulnerable in other ways. If former husbands are jailed it could prevent them from paying post-divorce maintenance and divest wives and children of financial security. In turn, it could leave women at the mercy of hostile, vengeful matrimonial families. Questioning the government's motives, they declared the law "not pro-women but anti-minority".

On the other side, the BMMA welcomed the law arguing that criminal measures alone can cease talaq-i-biddat. Its leaders argue their perspective is informed by their grassroots work offering legal guidance to ordinary Muslim women. They claim that in the past two years, since triple-talaq was declared invalid, dozens of recent victims of the practice have nevertheless approached their offices each year for help. Some husbands, declaring

themselves subject to shari'ah laws rather than court judges, have continued the practice regardless. Vulnerable, uninformed wives have hardly been in a position to confute them. Newspapers have also continued to report infringements of the court's judgment since 2017.

For a law to be a real deterrent, say the BMMA's leaders, it needs to carry penalties. They point out that other matters of personal laws, such as not paying post-divorce maintenance, already come with punishments regardless of religious community, and that talaq-i-biddat is already criminalised in more than 20 Muslim-majority countries.

CLAIMS COMING IN

The BMMA's stance has earned them criticism from their opponents. During my recent research into Muslim women's rights in India, two BMMA activists told me that the substance of the law shouldn't be conflated with the government that implemented it. They accused liberal feminists, who simply "say their piece on Facebook" and do not handle the everyday traumas of ordinary women, of political point scoring. "I question their feminism," one told me, saying that liberal feminists "have achieved nothing for Muslim women" in decades.

The staff of one BMMA office in Mumbai told me in late August that since the Act passed, five women had already come to them for advice on using the new law. All plan to file retrospective claims against their former husbands for talaq-i-biddat offences since last September. It's likely these numbers are merely a fraction of the women who may now use this new law to redress past abuses.

Ordinary Muslim women, argue the BMMA, often pass unheard in elite debates, but may find new empowerment in this law. By lifting the perpetual threat of instant divorce, this law may empower women and embolden them against perpetual threats from their husbands. For the law's supporters, if not for everyone, this possibility overrides the ongoing disputes about its origins and intentions.

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The Amazon fire crisis has been 500 years in the making – as Brazil's indigenous people know only too well

DARREN REID
theconversation.com

São Paulo – the largest city in the Americas – was recently plunged into darkness in the middle of the day due to smoke from the Amazon rainforest burning more than 2,700km (1,700 miles) away.

These fires have brought global attention to the forests of South America, but the crisis surrounding them has deep roots. To understand what is happening in the Amazon today, it's necessary to understand how deeply exploitation of the forest, and the Indigenous peoples who live within it, are ingrained in the global economy.

The first Portuguese explorers arrived in Brazil on April 22 1500. The region didn't at first appear to offer the gold or silver that was to make Central America a tempting target for colonisers, but it did present a more obvious asset: vast forests with a seemingly inexhaustible supply of timber.

The region's Brasilwood trees produced a valuable red dye, and with the colour red in fashion in the French court, Brazil's forests quickly became a target for profit-minded Europeans. Brasilwood was so prevalent before colonisation that it lent its name to the country. But after centuries of overharvesting, these trees are now a highly endangered species.

Indigenous peoples were initially incentivised to help harvest timber

in exchange for European goods. But eventually the native peoples were enslaved and made to destroy the forests which had provided the wood for their homes and the game and plants for their diet.

Once cleared of trees, land was turned into plantations to grow labour-hungry cash crops such as sugar, encouraging the enslavement of yet more Indigenous people. When they proved too few in number, vast numbers of people were taken from Africa and forced into slavery alongside them.

GLOBAL ECONOMY, LOCAL COST

The Mata Atlântica, a vast tropical forest which stretched down the east coast of the country and well into its interior, was an obvious target for the seafaring colonisers, who needed to ensure the materials they harvested could be easily transported to overseas markets.

But the environmental cost of this process was massive. As much as 92% of the Mata Atlântica has been destroyed over the past 500 years, erasing the places in which hundreds of distinct cultures evolved over the preceding millennia. Vast numbers of species disappeared along with it.

In the 19th century, the British cleared yet more forest to establish rubber plantations. Despite officially being keen to encourage the abolition of slavery, the British-owned Peruvian Amazon Company violently forced Indigenous people into servi-

tude. The anthropologist Wade Davis would later comment that "The horrendous atrocities that were unleashed on the Indian people of the Amazon during the height of the rubber boom were like nothing that had been seen since the first days of the Spanish Conquest."

The American industrialist Henry Ford founded a rubber-producing town deep in the Amazon rainforest in 1928. He hoped to "develop that wonderful and fertile land" to produce the rubber his company needed for car tires, valves and gaskets. Fordlândia, as it became known, was abandoned in 1934.

By the middle of the 20th century, the size of the Indigenous population first encountered by the Portuguese had shrunk by 80-90%. Meanwhile, the global demand for beef accelerated the destruction of South American forests to free up new grazing land.

Global brands, such as McDonalds, have been linked with Brazilian beef, half of which is produced on lands which were once rainforest. Just as demand for sugar and rubber fuelled historic slavery, the global appetite for beef drives deforestation and displaces Indigenous people today.

NEW FRONTIERS

The current crisis in the Amazon began with illegal gold miners, loggers, and farmers setting fires to clear lands for new enterprises. This process has been promoted and celebrated by the government of Jair

Bolsonaro and the country's powerful agribusiness sector. Already dislocated people face an increasingly grave situation. This is especially true for uncontacted groups who've yet to cultivate biological resistance to the diseases which outsiders can introduce, or develop the cultural experience necessary to navigate today's complex political landscape.

Many of Brazil's Indigenous cultures are completely oriented around their forests. In the modern era, their belief systems endure in groups such as the Kaingang, a part of the Gê peoples who occupied the southern parts of the Amazon rainforest and lived throughout the Mata Atlântica. They must actively nurture and protect these beliefs in the face of tremendous outside pressure.

Unlike in the US, dense forests and unmapped locations, not to mention uncontacted peoples, ensure continuity between the earliest days of European colonisation and modern Brazil.

Indigenous peoples have shown remarkable strength and resilience against more than 500 years of colonialist attack. But they remain vulnerable to an insatiable global economy which profits from the destruction of South American forests and the people who live within them. The recent fires are simply the most recent chapter in a much longer story.

[the writer is Senior Lecturer, American History and Popular Culture, Coventry University]

Assam CM calls for detail study to mark existing elephant corridors

GUWAHATI, SEP 4 (PTI): Assam Chief Minister Sarbananda Sonowal on Wednesday called for a detailed study to mark the existing elephant corridors in the state and to proactively involve local communities in taking preventive measures to reduce man-elephant conflict, an official said.

Sonowal, chairing a meeting of the State Board for Wildlife, Assam, appreciated initiatives such as the creation of WhatsApp groups with railway staff, forest department officials and local community members for reducing incidents of elephant deaths on railway tracks and called for sustained efforts in this regard.

The Chief Minister said that unregulated pachyderm population and increased human pressure on the eco-system of the state have resulted in scarcity of food for the elephants and their consequential venture into the human habitations and agricultural fields, an official said.

