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SummitTIMES

Vol 03 | Issue 323| Gangtok | Thursday | 20 December 2018

ON TOP OF THE NEWS

RNI No. SIKENG/2016/69420

Pages 8 | ₹ 5

Funds sought and posts created for One Family, One Job scheme

**Rs. 33,427.95 LAKH
SUPPLEMENTARY DEMANDS FOR
GRANTS TABLED IN ASSEMBLY**

**SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 19 DEC:**

Chief Minister Pawan Chamling today tabled Rs. 33,427.95 lakh as third batch of Supplementary Demands for Grants for the financial year 2018-19 in the Legislative Assembly. The Supplementary Demands for Grants consists of Rs. 28,278.14 lakh on Revenue Account and Rs. 5,149.81 lakh on Capital Account.

The third supplementary Demands for Grants comprises mostly of salary component for another two months under which the Government has decided to provide One Family, One Job scheme.

As per the third Supplementary Demands for Grants, under Food Security and Agriculture Development department, government is appointing 1,040 per-

sons as Marketing Assistants, under HRDD new appointments of 169 LDC, 400 Office Assistant-cum-chowkidar, 800 Child Care Attendants, 300

Night Guards, 300 malis, under Forest, Environment & Wildlife Management department new appointments of 1,040 as Environment Protection Guards, under Health Care, Human Service and Family Welfare new appointments of 173 Safai Karmacharis, under Horticulture and Cash Crops Development new appointments of 2,080 Organic Field Assistants, under Personnel, Administrative Reforms and Training new appointments of 1,000 Office Assistants, 1,000 Multi-Task Office Staff, under Police

department new appointments of 1,040 Village Police Guards,



under Power & Energy 1,040 Assistant Linemen, under Road & Bridges new appointment of 186 Baidars, 2,500 Khalasi, 1,000 Junior Engineers, under Rural Management & Development department new appointment 128 LDCs, 189

Assistant Village Librarian, 1040 Grievance Redressal Assistant, 128 Supervisors, 185 Office Assistants-cum-Chowki-

dars, 185 Assistant Barefoot Engineers and under Urban Development and Housing new appointment of 298 Safai Karmacharis, 96 Town Caretaker Assistants.

Besides this, Government has earmarked the budget for construction of Press Club Bhawan worth of Rs. 1 crore in the supplementary budget.

As per the policy

decision taken for proposed Janta Mela to be held in first month of 2019, the state government has also earmarked the budgetary provisions for procurement of Gas Cylinders worth of Rs. 2 crore, Induction Chullahs worth of Rs 2 crore, Photocopy Machines of Rs 50 lakh, Laptops worth Rs 12 crore, Desktop computer worth of Rs 20 lakh, sewing machines worth

Rs 20 lakh, utensils-Dinner Sets of Rs 1 crore.

The third supplementary Demands for Grants also indicated that the government commitment for construction of eight veterinary hospital at Hathidunga West Sikkim, Arithang West Sikkim, Sanganath South Sikkim, Namlung South Sikkim, Boomtar South Sikkim, Sangmoo South

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Grade 'D' job to 3 from each constituency in multi-speciality hospital: CM

**1000-BED
MULTI-
SPECIALITY
HOSPITAL
INAUGURATION
ON 15 JAN 2019**

**SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 19 DEC:**

Chief Minister Pawan Chamling, on Tuesday, announced that the multi-speciality hospital at Sokeythang will be inaugurated on 15 Jan and a 20,000 youth will be given appointment letters under 'One Family One Job' scheme in a grand Rojgar Mela to be held in first week of Jan.

Mr Chamling made the announcements while addressing a district-level coordination meeting of Sikkim Democratic Front for East District here at the party headquarters at Bye Pass Road on Tuesday, as per a press release from the party.

It may be mentioned that earlier, the hospital was scheduled to be inaugurated on 28 Dec and fully functional by January next year.

Mr Chamling also announced that Janta Mela will be starting from 16 Jan. On the same, he mentioned that the State Government will provide benefit to every household of the State

through Janta Mela.

He further informed that Sokeythang Hospital will offer treatment for cancer and all other diseases and free dialysis facility will be provided to patients with kidney related ailments.

He mentioned that the government has been working hard to make Sokeythang hospital the biggest and best government hospital in the country after AIIMS New Delhi. He informed that the foundation of the medical college will be laid in this hospital in February, which will provide free medical education to Sikkimese youth.

On the occasion, Mr. Chamling also announced that grade 'D' job will be provided to at least three youths from each constituency in this hospital. He mentioned that the government will be providing assistance to priests, monks, pastor-elder, mauvis to buy religious clothing during upcoming Janta Mela.

He informed that site of 30X40 at urban areas and site of 40X60 at rural areas will be provided to land beneficiaries and lands from the government sites will be provided for graveyards to needy community.

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RCB picks up Sikkim team's Milind Kumar for IPL season 2019

**SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 19 DEC:**

Milind Kumar, a right-hand batsman and an occasional off-break bowler, who played for Delhi in the domestic circuit until he was transferred to Sikkim for the current Ranji Trophy season, has been picked up by Royal Challengers Bangalore for IPL12 at his base price of Rs 20 lakh.

Earlier, he was bought by Delhi Daredevils for IPL Season 7 for Rs 10 lakh.

On the opening day of Ranji Trophy this year, he scored a double-century (261 runs) for Sikkim against Manipur. In his next match, he also scored another double-century (224 runs) against Nagaland. In the



following match, he followed that up with a century, making 133 runs.

On 14 Dec 2018, in round six of the Ranji Trophy, he scored his 1,000th run of the tournament.

Potala Palace in Tibet closed after heavy snow

KJM VARMA

BEIJING, DEC 19 (PTI): For the first time, the iconic Potala Palace, the official residence of the Dalai Lama was closed to visitors on Wednesday due to heavy snow in Lhasa, Tibet's capital.

The Dalai Lama resided at the 1,300-year-old Potala Palace before he fled to India in 1959 following the take-over of Tibet by China.

Due to the heavy snow, the steep stone stairs leading to the palace atop a hill became slippery, according to a statement released by the palace's administrative office late Tuesday.

"The palace is only closed on the Tibetan New Year's Eve and the second day of the New Year. There was no closure due to weather in the past," state-run Xinhua news agency quoted Jorden, deputy director of the palace administrative office as saying.

Over 440 palace staff and some 30 firefighters participated in the snow removal, Jorden said.

This winter's first snow in Lhasa came early Tuesday morning and did not stop until Wednesday morning. The city saw 10 cm of snow, and the temperature dropped to minus 9.4 degrees Celsius at 9 AM Wednesday, according to the regional meteorological bureau.

The regional meteorological bureau issued a blizzard Tuesday morning.



AFTER THE RAIN!

Namchi at 5:30 a.m. as seen from Bhanjyang Road on Wednesday. The region shivered with the season's first rain, and snowfall in the higher reaches, on Tuesday. The next day was of clear skies though and the magic of low clouds which presented a vision to delight.

Christmas fever grips Gangtok with the help from the Churches of Sikkim

**SAGAR CHHETRI,
GANTOK, 19 DEC:**

Churches of Sikkim have come together to celebrate Sikkim Christmas Festival 2018 on the theme, 'Peace, Love & Harmony,' in a grand manner on 22 and 23 December, here at MG Marg. The two-day pre-Christmas celebration will have a series of musical, cultural and other activities.

An adhoc-committee comprising of members from different churches has also been formed to celebrate this state-level festival.

Addressing a press conference here today, adhoc committee president, Stephen Raj Karki, mentioned that the people have already acquired the Christmas mood so they can celebrate



together in this state-level Sikkim Christmas Festival.

He informed that since all churches will be busy celebrating Christmas in their respective churches on 25 Dec, the festival has been organized

on 22 and 23 Dec.

The festival is scheduled to be inaugurated by Tourism Minister, Ugen T Gyatso Bhutia, on 22 Dec at 4PM and the closing ceremony of the festival will have Agriculture Minister, Somnath Poudyal, as chief guest.

Mr Karki informed that the festival will feature performances by renowned singer Anju Panth from Nepal, a national-level Hallelujah Choir from South Sikkim and other groups and individuals.

SCF adhoc committee general secretary, Pastor Smile Gurung, informed that Rev. BD Rai from Kalimpong and Rev. Jonah Bal from Rangpo will deliver the Christmas Messages.

He informed that another highlight of the festival will be the stalls of traditional foods and other items at MG Marg from 20 Dec to 05 Jan.

SCF adhoc committee publicity secretary, Andrew Chhetri, further informs that another aim of the event was to promote Sikkim tourism through such an event.

He mentioned that MG Marg will also be decorated to give a Christmas feel to the people. The committee has urged the people to be part of the festival to celebrate the Christmas.

*Gangtok on
Thursday,
20 Dec*

Temp: 15°C/06°C
Forecast: Sunny
to partly cloudy
with a little rain in
the evening, then
a shower in spots

Sunrise: 06:30 AM
Sunset: 03:42 PM

**HAVE A
STORY TO
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com

SKM Youth and Women Convention enters 2nd day



SUMMIT REPORT GANGTOK, 19 DEC:

The second day of the Youth and Women Convention of Sikkim Krantikari Morcha witnessed a series of activities, here, at Rolu, South

Sikkim on Wednesday. An SKM press release informs that the second day started with yoga for the participants at 5:30 a.m. SKM president, PS Tamang [Golay], also participated in the

convention.

The release informs that the day's programme started with a discussion on 'Nature & Human Life' by Dr. Shiva Kumar Sharma.

SKM working presi-

dent, MP Subba stressed that aware youth is very important for a better society, so youth should be concerned about the society's progress. He stated that SKM wants to have a clean administration and transparency along with honesty and corruption free system. On the same, he asserted that the youth have a big responsibility in this mission.

It is informed that SKM East District coordinator, Kunga Bhutia, Retrd. Joint Director, Chudamani Upreti, vice president (panchayat cell), LB Das, general secretary (press & publicity), Bikash Basnet and Retired Secretary, CL Denzongpa also spoke on the day.

5 from Sikkim attend ACTAsia youth conference



SUMMIT REPORT, GANGTOK, 19 DEC:

Delegation of 4 Inter-actors along with 1 Rotarian from Sikkim attended the fifth ACTAsia, Asian Rotary Youth Conference held at Bhu-

baneswar, Orissa, India.

Prakash Sundas, was one of the speakers from India who delivered a presentation on "Youth and Social Responsibility".

The conference was attended by participants

from different parts of South East Asia. The main aim of this conference is to create a platform for the youth to develop international understanding, friendship, fellowship and learning.

After Governor's rule, President's rule comes into force in JK from midnight

NEW DELHI, DEC 19 (PTI): After completion of six months of Governor's rule in Jammu and Kashmir Wednesday, the state will come under President's rule from midnight paving the way for the union cabinet to take all policy decisions related to the militancy-hit state.

