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ON TOP OF THE NEWS

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U-23 team completes hattrick of victories at Women's U23 One Day Trophy



**SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 01 FEB:**

Winning has become a habit for Sikkim's Under-23 women's team and on Friday the girls completed a hat-trick of victories at the ongoing Women's U23 One Day Trophy 2019-20 beating Manipur at KIIT Cricket Stadium, Bhubaneswar, Odisha by 143 runs, pocketing 4 points.

Sikkim won the toss and chose to bat first and scored 225 in 49.4 overs.

Rinki Rajak top-scored with a scintillating 90. This is the second time in a row that she has scored 90 runs.

She received able back-up from Sarojini Giri who made 25 runs and Pranita Chettri which clocked 24.

225 was a decent total and Sikkim's sharp bowling attack broke Manipur's back.

The wickets started skittling early and both Manipur openers were back in the dugout with the score at 14.

Manipur kept losing wickets at

regular intervals and were bowled out for 82 runs in 38.1 overs. Mariam Subba took 3 wickets, Pranita Chettri and Aruna Barman two each and Neema Yanki Lepcha and Rinki Rajak a wicket apiece.

"Playing the full 50 overs in this format is our main aim and the players are doing so which is an achievement in itself. All the credit goes to the players for supporting each other and playing as a team and not as individuals. The captain is also leading from the front and converting games into victories by huge margins," says Coach Amosh Rai.

Sikkim stands in the second position of the plate division league table with 12 points having won all the three matches they have played thus far and with 234 runs, Rinki Rajak is in the third-highest run-getter in the tournament.

Sikkim will next be playing Mizoram at KIIT Cricket Stadium on 02 February.

Sikkim U-17 boys down Kerala to reach football semis of National School Games



**SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 01 FEB:**

Sikkim U-17 boys' football team has reached the semi-final round of the ongoing 65th National School Games 2020 at Agartala, Tripura.

In the semis, Sikkim will now take on West Bengal on Sunday morning.

In its pre-quarter fi-

nal match played on Saturday, Sikkim outplayed Kerala 3-2 to secure a place in the quarter-final round.

The quarter-final match played today itself, Sikkim defeated Maharashtra 2-0 to reach the semi-final round. The semi-final matches and finals are scheduled to be played

on Sunday.

An 18-member State team is representing Sikkim in the tournament which had kicked off on 28 January.

The team is being accompanied by Pushpa Gurung as team coach and Mayal Lepcha as team manager and Bharat Tamang as chef-de-mission.

LIC union up in arms against IPO plan

MUMBAI, FEB 1 (PTI): Employees' union of LIC has strongly opposed the government's plan to sell a part of its holding in the country's largest financial institution through a public issue. "The government proposes to sell a part of its holding in LIC through an initial public offer," Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said on Saturday while presenting the Budget for 2020-21.

Currently, the government fully owns LIC.

"LIC has always been the last resort for funding for other public sector entities. We strongly oppose the government's proposal to sell a portion of its holding in LIC," All-India Life Insurance

Employees Federation General Secretary Rajesh Nimbalkar told PTI.

Further, he said the government's move is against the interest of the public because growth of LIC is the sheer outcome of the dedication and faith of policyholders and its agents.

Any dilution of the government's stake in LIC would shake faith of the policyholders in the institution. Nimbalkar said though the government has not revealed the amount of stake it plan to sell, going by the past experience it seems a majority stake would be sold, resulting into LIC losing its public sector status.

Anita moves from nursing to fitness, plans a gym exclusively for women

**SAGAR CHHETRI
GANGTOK, 01 FEB:**

Anita Chhetri, a certified personal trainer, has announced plans to open a gym exclusively for women to spread wider awareness about health and fitness among women. She hails from Dentam in West Sikkim and recently completed a six-month diploma in personal training from K11 Fitness Academy of Sciences, Delhi.

"During my workout at a gym at Gangtok, I realized that while we have many male personal trainers, there is not a single female personal trainer here. It was then that I decided to change



my profession towards fitness and took a personal trainer course from a reputed fitness academy," she shares.

29-year-old Anita Chhetri is the daughter of Chandra Bahadur Chhetri and Nim Phuti Chhetri from Dentam in West Sikkim. After completing her class XII from Hee-Yangthang Senior

Secondary School, she completed a diploma in Nursing and served as a staff nurse at the Central Referral Hospital for five years.

Speaking to SummitTimes, she shared that she has been interested in sports since childhood with football being her favorite sport which she played at the state-level.

"After joining CRH, I did not have time to play sports so I chose fitness and started working out at a gym in Gangtok. During my workouts, I realized that there were no female personal trainers in the State so I decided to switch to this

field," Ms Chhetri explains.

She worked out for one and a half years at Anga Iron Pump, Tadong, where she was motivated to become a personal trainer.

"After completing my diploma from K11 Fitness Academy of Sciences, I got some offers to work in Delhi and even worked as a personal trainer at a gym there for a short time. Now I have decided to return home and work in Sikkim as a personal trainer," she says.

Ms Chhetri is now working towards opening a gym exclusively for women.



NEW DELHI, FEB 1 (PTI):

In a marginal hike, the defence budget was increased to Rs 3.37 lakh crore for 2020-21 against last year's Rs 3.18 lakh crore, notwithstanding expectations of a significantly higher allocation to fast-track long-pending military modernisation.

The allocation compared to last year's budget estimate of Rs 3.18 lakh crore is an increase of 5.63 per cent but it comes to around 1.8 per cent if calculated against the revised estimate of 3.31 lakh crore for 2019-

20.

Out of total allocation, Rs 1.13 lakh crore has been set aside for capital outlay to purchase new weapons, aircraft, warships and other military hardware, according to the Union Budget presented in Lok Sabha by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman.

The revenue expenditure which includes expenses on payment of salaries and maintenance of establishments has been pegged at Rs 2.09 lakh crore.

The size of defence budget stands at Rs 4.71

lakh crore if a separate allocation of Rs 1.33 lakh crore set aside for payment of pensions is taken into account.

The three services have been pressing for higher allocations to carry forward their long-pending modernisation plans and go for big ticket acquisitions in view of fast changing security matrix in the region including China further boosting its military might.

The expectations for higher allocation rose after last year's Balakot strikes.

Military experts said

though the allocation was inadequate in view of the demands of the three forces, the outlay was satisfactory considering the state of the country's economy.

"Money given to the armed forces is not enough. But, at the same time, we have to consider the condition of the Indian economy. The important point will be how the resources allocated to the military are utilised," said Dr Laxman Behera of Institute of Defence Studies and Analysis.

The capital outlay of Rs 1,13,734 crore is an

increase of Rs 10,340 crore as against last year's budget estimate of 1,03,394 crore.

The revenue expenditure which includes expenses on account of salaries and maintenance of establishments has been pegged at Rs 2,09,319 crore as against Rs 2,01,901 crore in 2019-20.

The percentage of the allocation of Rs 3.37 lakh crore compared to India's GDP has almost remained static at around 1.5 per cent, which is the lowest since the 1962 war with China.

Sikkim builds defences against Coronavirus

**ARPAN PRADHAN
GANGTOK, 01 FEB:**

Sikkim has reinforced its defences against Novel Coronavirus and has begun screening of vehicles and persons at its border checkpoints.

A high level meeting headed by the Chief Secretary was held on 28 January to deliberate on how Sikkim could be kept safe and screening of vehicles and people at the inter-state border began on 29 January.

Health Department

officials further inform that the department has set up isolation wards at STNM Hospital in Gangtok and also at the Urban Health Centre at the Old STNM Hospital complex. Directions have also been passed to make similar arrangements at the district hospitals in case of an emergency.

Director General/Secretary, Health Department, Dr Pempa T Bhutia, informs that Sikkim is on alert and prepared to tackle Coronavirus.

"There is no need to panic but it's time to be serious and stay aware and alert," Dr Bhutia stated.

He stresses that people need to be careful since the virus tends to spread very quickly.

As informed by Dr Bhutia, a total of 6,943 persons were screened at Rangpo check-post in East Sikkim while at Utarar in West Sikkim, 12 people were screened, 226 at Reshi 226 and at Melli, 67 people were

checked screened.

The DG further informed that of the five Sikkim students studying in China, three have returned and were screened for the virus and are safe.

A dedicated ambulance has also been kept ready for any emergencies related to the virus and a 24x7 helpline - 104 - is at hand to clear any doubts or confusions.

As of 31 Jan, the virus, which broke out of

the Wuhan province of China, has claimed 250 lives in China and has spread to 18 countries already. Cases have also been reported in Nepal and India.

As per latest information, more than 12,000 are infected with the virus in China, of whom 1,300 are in critical stage.

The Coronavirus outbreak has been declared a Global Emergency by the World Health Organisation.

Turn Page 2

DR Thapa accuses Govt of being unjust towards education sector

SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 02 FEB:

DR Thapa, the Upper Bur-tuk MLA who now sits in the Assembly as a BJP legislator has accused the State Government being uncaring towards the education sector, a condition, he says, is revealed in the financial mismanagement in the Education Department which has spread concern about the department's ability to clear salary dues of employees at primary and junior high schools in East Sikkim.

In a statement released today, the MLA draws attention to the letter sent by Education Deptt's Senior Accounts Officer to BDOs in East district conveying the department's inability to pay the salaries of em-

ployees of Primary and Junior High Schools for the months of January and February, 2020.

The Department has since withdrawn the letter and even showed the Sr AO for having communicated without authorization and miscommunicating the financial state of the Department.

"Shortages of funds within departments are common, however immediate steps are taken to cut down on expenses and redistribute the funds so that salaries can be paid. Salaries should always be the topmost priorities of Government, a disability to pay salaries shows the incompetency and incapability of the people making decisions. A repeated delay in

salaries is a deep injustice to the working people, some of whom rely entirely on their salaries for day to day expenses," Mr Thapa writes in his statement.

He adds that such circumstances can be easily avoided by the Government through "simple redistribution" of funds to accommodate the salaries.

The fact that this was not done in time "reveals the complete disregard of the government towards the grievances of teachers and other employees," he alleges.

"It also points to the lack of foresight amongst the people responsible, could nobody have immediately prioritised the payment of salaries instead of having em-

ployees of many schools suffer for two months?" he questions.

Pointing out that education was the priority the world over, the BJP MLA has rued that "such an action by our Education Department displays no concern for the development of the education system in the state."