He also suggested



planting banana trees and grasses in the reserve forests and other forest lands to meet the increased food requirement of the elephants.

Sonowal also underlined the necessity to regulate interstate elephant movement and transferring of states elephants to other states, directing the forest department to ensure timely medical check-up of elephants by veterinary doctors before being sent to other

states on exchange.

The Chief Minister asked the forest department to publish booklets on the states environmental resources for distribution in schools and colleges.

Referring to the state governments aggressive drive to plant saplings in the state, Sonowal called for sensitisation campaign to make youths take responsibility for environmental protection.

Elevated road project at Kaziranga National park or the flyover construction over a 38.84 km stretch of National Highway 37 passing through the Park also came up for discussion and the chief minister directed that its Detailed Project Report (DPR) be submitted by October this year by PWD (NH Works).

“Once completed, it would be one of the top tourist attractions in the country and a prime example for

wildlife conservation initiatives,” he said.

Increase of remuneration for front line employees of the forest department, swift payment of ex-gratia to victims of man-animal conflict, raising the amount of ex-gratia to families of forest guards killed on duty by wild animals, sterilisation of monkeys as a measure of its population control were some of the other issues discussed in the meeting.

Arunachal CM reviews all railway projects in the state

ITANAGAR, SEP 4 (PTI): Arunachal Pradesh Chief Minister Pema Khandu on Wednesday reviewed all the railway projects in the state with senior officials of Northeastern Frontier Railway.

During the meeting with NF Railway (Construction) General Manager NKPrasad and other senior officials, Khandu discussed the construction of Murkongselek to Pasighat railway line, an official release said.

The chief minister assured all cooperation of state government in

expediting the railway project, it said.

He also discussed the status of several ambitious railway projects in Arunachal Pradesh including the 190-km Bhalukpong-Tawang railway line.

The Bhalukpong-Tawang railway line is estimated to be completed in 10 years. Survey works involving marking of alignment, soil inspection has been completed and detailed project report (DPR) would soon be prepared, it said.

The chief minister also enquired on other railway projects such as Pasighat-Tezu, Bame-Aalo, and all other projects proposed in the foothill areas of the state.

The chief minister urged the railway officials to maintain customer satisfaction level and to impose a ban on the use of non-biodegradable products.

He suggested the railways maintain utmost hygiene and to use perishable items like bamboo products, the release added.

Autorickshaw driver fined Rs 47,500

BHUBANESWAR, SEP 4 (PTI): A drunk autorickshaw driver was fined Rs 47,500 by the transport department on Wednesday for driving without a valid permit, licence, registration and under various sections of the amended Motor Vehicles Act which came into effect on Sunday, an official said here.

The traffic police and Regional Transport Office (RTO) Bhubaneswar personnel intercepted the autorickshaw at Acharya Vihar Chhak in the city on Wednesday and issued a challan of Rs 47,500 for the motor vehicle act violations to the

driver of the vehicle, the official said.

The penalty includes Rs 500 for general offence, Rs 5,000 for having invalid driving license, Rs 10,000 for violating permit conditions, Rs 10,000 for drunken driving, Rs 10,000 for violating air/noise pollution, Rs 5,000 for allowing unauthorised person to drive vehicle, Rs 5000 for using vehicle without registration and fitness certificate and Rs 2,000 for plying the vehicle without insurance.

The autorickshaw driver has been asked to deposit the total fine of Rs 47,500 at the Driving

Testing Centre in Chandrasekharpur, the official said. Admitting that he had consumed alcohol, the driver Haribandhu Kanhar said: “I cannot pay such huge amount of penalty. Let them seize my vehicle or send to jail, I cannot pay the amount.”

The driver also claimed that he has all the documents at home.

Meanwhile, officials said they have detained both the driver and the vehicle.

The official said the penalty was imposed according to the provisions of the new traffic rules which came into force on September 1, this year.

Centre delaying payments for rural job scheme: Mamata

KOLKATA, SEP 4 (PTI): West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Wednesday accused the Centre of delaying payments for the 100-day rural job scheme and restricting works under the programme.

She also claimed the state was ranked on the top in work under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MNREGA), against all odds.

Responding to a question in the Assembly, Banerjee said the Centre was “restricting works” under the rural job scheme. There had been “delay for payments

by at least three months and that even extends to six months, which is causing problems”, she said. The flagship programme of MGNREGA is a demand-driven employment scheme and provides supplementary means of livelihood to people in rural areas, primarily during lean periods.

Banerjee also said West Bengal topped in building houses and constructing roads.

With active support from state irrigation, panchayats, and fisheries departments, three lakh water bodies have been dug, she added.

Rs 125 crore allotted to IIT-KGP for Centre’s SATHI initiative

KOLKATA, SEP 4 (PTI): IIT Kharagpur has been selected for setting up a Sophisticated Analytical and Technical Help Institute (SATHI), a Department of Science and Technology initiative of the Centre, for which Rs 125 crore has been earmarked over a period of three years.

The primary objective of the state-of-the-art, professionally managed science and technology infrastructure facility, will be to extend help to the academic institutes in the neighbouring regions, an IIT KGP statement said here on Tuesday. Research establishments and industries, particularly start-ups and manufacturing units, will also be able to use the sophisticated instruments in a few select areas.

“IIT Kharagpur will treat the SATHI Centre as its Social Scientific Responsibility (SSR) programme to promote the culture of science-based entrepreneurship and start-ups in the country,” Rabibrata Mukherjee of IIT KGP, who is associated with the centre, said.

An amount of Rs 125 crore has been earmarked for the centre which will be given

during a period of three financial years, starting from 2019-20.

“We have already identified the requisite physical infrastructure for setting up this facility and we expect to start the activities for the centre soon, officiating Director Prof. Sriman Kumar Bhattacharyya said.

As per DST mandate, the SATHI Centre will run 24x7 round the year.

At least 70 per cent of instrument use time will be reserved for external users from other academic institutes, national laboratories, start-ups, entrepreneurs and the industry, the statement said.

The facility would involve the highest level of expertise of IIT KGP in several key convergence domains of science and technology such as medical sciences, soft materials, structural and safety engineering, quantum photonics, advanced communication and nano technology.

“We are aiming for the SATHI Centre at IIT Kharagpur towards becoming a national centre of excellence, catering to the scientific need of the country,” Mukherjee said.

IIT Delhi has also been chosen for the DST initiative.

Bru repatriation date to be finalised on Friday

AIZAWL, SEP 4 (PTI): The date for repatriation of the 4,447 Bru families lodged in relief camps in Tripura to their home state Mizoram will be finalised at a meeting in New Delhi on Friday, a senior official said here on Wednesday.

The meeting of the Joint Monitoring Group on Bru repatriation would be attended by officials of the Ministry of Home Affairs, Mizoram and Tripura governments, leaders of the Mizoram Bru Displaced People’s Forum (MBDPF), and members of civil societies.

The MBDPF is the apex body of the inmates of the six relief camps.

“Mizoram government has proposed to commence the repatriation from October 10. Unless puja celebrations pose problems and the monsoon plays

spoilsport, the ninth round of physical repatriation is expected to begin in October and complete this year,” Mizoram Home Secretary Lalbiakzama said.

