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SummitTIMES

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O N T O P O F T H E N E W S

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**BAS gen secy
appointed
Team Manager
of Indian
Junior team to
Asian c'ship**

**SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 25 SEPT:**

Badminton Association of Sikkim general secretary, Sukanta Das, has been appointed Team Manager of Indian Junior Team for the upcoming Asian Junior Badminton Championship to be held from 03 to 07 October at Mandalay, Myanmar. He is also an executive member of Badminton Association of India [BAI].

A BAS press release issued by its publicity secretary, Kalyan Dewan, informs that after leading the victorious Indian Badminton Team contingent in the South Asian Games 2016, Korean Open 2017 and Japan Open 2017, Mr Das has been bestowed with higher responsibilities by BAI with the BAI president nominating him to lead the Indian Junior Team as Team Manager for the upcoming Asian Junior Badminton Championship.

"It is a very proud moment both for the Badminton Association of Sikkim fraternity as well as our tiny State of Sikkim. The experience garnered by him would be especially beneficial to promote the game in the nook and corner of our state," the release adds. BAS has conveyed best wishes to Mr Das and team India.

**NIRMAL MANGAR
GANGTOK, 25 SEPT:**

Two budding footballers from Sikkim have been selected for training by Punjab Minerva Football Club.

Uttam Mangar and Biboswan Dahal, both ten years old, are heading for Chandigarh on 27 September to join the Pnjab Minerva boot camp.

Both will be under contract with Minerva for five years.

"I am very happy for my son. We will support him in chasing his dream of becoming a professional footballer," beam Meenu and BB Dahal, the proud parents of Biboswan.



A total of 22 players from Sikkim were selected for the final trials held on 13 September in Punjab.

Earlier, selection trials were

held in South Sikkim and is the son of Devi Tamang and Janga Bahadur Mangar.

"He is too fascinated by football... he lives the sport. We are very happy with his selection," said the father.

Both are studying in class V and play as strikers.

Bisboswan is a student of Tashi Namgyal Academy while Uttam studies at Kerabari Govt School.

"My favourite footballer is Lionel Messi," says Bisboswan, while Uttam says he likes Neymar the most.

Both name FC Barcelona as their favorite club.

SKM CONVENES CLC MEET AT MAKHA

**2019 elections
will pit money versus
mandate: Golay**

**WANGCHUK BHUTIA
MAKHA, 25 SEPT:**

Sikkim Krantikari Morcha (SKM) convened a constituency-level meeting today at Makha Bazaar in East Sikkim. Also on the day, the constituency-level party office was inaugurated at Makha Bazar.

Addressing the gath-

ering, the SKM party president, PS Tamang [Golay], claimed that the people of Sikkim will not be lured by money any more as they were wholeheartedly supporting the SKM this time.

He urged all the party workers and youth to be actively involved in

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Governor inaugurates Loyola Jubilee Hall

**SILVER JUBILEE
CELEBRATIONS
BEGIN AT LOYOLA
COLLEGE OF
EDUCATION**

**ARPAN PRADHAN
GANGTOK, 25 SEPT:**

Governor Ganga Prasad today inau-

gurated Loyola Jubilee Hall, the auditorium hall of Loyola College of Education, Namchi. With this, he also flagged off the silver jubilee year programme of the institution.

Loyola College of Education is a Catholic, Pri-

vate, Minority and self-financed institution, run by the Sikkim Jesuit Society. The concept of an institution was originally conceived by Fr Cherain Padiyara, the then Superior of Darjeeling Jesuits. The first batch of the

turn to pg02



Darj Towns Club wins Sikkim Veterans' Football Tournament

**SAGAR CHHETRI
GANGTOK, 25 SEPT:**

Darjeeling Towns Club has emerged the champion of the fourth edition of Sikkim Veterans' Football Tournament 2018 played here at Paljor Stadium. In the final match played on Tuesday, Darjeeling Towns Club outplayed defending champion's Darjeeling United Veterans 3-0.

With the help of a goal by Finjo Wangdi Sherpa in the 31st minute, Darjeeling TC ended the first half with 1-0 lead.

While the cup holders were trying hard to equalise, Sanjay Sashankar extended the Darjeeling TC lead to 2-0

minutes into the second half in the 47th minute and sealed victory for the team when he completed his brace in additional time.

Finjo Wangdi Bhutia of Darjeeling TC was adjudged the Man of the Match while Manjit Singh of Royal FC, Siliguri, received the Man of the Tournament trophy. The Fair Play trophy was awarded to Snow Lion FC, Gangtok.

Transport Minister, DT Lepcha, was present as chief guest for the final match.

The final day also featured an exhibition friendly match between 50-plus veterans of Nam-

turn to pg02

Criminalisation of politics of largest democracy is unsettling, says SC

NEW DELHI, SEP 25 (PTI): The Supreme Court Tuesday held that all candidates will have to declare their criminal antecedents to the Election Commission before contesting polls, and termed as "unsettling" the criminalisation of politics in the world's largest democracy.

The apex court said that informed choice is the cornerstone of democracy and asked the legislature to consider framing a law to ensure decriminalisation of politics.

It said there was a need for a law to prevent persons with serious criminal cases pending against them from entering the legislature and be a part of lawmaking.

The top court said corruption and criminalisation of politics are hitting at the roots of Indian democracy, and Parliament must take steps urgently to curb this menace.

A five-judge Constitution bench, headed by Chief Justice Dipak Misra, said that citizens have a right to be informed about the antecedents of their candidates.

It said the candidates have to file a form with the Election Commission declaring their criminal antecedents and criminal history in 'bold letters'.

In the unanimous verdict, the bench, also comprising Justices R F Nariman, A M Khanwilkar, D Y

Chandrachud and Indu Malhotra, said that political parties are obligated to put all the information about their candidates on their websites.

The apex court also said that political parties must be informed by the candidates about their criminal background.

It called for wider publicity, through print and electronic media about the antecedents of candidates affiliated to political parties.

Taking note of the submissions of Attorney General K K Venugopal that the court should not cross the laxman rekha vis-a-vis the separation of powers, the bench said it cannot enter into legislative arena to provide disqualification for candidates who are facing serious criminal cases.

However, it said the nation eagerly waits such legislation and the lawmaking wing of the democracy should take upon itself to come out with a law to address this.

The verdict was pronounced on a batch of pleas raising a question whether lawmakers facing criminal trial can be disqualified from contesting elections at the stage of framing of charges against them.

According to the prevalent law, the lawmakers and candidates are barred under the Representation of Peoples (RP) Act from contest-

ing elections only after their conviction in a criminal case.

The verdict was reserved on August 28.

The Centre had contended that the judiciary should not venture into the legislative arena by creating a pre-condition which would adversely affect the right of the candidates to participate in polls as there was already the RP Act which deals with the issue of disqualification.

Referring to the concept of presumption of innocence until a person is proven guilty, the Centre had argued that depriving a person from contesting elections on a party ticket would amount to denial of the right to vote, which also included the right to contest.

It had said that the courts will have to presume innocence in view of the fact that in 70 per cent cases, accused are being acquitted.

Venugopal had said that Parliament has made a distinction between an accused and a convict and there has been a provision for disqualification in the Representation of Peoples Act upon conviction of a lawmaker.

The Election Commission of India had taken a view which was apparently opposite to the Centre

turn to pg02

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Pasal

HSP meets PM, submits memo alleging corruption in Sikkim

SUMMIT REPORT GANGTOK, 25 SEPT:

A Hamro Sikkim Party [HSP] delegation called on Prime Minister Narendra Modi on the evening of 23 September [Sunday] at Raj Bhawan here.

The delegation welcomed the Prime Minister and submitted a memorandum on issues related with Sikkim, an HSP press release informs.

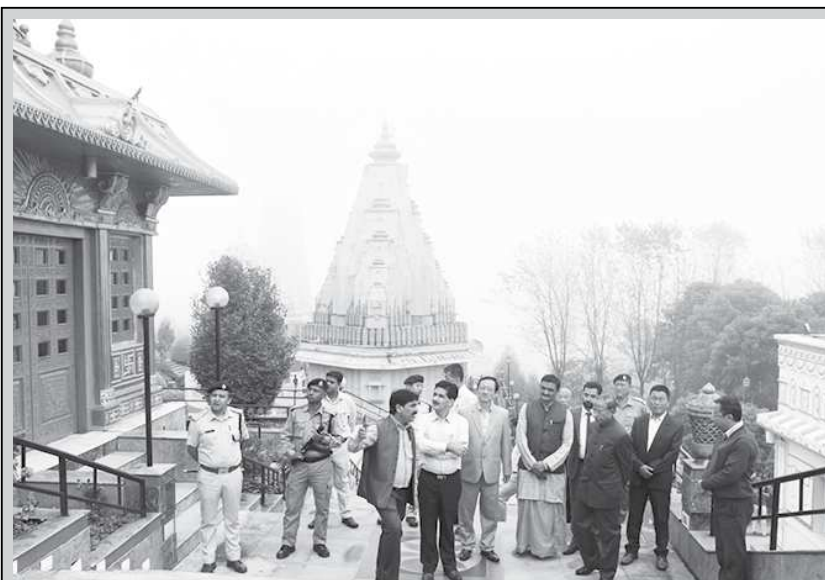
The HSP delegation comprised of vice presidents Bhachung Bhutia, RB Subba and Dr. Bina Basnett, former Minister KN Upreti and spokesperson Biraj Adhikari.

The HSP memorandum has demanded restoration of the lost Nepali seats in the As-

sembly and tribal status for the 11 left-out communities of Sikkim. The HSP has also demanded early reservation of Limboo-Tamang seats in the Assembly.

The HSP memorandum also reportedly alleges that the State government was misusing Central funds allocated for development of Sikkim. Corruption has also been alleged in development of hydel power projects.

Such misuse of funds has been already published in CAG Reports over the years but has not been taken up by the Centre, the HSP states. The HSP delegation demanded that a Central probe be initiated into all the corruption allegations.



GOVERNOR VISITS SIDDHESHWARA DHAM

NAMCHI, 25 SEPT: Governor Ganga Prasad visited Siddheshwara Dham at Namchi today. He took a brief tour of the various Jyotirlingas and other temples located at the dham.

Governor inaugurates Loyola Jubilee Hall

contd from pg01

Teacher-Students was admitted in July 1994. The college is now affiliated to Sikkim Central University.

Addressing the function, the Governor lauded the college for its dedicated service for the last 25 years, not only to the people of Sikkim but also to the whole nation.

He appreciated the hard work put in by the faculty members to bring out 50 young, dedicated and energetic teachers every year. He was much pleased to witness the cultural programme which was part of the event.

The Governor also released the College Annual Magazine and a book written by Rev. Fr Francis AV, vice Principal.