"It further discourages the employees working in schools and affects the studying environment of students. A government that does not prioritise education is a government that does not care about the future of its people," he adds while concluding with the appeal that the government take immediate steps to ensure the payment of salaries to employees.

ICAR-NOFRI organizes capacity building program on Organic Production Technology of Seed Spices

GANGTOK, 01 FEB

(PIB): A two-day capacity-building program on Organic Production Technology of Seed Spices was organized by ICAR-National Organic Farming Research Institute (ICAR-NOFRI), Tadong in collaboration with ICAR-National Research Centre on Seed Spices, Ajmer Rajasthan at ICAR-NOFRI, Tadong from 30-31 Jan, 2020.

A group of 50 farmers from Sikkim participated in the training program. Speaking on the occasion Chief Guest of the function Secretary, MT Sherpa, Department of Horticulture, Govt of Sikkim highlighted the importance of spice crops in Sikkim and stressed on the need to enhance its production and quality for the benefit of farming community.

He also raised concerns on the new issues challenging production of local spice crops of Sikkim and urged farmers to adopt new technologies. He also appreciated the efforts of ICAR-NOFRI and thanked ICAR-NRCS for conducting such training programs in Sikkim for the benefit of farmers. He handed over seeds of fenugreek and fennel to selected farmers on the occasion.

Guest of Honour, Padam Subba, Director (Horticulture), Govt of Sikkim emphasized the need for adoption of new organic production technologies of spice crops for enhancing production and quality for better marketing of



farmers' produce.

Joint Director, Dr RK Avasthe, ICAR-NOFRI stressed on the need for dissemination of proven organic production technologies of spice crops for raising farmers' income. He also urged farmers to adopt production of high value and low volume seed spices apart from their traditional spice crops. He also thanked Director, Dr Gopal Lal, ICAR-NRCS for encouraging such collaborative endeavors with ICAR-NOFRI.

Senior Scientist (Plant Breeding), Dr RS Meena, ICAR-NRCS, Ajmer briefed about various research activities and technologies developed at ICAR-NRCS. He informed that the training program has been framed for dissemination and promotion of seed spice crops in Sikkim along with mandate spices like ginger, turmeric, Red cherry pepper, garlic etc.

Salazar temporarily suspended by US SafeSport center

LOS ANGELES, FEB 1

(AFP): Athletics coach Alberto Salazar, already banned four years for a range of doping offenses, was given a temporary suspension by the US Center for SafeSport on Friday, US media reported.

USA Today was among the outlets reporting that Salazar had been suspended for unspecified allegations of misconduct.

The move comes almost three months after former teenage athletics star Mary Cain said that she was "emotionally and physically abused" while training under Salazar with the Nike Oregon Project.

Cain, a high school prodigy who was tipped for middle-distance greatness, said in an op-ed in the New York Times in November that she was pressured into losing so much weight her menstrual cycle stopped, leading to five broken bones because of osteoporosis.

She said she suffered suicidal thoughts and began cutting herself as

a result of the methods employed by Salazar and the Oregon Project staff.

It was not immediately clear if Cain's allegations led to the temporary suspension by SafeSport, which has authority over sexual abuse cases within US Olympic sport but can also rule on cases of emotional and physical abuse.

"SafeSport does not comment on specific matters to protect the integrity of the process and the parties involved, especially any potential victims," a SafeSport spokesman told USA Today.

Cain's allegations came after apparel giant Nike shut down the Oregon project in October when Salazar was banned for four years for doping offenses that included trafficking in testosterone, tampering with the doping control process and administering illicit infusions of the fat-burning substance L-carnitine.

Salazar denied wrongdoing and appealed the ban to the Court of Arbitration for Sport.

Earlier Senior Scientist (Entomology), Dr NK Meena, ICAR-NRCS, Ajmer and Convenor of the program welcomed the dignitaries and briefed about the objectives of the training program. He discussed in brief about the technologies in seed spices that can be adopted under organic conditions of NEH region.

During two-day program, Dr RK Avasthe deliberated on "Possibilities of organic production of seed spices" in Sikkim; Dr RS Meena deliberated on "Seed spices production in India and Improved varieties of seed spices with respect to Sikkim"; Dr NK Meena talked on "Insect-pests and diseases of seed spices and their management through organic means"; Dr Shiv Lal deliberated on "Sustainable production technology of seed spices for Sikkim and post harvest management" and "Val-

ue addition in seed spices"; Dr Chandan Kapoor talked on "Basics of organic seed production of spices"; Dr Chandramani Raj talked on "Organic insect-pest management in spices under Sikkim"; Dr Shweta Singh talked on "Organic disease management in spices" and Dr Amit Kumar talked on "Improved agronomic practices for spice crops".

Farmers also visited the ICAR-NOFRI Research Farm and were briefed about organic production technologies, ongoing research and development activities along with detailed discussions with the Scientists. Joint Director also distributed training certificates and farm-inputs to the farmers.

Dr RS Meena, Sr Scientist proposed the vote of thanks and Dr RS Meena, Dr Shiv Lal, Dr Chandan Kapoor and Dr PK Pathak coordinated the program. SM Kandwal (Sr Technical officer) moderated the program.

Sikkim builds defences...

Novel Coronavirus are an extremely common cause of colds and other upper respiratory infections. This virus can infect certain animals and spread from one animal to another. A coronavirus can potentially spread to humans particularly if certain mutations in the virus occur and the same have been reported from China and spreading quickly. Many of the people infected with the coronavirus in China had contact with a seafood and animal market in Wuhan a large city in eastern China, though it has since become clear that the virus can spread from person to person.

The symptoms can include a cough, possibly with a fever and shortness of breath. There are some non respiratory symptoms like nausea vomiting or diarrhea. Some may recover within a few days but some people especially the very young, elderly, or people who have a weakened immune system may develop infection which may lead to serious infection or diseases.

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Agri Minister calls in TN counterpart in Chennai



CHENNAI, 01 FEB (IPR):

As envisioned by the Chief Minister of Sikkim, PS Tamang to witness a substantial growth momentum in dairy farming and milk production in the State, Government of Tamil Nadu has become ready to extend cooperation and supports for Dairy Development in the State of Sikkim.

Minister, Agriculture, Horticulture, Animal Husbandry and Veterinary Services, Lok Nath Sharma called on the Minister, Milk and Dairy Development, Government of Tamil Nadu Thiru KT Rajenthra Bhalaji

at his residence in Chennai, today. Minister Sharma who is on study tour to South India, is accompanied by the CEO Sikkim Organic Mission, Dr S Anbalagan.

During the meeting, both the ministers shared existing scenario of dairy farming in their state and contemplated to explore in the field of Animal Husbandry through mutual support and cooperation.

Minister Sharma urged Mr Bhalaji to visit Sikkim with technical expertise to further strengthen milk productivity and other sectors

of Animal Husbandry and Veterinary Services in the state. Minister Bhalaji also assured to visit Sikkim next month along with the officials and field experts to conduct research for further development. He also assured to provide High Yielding Variety of cow which would be suitable in the climate of Sikkim.

Minister Sharma also discussed on ways and means to enhance productivity of milch animals, marketing of Organic Produces and other farmers orientated schemes.

Minister, Lok Nath

Sharma also visited the farm of Department of Horticulture Plantation Crops, Tamil Nadu Horticulture Management, Govt. of Tamil Nadu at Madhavaram, Chennai, yesterday.

He also visited Mushroom Production Unit wherein Milky Mushroom Shed, Oyster Mushroom Shed and Mushroom Beds Packing Units were established and took stock on the various technical aspects, process of production and post harvest management.

He also visited Integrated Chocolate Making Unit in the premises.

AC Milan recalls Diego Laxalt; Juventus offloads Emre Can

ROME, FEB 1 (AP):

United States left back Antonee Robinson underwent medical exams with AC Milan in an attempt to transfer from Wigan but the deal fell through before the window closed on Friday.

Instead, Milan recalled Diego Laxalt from Torino, where the Uruguayan fullback had been on loan.

Juventus was relatively quiet on the transfer market, with little-used Emre Can moving to Borussia Dortmund on deadline day in a deal that could be worth as much as 26 million euros (29 million).

Mario Mandzukic

signed for Qatari club Al-Duhail after being dropped by coach Maurizio Sarri, and third goalkeeper Matteo Perin was loaned to Genoa for the rest of the season.

Juve's biggest deal was signing 19-year-old midfielder Dejan Kulusevski from Atalanta in a deal that could end up being worth as much as 44 million euros. But Juventus then immediately sent Kulusevski to Parma on loan.

Roma loaned captain Alessandro Florenzi to Valencia, where the versatile fullback and winger is aiming for more playing time in order to keep his place on Italy's

squad for the European Championship.

Zlatan Ibrahimovic's return to AC Milan and Christian Eriksen's move to Inter Milan were the most high-profile signings in Italy during the transfer window.

Ibrahimovic has already made a major impact at Milan, which has gone unbeaten in six matches four in Serie A and two in the Italian Cup since he signed a free transfer at the end of December. The 38-year-old striker has two goals in five matches and, more importantly, added a sense of belief for the long-struggling seven-time European cham-

pion.

Eriksen, meanwhile, is being relied on at Inter to help reduce the three-point deficit behind eight-time defending champion Juventus. The Denmark playmaker signed a five-season contract after joining from Tottenham this week in a deal reportedly worth 20 million euros (22 million).

All three of Inter's signings this month came from the English Premier League. Ashley Young joined from Manchester United and Victor Moses signed from Chelsea, although he spent the past year on loan at Turkish club Fenerbah e.

China Masters badminton postponed over virus outbreak

BEIJING, FEB 1 (AFP): China's virus outbreak has forced the country's first badminton tournament of the 2020 world tour season to be postponed, organisers said Saturday.

The six-day China Masters was due to start on February 25 at Lingshui, in China's southern Hainan island.

But organisers "considered all necessary health, safety

and logistical risks and... believe it is sensible to postpone the tournament at this time, said a statement from the Badminton World Federation.

Several players had already withdrawn from the competition, the BWF added.

The virus that first appeared in the central Chinese city of Wuhan has resulted in 259 deaths and

spread to more than two dozen other countries.

Beijing has taken extreme steps to stop the spread of the virus, including effectively quarantining more than 50 million people in Wuhan and surrounding Hubei province.