President Ram Nath Kovind signed the proclamation for imposition of central rule in the state, which plunged into a political crisis in June after the Mehbooba Mufti-led coalition government was reduced to minority following withdrawal of support by the 25-member BJP in the state.

The gazette notification issued Wednesday said the President has received a report from Governor Satya Pal Malik and after considering it and other information, he was "satisfied" that President's rule in the state was needed.

"In pursuance...of the proclamation issued...by me under article 356 of the Constitution of India, I hereby direct that all the functions of the Government of the State of Jammu and Kashmir

and all the powers vested in or exercisable by the Governor of that State... shall, subject to the superintendence, direction and control of the President, (and) be exercisable also by the Governor of the State," the notification said.

The union cabinet headed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi took the decision on Monday after Governor Satya Pal Malik sent a report to the central government recommending imposition of President's rule in the state.

After the proclamation, the powers of the Legislature of the state shall be exercisable by or under the authority of Parliament and all the decisions taken thereof shall have a concurrence of the President under Article 74 (1)(i) under which council of Ministers with the Prime Minister, at the head, will aid and advise the President.

Since the state has a separate Constitution, in such cases, six months of Governor's rule is compulsory under Article 92 of the Jammu and Kashmir Constitution, under which all the legislature powers are vested with

the governor.

The governor on November 21 dissolved the 87-member state assembly after the PDP, supported by the Congress and their arch rivals National Conference, had staked claim to form the government.

Simultaneously, the two-member People's Conference led by Sajjad Lone had also staked claim to form a government with 25 members of the BJP and other 18 unknown members.

The governor had dissolved the assembly citing horse-trading and lack of stability to form a government as the reasons.

In case the elections are not declared, the President's rule can be extended by another six months.

No presidential proclamation shall in any case remain in force for more than three years except for the intervention of Election Commission of India which has to certify that the continuance in force of the Proclamation is necessary on account of difficulties in holding general elections to the Legislative Assembly.

Loan waiver not a solution to farm distress: Niti Aayog

NEW DELHI, DEC 19 (PTI): Joining the debate on farm loan waivers, government think-tank Niti Aayog Wednesday said such a move helps only a fraction of farmers and is no solution to mitigate agrarian distress.

Congress chief Rahul Gandhi has been pressing the government on the issue, saying he will not let Prime Minister Narendra Modi sleep until a loan waiver is given to all farmers.

"Farm loan waiver is not a solution to farm sector distress. It is not a solution but is palliative," Niti Aayog Vice Chairman Rajiv Kumar said at a press conference after the release of its 'Strategy for New India @ 75' document.

Kumar, however, added that in states where there is genuine farm distress, some short-term measures have to be taken.

Niti Aayog Member and agriculture policy expert Ramesh Chand also said the biggest problem with loan waiver is that it will benefit only a small fraction of farmers.

"In poorer states, only

10-15 per cent of farmers are benefited from loan waiver as few number of farmers get institutional loans in such states. In many states, not even 25 per cent of farmers avail institutional credit," Chand pointed out.

He noted that when you have this kind of variations in states in terms of farmers' access to institutional credit, it is not worth spending so much money on farm loan waivers.

"Even CAG report says that farm loan waivers does not help. Loan waivers is no solution to address distress in farm sector," Chand said.

Citing a recent study, he pointed out that in some states, more than 3/4th of farm loans are taken for consumption purpose and not for agriculture.

Chand argued that the demand for loan waiver arises because income of farmers is not increasing at a reasonable rate.

"We are discussing much better solution to address farm distress. We want to increase income of farmers," the Niti Aayog member insisted.

Both Kumar and Chand said the Aayog has suggested to the Ministry of Agriculture to link allocations to states to reform measures undertaken by them in the farm sector.

Replying to a query on GST, Kumar said the average rate will gravitate towards 15 per cent with increased resources and widening of the tax base.

"As the GST net widens, all these will gravitate towards average 15 per cent. It would be good rate if you compare with the previous indirect tax rate which used to be around 30 per cent. It will give impetus to consumption and economic growth," Kumar said. Prime Minister Narendra Modi had on Tuesday said the effort will be to ensure that 99 per cent of all items, including almost all items used by the common man, are kept at a GST slab of 18 per cent or less.

To a question on job creation, the Niti Aayog vice chairman said, "On the employment front, I am not sure crisis is appropriate word to use."

American jailed for attacking Sikh cab driver with hammer



YOSHITA SINGH

NEW YORK, DEC 19 (PTI): A man in the US has been sentenced to 15 months in prison for brutally attacking a 53-year-old Indian-origin Sikh taxi driver in Seattle last year.

Swarn Singh was assaulted with a deadly weapon by Rory Benson in December 2017, according to Sikhs civil rights group The Sikh Coalition.

Benson, who pleaded guilty to assaulting him, was sentenced to 15 months in prison by a court in Seattle on Friday. Singh, who maintains Sikh articles of faith including unshorn hair and a turban, had parked outside an apartment building to drop off Benson and his mother.

Benson, who was sitting in the front passenger seat, attempted to suffocate him with a piece of cloth kept in the taxi to wipe the windshield, the coalition said

in a statement.

He immediately ran out of the taxi, and Benson grabbed a hammer from his bag, chasing him on-foot. Benson hit Singh in the head repeatedly, specifically targeting his turban and knocking it to the ground, it said.

He suffered a scalp laceration and a skull fracture as a result of the attack and was rushed to hospital. Benson was arrested.

The coalition said it worked with Singh for 11 months to make sure the Bellevue Police Department and the King County Prosecuting Attorney's Office were properly investigating the incident and reviewing appropriate charges.

Singh submitted an impact statement to the King County Superior Court, urging his attacker to recognise the damage caused, detailing his injuries and the impact of the assault on the Sikh community.

Grade 'D' job to 3 from...

The SDF president urged party workers to take the upcoming election very seriously for the people of Sikkim.

"The upcoming election is more important for the people of Sikkim than me as the government will be formed by the mandate of the people," he said.

He added that if the corrupt and criminals come to power then they will destroy the future of the youth and Sikkimese in general.

Mr. Chamling informed that budgetary provisions have been made by the government to constitute welfare boards for students and retired employees.

The release informs that CLC presidents presented the report of their respective constituencies during the meeting.

The meeting was attended by Zilla and Gram panchayats, office bearers of youth and Cheli front, ward and block level committees of the party, president and members of constituency level committees of East District along with SDF MLAs of East District and in-charge and members of district level committee.

Funds sought and...

Sikkim, Chumbong West Sikkim Raarik at North Sikkim to the tune of Rs 92.23 lakh in rural Sikkim.

The discussion and voting on the third Supplementary demands for Grants will be taken up of Thursday.

During the Legislative Business, Minister-in-Charge of Law, Legal, Legislative & Parliamentary Affairs Department, Government of Sikkim, RB Subba presented the Sikkim Lokayukta (Amendment) Bill, Bill No. 27 of 2018. This bill has been framed to amend the provision of Section 9 and Section 34 of the Sikkim Lokayukta Act, 2014 to streamline and to strengthen the functioning of the Sikkim Lokayukta Act, 2014.

Discussion and voting on the Bill will take place on the 20 Dec, the second day of the Session.

Education Career Fest at Namthang



SUMMIT REPORT NAMTHANG, 19 DEC:

The second day of Education Career Fest, 2018, at Namthang Senior Secondary School Auditorium Hall on 18 Dec saw another busy and productive day with former Speaker, Legal Advisor to the Chief Minister KT Gyaltsen as chief guests, accompanied by area MLA, Tilu Gurung, as special guest.

Several resourceful persons were also present on the second day of the programme who covered different topics on education.

District Collector Prabhakar Verma spoke about Higher Education and UPSC coaching along with interacting with the participants in the session.

Raj Kumari Thapa, in turn, addressed the

topic of women's empowerment, while Rewaj Chettri delved on entrepreneurship and business.

Panel discussions were also held along with the interactions with students by resource persons from Shri Ramasamy Memorial University (SRM), Sikkim Manipal University (SMU) and Industrial Training Institute (ITI), Rangpo.

100 days to Brexit: EU acts to cushion no-deal shock

BRUSSELS, DEC 19 (AP): With British politics gridlocked and just 100 days until Brexit, the European Union on Wednesday triggered contingency plans designed to cushion some of the shock of a "no-deal" UK exit from the bloc. The EU measures, announced a day after Britain ramped up its own no-deal planning, are intended to alleviate "major disruption" to people and businesses in sectors including financial services, customs, air transport and climate policy. European Commission Vice President Valdis Dombrovskis told reporters that the plan was "an exercise in limiting damage." He said the aim was "to turn an abrupt exit into a more soft landing."

Britain is due to leave the EU on March 29, but it remains unclear whether lawmakers will approve the divorce agreement Prime Minister Theresa May's government has negotiated with the bloc. Leaving without a deal risks plunging the British economy into recession and touching off chaos at the borders.

The 14 EU actions include temporary one- to two-year measures to allow U.K.-EU financial services to continue and a 12-month provision to keep planes flying between Britain and the

bloc. But Dombrovskis stressed that the measures "cannot replicate the benefits of the withdrawal agreement, and certainly it cannot replicate the benefits of EU membership."

On Tuesday, the British government stepped up U.K. no-deal preparations, putting 3,500 soldiers on standby and warning thousands of businesses and millions of households to get ready for disruption.

The government said the plans which include chartering boats and stockpiling medicines are a sensible precaution.

But opposition politicians accuse the government of trying to scare lawmakers into supporting May's Brexit deal.

Opposition Labour Party leader Jeremy Corbyn on Wednesday accused May of "a cynical attempt to drive her deeply damaging deal through this House." "No-deal would be a disaster for our country and no responsible government would ever allow it," Corbyn said.

Many businesses agree. Britain's five leading business groups said in a rare joint statement that businesses "have been watching in horror" as political infighting made the prospect of a disorderly Brexit more likely. Organizations

Shiva Hang Subba grabs second position in 12 Hours Stadium Run

SAGAR CHHETRI

GANGTOK, 19 DEC:

Long distance runner, Shiva Hang Subba impressed everyone with his outstanding performance in the 12 Hours Stadium Run, on 16 Dec at Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium in New Delhi. He stood second in this ultra marathon covering 283 laps of the stadium and distance of 119.709km in 12hrs.

Interestingly, he was only one lap behind Abhishek Rathor of Delhi, who was placed first, by covering 284 laps and distance of 120.132km in 12hrs. Likewise, Sanjay Kumar stood third with 260 laps and distance of 109.98km. The run was conducted from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. on 16 Dec.

Fifty selected runners participated in this ultra-marathon, which



was organised by NEB Sports Entertainment. Shiva Hang was shortlisted on the basis of his performance in the 12 Hours Stadium Run held in July earlier this year at Bangalore. He finished this run covering a distance of 101.5km in 12hrs securing

the fourth position.

22-year-old Shiva Hang hails from Timbrong in West Sikkim under Yuksom-Tashiding constituency. He is a student of Marathon Man of Sikkim, Amar Subba. He works in tourism sector.