The programme was also attended by Additional CS to the Governor, Dr. K. Jaya Kumar, DK Pradhan, Director (Higher Education), HRDD, Rt. Rev. Stephen Lepcha, Bishop of Darjeeling-Sikkim, Rev. Fr. John Wilfred Lobo, Provincial of Darjeeling Jesuit Province, former Principals, Superiors, District Collector, SP South, Zilla Adhakshya, government officials, Principals of the various institutes, colleges and school around Namchi and neighbouring State, special invitees, Heads of local NGOs, Alumni, Teachers and Students from other schools.

Mamata's artistic side to be on display at puja pandals

KOLKATA, SEP 25 (PTI): Come Durga Puja, Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee's creative side will be on display at various pandals in the state.

A poem by Banerjee, which talks about contributions of the Santhal community to the country, will find a place on the wooden panels of a pandal at Bhawanipore, while another song written by the chief minister will be played at a New Ali-pore puja.

The Santhal poem - 'Joi Jit-kaur Deban Mena' (Say, we will win) will be translated in Bengali and etched on the wooden panels

of the main pandal of 'Swadhin Sangha' at Bhawanipore, in the southern part of the city, a puja committee member said.

Apart from the Santhal poem, life-size statues depicting the activities of tribal men and women will adorn the pathway to the pandal, Ashim Kumar Bose, the general secretary of Bhawanipore's Swadhin Sangha Puja Committee, said on Monday.

"The pandal will showcase the contributions of Santhal population to our country, their role in the freedom struggle and generate awareness about the lifestyle of the Santhali popula-

tion living in Purulia, Bankura, West Midnapore areas among the people," Bose said.

The Swadhin Sangha Puja Committee had last year themed its puja on Banerjee's poem 'Sobuj' (The Green), urging people to save the environment.

The chief minister has also composed the theme song for a prominent Durga puja at 'Suruchi Sangha' in south Kolkata.

Banerjee had said that the lyrics aimed to bring back the spirit of 'Agomoni' (traditional Bengali songs invoking the goddess) songs in theme music once again.

"I was requested by Arup Biswas (Banerjee's cabinet minister) to compose the theme song for his Durga Puja (Suruchi Sangha) and I decided to retain the spirit of Agomoni songs like 'Ja Devi Sarbabbhuteshu' in my lyrics. Hope it will be liked by everyone," she had said at a programme earlier this month.

Popular singer and West Bengal Minister of State for Culture Indranil Sen has lent his voice to the lyrics.

The chief minister had composed the theme song for the puja at 'Suruchi Sangha' last year also.



Sensitisation workshop at Rinchenpong underlines mission to eliminate TB

RINCHENPONG, 25 SEPT [IPR]: A sensitization workshop, "Sikkim Towards Elimination of TB by 2022," was held here at Rinchenpong community hall in West Sikkim today.

Dr. Bikash Pradhan (DTO) presented an overview on TB and detailed efforts towards active case finding, systems of sputum collection, 99 DOTS mobile online entry system of patients being provided medicines, early BCG vaccination, ventilated rooms for TB patients, precaution disposing sputum and finally building partnership with administrative department, Governments, NGOs for elimination of this disease.

Speaking on collec-

tive effort and coordination, CMO Dr. T. Namgyal stressed on the need to constitute a committee for "line-listing" and called on all to be responsible with strong commitment towards elimination of TB.

He also highlighted the Proud Mother Scheme, HPV vaccination, WIFS, RBSK, Mission Indradanush, and improvement in services, manpower, facilities and functionaries at District Hospital Gyalshing and Primary Health Centres.

In his address, the BDO urged Panchayats towards active case finding on TB as ongoing CATCH programme was more approachable.

West Zilla Upa Ad-

hyaksha, Ashok Kumar Gurung, chaired the workshop as chief guest.

In his address, he called for combined efforts and measures by all departments and private sector to eliminate TB from the State. The CM, he pointed out, had set a target for this in line with WHO guidelines and was hopeful that the target will be achieved ahead of the deadline.

The Zilla Upadhyaksha also initiated a productive interaction session mid-session and everyone took active part and many fruitful suggestions emerged.

Workshop was organised by Rinchenpong PHC and District Hospital Gyalshing.

SDF thanks PM for visit and inauguration

SUMMIT REPORT GANGTOK, 25 SEPT:

Sikkim Democratic Front has expressed deep gratitude towards Prime Minister Narendra Modi for inaugurating the first airport of Sikkim at Pakyong in East Sikkim on 24 September. SDF has also credited the farsighted leadership of Chief Minister Pawan Chamling for Sikkim and its people being able to get such unique infrastructure.

An SDF press release issued by its general secretary [press & publicity], Kavita Subba, mentions that the CM has once again placed the pending demands of the people of Sikkim with the

PM during the historic inauguration at Pakyong.

The release highlights that the CM strongly placed the pro-people demands of seat reservation for Limboos and Tamangs in the State Assembly before 2019 elections and tribal status for 11 left out communities of the State.

The release adds that the CM had placed these demands with the PM even during the declaration of Sikkim as an Organic State on 18 January in 2016 at Chintan Bhawan in Gangtok.

SDF has expressed gratitude towards the CM for strongly placing these demands on behalf of the people of Sikkim.



2019 elections will pit money versus mandate: Golay

contd from pg01

party's activities, stating that the 2019 election will be a contest between money and mandate.

He also addressed what he called SDF rumour mongering that he will not be allowed to contest the 2019 election and urged the people not to believe it.

"I am ready to sacrifice everything for the people of Sikkim," he said while alleging that SDF was playing communal among the people.

About the prospective party candidates, he said that he will not be choosing the candidates and that the decision will be left to the people.

SKM working president, Navin Karki, in his address, said that SKM

will establish a Nursing College in Tumin-Lingee constituency after formation of its government.

Also at the function, 230 people from Tumin-Lingee constituency joined SKM. Supporters from Singtam-Khamdong and Kabi-Lungtsok constituencies also attended the function which was also addressed by working president MP Subba, senior vice-president TN Dhakal, Kado Tshering Bhutia, Sangha MLA Sonam Lama and general secretary, North/ East Tshering Lepcha.

Earlier, the function began with a welcome address by Lall Man Subba, CLC president, T u m i n - L i n g e e constituency.

Darj Towns Club wins Sikkim Veterans' Football Tournament

contd from pg01

cheybong and Dzongri FC, which the former won 3-1.

The tournament was organised by one of the oldest and more popular football clubs of the State, Dzongri Football Club, Gangtok. 17 teams from different parts of Sikkim along with teams from Darjeeling, Kalimpong and Siliguri had participated in the tournament.

Speaking to media persons after the match, Darjeeling TC officials expressed their happiness and satisfaction with the team's performance informed that Darjeeling TC has former profes-

sional and national-level footballers from Darjeeling who have been participating in different veterans' tournaments across the country.

They congratulated the hosts, Dzongri FC, for consistently organising the tournament and urged them to continue their efforts.

"Such veterans' tournaments provide a good opportunity for former footballers of the region to meet each other and have a wonderful time. Such tournaments will also encourage youngsters towards football and other sports and live a healthy life," they said.

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Bandh in WB: BJP, TMC take out rallies

KOLKATA, SEP 25 (PTI): The opposition BJP took out rallies in the city and the state on Tuesday in support the bandh it has called Wednesday, while the ruling Trinamool Congress (TMC) brought out processions denouncing it.

The BJP has called a 12-hour shutdown on September 26 to protest the killing of two students in a clash with police at Islampur in North Dinajpur district on last Thursday.

"The people are fed up with this government. They will participate in this strike peacefully. But if the TMC and its goons try to foil the strike, there will be repercussions," BJP state president Dilip Ghosh said.

If the opposition parties call a bandh, the

state government goes all out to foil a strike, he said and wondered if Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee forgot how many strikes her party had called in West Bengal since 1998, the year the TMC was formed.

"The state government is trying to hush up the Islampur incident. But we won't stop until and unless justice is delivered," Ghosh said.

Both the BJP and the TMC took out rallies in various parts of the state in support and against the strike call respectively.

The TMC leaders alleged that the BJP sought to stop the developmental work in the state.

"The BJP is trying to foment trouble in

the state. The state government will take all the steps to ensure that normal life is not disturbed. The police will take stern action if anyone tries to enforce the strike," TMC secretary general Partha Chatterjee said.

State-run buses will be on the road, he said urging commercial establishments and private educational institutes to function normally Wednesday.

The opposition Congress and the CPI(M) have opposed the killing of two youths in Islampur but did not support the strike call accusing both the TMC and the BJP of trying to create communal polarisation in the state over the incident.

Gangtok on Tuesday, 25 Sept

Temp: 28°C/15°C
Forecast: A morning thundershower in parts of area; otherwise, time of clouds and sun.
Sunrise: 05:27 AM
Sunset: 5:30 PM

Jigdel Denzongpa Memorial chess tourney to begin 29 Sept

SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 25 SEPT:
Sikkim Chess Association [SCA] has announced plans to organise the second edition of the Jigdel Denzongpa Memorial State Level Chess Tournament 2018 from 29 September to 02 October here at SDF Bhawan hall.

The tournament will be played on Swiss League System of nine rounds. More than 300 players from all over the State are expected to participate.

Addressing a press conference here today, SCA general secretary, Mahendra Dhakal, mentioned that the tournament was started last year in the memory of Jigdel Denzongpa, a good chess player and promoter of the State. The Late Denzongpa was working as DE in Energy & Power Department and passed away last year.

He informed that the tournament will carry a total prize money of Rs 80,000 sponsored by batch-mates of the late Mr Denzongpa [1987 to 1991 batch of MREC, Jaipur].

Cash prizes will be provided to the top-20 players and top five in each age category will be awarded with trophies. The tournament will feature U-7, U-9, U-11, U-13 and U-15 in boys and girls.

Registration for the tournament is underway at the SCA office at Lumsey and interested persons can also contact SCA for further details. The last date for the registration is 28 Sept till 4 PM.

On behalf of SCA, Mr Dhakal thanked the family members and batch mates of the late Mr Denzongpa for their support to chess. The press conference was also addressed by advisor, Phurba Wangyal Bhutia and assistant treasurer, Saroj Sapkota of SCA.

Criminalisation of politics of largest democracy is unsettling...

contd from pg01

and said that the recommendations for decriminalising politics were made by the poll panel and the Law Commission way back in 1997 and 1998, but no action was taken on them.

It exhorted the court to issue the direction in the matter besides asking Parliament to make the suitable law.

The PILs were filed by NGO 'Public Interest Foundation' and BJP leader Ashwini Kumar Upadhyay.

Teachers’ Conference on Innovative Classroom Teaching Learning Practices

SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 25 SEPT:
A teachers’ conference on “Innovative Classroom Teaching Learning Practices in the State of Sikkim,” a first for Sikkim, was held at DIET here today.

The conference sought to facilitate innovations and experiments in classroom teaching which could lead to improvement in teaching learning process; encourage and support teachers to adopt innovative teaching practices to enhance quality of education; provide a forum for teachers to share and discuss their innovative practices leading to augmentation of their professional development.