Wuhan is scheduled to host the region's flagship badminton tour event, the Asia Championships, in April.

The BWF said it was too early to "make any final conclusions" about whether to proceed with the event, which is one of the last chances for badminton athletes to qualify for the Tokyo Olympics.

The China Masters joins a growing list of sporting events to be delayed or called off in the wake of the epidemic.

The LPGA on

Thursday cancelled its 2020 Blue Bay tournament slated for next month in Hainan, citing health concerns and growing travel restrictions implemented to slow the infection's spread.

And World Snooker on Friday also postponed this year's edition of its China Open, which was due to start in Beijing on March 30.

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New language course concludes in Singtam



YOGEN THATAL
GANGTOK, 01 FEB:
The month-long Newa Language Learning and Speaking class concluded here at Gorkha/ Nepali Dharmashala, Singtam, today. Pratap Pradhan at-

tended the valedictory programme as chief guest accompanied by actor Uttam Pradhan as special guest. The language class was organised by Newa Bhay Bowneykuthi. Students performed songs and

dances and also participated in a language quiz. The teachers and the best three students were also felicitated today. A total of 47 students had taken the course. President, Newa Bhay Bowneykuthi,



Binod Pradhan, also addressed the function. "It shall not be wrong to admit that today's generation is a victim of foreign culture and lifestyles and have forgotten to respect their own language. But there are

thankfully still people who know the value and dignity of their language and the approach made by the Newa Bhay Bowneykuthi, Singtam branch, deserves appreciation," said Shital Pradhan, an NBB member.

No strategic idea or anything concrete in Union Budget: Rahul Gandhi

NEW DELHI, FEB 1 (PTI): Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Saturday said there was no strategic idea or anything concrete in the Union Budget and it described the "hollow" approach of the government that was "all talk and nothing happening". Talking to reporters outside Parliament soon after the presentation of the budget, he described it as repetitive, saying the budget does not address the main issue of unemployment confronting the country's youth and the poor state of the economy. "The main issues confronting this country today are unemployment and the situation as far as the economy is con-

cerned. I did not see any concrete idea, any strategic idea that would help our youngsters get jobs. I saw a lot of tactical stuff, redundant things, I did not see any central idea," he told reporters. "The speech was over 2.5 hours long and I did not find any strategic thing in it. The main issue is employment and economy. There is redundancy and income tax has been complicated instead. "The government's approach is visible in this budget. It did not have anything in it. It was hollow," he said. Gandhi said the Union Budget describes the government quite well, which is of "all talking"

and nothing concrete. "It was more than 2 hours and 45 minutes (long). A lot of repetition, a lot of rambling, nothing concrete. So it is the mindset of the government - all talk, all talk, all talk, nothing happening. But, the country is, of course, is suffering," he said. "Our youth want jobs. Instead they got the longest budget speech in parliamentary history that said absolutely nothing of consequence. PM & FM both looked like they have absolutely no clue what to do next," Gandhi tweeted. Addressing youth in universities and colleges directly, he said,

"You know exactly what is going on. You know that you don't have a future, as far as jobs are concerned. And, nothing happened here to help you." The Congress leader said the budget was very long and it was probably the longest speech ever which saw tactical stuff but no central idea. Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman announced cuts in personal income tax, extended tax benefits for affordable housing and gave relief to companies on payment of dividend in the Union Budget for 2020-21 as the government looked to boost consumption to bring the economy out of the worst slowdown in

11 years. The minister proposed raising customs duty on a variety of products ranging from tableware and kitchenware, electrical appliances to footwear, furniture, stationery and toys to give a level playing field to domestic companies and boost 'Make in India'. Offering an optional lower rate of income tax to individuals, Sitharaman in her Budget for 2020-21 proposed new tax slabs of 15 per cent and 25 per cent in addition to the existing 10 per cent, 20 per cent and 30 per cent. The new I-T slabs would be for individuals not availing certain specified deductions or exemptions.

Vietnam says suspending all China flights over coronavirus

HANOI, FEB 1 (AFP): Vietnam has suspended all China flights as part of "strengthening measures" against the coronavirus outbreak, its civil aviation authority said in a statement on Saturday. The step applies to all airlines "which have routes between Vietnam and China" and also includes Hong Kong, Macau and Taiwan, it added in the directive which was posted on its website and took effect at 1 pm Saturday (0600 GMT). An AFP correspondent on a flight from Taiwan to Vietnam was among 98 passengers told to disembark just as the announcement went

public. "The decision is ridiculous and unacceptable," Vietnamese tourist Doan Thi Ngoc Diep told AFP after leaving the plane. Vietnam is the latest country to impose extraordinary travel barriers after the virus spread to two dozen nations and killed 259 people in China where it originated in the city of Wuhan. The United States temporarily barred entry to foreigners who had been in China within the past two weeks and Australia said it was barring entry to non-citizens arriving from China. Italy, Singapore and

Mongolia have also taken similar sweeping precautions. The World Health Organization declared the coronavirus outbreak a global health emergency on Thursday but did not advise international trade of travel restrictions. Vietnam's announcement came after the country confirmed its sixth case of the coronavirus. A 25-year-old hotel receptionist working in Nha Trang contracted the SARS-like pathogen after coming into contact with Chinese tourists who were later diagnosed with coronavirus.

She was also the first domestic infection for a Vietnamese national with no known history of travel to China. Three of the country's six cases were Vietnamese nationals who had travelled to Wuhan. The receptionist's health is "stable, no fever or cough", a hospital staffer told AFP on condition of anonymity, adding she had "no history of travel to China recently". Vietnam has joined Thailand, China, Germany, Japan, South Korea, France and the United States as the only countries with confirmed domestic coronavirus infections.

France's Macron sets sights on mending ties with Poland

WARSAW, FEB 1 (AFP): French President Emmanuel Macron will pay his first visit to Poland on Monday in a bid to mend ties strained over Warsaw's controversial judicial reforms and its position on EU climate goals. Controversial judicial reforms have put Poland's right-wing populist Law and Justice (PiS) government on a collision course with Brussels over rule of law violations. At the same time, an agreement by EU leaders in December to try to make the bloc carbon neutral by 2050 was immediately undermined by Poland's refusal to implement the aim. Macron's office said the trip, his first abroad this year, was aimed at "clarifying the French position on many European issues, opening up new areas of cooperation with a major EU partner and stressing the need to protect European democratic values." Up to now, relations have been cool at best.

Macron in 2018 himself accused Poland's PiS government and Hungary's populist Premier Viktor Orban of "lying to their people" about the European Union's powers to interfere in domestic affairs. "A reset is necessary because it couldn't be worse," said Eryk Mistewicz, head of the Warsaw-based Institute for New Media think-tank, pointing to "a spiral of misunderstanding and lack of mutual respect" between Paris and Warsaw. Brexit has made good relations with Poland all the more important as the central European heavyweight will now be the EU's fifth-largest member in terms of population and sixth in terms of GDP. "It's time to get real," Polish political scientist Alexander Smolar told AFP, adding that he expected Paris and Warsaw to push forward on economic ties in areas like nuclear and renewable energy as well as military

or digital cooperation. Up to now, Poland has sought to buy US military equipment as a way of bolstering its already strong ties with the major NATO ally. In the past, it chose US-made F-16 fighter jets over French Mirage warplanes and now, just days ahead of Macron's arrival, Warsaw sealed a 4.6-billion dollar deal with the US for new F-35 fighters. It also triggered outrage in Paris in 2016 when it pulled out of a 3.14-billion euro contract for 50 Caracal helicopters at the last minute. Now, however, "there is an awareness on the Polish side about its isolation in the EU, of having wasted the chance that the Weimar Triangle gave (a three-way platform between Paris, Berlin and Warsaw) and of a host of other errors," said Smolar, head of the Warsaw-based Stefan Batory pro-democracy NGO. Despite their polit-

ical differences, economic ties between the two EU partners remain strong and stable. France ranks sixth on Poland's list of trade partners, having exchanged nearly 21 billion euros worth of goods in 2018. French companies take fourth spot on Poland's foreign investor ranking, having poured more 18 billion euros into the country via some 1,100 companies, according to Polish data. Macron "is likely to try to explore common interests in the Multiannual Financial Framework (future EU budget) negotiations and seek ways to bring Poland into the European Green Deal," according to Pawel Zerk, a policy fellow at the European Council of Foreign Relations. The Green Deal is the EU's new one-trillion-euro (USD 1.1-trillion) plan to finance its goal of making the bloc carbon neutral by 2050.

East Bengal go down to Indian Arrows

KALYANI (WEST BENGAL), FEB 1 (PTI): East Bengal's bid for an elusive I-League title got a further blow as they were stunned by AIFF's developmental outfit Indian Arrows 0-1 here on Saturday. Vikram Partap Singh struck the all-important goal against the run of play in the 58th minute to lead the Arrows to their second win from nine matches. It was Givson Singh who set up the goal with a square pass from the edge of the box as the home team's defence was in a total disarray. With the win, the Arrows snapped a hat-trick of losses but remained at the bottom of the table with seven points from nine matches. Going through a turbulent phase, East Bengal started the year with

a hat-trick of losses, including a 1-2 derby debacle against arch-rivals Mohun Bagan, leading to the resignation of head coach Alejandro Mendez. But East Bengal had returned to winning ways with a 2-0 win over Chennai City in an away match in Coimbatore as they needed to continue the momentum with three back-to-back home matches. Playing under their new coach Mario Rivera, who took charge on Saturday, there was no change in fortunes for East Bengal as they slumped to 11 points from nine matches, 12 behind arch-rivals Mohun Bagan who are sitting atop the standings after 10 matches. East Bengal missed a flurry of chances and their easiest came in the

85th minute when Marti Crespi's long ranger rebounded and fell to substitute Ansumana Kromah. The Liberian found himself unmarked but ended up messing it up in front of an open net with his shot going over the bar. Worse was in store for East Bengal as they were reduced to 10 players in the stoppage time following a double yellow to their Spanish forward Marcos Jeminez Espada. Crespi had earlier squandered a chance in the 16th minute from captain Lalrindika Ralte's freekick as the home side dominated the proceedings in the first-half but without any goal. East Bengal next take on Aizawl FC and Punjab FC on February 7 and 13 respectively.



