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SummitTIMES

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ON TOP OF THE NEWS

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AAP to raise issue of shooting at Gandhi's effigy in Rajya Sabha

NEW DELHI, FEB 3 (PTI): Aam Aadmi Party parliamentarian Sanjay Singh will raise the issue of shooting and torching of Mahatma Gandhi's effigy in Uttar Pradesh last week, in Rajya Sabha.

Singh, who has given a notice to raise the issue during the Zero Hour of the House, said Modi government's "silence" on the issue is "highly unfortunate".

The incident, on the Mahatma's death anniversary, happened in Aligarh, where suspected Hindu Mahasabha members used a toy to shoot at his effigy and torched it in an enactment of his assassination.

A video of the incident had gone viral on social media, generating widespread outrage.

"The incident exemplifying Talibani culture is highly condemnable but it's unfortunate that Modi government has maintained silence on it," Singh said.

Aligarh police registered a case and arrested five persons allegedly involved in the incident.

Rahul Gurung retains champion status at NE Chess c'ship

Rakesh Gurung, also of Sikkim, comes in second

SAGAR CHHETRI

GANGTOK, 03 FEB:

Rahul Gurung emerged as the champion of the North Eastern States FIDE Rating Chess Championship held here in the State. This is his second consecutive champion's trophy of the tournament, having won the last edition as well. He accomplished the feat by securing eight and half points in this, the 19th edition of the championship held here at Sikkim Manipal Institute of Medical



Sciences auditorium.

Impressively, another player from Sikkim, Rakesh Gurung, stood on the second position with Soram

Rahul Singh from Assam securing the third position.

The six-day long prestigious championship was organised by Sikkim

Chess Association [SCA] under the aegis of All India Chess Federation [AICF] for the second time in the State from 29 January to 03 February. A total of 250 players from the North Eastern States had participated in the tournament.

In the list of top 20 players of the tournament, Sahil Dey from Assam stood on the 4th position, Santanu Borpatra Gohain from Assam on 5th position, Rohit Gurung from Sikkim on 6th, Trailokya Nanda from Assam on 7th, Nitish Das from Assam on 8th, Iftikar Alom Mazumdar from Assam on 9th, Dupit Tabu Arunachal Pradesh on 10th, Silkam Sangma from Meghalaya on 11th, Projit Phukon from Assam on 12th, Lalnungsanga from

Mizoram on 13th, Manoj Das from Assam on 14th, Thendup Tamang from Sikkim on 15th, Hage Lasa Nado from Arunachal Pradesh on 16th, Rajbeer Ahmed from Tripura on 17th, Barbith M Sangma from Meghalaya on 18th, Rijied Katrai from Meghalaya on 19th and Raluk Dui from Arunachal Pradesh on 20th position.

Rahul Gurung received the champion's trophy along with a cash prize of Rs 30,000, while certificates and cash prizes were handed over to players in top-20 overall and top-three players in different age categories. The tournament carried a total cash prize of Rs 1.50 lakh sponsored by the All India Chess Federation.

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HRDD Committee on demands of ad hoc teachers to meet next on 06 Feb

SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 02 FEB:

The committee instituted by the Human Resource Development Department on 29 Jan to address demands raised by ad hoc teachers convened its first meeting of 01 February during which it was decided that the next meeting be held on 06 February.

An HRDD press release informs that the demands were examined at the first meeting. The ad hoc teacher members of the Committee, the press release informs, told the committee that they were compiling some supporting documents for their demands.

The HRDD representatives in committee

in turn informed the meeting that once the supporting documents and relevant references are compiled, the Department would be able to further examine and place their demands to the government for consideration.

The next meeting of this committee was accordingly slated for 06 February at the HRDD Office.

Meanwhile, the Department has asked ad hoc teachers who have received appointment orders to resume their duties and not abstain from their responsibilities. The meeting on 06 February shall be held in the presence of committee members only, the release stresses.

Forest Fire in Upper Luing



NITESH R PRADHAN

GANGTOK, 3 FEB:

A major fire broke out at Upper Luing area near Ranka across the hill this afternoon. While the reason behind the fire was not established at the time of going to print, since it had still not

been doused completely and because there are habitations nearby, worry remains.

Local residents have requested the administration for immediate help.

On the ground, SFO Samser Subba, informed

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Model Degree College digitally launched at Chakung



GYALSHING, 03 FEB [IPR]:

Prime Minister Narendra Modi today conducted the digital launch of Model Degree College, Chakung, and New Pro-

fessional College, Dantam, both in West Sikkim under the Rashtriya Uchchatar Shiksha Abhiyan (RUSA), Department of Higher Education, Minis-

try of Human Resource Department.

While the PM was beamed in digitally, the function was also attended by Yangthang

MLA Chandra Maya Subba, Yuksam MLA Sonam Dadul Bhutia, Additional Chief Secretary, HRDD, GP Upadhaya, DC [West] Dr AB Karki, West Upadhakshya Ashok Gurung, chairpersons and councillors, Additional Director, HRDD, T. Eden, Deputy Director PL Subba, principals of various colleges and students.

During the program, a total of 70 Model Degree Colleges, 11 Professional Colleges, 66 Entrepreneurship, Innovation and Career Hubs and one Women's University in all over India were digitally launched from the Sher-e-

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Opp forum call on DK Bhandari



SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 03 FEB:

Members of the United Sikkimese Forum, minus Sikkim Krantikari Morcha representatives, today called on former Lok Sabha MP, DK Bhandari, at her residence here at Church Road.

USF discussed its plans for a political alliance and strategy of all opposition parties to challenge the 25-year-

old SDF government at the approaching assembly elections.

Sources inform that Ms Bhandari told all the USF members to formulate possible strategies and also advised that they take the largest opposition party, Sikkim Krantikari Morcha, into confidence.

The meeting of the USF is expected to be held anytime after 15 February, it is learnt.

Most students aware of just seven career options: Study

NEW DELHI, FEB 3 (PTI):

Majority of students in India are aware of just seven career paths, out of over 250 options they can pursue in the country, according to a survey.

The survey, based on responses from over 10,000 students in the age group 14-21 across India, shows that most are ignorant of the multitudes of options available to them.

As much as 93 per

cent of the students were aware of only seven careers, which included law, engineering, design and management, according to the survey conducted by Mindler, an online career-counseling platform.

There are over 250 careers across 40 domains covering of over 5,000 job types that one can pursue in India, researchers said.

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नयाँ सिक्किमको नयाँ उज्यालो

Join us to pay our respects to the **WOMEN OF SIKKIM** on the occasion of

7TH SKM FOUNDATION DAY

Observed as **WOMEN DIGNITY & EMPOWERMENT**

4th Feb, 2019

Venue: Mining Ground, Rangpoo, East Sikkim

Difficult Dialogues 2019 ends on a high note

PANAJI, FEB 3 (PTI): The fourth edition of Difficult Dialogues 2019 ended on a high note here with the platform witnessing a series of discussions on education and its myriad facets.

International experts, academics, leading thinkers and policy makers talked on the crucial factors affecting education in contemporary times during the final session on Saturday.

New threats to academic freedom, curriculum and pedagogy and role of technology in re-shaping the education system were some of the topics taken up on the last day of the two-day annual conference.

"While there is freedom in matters like choice of courses and papers to publish, the biggest threat is the stifling of freedom of expression to voice opinions that are not popular with the government authorities. Unfortunately, such incidences are on the rise," the panellists said.

The panel was represented by UGC Vice Chairman Bhushan Patwardhan, Dean, O P Jin-

dal Global University R Sudarshan, Paul Flather from the University of Oxford, UK and others.

It also suggested to start critical thinking and freedom of expression modules in schools itself, free speech memorials on campuses and encourage media to celebrate academics who are brave enough to raise their voices against the stifling of freedom of expression.

The panel on 'Curriculum and Pedagogy' underlined the need to "create curriculum material in local languages, resist politicisation of text books and the involvement of specialist institutions to develop such books".

On the role of technology in reshaping the education system in India, the panel headed by Prof Rajive Kumar (Advisor, AICTE), G P Phondke (former director, NISCAIR), Ashoka Misra (former director, IIT Bombay), among others said teachers and students in certain pockets still resist technology when it comes to teaching and learning.

Model Degree College...

Kashmir International Convention Center, Srinagar, by the Prime Minister.

Under the RUSA scheme, Sikkim will now have two Model Degree Colleges - at Chakung (West Sikkim) and Mangshila (North Sikkim) respectively and one Professional College at Dentam (West Sikkim).

Rahul Gurung retains...

The prize distribution ceremony had Sikkim Olympic Association president, BK Roka, as chief guest, who, along with other special guests, gave away the trophies and medals.

Sikkim Chess Association also feted the youngest player of the championship, five-year-old John Lalrinfela from Mizoram and the oldest player, 84-year-old TP Ghimirey from Sikkim.

In his address, the chief guest congratulated all winners and participants from different NE States and congratulated all parents for supporting and guiding their children and stated that such support and encouragement from parents would take their children to national and international level.

Mr Roka urged SCA to continue with its efforts for the promotion and development of chess in the State and towards providing more platforms to players.

Chief Arbiter of the championship, Dharmendra Kumar, commented that the standard of the chess in Sikkim and the entire north eastern region has been gradually improving and lot of quality players have been coming out of the region.

He also congratulated Sikkim for carving out a prominent place in chess in the north eastern region in a short period. He encouraged SCA to continue with its efforts to produce more quality players from the State.

SCA general secretary, Mahendra Dhakal expressed his happiness and satisfaction with the performance of Sikkim players and stated that achievements made by Sikkim players would encourage other players and help SCA efforts produce International Masters and Grand Masters from Sikkim.

He assured that the association would try to organise more regional and national competitions in the State to provide bigger platforms to local players.

Most students aware...

"Our research on over 10,000 students across India suggests an alarming ignorance of the career options available to students today," said Prateek Bhargava, founder and CEO of Mindler, who has recently launched a platform for career counselling in tier II and tier III cities across India.

India has limited trained career counsellors available who can assist and guide students to make the correct career decision among the plethora of choices available today, he said.

The platform aims bring counsellors from underserved cities across India under one roof and systemising the career counselling sector.

Forest Fire in...

that they received information about the first at 1:30 pm and that the Fire Services was closely monitoring the situation.

He informed that the area struck by the forest fire breakout was one and a half kilometers above the road, making access impossible to launch a fire-fighting effort.

He further added that rocks, rendered unstable after the undergrowth holding them firm was brned away, were falling continuously, making approach fraught with danger.

"We are monitoring the situation closely so that the habitations remain safe," he said.

Adding futher he stated that the Fire department will present the detailed report tomorrow.

Will return Padma Bhushan if govt doesn't fulfil promises: Hazare

RALEGAN SIDDHI (MAHA),

FEB 3 (PTI): Social activist Anna Hazare, whose indefinite hunger strike entered the fifth day on Sunday, warned that if the Narendra Modi government did not fulfil its promises, he would return his Padma Bhushan.

Earlier in the day, Bharatiya Janata Party ally Shiv Sena came out in Hazare's support, urging him to emulate socialist leader Jayaprakash Narayan and lead an agitation against corruption.

Hazare has been on a hunger strike since last Wednesday at his native Ralegan Siddhi village in Maharashtra's Ahmednagar district, demanding appointments of Lokpal and Lokayuktas and resolution of farmers' issue. "If this government does not fulfil its promises made to the country in the next few days, I will return my Padma Bhushan," he told PTI Sunday evening. "(The) Modi government has breached the faith of people. The 81-year-old was



awarded the third-highest civilian honour of the country in 1992. Hazare's demands include immediate appointment of anti-corruption ombudsmen Lokpal at the Centre and Lokayuktas in states, implementation of Swaminathan Commission's recommendations for tackling agrarian distress and electoral reforms.

In the morning, in support of the Army man-turned-activ-

ist's demands, a group of farmers and youths blocked the Ahmednagar-Pune highway at Supa village in Parner tehsil, 38 km from here.

The police tried to pacify the protesters and asked them to end the blockade as vehicles had backed up for around six km on both sides, Supa police station inspector Rajendra Bhosale said.

As many as 110 protesters were detained

in the afternoon and released after the traffic resumed, Bhosale said.