An official press release informs that the conference was presided over by Director, SCERT, Dr. Rabin Chettri, and had 13 Teacher Presenters from different schools of North and East districts.

Additional Chief Secretary, HRDD, GP Upadhyaya, was present as chief guest for the valedictory programme which was also attended by the Director, Primary Education/ SPD, Samagra Shiksha, BhimThatal, Joint Director of East District, Deputy Director, North District, Deputy Directors of SCERT, Principals of DIETs, South and West , Faculty members of SCERT, Block Resource Centre Co-ordinators of East and North Districts and Heads of participating schools.



The Director, SCERT, in his observations on the day's proceedings, spoke of involving all the DIETs and organizing the programme at the state-level in the future.

He said, “The efforts of individual teachers are worth celebrating and replicating.”

He congratulated the organizing Institute for being a pioneer in organizing such a noble and important event.

Additional Chief Secretary, HRDD, in his address, remarked, “The 13 teacher presenters of the day are the real heroes of the programme. Everyone has talent but we only have to make them aware of it. When there is fragrance in the flower, it will spread the fragrance. Similarly, good deeds will never go to waste and will be recognised.”

He also spoke of the presentations as being a treat to the eyes and that the innovative practices of these teachers should be disseminated throughout the State.

The Institute has expressed gratitude towards the endless support and guidance of the Additional Chief Secretary, HRDD, Director, SCERT, Director, Primary Education-cum- SPD, SamagraShiksha and all the invitees and participants.

THREE-DAY INDRA JATRA FESTIVAL CONCLUDES

A resounding celebration of tradition and culture



SHITAL PRADHAN

GANGTOK, 24 SEPT:

The three-day Indra Jatra festival, the biggest annual festival of the Newars, concluded at Manan Kendra, Gangtok on 23 September, registering as a resounding success, with Newars of Sikkim participating from all corners of the State.

Chief Minister Pawan Chamling attended the religious ceremony held at Bhanu Udhyan in the morning of 23 September and offered prayers along with the Newars.

The executive members of Sikkim Newar Guthi felicitated the Chief Minister with a Citation on his becoming the longest-serving Chief Minister of the country and bringing about welfare and communal harmony in the State in his 24-year tenure.

“The recognition of Newar language, appointment of Newari teachers in Government Schools, holiday for Indra Jatra and the funds sanctioned for the Construction of Newar Bhawan at Sichey are some of his gracious benevolence for which the Newars of Sikkim will always be indebted,” the organizers convey.

On the occasion, the Chief Minister was also presented with a Memento.

The annual magazine of Sikkim Newar Guthi, ‘Smarika,’ and the quarterly magazine on Newar culture and tradition, ‘Pau,’ were also released on the day.

The first two days (21 and 22 September) had exhibition stalls at MG Marg with the famed chaurasi vyanyan (84 food items), Achaars, musical Instruments, photography, paintings, handlooms, jewelries, Newari Food stall, etc to showcase the rich cultural heritage and traditions of the Newars of Sikkim.

The grand opening of the Indra Jatra festival and exhibition stalls had Minister Somnath Poudyal as chief guest. On the occasion, the raffle drawn in aid of the construction of Newar Bhawan was also released. Two postcards on Lakhey dance and Kumari dance were also released by the chief guest. The first day ended with cultural programs performed by the Newars at

MG Marg.

On the second day of the festival, the Open Talent Hunt Competition and Newari Folk Dance Competition were held at MG Marg. Gopal Bishwakarma from Tinek, Singtam, won the Talent Hunt Competition while the Dentam Sakha Guthi won the folk dance competition.

The awards and certificates were presented to them at the cultural programme held at Manan Bhawan.

The final day of the Indra Jatra festival started with a religious ceremony performed by Guruji Suryabir Taludar at Bhanu Udhyan. A jatra (procession) of Goddess Kumari was taken out from Bhanu Udhyan to MG Marg via Tibet Road in a beautifully decked 4-wheeled chariot.

The procession was attended by a large number of Newars who had thronged in from all corners of the State in traditional red and black attire.

The Indra Jatra festival concluded with a grand cultural program at Manan Kendra.

On the occasion, Sikkim Newar Guthi felicitated Shahid KP Pradhan posthumously who attained martyrdom fighting terrorists in Doda in J&K in the year 1994. Sanju Pradhan and Sabitri Pradhan were also felicitated for excelling and winning accolades and medals in football and Tae-kwon Do respectively. Awards for academic excellence to Class X and XII Newar students were given to Rahar Pradhan (Kendriya Vidyalaya), Sangit Pradhan (Rhenock SSS), Avash Mani Pradhan, Rohan Pradhan, Kulin Deep Pradhan, Sheelu Pradhan (Tashi Namgyal Academy) and Shristhi Pradhan (Holy Cross SSS).

Aditya Pradhan and Pooja Pradhan, the husband-wife duo, were awarded prizes for winning the 1st Bhaju Sikkim and Meiju Sikkim competition. Similarly, Jasmine Pradhan was awarded the 1st prize in Achar Competition for her Mango Lacha achar. Mementos were also presented to sponsors of the various competitions.

Dilu Pradhan, president, Sikkim Newar Guthi, spoke about the various activities undertaken by Sikkim Newar Guthi and urged all Newars to come forward and work for the community and the future generations. He stressed the need for all Newars to support the construction of the Newar Bhawan at Sichey.

Also speaking on the occasion, MLA Bikram Pradhan insisted that all Newars come forward to preserve their rich cultural tradition and customs and also highlighted the various activities taken up by the present Government for the welfare of Newars of Sikkim. The vote of thanks was offered by the General Secretary, IJCC 2018 Shri Jeewan Pradhan.



Coordination meet to prep for 10 Oct disaster mock exercise

GANGTOK, 25 SEPT (IPR): The National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) and the Sikkim State Disaster Management Authority (SSDMA) will be conducting a state-level mock exercise in all four districts on 10 October. This mock exercise is also being simultaneously conducted in ten districts of West Bengal.

A co-ordination/ orientation meeting to conduct the mock exercise was organized by SSDMA here at Mannan Bhawan chaired by Chief Secretary AK Shrivastava, and attended by Secretaries and Nodal Officers of various State/ Central Government line departments, ADGP Sikkim Police, representatives from the Army, Air Force, ITBP, SSB, District Disaster Management Authorities, NGOs, Press and Media.

The four District Collectors and District Officers from various line Departments also attended the meeting through video conferencing.

State Relief Commissioner, Secretary, Land Revenue & Disaster Management Department, Tsegal Tashi, briefed the meeting about the upcoming multi-state mock exercise and underlined the importance of the co-ordination-cum-orientation Meeting in making the mock exercise successful.

He directed all the District Collectors to activate their disaster management plans in order to carry out the mock exercise in their respective districts.

He informed that preparedness for the main mock exercise will be reviewed at a table-top exercise on 09 October.

At the outset, Maj Gen (ret.d.) VK Datta, Senior Consultant, NDMA, stressed on the importance of mock exercises, disaster management plans, roles and responsibilities of stakeholders, etc. He gave a detailed presentation on the mock exercise scenarios, Incident Response System, etc.

The Chief Secretary, who also chairs the State Executive Committee for Disaster Management, directed all the stakeholders to work together towards making the mock exercise successful. He shared his experience as a young officer in the districts and informed the meeting about the ways in which he used to deal with disasters with the few resource that were available at the time.

He informed the stakeholders that all the resources available in the State could be used during the time of disasters. He interacted with all the DCs and sought information about the recent calamities that occurred in the districts.

The District Collectors reported that preparations were well under way and they were ready to conduct the mock exercise.



GOVERNMENT OF SIKKIM BUILDINGS & HOUSING DEPARTMENT

No: 29(a)/ETENDER/BHD/2018

Dated: 22/09/2018

NOTICE INVITING TENDER

On behalf of the Governor of Sikkim, Chief Engineer, Buildings & Housing Department, Government of Sikkim invites percentage rate tenders from qualified Class IA contractors, within the State, enlisted with the SPWD in two cover system through e-procurement. The bids should be submitted online through the website www.sikkimtender.gov.in for the work as listed below:

SL. NO.	NAME OF WORKS	BID SECURITY 2.5% OF THE BID VALUE (RS. IN LAKHS)	BID VAL-UE (RS. IN LAKHS)	COST OF TENDER/ BID FORM (RS IN LAKHS)	COM-PLETION PERIOD.
1	2	3	4	5	6
1.	Construction of Underground parking space at Namchi, South Sikkim.	25.7435	1029.74	1.00	36 months.

IMPORTANT EVENTS.

i)	Publishing of Online Tender in e-procurement portal	: 22 nd September, 2018
ii)	Uploading of bidding documents in e-procurement portal	: 22 nd September, 2018.
iii)	Document download/Sale start date and time.	: 23 rd September, 2018 11:00 am onwards.
iv)	Last date & Time for seeking clarification regarding bids	: 24 th September, 2018 upto 1500 Hrs.
v)	Last date for online Submission of completed bids	: 8 th October, 2018 upto 1600 Hrs.
vi)	Date of opening of Tender bids	: 9 th October, 2018 at 1200 Hrs.

For all details on the bid visit www.sikkimtender.gov.in

Sd/- CHIEF ENGINEER
BUILDINGS & HOUSING DEPARTMENT
GOVERNMENT OF SIKKIM.

R.O. No. 373/IPR.PUB/Classi./18-19 dt. 24.9.18

SummitTIMES

ON TOP OF THE NEWS

Let's Pamper Our 10%

Invest in the children for your own future

As of 2011, exactly 64,111 members of Sikkim's population were in the 0-6 age-group, making up a neat 10.50% of its hen population of 6,10,577 people. The national share of population in this age-group is slightly higher at 13.1%, down from 15.9% in 2001. These figures, as per the Census of India 2011. The previous Census, that of 2001, had posted the number of children in this age-group at 78,195, making up 14.50% of Sikkim's population of 5,40,851 at the time.

There has been talk about the fall in fertility rates, with some even suggesting that Sikkimese women should bear more children:-o While such demands and suggestions are clearly wrong at so many levels, this section had only recently commented on such attitudes, so today, let's discuss "young age dependency", as census enumerators refer to the 0-6 age-group. Dependency ratio can be defined as the age-population ratio of those typically not in the labor force. This would mean the minors and the senior citizens, whose care rests on the shoulders of the productive/ working population. Clearly then, the lower this number, the lesser the stress on the working population and better the access to available resources for the 'dependents'. At a wider, society and State level, this means that the existing infrastructure and funds can now go much further since the number of beneficiaries is fewer. Even in absolute terms, for instance, the number of minors has dropped from 78,195 in 2001 to 64,111 in 2011. Given the trend, this number must be even lower now, seven years down the line. Budget outlays have however consistently risen, and even after factoring in inflation, there should be much more available by way of funds for these children per head than was the case two decades ago.