Amended UN draft resolution calls for withdrawal of mercenaries in Libya

UNITED NATIONS, FEB 1 (AFP): The United Kingdom sent its fellow Security Council members an amended draft resolution on Libya Friday, calling for the withdrawal of mercenaries from the country, according to the text, seen by AFP. The draft expresses the Council's "concern over the growing involvement of mercenaries in Libya," despite commitments made on January 19 at an international summit in Berlin, including "ceasing all support for and withdrawing all armed mercenary personnel." The text also urged all member states "not to intervene in the conflict or take measures that exacerbate the conflict." According to diplomats, Russia strongly

opposes any mention of mercenaries in the text. No date has yet been set for a vote on the resolution. Libya has been mired in chaos since a 2011 NATO-backed uprising that killed longtime dictator Moamer Kadhafi, with two rival administrations vying for power. The conflict deepened last year when military strongman Khalifa Haftar, who controls much of the south and east of Libya, launched an assault in April to seize Tripoli, the base of the UN-recognised Government of National Accord (GNA). Haftar has the backing of Egypt, the United Arab Emirates and Russia while the GNA is supported by

Qatar and Turkey. The first version of the British draft, dated January 24, contained no mention of armed foreign fighters. On Thursday, UN envoy Ghassan Salame accused "unscrupulous" foreign actors -- without specifying who -- of continuing to meddle in Libya's conflict, in violation of the Berlin commitments. Russia is accused of facilitating the arrival of several thousand Russian mercenaries in Libya, while Turkey allegedly brought Syrian rebel fighters into the north African nation. For the past 10 months, the Security Council has been unable to adopt any resolution on the conflict in Libya.

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SIKKIM STATE ELECTRICITY REGULATORY COMMISSION
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No: 318/SSERC/2017-18/10
Date: 30.01.2020

NOTICE FOR PUBLIC HEARING

Power Department, Government of Sikkim, a deemed licensee engaged in distribution and retail sale of electricity in the State of Sikkim has filed its Annual Revenue Requirement (ARR) and Tariff Petition for the Financial Year 2020-21 before the Sikkim State Electricity Regulatory Commission (SSERC).The ARR and Tariff Petition have been registered by the SSERC as Case No. MYT/2020-21/P-01/PDS dated 05.12.2019. The copies of the ARR/Tariff Petition can be viewed and downloaded from the Commission's website ([www.sserc.in/Tariff Petitions](http://www.sserc.in/Tariff%20Petitions)) and also from the official website of the Power Department (power.sikkim.gov.in).

Power Department has already issued a 'Public Notice' on the ARR/Tariff Petition soliciting objections and suggestions from the consumers and stake holders on the proposed ARR and Tariff proposal. As per the said 'Public Notice', any person who intends to file objections or suggestions on the ARR/Tariff Petition of the Power Department may do so by filing statement of objections or comments before the Secretary, Sikkim State Electricity Regulatory Commission. Objections or comments shall be submitted in 5 (five) copies by registered post or in person, which should reach the Secretary, Sikkim State Electricity Regulatory Commission, Old SITCO Complex, Deorali, Gangtok-737102 on or before 10th February 2020.

The objections or comments shall be submitted with copies of the relevant documents and evidences in support thereof alongwith Affidavit as per Form SSERC-3 of Sikkim State Electricity Regulatory Commission (Conduct of Business) Regulations, 2012. Form SSERC-3 can be downloaded from the Commission's website ([www.sserc.in/Regulations & Rules/Conduct of Business](http://www.sserc.in/Regulations%20&%20Rules/Conduct%20of%20Business)).

The SSERC therefore proposes to hold a Public Hearing on the ARR/Tariff Petition filed by the Power Department on the date, time and venue mentioned below:

Date	Time	Venue for Public Hearing	Category of Consumers.
19 th February 2020	10.30 AM to 2.30 PM	Small Meeting Hall , Chintan Bhavan, Gangtok, East Sikkim	All categories of Consumers

Interested parties/persons who intend to be heard in person may appear before the Sikkim State Electricity Regulatory Commission for the purpose and would be heard as per the above schedule.

Sd/-
Director (T&T)
Sikkim State Electricity Regulatory Commission

The Big C

Build better defenses. Generate wider awareness

Tuesday, 04 February is World Cancer Day, and of the many Days that are observed in State, this is one that should receive wider attention. As the world over, Cancer is palpably on the rise in Sikkim as well and even as better healthcare facilities are extended to patients and their families, it is important that wider awareness is generated on this health issue so that infection rates are brought down and detections made earlier. For the record, battling Cancer will require more than the chest-thumping bombast of converting Mintokgang, the official residence of the Chief Minister, into a Cancer Hospital. The Big-C cannot be curtailed with political spiel, and it is time that better informed agency was deployed. In this regard, the CATCH programme of the State Government was a welcome step towards institutionalizing annual health check-ups because it is primarily such healthcare habits which will ensure timely detection. CATCH, which one unfortunately does not hear about much nowadays, if it had been developed well, could have popularize preventive healthcare against the present practice of going to hospitals and doctors only after one has taken ill. In cases like Cancer, too often, this stage is too late. And make no mistake, Cancer is a major concern which is only going to loom larger in the years to come. Look around, just about everyone has some experience on the matter, either through a relative who has been diagnosed with “C.A.” or a friend who has someone in the family with Cancer. If it is any consolation, Sikkim is not alone in the nightmare and the increase in Cancer cases here reflects a global trend.

A recent report of the UN shows that cancer is now the world’s biggest killer – with the number of cases set to explode in coming years. In India, as per the National Cancer Registry Programme of the India Council of Medical Research (ICMR), more than 1,300 Indians died every day due to cancer between 2012 and 2014. As per the latest data available with ICMR, an estimated 2.25 million are living with Cancer in the country and nearly 8 lakh die of the disease every year. What makes the situation urgent for Sikkim is that the Population Cancer Registry also reveals that the incidence and mortality of cancer is highest in the North-Eastern Region. Even without the statistics, even anecdotal information should be enough for Sikkim to get serious about this year’s World Cancer Day theme - “I Am and I Will.” This theme underlines that it is all about the individual and one’s commitment. Through positive actions, people can reach the target of reducing the number of premature deaths from cancer by 2030.

World Cancer Day is all about raising awareness and encouraging prevention, detection, and treatment.

What is worrying is that Cancer cases worldwide are forecast to rise by 75% and reach close to 25 million over the next two decades. It is projected that by 2030, there will be 12 million cancer deaths per year!

The exclamation point reinforcing the worry, it is clearly time then that Sikkim also begins addressing this health issue on more levels than just referring Cancer patients to treatment outside the State. When one talks of a War on Cancer at the global level, one refers to the effort to find a cure for cancer by increased research and the development of more effective cancer treatments. These obviously do not apply to Sikkim and the State should consider itself lucky if it gets a good Oncology centre here itself. The multispecialty hospital should prioritise an Oncology Centre and the policy makers will hopefully ensure that no corners are cut in establishing the best such facility possible. While the world works on R&D, Sikkim should focus its energies on prevention, earlier detection/ diagnosis and screening. Sikkim also needs wider awareness about Cancer, not just as a preventive measure, but also as a support system for families combating cancer in the family. Awareness is also important because as per WHO, more than 30% of cancer deaths can be prevented by modifying or avoiding key risk factors

Why Brexit has not and will not trigger EU disintegration

DOUGLAS WEBBER
THECONVERSATION.COM

Brexit could radically change the UK. Both Scottish independence and Northern Ireland breaking away from Britain are conceivable and Boris Johnson’s government has a lot on his plate when it comes to negotiating the country’s future relationship with the EU, all the while delivering on the promised benefits of independence.

For the EU, Brexit marks more of a return to business as usual. The prospective fallout of Brexit will be rather less far-reaching or dramatic. At the time of the 2016 referendum, there were widespread fears that Brexit would unleash a contagion effect among other member states that could destroy the EU.

Opinion surveys conducted at this time suggested that the EU had become extremely unpopular among citizens in many other member states and that, if they had also staged referendums on whether to leave the EU, the outcomes in some of them – notably in two of the biggest pioneer states, France and Italy – would have been very close.

Three and a half years on, these fears have proved to be unfounded. Rather, as the citizens of the remaining 27 states have observed the destabilising impact that the referendum decision has had on British politics, they have been inoculated against the desire to secede from the EU. Outside the UK, national-populist parties have moderated their anti-EU rhetoric

and nowadays profess to want to change the EU from within instead of destroying it.

How lasting this inoculation effect proves to be depends to some extent on how, as it comes to be executed, Brexit affects the British economy, society and politics. The greater the success of Brexit, as perceived by citizens and elites in the remaining member states, the more likely it is that this inoculation effect of Brexit will wear off.

But the attractiveness of secession from the EU is not shaped only by the perceived impact of Brexit, before and after its execution, but also by how well or badly the EU manages the major issues that confront it. The 2016 UK referendum took place in the shadow of the eurozone and refugee crises, when the popularity of the EU among its citizens had reached its nadir. Since then, these crises have been contained and the EU’s popularity has recovered.

STABLE FOR NOW

While the EU has stabilised these crises, it has failed to create the right instruments to achieve a lasting resolution of either of them. If they flare up again, as is likely, or if new crises should break out, anti-European sentiment will resurge and secession from the EU may return to the political agenda in some member states.

The most likely candidates would probably then be larger member states whose citizens feel less dependent on the EU for their economic and physical secu-

rity. The states that did not fare well in the refugee or eurozone crisis and where the EU is already politically contested. Hence France and, above all, Italy.

Meanwhile, the general political orientation and day-to-day functioning of the EU will not be much affected by Brexit, either negatively or positively. A member of neither the euro nor the Schengen zone, the UK did not belong to the EU’s core mechanisms.

In an earlier era, the UK was the co-architect of important EU initiatives such as the single market, Eastern enlargement and security and defence policy. But by the time of the Brexit referendum it had relegated itself to the EU’s margins. In recent times no other EU member state regarded the UK as its most important partner in the EU. For 18 of the 27 other member states, this was Germany, for three it was France.

For sure, some member states – those closest to the UK in their overall political orientation, such as the Netherlands and the Scandinavian members, or former British colonies, such as Malta and Cyprus – will miss the UK more than others. But the post-Brexit EU is unlikely to change significantly. And the northwestern European member states have organised themselves into a new coalition akin to the old Hanseatic League to fill the vacuum left by the UK on economic and fiscal issues.

