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Summit **TIMES**

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ON TOP OF THE NEWS

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Two Sikkimese appointed as AIFF instructors

SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 13 FEB: Two football coaches from Sikkim have been appointed as Instructors to conduct the All India Football Federation 'E' certificate course. All India Football Federation [AIFF], New Delhi has appointed two coaches of Sikkim Football Association, Anil Tamang and Alpan Lepcha as Instructors for conducting AIFF "E" Certificate Course.

An SFA press release issued by its president, Menla Ethenpa informs that Grassroots Department of AIFF has given Anil Tamang his first assignment as Instructor to conduct this course in Kolkata and Shillong, while Alpan Lepcha has got his assignment as Instructor to conduct the said course in Kalyani, West Bengal.

While congratulating both coaches, Mr Ethenpa said that to become an instructor at national level is not an easy task, ultimately the hard work put in by both the coaches has paid off.



Not a pretty picture - the community hall at Gyalshing

RUDRA KAUSHIK
GYALSHING, 13 FEB:

The Community Hall here, opened with much fanfare barely two decades back, wallows in derelict condition now, awaiting much needed repairs since maintenance has been ignored for far too many years.

The facility, which houses a hall and also the public library, is a much-used venue for official

functions and community events. Unfortunately, even as the community hall was put to good, some might say even excessive, use, not enough attention was paid to upkeep.

As a result, the building wears a broken down look with missing window panes and damaged chairs.

The roof leaks, and this has not only damaged the walls and even electrical fittings, but is now de-

facing paintings by famous artists put up in the community hall.

And even as the roof leaks, the taps don't receive enough water and nowhere is this more telling than in the filth of the toilets.

The fountain, constructed near the centre as part of an ambitious bazar beautification project, has not worked in a while and is now a stagnant pool of water perfect to breed mosquitoes.

SC directs parties to share details of pending criminal cases against candidates



NEW DELHI, FEB 13 (PTI): The Supreme Court on Thursday directed all political parties to upload on their website details of pending criminal cases against candidates contesting polls, noting that there has been an alarming increase in criminalisation of politics.

The apex court said political parties will also have to upload reasons for selecting candidates with pending criminal cases on their website.

The court passed orders on a contempt plea which raised the issue of

criminalisation of politics claiming that directions given by the apex court in its September 2018 verdict relating to disclosure of criminal antecedents by candidates are not being followed.

A bench headed by Justice Rohinton Fali Nariman also directed that political parties will publish these details on social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter and in one local vernacular and one national newspaper.

The top court said political parties will have

to submit a compliance report in this regard to the Election Commission within 72 hours of selecting candidates having pending criminal cases against them.

It directed that the EC shall bring it to the notice of the apex court in case of failure of political parties to comply with its directions.

While pronouncing the order, the bench said it appears that there has been an alarming increase in criminalisation of politics in the last four general elections.

SAI selection trials for Namchi SAG Centre

SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 13 FEB: Sports Authority of India [SAI] has announced a talent scouting drive to select trainees in different sports disciplines to enroll at SAI SAG Centre, Namchi in South Sikkim under Residential & Non-Residential category for year 2020-21 in the age group of 12 to 16 years. The selection trials will be conducted on 15 and 16 Feb at SAI SAG Centre, Allay, in Namchi.

A notice from SAI informs that age relaxation may be considered in case of meritorious persons. The selection trial will be conducted in Archery [Boys & Girls], Boxing [Boys & Girls], Football [Boys] and Taekwondo [Boys & Girls]. The minimum age limit is 12 years as on 01.02.20 for Boys & Girls and minimum height is 147 CMs for boys and 146 CMs for girls.

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Month-long Aikido workshop begins at Tadong College



SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 13 FEB:

A month-long Aikido workshop is being held at Nar Bahadur Bhandari Degree College, Tadong, from 14 Feb to 14 March, a press release informs.

The departments of English and Physical Education are organizing the workshop with support from Rashtriya Uchchar Siksha Abhiyaan (RUSA) under Education Department, Government of Sikkim.

The students are set to learn under the supervision of Sensei Paolo Salvadego, 8th Dan Kyoshi (master). The Kobayashi Ryu Aikido is recognised by Dak Nippon Butoku kai and the imperial family of Japan. Aikido's message is a message of freedom and peaceful coexistence: no domination, no submission, no compromise, the release mentions.

The Kobayashi Ryu Aikido concentrates on assisting the practitioner in improving the use of

their energy, the process in which thoughts are formulated effectively, and the way in which one channelizes their creativity. Aikido thus opens up the possibility of determining lives by freeing it from the past and training us to focus on our present.

The occasion saw the presence of the Joint Director of RUSA, Rajiv Roka who congratulated the college for formulating a novel way of learning for the benefit of the students. The Principal of the college, Dr. Bina Pradhan addressing the faculty members and students encouraged them to participate and optimize the opportunity provided by the college.

Sensei Paolo Salvadego introduced the history and evolution of the martial art technique to the students. He stated that aikido is not a sport but a way of life. Explaining, the Sensei stated, a sport brings about the spirit of competitiveness and the

pressure of performance, as a result, it transforms the martial technique, which is a conglomeration of ethics, aesthetics, and effectiveness of a martial form on the body as well as the mind. His lecture was followed by a demonstration of some of the key aikido features, where the student volunteers got a first-hand lesson from Sensei Paolo.

In one month's course, the students will be learning the various techniques of the martial art form and will focus on improving their self-consciousness. At the end of the workshop, all participants will be awarded a certificate, which will bear the prestigious seal of the imperial dojo of Japan. The workshop is conducted by the Sensei free of any costs for the college students. If any individual is interested in joining the workshop Sensei Paolo will be conducting classes at a minimal cost for such candidates.

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Muffler Man outmanoeuvres Modi-Shah Juggernaut

JIWAN RAI

The Republic of India's dirtiest, fiercest and therefore ugliest election results came in. Delhi elected its new government. The muffler man, Arvind Kejriwal muffled the BJP's deafening battle cry of hyper-nationalism with a welfarism and development floor plan. The AAP retained its incumbent position. The country, except for the BJP (at least in public), foreknew the results. The AAP was a clear winner from the word go. However, for the first two years, the AAP was sliding down with no clear roadmap to run Delhi government. The AAP's tough journey that began in 2015 became a cakewalk from 2017.