It goes without saying that fewer number of the very young translates into an enhanced ability to invest in child development. It's simplistic, but one needs to be bear in mind that a fewer newborns now, while it might free resources to ensure better care and education for them in the immediate future, also translates as greater responsibilities on their shoulders in the longer run. As a generation ages, they will stop being active contributors to the economy and the workplace. Improved healthcare facilities will mean that they will also remain dependent for more years. The share of elderly will increase, and with fewer young coming of age down the line, the pressure on them to look after the aged will increase. China is feeling the stress of its one-child policy now. That said, today's minors will deliver on their adult responsibilities only as well as they have been groomed in the present. All the more reason why they should be exposed to the best education and groomed with a stronger sense of responsibility and belonging if the present generation wants to be looked after better when they retire and grow into the dependency of old age.

If education is genuinely touched by quality, a more confident and definitely more resourceful generation can be prepared. But Sikkim has been failing its young embarrassingly. Take the Annual Status of Education Report (ASER) of 2013, for instance. Where one had hoped that fewer children would have missed improved classroom teaching, the opposite seems to be happening. Reading levels among standard III students dropped from 52% in 2009 to 51% in 2013. Agreed, the drop is marginal, but reading levels were measured as class III students being able to read standard I texts. It should have improved substantially. But it dropped. This was for government schools, and for those who think private schools must have performed better, they didn't. Combined govt and private school data registers an even sharper drop from a combined acceptable level of 61% in 2009 to a worrying 57% in 2013. In mathematics, the fall in learning quality is even more dramatic. In 2009, 60% of the standard III students could do subtraction, the basic for this age, but in 2013, barely 50% in that class could do so anymore!

Where the young should have been learning better because there are fewer of them and still the same number, if not more, of teachers attending to them, the quality of teaching has fallen!

But quality education is something everyone owes to the very young. And now it is also affordable. Think about it, if 90% of the population wakes up to its responsibilities towards the remaining 10% who depend on them for everything, they can ensure that the minors receive the best of everything. If this 90% consciously resolves to genuinely care, a much more responsive, warm and compassionate generation will take charge of Sikkim in the very near future.

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: letters@summittimes.com

JOACHIM JARREAU,
CRISTINA MITARITONNA &
SAMI BENSASSI
theconversation.com

The share of internal trade in Africa remains low, as reflected by official statistics. This is despite numerous regional trade agreements that have led to tariffs removal within the trading blocs. At least in principle.

There are a host of short-comings that limit trade: non-tariffs barriers, red tape and insufficient infrastructure. Tariff barriers remain high outside areas covered by the agreements. Enhancing trade integration between African countries could yield large economic gains. This idea motivated the latest initiative for integration, the continental free trade area.

However, a large part of cross-border trade between African countries is informal. It either avoids customs entirely, or goes through official posts but is not recorded. Informal trade is difficult to measure. Most studies have relied on estimates based on partial surveys, or on accounting exercises. They concluded that a substantial share of Africa's regional trade was informal, on the order of 30% to 40%.

Informal trade is pervasive for agricultural goods as well as many industrial goods. Some traders are entirely informal; others are registered businesses but escape trade regulations and duties nonetheless.

This gap in the measurement of actual trade is problematic for trade policy. Why is it so pervasive, and what should governments do about it?

Our recently published study goes somewhat to filling the gap by looking into the magnitude, composition and determinants of informal trade in Benin.

WHAT WE FOUND

In 2011, the national statistics of Benin identified 171 non-official border points to conduct a survey of informal trade. As in many African countries, informal trade is pervasive in Benin. It operates in the open, and is tolerated, for the most part, by officials. Each border post was surveyed for a period of ten days. Each trader crossing the border (in either direction) was asked a short questionnaire about products and quantities traded, prices, origin and destination.

The rate of response to the survey was high. This means that, for the first time, there's a representative sample covering all informal trade at a



country's borders that can be compared with the official trade data such as customs data.

Using this data, our study confirms that informal trade is, in effect, a vital part of the trade system. For example, informal trade makes up the major part of trade in domestic products between Benin and Nigeria. Official statistics underestimate total trade by 50% for imports, and by about 85% for exports.

These figures are broadly in line with previous estimates for sub-Saharan countries. This confirms that trade statistics on the continent suffer from a serious blind spot.

Our study also shows that formal and informal trade differ by product composition. Informal trade isn't restricted to livestock and a few agricultural goods. Product and sector diversity is high. For example industrial products, such as textiles, agro-food, and transportation equipment are traded heavily on this channel.

Another noteworthy feature is that the product overlap between the formal and informal channels is very low: most goods are traded exclusively on one or the other.

This suggests that official statistics are also massively underestimating the product diversity in regional trade.

So why are some products traded formally, while others are exclusively traded informally?

REASONS FOR TRADE INFORMALITY

We estimate that products facing high tariffs are more likely to be traded informally. Non tariff barriers, such as sanitary and phyto-sanitary regulations, or technical barriers to trade (such as labelling requirements, quality standards), are also associated with more informality.

This suggests that complying with these regulations represents a cost for traders. They are there-

fore willing to avoid them by skipping the customs controls.

This raises serious questions around issues of product quality. There's no doubt that controlling product quality and enforcing regulations is necessary for consumer protection. Frequent cases of food poisoning in Nigeria, and their association with informal trade show the importance of this issue.

The difficulty lies in distinguishing between enforcement and excessive requirements. For example, our research shows that a lot of

perishable products are traded exclusively on the informal channel. This suggests that traders aren't avoiding formal channels because they want to smuggle products that don't meet health and safety standards. They simply want to sell products that would otherwise be spoiled if kept for too long.

HOW TO ADDRESS TRADE INFORMALITY

There is a great deal of evidence that trade costs are high in sub-Saharan Africa. This is due to inadequate infrastructure, excessive regulations and requirements at customs, as well as harassment and bribery. The pervasiveness of informal trade is a symptom of this.

Reducing tariffs should help formalise some of this informal trade. But it is difficult to predict by how much. It's possible that incentives to go informal remain high for many traders, even under the continent's proposed free trade agreement, especially if preferential treatment is costly or difficult to obtain.

Some authors suggest giving specific support to informal traders, for instance access to simplified trade regimes. The rationale for this is that there are too many obstacles – procedural and infrastructural – preventing informal traders from operating within the official framework.

Informal trade is, in effect, a vital part of the trade system on the continent, improving food security, and providing a source of income for a substantial share of the population. By reducing trade costs for a large share of (less visible) trade operators, specific facilitation measures could offer valuable opportunities to reduce poverty.

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Gurus, gas attacks and pubic hair: the strange history of Japan's new religions

ELLA TENNANT
theconversation.com

This summer, Japan finally executed six long-imprisoned former members of the now-banned radical religious group Aum Shinrikyo. All of them had taken part in the group's notorious 1995 sarin gas attacks on the Tokyo subway which killed 13 people and injured thousands more. Also executed was the group's founder, Shoko Asahara.

Founded as a new religion in 1987, Aum Shinrikyo propagated teachings based on Asahara's interpretation of Buddhism, Hinduism and the practice of esoteric yoga and meditation. At its height, it claimed a membership of 10,000 in and tens of thousands more abroad. But while the sarin attacks were unprecedented and won the group global notoriety, Aum Shinrikyo itself was far from unique.

In the years leading up to the attacks, Japan's religious landscape produced a wide range of groups pursuing radical social change. Although they presented themselves in very different ways, they all attracted followers seeking a more global awareness, and offered a sense of identity to people feeling disorientated in a rapidly changing society. At the time, I was conducting research and fieldwork in Tokyo, which put me in a position to observe and document not just the gas attacks but the social context in which they occurred.

One group that appeared at around the same time as Aum Shinrikyo was Kofuku-no-Kagaku, which began life as a publishing company that churned out books supposedly penned by its founder, Ryuho Okawa. In 1990, Okawa declared himself first the reincarnation of Buddha, then a supreme divinity by the name of El Cantare. By the mid 1990s, the group was legally a religion in Japan and

claimed a membership of 8.25m people, rapidly increasing with overseas proselytisation.

Kofuku-no-Kagaku presented itself as an "innovative" religion, with a fresh and dynamic public image. With a constantly changing cosmology based on social Darwinism and hints of Japanese nationalism, its message and approach matched the ebullient, competitive mood of the bubble economy. Whereas Aum Shinrikyo seemed to appeal to graduates from top universities, Kofuku-no-Kagaku attracted successful writers, journalists, actors, and "professionals" who had returned from overseas and experienced a form of cultural malaise.

It staged media campaigns and spectacular events to attract new members and retain those already "committed" within a tight plausibility structure. In other words, by repeatedly exposing its members to social events, reading materials, meetings and other activities, it constantly reinforced the credibility of its teachings. Fully dedicated members were often rewarded with a job in the corporation's plush offices in central Tokyo.



PROTECTING SOCIETY

Kofuku-no-Kagaku's moment in the international spotlight came when it block-booked a Ugandan stadium for a religious rally, which meant local athletes had nowhere to practice to qualify for the Olympics. But in Japan itself, its large-scale protests attracted only limited media coverage. That can partly be attributed to its "abrasive attitude" to criticism and its five-year court battle against Kodansha, a major Japanese publishing company that had dared to publish an article in one of its magazines which was seen as insulting to Okawa.

The group's most eye-catching demonstration at home came in 1994, when a horde of protesters walked from Shibuya to Yoyogi Park in central Tokyo on a November day displaying placards and shouting "stop the hair nudes!"

At the time, pornographic magazines were on sale in many Japanese corner shops, and people would openly read them on crowded trains; some regular newspapers also had a column dedicated to an erotic model or activity. Most of these publications covered up pubic hair with a black

square, but more and more magazines were flouting this convention. "Stop the Hair Nudes" was staged to draw the public's attention to this supposed indecency, and to win Kofuku-no-Kagaku credit for taking a moral stand.

For some protesters, the fact that a number of publishing companies were no longer covering up pubic hair seemed to cause more outrage than the pornography itself. As one protester explained to me: "I wanted to join in the demo to protect Japanese society from being corrupted ... as a parent I don't like society to be corrupted for children."

Starting in March 1995, Kofuku-no-Kagaku began openly criticising Aum Shinrikyo, stating that as "representatives of religiosity in Japan", members had a duty to speak out. The group took to the streets of central Tokyo, cruising around in vans with loudspeakers blasting criticism of Aum Shinrikyo and demanding the police investigate its activities. In a lecture I attended in 1994, Okawa himself claimed to know the whereabouts of the Sakamotos, a missing family allegedly abducted by Aum Shinrikyo in 1989.

And just two days before the sarin attack in 1995, I witnessed a demonstration by Kofuku-no-Kagaku members outside Aum Shinrikyo's Tokyo headquarters. While hardly reported in the press, the protest was seen by some observers as open provocation. An anonymous report in the Japan Times the day after the attack even suggested that the incident may have been orchestrated by one "rival" religious group in an attempt to discredit the other – but with little concrete evidence to support this claim, there was no follow-up.