For the ninth round of repatriation, the Mizoram government has identified 4,447 Bru families lodged in the relief camps as bona fide residents of the state last month.

Eight attempts had been made to repatriate the Brus, staying in six camps in Tripura after fleeing from Mizoram since late 1997, but the majority of them remained there.

Only around 1,681 Bru families have returned to Mizoram so far since 2010 and were settled in Mamit, Kolasib and Lunglei districts.

The Brus continue to refuse to return to Mizoram even after the

MBDPF signed an agreement with the Centre and Mizoram and Tripura governments on July 3 last year.

In the agreement, the Centre promised to provide Rs 4 lakh to each repatriated family by depositing the money in their accounts, payment of Rs 1.5 lakh for housing assistance and payment of Rs 5,000 per month to each family and free ration for two years.

The Bru people have been living in six relief camps in Tripura since they fled Mizoram in 1997 following ethnic clashes.

The first attempt to repatriate the Brus from the camps from November 16, 2009 not only fizzled out due to the murder of a Mizo youth at Bungthuam village on November 13, 2009, but also triggered another wave of exodus.

Doc assault: IMA threatens to launch countrywide ceasework

TEOK, SEPT 4 (PTI): The Indian Medical Association on Wednesday threatened to launch a countrywide indefinite cease work by doctors if the Centre immediately failed to enact a law to check violence against health professionals, IMA president Dr Santanu Sen said.

The IMA also demanded Assam Chief Minister Sarbananda Sonowal to come out with a statement within 24 hours on the deadly assault of a doctor at a tea garden, who had succumbed to his injuries at a hospital, after being assaulted by relatives of a tea garden worker. The IMA president was speaking to reporters here after visiting the family of the doctor, Dr Deben Dutta, here on Wednesday. He was also accompanied by some IMA members.

“Doctors continue to be attacked... enough is enough.

We have reached the end point, we are not going to let this go. If a Central act is not enacted and the chief minister’s statement does not come within 24 hours, then the government and the entire country have to remain prepared for the consequences”, he said.

The IMA chief said that the association has written to the prime minister, the home minister, the health minister and the chief minister underlining the

urgent need to enact a Central law to check violence against health professionals. “In Parliament, I had raised the demand for a Central act. If the government does not take any positive step, then doctors of the entire country will go for an indefinite cease work and the Central government will have to remain prepared for the consequences”, the IMA chief said.

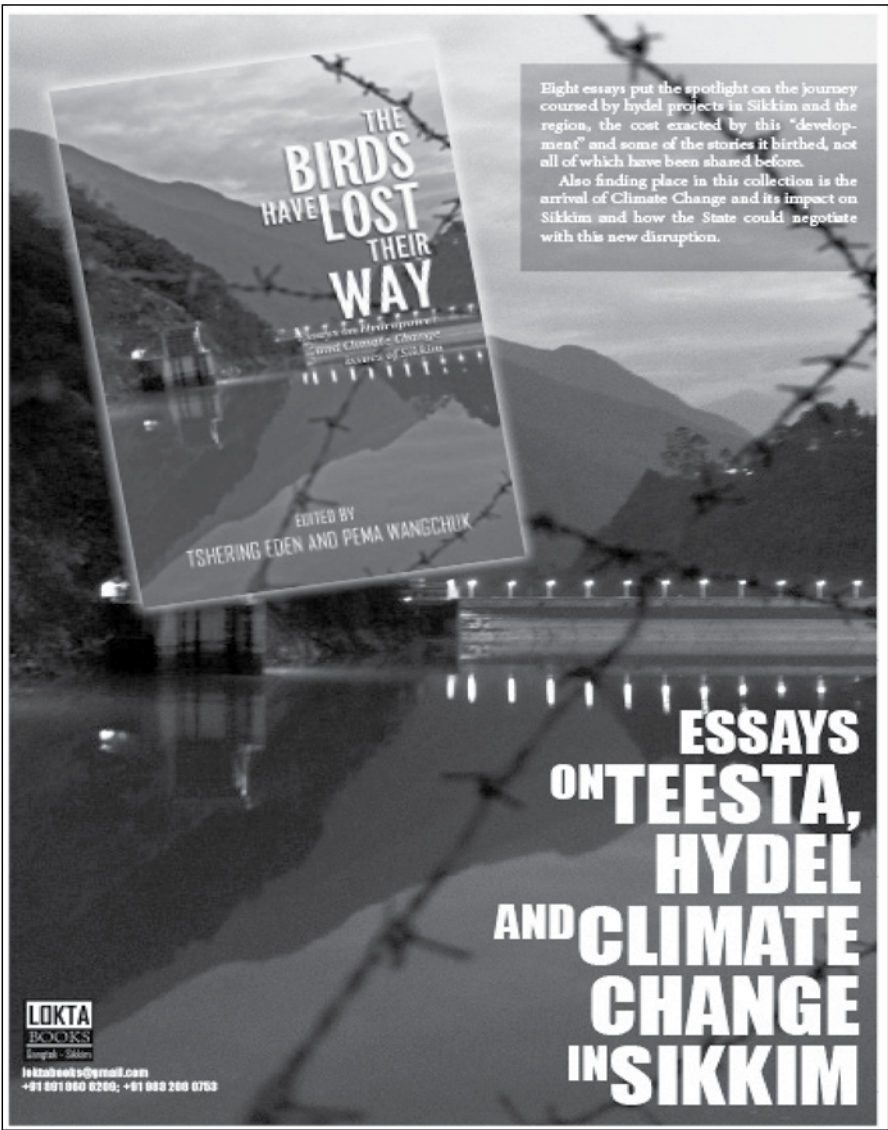
Mentioning that the state government, the chief minister or the health minister had not issued any statement after the incident, Sen said, “If the chief minister does not come out with a statement, all the doctors in Assam will go for cease work indefinitely, including emergency service.”

The 24-hour strike by the medical fraternity in Assam on Tuesday was “very successful”, he said.

Emergency services, however, were kept out of the purview of Tuesday’s stir.

The IMA chief said, another demand of the IMA was that the culprits must not be released on bail.

“As seen on many occasions, such people are released on bail after the situation calms down. None can be released and they be given the severest punishment,” he said.



KXIP set to release Ashwin, spinner to join Delhi Capitals

NEW DELHI, SEP 4 (PTI): Ravichandran Ashwin is all set to join Delhi Capitals for the next edition of IPL after Kings XI Punjab decided to release their skipper of last two seasons. KXIP releasing Ashwin was on expected lines after the franchise finished seventh in 2018 and sixth in 2019 under his leadership.

“Ashwin’s release approval is already with the BCCI and an announcement is likely soon. Delhi Capitals showed interest in him and KXIP, after thinking it through, felt they needed a younger spinner in the squad,” a source close to the development told PTI.

After finishing runners-up in 2014, KXIP have not made the IPL play-offs. The franchise has under-performed

since IPL’s inaugural season in 2008 and along with Delhi are the two franchises, who have not won the title.

Last week, Delhi Capitals advisor Sourav Ganguly had said the team would be happy to have the services of 32-year-old Ashwin, who is no more a certainty in the Indian Test playing XI, having all but permanently lost his slot in the white ball format.