The thin-skinned Kejriwal had been trapped by the BJP for

the first two years after its victory in the 2015 election in a one-upmanship game. The belligerent BJP at the Centre used central bureaucracy to repress the AAP government. Rookie CM Arvind Kejriwal was pushed to the wall. The hapless and thoroughly bullied AAP seemingly lost all of its hopes to keep its electoral promises. Shouting itself hoarse, demanding the full statehood of Delhi, seemed like a last resort. Delhi became an arena for the BJP and AAP tussle. The more intense the game got, the touchier Kejriwal became. Just when the BJP was celebrating the wasted years of a distracted Delhi CM, he had an epiphany in 2017. The AAP lost the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) elections with a humble 21 seats. The BJP bagged

a massive 64 seats. The muffler man realized that the tu-tu main main with the BJP was self-destructive. Delhi citizens were too mature to ignore the precious time he was wasting over an inconsequential squabble. The rest is history.

He re-scripted his plan with the twin policies of welfarism and development as its centrepiece. He diverted all of his energy into his work. Free water and electricity for the Delhi underclass, transformation of the school infrastructure (both software and hardware), Mohalla clinics with free medicine, check-ups and 212 tests by empanelled laboratories, free rides for women in DTC buses - to name some of the major ones.

The tables suddenly turned. The BJP knew that Kejriwal was

now becoming India's most followed and talked about well-farist politician. The BJP knew that Delhiites were enamoured with his new avatar as a 'development man'. The BJP knew that it had no promises up its sleeve that would outclass Kejriwal's. The only option that was crying to be taken was to dare Kejriwal to take on the BJP on an ideological battle - namely Hindutva, of which Shaheen Bagh was the all-important part.

The weathered muffler man whipped out a muffler of soft Hindutva to keep his AAP warm against the stormy BJP-wala hard Hindutva. His three major moves muffled and baffled the strident BJP. First, he declared himself a devotee of Hanuman. Intriguingly enough, the AAP supporters

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INVITATION



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15 FEB 2020. MANAN KENDRA. 2 PM ONWARDS

Follow norms in dealing with MPs, MLAs or face action: Govt to bureaucrats

NEW DELHI, FEB 13 (PTI): All central and state government officers have been asked to follow norms in dealing with communications from MPs and MLAs or face action, according to an official order.

Chief secretaries of all states/union territories have been asked to sensitise officials with regard to their duties and obligations in so far as the movement of Members of Parliament (MPs) in general and more particularly during Parliament sessions, it said.

The move comes after instances on violation of protocol norms laid in the existing guidelines were noticed by the government.

The Members of Parliament and State Legislatures, as the accredited representatives of the people, occupy a very important place in our democratic set-up, the Personnel Ministry said in the order.

In connection with their duties, they often find it necessary to seek information from the ministries/departments of the government of India or the state governments, or make suggestions for their consideration or ask for interviews with the officers, it said.

The guidelines concerning official dealings between administration and members of Parliament and state legislatures have been issued by the Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances and Pensions and being reiterated from time to time.

The provisions of the Central Secretariat Manual of Office Procedure regarding prompt disposal of communications from MPs have also been reiterated from time to time, it said.

However, keeping in view the instances of occasional non-observance of the guidelines, a need was also felt by the Committee of Privileges of the Lok Sabha for consolidating and reiterating the existing instructions. Accordingly, revised comprehensive guidelines were issued.

Therefore, all the ministries/departments are once again requested to ensure that instructions issued by the Personnel Ministry are followed by all officials concerned, both in letter and spirit, the order said, adding that "violation of these guidelines will be viewed seriously".

According to the existing guidelines, communications received from a Member of Parliament should be attended to promptly.

"Government servants should show courtesy and consideration to Members of Parliament and State Legislatures," according to the guidelines.

Training on Soil Management and Agro-Forestry by ICAR

GANGTOK, 13 FEB (IPR): A daylong Awareness cum Training Programme followed by field inspection was held with the theme of Adaption and Mitigation through Soil, Water, Nutrient Management and Agro-Forestry (Soil Carbon Sequestration/Conservation Agriculture) under NICRA Project at Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR), Gangtok, today. The programme was organised by the ICAR-National Organic Farming Research Institute, Gangtok.

Agriculture Minister, Lok Nath Sharma attended the inaugural ceremony as the chief guest. The programme was also attended by Agriculture Secretary, Rinzing C Bhutia, Secretary Horticulture, MT Sherpa, officials, Agriculture Scientists and farmers from different parts of the state.

Addressing the farmers, Minister Sharma shed light on existing scenario of agriculture in the state and encouraged farmers to adopt agricultural practices with new spirit to witness paradigm shift in the next five years. The state government, under the leadership of Chief Minister, P.S.Tamang, is fully committed to improve socio-economic status of farmers and to make them self-reliant and agro-entrepreneurs, he added.

He urged farmers to remain informed about the existing programmes of the state government



for its proper implementations in the field.

Minister applauded the activities carried out by ICAR and urged to adopt two GPU and to form a cluster in each district and to apply newly introduced technology to set an example for the encouragement of the farmers.

He also expressed concern over public grievances of wildlife interference and stressed upon need to sort out a mechanism to curb this genuine issue.

He also asked departmental officials to be more responsible and accountable to provide available services in co-ordination of farmers and also urged farmers to be more determined to practice agriculture, comprehensively as guided by the technical experts of the department.

Further he articulated at length on the future scope of farmers for sustainable growth.

Minister Sharma also urged scientists and all concerned to revive production of various crops and fruits like Orange, Ginger, Cardamom, etc. Further he advised farmers to imbibe enlightening technical session to mitigate and overcome its effects.