Dr Dhananjay Pote, who checked Hazare in the morning, said he had lost 3.8 kg in the past five days and his blood pressure, blood sugar and creatinine level in the urine had gone up.

Around 5,000 farmers from the district are likely to stage a protect outside the Ahmednagar collector's office on Mon-

Left leaders call for removal of Modi from Centre, Mamata from WB

KOLKATA, FEB 3 (PTI):

The Left Front Sunday called for throwing out the BJP from power at the Centre and the Trinamool Congress in West Bengal, accusing both of being "corrupt and throtlers of democracy".

Alleging that the BJP and the TMC were hand in glove with each other, CPI(M) general secretary Sitaram Yechury sought to know why Mamata Banerjee's TMC had joined the BJP-led NDA government after the Gujarat riots, which she alleged was engineered by the saffron party. Both the BJP and the TMC have to be removed from power at the Centre and the state respectively to bring corruption-free governments, he said at a rally at the Brigade Parade Ground here.

"Seeing the sea of humanity here, it is evident that the people will evict Modi from Delhi and Mamata Banerjee from Bengal," the senior CPI(M) leader said and threatened of an "inferno of resistance" if people were prevented from exercising their franchise by TMC workers in the state. The Left Front-held anti-BJP, anti-TMC rally attracted a fairly large gathering, given the CPI(M)-led Front's poor show in last year's panchayat elections in the state where it had been relegated to the third position behind the BJP.

The huge ground at the heart of the city can hold a couple of lakhs of people comfortably and holding a rally there is seen as an issue of prestige by political parties.

"Last month, we had seen the opposition rally here where they called for removing the Modi government at the Centre. But it is the TMC which brought the saffron brigade to Bengal," Yechury alleged.

"The Modi government has to be removed



because the people of the country are being ruined due of its policies," he said claiming that farmers are committing suicide and the young generation is suffering from unemployment.

He claimed that owing to GST and demonetisation, lakhs of businesses have shut down leaving scored of people jobless. Yechury alleged that nearly Rs 15 lakh crore have been looted from banks due to non-payment of loans by "Modi's friends" and the accused have fled the country and no action has been taken against them.

He alleged that the "loot was allowed" so that electoral bonds could be bought with the money to fund BJP.

"Ninety-five per cent of electoral bond funding has gone to the BJP - this is corruption. Where did the proceeds of Rafale scam go, it went to the BJP through electoral bonds," he alleged.

Accusing the BJP of dividing the people of the country on religious lines and creating an atmosphere of hatred and violence, he claimed that the minorities are living in fear. The CPI(M) general secretary said the job of a 'chowkidar' (watchman), which Modi claims to be of the country, is not to loot the country on one hand and sell dreams like

need right price for their produce and not doles.

He claimed that there have been a series of communal incidents in Bengal during the Trinamool Congress rule, while there was never any such incident during the 34-year-long Left Front rule in the state.

Calling for defeating the BJP at the Centre, CPI general secretary S Sudhakar Reddy said there was widespread resentment over the Centre's economic policies.

"The budget is a jumla just like the other promises made by the BJP government. The Modi government is destroying all the institutions in the country. Even Parliament doesn't function properly," Reddy said at the rally.

Kanhaiya Kumar, former Jawaharlal Nehru University Students' Union president, could not attend the rally it due to illness.

CPI(M) West Bengal secretary Suryakanta Mishra claimed that Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee had invited leaders of opposition parties to the Brigade rally on January 19, with a hope that her name will be mooted by the leaders as the prime ministerial candidate but her wishes were belied.

"None of the leaders present there, however, suggested her name. Instead, upon their return to their states, the named different candidates as for the PM's post. Her aspirations to become the prime minister is now turning out to be unfulfilled," he said.

Ailing ex-West Bengal chief minister Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee attended the rally, making a public appearance after a gap of almost three years. Biman Bose announced Bhattacharjee's presence in the rally but said he would hear the proceedings of the meeting from inside his car due to ill health.

CBI team goes to question Kolkata Police chief, detained by cops

KOLKATA, FEB 3 (PTI):

In an unprecedented development, a number of CBI officers, who had gone to question Kolkata Police chief Rajeev Kumar in connection with chit fund scam cases, were bundled into police jeeps, whisked to a police station and detained on Sunday, officials said.

Amidst escalating tension between West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee and the Centre, Loudon Street in central Kolkata witnessed a virtual showdown between the state police and the CBI.

There were conflicting reports about some CBI officers being arrested. While the agency sources claimed that some of its men were forcibly taken away from Kumar's Loudon Street residence and arrested, a senior police officer denied the claim and said they have been taken to the police station to check if they had the documents required for questioning Kumar.

As politics played out on the street, West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee rushed to the residence of Kumar. She had earlier extended her support to Kumar and alleged that the BJP was "misusing power to take control of the police and all other institutions".

Party spokesperson Derek O' Brien tweeted, "BJP planning a constitutional coup ? 40 CBI officials surround Kolkata Police Commissioner's home. Destruction of institutions goes on unabated. Our demand in #Parliament on Mon. Modi has to go. We are reaching out and sharing this with all Oppn parties who want to #SaveDemocracy."

West Bengal DGP Virendra and ADG(Law and order) Anuj Sharma too reached Kumar's residence. In a tit-for-tat move, a team of Kolkata

tervene and asked it to not to "play" with Hazare's life. Thackeray also asked Hazare to take to the streets instead of "giving up" his life, and urged him to emulate the role played by Narayan in the 1970s when the socialist leader took on the Indira Gandhi government.

Hazare should not meet the fate of activist G D Agrawal, who died during a fast for his campaign for clean Ganga, the Sena leader said.

Hazare had earlier declined to meet state government envoy and minister Girish Mahajan for talks. The anti-corruption crusader had told PTI that he welcomed the Maharashtra cabinet's decision to bring the office of the chief minister under the ambit of the Lokayukta.

"However, the strike will continue till the government fulfils promises they made before coming to power about passage of Lokayukta Act, appointment of Lokpal (at the Centre) and to tackle farmers' issues," he said.

Police officials reached the CGO Complex- the state headquarters of CBI. The fast-paced development started unfolding as soon as a team of 40-odd agency officers arrived at Kumar's residence this evening, but they were stopped by sentries and officials.

A day earlier, the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) claimed that Kumar had been "absconding" and "being looked for" in connection with Saradha and Rose Valley ponzi scam cases.

As the CBI team landed at the city police chief's residence, a team of Kolkata Police officers rushed to the spot to speak to the CBI officials and tried to enquire whether they had required documents to question Kumar.

"We don't want to speak on this issue as of now. Let's see what happens. Please wait for sometime," a senior CBI official standing outside the Police commissioner's house told reporters.

Later on, a small team of CBI officials was taken to Shakespeare Sarani police station for further discussions.

Thereafter, more men arrived at the spot and a commotion ensued. Some CBI officers were then forcibly bundled into police jeeps and taken to a police station.

According to the CBI, IPS officer Kumar, who led a Special Investigation Team of West Bengal Police probing the scams, needs to be questioned regarding missing documents and files but he has not responded to notices to appear before the agency.

Kumar, a 1989-batch IPS officer of West Bengal cadre, did not even attend a meeting with Election Commission officials who had gone to Kolkata to review election preparedness, sources said.

Month-long Newa speaking course ends

YOGEN THATAL SINGTAM, 03 JAN:

The month-long Newa language speaking course concluded here today at the Nepali Dharamsala with a special function attended by Aritahng MLA Shyam Pradhan accompanied by the Sikkim Newa Guthi president DL Pradhan and

vice president HP Pradhan, accompanied by executive body members of the organization from different places. The function was hosted by the organizing committee of Newa Bowneyguti, Singtam.

The course itself was held at Singtam Senior Secondary School

with HRDD coordinators Bikash Pradhan, Tara Pradhan, Kiren Pradhan, Babita Pradhan and Nirmala Pradhan as resource persons.

More than 60 students aged between 10 to 75 years old enrolled for the course which had classes being held in two shifts.

Manipuri director returns Padma Shri in protest against Citizenship Bill

NEW DELHI, FEB 3 (PTI): Veteran Manipuri filmmaker Aribam Syam Sharma on Sunday said that he would return the Padma Shri as a mark of protest against the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill 2016, terming it “anti-Northeast”.

The 83-year-old director, known for Manipuri films such as “Olangthagee Wangmadasu”, “Imagi Ningthem” and “Ishanou”, was bestowed with the country’s fourth highest civilian honour in 2006.

He said the plea of the Northeast people to not let the bill pass was not being heard by the Centre.

“The bill is against the interest of the Northeast and its people, especially in Manipur. All the leaders of the states in the Northeast have already requested the central government to reconsider (on the bill’s passage).”

“But yesterday when I was following the news, our honourable prime minister announced that the bill would be passed soon. He also request-

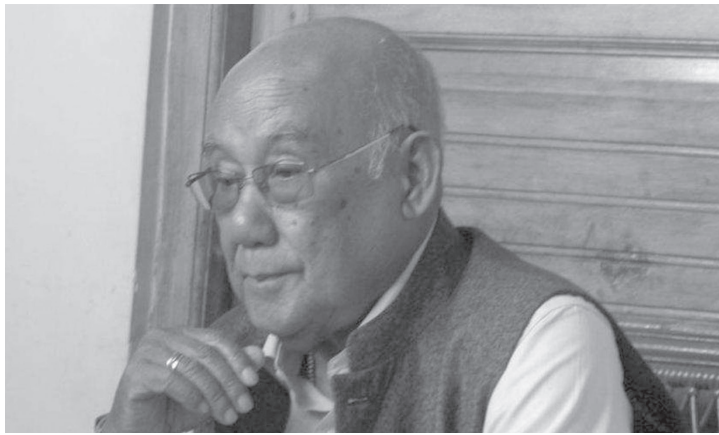
ed the chief minister of West Bengal to help him pass the bill. That means the government, rather the BJP, is determined to pass this bill. They are not listening to us,” Sharma told PTI.

Citing the example of Tripura, the filmmaker said history would repeat itself in Manipur if the bill is passed.

“We have already seen this in Tripura. Tripuris are having no say in Tripura... The population of Manipur is only 28-29 lakhs, which is less than the population of a district in Uttar Pradesh.

“The smaller states like Nagaland, Mizoram and Meghalaya have protection. Even then they are protesting because if the bill is passed the indigenous people will have no place. They will be wiped out. It may not happen now, but it will happen 50 years from today,” he said. Sharma said returning the award was the only way in which he could raise his voice against the bill.

“I’m not a politician. I’m not at all concerned with the politics. I’m just a



filmmaker. I have seen a lot in life. But this is the worst. If the bill passes, there will be no place for us. This is against the Northeast.

“I can’t do anything else. This is the only way in which I can protest... We feel neglected. Some kind of racial differences are happening... If not paid attention, the consequences will be severe. I’m worried about this,” he said.

Addressing a rally in West Bengal on Saturday, Prime Minister Narendra Modi made a strong pitch for the Citizenship

(Amendment) Bill, insisting it would bring “justice and respectability” to those who faced religious persecution.

“India got Independence after splitting it into pieces. People thought they can make a living in the country of their choice, but there they faced atrocities and torture because of communal malice... Hindus, Sikhs, Jains and Parsis.

“It was because of this that we brought the Citizenship Bill. These people have no place to go other than India. Should they not be giv-

en justice and respectability? I ask the TMC to support the Bill and facilitate its passage in Parliament,” he said.

The Citizenship (Amendment) Bill seeks to grant nationality to religious minorities such as Hindus, Sikhs and Parsis from Afghanistan, Pakistan and Bangladesh after six years of stay in India, instead of the currently required 12 years. Protests were witnessed in different parts of the country, particularly the Northeast, over the Bill which has been passed by Lok Sabha.

Women get death threats for entering Sabarimala

Malappuram, Feb 3 (PTI): The two women of menstruating age, who had entered the Sabarimala temple a month ago, have received death threats, police said Sunday.

Bindu and Kanakadurga, in their 40s, had defied dire threats from saffron organisations and offered prayers at the temple that was out of bounds for girls and women between 10 and 50 years of age, breaking the centuries-old tradition and infuriating the Hindu right.

The two women received a letter saying they would be harmed for entering the shrine,

the police said.