DEEP RIFTS REMAIN

It would be misplaced to think that the UK’s secession will make the EU more cohe-



sive, however. The eurozone and migration crises, in neither of which the UK was a protagonist, showed how deep the political rifts are – north-south and east-west – that can divide the remaining 27 member states.

As in the past, how effectively such crises are mediated and how well the EU survives them will depend on the willingness and capacity of its key member states – Germany and France – to provide the other members with leadership that these can accept and that holds the EU together.

Already during the crises of the last decade, including Brexit, the French and German governments were not always willing or able to pro-

vide such leadership. Shifting domestic political constellations in both Paris and Berlin could curtail this even further. Next year’s German parliamentary elections and the next French presidential election in 2022 will both be moments to watch.

In one key respect, the EU will never be the same again after Brexit. The teleological notion of “ever closer union” and that the process of European integration is irreversible (dear to many scholars and champions of European integration) has been decisively refuted. No one can assume safely that history has had its last word on how European states organise their relations with each other.

[the writer is Professor of Political Science, INSEAD]

Coronavirus Outbreak: Quarantining millions in China is unprecedented and wrong

VAGEESH JAIN
THECONVERSATION.COM

The World Health Organization (WHO) has declared the novel coronavirus outbreak a public health emergency of international concern. China has recorded over 8,246 cases, but just 170 deaths from the disease. As far as emerging diseases go, this virus appears relatively insipid.

Despite the mild severity of this disease, over 50 million people in Hubei Province have been restricted to their region as Chinese authorities try to prevent the spread of the virus. Wuhan’s public health authorities say they are in a “state of war” and public transport has been shut down in several Chinese cities.

Cordoning off ground zero is not unusual in public health emergencies. An outbreak of norovirus or salmonella may lead to restaurant closure. In the case of the Chinese novel coronavirus, the wet market from where it may have originated (in Wuhan) was similarly shut down.

Removing the suspected source of the disease is necessary but not sufficient. Any public health response to a disease outbreak must prevent transmission of cases to others. And while isolation is a well-established practice for individual cases, quarantining millions of healthy people is unprecedented in public health.

Across Asia, facemasks are back in vogue, with Alibaba selling 80 million over two days alone. Given the historical context, this is unsurprising. The Chinese are well acquainted with outbreaks of viral disease. Crystalline memories of severe acute respiratory syndrome (Sars) have re-emerged. But it is this very context that raises the question: is such a drastic response warranted?

ILLUSION OF INTERVENTION

Some, looking in from the outside, may welcome mass quarantine. But in reality, it is no better than the usual public health response of isolating cases and potentially high-risk contacts of cases. Going further to isolate those who have any theoretical risk of disease may allay public fear and provide the illusion of intervention, but it cannot be considered an evidence-based practice.

First, the argument for mass quarantine rests on the perilous assumption that one person’s risk of infection is the same as another’s, simply because they live in the same region. We know this is not the case, particularly at an early stage



in an outbreak, and that there are groups at higher risk who may be identified and targeted first before radical strategies that interfere with usual activities are considered.

In fact, any impediment to the day-to-day functions of healthcare and other infrastructure can be a huge problem for disease control. Contact tracing, disease surveillance, public education and administering protective equipment, drugs or vaccines, rely on effective communication with hospitals, primary care, laboratories and other institutions, such as schools or nursing homes. Descending into a zombie-apocalypse scenario does not help in the operational coordination of complex cross-agency public health activities.

Second, a Chinese public health response must protect those within the affected region as well as those outside it. The current position flagrantly ignores the rights of healthy people in and around Wuhan. If we assume all currently recorded cases are within the city of Wuhan (of approximately 11 million) and not the wider region, then we can conservatively estimate that over 99.9% of people are not cases.

While human-to-human transmission appears to be occurring, preliminary reports don’t suggest that this is a particularly infectious disease. For every one case, the WHO estimates that a further 1.4 to 2.5 (or an average of two) more people are

infected. To put this in perspective, for measles, an estimated 12 to 18 people will get infected from a single case. So the vast majority of the population trapped in the region are not unwell and would be unlikely to get infected with an appropriate public health response.

Such a geographical lockdown of this magnitude is not just superfluous but also introduces new health problems into the mix. The first week of quarantine has resulted in crowded hospitals, food shortages and the local economy grinding to a standstill. Amid such chaos, even the Chinese will struggle to prevent defectors from fleeing. Also, it is unclear when it would be possible to lift such a lockdown.

HIGH PRICE TO PAY

With cases increasing by the day, the quarantine looks like it is here to stay, but escalating economic and social pressures will loom large for decision-makers. Surely the billions the quarantine is costing the Chinese economy would be put to better use in developing new diagnostic, preventative or therapeutic technologies for the virus?

A quarantine of this scale will create more problems than it solves. Other countries must be careful not to hastily imitate the Chinese if and when given the opportunity.

[the writer is NIHR Academic Clinical Fellow in Public Health Medicine, UCL]

MHA gets Rs 1.67 lakh crore; emphasis on police, census

NEW DELHI, FEB 1 (PTI): The Union Home Ministry was allocated Rs 1,67,250 crore for the next fiscal with a special emphasis on police forces and works related to Census 2021.

This allocation of the home ministry Budget includes those funds earmarked for the eight Union Territories (UTs) like the newly created Jammu and Kashmir, and Ladakh, which were given Rs 30,757 crore and Rs 5,958 crore respectively, according to the Union Budget presented in the Lok Sabha on Saturday by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman.

As the works for the Census 2021 has begun, the government has allocated Rs 4,568 crore under the Census Surveys and Statistics head.

The houselisting phase of the Census and the National Population

Register will be carried out from April 1 to September 30, 2020.

The Census will have its reference date as March 1, 2021, but for snow-bound Jammu and Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand, it will be October 1, 2020.

The Union Cabinet has already approved Rs 3,941.35 crore for the NPR exercise.

The Budget allocated Rs 1,126.62 crore for relief on account of natural calamities and Rs 842.45 crore for social security and welfare schemes.

The lion's share of the Home Ministry Budget has gone to the paramilitary forces with the total allocation of Rs 92,054.53 crore for 2020-21.

The allocation to the paramilitary forces will be distributed proportionately to the Central



Reserve Police Force (CRPF), which is engaged in anti-militancy operations in Jammu and Kashmir, the north-east and often deployed for internal security duties, and the Border Security Force, which guards the Indo-Pak and Indo-Bangladesh borders.

The other forces which will also get funds from the Home Ministry are the Indo-Tibetan Border Police, the Central Industrial Security Force, the Sashastra Seema Bal, the Assam Rifles and the National Security Guard.

Rs 3,688.10 crore

has been earmarked as grants-in-aid to the state governments, Rs 1,001.30 crore as grant-in-aid to the Union Territory administrations and Rs 195 crore for works related to the north-eastern regions.

Rs 1140.38 crore has also been earmarked for expenses of the Council of Ministers.

The Budget also earmarked Rs 25,000 crore for the National Disaster Relief Fund (NDRF), which provides assistance to the states whenever there are natural calamities.

The money is given from the NDRF funds to states for calamities like floods, draught, cyclone, unseasonal rains, hailstorm and quakes.

Interestingly, just Rs 10,000 crore was earmarked for the NDRF in 2019-20.

In addition, Rs 30,757 crore has been earmarked for the newly created Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir, Rs 5,958 crore for Ladakh, Rs 5,164.26 crore earmarked for Andaman and Nicobar Islands, and Rs 4,635.10 for Chandigarh.

The recently merged UT Dadra and Nagar Haveli and Daman and Diu has been earmarked Rs 2,180.52 crore and Lakshadweep has been given 1,349.71 crore

In the Budget 2021, Rs 1,116 crore has been given to Delhi and Rs 1,703.02 crore to Puducherry.

Hottest January in Bengaluru in 150 years, says IMD

BENGALURU, FEB 1 (PTI): The Pensioners Paradise, as Bengaluru had been known for its salubrious weather, is becoming hot as the city recorded 33.4 degree Celsius on Thursday last, the highest in January in the last 150 years ever since the India Meteorological Department (IMD) started recording the temperature.

The IMD's observation affirmed the general observation that winter this time disappeared quite quickly, giving people wind of a severe summer ahead.

"The highest-ever temperature recorded in the city on January 30 was 33.4 degree Celsius. It has crossed all the previous records," director

of the Indian Meteorological Department in Bengaluru Geeta Agnihotri told PTI on Saturday.

On the same date, HAL airport had recorded 32.5 degree Celsius whereas it was 33.6 degree Celsius at the Kempegowda International Airport (KIA), she said.

Thursday's temperature broke the previous highest record of 32.8 degree Celsius recorded on January 21, 2000.

Agnihotri said the rise in temperature this year was in line with the IMDs forecast in November, which had said in a press release that summer would be harsher this year throughout the country compared to previous years.

Normally, the temperature increases after Makar Sankranti but this time there has been a kind of shooting rise in the temperature. Winter has not been there practically, said Agnihotri.

Explaining the possible reasons, the IMD director said, "We are having an impact of micro climate where there is too much of urbanisation, too much of vehicular pollution."

Locally, the climate of a particular place is changing because of these man-made factors. This is what I feel. This is the trend throughout the country, through the world. People are observing that there is increase in temperature, opined the IMD director.

Jamshedpur revival hopes meet ATK's aim for top spot

JAMSHEDPUR, FEB 1 (PTI): Their chances of a top-four finish becoming increasingly difficult, Jamshedpur FC will desperately need a win when they host a high-flying ATK in their Indian Super League match here on Sunday.

Jamshedpur have suffered four defeats in their last five outings and need to pick up as many wins as possible in their final five games to make it to the play-offs.

"Yes, we think we still have a chance to make it to the play-offs. The match is probably the most important match of the season because we are playing against a great team. It is a big challenge for us. It is probably our last chance to fight for top-four," said head coach Antonio Iriondo.

Sergio Castel has been in good form having scored twice in as many games since his return from injury. However, in the absence of the experienced Tiri, the home

team does not have a recognised foreign centre-back as Memo, who is a midfielder by trade, has been filling in.

Coming into this tie on the back of a 1-1 defeat in Chennai, the onus will be on the home side to show some fight. Farukh Choudhary has a single goal this season after starting the campaign on a brighter note.