Secretary Agriculture, Rinzing C Bhutia enlightened farmers on Pradhan Mantri Krishi Samman Nidhi and urged them to register their name in consultation of concerned VLW to receive financial benefits of Rs 6000 in three instalments, annually. He also outlined the benefits of PM Krishi Sichai Yojana and motivated farmers to cooperate for implementation of the scheme and active functioning of FPOs for their benefits.

Secretary Horticulture MT Sherpa recalled the role of agriculture in earning livelihood in the past decades and added that the agriculture sector is getting transformed

into entrepreneurship to make it more lucrative profession. He also underlined programmes under Horticulture Mission to promote cluster farming, Community approach, human resource development etc.

Mr Sherpa also informed that the new subjects of Horticulture will be introduced in the school curriculum to generate interest amongst young generation towards Agriculture and Horticulture.

Director Horticulture, Padam Subba also addressed the farmers and encouraged them for conservation of water through construction of Water Harvesting Tank. He also urged them to share acquired information in their respective societies.

Joint Director ICAR-NOFRI, Dr. RK. Awasthe also addressed the proposed welcome address and also drew lights on overview of ICAR and its functioning throughout the nation.

Dr. Awasthe also emphasised on activities accomplished by the institute and mentioned that the transfer of technology as the main component wherein regular monitoring, reporting assessment is being carried out by the institute, properly. He also threw lights on importance of crop rotation for enhancement of the production.

During the programme Minister Sharma handed over crop seeds to the farmers and also launched IEC folders published in local language.

The Awareness programme was followed by the inspection visit at the farm developed by ICAR. Minister along with the farmers visited Goat Research Farm, Poultry Seed Project, Citrus Rootstock block, Mushroom Spawn cum Production Unit, Dairy, piggery and the cultivated area. During the visit Minister also inaugurated a newly established Pig farm.

Roads & Bridges Minister chairs North district coordination meet



MANGAN, 13 FEB (IPR): Minister Roads & Bridges and Culture Department, Samdup Lepcha chaired a district level coordination meeting with all Head of offices of the district, Government Officers, Employees, officers of other organizations including GREF and Hydro Power Companies today here at conference hall of North District Zilla Panchayat Bhawan.

The meeting attended amongst other by the former Up-adhakshya, North, N. T. Lepcha, District Magistrate, North, Tenzing T. Kaleon, Sr. S. P. North, Sonam Gyatso Bhutia.

DC/North, Mr Kaleon in his keynote address informed that the coordination meeting was called on the direction of Hon'ble Minister to discuss on various issues related betterment of the Lachen-Mangan and District as whole and to sort out the various issues pertaining to the different department of the district.

Minister, Samdup Lepcha in his address directed all government

officers and employees to maintain punctuality in the office, maintaining proper attendance of staff, simultaneously he has stated that he shall conduct surprise visit to government offices and strict action will be initiated to those who found to be absent.

Speaking to the works department and Engineering section, Minister, Lepcha has directed that there must be proper implementation of any scheme with quality work that are being sanctioned by the government in a stipulated time with a total transparency. Further, Engineer section have been directed that henceforth the engineering cell must identify the genuine project and to prepare an authentic Detail Project Report or Estimate.

Power Department has been asked to maintain proper office records, keeping proper blueprint and work details of all contractual works which falls under their jurisdiction.

GREF officials were asked to focus on maintenance of Singtam to

Rangrang road condition. Necessary direction was also given take up immediate maintenance work in all trouble spots.

Likewise NHPC-V official were directed to expedite the restoration work at Dikchu slide near Dikchu dam in coordination with GREF and Teesta Urja-III.

Lastly, Minister called all officer and staff to work in close coordination and come forward with innovative ideas for development of district and state as a whole in order take Sikkim into new height. Furthermore, he has assured to the house that he would place all the issues facing by the district before state government.

During the meeting, all head of offices presented their departmental status, scheme and issues through power point presentation.

Earlier, ADC/North, Surat Gurung delivered welcome address and coordinated whole programme while the meeting ended up with vote of thanks proposed by SDM, Mangan, Karma Thendup Bhutia.

In K'ntaka, MLA facing 15 cases under Forest Act made Forest Minister

BENGALURU, FEB 13 (PTI): Appointment of Anand Singh, an MLA from the mine rich Ballari district as Minister for Forest, Ecology and Environment Department has drawn flak from various quarters as several cases are pending against him, including under the Karnataka Forest Act.

The Opposition Congress has hit out at Chief Minister B S Yediyurappa for appointing Singh, a businessman with mining interests, as Forest Minister. "Forest minister facing 15 cases under Forest act."

@BSYBJP allotting forest ministry to Anandsingh is illegal since he has over dozen cases pending against him, including serious offenses under Karnataka Forest Act.

How can a person charged with serious offences head the ministry?" the Karnataka Congress tweeted. Leader of the Opposition and former Chief Minister Siddaramaiah has also objected to Singh's appointment as Forest Minister and termed the decision as "not right".

Several twitter users have also opposed Singh being made the Forest Minister, pointing out a conflict of interest.

An online petition has also been started, demanding that the Chief Minister drop him immediately.

Singh, one among the

newly elected BJP legislators after defecting from Congress and facing disqualification, was inducted into the Ministry by Yediyurappa on February 6 and initially given the Food, Civil Supplies and Consumers Affairs portfolio on February 10.

Buckling under pressure from some newly inducted Ministers, reportedly including Singh, who were unhappy with portfolios allocated to them, the Chief Minister the very next day reallocated certain portfolios, appointing the Vijayanagara MLA as Minister for Forest, Ecology and Environment.

However, Singh on his part has maintained that the portfolio was allocated to him by the Chief Minister and that he did not ask for it.

Claiming that the cases against him were "minor violations", he linked them to traffic violations. "...like traffic violation cases if you have vehicles, similarly- there are naturally cases of violation as the family has been in the mining business for long."

Singh's election affidavit filed ahead of the December 2019 bypolls says he has 15 cases pending against him, as also offences under the Indian Penal Code and the Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Act, to be read with violations of the Karnataka Forest Act.