NEW LIFE

Times have changed since those

turn to pg05

SC leaves it to Parliament for a law to bar those facing criminal cases from contesting polls

NEW DELHI, SEP 25 (PTI): Declining to bar those facing serious criminal cases from contesting elections, the Supreme Court Tuesday left it to Parliament to enact a "strong law" before the "malignancy" of criminalisation of politics becomes "fatal" to democracy.

According to the prevalent law, lawmakers and candidates are barred under the Representation of Peoples (RP) Act from entering the poll fray only after their conviction in a criminal case.

The court, however, passed a slew of directions aimed at keeping those with criminal antecedents at bay one of which was each candidate will have to state "in bold letters" about pending criminal cases in the form provided by the Election Commission. The candidate and the concerned political party were also directed to issue a dec-

laration in widely circulated newspapers in the locality and in electronic media about his or her antecedents.

The court said the nation was "eagerly" waiting for a legislation as the society has legitimate expectation to be governed by proper constitutional governance and citizens cannot be compelled to stand as "silent, deaf and mute spectators" to corruption by projecting themselves as helpless.

Holding that criminalisation of politics is an "extremely disastrous and lamentable situation" and the "polluted stream of politics" needs to be cleansed, a five-judge Constitution bench headed by Chief Justice Dipak Misra in its unanimous verdict said this "unsettlingly increasing trend" has the propensity to "send shivers down the spine of a constitutional democracy".

"A time has come that

the Parliament must make law to ensure that persons facing serious criminal cases do not enter into the political stream.

"We are sure, the law making wing of the democracy of this country will take it upon itself to cure the malignancy," it said.

The 100-page verdict was pronounced on a batch of pleas raising a question whether lawmakers facing criminal trial can be disqualified from contesting elections at the stage of framing of charges against them. The PILs were filed by NGO 'Public Interest Foundation', BJP leader Ashwini Kumar Upadhyay and others.

A senior government functionary welcomed the verdict, saying it seeks to cleanse the polity of criminal elements. He, however, said issues like politically motivated cases have to be con-

sidered. The official said the government will study the order in detail and decide the next course of action.

He pointed out that several of the directions given by the top court have already been implemented, including filing of affidavits by candidates giving details of criminal cases against them.

"Substantial efforts have to be undertaken to cleanse the polluted stream of politics by prohibiting people with criminal antecedents so that they do not even conceive of the idea of entering into politics. They should be kept at bay," the court said.

The bench, which also comprised Justices R F Nariman, A M Khanwilkar, D Y Chandrachud and Indu Malhotra, said malignancy of criminalisation of politics was "not incurable" but the issue was required to be dealt with soon before it becomes

"fatal" to the democracy.

The bench said complete information about criminal antecedents of the candidates forms the "bedrock of wise decision-making and informed choice by the citizenry" as informed choice was the cornerstone to have a pure and strong democracy.

The court also referred to the 244th report of the Law Commission and cited its finding that in 10 years since 2004, 18 per cent candidates contesting elections have criminal cases pending against them (11,063 out of 62,847).

"The voters cry for systematic sustenance of constitutionalism. The country feels agonized when money and muscle power become the supreme power," the bench said, adding it was imperative that persons who enter public life and participate in law making should

be above any kind of serious criminal allegation.

Underlining the need for giving citizens an "informed choice" and infusing a culture of purity in politics, the bench said increasing trend of criminalisation of politics tends to disrupt constitutional ethos and strikes at the very root of our democratic form of government.

The bench also took note of the submissions of Attorney General KK Venugopal that the court should not cross the 'lakshman rekha' vis-a-vis the separation of powers and said it was well settled in law that the court cannot legislate.

The apex court while recommending that Parliament bring out a "strong law" said it would be mandatory for the political parties to revoke membership of persons against whom charges were framed in heinous and grievous offences

and not to set up such persons in elections for Parliament as also State Assemblies.

"If a candidate is contesting an election on the ticket of a particular party, he/she is required to inform the party about the criminal cases pending against him/her," it said, adding that "the concerned political party shall be obligated to put up on its website the aforesaid information pertaining to candidates having criminal antecedents".

The apex court also said that criminalisation of politics was never an "unknown phenomenon" in Indian political system but its presence was seemingly felt in its "strongest form" during the 1993 Mumbai bomb blasts which was the result of a collaboration of a diffused network of criminal gangs, police and customs officials and their political patrons.

Bru repatriation ends: Only 31 families return in govt's latest effort

AIZAWL, SEP 25 (PTI): Of the 5,407 Bru refugee families, only 31 have returned from their camps in Tripura to Mizoram during the stipulated one month of repatriation, which ended on Tuesday, Mizoram home department officials said.

Now, those who remained in the six relief camps face an uncertain future as the Centre had earlier warned that assistance doled out to them would be stopped from October 1.



"Only 31 Bru refugee families have reached Mizoram since August 25. We have unofficial information that 16 more are willing to return and they will reach Mizoram by today or tomorrow," the officials said.

Noticing the tardy response of the refugees to the process, the Mizoram government had termed the final repatriation process a "futile exercise" earlier this month.

"It is to be seen whether the Centre stops assistance for the inmates of the six Bru relief camps by October 1 as was warned earlier," a state home department official said.

The Bru refugees in the Tripura relief camps used to receive free ration and subsistence allowance of Rs 5 per day per person from the Centre.

In a November-2016 survey, 32,876 Bru belonging to 5,407 families were identified as bona fide residents of Mizoram, who could be repatriated. However, a study conducted later found that just 2,753 people belonging to 423

families expressed their willingness to return.

Meanwhile, Bru leaders in the relief camps alleged that a group of Brus objected to the repatriation process and asked the people not to return to Mizoram.

They even obstructed those willing to return to Mizoram and threatened Mizoram Bru Displaced People's Forum (MBDPF) leaders through social media for which a police complaint was lodged, they said.

The Centre was earlier optimistic about Bru families returning to Mizoram during the repatriation process after an agreement was inked on July 3 between Union Home Minister Rajnath Singh, chief ministers of Mizoram and Tripura and MBDPF chief A Sawibunga in Delhi.

The agreement stipulated that Rs 4 lakh for each repatriated Bru family be deposited to the bank account of the head of the family which would mature after three years and payment of Rs 1.5 lakh would be made for housing

assistance.

Each repatriated Bru family would be given Rs 5,000 through Direct Benefit Transfer every month and free ration for two years.

Thousands of Brus had been lodged in the Tripura relief camps since late 1997 in the wake of communal tension triggered by the brutal killing of Lalzawmliana, a forest guard, in the Dampa Tiger Reserve on October 21, 1997 by Bru National Liberation Front (BNLF) militants.

The first attempt to repatriate them in November 2009 not only failed but triggered another exodus after Bru militants gunned down a youth at Bungthuam village, three days before the commencement of the repatriation process.

Though some Bru families had returned to Mizoram during a number of repatriation processes and on their own will, many of them continued to refuse to leave Tripura despite many attempts by the government.

Assam's debt up 73 pc; development spending down 47 pc in

GUWAHATI, SEP 25 (PTI): Assam Government Tuesday said its borrowings rose by a whopping 73.40 per cent to Rs 9,796.33 crore in last fiscal even as 46.84 per cent of its funds for development works remained unused.

In a written reply to a query by AGP MLA Ramendra Narayan Kalita, Finance minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said the state raised debt of Rs 9,796.33 crore from various sources in 2017-18.

This amount was much higher compared to what Assam's borrowings of Rs Rs 5,649.45 crore in 2016-17 financial year, he informed.

On the other hand, the state's spending just crossed the half-way mark of the total allotted fund for various developmental works, the

minister said to a separate question by Congress MLA Abdul Khaleque.

During the last fiscal, the state government had allotted Rs 48,189.90 crore for carrying out developmental works, of which only Rs 25,619.83 crore were spent in the entire year, indicating nearly 47 per cent non-utilised funds, Sarma said.

Not getting the fund release proposals from concerned departments has been cited as one of the reasons for under utilisation of allotted funds along with the massive flood that took place in the state in 2017, he added.

In another reply to a query by AIUDF MLA Aminul Islam, Sarma said only 40.08 per cent funds under various constituency related schemes were utilised at Rs

152.07 crore as against sanctioned amount of Rs 379.45 crore in last financial year.

Regarding repayment of debt, Sarma informed that Assam paid back Rs 2,965.39 crore to various institutions in 2017-18, lower than Rs 2,990.88 crore that it had repaid in the previous fiscal.

"As per AFRBM Act, the debt to GDP ratio of the state is permissible up to 28.5 per cent. With the current ratio of 18 per cent, the state government is at comfortable position," he added.

During the last financial year, Assam received Rs 980 crore from the Centre as compensation under the GST, while it already received Rs 467 crore as compensation till August this fiscal, the minister informed the House.



Gurus, gas attacks and pubic hair: the strange history...

contd from pg04

strange days. While Aum Shinrikyo disbanded after the sarin attack, many of its members quickly reformed under a new name, Aleph. Even after this summer's executions, more evidence is emerging of the group's links to the use of the gas and other suspicious activities.

Meanwhile, Kofuku-no-Kagaku - which now operates under the snappy new English name Happy Science - appears to have assimilated into the mainstream. It now operates "temples", retreats, overseas branches, and schools. It even boasts a political party, the Happiness Realisation Party, founded in 2009. Its platform promises to "offer concrete and proactive solutions to the current issues such as military threats from North Korea and China, and the long term economic recession". It has yet to be voted into

parliament.

In the aftermath of the events of 1995, the government was forced to reexamine and tighten up existing legislation, which until then meant that virtually any group with a leader, a doctrine and a membership could claim to be a religion. As a result, such groups benefited from tax breaks, and were essentially left to their own devices.

Founding a religion in Japan is far more difficult now than it was before 1995. But as in the case of the Branch Davidian sect led by David Koresh in Waco, Texas, full immersion in a particular vision of society still works. It impels followers to set about making their particular vision a reality - and helps them justify the unjustifiable.

[the writer is Keele University]

Ronaldo turns to Juventus challenge after FIFA best player snub

MILAN, SEP 25 (AFP): Cristiano Ronaldo turns his focus back to Juventus's quest for a treble this season on Wednesday after losing out in the FIFA's best player of the year award.

Five-time Ballon d'Or winner Ronaldo skipped the awards ceremony in London on Monday as his former Real Madrid teammate Luka Modric beat him for the award.

The 33-year-old Portuguese star also lost out to Liverpool's Mohamed Salah for the Puskas Award for the best goal.

He had been nominated for his superb overhead bicycle kick for Real Madrid against Juventus in last season's Champions League quarter-final, which even drew a standing ovation from



Juventus supporters in Turin.

Juventus coach Massimiliano Allegri had backed Ronaldo -- who has scored three goals in his last two league games -- for the award, as he led the way in

the Champions League with 15 goals to help Real to a third straight title.

"With no offence to Luka Modric, I'd give the Ballon d'Or to Ronaldo for what he did last season. I think he de-

serves it," said Allegri.