ATK have to close the gap at the top of the ISL table with FC Goa and Bengaluru FC also chasing the top spot which guarantees an automatic berth into the AFC Champions League group stage next season.

"It is very difficult to play because the last matches in the competition it is limited to stress. This stress sometimes is not good for football. We have just four matches in the competition. We want to get our objectives and targets," said ATK coach Antonio Habas.

The good news for the visitors is that David

Williams is back in contention for a start after missing their last three games due to injury.

What would please Habas is that they have just conceded 10 goals, which is second-best in the league this term. The trio of Pritam Kotal, Agus and Sumit Rathi have done an exceptional job at the back for the Kolkata outfit.

They are also prolific with 24 goals, second only to FC Goa's 32. Mandi is back after serving a one-game suspension which would give more options to Habas.

ATK are deadly with their through balls, with Roy Krishna and Williams' pace a big weapon. Jamshedpur will need to be wary of this aspect of ATK's game and ensure their midfielders do not get enough time and space on the ball.

While Jamshedpur look to keep their hopes of a play-off spot alive, ATK are looking to bridge the gap at the top.

Dabbawalas feted at BMC's Flower Show

MUMBAI, FEB 1 (PTI): The Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation on Saturday felicitated Mumbai's famous Dabbawalas (tiffin carriers) during its ongoing 25th Annual Flower Show and Exhibition at the Veermata Jijabai Bhosale Zoo here.

A flower model of the iconic Dabbawala with trademark Gandhi 'topi' (cap) and a rack full of lunch boxes on his head has been put

up at the show, which started on Friday.

The theme of this year's show is 'icons of Mumbai' and it features topiary models of things that are associated with the megapolis, such as a textile mill and film camera as a symbol of the city's film industry.

More than 5,000 Dabbawalas deliver over two lakh tiffins to office-goers in the city every day, and are known globally for

their punctuality and near-zero error rate.

The three railway lines -- Western, Central and Harbour -- that link 70 stations in the city ensure that lunch boxes travel from the farthest northern suburbs to business areas in south Mumbai within a maximum of two hours.

In 1998, the Forbes Global magazine gave a 'Six Sigma' rating of efficiency to Dabbawalas,

whose business dates back 100 years.

Subhas Talekar, president of the Mumbai Dabbawala Association, said the BMC had specially invited association members to the exhibition.

They were overwhelmed by the felicitation by the civic body, he said.

"Without cooperation from the BMC, we would not be able to run our business. The

BMC has provided us bicycle stands outside railway stations. It has also installed a statue of Dabbawala at Haji Ali junction," he said.

The exhibition features 25,000 species of shrubs, flowering plants, fruit-bearing trees, bonsai trees, exotic vegetables and spice shrubs to mark its 25th anniversary. It would end on Sunday.

The race to grieve: how social media has made professional mourners of us all

MAX RUSHDEN LONDON, 01 FEB [THEGUARDIAN]: There is a tradition dating back to ancient Egyptian times for professional mourners who would turn up at funerals of people they had never met. They would perform various roles -- wailing uncontrollably, dancing, or just paying their respects. They can be found in the Old Testament, and the first reports of it in China are from the 8th century.

A similar service was on offer in Essex for £45 until the middle of 2019. According to rent-amourner.co.uk it closed down because it was "too difficult to scale this operation to serve the whole country". Bizarre as it might sound, there was a market for it -- providing solace to a family who wanted there to be more people at a funeral. To suspend reality or to give someone the send off they deserved.

Social media has in a way made professional mourners of us all. While it is no one's place to tell anyone else how to express sadness or pain, it sometimes feels there is a race to grieve. A race to care. A race to show that you have the most compassion.

After the tragic death of Kobe Bryant, a few people asked why we hadn't mentioned him on the Guardian's Football Weekly podcast, which I hosted on Monday. One tweeter could not believe we hadn't. I have been criticised before for failing to acknowledge someone's passing, as if not commenting is a sign of indifference.

You like to imagine everyone's default set-



ting at such a tragedy and such a loss of life would be shock, sadness and compassion. How can it be anything else? Yet we are now judged if we say something and judged if we don't. Feeling compelled to publicly announce our sadness makes it start to feel like some kind of transaction.

And before long we are wasting our time caring more about whether Luis Figo has copied Cristiano Ronaldo's post of condolence and we have stopped thinking about the nine people who lost their lives -- three of them teenagers.

We did not discuss Bryant on the podcast. Some listeners in the US -- or those who loved Bryant -- might have turned to us for some escape from the wall to wall coverage it received there.

There is a relentlessness to way the traditional media deals with tragedy and death. It can have a cold, transactional feel to it. You have a responsibility to cover the news respectfully but you have brutal conver-

sations. This person is dead. Should we do the whole show on it? Or just half an hour and get back to the transfer news? I've had those conversations. What is a life really worth?

Last year I came on air minutes after we'd heard that Gordon Banks had died. We had to dedicate the show to him, his life, and his impact on football. That meant producers ringing up his friends and colleagues. They would often be the one to tell them that Banks had died -- the kind of thing doctors are trained to do -- and then ask them to come on air in five minutes' time. I distinctly remember how eloquently Bob Wilson spoke of his friend. He painted a beautiful picture of a great man and would have felt a sense of duty to speak well of him. Yet I don't know if it was right to put him in that position.

I was at Sky with Paul Merson the day we heard of the sudden death of Ugo Ehiogu. Merse had played with Ugo at As-

ton Villa and he was rushed on to Sky Sports News. He spoke amazingly, breaking down at one point. He probably should not have been put on air so quickly. He was sad about his friend. But in the thirst for instant reaction none of us questioned it at the time.

On their excellent Stadio podcast, Musa Okwonga and Ryan Hunn discussed Bryant only hours after he died. They articulated perfectly how the death of a sporting icon can have such an impact on us. As Hunn explained: "You are dealing with an individual who has given a huge amount of people, Lakers fans, probably some of the greatest experiences of their life."

However trite it sounds, if I look back at my most euphoric experiences, many of them are sporting. And if those idols -- who seem in some way immortal -- aren't here any more, it makes us think of our own lives. It triggers memories and fears. Those cliched hashtags on Twitter and

Instagram -- do the important things, tell people you love how you feel, focus on the positive -- are probably right.

Yet Bryant's life did not just happen on the court. And this is where it is complicated. In the hours after his death the Washington Post's national reporter on its breaking political news team, Felicia Sonmez, tweeted about his rape case that was dismissed before trial in 2004, Bryant's subsequent apology to his accuser and his settling of her civil case.

Sonmez linked to the Daily Beast's report of 2016 entitled "The DNA Evidence, the Accuser's Story, and the Half-Confession". It makes for difficult reading. Sonmez got a tirade of threats and abuse. Her address was posted online. She was suspended by her paper and, following a separate backlash, was reinstated.

It's hard to tell if the hours after his passing are the right time to bring it up. But if not then, when? Today? In six months? As Okwonga said on Stadio "The grim parts of his legacy will I think in some minds be shielded by the amazing stuff he did on the court and we need to navigate all of it in time ... When we consider the fullness of his legacy we look at all that he was."

We forgive those we love more than others -- our sporting heroes, our family, our friends. The reality of Bryant -- like many others -- is far more complex. His death is tragic. People who love him need time and space to process -- the two things traditional and social media don't give you.

HAVE A STORY TO SHARE?

email us: news@summittimes.Com

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

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

ESSAYS ON TEESTA, HYDEL AND CLIMATE CHANGE IN SIKKIM

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Churchill Brothers eye better outing against Neroca

MARGAO, FEB 1 (PTI): Churchill Brothers FC will seek an improved showing when they take on Neroca FC in the I-League here on Sunday. The Goans seem to be in a spot of bother, particularly in defence with Radanfah Abu Bakr being ruled out owing to the marching orders in the last match.

The Red Machines, though, will be happy with the return of Gam-

bian midfielder Dawda Ceessay whose pairing with Khalif Alhassan in the middle will be one to reckon with.

Churchill Brothers are placed sixth having bagged 10 points from seven games.

Speaking before the match Churchill Brother coach Bernardo Tavares said, "The team is upset with the last few results. We played well in moments rather

than throughout, which can't win you a match. So we ended up on the losing side. We want to play consistent football and ensure that we win against Neroca."

Neroca FC are placed eighth in the table with eight points from nine games. The Orange army showed resilience against Punjab after a long time but eventually, Dicka's individual brilliance took the game

away from them. But, their on-field performance would certainly give them lots of confidence.

The biggest ray of hope for the team is the striker from Mali, Bou-bacar Siaka Diarra, who has scored four goals from nine matches. He will be looking to continue his good form.

Coach Gift Raikhan said, "We are really not happy that we lost the

last match. The team played a really good game. We dominated play for the most part of the game and even scored our two goals before Punjab could do so."

"It is football and we will have to again plan, recreate and re-strategize. We have to look at the Churchill match as an opportunity and though they have very good players we will fight for every ball.

Gokulam Kerala aim to snap TRAU's winning run at home

KOZHIKODE, FEB 1 (PTI): Fourth-placed Gokulam Kerala FC will aim to snap the winning run of Manipuri side Tiddim Road Athletic Union (TRAU) FC as they go head-to-head in a key I-League clash here on Sunday.

Third-placed TRAU could not have asked for a better debut season, enjoying a four-match winning streak since the Imphal derby against Neroca FC.

Since their defeat to East Bengal in the second week of December last year, they are also in the midst of a six-game unbeaten run.

Gokulam, on the other hand, have been blow-

ing hot and cold, winning half of their eight games so far but also losing three in the process.

Speaking ahead of the game, Gokulam's Spanish coach Santiago Varela refused to accept that his side was too dependent on the heroics of Trinidadian captain Marcus Joseph.

"We have always shown to play in a way that all players are important in our game," he added.

"TRAU are a balanced team with good individuals and intensity. The plan is always to be the protagonists, control the game and be offensive. We will go in search of three points



from the start."

Marcus, in fact, along with Ugandan Henry Kisekka have accounted for nine of Gokulam's 12 goals so far and the duo will have to do an encore if the hosts are to stop TRAU's juggernaut.

For the visitors, it

was captain Princewill Emeka of Nigeria who shared his views before the game and he sounded confident.

"It is going to be tough but we remain positive. It all boils down to the 90 minutes on the pitch. Neither the records nor

the past form will play for us. We have players who can take care of the likes of Marcus and Henry."