Muffler Man...

countered the BJP supporters' "Jai Shri Ram" with "Jai Bajrangbali"! Childish, one might say - but true. The BJP-AAP supporters even quarrelled about proving the supremacy of their gods. The former would say, "Our Rama is greater than Hanuman" and the latter would respond with, "You know, Hanuman carried Rama on his soldier" etc. Secondly, he launched the Mukhyamantri Tirtha Yatra scheme for senior citizens. The devotees were taken for a free pilgrimage. Thirdly, he had a tough task to keep his Muslim voters intact. Shaheen Bagh, the Muslim dominated area and the famous anti-CAA protest site got undue visibility as a polarizing poll issue. The Union Home Minister Amit Shah went so far as to say, "press a button with such anger that Shaheen Bagh feels the current". Kejriwal went mute on the issue, thus pleasing BJP supporters, whose support he was openly soliciting. He kept his Muslim supporters happy by regularly attending Iftar events and even wearing a skull cap. He outsmarted, outwitted and outplayed its archrival in every department of the game. He is now Delhi's Cm for another five years.

Now, finally, the return of the AAP in Delhi raises a few questions.

Are Delhiites barefaced hypocrites - voting AAP into state government for state welfare and internally rooting for BJP to promote its Hindu nationalist agenda?

Have India's development politics been so lame that marginal development in Delhi can become a national talking point and a burning example of development? Has India become so development-starved?

Can Arvind Kejriwal use his Delhi model as a springboard to pursue his political ambition in the wider periphery of national politics? Will he continue to stick to a development agenda then? Can his style of politics banish religious polarization to redundancy? The answer to these crucial questions has deep implications for India's future and welfare.

jiwanr@gmail.com

SAI selection...

Interested sportspersons who are in the age group of 12 to 16 years can attend the selection trial on 15 Feb at SAI SAG Centre, Alley at 8 AM. Sportspersons attending the selection trial should bring personal kits, original and duly attested photocopies of Birth Certificate issued by the Department of Health, Certificate of participation in their respective sports, two passport size photographs, Certificates of educational qualification, Residential certificates and Medical fitness certificate from a recognized medical practitioner at the time of selection trial.

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KUTSE SHEGU



The 49th days Kutse Shegu of our late father Ren Rey Mondal or Tenzing Lepcha, who left for heavenly abode on 29th December 2019 falls on 15th and 16th February, 2020.

All relatives, family, friends and well wishers are requested to join us in offering prayers for the departed soul at our residence at Rey Busty, Rumtek

East Sikkim. We also express our gratitude to all the well wishers who stood by us during our time of bereavement.

9832015083 Nima Lepcha
2. 8167734336 Mingur Bhutia
3. 7550819886 NT Lepcha
4. 9434407296 Rinchen Lepcha
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An area measuring 1 acre at Sadam South Sikkim near Loretto Convent School at Gupti road. Price negotiable any one interested can contact: 78640-04501,62970-03235, 98320-48410

SMIT organizes Dcoders Hackathon



SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 13 FEB:
Sikkim Manipal Institute of Technology organized the 'Dcoders Hackathon' - a competition targeted to solving local problems using a technical approach, in

association with All Core Computer Engineers Students' Society and Institution's Innovation Council at Majhitar, East Sikkim. With the participation of more than 160 students, the hackathon saw students solving

the assigned problem statements with great enthusiasm, a press release informs. According to the organizers, the aim of the hackathon was to provide a learning experience to all and expose

them to the current hiring trends in the industry which is shifting from aptitude to hackathons. The students were judged by a panel via an interview process where they were questioned regarding their approach and con-

tribution. The Souled Store was the official gifting partner for the hackathon which was also supported by Coding Ninjas, Bengali Kitchen, Coffee Break, Cool Joint, Punjabi Kitchen, House of Thugs, Priya Hotel and New Shree Shyam. The competition was divided in years to ensure equality in level of competition where the winners were awarded Rs 3000, the runners-up Rs 2000 and the second runners-up Rs 1000 per year. All the participants were awarded goodies, coupons and certificates of participation. The solutions developed shall be worked upon and groomed to be used in the real world scenarios, informed Sunil Dhimal, Teacher Coordinator, Dcoders.



Clean up drive at Rongi Chu

YOGEN THATAL SINGTAM, 13 FEB:
A team of officials from Singtam Nagar Panchayat, police personnel, councillors along with Municipal Executive Officer conducted a massive cleanliness drive on the banks of Rongi Chu on 12 Feb.

MEO, Prakash Chandra Kharel, Bazaar Inspector, Biren Rai along with councillors and staff from SNP,

accompanied by SI, Sonam Thendup Bhutia and staff from Singtam Police Station, and local residents participated in the drive.

It may be mentioned that Summit Times had published a news report on dumping of garbage at Rongi Chu on 08 Feb 2020.

The cleanliness drive started from the crematorium (Lal bazaar) till the old metal bridge.

TALK ON PATENTING AND INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY RIGHTS AT SRM UNIVERSITY SIKKIM SRM official IPR Cell of Science & Tech Dept



SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 13 FEB:
A talk on patenting and Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) was organized at SRM University Sikkim on 12 Feb, a press release informs.

The lecture was delivered by IPR consultant, registered patent agent and attorney based in Hyderabad, Ravi S. Speaking to both research scholars as well as members of

the faculty, the resource person informed the audience about the importance of patenting and the various legal aspects of Intellectual Property Rights which are crucial for all researchers.

On the occasion, the VC, Prof. Ch. Satish Kumar announced that SRM University Sikkim is officially recognized as the IPR Cell by the Department of Science and

Technology and Climate Change, Sikkim, for promoting IPR in the region. "IPR and patenting are vital aspects of law, which every researcher should be aware of. This lecture will go a long way in creating awareness of this. It gives us great satisfaction that after a great deal of effort, we have organized this lecture which will benefit everyone," said the Vice Chancellor.

Bottled drinking water in Kerala to cost Rs 13 a litre

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, FEB 13 (PTI): Bottled drinking water in Kerala will henceforth cost Rs 13 a litre with the Left government deciding to bring packaged water under the ambit of the Essential Commodities Act with a view to regulate its price.

One litre of bottled water presently costs Rs 20 in the state.