Addressing a press

conference here today, he expressed his immense happiness and satisfaction on his performance in the 12 Hours Stadium Run.

"I gave my best in the event and I am happy and satisfied with my performance. I would try my best to continue with

my performances keeping the name of my state on the top," he expressed. He further expressed that the credit for this achievement goes to his trainer, Amar Subba, his family, friends and well wishers who have been encouraging and supporting him constantly to give his best in the competition. He expressed his gratitude to all his supporters.

Likewise, Amar Subba stated that there are lots of talented and potential runners in the State and they all need proper exposure, guidance and support from every side. He stated that it was a big achievement by his student Shiva Hang Subba and this will further encourage him to do better in future competitions. He urged everyone to support all the talents in the State.

Sponsors, government support key to Indian athletes success, says Sindhu

MUMBAI, DEC 19 (PTI): Star shuttler PV Sindhu on Wednesday said support from different sectors, including the government, has played a key role in the success of Indian sportsperson at international level.

"We have sponsors now-a-days, a lot of people have sponsors. Before if you do well, achieve success and are in the top, then only sponsors used to support you," said Sindhu, who recently became the first Indian to win the badminton World Tour Finals. "But now there are a lot of

sponsors who are coming and encouraging at the grass-root level. That is very important."

Sindhu broke her silver jinx in great fashion on last Sunday by defeating her nemesis Nozomi Okuhara of Japan 21-19 21-17 in the women's singles to become the first Indian to win gold at year-ending World Tour Finals in Guangzhou, China.

The 23-year-old Sindhu, who has won a silver medal at the 2016 Rio Olympics, was speaking at the Republic Summit, which was also attended by wrestler Babita Phogat and former In-

dia opener Gautam Gambhir. "If you play well automatically you will do well and then the government support is there. You have the TOPS (Target Olympic Podium Scheme) for the talented and top players and also Khelo India. "The government is doing a great job by supporting us, so if you do well they will recognise you and they will sponsor you," Sindhu said.

Asked Sindhu about the pressure she had of finishing second-best before breaking her gold jinx in Guangzhou recently, she said, "I didn't feel any pressure."

"WITH SINCERE GRATITUDE"

There are really no words to express our heartfelt thanks for the sympathy & support you all have extended towards our family during the sad demise of our beloved father. Your moral support everyday brought us peace & your bereaved concern helped us pass through our difficult time.

Though we could not thank you all individually but through this small note we would like to extend our gratitude to all who have come to visit us from far & flung places to condole us and who joined in the funeral procession upto Decheling on 14th Dec 2018. We all are deeply touched by your kind gesture, love & support.

The death of our beloved father, Lakpa Tsering Ethenpa at the age of 88 years is a big loss for the family & friends but at the same time we want to celebrate Pala's life as he lived live to the fullest to the extent that he could see & bless his Great Grand Children as well.

We also believe that he must have been very happy to see all his well wishers making sure that his funeral farewell wasn't amiss. All your presence was what made us stronger and again, mere words wouldn't justify our immense gratitude for this.



**Mrs. Pasang Lhamu Ethenpa (wife)
Menla Ethenpa (son) & family
Dr. Sonam T. Ethenpa (son) & family
Diki Yangzum Ethenpa (daughter) & family
Chopel S. Ethenpa (daughter)
Sangay Pema Ethenpa (daughter) & family
& hosts of grand children & Great Grand Children
Ethenpa Villa, Lower Tadong, Gangtok-737102**

HRDD officials meet NSDC, resolve issues related to Vocational Studies

SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 19 DEC:

A meeting was held at the National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC), New Delhi, on 06 Dec between the officials of the Human Resource Development Department and various Sector Skill Councils. The team from the Government of Sikkim was headed by the Additional Chief Secretary, Human Resource Development, G P Upadhyaya along with Joint Secretary (H.E), Principals NBBDC and Bachelor of Vocational (B Voc) College, Dentam.

An HRDD press release informs that the meeting was held to resolve important issues pertaining to the B Voc courses which are currently being taught in two colleges in the State namely NBBDC, Tadong and B Voc College, Dentam.

The Additional Chief Secretary, HRDD, Mr Upadhyaya addressed the meeting where he placed the issues that the Colleges were facing. SR, Head, Suajit Ray and Head, Education from NSDC, Rekha Menon, provided all the support and the Sector Skill Councils were directed to look into the issues immediately and the timeline

for the same has already been prepared.

The courses offered in NBBDC, Tadong are Pharmaceutical Chemistry and Software (IT) while B Voc Dentam offers Pharmaceutical Chemistry, Software (IT), Retail and Tourism. The B Voc colleges have been introduced in our education system keeping in mind the present requirement of technical and self-sustaining job profiles in the State. The B Voc course is totally job-oriented where the students are offered an Advanced Diploma as well as a Degree.

Furthermore, the uniqueness of the B Voc Courses lies in the multiple entries and exits wherein the students can opt for a Diploma and get a job to gain some experience and if the students wish to return and complete their Degree they can re-join the College and complete their course.

The Department has already provided a Virtual Lab for the Pharma Chemistry course which is the first of its kind in the whole of North East. So, in the days to come the students will definitely benefit from the B Voc courses, the release mentions.

1000 patients treated in Lifeline Express in remote Tripura

AGARTALA, DEC 19 (PTI):

Over 1000 patients from rural hamlets of North Tripura district were treated at the Lifeline Express, popularly known as the Hospital Train, in the last two days at Churaibari railway station, officials said Wednesday. "We received 400 patients on the first day and today 600 patients had registered their names. We provide diagnostic, medical and advanced surgical treatment to persons with disabilities," Life Line Express Joint Director Anil Prem-sagar said.

Among those who received treatment on the 'hospital train' so far, 77 cataract patients would undergo surgery from tomorrow. The train would remain stationed at Churaibari, 185 km from here, till January 6, offi-

cials said. "We offer eye and surgeries, plastic surgery, orthopedic surgery and treatment of oral, breast and cervical cancer on Lifeline Express," Prem-sagar said.

The effort is to reach to those people who hail from remote areas that lack medical facilities, he said. When contacted, Chief Medical Officer of North Tripura district, Jagadish Chandra Nama, said, the health department provided 11 personnel for assisting those providing medical services in the Lifeline Express.

Churaibari Assistant Station Superintendent Prasanta Bhattacharjee said, the train arrived in Tripura on December 16, started offering treatment since Tuesday and would continue till January 6 next year.

Nepal stops water project contractors from leaving country

KATHMANDU, DEC 19 (AP):

Nepal's government has stopped eight Italian contractors from leaving the Himalayan country in an effort to complete a critical but much delayed water supply project for the capital.

Nepalese officials and the Italian contractors met again on Wednesday, but no agreement was reached, said Ministry of Water Supplies spokesman Shankar Prasad Subedi.

A statement from the ministry said the eight contractors from the Italian company Cooperativa Muratori Cementisti Ravenna are being kept under strict surveillance

by the authorities in Kathmandu because they had information that the contractors might be attempting to leave Nepal.

Nepalese officials are worried that contractors from the financially troubled company may attempt to flee, leaving the project unfinished.

Officials speaking on condition of anonymity because they are not authorized to speak to reporters said airport immigration authorities have been instructed to not allow them to leave the country. However, no official notice has been issued for the prohibition. The Italians have been

working on the project for the past four years, but the Melamchi Drinking Water project is nearly 2 decades old. It is supposed to bring drinking water to Kathmandu, the capital, where households have water for only two hours every five days.

The project has been delayed due to political instability in Nepal, as well as a devastating 2015 earthquake.

Nepal is mostly covered with mountains that have rivers, but Kathmandu faces a severe water problem. Most residents there have to depend on water trucks to bring water to their homes.

LOST

I Sonam Palzor Lepcha, DOB: 15.03.1983, S/o. Mr Aching Lepcha, R/o. Mangan North Sikkim have lost my hand bag in which my class X passed Certificate of CBSE Board bearing Roll No: 3120242 passed out in the year 1999 and Serial No: 00305268. So if found kindly contact on: 9609861871.

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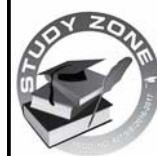
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**Karma Tenzing Namgyal [son] and family
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SummitTIMES

ON TOP OF THE NEWS

At a Year's End

Looking Ahead To a New Year

Another year is drawing to a close. And before the New Year resolutions are drawn up, will come the reminiscing, a going over of what has transpired over the year. Such reminiscing proliferates all circles- among friends, on Facebook, over WhatsApp, at chai-dokans (more like cafes and pubs in Sikkim now), in newspapers and in share-cabs. This exercise is about more than producing a special supplement for publications or participating in interesting conversations; in the packaging of the highlights of a year; one finds trends – even projections which could help plan ahead and learn to prepare. Even without these benefits, it is always a welcome engagement to take stock once in a while, and a year-end is as good a time as it gets to do so. This publication will also probably engage in such an exercise with the New Year, but that is not the point being made here; what is noticeable is that such discussions are noticeably muted this time around. Blame the recent wave of politicking for that which might have made conversations too current and speculative to allow time for re-caps and reviews. But then again, winter months have traditionally been slow months in Sikkim, the school holidays ensuring that families command more time than the usual favourite of political gossip. These months have also traditionally been administratively (even) more lethargic with everyone preferring cosy over busy.

In itself, the year 2018 will be remembered for its ordinariness. There was nothing outstandingly remarkable that happened in Sikkim this year, and although there were many moments when people must have gasped or applauded, there was very little of lasting consequence. And that is not necessarily a bad thing because a little pause never hurt anyone. One hopes though that more happens next year.

The social space was dominated, like always, by politics and its usual routine of name-calling and camp-switching, but even in that field there is nothing that commands top of the mind recall except the more immediate developments. Perhaps it is the effect of pre-election anxiety. Politics has a habit of running in circles, going through its motions of resurgence and calm, claims and counter-claims and these invariably find a ready audience. Attention being paid to such developments is important, but past experience also shows that investing complete devotion is ill-advised because it comes at the cost of sidelining other, more immediate to the people issues. For example, the reminiscing that should already have been rippling is missed, but that is not as big a worry as the possibility that the people might get side-stepped as politics bulldozes everything else away from the public domain. And that, in way has been what 2018 has been about. The previous few years had seen people engage the public domain more with a slew of developmental debates, people's protests, elections, impressive individual successes and of course, many collective failures as well. This year has been much duller in comparison, with the public domain again swept up by 'leaders' and priorities shaped by their respective fixations. If anything has underlined year 2018, it has been the near supplicant withdrawal of people's voices from public issues, the space given up again to politics and its players who now need to hedge their positions with one eye on the elections. Their politicking is now being dictated by the camps they find themselves in or hope to be in rather than what their political ideology is.

Politics has always been about "position" and "opposition" in Sikkim, but this pigeonholing needs to end and people need to be able to see clearer ideological stands and more consistent positions.