Besides Gokulam's foreign duo, the likes of Falguni Singh and Premjit Singh for TRAU have also impressed with their skills.

Manchester United's 'fiery' Bruno Fernandes is 'similar player to Scholes'

JAMIE JACKSON MANCHESTER, 01 FEB [THEGUARDIAN]: Ole Gunnar Solskjær believes Bruno Fernandes has a similar X factor to Paul Scholes in his ability to create and score while also having the former Manchester United midfielder's fiery temperament.

Scholes, who retired in May 2013, is considered one of United's greatest players, having won 11 titles in a career at the club that spanned 20 years. Fernandes was signed from Sporting Lisbon on Thursday for an initial £46.5m and will be in Saturday's squad for Wolves' visit.

United have not scored enough from midfield and Solskjær was asked whether the 25-year-old, who scored 15 goals for Sporting this season, could solve the problem.

The United manager

said: "He is a goalscorer and assisting midfielder, a little bit like Paul Scholes. He can strike a ball fantastically. He has got such a wonderful technique but he also is going to get assists from set plays and from his range of passes. He is a similar type to Scholes: fiery, passionate, hates losing and same number [18] on the back of the shirt."

When the injured Paul Pogba returns Solskjær is confident Fernandes can operate alongside him.

"Bruno can play with good players, yes," he said. "Bruno can do absolutely everything apart from ... he's probably not a target man in the box but he is such a good footballer. He can play in a three-man midfield, he can play as a 10, he can play in off the side, he can play in a diamond. We will give him his time



to find his best position."

Solskjær denied Fernandes's arrival meant the unsettled Pogba would depart in summer. "We want to try to build towards a team that will challenge for the title and trophies, so we want to keep our best players," he said. "We can play them together."

Fernandes will provide welcome competition. "We bring him in to play [regularly] and we believe [in] him. But we are also going to give

him time to find his feet and settle down with new teammates in a new country."

Fernandes has spoken of discussing the move with his countryman Cristiano Ronaldo, who enjoyed a stellar United career. Solskjær, though, stopped short of comparing Fernandes to the five-times Ballon d'Or winner.

"Cristiano is unique," Solskjær said of his former teammate. "We hope that Bruno will come in

here and have a fantastic career. He has already given the players a boost. Just by meeting him they can see what type of human being he is, his personality, but to start comparing him with Cristiano is not fair on the boy.

"I think he is another piece in the jigsaw. I am sure he will give us that X factor that we have been missing at times this year. It's an important piece in the puzzle that we are trying to solve."

Gokulam Kerala thrash Odisha Police 7-0

BENGALURU, FEB 1 (PTI): Gokulam Kerala registered a resounding 7-0 victory over Odisha Police in the Indian Women's League (IWL) football here on Saturday. Sabitra Bhandari's five-goal effort made all the headlines, with Agbo Esperence and Grace Lalhahnar also scoring two late goals.

The two halves were quite contrasting in nature. While the first was quite closely contested, the second was a one-way traffic. Bhandari opened the scoring in the seventh minute, with a volley from the edge of the box which left the keeper with no chance.

Odisha Police were still in the game going into half-time but the second half erupted like a volcano. Bhandari made it 2-0 in the 52nd minute after chasing down a loose clearance and heading it past the onrush-

ing Odisha Police keeper Tikina Samal.

The Nepal international completed her hat-trick just a minute later through a brilliant solo effort, going past three defenders and slotting it home.

With the match ball in her bag, Bhandari wasn't done yet. She added her fourth in the 74th minute by converting a seemingly speculative cross and a fifth one by rounding off the keeper. There was a shout for offside, but the flag stayed down.

Bhandari was replaced by Agbo Esperence in the 86th minute, to a huge round of applause.

The substitute, who hails from Ivory Coast, made it 6-0 in the 90th minute, rounding off a wonderful solo effort. The seventh goal came from Grace Hahnar in stoppage time as the match drew to a close.

England claim dramatic super over win against Australia in women's T20



SYDNEY, 01 FEB

[THEGUARDIAN]: England questioned Australia's ability to cope with the pressure of hosting the women's Twenty20 World Cup – and then backed it up with a super over victory on Saturday.

England earned first bragging rights over Australia this summer after skipper Heather Knight blasted them to victory in the second match of the tri-series, also involving India, at Manuka Oval.

Bushfire smoke lingered in the distance as water bombers passed overhead throughout the game, battling blazes threatening Canberra's southern edge. The temperature sat above 40 degrees all match and it was Knight who conquered the blistering conditions, smashing 78 runs off 45 balls.

Australia mounted a stunning comeback, hitting 22 runs off the final two overs to force the Super Over but England chased the eight runs in

four balls.

Australia bowled after winning the toss and dominated early, allowing just 29 runs off the power play – the first six overs – but Knight and Fran Wilson (39 not out) responded with a 115-run partnership.

Ellyse Perry (1-9) snared the first wicket when Beth Mooney took a screamer at point to dismiss Danni Wyatt (17) in the fifth over. Amy Jones (10 off 24) struggled to get going and under pressure was run out after a direct hit from Jess Jonassen fielding at mid-off.

Australia teenage debutant Annabel Sutherland dropped a tough catch off Georgia Wareham (1-15) to keep Knight out there in the ninth over. Perry atoned the mistake later that over after running 20 metres from long-on and taking a sliding catch in the deep to dispatch Natalie Sciver (4).

Wilson was dropped

in the 18th over and Knight received another reprieve in the 19th as Australia struggled in the field. Knight, who made 67 a day earlier against India, was caught in the final over by Rachael Haynes off Megan Schutt (1-40) as England tallied 156-4.

Australia opener Beth Mooney (65 off 45 balls) was sublime before a middle-order collapse put England in control thanks to Sarah Glenn (3-28). But Sutherland (22) led the fightback alongside Delissa Kimmince (15) and both finished unbeaten to steer Australia to 156-4.

Left-arm off-spinner Sophie Ecclestone bowled a superb super over, keeping Alyssa Healy and Ashleigh Gardner to just eight runs. Perry bowled for Australia but Knight and Wyatt got there easily.

England lost the series opener on Friday to India, who Australia face on Sunday.

Women's tri-nation series: India look to improve fielding as they take on Australia



CANBERRA, FEB 1 (PTI):

The Indian women's team will look for an improved show in the fielding department to complement its fine bowling when it takes on Australia in its second game of the tri-series here on Sunday.

India are on top of the points table after the Harmapreet Kaur-led side beat England by five wickets in the tournament opener on Friday.

India put up a fine bowling performance, led by their spinners, to restrict England to 147, which was followed by a match-winning unbeaten 42-run knock by skipper Harmanpreet.

In the batting department, the top four including young Shafali Verma, Smriti Mandhana, Jemimah Rodrigues and Harmapreet were all among runs, but the middle order comprising

Veda Krishnamurthy and Taniya Bhatia struggled.

However, India were far from impressive when it came to fielding with Harmanpreet, Jemimah and Veda dropping catches, apart from misfields, and they side will look to quickly pull up their socks.

"I'm really happy that our young players could play with freedom. We have to work hard on our fielding. We need to improve," Harmanpreet had said after the match.

Defending T20 world champions Australia, on the other hand, will be desperate to bounce back after going down to England in a thrilling game that was decided via a Super Over on Saturday.

The Australian bowlers remained largely unsuccessful against England as only opener Beth Mooney starred

with the bat.

The home side will take confidence from the fact that India had lost both their matches against them in the tri-nation T20 series in 2018.

Squads: Australia Women Squad: Alyssa Healy, Beth Mooney, Ashleigh Gardner, Meg Lanning (capt), Ellyse Perry, Rachael Haynes, Jess Jonassen, Delissa Kimmince, Annabel Sutherland, Georgia Wareham, Megan Schutt, Nicola Carey, Sophie Molineux, Erin Burns, Tayla Vlaeminck

India Women Squad: Shafali Verma, Smriti Mandhana, Jemimah Rodrigues, Harmanpreet Kaur (capt), Veda Krishnamurthy, Taniya Bhatia, Deepti Sharma, Shikha Pandey, Pooja Vastrakar, Rajeshwari Gayakwad, Radha Yadav, Richa Ghosh, Arundhati Reddy, Harleen Deol, Nuzhat Parween, Poonam Yadav.

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The Crown’ to end after season five with Imelda Staunton as Queen Elizabeth

LOS ANGELES, FEB 1 (PTI): Netflix’s critically-acclaimed royal drama “The Crown” will conclude after its fifth season with veteran actor Imelda Staunton being confirmed to portray Queen Elizabeth II.

According to The Hollywood Reporter, series creator and showrunner Peter Morgan said though he originally envisioned the show to run for six seasons, he now believes five is the “perfect time and place to stop”.



“At the outset I had imagined The Crown’ running for six seasons but now that we have begun work on the stories for season five it has become clear to me that this is the perfect time and place to stop,” Morgan said in a statement.

“I’m grateful to Netflix and Sony for supporting me in this decision,” he added.

Staunton, best known for playing Dolores Umbridge in the “Harry Potter” series, will replace Oscar winner Olivia Colman as Queen Elizabeth II for the fifth season.

Colman, who took over the part from Claire Foy after the first two seasons, made her debut as the Royal Queen with the third season in November last year. She is set to appear in

the show’s fourth season which is expected to premiere later this year.

But unlike her two predecessors, Staunton will get to play the part for only one season.

“I have loved watching ‘The Crown’ from the very start. As an actor it was a joy to see how both Claire Foy and Olivia Colman brought something special and unique to Peter Morgan’s scripts.

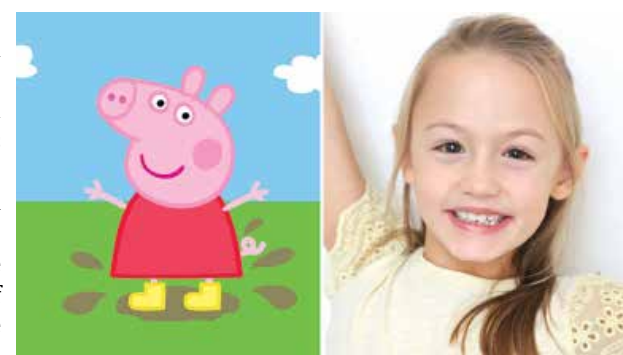
“I am genuinely honoured to be joining such an exceptional creative team and to be taking The Crown’ to its conclusion,” the 64-year-old actor said.