Food and Civil Supplies Minister P Thilothaman on Thursday said the government decided to regulate the price of bottled water after receiving widespread complaints from the public about its exorbitant price. "A notification on the new price-- Rs 13 per litre-- will be issued within two days. We have taken legal opinion on bringing bottled water under the category of essential commodities," he told PTI.

Though the govern-

ment had mulled cutting the price to Rs 11-12 two years ago, it could not be implemented due to protests from large scale bottled water manufacturers and traders, the minister said. "There were widespread complaints against the price. A section of manufacturers had opposed the price cut. When we had convened a meeting, local traders also opposed our proposal to sell it in the Rs 11-12 range," he said. The minister said now the price cut was possible as bottled water has been made an essential commodity.

Asked if the Left government has plans to bring any other products in the list of essential commodities, he said though there were no such plans as of now they would definitely intervene and take effective measures if the general public had any complaints.

BJP leaders instigating civil war in country: Gehlot

JAIPUR, FEB 13 (PTI): Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot on Thursday alleged that leaders of the Bharatiya Janata Party were instigating a civil war in the country.

Replying to a debate on Motion of Thanks on the governor's speech in the assembly, the chief minister claimed that the saffron party was trying to weaken democracy.

"People of the ruling party at the Centre are provoking a civil war. Where the country is heading?" he said.

Attacking the BJP for saying that the Congress was weakening democracy, Gehlot questioned how a party which got freedom for India and contributed to the making of the Constitution can do so?

He criticised controversial slogans like "desh ke gaddaron ko" raised during BJP's campaign in Delhi.

"Here (in Rajasthan) also, it was said that chief minister was spreading anarchy," Gehlot said.

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This Valentine's Day

LOCHANA MAINALI

Valentine's Day is approaching and everyone is talking about love. But today I want to write something for my readers who are out there feeling cold even when the season is about love and love is always warm. Sorry to hear that you have been cheated upon but dear one it wasn't your fault. No, it actually wasn't you or anything about you that made them take that decision. They had a chance to choose and remember they chose them. Here are a few tips to change your tragedy to a trophy that will make you a winner.

1. LET GO:

I know it isn't as easy as it may sound. You are trying to hold on to something that has broken down and it is only wounding you more and more as time passed by. Learn to differentiate between being in love and being in love with the idea of love. If you really loved someone you will always want to see them happy. You should also know that you loving someone is totally your choice so it doesn't need a label or a tag of some sort of relationship nor does it need anyone's validation.

2. DON'T PLAY THE VICTIM:

It is very common amongst us to keep pitying us or wanting someone to pity us. We keep doing that by repeating and re-repeating the not so happy ending. We keep on satisfying our need to be loved on the alms given to us in form of pity. If you keep

doing this all you will end up is attracting more people who will pity you for a while and leave after that. Some of them may even buy you your favorite flowers but even you know that they are just making themselves feel good for giving that attention to someone who was craving the limelight.

3. YOU ARE WORTHY:

When you are cheated upon all you end up doing is hating almost everything about you.

You are forced to fall down in a pit that is full of insecurities and your fears. You may even see this as an end but dear one end is when you give up and stay in that pit. What you are looking outside of you is actually within you. The love, the happiness, the joy everything is within you. Stop criticizing yourself and stop doubting your self worth on the basis is someone else's decision. You take charge of how you need to feel. Sometimes people do find a way back to you and dear soul wanting them back be your inner wish but remember you weren't their choice back then.

4. TRUST:

Dear soul, you are amazing. Please stop denying every little thing that gives happiness to you. Yes, you are afraid I know that. Probably to an extent that it scares you even when people are just being nice. Being cheated upon does that to you. You never can trust people again but isn't it unfair that the one who is supposed



to have a guilty conscience is actually out there probably going around with someone who they said were not their type and here who loved and wanted to make it work is so scared to even think of a relationship. How long will you punish yourself for loving? I remember a friend of mine saying "see you got to start trusting like every day you put a little faith upon a driver to drop you somewhere, you don't ask them to show their driving licence every time you board a vehicle" Love is that. You have to trust and only when you do so you reach somewhere even if it isn't your destination. The first step is to at least give it a try. Start trusting yourself. Put a little faith on yourself. First step will definitely be worth it.

5. MANIFEST:

Here is what you can do instead of thinking yourself as a victim you can manifest what

you want in your life, your relation and your career. Manifest as in think of what you want rather than what you don't. Think about how you want your life to turn out rather than how it didn't. Focus on making your life better for yourself, for you truly deserve it. Listen to songs that are happy, that give you some sort of inspiration, something that gives you hope rather than the songs that makes you gloomy. For when you are singing you are actually sending that vibrations to the Universe.

Have you noticed how what you don't want keeps on repeating? This may be signifying that you have passed on too much of information on what you don't want sub consciously. Time to change the pattern of how you think. Focus on what you want, keep repeating it to your sub conscious mind either silently or out loud. You will be amazed to see the difference.

What is Novel Coronavirus - nCoV?

The Novel Coronavirus (nCoV) is new strain of Coronavirus that originated in Wuhan, China. Notorious for mutating quickly and acquiring new qualities, it is a rising epidemic that was previously not identified in humans.

Symptoms of nCoV

- Fever
- Difficulty in breathing
- Dry Cough
- Severe acute respiratory syndrome
- Pneumonia - like symptoms

Precautions to Prevent nCoV

- Wash your hands often with soap.
- Use an alcohol based hand sanitizer
- Observe good personal hygiene.
- Avoid touching your face with unwashed hands.
- Avoid contact with people with possible symptoms.
- Avoid contact with animals and consumption of undercooked meats.
- Avoid travel to nCoV affected places.
- Wear a mask if you have respiratory syndrome, and cover your mouth while coughing or sneezing.

Treatment

- Treatment is symptomatic and supportive, based on the patient's clinical condition.
- No vaccinations available as of now.
- Visit Doctor in case symptoms detected.