Forty-four-year-old Kanakadurga, who faced stiff opposition from her husband and other relatives for offering prayers at the Lord Ayyappa Temple on January 2, was forced to take shelter at Perinthalmanna here after her house was locked and her family members shifted to another building.

Police sources said she still continues to be at the shelter after being discharged from hospital following an alleged attack by her mother-in-law for entering the holy shrine.

An employee of the Civil Supplies Depart-

ment, she has filed a petition in a court here under the Domestic Violence Act, stating she had the right to stay at her husband’s home.

Bindu, a 42-year-old college lecturer and CPI(M) ML activist, had accompanied Kanakadurga to the shrine.

The Supreme Court had in a historic verdict last year lifted the centuries old ban and allowed women of all age groups to offer prayers at the temple.

Both the women are being provided round-the-clock security by police besides CCTV surveillance.

IIT Delhi students criticise govt for ‘minimal hike’ in fellowships

NEW DELHI, FEB 3 (PTI): IIT-Delhi research scholars criticised the government for hiking the fellowships of PhD students by “minimal amount” and said it is unacceptable and a “betrayal” to them.

The Centre on January 30 enhanced the fellowship of PhD students and other research personnel enrolled in any area of science and technology. It said the move will directly benefit over 60,000 researchers.

Fellowship of the Junior Research Fellows (JRF) in the first two years of the PhD programme has been increased from Rs 25,000 to Rs 31,000 per month. Similarly, in the remaining tenure of PhD, a Senior Research

Fellow will get Rs 35,000 per month, instead of the present Rs 28,000.

The IIT-Delhi research scholars said the negligence of the research interests in the country sends a clear message to the world about “the sorry state of affairs in the bureaucracy and lack of political will to improve research and education”.

They demanded the government must immediately revamp the Office Memorandum meeting the demand of research scholars.

The research scholars of IIT Delhi in unison would like to put on record that they are extremely disappointed and feel betrayed by the authorities concerned, they said.

The mere increase in the fellowship is an insult to the research scholars’ community, they added.

“Research scholars of IITD, along with researchers from every part of the country have been protesting for several months for the hike in research fellowships. After regular intimations to the ministries and agencies concerned, expressing our genuine demands, this hike is unjustified and not acceptable,” one of the scholars said.

According to the scholars, they had asked for an 80 per cent hike along with revision in HRA amount. Not only the hike is offensively low but the HRA amount remains unchanged.

The meagre hike has

been implemented from January 1, 2019 with no arrears. An empowered committee, set up to enhance the fellowship of PhD students, will work out the incentives for research scholars in a month or two, a senior official had said.

The government had said there is a substantial 30-35 per cent enhancement in the financial rewards for the scientists involved in the research and development (R&D) projects as research associates and the top bracket of research associateship is fixed at Rs 54,000.

All the research fellows are also entitled to house rent allowance as per the central government norms.

Northeast political parties, students’ bodies intensify campaign against Citizenship Bill in Delhi

NEW DELHI, FEB 3 (PTI): Major political parties and student groups of the Northeast Sunday intensified their campaign against the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill in the national capital, with a series of meetings with leaders of the BJP, Congress and other parties urging them not to pass it in the Rajya Sabha.

A delegation of 11 political parties of the Northeast, including the Asom Gana Parishad (AGP) and the National People’s Party, met Union Home Minister Rajnath Singh and requested him not to press for passing the bill in the Rajya Sabha, AGP leader and former Union minister Birendra Prasad Baishya told PTI.

The delegation was led by Meghalaya Chief Minister Conrad Sangma. Earlier in the day, former Assam chief min-

ister and founder-president of the AGP Prafulla Kumar Mahanta along with other party leaders met Leader of Opposition in Rajya Sabha Ghulam Nabi Azad, Union minister Ram Vilas Paswan and Samajwadi Party leaders urging them to take a stand against the bill.

The leaders of the regional parties of the Northeast, who are camping in Delhi, will meet representatives of all political parties so that the bill is not passed in the Upper House, Baishya said.

A team of top leaders of the North East Students’ Organisation (NESO), comprising major students’ groups of the region, met Biju Janata Dal leader Bhartuhari Mahtab and requested him to ensure that his party votes against the bill if it is brought in the Upper house.

Pope heads to UAE for historic trip

ABU DHABI, FEB 3 (AFP): Pope Francis heads to the UAE Sunday for the first ever papal visit to the Arabian Peninsula, birthplace of Islam, where he will hold an open-air mass for tens of thousands of Catholics.

The pontiff will take part in an interreligious conference on Monday, meeting Sheikh Ahmed al-Tayeb, the imam of Cairo’s Al-Azhar, Sunni Islam’s prestigious seat of learning.

Hours before he flies back to Rome on Tuesday, he will lead an open-air mass -- set to be the largest gathering ever in the UAE, according to local media.

The pope boarded a flight Sunday afternoon from Rome’s Fiumicino airport and is set to arrive in Abu Dhabi at 10 PM (1800 GMT).

His visit comes with the UAE engaged in a long-running military campaign in Yemen and embroiled in a diplomatic spat with nearby Qatar.

Before heading to the Gulf, the pontiff urged warring parties in Yemen, where the UAE backs the government against Huthi rebels, to respect a truce agreement.

“I appeal to all parties concerned and to the international community to allow the urgent respect of established accords to ensure the distribution of food,” he said.

“The population is exhausted by the lengthy conflict and a great many children are suffering from hunger, but cannot access food depots,” he added.

“The cry of these chil-



dren and their parents rises up to God.”

Nearly one million Catholic migrants reside in the UAE, mostly hailing from the Philippines and India. Around 135,000 have secured precious tickets to Tuesday’s mass at Zayed Sports City Stadium.

On Sunday morning, hundreds of Catholics queued in drizzling rain outside St. Joseph’s Cathedral in Abu Dhabi to get their passes.

“I think the pope coming really opens doors for conversations about tolerance that the whole world needs to hear,” said Collins Cochet Ryan, a 39-year-old expectant mother from the US.

For Indian Doris D’Souza, who lives in Goa, Pope Francis’s trip to the UAE was not to be missed.

“Since I came to know about the pope’s visit to Abu Dhabi, we jumped (at) the opportunity to be witness.” The UAE capital’s main streets and those leading to St. Joseph’s Cathedral -- which the pope is set to visit on Tuesday -- were lined with Vatican City flags and banners of the interreligious meeting.

UAE minister of state for foreign affairs Anwar Gargash extended an official welcome to Pope Francis on Sunday.

“It is a visit that carries great humanitarian value, and the UAE adds a new (chapter) in the history of fraternity and tolerance,” he tweeted.

He took an apparent jab at Qatar, which hosts Islamist cleric Youssef al-Qardawi and is engaged in a bitter standoff with its Gulf rivals.

Gargash pointed out the difference “between those hosting a cleric of violence and terrorism... and those who host the pope and the Al-Azhar sheikh for a dialogue of love and communication”.

The UAE, along with Saudi Arabia, Bahrain and Egypt, cut all ties with Doha in June 2017 over allegations it supports extremists.

The UAE prides itself on its religious tolerance and cultural diversity.

It has eight Catholic churches. Oman, Kuwait and Yemen each have four.

Qatar and Bahrain have one each, while ultra-conservative Sunni powerhouse Saudi Ara-

bia bans all non-Muslim places of worship.

The UAE has however been criticised by rights groups for its involvement in a bloody Saudi-led military intervention in Yemen, where an estimated 10,000 people have been killed in four years of war.

Millions of Yemenis face imminent starvation, according to the UN.

Rights groups have also slammed the Gulf state for upholding a 10-year prison term against activist Ahmed Mansoor on December 31 -- two weeks after the UAE declared 2019 the “Year of Tolerance”.

“Despite its assertions about tolerance, the UAE government has demonstrated no real interest in improving its human rights record,” Sarah Leah Whitson, Middle East and North Africa director at Human Rights Watch, said Sunday.

“But the UAE has shown how sensitive it is to its image on the global stage, and Pope Francis should use his visit to press UAE leaders to meet their human rights obligations at home and abroad.”

OPRAH HANDING OUT TEQUILA SHOTS IN HER PAJAMAS IS TRULY ICONIC

From the studio to the seas, Oprah Winfrey will never stop giving. And people will never stop loving it. The talk show host posted an Instagram video on Saturday that showed the newly minted 65-year-old handing out tequila shots to women on a cruise ship. Oh yeah, she was also in her pajamas.

You can hear it now, can’t you? “YOU get a shot and YOU get a shot!”

Oprah and her BFF Gayle King hosted a three-day gathering called the Girls’ Getaway Cruise on one of Holland America Line’s ships. It departed from Ft. Lauderdale and made stops in the Bahamas.

“Tequila anyone? ‘I’m not throwing away my shot!’ Thanks to every mother-daughter-sister-friend-cousin-neice-companion-partner who joined us on the #Girl’sGetAway-Cruise,” she captioned the video.

How a chance visit to Los Angeles got Nimrat her return ticket to “Homeland”

KOMAL PANCHAMATIA MUMBAI, FEB 3 (PTI): Nimrat Kaur is returning to the final season of “Homeland” and the actor says she never thought she would reprise her role in the hit American TV series.

Nimrat, who played Tasneem Qureshi, an ISI officer in the fourth season of the award-winning show, will return for the eighth installment.

“When I did season four, I had no idea I will be brought back. It was just one season deal. This offer came as a surprise to me. Who would have thought? I had never thought I would go back on the show as that character again,” Nimrat told PTI.

The actor recounted how a chance visit to Los Angeles played an integral role in bagging the last season.

“They (the team) wanted to meet me as they were in the process of scripting the final season. Luckily, I was

in Los Angeles at the same time. They wanted my character to return because it did well for them,” she said.

The actor said she is looking forward to playing Tasneem again. “The opportunity to play it again and to jump into that universe is exciting. It is for the first time that I am repeating what I played onscreen,” she said.

She recalled it was tough adjusting to a different type of role and a different working environment in Hollywood.

“It was a little challenging when I got there as it was first time I was working abroad so the system was new to me. It is out and out grey character and I had to train myself to be comfortable playing the part.”

The eighth season goes on floors this month and is likely to air in June.

The team will shoot the last installment in Casablanca.

SummitTIMES

ON TOP OF THE NEWS

Politics for All

...not a free-for-all and not shallow profiteering

Sikkim enjoys its politics. It revels in its plotting, conspiracies, claims and counter-claims. It does not however bother too much with nuance or accountability, or so it appears. Rides in share-cabs are invariably peppered with loose political gossip, sometimes informed, often hearsay, frequently layered with complaints and cribbing but always interesting.

And that is a good thing.

No, not the latter bit, but the open mic approach to discussing politics. Some decades back, people would whisper the names of leaders and would keep looking over their shoulders even if they were only thinking disaffection to themselves. That is clearly not the case anymore and people voice political opinions freely and loudly even to strangers (as in the case of share-cabs). Noticeably though, the motivation to speak is not always the best aspect of this engagement. People continue to arrive at their political positions due to personal profits or losses from associating with a party or a leader. Ideology and vision are deployed more as crutches to justify positions already taken when these should have been arguments which convinced individuals to join different camps. Since this – personal motivation and not interests of wider masses – is how people take sides, leaders and their parties also play it lazy here – expending their energies on name-calling, complaining, ridiculing and blaming instead of refining their ideologies or communicating their plans for Sikkim.

The above rant aside, political engagement has consistently improved in Sikkim if electoral participation is taken into consideration. Voter turnout, much to everyone's surprise, has been improving impressively over the past elections even when the electorate was not pulling any surprises. A high turnout is usually seen as a sign of the electorate uniting to shake things up. It has been quite the opposite in Sikkim's case and the only explanation that comes to mind is that the electorate here wants a stake, so even when it is a pro-incumbency verdict they are serving up they want to do so in high numbers. Voter turnout has grown from 65% in 1979, when the first Assembly election as a part of India was held, to 81.79% in 2009 and 80.80% in 2014. Noticeably, women, even if their representation in the Legislative Assembly remains noticeably low, are taking to voting in earnest and their turnout has edged past the males who are otherwise traditionally seen as the more politically engaged. Female voters outperformed males 81.31% to 80.31% in elections 2014.