The franchise will only think about the new captain once the head coach is appointed.

Former New Zealand head coach Mike Hesson, who was in charge of KXIP in 2019, has joined Royal Challengers Bangalore as director of Cricket Operations after not being picked for the India head coach job.

Sourabh enters second round of Chinese Taipei Open

TAIPEI, SEP 4 (PTI): Former champion Sourabh Verma made a positive start at the USD 500,000 Chinese Taipei Open, progressing to the second round with a straight-game win over Japan’s Kazumasa Sakai in men’s singles here on Wednesday.

The 26-year-old from Madhya Pradesh, the reigning national champion, overcame world number 44 Sakai 22-20, 21-13 in 38 minutes to set up a likely clash with top seed and local favourite Chou Tien Chen in the second round.

Sourabh, who won the Hyderabad Open last month, emerged as the only surviving Indian in the World Tour Super 300 tournament following the loss of women’s singles player Riya Mookerjee and women’s doubles pair of Aparna Balan and Prajakta Sawant in the opening round.

While Riya lost 21-19 11-21 13-21 to Thai-

land’s Supanida Kate-thong, Aparna and Prajakta suffered a 19-21 23-21 15-21 to local pair Cheng Yu-Pei and Juang Tz-Ren. In the men’s singles match, Sourabh, who had clinched the title in 2016, erased a 3-6 deficit to grab a slender 11-10 lead at the break. The Indian quickly pocketed two more points but the Japanese came back to hold a 15-14 advantage.

Sourabh, however, kept his nose ahead at 18-16 and held two game points at 20-18. Sakai reeled off two points to draw level before the Indian marched ahead to seal the opening game.

In the second game, Sakai surged to a 6-0 lead but Sourabh turned the tables, jumping to a 9-8 lead before managing a small 11-10 advantage at the interval.

After the breather, Sourabh looked in a different zone as he kept gathering points at will, even as Sakai crumbled.

Putin invites Indian PM to visit Moscow for 2020 Victory Day celebrations



VLADIVOSTOK, SEP 4 (PTI): Russian President Vladimir Putin on Wednesday invited Prime Minister Narendra Modi to attend the celebrations to mark the 75th anniversary of Victory in the Great Patriotic War in Moscow in May 2020.

“We are expecting you in May next year at the celebrations devoted to marking the 75th anniversary of Victory in the Great Patriotic War, Victory over Nazism,” the Russian president told Prime Minister Modi during their talks.

Putin noted that he also planned to meet with Modi at a summit of BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa) in Brazil, which is scheduled for November.

The Russian president said he had held a one-on-one meeting with Modi on Wednesday, discussing a broad range of issues while traveling

on a boat to a new Zvezda shipyard and on the way back, state-run Tass news agency reported.

Putin thanked the Indian premier for attending the Eastern Economic Forum in Russia’s Far Eastern port city of Vladivostok as the guest of honour. A serious groundwork had been laid by the ministries, agencies as well as business entities before this meeting, he noted.

“A solid package of bilateral documents had been agreed on, including in trade, investment and industrial sector, on military and technical ties, education and culture,” Putin said.

Putin emphasised that Russia and India “have been working rather actively on the global arena, supporting each other.” “Our positions are very close or coincide on many key issues of the international agenda,” he noted.

Rashid ‘excited’ to lead Afghans in Bangladesh Test

CHITTAGONG (BANGLADESH), SEP 4 (AFP): Afghanistan’s spin prodigy Rashid Khan faces a tough challenge as he captains his side for the first time against Bangladesh in only his war-torn country’s third Test starting Thursday.

Afghanistan obtained Test status in 2017. In their first outing in June 2018 India thrashed them inside two days, but in the second in March they beat fellow newcomers Ireland by seven wickets.

Leg-spinner Rashid was named skipper for all three formats after their dire World Cup campaign in England and Wales when they lost all nine matches and were dogged by several controversies.

The Indian Premier League (IPL) star will become the youngest ever Test captain at the age of 20 years 350 days when he steps out in the Test match at the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium in Chittagong.

He will overtake Zimbabwe’s Tatenda Taibu, who made his debut as Test captain just eight days older than Rashid against Sri Lanka at Harare in 2004.

“(I am) pretty excited. It is a new role to be a captain of the team and



will try my best to be positive and enjoy the game,” Rashid told reporters last Friday after the arrival of his team in Chittagong.

The Afghan side has been through turmoil in recent months.

In April 2019, the Afghanistan Cricket Board (ACB) named Rahmat Shah as Test captain, replacing Asghar Afghan, who led the side in their first two Test matches.

But Rashid’s appointment as Test captain after the World Cup means Shah was removed before he took charge of a match.

They will be up against a side who have won five of their last 10 Tests at home, including one each against England and Australia.

Bangladesh are expected to field a spin-heavy attack against the visitors for the one-off Test, but interim Afghan coach Andy Moles said they have no fear.

“We have massive respect for Bangladesh team. They are a level above us. (But) we are not scared of Bangladesh,” Moles told reporters in Chittagong on Monday.

“We are under no illusion that this is going to be a tough examination of our skills. If we could show application and concentration, we are capable of doing something special over the next five days.”

Afghanistan will also play a tri-nation Twenty20 tournament from

September 13 with Zimbabwe and hosts Bangladesh.

Bangladesh (from): Shadman Islam, Mominul Haque, Soumya Sarkar, Shakib Al Hasan (capt), Mahmudullah Riyad, Mohammad Mithun, Mushfiqur Rahim, Liton Das, Taijul Islam, Mosaddek Hossain, Nayeem Hasan, Mehedi Hasan, Taskin Ahmed, Ebadat Hossain, Abu Jayed.

Afghanistan (from): Rashid Khan (capt), Ihsanullah Janat, Javid Ahmadi, Ibrahim Zadran, Rahmat Shah, Hashmatullah Shahidi, Asghar Afghan, Ikrām Alikhil, Mohammad Nabi, Qais Ahmad, Sayed Ahmad Shirzad, Yamin Ahmadzai, Zahir Khan Pakteen, Afsar Zazai, Shapoor Zadran.

Jehan moves up to 2nd spot in FIA F3 Championship

SPA-FRANCORCHAMPS (BELGIUM), SEP 4 (PTI): India’s Jehan Daruvala earned his sixth podium of the season and moved up to the second position after round six in the FIA Formula 3 championship here.

Jehan had earlier bagged a sensational pole position, his first race in the series which is a support event to the Formula 1 Belgian Grand Prix.

Jehan started well from pole and managed to exit the first corner ahead. However Pedro Piquet, son of three-time Formula One champion Nelson Piquet, took advantage of the Indian’s slip stream to overtake him after Eau Rouge.

Thereafter, Jehan continued to lose ground and fell all the way to fourth.

The Indian then pushed hard and was able to slowly move back into second place, behind Piquet. Unfortunately for Jehan, a Virtual Safety Car was declared and the timing of the call caused him to lose four seconds.

Later, Jehan’s Prema teammate Robert Shwartzman managed to use his DRS (Drag Reduction System) to drive right around Jehan.

Although the Indian

tried to push hard again, he had to settle for third place, behind Shwartzman, while Piquet bagged his maiden win in the FIA F3 championship.