Here, as we end a year with wishes of a prosperous new year, one sends up a prayer that 2019 will treat Sikkim to a resuscitated civil society, which, even if it stays away from confrontations, at least engages enough to flag what should be the more important issues for the people's leaders, whether in the ruling or in the Opposition camps, to take up.

Colour Vision: Evolution and Variation in the Animal Kingdom; and the Evolutionary Significance of Deuteranomaly in Humans.

ABHIBYANJANA R. THATAL

In a bullfight, a bull is released in an arena where a matador is seen standing waving a red cloth that the bull charges on. A common misconception in this bullfight is that the bulls charge at the sight of the red color. Today, we have come to understand that the bull is not furious because of the red color but the waving of the cloth. In fact, bulls, like other cattle, are color-blind to red. This does not mean that they completely lack the ability to perceive colors; they can see only two of the three (Red, Green, and Blue) primary colors. This is also known as dichromatic vision. The way humans perceive red is not the same way a bull can perceive it, due to the anatomical nature of the eyes. Humans, on the other hand, are able to see all the three primary colors and are trichromatic in nature. In the paper titled 'The Causes and Consequences of Color Vision' by Ellen Gerl and Molly Morris, they discuss the various kinds of color vision in humans and animals and the study of color perception in animals once we have come realize that animals don't perceive the world the same way humans can. Humans and certain primates have evolved to have a trichromatic vision; this is due to the three classes of photopigments present in cones of the human retina which makes us able to perceive the wavelengths of the three primary colors, red, green and blue. The mixing of these three wavelengths through the filters in our photopigments enables us to see the world in a wide spectrum of colors. Trichromatic vision in human beings has helped them process the visual information of the world through color, making it more comprehensible. There are many advantages of being able to see colors in trichromatic mode, humans and primates had the need to distinguish colors in nature in order to understand and communicate better with other human beings and nature. It is important that we have a color vision in order for us to notice subtle changes in expressions in the face while interacting with other people. (Changizi, 2010) Expressions those are not very salient like the light blushing of the cheeks when people are nervous or embarrassed, a trichromatic vision allows us to see that, improving our communication.

Another reason why color vision is important to human beings is for us to understand if certain fruits, berries, and even food are consumable. In the paper titled, Food color is in the eye of the beholder: the role of human trichromatic vision in food evaluation by Francesco Foroni, Giulio Pergola and Raffaella Ida Rumiati, it is explained to the readers that humans and most apes and old primates with trichromatic vision distinguish and judge the nutrition value of food based on the brightness and color of the food. (Feroni et al, 2016) For instance, red indicates higher protein content in the food.

In humans and their close ancestors, the trichromatic vision has been of evolutionary advantageous for the species to foraging, which was and still is an important way in which they get food and nutrition. (Caine et al 2010) This is perhaps also the reason why natural selection favored trichromatic vision for human beings. Among other species in nature, there are different kinds of vision which have been adaptive and useful for the survival of the species, for example, frogs and other reptiles are able to perceive ultraviolet rays which humans can't see. Gerland Morris also explains in their paper 'The Causes and Consequences of Color Vision', that birds have the most sophisticated color vision as they have five classes of photopigment cones, as a result, they

are able to see hues that we cannot see. (Gerl and Morris, 2008) The opsins gene which is responsible for the formation of photopigments generates five photopigments, out of which four are linked to the cone. (Yokoyama, 2000) The color vision and its importance are also linked with the complex brain activities of human and some primates in comparison to other mammals that enable them to interpret and use the color information in ways that other animals with limited central processing capacity couldn't. (Jacobs, 2009) However, not all species require this ability to process information of the world. While it may seem that trichromatic vision is certainly more useful when compared to a dichromatic vision as it enables animals to distinguish only a limited number of colors, it may not entirely be true for all animals. For instance, most nocturnal animals would require a more sophisticated vision for the night when there is no light to process color information; hence they would



not necessarily need a trichromatic vision. Most mammals have been found to have dichromatic vision, like dogs and horses, cattle and many more who rely on rod functioning more than the cone are able to see and process information better than humans or trichromats in low-light. (Gerl and Morris, 2008)

Humans though said to be trichromats have a certain percentage of people who are commonly called color-blind, this means that they are not able to perceive one of the three primary colors in nature, usually they cannot distinguish between red and green in nature, as a result, they have limited vision and are dichromatic in nature. For a long time, it was seen as a disadvantage and people with dichromatic vision were barred from certain professions like the navy and army. It is seen that human males have a higher chance of being born dichromatic than a female. (Gerla and Morris, 2008) One in twelve men experiences color-blindness, whereas one in two hundred women experience color-blindness. ("Types of Color Blindness – Color Blind Awareness", 2018) This is due to the fact that in color-blindness, the defective gene that codes for opsin which is responsible for the formation of photopigments is an X-linked recessive trait. As a result when a female carrier produces offspring with a normal male and the offspring is a male with the recessive x-linked opsin gene defect they will be color-blind. This is the reason why males have a higher chance of being color-blind as compared to males.

When it comes to a dichromatic colour vision in humans the limitation of colour vision may vary from person to person, to be specific, people suffering from protanopia are unable to distinguish the 'red' light. Those with tritanopia are unable to perceive 'blue' light and those with deuteranopia are unable to perceive the 'green' light in nature. It appears that the huge amount of colour information to the eye can

cause us to miss the textural information of objects around us; however, a person with deuteranomaly (Colour-blind person) can detect and process textural information that a person with normal vision couldn't. (Morgan, Adam, & Mollon, 1992) Though it may seem obvious why trichromatic vision was favoured by nature in human beings, chromatic information is not the only kind of data that can be perceived from nature, as we can see in case of other animals like dogs etc. Dichromatic vision doesn't rely on chromatic information as much and assess other visual cues or information of objects and surrounding like luminance, texture, depth etc. (Morgan et al 1992) this certainly shows certain kind of advantage over a trichromatic vision. It was observed in an experiment carried out by Morgan, Adam, & Mollon where they took 16 subjects who had a trichromatic vision and seven male dichromats, that people who are colour-blind seemed to be unaffected by the

use of camouflage to the target and area. Another experiment conducted by Nancy G.Caine¹, Daniel Osorio and Nicholas I. Mundy where they take 15 marmosets out of which nine males and six females were exposed to low-light and normal light foraging, conclusively shows that even when it came to foraging dichromats had more advantage in low light intensity environment as compared to trichromats, in fact dichromatic capuchins had a higher chance of insect foraging than trichromats. (Caine, Osorio & Mundy, 2009) All these experiments and their result which indicate a certain advantage of dichromats when it comes to detecting texture, luminance, camouflage and detects objects in lowlight point to an advantage which may be causing deuteranomaly to be high among human beings. It also suggests that apart from the obvious disadvantage of having a dichromatic vision, it also enables them to perceive certain information which may be ignored by a heavily chromatic reliance on information of the surrounding by individuals with trichromatic vision, which is most likely the reason why we have a high frequency of colour-blindness in human beings.

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Morning lark or night owl? How our body clocks affect our mental and physical performance

ELISE FACER-CHILDS
theconversation.com

Whether you're a morning person or love burning the midnight oil, we're all controlled by so-called "body clocks." These body clocks (which regulate your circadian rhythms) are inside almost every cell in the body and control when we feel awake and tired during a 24-hour period. But as it turns out, our latest study found that our body clocks have a much bigger impact on us than we previously realised. In fact, our body clocks actually effect how well a person performs on both mental and physical tasks.

Our circadian rhythms are controlled by the brain's suprachiasmatic nucleus, which detects light. When cells in your eyes register that it's dark outside, they send these signals to the suprachiasmatic nucleus. It then releases the hormone melatonin, which makes you feel tired.

Your chronotype is another factor that determines how your biological clocks affect your daily behaviours. For example early chronotypes ("morning larks") rise early and are most active in the morning, but feel tired late in the afternoon or early evening. Late chronotypes ("night owls") are tired during the morning, but feel awake in the evening.

These individuals differences may also be seen in multiple other physiological, behavioural and genetic

rhythms that happen over a near 24-hour period. For example, chronotype determines the time melatonin is released. For morning larks, melatonin can rise around 6pm, making them feel tired by 9pm or 10pm. For night owls, melatonin can increase at 10pm/11pm or even later, meaning many aren't tired until 2am or 3am.

Genetics can determine your body clock type, but it's also largely influenced by schedule and lifestyle. It also changes over your lifetime. People tend to be larks during the first ten years of their life, then shift towards night owls during adolescence and early twenties. By the time you're 60, you'll probably have similar sleeping patterns as when you were ten. However, even with these lifetime changes, the factors that determine your chronotype are unique to every individual.

PEAK PERFORMANCE AND THE BODY CLOCK

Our study recruited 56 healthy individuals and asked them to perform a series of cognitive tasks (to measure reaction time and their ability to plan and process information), and a physical task to measure their maximum grip strength. The tests were completed at three different times between 8am and 8pm to see how an individual's performance varied throughout the day. Our results showed peak performance differed significantly between larks and owls.

Larks performed best earlier in the day (8am in cognitive tasks and 2pm in physical tasks), and were 7% to 8% better than night owls at these times. Night owls performed best at 8pm in both cognitive and physical tasks. Grip strength was found to be significantly better during the evening for owls by 3.7% compared to larks.

Peak performance was also related to the number of hours it takes for you to perform your best after waking up. Larks performed their best in cognitive tasks immediately after waking up, and seven hours after waking up in the physical task. Night owls performed best in all tasks around 12 hours after waking up.

When it comes to elite performance, athletes are striving for minute gains where a winning margin can be narrow. For example, at the 2016 Olympics, if the last placed competitor in the men's 100m sprint had run 0.25 seconds faster, he would've beaten Usain Bolt.

Our previous research found that being a morning lark or a night owl is a key contributor in the timing of peak individual and team athletic performance.

Our new study shows that compared to larks, night owls are significantly sleeper in the morning, making their reaction time slower by 8.4%. They're also 7.4% weaker (using a maximum grip strength test) than their morning lark counterparts.

Night owls also seem to show a larger variation in peak performance throughout

the day, suggesting they may be more sensitive to time-of-day changes than larks. For example, a night owl competing against a morning lark at 8am would be more impaired than a lark competing against a night owl at 8pm.

However, other things, like travelling, can also affect performance. Moving across time zones de-synchronises our body clocks, which need a chance to adjust. People that constantly change their sleeping patterns may experience "social jetlag", which impairs performance too.

Since athletic success depends on the smallest margins, understanding precisely what time peak performance is likely could mean the difference between winning a gold medal or finishing in last place. Our study found that overall, morning larks tended to perform better earlier in the day, and night owls performed better later in the evening.

Knowing just how much our body clock affects us could be useful even in our everyday life. It can help us understand more about how we can gain maximum productivity in business or the best academic performance in school.

The typical structure of our society greatly favours larks over owls. Since our typical working day doesn't let night owls follow their preferred sleep and wake patterns, maybe it's time we start thinking about being more flexible.