The point being made here is that people in Sikkim have taken to politics. The irony thus cannot be missed when politics does not engage the people with either matching consistency or the required intelligence. Sloganeering and shallow predictability define "politics" here, and when elections come calling, there is some muscle as well, but unfortunately, no respect for the real interests of the people. Given the high stakes and short-duration politics that Sikkim's politicians engage in, some amount of violence is expected when elections arrive, but care needs to be taken to ensure that it does not shoo away the lay people. Force the people away and politics is an already small Sikkim will become the nexus of an even smaller group promoting even more personal profits and ambitions.

Instead, political actors here need to build on the already expressed interest of people here in politics, democracy and voting. If the leaders remain "old fashioned", the people will need to wrest politics and political debate back from the mischievously inclined because when fists fly, reasoning sinks, and without discussion and debate, there can be no democracy.

WRITE US:

Readers are invited to comment on, criticise, run down, even appreciate if they like something in this paper. Letters carrying abusive/ indecorous language and personal attacks, except when against people responsible in this newspaper (who are fair game), will have to be ignored. Letters which carry forward a conversation or initiate a dialogue will command immediate attention and receive prominence.

Mail us at: news@summittimes.com

How Howard Thurman met Gandhi and brought nonviolence to the civil rights movement

WALTER E. FLUKER
theconversation.com

Director Martin Doblmeier's new documentary, "Backs Against the Wall: The Howard Thurman Story," is scheduled for release on public television in February. Thurman played an important role in the civil rights struggle as a key mentor to many leaders of the movement, including Martin Luther King Jr., among others.

I have been a scholar of Howard Thurman and Martin Luther King Jr. for over 30 years and I serve as the editor of Thurman's papers. Thurman's influence on King Jr. was critical in shaping the civil rights struggle as a nonviolent movement. Thurman was deeply influenced by how Gandhi used nonviolence in India's struggle for independence from British rule.

VISIT TO INDIA

Born in 1899, Howard Washington Thurman was raised by his formerly enslaved grandmother. He grew up to be an ordained Baptist minister and a leading religious figure of 20th-century America.

In 1936 Thurman led a four-member delegation to India, Burma (Myanmar), and Ceylon (Sri Lanka), known as the "pilgrimage of friendship." It was during this visit that he would meet Mahatma Gandhi, who at the time was leading a nonviolent struggle of independence from British rule.

The delegation had been sponsored by the Student Christian Movement in India who wanted to explore the political connections between the oppression of blacks in the United States and the freedom struggles of the people of India.

The general secretary of the Indian Student Christian Movement, A. Ralla Ram, had argued for inviting a "Negro" delegation. He said that "since Christianity in India is the 'oppressor's' religion, there would be a unique value in having representatives of another oppressed group speak on the validity and contribution of Christianity."

Between October 1935 to April 1936, Thurman gave at least 135 lectures in over 50 cities, to a variety of audiences and important Indian leaders, including the Bengali poet and Nobel laureate, Rabindranath Tagore, who also played a key role in India's independence movement.

Throughout the journey, the issue of segregation within the Christian church and its inability to address color consciousness, a social and political system based upon discrimination against blacks and other nonwhite people, was raised by many of the people he met.

THURMAN AND GANDHI

The delegation met with Gandhi towards the end of their tour in Bardoli, a small town in India's western state of Gujarat.

Gandhi, an admirer of Booker T. Washington, the prominent African-American educator, was no stranger to the struggles of African-Americans. He

had been in correspondence with prominent black leaders before the meeting with the delegation.

As early as May 1, 1929, Gandhi had written a "Message to the American Negro" addressed to W.E.B. DuBois to be published in "The Crisis." Founded in 1910 by DuBois, "The Crisis" was the official publication of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People.

Gandhi's message stated, "Let not the 12 million Negroes be ashamed of the fact that they are the grandchildren of slaves. There is no dishonour in being slaves. There is dishonour in being slave-owners. But let us not think of honour or dishonour in connection with the past. Let us realise that the future is with those who would be truthful, pure and loving."

UNDERSTANDING THE IDEA OF NONVIOLENCE

In a conversation lasting about three hours, published in The Papers of Howard Washington Thurman, Gandhi engaged his guests with questions about racial segregation, lynching, African-American history, and religion. Gandhi was puzzled as to why African-Americans adopted the religion of their masters, Christianity.

He reasoned that at least in religions like Islam, all were considered equal. Gandhi declared, "For the moment a slave accepts Islam he obtains equality with his master, and there are several instances of this in history." But he did not think that was true for Christianity. Thurman asked what was the greatest obstacle to Christianity in India. Gandhi replied that Christianity as practiced and identified with Western culture and colonialism was the greatest enemy to Jesus Christ in India.

The delegation used the limited time that was left to interrogate Gandhi on matters of "ahimsa," or nonviolence, and his perspective on the struggle of African-Americans in the United States.

According to Mahadev Desai, Gandhi's personal secretary, Thurman was fascinated with the discussion on the redemptive power of ahimsa in a life committed to the practice of nonviolent resistance.

Gandhi explained that though ahimsa is technically defined as "non-injury" or "nonviolence," it is not a negative force, rather it is a force "more positive than electricity and more powerful than even ether."

In its most practical terms, it is love that is "self-acting," but even more – and when embodied by a single individual, it bears a force more powerful than hate and violence and can transform the world.

Towards the end of the meeting, Gandhi proclaimed, "It may be through the Negroes that the unadulterated message of nonviolence will be delivered to the world."

SEARCH FOR AN AMERICAN GANDHI

Indeed, Gandhi's views would leave a deep impression on Thurman's own interpretation of

nonviolence. They would later be influential in developing Martin Luther King Jr.'s philosophy of nonviolent resistance. It would go on to shape the thinking of a generation of civil rights activists.

In his book, "Jesus and the Disinherited," Thurman addresses the negative forces of fear, deception and hatred as forms of violence that ensnare and entrap the oppressed. But he also counsels that through love and the willingness to nonviolently engage the adversary, the committed individual creates the possibility of community.

As he explains, the act of love as redemptive suffering is not contingent on the other's response. Love, rather, is unsolicited and self-giving. It transcends merit and demerit. It simply loves.

A growing number of African-American leaders closely followed Gandhi's campaigns of "satyagraha," or what he termed as nonresistance to evil against British colonialism. Black newspapers and magazines announced the need for an "American Gandhi."

Upon his return, some African-American leaders thought that Howard Thurman would fulfill that role. In 1942, for example, Peter Dana of the Pittsburgh Courier, wrote that Thurman "was one of the few black men in the country around whom a great, conscious movement of Negroes could be built, not unlike the great Indian independence movement."

KING, LOVE AND NONVIOLENCE

Thurman, however, chose a less direct path as an interpreter of nonviolence and a resource for activists who were on the front lines of the struggle. As he wrote, "It was my conviction and determination that the church would be a resource for activists – a mission fundamentally perceived. To me it was important that the individual who was in the thick of the struggle for social change would be able to find renewal and fresh courage in the spiritual resources of the church. There must be provided a place, a moment, when a person could declare, I choose."

Indeed, leaders like Martin Luther King did choose to live out the gospel of peace, justice and love that Thurman so eloquently proclaimed in writing and the spoken word, even though it came with an exacting price.

In his last letter to Martin Luther King, dated May 13, 1966, Thurman expressed his regret for the time that had elapsed since he and King last spoke. He ended the short note with a rather foreboding quote from the American naturalist and essayist Loren Eiseley,

"Those as hunts treasure must go alone, at night, and when they find it they have to leave a little of their blood behind them."

King, like Gandhi 70 years ago, fell to an assassin's bullet on April 4, 1968.

[the writer is Professor of Ethical Leadership, Boston University]

Alzheimer's is linked to gum disease – but bad oral health is not the only culprit

SIM K. SINGHRAO
theconversation.com

For most people, teeth cleaning may just be a normal part of your daily routine. But what if the way you clean your teeth today, might affect your chances of getting Alzheimer's disease in years to come?

There is an increasing body of evidence to indicate that gum (periodontal) disease could be a plausible risk factor for Alzheimer's disease. Some studies even suggest your risk doubles when gum disease persists for ten or more years. Indeed, a new US study published in Science Advances details how a type of bacteria called Porphyromonas gingivalis – or P. gingivalis – which is associated with gum disease, has been found in the brains of patients with Alzheimer's disease. Tests on mice also showed how the bug spread from their mouth to brain where it destroyed nerve cells.

The report in question was carried out and self-funded by founders of a US pharmaceutical company Cortexyme, which is researching the cause of Alzheimer's and other degenerative disorders. Scientists from the San Francisco drug firm will launch a human trial later this year.

WHAT IS GUM DISEASE?

The first phase of gum disease is called gingivitis. This occurs when the gums become inflamed in response to the accumulation of bacterial plaque on the surface of the teeth.

Gingivitis is experienced by up to half of all adults but is generally reversible. If gingivitis is left untreated, "sub-gingival pockets" form between the tooth and gum, which are filled by bacteria. These pockets indicate that gingivitis has converted to periodontitis. At this stage, it becomes almost

impossible to eliminate the bacteria, though dental treatment can help control their growth.

The risks of gum disease are sig-

grate from the mouth to the brain in mice. And on entry to the brain, P. gingivalis can reproduce all of the characteristic features of Alzheimer's disease.



nificantly increased in people with poor oral hygiene. And factors such as smoking, medication, genetics, food choices, puberty and pregnancy can all contribute towards the development of the condition.

Though it is important to remember that gum disease is not just the work of P. gingivalis alone. A group of organisms including Treponema denticola, Tanerella forsythia and other bacteria also play a role in this complex oral disease.

MOUTH BRAIN CONNECTION

At the University of Central Lancashire, we were the first to make the connection with P. gingivalis and fully diagnosed Alzheimer's disease. Subsequent studies have also found this bacteria – which is responsible for many forms of gum disease – can mi-

The recent US research which found the bacteria of chronic gum disease in the brains of Alzheimer's disease patients gives additional very strong research-based evidence – but it must be interpreted in context. And the fact of the matter is that Alzheimer's disease is linked with a number of other conditions and not just gum disease.

Existing research shows that other types of bacteria and the Herpes type I virus can also be found in Alzheimer's disease brains. People with Down's syndrome are also at a higher risk of developing Alzheimer's disease, as are people who have had a severe head injury. Research also shows that several conditions associated with cardiovascular disease

can increase the risk of Alzheimer's disease. This suggests there are many causes with one endpoint – and scientists are still trying to figure out the connection.

This endpoint results in the same symptoms of Alzheimer's: poor memory and behavioural changes. This also occurs alongside plaque buildup in the grey matter of the brain and what's known as "neurofibrillary tangles". These are the debris left from the collapse of a neuron's internal skeleton. These occur when a protein can no longer perform its function of stabilising the cell structure.

BRUSH YOUR TEETH

The latest research adds more evidence to the theory that gum disease is one of the things that can lead to Alzheimer's disease. But before you start panic brushing your teeth, it's important to remember that not everyone who suffers from gum disease develops Alzheimer's disease and not all who suffer from Alzheimer's disease have gum disease.

To find out who is "at risk", scientists now need to develop tests that can show the dentist who to target. Dental clinicians can then advise those people as to how they can reduce the risk of developing Alzheimer's disease through better management of their oral health. But until then, regularly brushing your teeth and maintaining good oral hygiene is recommended.

[the writer is Senior Research Fellow in the School of Dentistry, University of Central Lancashire]

Cruising down Irrawaddy River

‘Which is the longest river in Burma?’

Irrawaddy. I knew my answer just like I knew it was Nile for Egypt and Amazon for Brazil because we learned them in middle school. For some reason I enjoyed geography and these classes introduced us students to a world that was often mere answers to the questions that would come for tests.

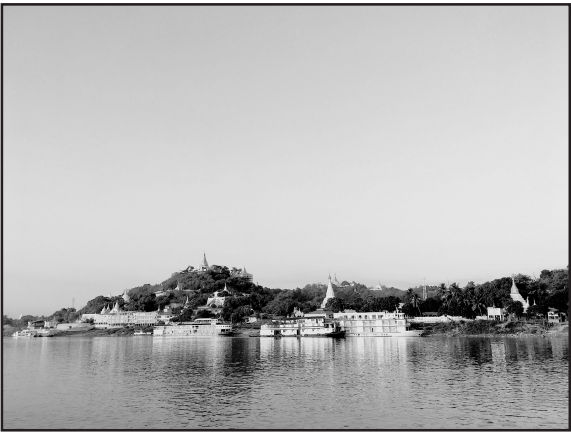
So cruising down Irrawaddy was not something I foresaw when I was learning these tidbits in school. But that morning before the break of dawn, we were rushing to the pier to catch our cruise boat from Mandalay to Bagan.