If you seek help, you may call :
-Toll free no. 104
District surveillance Officer
EAST : 7029372100
WEST : 9593297809
NORTH : 9641957468
SOUTH : 7407691463
New STNM
AMS : 9434711402

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & FAMILY WELFARE GOVERNMENT OF SIKKIM

The Public Needs Transport

At least 1,14,293 households in Sikkim would welcome a reliable Public Transport option

Waiting in the cold for a share-cab is not the most relaxing way to begin a work-day, especially since the weather is refusing to play along and soon a tourist season will set in to make the wait for taxis even more frustrating. Not only will the jams get enormous and tiring, even taxis will become scarce as they chase after the more remunerative sightseeing fares. This, when taken up along with the growing hesitation among banks to jump at every vehicle loan application, leads to a situation where one can safely assume that the number of new private cars on Sikkim roads will not be growing at the same clip as they did in the decade between 2001-2011. A host of factors came together in that decade to inject an explosion of vehicles in Sikkim, and while this might be all fine if one were looking at vehicle ownership as a sign of prosperity, the traffic jams here led to a mistaken notion that there were enough private vehicles in Sikkim to justify the absence of a decent public transport system here.

Let's hold that thought and begin with vehicle ownership statistics in Sikkim as revealed in the data for households released by the Census of India for 2011. Sikkim had around 1.04 lakh households in 2001 which grew to 1,28,131 households in 2011. While the population grew at its slowest rate in recent times at 12.6% between 2001-2011 [against 33.6% growth in the previous decade, 1991-2001], four wheel vehicle ownership grew nearly four-times. Where 2.3% of the families in Sikkim owned a car/jeep in 2001, the 2011 head-count revealed that this has now grown to 8.3%. It is now 17 years since that census was undertaken, so chances are that the number of families owning a car of their own has grown some more or possibly the same families are now owning more vehicles. Comparing Sikkim's [per capita vehicle spread against the national average for such ownership throws up some interesting statistics as well. While back in 2001, car ownership in Sikkim at 2.3% was slightly lower than the national average of 2.5%, in 2011, it was nearly double the national average of 4.7%. For those who would prefer real numbers, here it is - while 2,618 of the 1.04 lakh households in Sikkim owned a car in 2001, in 2011, this number had grown to 10,635 families out of the around 1.28 lakh households here. The increase, as mentioned, has been mind-boggling and the endless line of vehicles on the highways and town roads here also projects the mistaken notion that there are already too many vehicles on the roads.

And some might even use this density to argue against adding the burden of a wider public transport system here. But that would be a wrong inference, because while many more families in Sikkim now own cars, the number of Sikkim households without any mode of conveyance is also staggering at 89.2% of the households here. Interestingly, at the national level, while much fewer families on average own a car, only 44.1% of the households own no mode of transportation. Again, for those who would prefer actual numbers - the Census of 2011 found that 1,14,293 households in Sikkim do not own any form of conveyance, neither a car, nor a scooter nor even a bicycle. This number was 1,00,548 in 2001. The point being made here is that nearly 90% of the households are in need of a cheap and reliable mode of transportation.

The road network in Sikkim is already expansive and there are jeeps available to and from every corner of the State. People have recourse to only an occasional SNT bus in most places and private jeep services are expectedly more expensive than what a state operated bus would charge for the same journey. What is also sorely missed in Sikkim is a public transport option for shorter distances. Even the City Runner which has a well advised route connecting Gangtok to the suburbs and nearby towns has too few buses on the road compared the number of commuters who would use it if they were more frequent and better scheduled (at least to the level that the jams on Gangtok's only road will allow). The same applies to the districts.

Fact remains that close to 90% of the population remains denied the option of using a state supported public transport, which, even if it were slower, would also be more reliable [against the tourist season vagaries of private operators], safer and cheaper. The policy makers should perhaps factor the interests of this sector in their future projections.

Parasite: At Last the Oscars Jumps the 'One-Inch' Subtitles Barrier

AGATA LULKOWSKA
theconversation.com

Parasite may be the first foreign-language film to win an Oscar for best picture, but now that line has been crossed, there's every hope this might mark a shift in attitudes to what the film's director Bong Joon-ho calls the "one inch tall barrier of subtitles".

A lot has been said recently about diversity and inclusion (or lack thereof) in the long history of the Oscars but the success of Roma in 2019, winning three awards including best director for Alfonso Cuarón, suggests an openness - both in the industry and among moviegoers - towards high-quality films in languages other than English.

This is not just about the significance of Parasite. As good as it is, it might not even be the best of Bong's films (it's his 14th film if you include shorts, the cult movie The Host, and Memories of Murder, which all deserved more attention than they got) and probably not the best South Korean one. South Korean directors have made many great films over the past three decades - Park Chan-wook's Oldboy (2004), Kim Jee-woon's I saw the Devil (2011) and, of course, Bong's Memories of Murder (2004) - which garnered critical acclaim but few significant awards.

But Bong's films - and those of other prominent international directors - are now available on Netflix - and as more movies are made by and for online streaming platforms, giving audiences access to more diverse sources of content, the academy needs to shift away from its elitist, Hollywood-centric approach which tends to favour English-language movies.

We've become used to seeing successful foreign directors lured by the big Hollywood studios. So, while to many people who know Cuarón as the director of Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban (2004) Children of Men (2006) and Gravity (2013), for me he will always be the director of Y Tu Mama También (2003). This, and Alejandro González Iñárritu's Amores Perros (2001), marked the emergence of the New Mexican cinema of the 2000s. Iñárritu is, of course, now most famous for Birdman (2014) and The Revenant (2015).

This is what makes Bong a bit special: he has felt the lure of Hollywood - but is firmly rooted in his own culture as well. He has made two films in English: Snowpiercer (2013), a dystopian sci-fi movie about the aftermath of a climate change experiment gone wrong and Okja (2017) about a girl who befriends and tries to rescue a genetically modified "super-pig". Both were beautiful to look at, with great production values and a fantastic cast - but they lacked the Korean flavour which gives

Parasite its appealing "local roots" or "otherness", depending on who's looking.

After the success of Okja, Bong returned home with a clear intention to keep making movies that foreground Korean culture and social dynamics.