Race 2 starting order is decided on Race 1 results in reverse order for the top 8.

Jehan started sixth and had a good start, quickly moving up into fourth.

Unfortunately for Jehan though, two racers in front of him had an incident and one of the cars while re-joining came right in front of him.

Jehan had to lift off to avoid a collision, which allowed another racer to overtake. The Indian then got back one position and finished eventually in the fifth place. New Zealand’s Marcus Armstrong won the race.

“On the first lap of

Race 1, I bottomed quite a lot through Eau Rouge so Piquet flew by me before Les Combes. I was pretty confident I could stay with him, but the Virtual Safety Car came out at the last chicane and somehow I lost a lot of time. Third is not ideal, but it’s not bad,” Jehan said.

Jehan moved up from third to second position in the championship standings with two rounds remaining.

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Sport as song and song as sport: a night at the Basque derby

SID LOWE

theGuardian

Poets and panache were on show in Bilbao as Athletic maintained their strong start, against Real Sociedad. If the world is a football and players nomads what ties us to this dream, to this history? They were, we are, a long thread of feeling from those muddy fields to this stadium. We are heirs of a culture, a way of being. Listen once more to the heartbeat of San Mamés. Listen to the spirit of the fans. Though we may not be the richest nor, probably, the best

our greatest victory is to be who we are. The poets set off at eight and went west along Pozas, which is the only way to head. As much a portal as a street, Pozas is narrow, noisy, tight with people, a pace and direction of its own. On either side, every other entrance is a bar, flags hung over doorways; at the end, the football stadium rises in the sunset, drawing you in irresistibly but without hurry as if there’s no way out, nowhere else you could possibly go and nowhere else you would want to go either, especially not today. The Cathedral, they call it. And, as they were pulled towards San Mamés on Friday night, through red-and-white shirts, through blue-and-white shirts too, Jon, Onintza, Xabi, Andoni, Maddalen and Amets occasionally stopped and broke into verse. When they did, crowds wearing both colours gathered to listen and laugh.

The Basque derby means the bertso derbi too, sport as song and song as sport. Competitive, improvised street poetry: witty, incisive and theirs. The six bertsolari, three supporting Athletic Club, three supporting Real Sociedad, had paused to perform where Pozas crosses María Díaz de Haro street and momentarily opens up, and then again on a stage set in front of the new stadium on old ground. Standing where the original San Mamés had stood for 99 years and where its spirit survives, they’d done battle, words flying. Now, just before 10pm, two minutes before kick-off, Jon Maia and Maddalen Arzallus were on the pitch. “If the world is a football ...” Jon began, “our greatest victory is to be ourselves.”

When he lowered the mic, 47,697 people roared. In the tunnel, waiting, Gaizka Garitano could hear it. “This is not any game,” he said later, and if anyone knows that, he does. Growing up, he wanted to be a bertsolari, but he doubts that he really had the talent for it – these guys are the Messi and Ronaldo of verse, he says – and he became a footballer instead. Born in Bilbao, he played in the Basque Country for Athletic, la Real, Eibar and Alavés. Of his 16-year playing career, 14 were spent in Euskadi and he built a coaching career there too. He it was who took Eibar into primiera for the first time ever and since December he has been manager of Athletic Club. What he has done at both is extraordinary; it is also fitting somehow, faithful to an identity which is his.

There’s something special about Basque football and about this derby in particular, where the fans sit together and that was perhaps even more evident this

week. Sometimes football is an expression of self, and this felt like one of those times – all the more so in the context of what has happened at Athletic over the nine months since Garitano took over, seeking survival. Like this wasn’t just winning; this was being.

The Basque Country makes up 1.4% of Spain’s territory, 1.4% of its population and 20% of its top-flight football teams. Include Osasuna (which many do; the club name is Basque) and thus add Navarre (which is another step again in an uneasy debate), and it accounts for 3.6% of the territory, 6.2% of the population and a quarter of all first division teams. Most know about Athletic’s policy, but it’s not just them. In the build-up to this game, Athletic striker Iñaki Williams was asked if he envied la Real’s signings, which include Alexander Isak, Martin Odegaard, and Portu; no, he said, but they envy us having people “from home”. Yet until John Aldridge came, unwelcome at the start, celebrated at the end, la Real had a similar approach; 15 of their squad have been in the youth system; and on Friday seven started – two in the Athletic side. Of the 22 starters, 15 were Basque (17 if you include two from Navarre), 11 had been in in the junior teams at Athletic or Real and both managers were Basque.

The game was Basque too, very Athletic. And if there’s an element of cliché in that, there’s also a significant element of truth. Garitano heard Jon finish, then sent his team out the way he does – roaring at their rivals, relentless. As El Diario Vasco put it: “Every time Real lost the ball, there was an ambush; every corner was a headache; every attempt to bring the ball out, they were suffocated; every challenge, a defeat.” They were behind after 11 minutes: in his 122nd consecutive game, Williams swept in Ander Capa’s ball after a neat one-two from a throw – Capa’s third assist and the third time Athletic have scored via a throw. It was two on 28, Raúl García looping a lovely shot beyond Miguel-Ángel Moyá, which is how it finished but it could have been more. Yuri Berchiche struck one, Iñigo Córdoba another as Athletic steam-rollered Real, racking up 15 shots in a din enough to make ears bleed. Unable to live with it, built for a different game, la Real didn’t have their first shot until the 84th minute.

La Real had prepared for this, manager Imanol Alguacil said. But they could do nothing to stop it and could find no way out. There was escaping Athletic or the truth: his team had a goal ruled out by VAR, which also turned a penalty into a free-kick just outside the box, and their captain Asier Illaramendi was taken off injured, all moments that might have changed this, but Alguacil admitted that Athletic were “better in everything”; “they deserved to win,” he said. His side looked cowed, “like lambs before lions”, Marca called them. “It’s not easy to nullify them the way we nullified them, because they’re a very, very good team,” Garitano said, “but Athletic imposed themselves – as we have done in the last few months.”

That “last few months” was not pulled from thin air. Before the game, Garitano had noted how his team had begun “overwhelming opponents” and they did it again. La Real were “unrecognisable”, one headline

had it; Athletic, on the other hand, were “a red and white cyclogenesis”, said El Correo, and exactly the way they always are. Or are supposed to be.

If there was a moment that defined this game, that defines them, rather than Williams’s goal or García celebrating his by signalling the wound on his leg; rather than the cheeky Capa skill that got a huge cheer, Yuri bombing up and down, or Iker Munian buzzing everywhere; rather than the way defenders look over their shoulder, terrified, every time Williams sets off; maybe it was the moment la Real broke. The pitch opened before them, but suddenly, Dani García, whose mates are all Real fans, closed it again. Stepping out, alone, he won the tackle then stood there, arms wide, defiant, a gladiator in the ring. Are you not entertained?

Oh, they were entertained all right, greeting him with a wall of sound. Football is this too, especially here. Afterwards, one Real Sociedad-supporting columnist called Athletic “primitive”, insisting “there is no team that obtains more with less”, whinging: “How boring!” But he was wrong. Ask those fans what they thought. Or the headline that called Athletic “a team to enjoy”. Or Garitano, who described them as “alegre” – happy, open, fun. Better still, ask them what they want. Because, if Garitano also called them intense, a team based “more on the physical than the technical”, a side that has to “sweat every point”, that is also the way they are – and the way they’re supposed to be.