[the writer is Research fellow, University of Birmingham]

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

Mail us at: news@summittimes.com

River tourism project ‘Dwijing Festival’ to begin on Dec 27



GUWAHATI, DEC 19 (PTI): The third edition of the 12-day ‘Dwijing Festival’, a river tourism project of the Assam government, begins from December 27 in Chirang district.

‘Dwijing’ means river bank and the festival covering areas around the river Aie will focus on business and income generation for the local people through rural tourism, Assam Tourism Minister Chandan Brahma told reporters here Wednesday.

The river Aie, meaning ‘Mother’, originates from the

Himalayas of Bhutan flowing through Chirang and Bongaigaon districts before meeting the river Brahmaputra. The Aie plays a vital role in the lives of people of the area.

The venue of the various events of the festival will centre around the Hagrama bridge, the longest rural river bridge in the state, Brahma added.

“We plan to make it one of the biggest festivals of the region and establish it as an annual calendar event at the national and international level,” the

minister said. The festival would showcase ethnic trade, cuisine, culture, games and sports, exhibitions, adventure sports, river rafting, helicopter rides and cultural programmes to make it a centre of attraction for the visitors as a New Year event.

Leading Bollywood artistes such as Malaika Arora Khan, Himesh Reshammiya, Kailash Kher, Amit Trivedi, Shweta Pandit and a galaxy of stars are expected to perform during the 12-day festival. The festival is being organised jointly

by Assam’s tourism department, Assam Tourism Development Corporation (ATDC) and Bodoland Tourism.

The ATDC would promote this event at the national platform and “we want to change the image of the BTAD areas by presenting the beauty and culture of the region”, ATDC Chairman Jayanta Malla Baruah said.

The festival would focus on contemporary attractions of Bodoland Territorial Area Districts (BTAD) - Kokrajhar, Chirang, Baska and Udalguri.

Mamata ministry expansion Thursday

KOLKATA, DEC 19 (PTI): The 31-month-old Mamata Banerjee Congress government in West Bengal will be expanded on Thursday and four new faces would be inducted into it, officials said Wednesday.

The new names to be inducted into the state cabinet were shortlisted Tuesday and sent to the governor on Wednesday, the state secretariat sources said.

The probable ministers are Sujit Bose, Tapas Roy, Nirmal Majhi and Ratna Ghosh.

They would be sworn in Thursday by Governor K N Tripathi at the Raj Bhavan in the presence of Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee and her cabinet colleagues, the sources said.

The portfolios of the new entrants to the cabinet would be announced after the swearing in,



they added.

This is Trinamool Congress’ second term in office after winning the 2016 assembly election

in the state. Its first term was after the historic win of the party by throwing out of power the 34-year-long Left regime in 2011.

IWAI team to visit Tripura on December 26

AGARTALA, DEC 19 (PTI): A high-level team of the Inland Waterways Authority of India (IWAI) would visit Tripura on December 26 to conduct a survey and decide on the location for a jetty for a new waterway connecting India and Bangladesh, the state government said Wednesday.

The new Indo-Bangla waterway has been proposed between Ashuganj river port in eastern Bangladesh and Sonamura in Sipahijala district of Tripura through rivers Gomati and Meghna.

Tripura Chief Minister Biplab Kumar Deb met Union Minister Nitin Gadkari at New Delhi on the issue on Tuesday.

“It was decided that a high ranking team from IWAI would visit Tripura on 26th and 27th December, 2018 and decide on the location of the jetty/ finalize the location of land for the project of inland waters in Gomati river from Tripura to Bangladesh,” a government statement said.

Sources in the Chief Ministers Office (CMO) said, Sonamura, which is about 60 km from here, was initially chosen as the location for the jetty and a preliminary survey was also conducted by the state government.

However, it was up to the IWAI officials to decide, they said. Last month, Chief Minister Biplab Kumar Deb had said a new waterway would come up within six months for movement of container ships between Sonamura and Ashuganj river port.

Once it was completed, goods to the state would directly reach Sonamura town from Bangladesh easily, Deb had told reporters.

The central government would soon start dredging Gomati river on the Indian side for the new waterway to connect Ashuganj port on Meghna river covering about 60 km, he said.

The secretary to the department of shipping of the central government had recently visited the state and inspected the sites.



China to conduct detailed project report for Kathmandu monorail

SHIRISH B PRADHAN
KATHMANDU, DEC 19 (PTI): Nepal on Wednesday signed an agreement with a Chinese state-run construction company for conducting a detailed project report for a 27-km monorail project in the capital city of Kathmandu, an official said.

Kathmandu Metropolitan City (KMC) mayor Bidya Sundar Shakya and China Railway Construction Corporation (CRCC) director of overseas business management department Zhao Guangbing signed the Memorandum of Understanding here, a top official said.

CRCC’s China Railway 25th Bureau Group Corporation Limited will complete the Detailed Project Report (DPR) within a year.

According to the preliminary study report, the

proposed monorail along Kathmandu’s 27 kms ring road would cost an estimated Rs 116 billion (USD 1.03 billion).

The Chinese company said that the project will be completed within three years after submitting the DPR, KMC’s deputy mayor Hari Prabha Khadgi Shrestha said.

“It is the beginning of a long-term project in Nepal and first of its kind. We will do our best to make it successful,” Zhao said.

Based on the agreement, the Chinese company will bear all the expenses for the DPR.

The contract for the railway project would be awarded through open competition under the Build, Own and Operate (BOOT) model, Shakya said.

No separate time zone for northeastern states for strategic reasons: Govt

NEW DELHI, DEC 19 (PTI): A panel, formed to examine having a separate time zone for the northeastern states, recommended against it for “strategic reasons”, the government informed the Lok Sabha Wednesday.

In a written response to a question on demands from the northeastern states for having a separate time zone, Union Science and Technology minister Harsh Vardhan said such requests have been made on the ground that sunrise and sunset timings in these parts are much earlier than official working hours.

“National Physical



Laboratory (NPL) published certain reports in science journals on this issue, referring to saving of electricity,” Vardhan said. The matter was examined by a High Level Committee (HLC) comprising the secretary of

the Department of Science and Technology and chief secretary of Tripura, he added.

However, in response to the question, there was no mention of when the panel was formed.

“The HLC, after considering the issue, recommended not to have two time zones for India for strategic reasons,” he said. A senior official of the Ministry of Science and Technology said the panel was formed several years ago.

The demand for a separate time zone is not new. Last year, Arunachal Pradesh Chief Minister Pema Khandu demanded a separate time zone for northeastern states stating that several work hours are wasted as offices open late and sun rises early.

France has 12 time zones, while the US has 11 and Australia has eight. Like India, China has only one time zone.

Adventure team visits Kallek village in Arunachal Pradesh



ITANAGAR, DEC 19 (PTI): An adventure team, comprising 30 people, have reached Kallek village in Arunachal Pradesh to promote tourism in the area, with ‘Atang Ane’, the largest tree of the state, as the centre-point of the expedition.

‘Atang Ane, the Ficus elastica (Indian rubber bush), found near the remote village under Pangin forest division in Siang district, is the largest tree of the state under the multi-trunk tree

category. Situated on the northern side of Kallek, it takes two hours of trekking from the nearest motorable road to reach the giant tree.

In 2012, the tree with a circumference of 59.8 metres, was located by one Takom Tamuk of the village.

Apart from trekking down to ‘Atang Ane’ from Kallek, the team also participated in bird watching and visited Hiirep Waterfall near the village on Sunday. “The basic

idea of organizing the expedition was to highlight and promote the tourism potential of Kallek village, programme coordinator of the expedition, Tajir Tamuk, said.

Tamuk, who is a resident of Kallek village, said the village has many things to offer to visitors such as adventure tourism and wildlife tourism.

The expedition was jointly organized by the villagers of Kallek and an Itanagar-based tour agency.

NOTICE INVITING TENDER

Sealed tender invited from the interested firm/ individual for the Auction of the Vehicle belonging to Sikkim Tourism Development Corporation bearing the following description :-

Particulars of the Vehicle			
1	Make / Model	Toyota Innova	Year of Manufacture
	Engine No-	2KD 6401834	Nov-09
	Chassis No	MBJ11JV4007194845	
	Life of the Vehicle	09 Years	
	Vehicle Registered No	SK-01-Z-0048	
Offset value as vaulted by SNT Division Transport Deptt, Govt of Sikkim-Rs 2,10,000/-			
3	Make / Model	Toyota Innova	Year of Manufacture
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	Life of the Vehicle	09 Years	
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2	Make / Model	Toyota Innova	Year of Manufacture
	Engine No-	2KD 6403743	Nov-09
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	Life of the Vehicle	09 Years	
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On "as is where is basis" Lowest amount of the tender should not be below then Rs 2,10,000/- (Two Lakh Ten Thousand Only) /- . Sealed tender should reach to the Office of Chief Executive Officer, Sikkim Tourism Development Corporation, Hotel Mayur, P.S.Road, Gangtok.

Duly accompanied by the earnest money in the form of TDR of Rs10,000/- (Rupees Ten Thousand Only) drawn in favour of Sikkim Tourism Development Corporation as on 19th December 2018.

The tender will be opened on the next day (i.e. 20th Dec 2018) between 15.00 hrs -16.00 hrs in the presence of Tender Committee and interested parties at Sikkim Tourism Development Corporation, Head Office, Hotel Mayur, P.S. Road, Gangtok

The Vehicle can be inspected at Burtuk Helipad with the permission of the Assistant Manager, Burtuk Helipad during working hour between 10.00 hrs to 15.00 hrs.Sikkim Tourism Development Corporation reserves the right to reject any or all tender without assigning any reason thereof.

Tender forms could be collected by paying Rs. 1000/- (Non Refundable) from below mentioned addresses (During, working hour between 10.00 hrs to 15.00 hrs.)

1. Sikkim Tourism Development Corporation, Head Office, Hotel Mayur, P.S. Road, Gangtok

2. STDC, Travel Division Office, M.G. Marg, Gangtok

3. STDC Burtuk Helipad

Sd/-
Chief Executive Officer,
Sikkim Tourism Development Corporation
Hotel Mayur, 1st Floor
P.S. Road, Gangtok

Kirsten, Gibbs, Powar to appear for women's coach interviews on Thursday

MUMBAI, DEC 19 (PTI):

The next step in the hunt for India's new women's cricket coach will be taken here Thursday when short-listed candidates, including Gary Kirsten, Herschelle Gibbs and incumbent Ramesh Powar, appear for interviews before the BCCI selection panel.

The other shortlisted candidates out of the 28 applicants who will be interviewed are W V Raman, Venkatesh Prasad, Manoj Prabhakar, Trent Johnston, Mark Coles, Dimitri Mascarenhas and Brad Hogg. The high-profile short-list which will be interviewed by an ad-hoc panel comprising ex-India players Kapil Dev, Anshuman Gaekwad and Shantha Rangswamy.

It is learnt that most of the foreigners will give their presentation via Skype while locals like Powar will appear in person. "The ad-hoc panel comprises former players of high repute. I have no doubt that the committee will pick the best one," a BCCI official told PTI.