The Italian champions face a heavy week in Turin with three games in their Allianz Stadium in the space of seven days.

After Wednesday's game

against 18th-placed Bologna, who shocked Roma 2-0 at the weekend, Juventus play Carlo Ancelotti's Napoli in a top-of-the-table clash on Saturday.

Juventus have had a perfect start to the season with five wins and 15 points -- three points ahead of Napoli.

Allegri's side also play Swiss club Young Boys in the Champions League a week on Tuesday, a game which Ronaldo will miss after his controversial sending off against Valencia in Spain.

ROMA CRISIS

Napoli host promoted Parma, before their trip to Turin, with an eye on their Champions League game against Liverpool in Naples.

"We won there (Juventus) last season and still finished second," said Napoli striker Lorenzo Insigne.

"If we don't win the mid-week game with Parma, then the result with Juve is irrelevant, so we have to take it one at a time."

Under-pressure Roma host promoted Frosinone looking for a boost after slipping to 14th with their weekend defeat in Bologna.

Coach Eusebio Di Francesco has reportedly been given a week to save his job, starting against the newcomers from outside Rome, before the city derby against Lazio at the weekend.

Frosinone are second from the bottom of the table with 12 goals conceded, including two to Juventus last weekend.

"At the end of the year when the points are counted the matches like the one in Frosinone you don't remem-

ber immediately, but you know how important they were," said Allegri.

Roma then host Czech club Viktoria Plzen in the Champions League next week, having lost their opener to holders Real Madrid.

Meanwhile, Inter Milan face a tough task against Fiorentina in the San Siro Tuesday with coach Luciano Spalletti serving a touchline ban for his over-exuberant goal celebration against Sampdoria.

Inter have been struggling but their last-gasp win against the Genoa side followed their come-from-behind 2-1 win in the Champions League against Tottenham.

Spalletti's side travel to the Netherlands to play PSV Eindhoven in the Champions League next week.

Yesterday Once More: MS Dhoni leads India for 200th time

DUBAI, SEP 25 (PTI): Mahendra Singh Dhoni Tuesday had a date with destiny as he got to lead India for the 200th time in ODIs, nearly two years after giving up captaincy on his own terms.

With skipper Rohit Sharma and his deputy Shikhar Dhawan being rested after four matches in six days, it was nothing but sheer destiny that India's most successful captain walked out alongside match referee Andy Pycroft and Afghanistan skipper Asghar Afghan for the toss in their Asia Cup game.

Dhoni has never bothered about milestones and that is why he remained unfazed while calling time on his Test career with 10 short of 100 matches, a benchmark for any cricketer worth his salt.

It didn't matter to Dhoni one bit even though he had no competition.

No wonder when the decision to quit ODI captaincy was announced in early January 2017, his fans were less surprised. It didn't matter that he had a chance to captain India in 200 ODIs.

But then if destiny had made an elaborate plan, it was not in Dhoni's hands to change the script.

"I was not really sure of where I am standing. I have captained in 199 ODIs, so this gives me an opportunity to make it 200. It's all destiny and I always believed in that," Dhoni said with a poker face when



Russell Arnold posed the question at the toss.

Since numbers didn't matter during his halcyon days, it was all the more expected that it would matter even less when he is in the twilight of his illustrious career.

"It's not in my control, once I left captainship," he said when asked if he ever thought that he would be able to complete 200 ODIs as captain.

Then came the usual Dhoni answer:

"Good to complete 200, but I don't think it really matters," he sounded business as usual.

But people who were used to see him lead for 10 years were happy.

"He is hundred percent the most popular Indian captain," Sunil Gavaskar made the most telling statement.

Asia Cup: Pakistan, Bangladesh lock horns in virtual semifinal

ABU DHABI, SEP 25 (PTI): Smarting from back-to-back losses at the hands of arch-foes India, Pakistan will have their task cut out when they lock horns with a tricky Bangladesh in a virtual semifinal of the Asia Cup here Wednesday.

One of the two teams will be heading home after their final Super Four game at the Sheikh Zayed Cricket Stadium here and given the backlash they received after the reverses against India, former world and Asian champions Pakistan will be eager to raise their game.

While their batting has shown signs of improvement days after being bowled out for 160-odd runs, more needs to be done if they are to make the title clash, where India await.

The struggling batsmen would do well to take a cue from the seasoned Shoaib Malik, who has been one of the few impressive performers from the side in the continental tournament, which they have won two times.



However, Pakistan's biggest concern is the poor form of pace spearhead Mohammed Amir, who seems to have lost sting and is struggling to take wickets, which is his primary job, and which was reiterated by his skipper Sarfraz Ahmed on the eve of the group game against India.

Sarfraz's words did not have the desired effect as Amir and Co failed to deliver.

Pakistan will hope the team gets the job done against Bangladesh and regain confidence.

After their nine-wicket humiliation at the hands of India, coach Mickey Arthur said Pakistan have

a huge task at hand.

"It's a semi-final now. We have to find a way to dig ourselves out of the hole we are in at the moment. We will come back from this. We are at our best in must-win matches. That's when we come to the party," he said.

"I believe in our players. I think they are a fantastic bunch of players," he added.

Bangladesh managed to scrape past a spirited Afghanistan in a last-over finish to keep their hopes alive, and having produced decent performances, save the loss against India, they will fancy their chances against Pakistan.

Cricket captain Kohli, lifter Chanu bask in Khel Ratna glory

SAUMOJYOTI S CHOUDHURY

NEW DELHI, SEP 25 (PTI): Ace cricketer Virat Kohli sent the shutterbugs into a clicking frenzy as he received the Rajiv Gandhi Khel Ratna award, sharing the country's highest sporting honour with diminutive weightlifting world champion Mirabai Chanu at the Rashtrapati Bhawan here Tuesday.

Star javelin thrower Neeraj Chopra, who won gold medals in the Commonwealth and Asian Games this year, and junior world champion sprinter Hima Das were among the 20 sportspersons who received the Arjuna Awards from President Ram Nath Kovind here.

The ceremony, which is traditionally held on August 29 to commemorate the birth anniversary of hockey legend Major Dhyan Chand, was pushed to September 25 this year to avoid a clash of dates with the 18th Asian Games in Jakarta and Palembang on September 2.

Kohli was accompanied by his actor wife Anushka Sharma, his mother Saroj Kohli and his elder brother Vikas at the ceremony.

Kohli is the third cricketer to be honoured with the Khel Ratna after batting legend Sachin Tendulkar (1997-1998) and former captain Mahendra Singh Dhoni (2007)

The world's No.1 Test batsman as per the ICC rankings, has been in stupendous form in the past three years though he missed out of the top award despite nominations in 2016 and 2017.

The 29-year-old Kohli has 6147 runs in 71 Tests with 23 centuries and 9779 runs in 211 ODIs, including 35 tons.

Kohli received the Arjuna award in 2013 and the Padma Shri last year.



Sharing the top honours with him was Chanu, who had received the Padma Shri earlier this year, was chosen for the Khel Ratna following her gold medal in 48kg category at the World Weightlifting Championships last year.

She also bagged the yellow metal in this year's Commonwealth Games but didn't compete at the Asian Games due to injury.

While the Khel Ratna award carries a prize purse of Rs 7.5 lakh, the Arjuna awardees are given Rs 5 lakh each along with a citation.

Besides the Khel Ratna and Arjuna

awards, the President also gave away Dronacharya and Dhyan Chand awards to coaches, the Tenzing Norgay National Adventure awards, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad Trophy and Rashtriya Khel Protsahan Puraskar.

The awards, like every year, copped a fair share of controversies with wrestler Bajrang Punia's threat to take legal action over Khel Ratna snub being the most prominent one. He eventually backed down after meeting Sports Minister Rajyavardhan Singh Rathore.

Before this, the Sports Ministry struck off compound archery coach Ji-



wanjoy Singh Teja's name from the list of Dronacharya awardees due to a past case of indiscipline. Teja resigned from his position to express his angst.

The Dronacharya Award was presented to eight coaches this year, including cricket mentor Tarak Sinha and 39-year-old boxing coach C A Kuttappa, who was credited by Vijender Singh for his historic Olympic bronze in 2008.

The Dhyan Chand Award for lifetime sporting achievement was given to four former athletes.

Among the notable absentees was cricketer Smriti Mandhana, who was to

receive the Arjuna award but is currently with the Indian women's team on its tour of Sri Lanka.

List of Awardees:

Rajiv Gandhi Khel Ratna Award: Virat Kohli and Mirabai Chanu.

Arjuna Awards: Neeraj Chopra, Jinson Johnson and Hima Das (Athletics); N Sikki Reddy (Badminton); Satish Kumar (Boxing); Smriti Mandhana (Cricket); Shubhankar Sharma (Golf); Manpreet Singh, Savita (Hockey); Ravi Rathore (Polo); Rahi Sarnobat, Ankur Mittal, Shreyasi Singh (Shooting); Manika Batra, G Sathiyam (Table Tennis); Rohan Bopanna (Tennis); Sumit (Wrestling); Pooja Kadian (Wushu); Ankur Dhama (Para-Athletics); Manoj Sarkar (Para-Badminton).

Dronacharya Awards: C A Kuttappa (Boxing); Vijay Sharma (Weightlifting); A Srinivasa Rao (Table Tennis); Sukhdev Singh Pannu (Athletics); Clarence Lobo (Hockey, Lifetime); Tarak Sinha (Cricket, Lifetime); Jiwan Kumar Sharma (Judo, Lifetime); V R Beedu (Athletics, Lifetime).

Dhyan Chand Awards: Satyadev Prasad (Archery); Bharat Kumar Chetry (Hockey); Bobby Aloysius (Athletics); Chougale Dadu Dattatray (Wrestling).

Rashtriya Khel Protsahan Puruskar 2018:

1. Identification and Nurturing of Budding & Young Talent: Rashtriya Ispat Nigam Limited.

2. Encouragement to Sports through Corporate Social Responsibility: JSW Sports

3. Sports for Development: Isha Outreach

Maulana Abul Kalam Azad (MAKA) Trophy 2017-18: Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar.

China says can't hold US trade talks with 'knife to the throat'

BEIJING, SEP 25 (AFP): China said on Tuesday it was impossible to hold trade talks with the United States while Washington is imposing tariffs that are like "holding a knife to someone's throat".

Speaking a day after Washington activated tariffs on 200 billion in Chinese goods, vice commerce minister Wang Shouwen said China is open to negotiations but that the two sides must treat each other "equally and with respect".

"Now that the US has adopted this type of large-scale trade restrictions, they're holding a knife to someone's throat. Under these circumstances, how can negotiations proceed?" Wang told a news conference.

US Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin had invited Chinese officials to hold new talks, but President Donald Trump's latest salvo -- and warnings that another 267



billion of goods are being lined up -- appear to have scuttled that effort.

Wang met US officials in Washington in August but there have been no high-level meetings between the

world's top two economies for months.