MAKING INCLUSIVITY COUNT

Perhaps the academy is beginning to understand that it is not about "Hollywood" versus "foreign movies", but about promoting good films, no matter where they come from. But this change won't happen overnight, and it might need an additional push from within. There's certainly no shortage of liberalism and social conscience on display at the awards ceremony.

Joaquin Phoenix who won best actor for The Joker delivered a passionate and well-received speech in which he appeared to criticise US cultural



and political dominance:

"We're talking about the fight against the belief that one nation, one people, one race, one gender, one species, has the right to dominate, use and control another with impunity."

Can this, supported by the democratisation of viewing practices and the strong influence of social media, help promote the turn towards diversity and inclusivity that the Oscars so badly needs?

FUTURE SHIFT?

But perhaps the real question to ask is the legacy of Oscars when compared to the international film festivals. Are the Oscars still prestigious enough, and how do they exercise the requirement to satisfy both the critics and the audiences?

There is a clear shift with the foreign language film category changing its name to international feature film. This could be a proof of shifting the priorities in the awards industry: the world "international" implies collaboration, transcultural

effort, and some form of collective belonging - as opposed to basing the category purely on language. The United States, the home of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, is a multicultural place where many languages are spoken, so a film in a language other than English may not necessarily be "foreign".

Could this shift in the name mean that the award becomes not only more relevant locally, but also more open to the film industry as a whole? This is a potentially significant change which signifies a radical adjustment in the way of approaching the intercultural diversity in cinema. The idea is not about replacing Hollywood productions which dominate the market - and which have their (very large) audiences - but about making way for foreign productions of high quality and giving

them a chance to shine. Subtitles should not be a barrier to prevent that.

Good cinema, whether it's indigenous, international or Hollywood-centric, should be subject to the same expectations no matter where it is made. Of course, this will not happen overnight, but perhaps the success of Parasite can open the door to this more open minded way of thinking.

I'd like to believe that with the democratisation of audiences' requirements comes the new era of the film awards, including Oscars, where a good film can come from India, Mexico, Korea, and where subtitles connect the makers with audiences by making the variety and richness of cinema of different background accessible.

Let's jump the one-inch barrier, embrace the subtitles and celebrate the freshness offered by the best of world cinema.

[the writer is Lecturer in Film Production, Staffordshire University, Staffordshire University]

False information fuels fear during disease outbreaks: there is an antidote

MARINA JOUBERT
theconversation.com

False allegations and rumours about the coronavirus outbreak have been running riot on social media and in some mainstream media. Misinformation is rampant and conspiracy theories have added to the confusion. Examples include reports that the virus can kill a person in seconds, that Ghana has developed a successful vaccine and that HIV drugs have been used as a cure. There has even been a photo showing dozens of coronavirus victims lying dead in the streets of Wuhan in China.

All of these claims have been shown to be false.

The spread of rumours and plain lies has happened in the wake of other disease outbreaks. For example, when Ebola broke out in West Africa in 2014, rumours about the source of the disease included that the virus was cultivated and released to kill Africans. During the 2018 outbreak of the bat-borne Nipah Virus in India, it was alleged that news of the disease was a corporate conspiracy to boost sales of mosquito repellent.

This sensationalist and alarming content is spread via online channels, creating what have become known as "digital pandemics" or "(mis)infodemics". Their effect is to amplify public anxiety. This can derail official efforts to provide credible information to the public. Misinformation also has devastating consequences for affected communities, such as the current increase in anti-Chinese sentiments.

Several factors fuel the spread of misinformation during outbreaks of infectious diseases. These include fear and the speed of social media. As previous incidents like this have shown, it's possible to counter the foolishness. But this requires scientists and public health officials to step

up to the plate and to proactively use their platforms to convey accurate information.

FUELLING FEAR

Misinformation spreads fast when people are afraid. A contagious and potentially fatal disease is frightening. This provides the ideal emotionally charged context for rumours to thrive.

People rely on mental shortcuts (or heuristics) when facing complex information, rather than consider everything carefully and critically. This allows them to make instant decisions that are, unfortunately, often wrong.

Scientists need time to study a new disease and test potential treatments, but people may be desperate and impatient. As a result, it's common for old home remedies and unproven treatments to be revived. One example is the claim that oregano oil can cure the coronavirus. I have personally received a detailed WhatsApp message about how "Biblical oils" such as frankincense can cure any stage of a coronavirus infection.

Ingrained negativity bias means that people love to share bad news. A 2018 study confirms that false news travels farther, faster and more widely than the truth. Scientists ascribe this to the novelty and emotional reactions these messages invoke. This also explains why people are inclined to speculate and spread exaggerated rumours about the perceived dangers of an infectious disease.

NEW MEDIA

Editors and journalists no longer control the flow of news and opinion. Anyone can generate and distribute text, images, sound clips and video on social media. It's easy, fast and virtually free to distribute information. Messages can be amplified, shared and reacted to at levels previously unimaginable.

Social media channels provide near-perfect vectors for misinformation to proliferate. Some social media

tech giants claim that they are doing what they can to stop the spread of half-truths and outright falsehoods about the coronavirus. Facebook, for example, has promised to help limit the spread of false information by taking down content containing false claims and conspiracy theories that have been flagged by leading global health organisations and local health authorities.

But sources of misinformation are often unclear and it may seem daunting (or even impossible) to control their spread.

TAKING CONTROL OF THE NARRATIVE

Research has shown that, during a health crisis, affected communities are eagerly looking for information and able to assimilate positive health messages rapidly.

For their part, most scientists are keen to combat misinformation. They even feel morally obliged to help stem the flow of misinformation, particularly when inaccurate health messages could cause harm to desperate and vulnerable people.

Rather than lamenting the dangers of social media, scientists and public health officials should learn how to use social media more effectively for frequent and reliable updates. This could include working with so-called social media influencers including popular sports stars and celebrities to convey accessible and actionable health messages.

The mass media can also play a key role. Major media organisations are rising to the current coronavirus challenge by providing accurate information. Take this visual guide from the BBC and the news updates from the IOL media group in South Africa.