HACHIOJI (JAPAN), DEC 19 (AFP): Yudai Shigeoka has long dreamed of becoming a world boxing champion, but a decision that could see the sport excluded from the 2020 Olympics might deal his hopes a knockout blow.

The International Olympic Committee said last month it was suspending preparations for boxing at the Tokyo 2020 Games over governance concerns, leaving Japanese boxers in limbo.

"All of us have been practising for the Tokyo Olympics," the 21-year-old told AFP after an evening training session at the Takushoku University gym in the Tokyo suburb of Hachioji.

"Honestly, it'll be shocking for boxers if a dream that is right in front of us just disappears."

The IOC took the decision over concerns about the sport's troubled governing body, the International Boxing Association (AIBA), which is now under investigation by the Olympic committee.

IOC President Thomas Bach declined to promise that boxing would be part of the 2020 Games, though he pledged at a Tokyo press conference to "make all efforts to protect the athletes, as we always do".

Japan's boxing federation is taking the issue seriously, with its president warning of "major damage" to the boxing world if the sport is excluded from the 2020 Games.

"The number of boxing athletes could decline because of this," president Sadanobu Uchida told AFP.

- CHILDHOOD DREAMS -



There are currently about 5,000 amateur boxers -- mostly men -- in Japan.

"Athletes train for years for the Olympics, saying it's their childhood dream... The Olympics is such a special event for them," he said.

And because boxers often have a shorter career than other athletes, they have fewer chances to qualify for the Olympics, which takes place every four years, he added.

The federation has warned its coaches to pay close attention to the

decision's effect on athletes, fearing they may become demoralised and lose motivation.

They have also collected more than 450,000 signatures on a petition asking the IOC to keep the sport in the Olympics.

"We really hope boxing tournaments will be held. I have faith they will be," Uchida said.

Boxing has an ancient Olympic tradition and has featured at every modern games since 1904, with

the exception of the 1912 Games in Stockholm because Swedish law at the time banned the sport.

"It'll be sad if boxing is scrapped. It'll be sad for everyone who does boxing," said Shigeoka, captain of the university's team.

As a child he practised karate, but he switched to boxing when he turned 13 and won national titles four times when he was in high school. Now he practises with 20 other members of the team two

hours a day, six days a week. They run, do sit-ups, spar, shadow box and train with sandbags.

- LEFT IN LIMBO -

Last month, he came in top at the country's biggest national championships for amateur boxers.

Masayuki Urashima, a 22-year-old student who trains with Shigeoka, fears his efforts "will be wasted" if boxing is removed from the Tokyo games.

Many of his fellow fourth-year teammates have quit boxing as they look for a job, but Urashima has decided to continue training, hoping to be selected for the Tokyo Games.

"Competing at the Olympics is what I dream of. It's a good opportunity because it's going to be held in Tokyo."

Japanese boxers ought to have a leg-up when it comes to qualifying, because as host nation they are guaranteed seven spots -- five for men and two for women.

Ordinarily, the number would depend on how Japanese boxers fared in Asian qualifiers. At the 2016 Rio Games, they only secured two spots.

The IOC's final decision on whether to include boxing in the 2020 programme is not expected until June next year, and until then Urashima and Shigeoka say they will keep training and hoping.

"Whether or not I'm good enough, I want to do my best until the end," Urashima said, adding that he plans to quit boxing after 2020.

"I just really want to compete in the Olympics.

Some steps forward but no end to Indian tennis' stagnation in mixed 2018

NEW DELHI, DEC 19 (PTI): The resurrection and rise of some players could hardly fill the overall vacuum in Indian tennis which endured its familiar share of disappointment and drama in 2018 amid a glimmer hope for the future.

That the vacuum is real can be gauged from the fact that a 45-year-old Leander Paes is still India's biggest player, winning titles even this year, dropping no hints of retirement. It is a tribute to his longevity but also a reflection of the lack of depth in Indian tennis.

This is not to say that the younger lot did not take strides forward, they did, but none was big enough to shake up the circuit.

Prominent among the movers was Prajnesh Gunneswaran, who is a heart-warming tale of rising from the ashes.

For someone who appeared destined to be lost after being hampered by career-threatening knee stress fractures, Prajnesh's perseverance pulled him through.

From starting the year at 243rd in the rankings, the gritty left-hander overtook both Yuki Bhambri and Ramkumar Ramanathan to be the country's number one player at 107th.

An Asian Games singles bronze was the just reward for his never-say-die spirit which was earlier on display when he beat rising Chinese star Yibing Wu in the decisive fifth rubber in a Davis Cup Asia/Oceania group 1 tie in April.

Prajnesh's win came when country's top player Yuki Bhambri was not part of the tie due to injury.

That 6-4 6-2 triumph sealed India's place in the World group play-offs. But the team itself could not go past that stage and is back in the qualifying round for the 2019 competition after a 0-4 loss to Serbia.

After making four finals this year on the Challenger circuit and converting them into two titles Anning and Bengaluru entering the top-100 is the next logical step for the 29-year-old Chennai-lad, who lost five crucial years to injuries.

In contrast, both Bhambri and Ramanathan failed to realise the potential that has been spoken of ever since they arrived on the circuit.

In Bhambri's case, injuries were a major cause for his lack of growth. It was a stop-start year for Bhambri, who first made it to top-100 in 2015.

Ramanathan, on the other hand, has managed to remain injury-free but has mostly buckled under pressure. A testimony to his fitness is the 35 tournaments he played in 2018, something which also helped him keep his place in the top-150 despite moderate success.

Ramanathan's biggest result came when he made his maiden ATP 250 final in New Port.

The depth in doubles got better for India with as many as seven players figuring in top-100 at one stage. At the year end, that number stands at five after Vishnu Vardhan and N Sriram Balaji dropped out.

Divij Sharan made the year his own. Despite losing trusted partner Purav Raja, the Delhi left-hander went on to become India's number one doubles player, overtaking Rohan Bopanna, who has been the country's best in this format.

Bopanna and Sharan combined to pick up India's fifth ever men's doubles gold at the Asian Games.

Sharan did not win an ATP title this year but he did play semifinals nine times apart from a quarterfinal appearance at the Wimbledon with Artem Sitak.

Now he and Bopanna have decided to pair up for 2019, keeping in mind the Tokyo Olympics in 2020.

Another player who deserves kudos this year is Jeevan Nedunchezhiyan, who played nine finals on Challenger circuit and won four titles. He also came close to winning his second ATP 250 level title but lost the final at Chengdu Open.

However, there was no stopping old warhorse Paes, who became the most successful doubles player in the history of the Davis Cup by winning his 43rd match in the competition.

His 11th-hour pullout from the Asian Games did raise a few eyebrows given that the reason cited was the denial of a partner of choice -- an issue which seems to crop up with alarming regularity before every major multi-sport assignment for Indian tennis.

In the women's circuit, trailblazer Sania Mirza was on maternity leave and was blessed with a son towards the end of the year. She is preparing to be back in action next year.

Among others, Ankita Raina was at her fighting best and Karman Kaur Thandi did show that she is one for the future on the women's circuit. Ankita won a rare singles bronze medal at the Asian Games.

Administratively not much changed but thanks to KSLTA and MSLTA, the Indian players made most of the home Challenges.

Prajnesh featured in both the finals, winning the Bengaluru open against Saketh Myneni and ending a runners-up to Elias Ymer in Pune.

But it would take a lot more than that to make Indian tennis a force globally.

Langer says loved India's aggression; calls Kohli-Paine showdown humorous

PERTH, DEC 19 (PTI):

Australian coach Justin Langer says he quite liked India's aggressive yet not-crossing-the-line approach in the second Test and insisted that the heated exchanges between Virat Kohli and Tim Paine were humorous not abusive.

India skipper Kohli and his Australian counterpart Paine clashed on the field a few times and exchanged a lot of words, with physical contact almost becoming a reality at one point.

However, Langer said that he enjoyed the confrontation.

"I thought it was brilliant. As the two captains and they're trying to stamp their authority on the game and I don't think at any point there was any abuse or any real aggression to it," Langer told 'Fox Cricket'.

"In fact there was a bit of humour and there's been a lot of talk about banter. There's got to be some in a Test match. It's a great part of the game, and there was actually a bit of humour, a bit of Aussie humour as well.

"That's what we pride ourselves on we've got a bad reputation in a lot of ways, but when there's a bit of humour in it I thought it was a good exchange," he said.

Langer said he was happy that his team could stand its ground against an aggressive India during the Test.

"...It was quite emotional at the end of day three to be honest because I felt India had been really aggressive. I love it and that's what Test cricket is really about. But we just needed to keep standing our ground with our skill, and hopefully we did that in this Test match," he said.

Asked about that particular



moment when Kohli and Paine were almost in each other's physical space, Langer said it was all part of the theatrics.

"I think the days of Dennis Lillee and Javed Miandad are gone. I think Andrew Symonds did it to a spectator one day, it was one of the best shirt-fronts you've ever seen in your life, but I can't ever imagine that in the environment we're now in with so many cameras," he said.

"It'd be absolutely silly for that to happen. That's not cricket. They (Paine and Kohli) got close, but in a lot of ways it's not a contact sport. We get that, but it was all part of that theatre of Test cricket and I didn't see anything malicious in that."

India lost the second Test by 146 runs as Australia pulled level 1-1 in the series.

Langer said that the win -- Australia's first since the ball tampering scandal -- was more relief than joyous.

"When we got Rishabh Pant out, that was the first time in about 16 hours that I relaxed.

I just had this sneaking suspicion - he's a very dangerous player, when

he got out I thought 'ok now we can maybe enjoy it,'" Langer said.

"I remember my first Test hundred, if you go to my house there's the bat I had, and it's just a relief after all that time. It's probably eight years, and that was the emotion. In a lot of ways that's the emotion now, relief to get the result."

"A lot of them (Australian cricketers) have been bashed for nine months. Now they can sit back and enjoy it."

Langer also praised Paine's leadership skills.

"Tim Paine is the toughest pretty boy I've seen, but he is incredibly impressive as a captain and a person. He hasn't got a bad bone in his body. What the world doesn't see is his presence in the change room," he said.

"He's a real learner, he's very thorough, he prepares as well as anyone ... the other thing about Tim Paine we often forget is he's literally the best keeper in the world...He's an unbelievable cricketer," said the coach.

India made the mistake of not going with a full-time spinner and it proved costly in the end, with Nathan Lyon

picking man-of-the-match award for his eight wickets.

Langer paid tribute to the off-spinner.

"When Mohammed Shami was bowling his aggressive spell (in the second innings on day four), I was nervous to watch and was thinking 'maybe we should declare now because we didn't want anything to happen to Nathan Lyon (or any of our bowlers),' he said.

"Kohli's the best player in the world. Those two wickets (for Lyon on day four), what he allows us to do by bowling so well is give our fast bowlers a bit more of a spell. And he can bowl so well, not just holding up an end but he's taking wickets for us," said Langer.