He said Tuesday the US measures "have made it impossible for the negotiations to proceed" and blamed the US for abandoning a consen-

sus on trade that was struck in May, but was quickly followed by new US tariffs.

High-ranking officials from several Chinese government agencies held a press conference on Tuesday

as Beijing rolled out a new white paper claiming to set the record straight on trade related facts.

Fu Ziyang, another vice minister of commerce, noted that some in the United States accuse Beijing of engaging in unfair competitive practices, causing the huge trade deficit between the two countries.

"This is totally devoid of fact, groundless, and totally misleading," he said, adding that American firms sold 700 billion worth of goods in China each year, earning more than 500 billion in profit.

The trade fight between the top two economic giants has steadily escalated through the summer, as the US levied two waves of new tariffs that have now hit about 250 billion worth of goods, roughly half of China's exports to the United States.

Beijing has struck back

with each step, hitting 110 billion worth of US goods, or nearly everything China buys from the United States.

Experts have warned the snowballing trade spat will harm both economies and even global growth, with Fitch Ratings cutting its growth estimates for China and the world for 2019.

China's exports to the US accounted for 19 percent of all its overseas shipments last year, according to the white paper published by China's cabinet, the State Council, on Monday.

Officials in Beijing said they planned to step up support for harmed industries and companies as they seek to offset the trade war's effects.

"We will actively take all types of measures to help companies resolve their difficulties," said Luo Wen, vice minister of industry and information technology.

China will "earnestly reduce taxes and burdens for companies and strive to optimise the business environment", he added.

Some European and American firms have already started shifting supply chains out of China, or put new investments on hold, according to industry group surveys, a potential problem for Beijing as economic growth sags.

Foreign firms said the latest round of US tariffs, hitting a wide swathe of products including electronics and furniture, would worsen their problems, according to the surveys.

Luo called the trade-related risks driving firms out of China a natural phenomenon and said Beijing would look at the situation rationally.

"We believe the vast majority of companies will remain in China and deepen their development," he said.

Indo-Pak trade potential stands at USD 37 billion: World Bank

SAJJAD HUSSAIN

ISLAMABAD, SEP 25 (PTI): The trade potential between India and Pakistan stands at USD 37 billion, according to a World Bank report which said that continued political tensions and lack of normal trade relations between the two nations have cast a shadow over cooperation efforts with South Asia.

The report 'A Glass Half Full: The Promise of Regional Trade in South Asia', which was released on Monday, has highlighted among key factors, the long list of product restrictions in bilateral trade. India and Pakistan continue to maintain long, sensitive lists of items on which no tariff concessions are granted.

The lack of normal bilateral trade relations between the two countries affects the formation or deepening of regional value-chains in various high-value trading sectors, Dawn newspaper reported quoting the report.

Pakistan has a list of 936 items and almost 17.9 per cent of tariff lines that apply to imports from all South Asian Free Trade Area (SAFTA) countries.

India maintains a list of 25 items (0.5 per cent of tariff lines), which includes goods such as alcohol, firearms, etc.



However, it has a much longer, 64-item list, (almost 11.7 per cent of tariff lines) for Pakistan and Sri Lanka, but which effectively applies only to Pakistan, because India applies a smaller sensitive list to Sri Lanka as part of a separate India-Sri Lanka Free Trade Agreement.

Items on the Indian sensitive list can be imported at the most-favoured-nation tariffs from any SAFTA country, including Pakistan, because India accorded Pakistan the status in 1996, soon after the accession of the two countries to the World Trade Organisation.

However, Pakistan has not granted India the most-favoured-nation's status or non-discriminatory market access.

In addition, the preferential access granted by Pakistan on 82.1 per cent of tariff lines under SAFTA is partially blocked in the case of India because Pakistan maintains a negative list comprising 1,209

items that cannot be imported from India.

In practice, many of these items are exported from India to Pakistan through a third country, usually the United Arab Emirates.

The report says another barrier to bilateral trade is the proliferation of NTMs (non-tariff measures), some of which take the form of non-tariff barriers, such as port restrictions.

Pakistan allows only 138 items to be imported from India over the Attari-Wagah land route. Furthermore, cargo trucks from either side cannot move beyond their border zones, which means that goods must be transloaded at the border, adding to the time and cost of trading.

Another factor impeding bilateral trade in goods and services, as well as FDI, is the encumbered visa regime that India and Pakistan have created for each other, which restricts the mobility of people between the two countries.

Continued political tensions and lack of normal trade relations between India and Pakistan have cast a shadow over cooperation efforts within South Asia, contributing to the lack of progress in the regional cooperation agenda of SAARC and SAFTA, the report said.

Trump and Macron discuss Syria, Iran and trade

WASHINGTON, SEP 25 (PTI):

US President Donald Trump on Monday held a meeting with his French counterpart, Emmanuel Macron, during which the two leaders discussed the situation in Syria, the aggressive behaviour of Iran and promoting free trade between the US and the European Union (EU).

"The two leaders discussed a wide range of international issues, including the situation in Syria, countering threats posed by Iran, and promoting fair terms of trade between the United States and the European Union," the White House said in a readout of the meeting.

They also discussed Trump's plan to visit Paris in November and attend the Armistice Day centenary commemoration.



"Both leaders reaffirmed their commitment to closely coordinate to address global challenges," the White House said.

Earlier in the day, Trump said France is doing very well.

"We are doing very well. Very importantly, we are doing very well together. We have a lot of trade and we are discussing trade. We will be discussing it today," he said.

"We will be discussing mili-

tary and defense. Terrorism is a big subject that we are always talking about. That is why we are here tonight, I think maybe more so than almost anything. And trade," Trump said.

Expressing his deepest condolences for Hurricane Florence, Macron said the French people feel very close to the American people, especially the Carolinas.

"We are here to discuss a lot of topics we have in common. President Trump just indeed expressed a few of them. But I think, we are here to deliver. And this occasion of all these meetings, and especially the meeting we will have on Wednesday, will be a great occasion to deliver for our common security," Macron said.

The two countries, he said, have a lot of visions in common.

Jailed ex-leader seeks freedom after surprise vote in Maldives

COLOMBO, SEP 24 (AFP): A Maldives court released five political prisoners and heard appeals for freedom from several others on Monday, including a former president, just hours after strongman leader Abdulla Yameen conceded a shock election defeat.

Yameen, who jailed or exiled most of his rivals during a turbulent five-year term, was unexpectedly beaten by an opposition candidate who immediately urged the ousted president to free all dissidents he had incarcerated.

Opposition lawmaker and former police chief Abdulla Riyaz and four others were released by the Criminal Court in the capital Male on Monday.

They had been held indefinitely following an alleged plot to impeach Yameen in February that saw

dozens detained.

Former president Maumoon Abdul Gayoom, the country's longest-serving leader and estranged half-brother to Yameen, was among several other political prisoners brought to Male to lodge appeals against their sentences. Their cases were referred to the country's High Court.

Officials said Gayoom, 80, and the other political prisoners were taken back to the Maafushi prison island near the capital and their appeals would likely be heard on Tuesday.

Gayoom, who ruled the Maldives for 30 straight years before its transition to democracy in 2008, was among those arrested during a February crackdown in the Indian Ocean island nation.

Gurus, gas attacks and pubic hair...

contd from pg04

strange days. While Aum Shinrikyo disbanded after the sarin attack, many of its members quickly reformed under a new name, Aleph. Even after this summer's executions, more evidence is emerging of the group's links to the use of the gas and other suspicious activities.

Meanwhile, Kofuku-no-Kagaku – which now operates under the snappy new English name Happy Science – appears to have assimilated into the mainstream. It now operates "temples", retreats, overseas branches, and schools. It even

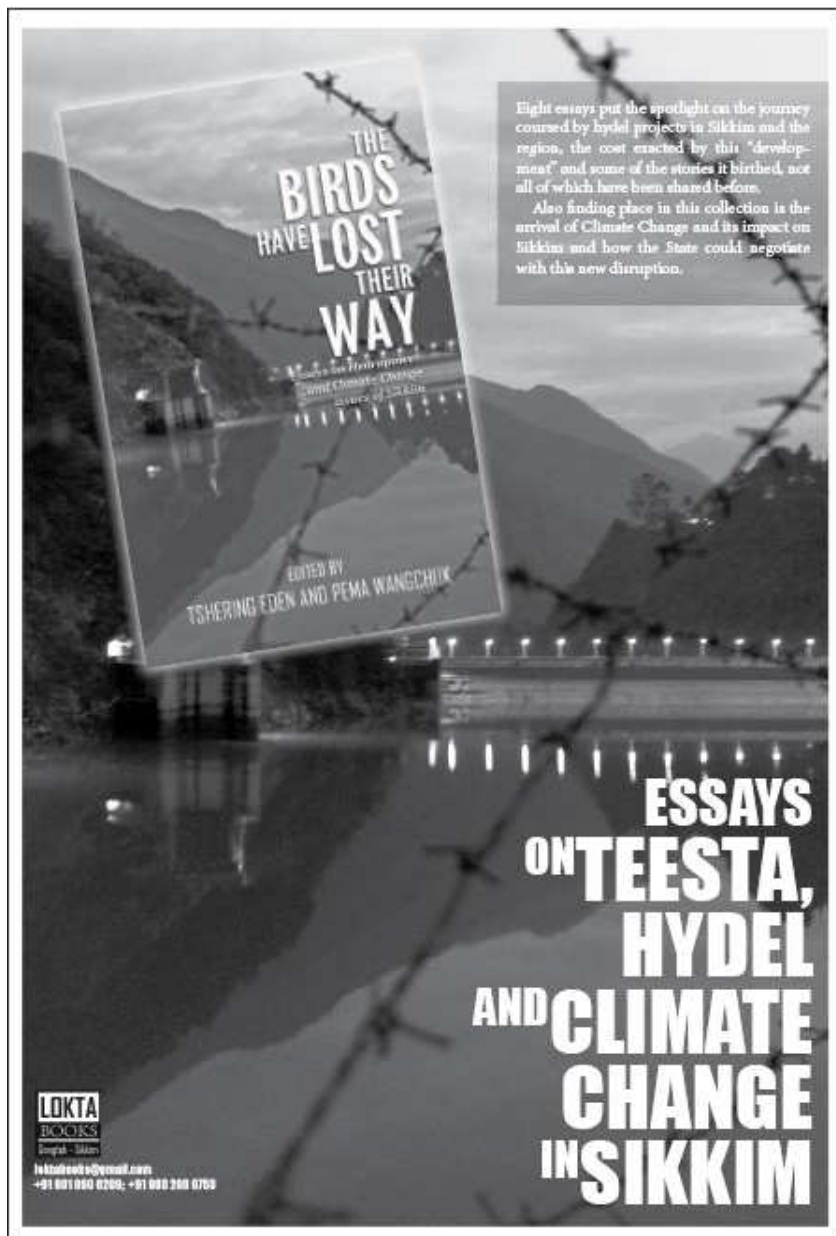
boasts a political party, the Happiness Realisation Party, founded in 2009. Its platform promises to "offer concrete and proactive solutions to the current issues such as military threats from North Korea and China, and the long term economic recession". It has yet to be voted into parliament.