Cruises often make me think of an elite activity for people with time and money. So I feel like getting on a cruise or even a boat is a big deal for people like myself who have limited access to these water bodies. But my hunches were somewhat true because our cruise was transporting only tourists and foreigners in that boat.

Paying our fee in dollars should have hinted this but it was still a smaller amount for an all day cruise so I didn't think much. And the only Burmese passenger was a friend of an American who was traveling with him. The rest of us were in for the ride and few minutes into the cruise, the orange sunrise welcomed us and brought

us all up on the deck spellbound and ready for the tryst with Irrawaddy.

The river Irrawady runs from North to South Myanmar acting as arteries of inter-



connectedness in its long journey before ending in the Andaman Sea. It capitalizes on transport and trade as the riparian landscape is as diverse as the activities of the people living by the river.

Breakfast was served on the boat as some went to sleep and some lounged in their chairs basking in the morning sun,

reading a book as I started journaling. It was a warm lazy morning and between bridge crossings and sunny naps, it was already noon.

The boat stopped at a pottery village where locals make pottery and tourists get a feel of rural economy at best. As the pottery demonstration was taking place a little girl nudged me and handed a small turtle made of red clay. I couldn't say so no to her and in return handed her 200 Kyat (a little less than ten rupees) which was all the change I had. All of a sudden I heard noises and realized that her family were, I would like to think praising her for making that deal because when I looked at her she smiled at me.

Further down the village were some of these red clay artefacts; little bowls-animals-decors and a sign that read 'Welcome to Yandabo'. We realized that was the name of the village and for some reason, the name sounded very familiar. I didn't think of it much then but later googled and we had actually visited a very historic village. The Treaty of

Yandabo that ended the First Anglo-Burmese War was signed in this place in 1826. This was where the wealthy Burmese ceded to the imperial British and it was the beginning of Burma's road to poverty and turmoil. I didn't hear this bit of history from our guide but then he was busy explaining things in French to other tourists

so we didn't realize the significance of the place till we got back. Burma must've been so rich before that fateful February



in 1826...

We then had lunch and again people either retired to the cabin or watched the river. I had heard of the Irrawaddy dolphin but didn't see any. Instead there were about five boats I saw that was transporting coal down the river. One boat had construction pipes and I can only imagine the number of goods the river

carries every day.

Dams have been built on the river too and China plans on reviving its Myitsone dam project that was suspended in 2011 after local activists opposed the same.

The river therefore is an important source of livelihood, trade and transport for the people as one could see sand mining by the river banks along with people who were fishing and washing clothes.

Towards the end of our trip, little white clouds exploded in the crisp blue sky as the setting sun was the needed solace to our unsettled minds.

Cruising down Irrawaddy had been a lesson –of the river, the people, and the history of Irrawaddy.

At a recent conference I heard the famous James Scott who wrote 'The Art of Not Being Governed' is currently writing a book on Irrawaddy River. He must've spent much time and energy reading, exploring and experiencing the river.

As for me, I was already overwhelmed with the day's lessons about a river that is known to be the "source of continuity and hope in a country at odds with itself".



Woman dies of suffocation in menstruation hut in Nepal

KATHMANDU, FEB 3 (PTI): A 21-year-old Nepali woman has died reportedly due to suffocation during her stay in a windowless hut as part of a banned practice that considers women untouchable during menstruation, according to a media report. The incident happened in Nepal's remote Doti district on January 31 when Parwati Bogati was sleeping alone in a secluded hut due to menstruation and had lit a fire to keep the hut warm. When Bogati did not wake up till late next morning, her mother-in-law Laxmi Bogati went to the hut to check her but found that she had passed away, the Kathmandu Post reported.

"She (Parwati) was excited about the next day as her menstruation would end. Poor child closed her eyes forever," said Laxmi. She said that Parwati went to the secluded hut in a nearby abandoned house as the regular menstrual hut she used to go was crowded that day as three more women from the village having their menstrual period were already there to spend the night. The rural municipality's Chairman Dirgha Bogati said that Bogati died of suffocation.

"Police took the body for post-mortem on the same evening," he said.

As part of the tradition many communities in Nepal consider menstruating women impure and force female of menstruation age to stay in sheds away from the family home once a month despite the practice being banned. In 2005, Nepal's Supreme Court banned such practices which was followed by a new law in 2017 to criminalise it.

In January this year, a 35-year-old woman and two of her sons died of suffocation after they spent a night in a windowless hut as part of the banned practice.

Similarly, in 2018, a 23-year-old woman in Nepal was found dead at an isolated hut where she was left alone as part of the banned practice.

World heritage centre to be set up at Mayapur

KOLKATA, FEB 3 (PTI): A World Heritage Centre housing 'spiritual camps' of 45 countries would be set up at Mayapur, the global headquarters of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON), in Nadia district. The camp of each country would reflect its culture, dress, lifestyle, food and ambience, an ISKCON spokesman said from Mayapur Sunday.

The process for setting up the centre got momentum after West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee inquired about the project at a recent administrative meeting in Nadia district. Expressing hope that the centre would help in attracting more tourists to the state,

she had offered all help to the ISKCON from the state government. The estimated project cost of the proposed centre has been fixed at Rs 3000 crore, the spokesman said.

"The Temple of Vedic Planetarium will come up at the first part of the World heritage centre. It will have one of the biggest domes in the world. The TOVP is expected to be inaugurated in 2022," Head of ISKCON Mayapur Land Department, Alay Govind Das said.

"We will be setting up other facilities in the centre including four amusement theme-based parks. Latest technology would be used to bring alive the tales of Lord Krishna in Vrindavan," Das said.

FIELDWORK REFLECTIONS

Lifeline of the hills

RONGNYOO LEPCHA

Earth was but a ball of fire when it was born then it cooled for centuries and then the fire and ice gave birth to the elixir of life, water. Water has been the basis of life, seventy percentage of the Earth is covered in it and about 78 percentage of human body consists of water. As being an important element for survival humans and animals have been very possessive of the water bodies around them. Countries guard water sources at boundaries to protect and ensure the continued flow of water in their country which supports agriculture, daily lives and also for production of energy. Teesta and Rangeet has been two major source of subsistence for the communities of the Sikkim and adjoining hill regions and also in the plains where it stretches vastly before joining the Brahmaputra on its journey to the sea.

Water has been a primary basis of life and Teesta has been a major source of subsistence for the communities of Sikkim and adjoining hills. It has provided food water for different purposes and now it is being used to generate hydro power that helps in the development. Many communities view it as a secret water body and are linked with it in one way or the other. The oldest inhabiting community of these hills the Lepchas call it Rongnyoo and see it as a provider and a motherly figure, the story goes. Teesta and Rangeet are two major rivers, the Lepchas know these two rivers as Rongnyoo i.e, Teesta who is believed to be female and Rangeet who is believed to be male. Many many years ago the two river spirits Rongnyoo and Rangeet were very much admired throughout Mayel Lyang (old Lepcha territories) for their apparent love for one another they used to go everywhere together. The two river spirits met secretly one day they decided to down to the plains and live together forever. The rivers decided to take different routes to go down promising to meet at Ponzok (today's Paysok). They issued a playful challenge to each other that their journey would be raced down to the plains.

Since the two spirits were venturing out of their homes for the first time they did not know the way. They each agreed

to take a guide on their long journey. Being the male Rangeet was competitive, he choose a Tut fo, a mountain bird to guide him. He knew the bird was the swiftest and would help him win the race. Rongnyoo was more subdued and pleasant, she decided to follow a Paril bu, a snake. Wishing each other well,



the rivers set off.

Tut fo, while swift, got distracted by the abundant fruits on trees, the colorful flowers and insects. It would wonder off to play with other birds or to eat some insects on the way. Rangeet followed the distracted and procrastinating bird longing to meet his lover soon. Intent on wining Rangeet constantly reminded his guide of the race but the bird would forget while enjoying the sublime colors of the forest.

On the other hand true to its nature, Paril bu darted straight down to the plains, without looking left or right, intent on reaching its destination. Following the snake Rongnyoo was soon in the sight of plains. She knew she had won the race but her happiness gave way to concern as Rangeet had not arrived on time and she waited and waited. When Rangeet eventually emerged out of the mountains he sighted Rongnyoo far below him. He raged swiftly to meet Rongnyoo pulling large boulders with him, he knew he had lost the race. His first

words on seeing her were Thi-sa-tha (when did you arrive?) he asked. Seeing he had lost the race his pride was hurt. He decided to flow back to the mountains, causing destruction everywhere. On seeing her lover's rage, Rongnyoo was grief struck, she decided to follow him begging him not to go back, and as a

result the waters rose higher and higher. The rising waters flooded the lands causing forests, hills to disappear under it. Men, women and children, animals, birds and insects climbed trees to save themselves. Eventually Rongnyoo was able to sway her lover and together they went on to their journey towards the plains.

The Lepchas perform "Rongnyoo Rongeeet Sumsu" to offer gratitude to the rivers for sustaining them and their lands till date and ask for power and protection for the future. Food grains, fruits, yams, milk, chi are offered. Two stones erected as representations of the two river spirits. Bongthings (Lepcha male shaman) and Muns (Lepcha female Shamans) mediate between the people and the spirits.

Not only the Lepchas but other communities also regard Teesta as sacred, and come to worship. Cheywar or birth rites, are performed here. The child (only male) is brought to the river, when he reaches three years of age

and made to release a pair of pigeons usually white. The water is poured in the child's shaved head and incenses and oil lamp is lit in front of three small erected stones. Flowers and red vermilion are offered in the name of the child. For some it is the way to the afterlife as their last evidences of existence is burnt to ashes that flows with water in a constant journey towards the sea and the afterlife. For some it provides recreation and income adventure sports like river rafting have helped people living near the river with source of income he will come for fishing to local and seasonal species of fish available in the river also provide free of income as adventurous come pitch their own tents and fish but these fishes are released back to the river. However there are others who use unusual means like electrocuting or using blasting to kill which is hampering the cycle of reproduction and population of these fishes as small fries also get caught up in the current.

The effigies of gods and goddesses are brought here to be submerged every year after the festivals have ended. To all that the rivers takes into her embrace it is ironic that people are still not satisfied and throw in non-biodegradable wastes, plastics which eventually come back to hamper the environment. Even with development setting in they have depended highly on the rivers for the source of energy and the platform to build up on the infrastructure and generate income and for the satisfaction of the people.

But what are we doing in return? For those who worship her, throwing plastics into with offerings, people should be more sensitive, for ones claiming to be nature lovers also should be concerned about saving it and even if they can't help in reducing pollution they should be the first one to take a step towards not adding to it. A little step by each can go a long way in minimizing the splurge that has started a long time ago. One must respect each other's sentiments connected to rivers and work for minimizing the amount of waste poured into it rather than contributing to it in the name of religion and rituals.

[The writer is PhD Scholar, Department of Anthropology, Sikkim University]

Gervinho matches Ronaldo double as Parma frustrate Juventus

MILAN, FEB 3 (AFP): Cristiano Ronaldo scored twice but champions Juventus had to settle for a point as a late Gervinho double snatched a 3-3 draw after promoted Parma staged an impressive comeback in Serie A on Saturday.

Juventus' dropped points allowed Napoli to cut the gap on the leaders to nine points after a confident 3-0 win over Sampdoria.

Massimiliano Allegri's side had already had their confidence shaken after a 3-0 defeat to Atalanta shattered their hopes of winning a fifth straight Coppa Italia.

Saturday's draw was not the response Allegri had called for ahead of their Champions League last 16 first leg tie against Atletico Madrid on February 20.

"I'm happy for the goals but not the result," said Ronaldo.

"Parma didn't do anything special, they waited for us to make a mistake.