“It’s in our DNA, the way we are,” Athletic’s manager insisted. “You talk to me about style books, but I haven’t read any of them. This is us. It’s contagious. People at San Mamés enjoy it; we have to transmit that to them, that effort. We can have a bad game but we always have to do that. The communion with the stands is very important. Historically we have a way of playing, values, and we have to express that every day.”

It works, too. In 2006, Angel Garitano arrived at Athletic as assistant coach on a rescue mission. They had won only once in 13 games and were in the relegation zone; going down for the first time ever was a genuine possibility. Twelve years later, his son Gaizka arrived at Athletic as coach. They had won just once in 14 games and were in the relegation zone; going down for the first time ever was a genuine possibility. Athletic were 18th but within a month they scored that penalty, from that run, and didn’t lose for seven games. On the final day, they were a crossbar’s width from a European place. They’d climbed 10 places, winning 12 of 24 under Garitano and began this new season beating Barcelona, with Aritz Aduriz’s absurd overhead kick.

On Friday, they went on top.

Two days later, Atlético overtook them but Athletic are still second. “This is something to enjoy,” Williams said on Friday night. Athletic had gone 14 games without defeat at home – right back to the last time la Real came. Seven months on, they’d beaten them back and had done it their way; they were who they are. “I’m glad the people are happy,” Garitano said. “This is not any game; it’s special, the most important night of the entire year.”

Five US Governors to visit India over next two months

BY LALIT K JHA

WASHINGTON, SEP 4 (PTI): The governors of five US states New Jersey, Arkansas, Colorado, Delaware and Indiana -- are scheduled to visit India over the next few months to enhance economic ties with the country.

They will be leading high-powered trade delegations comprising top businesses from their respective states.

The unprecedented move of five American governors visiting India in quick succession is a part of the efforts by the Trump administration and the Modi government to enhance state-to-state relationship. The effort has been propelled by the current India's Ambassador to the US, Harsh Vardhan Shringla, who has travelled to 11 US states so far.

Noting that states play an important role in both the countries, Shringla said this is a very important initiative.

"Increasingly, states have an important say in economic activities, investment, trade and people-to-people contact," Shringla told PTI in an



interview.

"I'm happy to say that in the next two months, we will have five governors of US States visiting India," he said, days before New Jersey Governor Phil Murphy leaves on his maiden trip to In-

dia with a high-powered trade delegation.

In fact, he is the first governor of New Jersey -- a state which has a sizeable population of Indian Americans -- to visit India. Early this Summer, Murphy had hosted

Shringla over a dinner.

Arkansas Governor Asa Hutchinson is scheduled to visit India from September 29 to October 6. This will also be the first ever India visit by a Arkansas Governor. Hutchinson had a work-

ing lunch with Shringla early this summer. Later this month, Indiana Governor Eric Holcomb would make his second trip to India, as part of his four-nation Asia sojourn including China, Japan and South Korea.

In India in early October, Holcomb will watch Indians Pacers in Mumbai for the NBA's first games in India. Similarly, Colorado Governor Jared Polis announced his decision to travel to India with a trade delegation in the presence of Shringla at a business round table in Denver this summer. He is slated to visit Mumbai, Bengaluru and New Delhi.

He will also participate in Global RE-Invest Expo, organized by India's Ministry of New and Renewable Energy, to be held between October 31 and November 2 in Greater Noida.

Delaware Governor John Carney is also scheduled to visit India this fall.

In addition, Lt Governor Eleni Kounalakis of California is also scheduled to travel to India soon.

Iran says to stick to nuclear deal for USD 15 bn oil credit



TEHRAN, SEP 4 (AFP): Iran said Wednesday it will resume full compliance with a 2015 nuclear deal if it can sell its oil or get a USD 15-billion credit line guaranteed by future crude sales.

Deputy Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi expressed doubt, however, that such a plan could be agreed before a looming deadline set by Iran to further scale back its commitments under the nuclear accord.

The agreement -- known formally as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) -- has been crumbling since the United States unilaterally withdrew from it in May last year.

France has been trying to convince the United States to offer Iran some sort of relief from sanctions it has reimposed on the Islamic re-

public since its pullout.

"Iran... will return to full implementation of the JCPOA only if it is able to sell its oil and to fully benefit from the income from these sales," said Araghchi.

"The French proposal goes in that direction," he was quoted as saying by state news agency IRNA. Araghchi, speaking days after leading an economic delegation to France, ruled out any renegotiation of the JCPOA, but said Iran was open to talks on how to implement it better. "Returning to full implementation of the JCPOA is subject to receiving 15 billion over a period of four months, otherwise the process of Iran reducing its commitments will continue," he said.

But Araghchi cast doubt on the likelihood of an agreement being

reached before the deadline set by Iran.

"I don't think the European countries will be able to take an effective step before Friday... so we will take the third step," he said.

Iran has hit back with countermeasures in response to the US withdrawal from the JCPOA, which gave it relief from sanctions in return for curbs on its nuclear programme.

In July, it said it had increased its stockpile of enriched uranium to beyond the maximum set by the deal. It later announced it had exceeded a cap on the level of enrichment of its stocks.

Iran has been threatening to carry out a third step by Friday unless other parties to the deal offset the effect of US sanctions in return for its continued compliance.

Violent clashes at Kashmir protest in UK, 2 arrested



BY ADITI KHANNA

LONDON, SEP 4 (PTI): Two people remain in custody after being arrested during clashes as thousands of protesters led by British Pakistani groups descended upon the Indian High Commission here against the scrapping of special status of Jammu and Kashmir.

The 'Kashmir Freedom March' began at Parliament Square on Tuesday and moved towards India House, with protesters waving anti-India placards and chanting slogans such as 'Azadi' and 'Stop Shelling in Kashmir'.

Scotland Yard said it had appropriate police presence to monitor the protest march.

"Two people were arrested for criminal damage and remain in custody," a Metropolitan Police spokesperson said.

London Mayor Sadiq Khan branded the clashes as unacceptable behaviour and called on the police to take action against the perpetrators.

"I utterly condemn this unacceptable behaviour and have raised this incident with the Met Police to take action," he said.

A UK Opposition Labour Party MP from Birmingham, Liam Byrne, has launched an online petition over the Kashmir issue and was among the politicians backing Tuesday's protests.

"Today thousands of people marched from Downing Street to the In-

dian High Commission to send a clear message to Modi you cannot silence the people of Kashmir," he said. The latest clashes follow a face-off between anti-India protesters led by British Pakistani and separatist groups and a group of Indian diaspora members celebrating Indian Independence Day outside the Indian mission in London on August 15.

Ironically, the Independence Day violence was also raised in the House of Commons by Indian-origin MP Shailesh Vara on the same day as the latest clashes, with Vara urging UK foreign secretary Dominic Raab to condemn the acts.

"It is absolutely right that any violence is deplorable. It shouldn't be conducted in this country, or anywhere else for that matter, at any individual communities. What we now need to do is try and reduce those tensions but also, on a positive side, build up confidence building measures to allow proper dialogue between the communities in Kashmir and also between India and Pakistan," said Raab, who addressed a series of questions over Kashmir in the Commons on Tuesday and called for India-Pakistan dialogue.