In the aftermath of the events of 1995, the government was forced to reexamine and tighten up existing legislation, which until then meant that virtually any group with a leader, a doctrine and a membership could claim to be a

religion. As a result, such groups benefited from tax breaks, and were essentially left to their own devices.

Founding a religion in Japan is far more difficult now than it was before 1995. But as in the case of the Branch Davidian sect led by David Koresh in Waco, Texas, full immersion in a particular vision of society still works. It impels followers to set about making their particular vision a reality – and helps them justify the unjustifiable.

[the writer is Keele University]





Sonu Sood honoured with Doctorate Degree of Taekwondo

MUMBAI, SEP 25 (PTI): Actor Sonu Sood has been honoured with the Doctorate Degree of Taekwondo.

The 45-year-old actor, who is known for leading a healthy lifestyle over the years, was felicitated with honour for his outstanding contribution and support towards taekwondo sport.

He was honoured in the presence of Prabhat Sharma, secretary general of Taekwondo Federation of India at the opening ceremony of 107 International

Kyorigi Referee Seminar/121st International Kyorigi Referee Refresher Course and 40th International Poomse Referee Seminar.

"It feels good to see everybody so fit out here, all thanks to the event organisers who have managed to get the taekwondo experts all over the country on the same platform and created the Taekwondo Federation," Sonu said in a statement.

"It's great to know that people across

all age groups are interested in taekwondo sport and they want to create awareness regarding the same and inspire others. Felicitating these experts would certainly inspire them and others to take up the sport as also a fitness initiative. I really hope such good fitness initiatives inspire the people and help us make a healthy India," he added.

On the work front, Sonu will be next seen in Rohit Shetty's 'Simmba', alongside Ranveer Singh and Sara Ali Khan.

"Meray Pyare Prime Minister" to release ON December 14



MUMBAI, SEP 25 (PTI): Rakeysh Omprakash Mehra's "Meray Pyare Prime Minister" is set to hit the screens on December 14.

The film, which focuses on open defecation and sanitation problems in the country, has been shot on real locations.

The story revolves around the friendship of four kids living in the slums, according to a press release.

The protagonist of the movie, Kanu, is not happy that her mother has to go out as they don't have a toilet at home and decides to write a letter to the prime minister

requesting him to get toilets built for them.

National Award-winning actor Anjali Patil plays the role of a mother.

The music of the film is composed by Shankar-Ehsaan-Loy and lyrics by Gulzar.

The idea first came to Mehra three years ago, when he got attached to an NGO in Ahmedabad called Yuva Unstoppable.

The director, along with the NGO started building toilets in municipal schools. They have built toilets in around more than 800 schools since then.



Sportspeople are the pride of the country: Amitabh Bachchan

MUMBAI, SEP 25 (PTI): Megastar Amitabh Bachchan says sportspeople are the pride of the country and honouring them brings glory to the entire nation.

The 75-year-old actor, who is currently hosting reality TV game show "Kaun Banega Crorepati", took to Twitter to share photographs with the players of the men's national hockey team.

"Honouring the Indian Hockey Team on 'KBC Karmveer' episode... Their dedication, their effort for the country is beyond compare... When we honour our sports-

people, we honour our country. They are the pride of the country. They are the pride and glory of the tricolour," Bachchan wrote.

The star also took to his blog to hail the sportspeople.

"Sport is the identity of a nation... When we excel in a routine the world takes notice... Sportsmen are a nation's brand ambassadors... For merit for glory for the recognition that we are blessed with," he wrote.

Bachchan also urged the people to wish the team for the World Cup, to be held in Odisha next month.

SALMAN KHAN IS MY REAL-LIFE HERO: WARINA HUSSAIN

MUMBAI, SEP 24 (PTI): Warina Hussain says she has found a "dream launch" in "Loveyatri" and the debutante would be forever grateful to Salman Khan for the opportunity.

From performing for family in Afghanistan as a child to making her Bollywood debut with the upcoming romantic-drama, the actor is geared up for her journey in films.

She will be seen opposite another newcomer Aayush Sharma, Salman's brother-in-law, in the Abhiraj Minawala directorial.

"To make a debut in a film produced by Salman Khan is surreal. The bigger the project, the more responsibility you have and I am aware of it. I am so grateful to him, this still feels like a dream," Warina told PTL.

Born in Kabul, Warina moved to India around seven years ago and started modelling.

She said she was always inclined towards acting. She started training in the



craft and began auditioning for films and commercials, roughly three years back.

"I was really nervous when I did my first portfolio. I knew nothing of the industry then. Today, I find myself at the same spot where I was six years ago. This is my first film and I have no idea about how to go about it."

Warina recalled meeting the star for the first time at his residence.

"He was so nice. He is always very positive about everything. He has been so supportive of me throughout. He is a real-life hero for me. My life totally changed because

of him. Despite me coming from a very different background, he gave me this huge break," she said.

The actor said she has faced her fair share of struggles in the industry.

"It is difficult to bag a project. There is so much competition, you end up questioning your craft. I have faced rejections for a couple of films. When I started out I was not comfortable in speaking Hindi. I was almost on board for a film but the project never took off."

"Loveyatri" is scheduled to release on October 5.



Kiara Advani joins Shahid Kapoor in "Arjun Reddy" remake

MUMBAI, SEP 25 (PTI): Actor Kiara Advani has been paired opposite Shahid Kapoor in the Hindi remake of Telugu blockbuster "Arjun Reddy".

Kiara, who was most recently seen in Netflix's "Lust Stories", will essay the role of Shahid's love interest.

"Arjun Reddy" has always been one of my favourite films. There are so many shades to the heroine's character; I'm very excited about it," Kiara said in a statement here.

Directed by Sandeep Reddy Vanga, who also helmed the original critically-acclaimed Telugu-language blockbuster, the remake will

go on floors next month.

"Kiara epitomises the female character in the film to the T. She has the perfect combination of innocence (in terms of looks) and maturity (in terms of performance) that's so important for the character," Vanga said.

The original film, starring Vijay Deverakonda and Shalini Pandey in the lead, revolved around a medical student who falls in love with his junior and how their relationship evolves.

The remake will be produced by T-Series and Cine1 Studios.

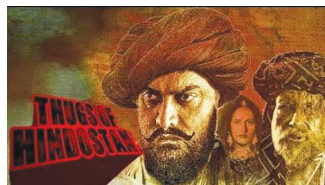
'Thugs of Hindostan' will be dubbed in Tamil and Telugu

MUMBAI, SEP 25 (PTI): Amitabh Bachchan-Aamir Khan starrer "Thugs of Hindostan" will be dubbed in Tamil and Telugu to reach a wider audience upon its release.

Bachchan and Khan have also shot a video, announcing the film's release in the two languages.

Director Vijay Krishna Acharya said the coming together of two stars for the first time will be a treat for the audience.

"We are a nation of film lovers, and films have often been a cultural glue that binds us all in a way that transcends geography. We hope that in 'Thugs of Hindostan', the audience will find a story that's universal in appeal and unique in its presentation..."



Hindostan," Acharya said in a statement.

Rohan Malhotra, VP - Distribution, Yash Raj Films, said, "... 'Thugs of Hindostan' will be the biggest ever release a Bollywood title has ever had in the history of Indian cinema... We want to give the film a release scale that justifies its humongous hype."

Backed by Yash Raj Films, the mega action adventure, also featuring Katrina Kaif and Fatima Sana Shaikh, is scheduled to release on November 8.

ARIES: You're often preoccupied by other people's lives. Your devotion to others will be appreciated today, Aries. For example, in the family circle, you may have to bandage everyone's little physical or psychological wounds. Don't neglect your energy needs. As you're aware, you need all the strength you can muster.

TAURUS: You may have some trouble getting out of bed today due to a desire to let the world carry on without your help for a while. Taurus, you can yield to that lazy urge today, for the aspects are likely to assist you in fulfilling your goals. Take advantage of some time off to rest or perhaps tidy your nest. You might want to make that bed, too.

GEMINI: The day ahead should be excellent, Gemini. You tend to work

with an energy unparalleled by the other signs, and today you reap some rewards for your diligence. These days it's rare to find someone as conscientious as you, and you deserve recognition. Nevertheless, you still have many hills left to climb, as you well know!

CANCER: You've been lucky for the last two months, there's no doubt about it. Lately it seems like your luck is changing. It's hard to pinpoint, but something isn't quite right in your daily life. At the moment, the planets are imparting some lessons that could be difficult to bear, Cancer. Get through this transition with as little pain as possible. The lessons you learn will prove worthwhile.

LEO: This is going to be a good time to get a global view of things,

Leo. Take full advantage of the current planetary aspects by reading some books on spirituality or travel. If you desire to go on a long voyage, don't be surprised if your job sends you on an adventure, even if it isn't part of your job routine. Don't hesitate! Go breathe in some fresh air in a new place!

VIRGO: It's true that having to earn a living isn't always the most agreeable thing in life, Virgo. However, we all know that it's necessary. Have you thought about adding more balance to your life? All work and no play makes anyone a dull person. This would be a good day to examine your daily life and add some new elements. Yes, Virgo, it's time for you to choose a hobby.

LIBRA: If you've had some prob-

lems in your sentimental life during the last few months, Libra, they're probably behind you now. It's a sure bet that you've learned something. You've been served the same dish for years and now it seems you've finally had enough! Know that from now on you'll be better about not falling into the same old traps.

SCORPIO: If you aren't the most self-assured person in the world, Scorpio, take a look around and see all that you've done. True, you still have many unattained dreams, but look at how many you've already realized. A lack of confidence in your abilities is holding you back. There's a moment for everyone when a leap of faith is required. It's time for you to jump.

SAGITTARIUS: You may meet

some new people in the next few days, Sagittarius. Someone in your professional life may help you launch some unusual experiments that have never been done before. Or someone may want to create a new service or get into a completely new market. You will be the one they seek to explore these exciting new avenues!

CAPRICORN: It seems as though you're trying to live down some criticism, Capricorn. For weeks you've taken special care to look over your work to catch any mistakes. Perhaps the number of errors you found surprised you. Criticism from others stung even more as a result, because you could see that it had some merit. Today you'll get some relief. In fact, you may receive some

compliments.

AQUARIUS: Smile, Aquarius, because the forecast is bright today. You'll be in a curious mood, just right for new encounters. Perhaps this will add a little spice and enjoyment to your love life. There's a wide spectrum of experiences awaiting you, ready to offer fulfillment. A spirit of adventure prevails. You should take advantage of it!

PISCES: The Rolling Stones said it best, "I can't get no satisfaction," and that's how you've been feeling lately, Pisces. Indeed, looking back on your recent activities, you may feel a bit like a character in Wonderland - running as fast as you can just to stay in the same place. The day ahead will provide some relief and open up new, more fulfilling opportunities.