"But we're not worried, we know it will be a great season for Juventus." Juve, hit by injuries to defenders Leonardo Bonucci, Giorgio Chiellini and Andrea Barzagli, have now conceded six goals in their last two matches.

But they still have a comfortable nine-point lead over Napoli with Inter Milan 20 points behind in third.



"It doesn't change anything, but we must not take anything for granted," said Allegri.

"We were too light in defence. It was the first time this back four had played together." Juventus lined up with an inexperienced back line of Leonardo Spinazzola alongside Uruguay defender Martin Caceres who got his first start since moving from Lazio.

Sami Khedira rattled the post twice, before Ronaldo opened the scoring after 36 minutes with Daniele Rugani again scoring for the hosts on 62 minutes.

An Antonino Barilla header clawed one back for Parma two

minutes later before Ronaldo completed his brace to return to the top of the Serie A goal-scorers' chart with 17. But Ivorian Gervinho threw his side a lifeline on 74 minutes and grabbed a point at the death for Parma who remain 12th in the table, 31 points behind Juventus.

"At least we satisfied those who complained we weren't entertaining," said Allegri.

"But the beautiful football doesn't pay off, at the end of the day you have got to just kick it away from your goal." The seven-time reigning champions nevertheless remain unbeaten this season having dropped points just twice before against

Genoa and Atalanta.

- NAPOLI POWER BACK -

Earlier Arkadiusz Milik and Lorenzo Insigne scored quick-fire goals and Simone Verdi added a third from the spot as Napoli got back on track.

AC Milan had dented Carlo Ancelotti's side's title hopes with a goalless draw in the San Siro last weekend before dumping the southerners out of the Coppa Italia midweek.

"Napoli are back strong," said Ancelotti. "Today we found the depth and the ability to quickly overturn the game.

"The two tests against Milan were not our usual selves, we're back to our normal stan-

dard." Sampdoria striker Fabio Quagliarella was thwarted in his bid to set a new record of scoring in 12 consecutive Serie A games as the side from Genoa also missed the chance to move up into fourth and the Champions League places.

But Quagliarella -- who is from Naples and had scored in Sampdoria's 3-0 win over Napoli earlier in the campaign -- was denied his best chance to make history by a sliding Kalidou Koulibaly tackle.

Napoli skipper Marek Ham-sik -- reportedly set for a move to China -- returned from injury and orchestrated the opener after 25 minutes in the San Paolo Stadium.

The Slovak international's cross found Jose Callejon who burst through to provide the assist which Milik finished off for his 12th league goal this season. Less than a minute later Insigne connected sweetly with another Callejon assist for his first league goal in three months.

Napoli were awarded a penalty for a Joachim Andersen handball but despite the calls of "Kalidou, Kalidou" from the crowd for the Senegalese defender to take it after his towering performance, it was Verdi who stepped up to convert in the final minute.

Sampdoria remain sixth, two points off AC Milan in the final Champions League berth.

Rayudu, Pandya power India to 35-run win in fifth ODI for biggest ever series win

WELLINGTON, FEB 3 (PTI): India claimed their biggest series win on New Zealand soil, overcoming a disastrous start to earn a hard fought 35-run win in the fifth ODI here Sunday.

The 4-1 scoreline is the best that India have achieved in New Zealand across formats since they started touring the country in 1967.

At 18 for four, India were heading towards another sub-100 total before the middle-order batsmen fought back to post a fighting total of 252. The 98-run stand for the fifth wicket between Ambati Rayudu (90 off 113) and Vijay Shankar (45 off 64) was the highlight of the middle-order fight back.

Hardik Pandya's 45 off 22 balls also went a long way in India posting a challenging target and his two wickets later on showed why he is such an important member of the team.

New Zealand batsmen, including skipper Kane Williamson (39), squandered their starts in the chase but the home team remained in the contest until Jimmy Neesham (44 off 32) was dismissed in the 37th over.

His freak run out, which was effected by the ever so sharp Mahendra Singh Dhoni from behind the stumps, came after a lbw appeal was turned down. New Zealand eventually ended with 217 in 44.1 overs despite Matt Henry's unbeaten 17 off 9 in the final overs.

Leggie Yuvzendra Chahal took three time-ly wickets for India, conceding just 41 runs in 10 overs.

Irrespective of the game's outcome, Rayudu played one of the most significant knocks of his career and made a compelling claim for a World Cup spot.

At the toss, skipper Rohit Sharma called the eight wicket loss in the previous game 'humiliating' and embraced the challenge of batting on a

testing surface by opting to bat. With top-four falling cheaply, it looked Rohit's brave call backfired but Rayudu and Shankar produced an innings-reviving stand under immense pressure.

Pacer Henry was the standout bowler for the hosts, taking four wickets for 35 runs while Trent Boult picked up three for 39.

After being bowled out for a paltry 92 in the fourth ODI, India had a point to prove.

The visiting team made three changes in the playing eleven. A fit again Dhoni was back in the team in place of Dinesh Karthik while Mohammad Shami and Shankar replaced Khaleel Ahmed and Kuldeep Yadav. The chinaman bowler was rested from the game. The ball swung at the Westpac Stadium, like it did at Hamilton, and troubled the Indian batsmen, including the experienced opening pair of Rohit and Shikhar Dhawan.

Boult, who took five wickets on Thursday, and Henry swung the ball at express pace and shared two wickets each to leave India reeling at 18 for four in seven overs.

It was a combination of top-class fast bowling and questionable shot selection that led to the top-order failure. Rohit (2) was outdone by a beauty from Henry, the one that moved away from the middle stump line to dislodge the off-stump.

Dhoni (1), playing Sunday's match after the missing the last two games due to injury, was bowled by Boult, off a peach of a delivery that swung back sharp and late to take the Indian wicketkeeper's off-stump.

On the other hand, Dhawan (6) slashed one hard to be caught at third man while the young Shubman Gill (7), getting his second game of the series, scooped a simple catch to the cover fielder.

Internet de-addiction clinics to help youth in Lucknow



LUCKNOW, FEB 3 (PTI): Special clinics to provide counselling to youngsters addicted to social media platforms will soon be set up by the King George Medical University here.

The psychiatry department of the University will run the clinics targeted at adolescents.

Professor PK Dalal, the head of KGMU's psychiatry department, told PTI that "Owing to massive usage of various social media tools/platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, mobile games and Instagram, a number of people are suffering from mental disorders.

"The Bengaluru-based NIMHANS (National Institute of Mental Health and Neurosciences) had four years ago started SHUT clinic -- Service for Healthy Use of Technology. Following the success of the first SHUT clinic, the psychiatry department of KGMU also decided to open similar clinics," he said.

"Through the special clinics, counselling will be done of youngsters so

as to motivate them to use less of social media tools. Most of the children from middle-income families get addicted to social media. As a result, there is an adverse impact on academics, the children become irritated, impact is also on their eyes and they tend to lose their concentration. If parents tell them to refrain from using mobile phones, they become stubborn, and hide it from their parents," Dalal said.

Director of NIMHANS, professor BN Gangadhar during his recent visit to Lucknow had suggested that 'SHUT' clinics should be started at all major and prominent institutes. "On this suggestion, KGMU is planning to open similar clinics," Dalal said.

The HoD also said that the clinics opened here will not be called 'SHUT' clinics, but will be given some other name. He also added that counselling centres will also be started in various schools and colleges to fight the adverse impact of social media.

Book seeks to decipher the hatred behind lynchings

NEW DELHI, FEB 3 (PTI): A new book pieces together stories of people at the receiving end of mob violence and seeks to find out what triggers lynchings to flout laws with impunity.

In recent years, cases of mob lynching have increased to an alarming extent and the emergence of mobocracy has put India's secularity and democratic constitution to test, says Ziya Us Salam in his book "Lynch Files: The Forgotten Saga of Victims of Hate Crime".

He says the mob giving out instant justice is not the way our Constitu-



tion makers had planned. From Dadri and Una to Alwar and Hapur and from Rajkot to Dimapur, each of these stories point out to a lapse in security, he says.

"The modus operandi in lynching cases (related to cattle smuggling)

remains the same, the 'common maximum programme' almost identical. In almost all cases, it starts with unproven allegations of cow smuggling or cow slaughter," the book, published by Sage, says.

So what prompts a

'gau rakshak' to take law into his hands?

"In a society like ours - troubled over population explosion, scarcity of resources, limited job opportunities, widening gap between the rich and the poor, and hopelessness emanating from all-pervading corruption - people tend to feel a sense of existential void and powerlessness," the book claims.

"The result is anger," it says.

Salam also discusses the Supreme Court judgement against lynching and says it has given some hope.

Australia extend lead as Sri Lanka struggle to stay in 2nd Test

CANBERRA, FEB 3 (AFP): Australia zeroed in on a 2-0 series win after dismissing Sri Lanka for 215 Sunday then piling on more runs to leave the visitors with a mountain to climb to stay in the second Test at Canberra.

Sri Lanka resumed the third day at 123 for three on what appeared to be a decent batting track, but in a hostile morning session lost four wickets and Kusal Perera, who retired after being hit on the head by a bouncer.

Their resistance finally folded in the second over after lunch, with Mitchell Starc taking five wickets to leave them trailing by 319 after Australia's first innings 534 for five declared.

By tea, the hosts' lead had been extended to 386 with Usman Khawaja not out 25 and Travis Head on 14 after skipper Tim Paine opted not to enforce the follow-on.

But it was far from plain sailing for Australia, who were 67 for three at the break.

Marcus Harris again failed, out for 14 with Kusal Mendis taking a superb diving catch at slip off Kasun Rajitha, throwing his place on the Ashes tour to England



later this year into question. Mendis held another catch to dismiss first innings century-maker Joe Burns for nine, this time off Vishwa Fernando, and Rajitha struck again to remove Marnus Labuschagne for four.

In an incident-packed morning at Manuka Oval, Paine handed the ball first up to Jhye Richardson and Pat Cummins and they responded with a slew of bouncers.

Both Perera, who resumed on 11, and Dhananjaya de Silva, on one overnight, took blows to the head in the opening two overs, but were fine to continue.

Perera was then hit flush on the helmet ducking into a Richardson ball on 27.

The neck protector flew off and a Sri Lankan physio rushed to his aid. He continued and added two more runs only to call the physio again

four balls later.

Once again he opted to bat on but was clearly feeling the effects and was helped off the field soon after. He stayed at the ground monitored by medics, but did not play again.

- KARUNARATNE RETURNS -

Ironically, the courageous Dimuth Karunaratne replaced him after being felled by a brutal bouncer on Saturday from Cummins.

He had laid prone on the ground for at least 10 minutes before being stretched off in a neck brace, but after a hospital check was cleared of concussion and given the OK to resume his innings.

The opener returned on 46 and smacked a four to bring up his 22nd Test 50 before being caught at gully by Kurtis Patterson off Starc after adding nine more.

He was out just three balls after de Silva bizarrely hit his own wicket while attempting a pull shot off Starc. As his bat swung around it took one of the bails off and he was gone for 25.

In the next over debutant Chamika Karunaratne also fell, without scoring, getting an edge to a Nathan Lyon ball with Starc holding the catch at slip.

Niroshan Dickwella was out lbw to Labuschagne on the last delivery before lunch, and when they returned Dilruwan Perera and Ferndano lasted just eight more balls.

Starc did the damage with 5-54, silencing his critics after a lean spell.

Australia won the first Test in Brisbane by an innings and 40 runs.

Venezuelans rally for and against embattled Maduro on revolution anniversary

CARACAS, FEB 3 (AFP): Buoyed by the defection of a top general, Venezuelan opposition leader Juan Guaido predicted Saturday the month of February would be “decisive” in determining the future of the nation as he and socialist leader Nicolas Maduro held competing mass rallies in the capital.

National Assembly head Guaido, 35, had called Saturday’s protest to ramp up the pressure on Maduro to step down, ten days after stunning the world by declaring himself “interim president” of the oil-rich but crisis-racked country.

He received a boost before it began when an air force general became the highest ranking officer to abandon Maduro and recognize Guaido as the country’s true leader.

US National Security Advisor John Bolton responded to that in a tweet calling on “all military members to follow General (Francisco) Yanez’s lead.”