Amelie Bea Smith is Peppa Pig’s new voice

LOS ANGELES, FEB 1 (PTI): British child actor Amelie Bea Smith has been roped in by Entertainment One and animation studio Astley Baker Davies as the new voice of popular cartoon character, Peppa Pig.

Amelie will debut as the voice of the title character of the animated hit in episode titled “Valentine’s Day”.

“We’re delighted to welcome Amelie to the ‘Peppa Pig’ voice cast and are confident that she will continue the strong legacy of the



previous Peppa voice actors,’ said co-creators Neville Astley and Mark Baker from Astley Baker Davies

The nine-year-old actor has previously starred in British soap opera “EastEnders”.

Smith is the fourth British voice artiste to play Peppa Pig. Prior to her, Harley Bird, now 18, voiced Peppa Pig from the age of five and also won a BAFTA for the role in 2011.

Lily Snowden-Fine and Cecily Bloom have also played the character that first appeared on television in 2004.

Billionaire Bloomberg floods Democratic primary with cash

DES MOINES (US), FEB 1 (AP): Billionaire Michael Bloomberg spent roughly USD 180 million in the month after his late entry into the Democratic presidential primary, a staggering sum that’s drastically more than all other leading contenders spent during much of the past year combined.

Since his entry into the race in late November, the former New York City mayor has drawn withering criticism from rivals who accuse him of using his massive fortune, estimated to be USD 60 billion, in an attempt to buy the party’s nomination.

The spending, detailed in a campaign finance report that all candidates must submit to the Federal Election Commission on Friday, has enabled Bloomberg to dominate TV advertising and become a credible contender, even though he hasn’t appeared in a debate and is not competing in many early voting states.

On Sunday, he will go head-to-head with President Donald Trump in dueling ads that air during the Super Bowl.

Meanwhile, the other leading candidates have drawn down their cash reserves in a final push before the first-in-the-nation Iowa caucuses on Monday.

Money may not be an obstacle for Bloomberg. But the cash-on-hand sums reported by former Vice President Joe Biden, former South Bend, Indiana, Mayor Pete Buttigieg and Sens.

Bernie Sanders, Elizabeth Warren and Amy Klobuchar will offer a key indication of the health of their campaigns.

A poor performance during the caucuses on Monday combined with an ane-

mic bank account balance could be a death knell for a campaign, or at least make it difficult to persuade donors to give more money.

For the guys and gals who have spent substantial resources getting to this stage in Iowa, if they don’t meet expectations, they are going to be in a position where they have to live off the land in the coming weeks, which is not a fun place to be, said Danny Diaz, a Republican consultant who was a senior adviser for Mitt Romney’s 2012 White House bid and the manager of Jeb Bush’s 2016 presidential campaign.

The totals reported Friday will show where the candidates stood at the end of 2019 and don’t reflect the month of spending in the sprint before the caucuses.

Sanders spent USD 50 million over the last three months of the year and had the most cash still on hand, with USD 18.2 million.

Buttigieg reported that he spent USD 34 million during that time and had USD 14.5 million cash on hand, while Warren spent USD 33 million with USD 13.7 million left.

Klobuchar had USD 4.9 million in reserve after spending USD 10.1 million during that period.

Biden has not yet filed his report, which was due by midnight Friday.

Those who rely on traditional donors to fund their campaigns will likely face additional headwinds coming out of Iowa unless they bring in new donors because some of their most ardent supporters have already given the USD 2,800 maximum.

The two leading progressives in the race, Warren and Sanders, on the other hand, have relied on an army of small-dollar grassroots donors chipping in small amounts a source of campaign cash that doesn’t easily max out.

“If one underperforms (in Iowa) and you’re strapped for cash, you’re probably going to crash and burn,” said David Brock, a major Democratic fundraiser who leads two outside groups that are targeting Trump in the general election.

“It may be that we see even further winnowing of the field soon.”

In October, Biden reported that he had just USD 9 million on hand at the end of September, which was far less than Warren, Sanders and Buttigieg.

On Friday, his campaign announced in a memo to supporters that January was their strongest fundraising month since the launch of his campaign.

But campaign manager Greg Schultz also downplayed the importance of being a leading fundraiser.

A super PAC founded by Biden allies reported that it spent USD 2.9 million of the USD 3.7 million it raised by the year’s end.

The group, which legally cannot coordinate with Biden’s campaign, said in a news release that it has since taken in a total of USD 7.6 million, most of which was spent on ads in Iowa.

Steve Schale, a strategist for the group, did not respond to a request for comment.

“Elections ultimately are not about money, they’re about having the right message and vision for the country. But you have to have the resources to compete, which we unequivocally do,” Schultz wrote in the memo.

Clinton jabs again at Sanders, says he didn’t unite party

DES MOINES (US), FEB 1 (AP): Hillary Clinton is not done talking about Bernie Sanders.

The 2016 Democratic presidential nominee said in a podcast interview that aired Friday that Sanders didn’t try to unify the party after losing the primary to her four years ago and that he and his supporters contributed to her loss to Donald Trump in the general election.

Asked by Emily Tisch Sussman of the podcast “Your Primary Playlist” what Sanders could do this time to unite the party against Trump, Clinton replied, Well, he can do it, for one.”

That’s not our experience from 2016, Clinton said.

Clinton’s comments come just days before the first-in-the-nation caucuses in Iowa, where Sanders is bunched at the top of the

polls with former Vice President Joe Biden, Massachusetts Sen. Elizabeth Warren and former South Bend, Indiana, Mayor Pete Buttigieg.

The remarks are yet another reminder of the lasting scars of the the brutal 2016 primary battle between Sanders, whose supporters believe the contest was rigged in Clinton’s favour, and Clinton, who has begrudged Sanders for not supporting her candidacy quickly enough after she clinched the nomination.

Just last week, Clinton raised doubts about whether she would endorse Sanders if he wins the 2020 Democratic nomination to face Trump.

Clinton told The Hollywood Reporter in an interview that she’s not going to go there yet, but later took to Twitter to say her priority was to defeat Trump, and, as I always have, I will do whatever I can to support our nominee.

The Sanders campaign didn’t immediately respond Friday to requests for a reaction about Clinton’s comments.

Last week, Sanders refused to comment on Clinton’s critical remarks, saying only in a statement, “Together, we are going to go forward and defeat the most dangerous president in American history.

In Friday’s podcast, Clinton contrasted the conversations she had with Barack Obama in 2008 about unifying the party after he became the nominee with the conversations she had with Sanders in 2016 after it became clear she would come out on top. They were like night and day, she said.



START YOUR ENGINES! The co-stars, Michelle Rodriguez & Vin Diesel chat during The Road to F9: Fast & Furious Fan Fest in Miami, Florida.

THE DAY AHEAD

Aries: Yet again the cards are reminding you to sever toxic ties. If you’re the only one invested in this relationship, Aries. It’s not selfish to exit a relationship that’s making you feel disrespected and dishonoured. Be sure to take the high road instead of succumbing to the blame game though. You are an empowered being making empowered life choices. A Rumi quote to help you survive the trials and tribulations of the emotional realm: Taurus: When you are on the right path, the Universe tends to wink and nod from time to time to let you know you’re winning the game of life. Be cognizant of the signs and synchronicities on your path, Taurus. The song on the radio that describes your state of mind accurately or a conversation you overheard at the bar are no coincidences. They’re all nudg-

ing you towards your truth; your true purpose in the earthly realm. Gemini: Love and freedom. Freedom and love. They’re both two sides of the same coin, Gemini. What’s making your relationship thrive: the balance between ‘me time’ and ‘we time’. Continue to give each other space. Trust that this will make your bond a lot stronger. Single twins in the market for love, expect a twist in the tale. Cancer: 2020 has just begun, Cancer, and you’re already thinking about giving up! So you had a minor setback. Things didn’t turn out the way you wanted to. Oh, and let’s not get started on the people around you! But that doesn’t mean there aren’t things that are looking up or working out right now and in this moment. Leo: The world has a way of mirroring our beliefs back to us. By holding on to the

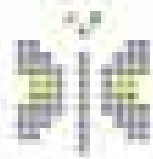
belief that good things don’t happen to you, you are blocking the Universe from giving you all that you deserve and more. This self-limiting pattern could be the reason your anxiety is triggered. So think about how you can break free from this shackle.. Virgo: Virgo, you’re the one everybody turns to for sage advice (a reality check). The responsible member of the crew who drives them home after a particularly debauched night. But that doesn’t there’s only one side to you. Labels are just labels, Virgo. Free yourself from the idea of who you are supposed to be and allow yourself to embrace all aspects of your personality. What the cards are encouraging you to do today: Libra: Everything you are looking for is right here and in this moment. There is no rush to get anywhere. You are enjoying the process of getting to know the other organically rather than rushing to the finish line. If they are ‘the one’, things will

work out despite the odds. If they’re not, you’ll still have made memories you will cherish for a lifetime. Scorpio: It doesn’t matter how many times you have had your heart broken. Everything transpired for a reason. This you believe with your whole heart. You’re grateful for where you are now: a place of joy and love. For a lot of you, this marks a new beginning. Sagittarius: Today, you’re taking a no BS approach to love, life, and everything in between. Yes, that means having to sever certain connections or say goodbye to toxic ties, and that’s okay. Your space is sacred, Sagittarius. Do what you need to in order to protect yourself. Not everybody is used to being served the truth tea though. Capricorn: Capricorn, you’re an alchemist. A master manifestor in your own right. Rules of game to help you reclaim your reins: 1) Tell the Universe exactly what you want;

2) Be specific. Visualise the details; 3) Trust in your power; 4) Take the required action and; 5) Express gratitude for what you have and what is yet to come. Aquarius: You know what’s underrated? A tall cup of cocoa, an old pair of linen pants, and a book that reminds you of the power of being in the now. Aquarius, this is your cosmic cue to shun worldly responsibilities and retreat into your inner sanctum. Be sure to put your phone on flight mode as you. Meditation and mindfulness will also take centre-stage today. Pisces: Sometimes you just need to take a moment to review your life, be grateful for the highs as well as the lows, and acknowledge each other’s role in the process of evolution. You didn’t think you could make it, yet you did! Trust that your connection will only grow deeper. Single Pisceans could be reflecting on their past patterns.



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