"We want to see a reduction of tensions in Kashmir, respect for internationally recognised human rights and steps from all sides to rebuild confidence," he said.

Pound extends recovery amid Brexit drama

LONDON, SEPT 4 (AFP): The pound rebounded further Wednesday, but gains were capped by investor anxiety after Brexit turmoil sent the currency tumbling and set the stage for a potential snap UK election next month.

Global stocks rose, with Hong Kong the star performer on reports -- which were subsequently confirmed -- that city leader Carrie Lam would shelve a loathed extradition bill that sparked months of unrest.

Investors brushed off US President Donald Trump's latest China outburst to push equity markets higher.

Back in London, the pound shot back above 1.22 Wednesday, an increase of one per cent from late Tuesday.

Having dived Tuesday to USD 1.1959 -- the pound's weakest level since 1985 except for a 2016 "flash crash" -- it has since rallied on rising hopes that Britain will not exit the European Union without a deal.

"Sterling was thrown a lifeline by a parliament determined to avoid a no-deal Brexit," said analyst Connor Campbell at trading firm Spreadex, but he also injected a note of caution.

"The complicating factor here, and the reason that sterling's gains... are not even greater, is the potential for a general election."

Prime Minister Boris Johnson headed into a fresh Brexit showdown in parliament after being dealt a stinging defeat over his promise to get Britain out of the EU at any cost next month.

The Conservative leader has proposed holding an early general election on October 15 if lawmakers vote against



him again on Wednesday and force him to seek a three-month Brexit extension from Brussels.

Many economists argue that a no-deal departure would hammer the British economy, which risks already falling into recession this quarter.

British business activity shrank already in August, slammed by weakness in the key construction, manufacturing and services sectors, a key survey showed Wednesday.

The purchasing managers' index (PMI) for all UK sectors dropped to 49.7 from 50.3 in July, according to IHS Markit, which compiles the data. A figure below 50 indicates contraction.

"The PMI surveys are so far indicating a 0.1-percent contraction of GDP in the third quarter," which would mean Britain had fallen into recession, noted Chris Williamson, chief business economist at IHS Markit.

Britain's economy unexpectedly shrank in the second quarter of the year.

The official definition of recession is two successive quarters of economic contraction. Elsewhere on Wednesday, Asian markets rose, led by a 3.9-percent surge in Hong Kong.

Shares rallied on the

Hang Seng Index, with property and retail firms among the best performers, having taken a hiding over the past few weeks as the demonstrations were increasingly marred by violence.

Later on Wednesday, at 1030 GMT, Hong Kong's embattled leader confirmed the news, announcing that she will permanently shelve an extradition bill that lit the fuse for three months of pro-democracy protests that plunged the city into crisis.

"The government will formally withdraw the bill in order to fully allay public concerns," pro-Beijing chief executive Lam said in a video statement.

In a message that was markedly more conciliatory in tone than her more recent statements, Lam appealed for protesters to abandon violence and to embrace a "dialogue" with the government.

"Let's replace conflicts with conversations and let's look for solutions," she said.

Withdrawing the bill is one of the five key demands of protesters, who have taken to the streets in their millions in the biggest challenge to China's rule of Hong Kong since its handover from the British in 1997.

Saudi, UAE foreign ministers arrive in Islamabad for talks amidst fresh Indo-Pak tensions

BY SAJJAD HUSSAIN

ISLAMABAD, SEP 4 (PTI): Foreign ministers of Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates arrived in Pakistan on Wednesday to discuss the regional situation with the country's top civil and military leadership amidst fresh Indo-Pak tensions over Kashmir. Saudi Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Adel bin Ahmed Al-Jubeir and Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of the UAE Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed bin Sultan al-Nahyan were received by Pakistan Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi, reported the Dawn newspaper.

Qureshi said the visits were part of Pakistan's diplomatic effort to sensitise the world about the Kashmir issue after India revoked the special status of Jammu and Kashmir last month.

The Saudi and UAE ministers are expected to meet Prime Minister Imran Khan and Army Chief Gen Qamar Javed Bajwa. Ten-



sion between India and Pakistan has spiked after New Delhi withdrew Jammu and Kashmir's special status and bifurcated it into two union territories.

A statement issued by the Saudi embassy in Islamabad on Tuesday said that matters relating to bilateral relations between the two countries will also be discussed in the meetings. Saudi Arabia is a close ally of cash-strapped Pakistan and Riyadh has provided aid worth billions of dollars to Islamabad to overcome its financial woes.

The Saudi minister's visit came after Prime Minister Khan telephoned Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman and discussed

the situation in Kashmir. The latest phone call was the third between the prime minister and the Saudi crown prince in three weeks.

Pakistan, which has downgraded its diplomatic ties with India, has been trying to raise the Kashmir issue at various international fora. Khan has been repeatedly warning the possibility of a military confrontation between the two nuclear armed neighbours over the Kashmir issue. Asserting that abrogation of Article 370 was its internal matter, India has strongly criticised Pakistan for making "irresponsible statements" and provocative anti-India rhetoric over issues internal to it.

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Priyanka Chopra-Rajkummar Rao sign on 'The White Tiger' for Netflix

MUMBAI, SEP 4 (PTI): Priyanka Chopra Jonas and Rajkummar Rao will star in an adaptation of Arvind Adiga's Man Booker Prize-winning novel "The White Tiger", Netflix announced on Tuesday.

The streaming giant is producing "The White Tiger" in association with Mukul Deora while Chopra Jonas will serve as executive producer.

The film, which will also mark the debut of Adarsh Gourav, will be directed by Ramin Bahrani of "Fahrenheit 451" and "99 Homes" fame. Bahrani is also writing the screenplay. Filming for "The White Tiger" will begin later this year in India.

Adiga's book follows the extraordinary journey of a self-made man from tea-shop worker in a village to successful entrepreneur in a big city. Murder, love and deceit become the ultimate price for ambition. "I'm so excited to work with Ramin Bahrani and Netflix to bring Aravind

Adiga's poignant story to cinematic life. When I read the book, I was fascinated with the perspective of the narrative. The story's portrayal of raw ambition and the extent one will go to achieve one's goals is riveting. I look forward

said in a statement.

Rao said, "It's an exciting time for actors today and I'm thrilled to be a part of such a world-class project. I've been an admirer of Ramin's work and am excited to see The White Tiger come to



FOREVER YOUNG! The triple threat, Jennifer Lopez wows in a white one piece on the diving board of a yacht in St. Tropez.

'Aadhaar' to premiere at Busan film festival

MUMBAI, SEP 4 (PTI): Viineet Kumar Singh-starrer "Aadhaar" will have its world premiere at the 24th edition of the Busan International Film Festival in October.

The film, produced by Drishyam Films and Jio Studios, will be screened in the 'A Window on Asian Cinema' on October 6 at the presti-



gious festival, which runs from October 3 to 12.

The Aadhaar scheme has got polarising reactions from different corners of civil and political society. The film, according to the makers, will look into these perspectives through the story of a common man as he gets caught in the bureaucratic red tape in the process of enrolling his name in the scheme.