While India have brought in Mayank Agarwal and Hardik Pandya for the Boxing Day Test, Australia have named an unchanged squad, even as doubts surface over the form of middle-order batsman Peter Handscomb.

"There are areas every one of our players can improve... The only thing I've spoken to him (Handscomb) about so far is I wonder if he's watching the ball..." he pointed out.

10-man AC Milan draws 0-0 at relegation-threatened Bologna

ROME, DEC 19 (AP): Following a week in which it was eliminated from the Europa League and hit with a financial fair play penalty, AC Milan didn't do much to help itself with a 0-0 draw at relegation-threatened Bologna in Serie A.

Milan finished with 10 men after midfielder Tiemoue Bakayoko was sent off after picking up his second yellow card in three minutes on Tuesday. Gonzalo Higuain and Hakan Calhanoglu both missed chances for Milan.

Desperate to qualify for the lucrative Champions League, Milan is fourth in Serie A, two points ahead of fifth-place Lazio.

The top four teams qualify for the elite European competition.

Last week, Milan was fined 12 million euros (USD 13.6 million) by UEFA and threatened with a one-season ban from European competition for breaking financial fair play rules.

UEFA said its club finance panel ruled the ban will be activated if Milan fails to break even on soccer-related business in June 2021. If Milan fails to comply, it will be banned for the next UEFA competition it qualifies for in either of the 2022-23 or 2023-24 seasons. The decision was announced the day after Milan was eliminated from the Europa League in the group stage. The 12 million euros will be deducted from its prize money.

The fine is one of the biggest imposed by UEFA since financial fair play sanctions began in 2014.

Bologna remained third from the bottom.

Putin: Russia has enough missiles without violating treaty

MOSCOW, DEC 18 (AP): President Vladimir Putin on Tuesday rejected the US claim that Russia developed a new cruise missile in violation of a key nuclear treaty, arguing that Russia has no need for such a land-based weapon because it already has similar missiles on its ships and aircraft.

Washington warned this month it would suspend its obligations under the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty (INF) in 60 days if Russia did not return to full compliance.

The US claims the 9M729 cruise missile breaches the INF, which bans all land-based cruise and ballistic missiles with a range of 500 to 5,500 kilometers (300 to 3,400 miles.) Moscow has repeatedly denied the accusation.

Speaking to Russia's top military brass Tuesday, Putin rejected the US claim of developing a land-based cruise missile, saying Russia now has similar air- and sea-launched weapons to do the job. Putin said the Russian military has successfully tested air-launched Kh-101 and sea-launched Kalibr cruise missiles with



a range of 4,500 kilometers (2,790 miles) in combat in Syria.

"It has probably made our partners worry, but it doesn't violate the INF treaty," Putin said.

Putin said the treaty signed by US President Ronald Reagan and Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev didn't limit sea- and air-launched cruise missiles, which the Soviet Union didn't have at the time and the United States did in significant numbers.

The Russian president argued that the pact represented "unilateral disarmament" for the Soviet Union, adding: "God only knows why the Soviet leadership did it." He emphasized that with Russian strategic bombers and navy ships now armed with long-range cruise missiles, it makes the development of similar land-based weapons redundant.

"It makes no difference whatsoever if we have a Kalibr-armed submarine or aircraft carrying missiles or similar weapons ashore," he said. "We can strike any targets within the range of 4,500 kilometers from the territory of Russia."

Putin added, however, that Russia could easily build such land-based missiles if the US opts out of the INF Treaty, which he described as a key stabilizing factor.

"If we have similar air- and sea-launched systems, it wouldn't be that difficult for us to do some research and development to put them on land if needed," he said.

Putin added that Russia also has other new weapons that aren't banned by the INF, such as the air-launched Kinzhal hypersonic missile and the Avangard hypersonic glide vehicle, saying that they have significantly bolstered Russia's military capability.

"No one has hypersonic weapons yet, but we have it," he said.

Kinzhal has already been commissioned by the military, which put

them in service with a squadron of MiG-31 fighter jets.

Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu said Tuesday that the aircraft carrying missiles have flown 89 patrol missions over the Caspian and the Black Seas this year.

Shoigu said the Avangard will enter service with the military next year. Putin suggested that other countries that built intermediate-range missiles should be engaged in talks on a possible new agreement.

"Why not start talks on their accession to the treaty, or discuss parameters of a new agreement?" he said.

Trump ex-security chief sold country out, says judge

WASHINGTON, DEC 18 (AFP): President Donald Trump's former national security chief on Tuesday received a delay in sentencing for lying over Russian contacts, after a judge threatened him with stiff jail time and said: "You sold your country out."

Russia collusion investigation head Robert Mueller had proposed Flynn receive no jail time for lying to investigators about his Moscow ties - and in his own pitch to the court last week, Flynn had requested the same.

But Judge Emmet Sullivan said Flynn had behaved in a "traitorous" manner and suggested he was prepared to deliver a tough sentence to the former three-star general, saying Flynn's crime as a key White House player was far beyond those that lower-level Trump campaign aides had committed.

Sullivan gave Flynn the option to move ahead with sentencing, or put it off until the Mueller probe is more advanced and Flynn can better demonstrate his cooperation with the Russia collusion probe.

"I want to be frank with you, this crime is very serious," Sullivan said. "I'm not hiding my disgust, my disdain." "Arguably, you sold your country out."

Flynn was facing a standard sentence of zero to six months in prison after he pleaded guilty to lying to FBI investigators in January 2017, just after Trump became president, about his communications with then Russian ambassador Sergei Kislyak.

Mueller had told the court that no jail time was merited based on Flynn's cooperation with

the probe, including 19 interviews over the past year, and his long record of military service.

But Sullivan noted that Flynn had already avoided charges of violating laws on interference with US foreign policy and had skirted being included in Monday's indictment of two Flynn business partners for illegally working for Turkey.

"This case is in a category by itself right now," Sullivan said.

Flynn was one of the first to face charges in the sweeping Mueller investigation into possible collusion with Moscow in the 2016 election, reaching a plea deal announced just over one year ago.

It remains unknown what Flynn has told investigators about Trump, whom he served in the White House for just weeks in 2017 before resigning in the wake of scandal.

The former top aide was accused of hiding repeated contacts with the Russian ambassador to the United States and accepting USD 530,000 from Turkey to illegally lobby for the country during the campaign.

Trump has maintained that Flynn was tricked by FBI agents into lying as part of a broader scheme to damage his presidency.

"The whole Russian Witch Hunt is a Fraud and a Hoax which should be ended immediately," he tweeted on Tuesday before Flynn's sentencing.

As a star Marine Flynn, 60, was credited for his battlefield intelligence operations and went on to become head of the powerful Defense Intelligence Agency.

But he spent just two

years in the position before being removed in 2014 by then-president Barack Obama for mismanagement.

After that he moved into politics on the far right and joined Trump's election campaign as a senior advisor.

In July 2016 he spoke at the Republican convention where he led a now-iconic, rousing chant of "lock her up" directed at Trump's Democratic election rival Hillary Clinton.

The US intelligence community had strongly opposed his post-election appointment as White House national security advisor, considering him as someone given to bizarre conspiracy theories and possibly compromised by the Russians.

He had been paid several times to join Russian company events, most notably in December 2015 when he sat next to President Vladimir Putin at a gala for the country's state-run RT television.

In December 2016 he communicated numerous times with Kislyak, allegedly promising to lighten sanctions - a stance seen as undermining the policy of Obama, who was still president.

Revelations of those discussions led to Mueller's probe of his actions.

Flynn may have angered investigators and the court last week when, echoing one of Trump's longstanding allegations, he suggested FBI agents tricked him into lying and alleged that the agents themselves had come under investigation.

Mueller's team sharply rebuffed Flynn, releasing the record of the interview and saying there was "nothing" in the FBI's actions that caused him to lie.

Belgian prime minister announces resignation

BRUSSELS, DEC 19 (AFP): Belgian Prime Minister Charles Michel has announced his resignation, less than two weeks after his main coalition partner quit in a row over migration, leaving him leading a minority government. Michel, who took office in 2014, lost the backing of the New Flemish Alliance (N-VA) over his support for the UN migration pact, a cause celebre for European anti-immigration parties.

His resignation Tuesday comes two days after demonstrations against the pact in central Brussels descended into scuffles, with police forced to use tear gas and water cannon to restore order.

After a debate in parliament where opposition parties refused to lend their support to keep his government working until legislative elections in May next year, Michel announced he would quit. "I have taken the decision to submit my resignation and it is my intention to go to see the king immediately," Michel said, jumping before lawmakers could push him with a motion of no confidence.

Afterwards, King Philippe received Michel but will hold consultations before deciding whether to accept his resignation, the palace said in a statement.

Agriculture Minister Denis Ducarme of Michel's liberal MR party, criticised left wing and green parties for risking "paralysis and crisis for our country" instead of cooperating. The Flemish nationalist N-VA, led by powerful Antwerp mayor Bart De Wever, had made political demands which Michel judged "unacceptable" -- notably on possible constitutional changes.

Trump signals retreat on wall funding, but shutdown threat remains



WASHINGTON, DEC 19 (AFP): President Donald Trump backed off his demand for USD 5 billion in border wall funding but his subsequent offer was rejected by congressional Democrats, leaving the opposing sides struggling to avert a partial US government shutdown.

Trump had stood firm for days, declaring he needed the funds to build the controversial wall, defiantly proclaiming last week that he would be "proud" to stop some government operations cold after a midnight Friday deadline if he did not get his wish.

He appeared to ease that stance early Tuesday when the White House said it did not want a shutdown and was looking for "other ways" to obtain funding, including getting Congress to re-program USD 1 billion in unspent funds so Trump could use them on his immigration policies.

"The president asked every one of his cabinet secretaries to look for funding that can be used to protect our borders," White House spokeswoman Sarah Sanders said.

Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi -- set to become speaker of the House when Democrats take control of the chamber January 3 -- and top Senate Democrat Chuck Schumer shot down the

proposal, saying the USD 1.6 billion in border security funding in proposed legislation is sufficient.

"Leader Schumer and I have said that we cannot accept the offer they made of a billion-dollar slush fund for the president to implement his very wrong immigration policies," Pelosi told reporters. "So that won't happen."

The deadlock leaves thousands of federal workers in limbo, wondering whether they will be sent home without pay one week before Christmas.

Trump said it was still "too early to say" whether a deal could be struck in time.

"We'll see what happens," he said at the White House. "We need border security." If Republican and Democratic lawmakers fail to reach agreement on a spending package by midnight Friday, parts of the government will slide into a shutdown, paralysing some federal operations.

The exact impact is difficult to foretell. About 75 per cent of the government is already funded through September 2019.

But a quarter of government operations still require spending agreements and could face disruptions, including the departments of justice and homeland security.

Republicans presently control Congress, including 51 seats in the 100-member Senate. But a deal in the upper chamber can only advance with 60 votes, meaning Democratic support is vital.

Pelosi said the path forward remained unclear, and that a stopgap "continuing resolution," or CR, might be required.

Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell insisted he remained confident there would be no work stoppage.

"I think a government shutdown is not a good option," McConnell said, adding he was in discussions with the White House on ways forward. But he acknowledged that a brief CR might be the likeliest move.

"If we end up going with a relatively short-term CR, we will end up, in effect, punting this year's business into next year," McConnell said.

Meanwhile, Sanders expressed optimism that the White House could find legal ways to obtain extra funding.

"There are certainly a number of different funding sources that we've identified that we can use... that would help us get to that USD 5 billion that the president needs in order to protect our border," she said on Fox News.

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

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

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FASHIONISTA! Singer Rita Ora rocks a fab Fendi look while out and about in New York City.



Shortlists for Oscars in nine categories announced

Los Angeles, Dec 18 (PTI): The Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences has announced shortlists in consideration for the 91st Oscars in nine categories, weeks before the nominations in other categories go live.

Nominations for the awards will be announced on Tuesday, January 22, 2019.

The Oscars will be held on Sunday, February 24, 2019, at the Dolby Theatre at Hollywood & Highland Center in Hollywood.

Semi-finalists in Documentary Feature, Documentary Short Subject, Foreign Language Film, Makeup and Hairstyling, Music (Original Score), Music (Original Song), Ani-

mated Short Film, Live Action Short Film and Visual Effects are as follows:

DOCUMENTARY FEATURE Charm City Communion Crime + Punishment Dark Money The Distant Barking of Dogs Free Solo Hale County This Morning, This Evening Minding the Gap Of Fathers and Sons On Her Shoulders RBG Shirkers The Silence of Others Three Identical Strangers Won't You Be My Neighbor? **DOCUMENTARY SHORT SUBJECT** Black Sheep End Game Lifeboat Los Comandos My Dead Dad's Porno Tapes A Night at the Garden Period. End of Sentence.

ARIES: Someone might try to charm you into opening your wallet or try to sell you something you don't even need, so have a ready reply to politely turn them down. With generous Venus trading fire with the moon across your financial axis, it's hard to know WHAT might come down the monetary pike. Avoid temptation by steering clear of your favorite shopping destinations or carrying cash so you don't spend over budget. **TAURUS:** Come here...now go away? Today, your ruler, Venus, who is positioned in your partnership realm faces off with the moon in Taurus. This could cause a random misunderstanding in a key relationship—or bring someone totally new into your orbit. Bottom line: Even if you feel a strong attraction, you could easily shift into mixed-signal mode without meaning to be cold or coy.

GEMINI: With easygoing Venus in your wellness corner getting an oppositional zap from the moon in your subconscious zone, you may be torn between hitting Pilates after work or just going home and ordering pizza. It's not going

to work to push yourself if you're tired. But some meditative exercise, like a walk home from work, will clear your head and help you get in tune with the feelings that might be causing these self-soothing cravings.

CANCER: Fickle much, Cancer? Thanks to a tug of war between Venus in your passionate fifth house and the moon in your unpredictable eleventh, your emotions could be all over the map. You could be wildly drawn to someone only to find out, moments later, that they're not even close to touching your baseline standards. And it runs both ways: Someone you're getting to know could ghost you after forming what you THOUGHT was an incredible connection.

LEO: Unanticipated changes at work could throw a wrench into your plans today, as the moon in your professional zone stares down agreeable Venus in your realm of home and family. You won't feel happy if you have to cancel (or alter) a plan with a close friend or relative, es-

Nothing I love more than directing: Kangana on her directorial debut



MUMBAI, DEC 18

(PTI): Actor Kangana

Ranaut, who is making a controversial directorial debut with "Manikarnika: The Queen of Jhansi" after its director Radha Krishna Jagarlamudi left the project, says she

Kangana, who dressed up as her character of Rani Laxmibai at the trailer launch of the film, said it was Prasoon Joshi, dialogue writer of the film, who suggested she helm the film.

"Prasoon Joshi first showed confidence in me and said I would be the right person (to direct the film). I was not ready. When I started shooting for the film, we had action and horse riding and all of that. I felt I was a duck paddling beneath the surface.

"It was all too much for me from action to costumes to drama. But the whole team was warm to me. I was conscious as there were a lot of things in the media, gossip and opposition as they don't know what has happened and at this time we could go and clarify things. But everyone was warm to me and I felt confident," she said.

The film is set to be released on January 25, 2019 and will clash with Hrithik Roshan's "Super 30" and Emraan Hashmi's "Cheat India".

She did not directly comment on the clash but said choosing January 25 was important for them, keeping the patriotic theme of the film in mind.

"Nobody pressured me for this release date but I felt this film should have this sentiment as far as the release date is concerned like Republic Day or

loved sweating it out like a technician on the film.

At the trailer launch of the film, Kangana said she loved being out in the sun and would swap the luxuries of a star for a seat behind the camera without any hesitation.

"I don't know what is it about me but I really love working as a technician. No actor wants to be out in the sun as opposed to being in the AC van. No actor wants to be among 80 sweaty people who are asking you 100 questions.

"I don't know what is it about me that I am so comfortable in this job. There is nothing I love more than directing. Even though I don't get to wear make-up or look like my star self or get any special treatment. It is absolutely a worker's life to be honest, but there's something so amazing about this job that I don't know why people even consider this a job. It is so much fun. I think acting is more like a job but directing is a lot of fun. I hope I get more chances to do this. This seems like my first love," she told reporters.

Kangana has been credited as the co-director on the film, which was in the headlines after Jagarlamudi left the project abruptly reportedly due to creative differences with Kangana, who plays the title role.

Jagarlamudi has not commented on his departure but the producers said he left the film midway as the dates were clashing with his forthcoming project, a biopic on NTR.

Independence Day." Though the actor or producers did not directly comment on what was the reason behind Jagarlamudi's departure from the film, Kangana admitted that the subject is "jinxed".

"This subject is jinxed, a lot of people tried to make it. When we started this film I got hurt, I got 20 stitches. We faced obstacles like people falling from horse, this was ok but has it ever happened that a director has left the film?"

The director's departure is not the only controversy that has come Kangana's way as director Ketan Mehta had accused her and producer Kaman Jain of "breach of trust" as the actor reportedly had said 'yes' to his project but later moved ahead with another director.

Kangana said she was overjoyed when writer KV Vijayendra Prasad of "Baahubali" and "Bajrangi Bhaijaan" fame narrated the script to her. "When Vijendra sir came to me I was clapping and absolutely exhilarated when he narrated. I have taken their vision ahead. I could interpret because I have shot 60-70 per cent of the film. As far as creative aspect is concerned I would like to give to the writers. The script was never changed," she said.

"It is not that I had to taken someone's vision ahead with the material I was given. I had my own vision. It is a definitely much more difficult to step into someone else shoes," she added.

Being best friends key to sustaining romantic relationship: Ranveer on Deepika

JUSTIN RAO

MUMBAI, DEC 18 (PTI): Ranveer Singh says being best friends with one's spouse is "key to sustaining a romantic relationship". Ranveer tied the knot with his girlfriend of six years, actor Deepika Padukone in an intimate twin wedding ceremony in Italy last month.

"Being best friends with each other is truly the dynamic. We are deeply in love with each other but above all we are best friends. We are each other's support system, companions. We have a lot of fun together.

"Being each other's best friend is truly paramount, where you can share silences, laughter and light moments. To have somebody who makes the passing of the lifetime a pleasant experience everyday is very rare and precious," the actor told PTI in an interview.

The couple started dating on the sets of Sanjay Leela Bhansali's "Ram Leela". The duo then went on to feature in two more of Bhansali's films "Bajirao Mastani" and "Padmaavat."

"I feel like the two greatest things I've done in my life is, one, become an actor and two, get myself the most amazing

life partner one can hope for," he adds.

Ranveer credits Deepika for curating every aspect of their "fairytale" wedding.

"I had this fairytale wedding and I keep telling my wife that it's the stuff of dreams. I could not have even dreamed of such

a wedding. It's beyond my imagination. I could never have the vision for it. She meticulously curated and designed every aspect of it. "It was everything as it should have been - the most joyous month of our lives, there were tears of happiness throughout. It will be a fond memory in our hearts forever," he says.

The actor says some-

one "very senior" in the film industry told the couple after the wedding that as youth icons their tying the knot has "reinstated everyone's faith in the institution of marriage".

"In the day and age we live in, the concept of marriage is questioned sometimes. This person told us how this has made a socio-cultural impact. To make a commitment is a positive sign. I feel lucky and blessed. As cliché as it sounds, she's literally the best thing to have happened to me," he says.



AQUARIUS: Build a little flextime into your schedule today, Water Bearer. You might not wake up expecting to have to put out fires on the home front—and hopefully you won't—but today's stars urge foresight. With loyal Venus in your career corner, you're all about meeting your professional obligations. But a tense opposition from the moon in your home court could spark a domestic drama. Put out the flames, and if you have to calm someone down, make that your priority. **PISCES:** Pause before you publish! You might be mortified by how your most innocent comment gets twisted under today's opposition of tactful Venus in your candid ninth house and the sensitive moon in your communication center. If that hasn't happened (yet), make it your business to carefully review every word you're about to utter and every social media blurb you're planning to post. And withhold the Tweetstorms or vaguebooking about "certain people," unless you want friends to start wondering if you're throwing them virtual shade!

and the emo moon in your relationship realm. As the diplomat of the solar system, Venus will do anything to keep the peace, but the erratic vibes you're feeling are probably beyond your control. Try to keep your anger and frustration in check because there will be a strong temptation to go volcanic on someone.

SAGITTARIUS: An unsettling face-off between the moon and mellow Venus in your soothing twelfth house could raise your hackles. You might deliberately be laying low, trying to catch up on your rest or do some behind-the-scenes quiet work when someone invades your space, intent on getting your attention (and maybe pushing your buttons while they're at it).

CAPRICORN: Be careful who you confide in today, Capricorn. A drama-dredging opposition between amicable Venus in your social sector and the moon in your passionate fifth house could cause you to mistake a frenemy for an ally. Even your true crew may be acting out their issues, and someone might look you straight in the eye and project all their baggage right onto you!

pecially if the bonding time is long overdue. But deadlines are deadlines, so find a tactful way of letting them know—and don't be too surprised if they overreact. Give 'em a day or two to calm before you try to make "amends." This too shall pass. **VIRGO:** Blurt alert! With diplomatic Venus in your communication center, you might feel like you know exactly how to package a message. Yet the peacekeeping planet is in the crosshairs of the moon in your "honest to a fault" ninth house, which could give your words an unintended edge.

LIBRA: A flare-up of emotional insecurity could catch you off-guard today as your ruler, tender Venus, skirmishes with the moon in your zone of intense emotions. If you're feeling underappreciated or neglected, be careful not to lash out at the people in your life—especially your love interest.

SCORPIO: Get out your decoder ring, Scorpio. You might need it to unscramble some of the mixed signals that are inevitable under today's tense opposition between passionate Venus in your sign