The United States recognised Guaido as Venezuela’s interim president on January 23 while four major European nations -- Britain, France, Germany and Spain -- have said they will do likewise unless Maduro calls presidential elections by mid-night on Sunday.

Speaking at a pro-regime demonstration marking 20 years since his predecessor Hugo Chavez came to power, Maduro ignored those demands and instead reiterated his call to bring forward legislative elections slated for the end of 2020 to this year.

“They (the opposition) want to bring forward elections, let’s have elections,” he said.

Maduro, making his first public appearance since a military parade in August when he claimed



to have been targeted in an attempted assassination, accused Guaido of being a US “puppet” in a coup d’etat attempt.

The National Assembly is the only one of Venezuela’s five government branches controlled by the opposition.

Guaido had earlier urged the armed forces to allow humanitarian aid from abroad into the country.

“You, soldier... have the decision in your hands” to allow it in or not, said Guaido. The United States said Saturday it will transport aid to the country in response to a request by Guaido.

Under Maduro’s stewardship, oil-dependent Venezuela has lurched into an economic crisis that has left the country suffering from hyperinflation and shortages of food and medicine.

Maduro refuses to let aid into Venezuela, claiming it would precede a US-led military intervention.

Guaido called for a new demonstration on February 12.

Speaking at the Euro-

pean Union’s headquarters in the east of the capital, he said this month “should be decisive.”

The rival Caracas rallies, separated by 10 kilometers (six miles), attracted huge crowds.

Carlos Morales, a 62-year-old who voted for Chavez in 1998 but now says socialism only brings “misery,” attended a pro-Guaido rally with his wife.

“This is the leader that all Venezuelans hoped for, a new leader, young, who is not contaminated,” he added.

At the pro-Maduro demonstration, Virginia Rondon, 69, hummed songs that glorified Chavez, and reminisced about his socialist revolution, saying: “I never experienced anything more beautiful in all my years.”

Others denounced the specter of US intervention and called on the United Nations to halt “Trump’s war.”

Early on Saturday, General Yanez said in a social media video that he disavowed Maduro’s “dictatorial” authority and recognised Guaido

as the acting president.

The air force high command strategic planning director said “90 per cent of the armed forces don’t support the dictator.”

His defection is “a hard blow” to Maduro, said Rocio San Miguel, an expert on the Venezuelan military.

The Venezuelan air force posted a picture of Yanez on its Twitter account tagged with the word “traitor.”

Later, in another video, retired Major General Jorge Oropeza, former air force general commander, also said he recognised Guaido as acting president.

Oropeza and Yanez were also joined by Jonathan Velasco, Venezuela’s ambassador in Iraq.

The military and security forces have so far been Maduro’s main pillar of support, but there have been signs of unrest in the ranks.

On January 21, a group of 27 soldiers rose up against Maduro in Caracas, although that was quickly suppressed.

It helped spark a week of protests in

which 40 people were killed in clashes with security forces, with hundreds more arrested. The challenge to Maduro is his most serious yet, with the United States leading the campaign to drive him from office.

Guaido moved to expand his international support by reassuring China -- Venezuela’s main creditor and a long-time ally of the socialist regime -- that he would honour bilateral agreements if successful in ousting Maduro.

China, like Russia, has denounced outside interference in Venezuela.

Guaido told the South China Morning Post he would not disrupt the relationship with China despite his close ties to Washington.

“China’s support will be very important in boosting our country’s economy and future development,” he said in an email interview.

China’s foreign ministry spokesman Geng Shuang said cooperation between the countries would continue “no matter how the situation changes” in Venezuela.

Pak to export donkeys to China

ISLAMABAD, FEB 3 (PTI): Pakistan, which has the third largest donkey population in the world, will export the animal to China, opening the avenue to earn millions from the trade, according to a media report.

Donkeys are highly prized in China, especially for their hide which is used to manufacture traditional Chinese medicines. Gelatin made from donkey skin has been long considered to have medicinal properties in China, traditionally being

thought to nourish the blood and enhance the immune system.

Pakistan has the world’s third largest population of donkeys with more than 5 million animals, while China stands at number one.

A senior official at the livestock department in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province said Chinese companies are interested in donkey farming in Pakistan and foreign companies are ready to invest USD 3 billion, the Geo News reported.

In a bid to boost the country’s exports, the live stock department has announced that it will develop donkey farms the first of its kind in the country.

According to reports, at least two donkey farms are being set up in Dera Ismail Khan and Mansehra with foreign partnership.

During the first three years, the government plans to export as many as 80,000 donkeys to China, according to the report.

Powerful storm hits Southern California, flooding highways



LOS ANGELES, FEB 3 (AP): The second in a string of powerful storms battered California on Saturday, shutting key highways after water and mud rushed into lanes from bare hillsides in wildfire burn areas where thousands of residents were under evacuation orders.

Flash flood warnings were issued for huge swaths of Southern California and forecasters said the system brought more than 4 inches (10 centimeters) of rain at lower elevations and several feet of snow in the mountains, where whiteout conditions closed roads.

A wind gust in Santa Barbara County topped 80 mph (128 kph) as the storm moved south and at one point dropped more than a half-inch (1.27 centimeters) of rain in five minutes. Trees and power lines were down across the region.

In Malibu, where the Woolsey fire last year destroyed homes and burned hillsides bare, officials closed Pacific Coast Highway and many other roadways

after mud carried trees and rocks into lanes. Residents whose homes survived the flames barricaded their properties with sandbags to protect their properties from floodwaters.

Carol Cavella was evacuated during the November fire and again Saturday when the creek behind her house threatened to overflow and inundate her backyard.

The 86-year-old put her cat in the car and drove to a coffee shop on higher ground, her son-in-law, Warren Bowman said. “She does not scare easily, but she got a little scared watching that water rise,” Bowman said. He was trying to convince her to come to his house in Los Angeles but she said she’d rather wait to see if the waters recede and she can return home.

The California Department of Transportation said Saturday night in a tweet that the both the northbound southbound lanes of U.S. 101, a vital route between Los Angeles and points north and west, have been reopened. Earlier Saturday,

in the Montecito area of Santa Barbara County, several miles of U.S 101 were closed because of flooding. Elsewhere in the county, evacuations were ordered or recommended for neighborhoods near the Thomas, Whittier and Sherpa fire scars.

“This is a dangerous situation,” the National Weather Service said, warning that the high rates of rain could send boulders sluicing down denuded hillsides along with the mud and debris.

It has only been a little over a year since a downpour on the huge Thomas Fire burn scar unleashed a massive debris flow that destroyed or damaged hundreds of homes in the seaside community of Montecito. The disaster killed 21 people, and two others have never been found.

Rescue crews scrambled Saturday to pluck motorists from cars caught in rising waters, said Mike Eliason, a spokesman for the Santa Barbara County Fire Department. He urged drivers who come upon flooded intersections to find alternate routes.

China disciplines 80 officials linked to major vaccine scandal

BEIJING, FEB 2 (AFP): China’s corruption watchdog on Saturday said it had disciplined more than 80 officials linked to a vaccine scandal last year that inflamed public fears over the safety of domestically produced drugs.

Changchun Changsheng Biotechnology -- a major Chinese manufacturer of rabies vaccines -- was slapped with a USD 1.3 billion fine in October after it was found to have fabricated records.

Four officials from the China Food and Drug Administration (CFDA), including former deputy director Wu Zhen, have been handed over to prosecutors, the Central Commission for Discipline Inspection said in a statement Saturday.

State-run news agency Xinhua detailed the allegations against Wu including nepotism and taking bribes. He has also been expelled from the Communist Party, it said.

“Being ‘ruthless to the people’, Wu allegedly abused his power in drug regulation, severely jeopardising the state’s supervision over drugs,” Xinhua said, citing the graft watchdog.

El Chapo drugged and raped teenage girls, witness claims



NEW YORK, FEB 3 (AFP): A witness in the trial of Joaquin “El Chapo” Guzman told the US government the Mexican drug kingpin drugged and raped girls as young as 13, according to court documents unsealed Saturday.

Longtime associate Alex Cifuentes told authorities a woman would send Guzman photos of young girls to choose from, with a fee of USD 5,000 per girl.

Cifuentes used this service himself three or four times, having sex

with girls as young as 15-years-old, the government said in the documents, adding he “witnessed the defendant do the same on multiple occasions, with girls as young as 13 years old.”

The former Sinaloa cartel leader, 61, would allegedly sometimes drug the girls with “a powdery substance” with Cifuentes’ help before raping them.

But Cifuentes, who lived with Guzman in 2007 and 2008, did not mention any of this in four days of

testimony during the trial, which ended on Thursday after three months of hearings.

“Joaquin denies the allegations, which lack any corroboration and were deemed too prejudicial and unreliable to be admitted at trial,” Guzman’s lawyer, Eduardo Balarezo, said in an emailed statement.

“It is unfortunate that the material was publicly released just prior to the jury beginning deliberations.” On Monday, the jury will begin deliberating whether

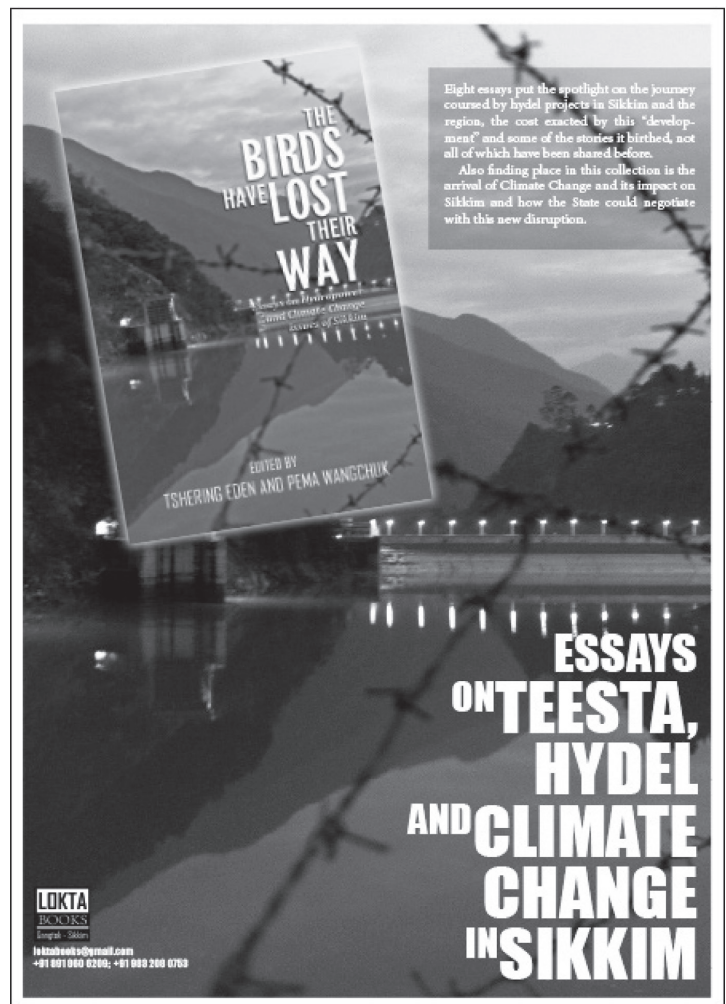
Guzman is guilty of trafficking hundreds of tons of drugs into the US.

He faces a life sentence if convicted.

The documents were published following a legal claim by US media, which throughout the trial fought the secrecy surrounding the case.

Cifuentes, 50, was arrested in Mexico in 2013 then deported from Colombia to the US.

Currently in prison, he is cooperating with the government in exchange for a reduced sentence.



People told me I would be over if I take break from films: Nargis Fakhri

JUSTIN RAO

MUMBAI, FEB 3 (PTI): Nargis Fakhri had no qualms about taking a break from films but she says there were people around her who tried to drill the notion into her head that the audience will forget her in her absence. The model-turned-actor made her debut in 2011 with "Rockstar". Her last outing was 2017's "Housefull 3".

Since then, she reduced her on-screen appearances as well.

"When I said I'm going to take a break for six months, there were people who freaked out. I was told I'll lose everything, people will get ahead of me. They'll forget about me. They put all those things in my head. But I said I don't believe that," Nargis told PTI.

The actor has come out of her short hiatus with her new film, "Amavas", and realised that nothing had changed.