"We are proud that 'Aadhaar' will have its

World premiere at the 24th Busan International Film Festival. Our philosophy at Drishyam Films is to always work with filmmakers and partners who will take our vision of global storytelling to greater heights.

"The film is uniquely relevant in today's climate and we are glad it's getting its due recognition," Drishyam Films' founder Manish Mundra said in a statement here.

To celebrate the festival premiere, producers have also revealed the first look of the film on social media, which is slated to release later this year in India.

"Aadhaar" marks National Award winning filmmaker Suman Ghosh's debut in Hindi cinema as a director.

"I am honoured and extremely happy that my Hindi feature debut is making its world premiere at Busan, a festival that has always given our films a very warm reception. I am grateful to my wonderful cast and crew, and my producers Drishyam Films and Jio Studios for their unwavering support and courage so I could make the film I had envisioned," Ghosh said.

The film boasts of a talented ensemble cast including veteran actors Raghubir Yadav, Saurabh Shukla and Sanjay Mishra among others.

ARIES: That surge of energy and passion that you are feeling, Aries, this is the time to channel it constructively. You have been given the magic wand to create the opportunities for success. Network, make connections. People are drawn to your power and potential. PS: It's time to live your boss babe potential.

Tip: Channel your energies wisely.

TAURUS: The Universe is providing you with solid, continual energy to tide through this week. Assert your authority gently, Taurus. Different situations require different shows of power. When it comes to big decisions, keep the long-term goals in mind.

Tip: Different situations require different shows of power.

GEMINI: Gemini, you are a powerhouse of creative ideas. Channeling them in the right direction promises

material gains, fame and power. Take this day to ground yourself firmly to the Earth, so that you can pluck the opportunities rather than being plucked by them.

Tip: Ground your energy.

CANCER: Work pressure keeping you up at night? Understand the balance between yin and yang. Sometimes you have to go into the space of nothing to create something. Give yourself the time you need to recharge your batteries. This is the only way to become your most productive self. The cards are also telling you to listen to your own instinct rather than the noise around you.

Tip: Trust your instincts.

LEO: Playing the victim card is so 2000 and late, Leo. Awaken to your power. Take charge of your circumstances. Things outside you might not

be in your control, but your reaction to them certainly is. Sure, there's a slight chance you might fail or not reach the desired destination in the given time.

Tip: Let them hear you roar.

VIRGO: This week, you're a magnet for joy, love, abundance and blessings. Virgo, there's a reason they're calling you destiny's favourite child. The best part about this phase is that you're not celebrating your victories alone. You are surrounded by those who take pleasure in watering you and pride in watching you grow.

Tip: Open yourself to joy and abundance.

LIBRA: You know that no great work of art can be created without retreating into 'shunya', the womb space, the beginning and end of all creation. This week, you are learning the importance of listening to your inner wisdom and

being receptive to the cosmic currents of inspiration.

Tip: Retreat into that space of 'nothingness.

SCORPIO: Here's some daily wisdom for you courtesy the Internet: "Easy to spot a yellow car when you are always thinking of a yellow car. Easy to spot opportunity when you are always thinking of opportunity." It all comes down to what you are focusing on.

Tip: "Those who don't believe in magic will never find it.

SAGITTARIUS: This is the big fruition period. A time of recognition and rewards. Ready to take home the big, fat pay cheque, Sagittarius? You are exactly where you need to be. Trust. Remember, life is dual-natured. While the gods of abundance are smiling down at you today, they make take a hiatus tomorrow.

Tip: This is period of gains.

CAPRICORN: Let 'go with the

flow' be your mantra when you can't make sense of your circumstances. As you do, let go of the anger and frustration too. You are being led to a better place.

Tip: You are making your way to a better tomorrow.

AQUARIUS: You don't have to do it alone, Aquarius. People around you are offering assistance. Open yourself to help and guidance. Have you been holding onto a grudge since time immemorial?

Tip: Open yourself to help.

PISCES: Slow down. Breathe. Everything will take care of itself when you drop the energy of fear and anxiety. The best part about this phase: your soul tribe is showing up for you in a multitude of ways. Connecting with friends, both old and new, is also on the cards.

Tip: Old friends. New memories.

Christoph Waltz to team with Liam Hemsworth for Quibi series

LOS ANGELES, SEP 4 (PTI): Veteran actor Christoph Waltz has joined Liam Hemsworth in an untitled action-thriller series for upcoming streaming service Quibi.

According to Variety, the series revolves around Hemsworth's Dodge Maynard who is desperate to take care of his pregnant wife before a terminal disease takes his life.

In his pursuit, he ac-

cepts an offer to participate in a deadly game where he soon discovers that he is not the hunter, but the prey.

Waltz will essay the role of Miles Sellers.

CBS Television Studios is producing the series for Quibi, which will be penned by "Sopranos" writer Nick Santora.

"Mad Men" director Phil Abraham is at the helm. Quibi, co-founded

by Hollywood heavyweight Jeffrey Katzenberg and former HP CEO Meg Whitman, is set to launch in the US in April next year.

The streaming service has already lined-up an impressive slate of projects in collaboration with celebrities like Steven Spielberg, Jennifer Lopez, Idris Elba, Chrisy Teigen, Lena Waithe, Don Cheadle, Tyra Banks and Lorne Michaels.

Martha Plimpton cast in HBO dramedy pilot 'Generation'



LOS ANGELES, SEP 4 (PTI): Emmy-winner Martha Plimpton has been roped in to feature in HBO's dramedy "Generation".

According to Variety, the series will focus on a group of high school students whose "exploration of modern sexuality tests deeply entrenched beliefs about life, love and the nature of family in their conservative communi-

ty." Plimpton will essay the role of Megan, an Orange County mother whose deep-rooted beliefs contradict with the values of her children's generation. She is the mother of the show's yet-to-be-cast female leads.

The 48-year-old actor won the Emmy for best guest actress in a drama series for her role in "The Good Wife".

Kristen Stewart was told she 'might get Marvel movie' if she hides sexuality

Los Angeles, Sep 4 (PTI): Actor Kristen Stewart has revealed that she once told if she hides her sexuality she might get an opportunity to star in a Marvel film.

In an interview with Harper's Bazaar, the 29-year-old actor opened up about the discrimination she faced in the film industry due to her sexuality.

"I've fully been told, 'If you just like do yourself a favour and don't go out holding your girlfriend's hand in public, you might get a Marvel movie.' I don't want to work with people like that," Stewart said.

The "Twilight" star became open about her sexuality post her split from "Twilight" co-actor Robert Pattinson.

The actor, who then dated visual effects producer Alicia Cargile, said hiding her relationship was making her feel caged.

"I think I just wanted to enjoy my life. And that took precedence over protecting my life, because in protecting it, I was ruining it.

"Like what, you can't go outside with who you're with? You can't talk about it in an interview? I was informed by an old school mentality, which is you want to preserve your career and your success and your productivity, and there are people in the world who don't like you, and they don't like that you date girls, and they don't like that you don't identify as a quote unquote 'lesbian,' but you also don't identify as a quote unquote 'heterosexual,' And people like to know stuff, so what the f*** are you?" she said.

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