"You leave something to follow your dreams and when you come back, everybody is doing the same thing. It's no different. So you can blend in easily. There's never a problem," she adds.

Before she took a break, Nargis featured in films like "Madras Cafe", "Main Tera Hero" and Marathi feature "Banjo", but says staying away from the spotlight was not difficult.

"I am happy. I like to do films but I also realised in the years I lived in India that I only worked all the time. I didn't even have my friends and family around.

"I didn't see my mom for three years. Happiness is in re-

lationships which you have with people. If you don't have the support system, it's detrimental to your health. I had to learn how to balance," she says.

The 39-year-old former model, who describes her turn to acting as a "beautiful accident", says the job is "super emotionally demanding."

"It takes up your life. You leave your real life to go into this other life. You need to be so committed.

I had to be more because of my obstacles - I had to learn the language, get a tutor.

"I was so consumed with work that my mom used to mail me 'Are you alive?' There's so much you have to put into it. I value my work but now also I value my regular life. Acting was not my first choice anyway," she says.

While she awaits the release of "Amavas", a horror-thriller directed by Bhushan Patel, Nargis says a lot has changed in terms of the scripts she wants to choose today.

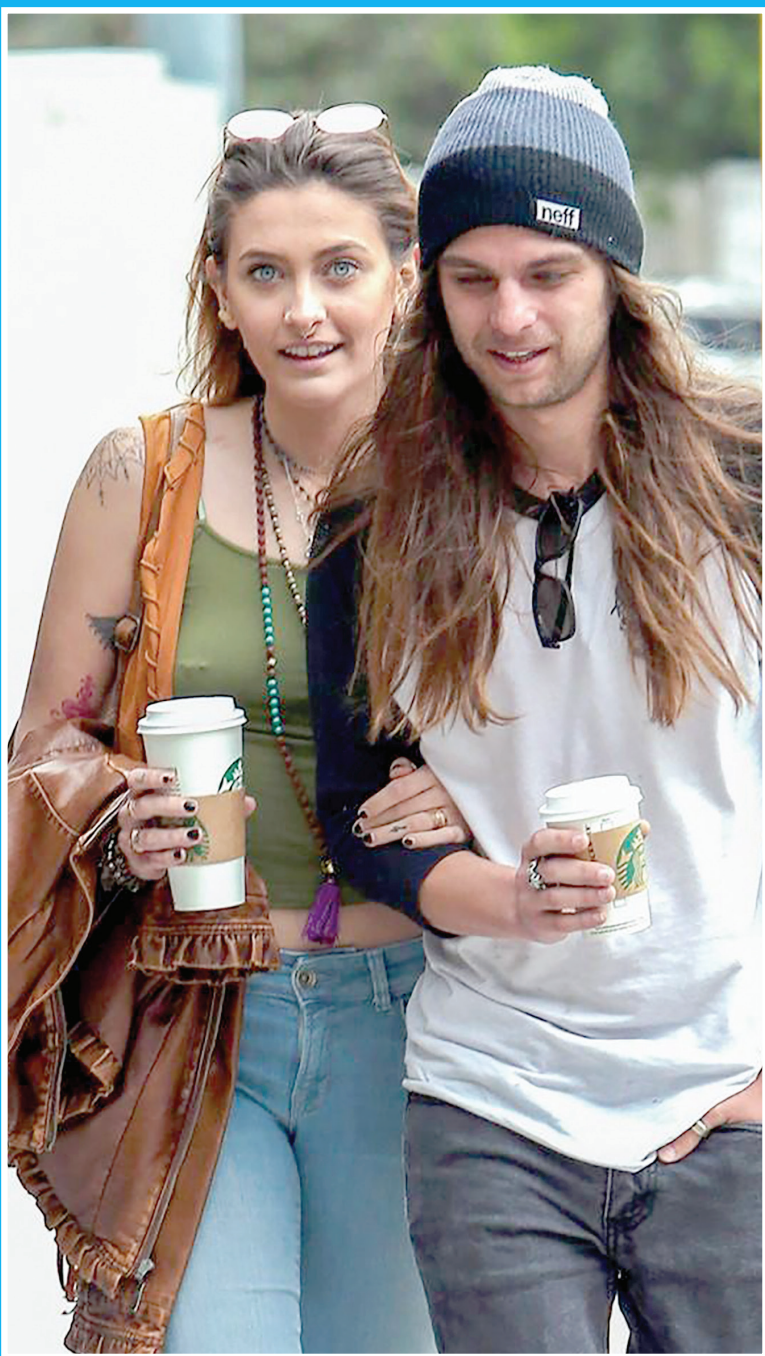
The actor says, in the initial phase of her career, it was her agency which directed her to choose cer-

tain kinds of films with an emphasis on the production house, director and co-stars more than the scripts so that she does not "miss out on good projects".

"There's a valuable lesson that I keep with me. It's the ability to say no and then make my own choice. If it's a wrong choice, it's on me. But at least I had the chance to say. I look at scripts differently.

"I'm still not so professional about it, sometimes I'm naive because I want to give things a chance. I'm optimistic about a lot of things. Today, I want to take a chance," she adds.

Also featuring Sachin Joshi, "Amavas" is scheduled to be released on February 8.



PARIS JACKSON & GABRIEL GLENN: The model looks to be in good spirits as she cozies up to new boyfriend Gabriel Glenn on a Starbucks coffee run in Hollywood.

'Guardians of the Galaxy Vol 3' definitely on the cards, says Chris Pratt



LOS ANGELES, FEB 03 (PTI): Chris Pratt has promised the "Guardians of the Galaxy" fans that the third film in the franchise will surely see light of the day.

The future of the threequel took a hit after Disney sacked director James Gunn from "Guardians of the Galaxy: Vol 3" last July when his old offensive tweets resurfaced on social media.

Gunn was in the middle of writing the script for the third film when he was fired from the job. Pratt assured the fans

that the movie will happen.

"I promise there'll be a third movie, I don't know exactly what that's going to look like, but I know everyone on board is just eager to give the fans what they want and wrap up a trilogy in a meaningful way," he said.

"We're still circling the city of Jericho, I like to say," he added.

The actor, who plays Peter Quill/ Star-Lord in the series, was speaking on the sidelines of the "Lego Movie 2" premiere.

It's turning out well: Saina Nehwal on biopic

SHUBHA DUBEY

MUMBAI, FEB 3 (PTI): Saina Nehwal is looking forward to her biopic and the ace shuttler says actor Shraddha Kapoor, who will be playing her role in the movie, has worked hard on the project.

Titled "Saina", the film directed by Amol Gupte, went on floors last September.

"I am looking forward to the film. The script is lovely. As far as I have seen Shraddha preparing for it, she has done really well. I am waiting for it. It is taking some time to complete. But I am sure it is turning out well," Saina told PTI.

The badminton player said life stories of sports stars make for a good movie plot line as they are full of hardships and motivate people to do better in their lives.

"All the sports star have wonderful stories behind them. The struggles and



hardships, they have gone through are very different from each other. So, a film on any sports star will make a good plot.

"If there is a biopic on a sportsperson, I am the first one to go and watch it because it motivates me a lot. I am sure people would like to know my story as well."

Saina was talking on the sidelines of Lakme Fashion Week Summer/Resort 2019, where she walked the ramp for designer Vaani Raghup-

athy Vivek's new collection "Magnoliaa".

The sports star looked ethereal in a heavily embellished bright yellow lehenga as she sashayed down the runway on Saturday.

Saina, who recently won the Indonesia Masters, said walking the ramp was a wonderful experience for her.

"I want to thank Vaani for giving me this opportunity. People are used to seeing me on court so it was a good change for them also.

ARIES: Lunge out of your comfort zone on Saturday, Aries! Under a boundary-busting trine between amorous Venus in your adventurous ninth house and transformative Uranus in your sign, love knows no limits. Keep an open mind and see where that leads you. If you're single, you could be attracted to someone radically dissimilar to your usual type or be amenable to a long-distance relationship.

TAURUS: Your sex appeal is off the charts this Saturday as voluptuous Venus in your erotic eighth house hooks up with unpredictable Uranus in your fantasy zone. You won't be able to keep a lid on your blazing sensuality. You could be minding your own business when out of the blue, a sultry lightning bolt strikes. With spontaneous Uranus in the picture, this person could have serious soulmate potential.

GEMINI: If you find yourself at a crossroads with a key relationship on Saturday, Gemini, don't panic. You'll know which way to turn without a GPS. Diplomatic Venus in your partnership house teams up with game-changer Uranus, bringing on a make-

it-or-break-it moment. Suddenly the fog lifts, and you'll have the clarity to decide whether or not to ink the deal, move in together or whatever next step you're deliberating.

CANCER: Set some new goals and commit to making the kind of positive changes that will give you even more energy and clarity, like swapping out that second coffee with a green juice and renew your yoga pass. On Sunday, vixen Venus heads into Capricorn and charges up your partnership sector until March 1. This could make you think a bit more seriously about your own relationship status.

LEO: Ready for a style upgrade? On Saturday, fashionista Venus in your glamorous fifth house shoots a supportive beam to changemaker Uranus, turning your attention to your overflowing closet. To make room for some seasonal arrivals, you'll need to clear out space—and Uranus says there's no time like the present!

VIRGO: PMystery is the spice of life, and things could get muy picante on Saturday as a zesty trine between amorous Venus and transformative Uranus in your clandestine

eighth house arouses desires you didn't even realize you had. With the love planet lighting up your home zone, Chez Virgo could become the setting for some sexy escapades.

LIBRA: Got a heart brimming with love? Shout it from the rooftops on Saturday, Libra! As devoted Venus in your expressive third house forms a supportive angle with transformative Uranus in your relationship corner, communicating your feelings to that special someone could be a game-changer. Even a simple declaration of your admiration to a friend will deepen the bond.

SCORPIO: Saturday's harmonious angle between fair-minded Venus in your money house and game-changer Uranus in your sixth house of details can help reset your balance sheet. Whether you've been picking up the slack for a coworker (or they for you) or the idea of reciprocity has been lost on a certain entitled friend, take a step toward parity. Surprise someone who's been wildly generous to you by sending flowers or taking them out to lunch just because!

SAGITTARIUS: Expect the unexpected

this Saturday as amorous Venus in your sign buddies up with unpredictable Uranus in your passionate fifth house. If you're inspired to do something completely out of character, just go with it without judging it or worrying about the consequences. Take the initiative with someone new, weeding out the tepid types and drawing in people who can keep up with your sizzling energy! **CAPRICORN:** You're in for a surprise this Saturday, Capricorn—if you can drop your guard enough to let the magic in. A harmonizing trine between affectionate Venus in your unconscious corner and radical Uranus could dredge up some deeply buried emotions—you know, the pesky kind you hate to deal with. While you're great at the stiff-upper-lip thing, people who know you best realize that under that cool exterior lives a super-sensitive soul.

AQUARIUS: Scan local listings and find the most fun and out-there activities. Then grab some fellow adventurers to join your escapades. On the romantic front, if you're single, don't restrict yourself to one person. Life's a buffet, Water Bearer, so fill your plate! Attached? This day

is perfect for that double (or group) date you've been talking about. On Sunday, as creative Venus glides into Capricorn and your quixotic twelfth house until March 1, mix it up! Pull clothes out of your closet that haven't seen daylight in a while. Rock some bling you might normally think is too much. If you've been secretly crushing on someone, take a bold leap and invite THEM out. At least you'll find out if you've got a fighting chance!

PISCES: Before you head out for brunch or a night of dancing, stop and gaze into your metaphoric crystal ball. Saturday's helpful hookup of lucky Venus in your career sector and transformative Uranus in your money house provides the perfect opportunity to hit pause and evaluate some of your loftiest professional ambitions. Are your dreams the same as last year? Do they need some updating? And the million-dollar question: What are you doing to steer things in that direction? Make a list of what you think you can or should do to take a giant leap forward, and schedule a few of these things into your calendar for next week. On Sunday, affable Venus swings into Capricorn and fires up your collaborative eleventh house.

REQUIRED FOR CANADA

**Nurses,
Caregivers,
Chef-Waiters-Butchers-Bakers,
Driver,
Farm Workers - Meat Packers
IT PROFESSIONAL**



Walk for Interview & Resume Submission

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