Science media centres, such as the ones in the UK and Australia, have lists of topic experts on hand to ensure journalists can reach them

easily. These platforms are providing expert responses to the coronavirus and extensive multimedia resources that help journalists report the story more accurately.

Institutional media offices, science academies and learned societies could play a significant role in mobilising experts to respond visibly and pro-actively during disease outbreaks. For example, many universities such as Harvard and the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine are providing updates.

International, national and regional public health organisations share the responsibility to provide accurate and timely information to the media and the public. For example, the World Health Organisation (WHO) provides basic advice to the public and has a team of risk communication experts and social media teams. The WHO also issues daily situation reports and hosts press briefings.

And people are being called on to judge online sources more critically so that they will be able to distinguish between credible and dubious content. For example, the International Federation of Library Associations created an infographic with eight simple steps on how to spot fake news.

There are a number of a number of additional challenges that pertain to Africa. A report on South Africa identified a few of these. They include getting accurate information to people who aren't literate or don't have internet access; constructive involvement of traditional healers; making health messages available in indigenous languages and empowering public health officials to communicate accurately, clearly and speedily. All are relevant to other countries on the continent.

[the writer is Science Communication Researcher, Stellenbosch University]

Bengal BJP divided on strategy for 2021 state polls

KOLKATA, FEB 13 (PTI): After the BJP's defeat in the Delhi Assembly elections, poll managers of its West Bengal unit are divided whether to push its aggressive strategy on the CAA-NRC or mellow it down and lace it with alternative policies of governance.

The BJP that recently suffered a defeat at the hands of the AAP, which won the polls for the third consecutive time on the plank of good governance, is in two minds about its strategy for 2021 Assembly polls in West Bengal.

In West Bengal, the BJP had won 18 out of the 42 Lok Sabha seats in 2019 parliamentary polls, while it had swept all the seven Lok Sabha seats in Delhi.

"But within a few months, we see that the results are completely opposite in Lok Sabha polls and Assembly polls in Delhi. So we cannot take it for granted that just because we won 18 seats in Bengal,



we will also win the Assembly polls."

"So we need to change our strategy for state elections. It is not necessary that what works for national elections will also work for state polls. Our campaign should not only highlight implementation of CAA and need for NRC. It should also lay similar stress on alternative and better policies of governance," a senior BJP

leader said on condition of anonymity.

Since last year, the demand for NRC to weed out infiltrators and the new citizenship law have emerged as the latest flashpoint in the state, with the TMC opposing them tooth and nail, and the BJP pressing for their implementation.

Another section of the state BJP, considered close to its president

Dilip Ghosh, is of the opinion that there is no need for a change in the party's strategy in West Bengal, as aggressive politics has yielded positive results for the party.

"If you want to counter a party like the TMC, you have to keep up the tempo and your aggressive strategy. It has helped us. Our campaign on the issues of the new Citizenship bill and the

proposed NRC had yielded good results in Lok Sabha polls.

"If we change our strategy, it will be considered that we are retreating. This would send a wrong message to our party cadres. Obviously we will have an alternative set of governance policies but that doesn't mean diluting our campaign over CAA-NRC," the BJP leader said.

CU refuses to allow Aishe Ghosh's prog on campus

KOLKATA, FEB 13 (PTI): The Calcutta University on Thursday refused to allow a programme which was to be addressed by JNUSU president Aishe Ghosh on its campus, sources said.

The authorities have not cited any reason for the refusal to allow the programme of a Left-leaning organisation, 'Calcutta University Save Autonomy Save University Forum', they said.

Ghosh was a speaker in the seminar that was scheduled to be held in the College Street campus of the Calcutta University.

The JNUSU leader had suffered head injuries during the violence at the JNU on the night of January 5 as a group of masked people armed with sticks attacked students and teachers, besides damaging property on the campus.

Missing data row: FIR against former NRC official



GUWAHATI, FEB 13 (PTI): Hours after Assam's updated citizenship data disappeared from the website 'nrcassam.nic.in', an FIR was filed against a former NRC official for allegedly failing to submit the password to the sensitive document before quitting her job.

Talking to PTI on Thursday, NRC state coordinator Hitesh Dev Sarma said the complaint against former NRC project officer was filed under Official Secrets Act in Paltan Bazar police station here, as she "did not provide the password to the document, despite written reminders".

"She failed to surrender the password even after tendering her resignation on November 11 last year. She was a contractual employee and no longer authorised to hold the password, after quitting her job. An FIR has been filed against the former NRC project officer on Wednesday for violating the Official Secrets Act," he said.

Sarma also stated that the NRC office had written to her on several occasions for submitting the password, but did not get any response.

"We knew (she had resigned) and, therefore, sent several letters to her for handing over the password. But as she did not respond all these months, we filed a complaint against her yesterday for violating the Official Secrets Act.

"We must know if she has tampered with the sensitive information, after resigning," he added. The NRC state coordinator, however, refuted allegations of "malafide intent" involved in the

matter. "...this (cloud service provided by IT major Wipro) was not renewed by the earlier coordinator. So, the data went offline from December 15 last year. I assumed charge only on December 24," Sarma, who had gone on leave for weeks after being appointed the NRC state coordinator, clarified.

He also said that the state coordination committee had discussed the issue in its meeting on January 30 and wrote to Wipro during the first week of February.

"Once Wipro makes the data live, it will be available to the public. We hope that people will be able to access it in the next 2-3 days," Sarma claimed.

Reacting to the development, Wipro had said: "The IT Services Contract was not renewed by the authorities upon its expiry in October, 2019. However, as a gesture of goodwill, the company continued to pay the hosting service fee until January-end, 2020."

In another FIR filed with state criminal investigation department on Wednesday, NGO Assam Public Works (APW) alleged that former NRC Assam coordinator Prateek Hajela tampered with the final NRC list - published on August 31, 2019.

APW member Rajib Deka, in his complaint, accused Hajela of disobeying orders and directions of the Supreme Court, forgery of public register and committing offences under cyber laws for altering or changing public records by misusing his powers and position. The NGO

also said that after publication of the final list, several social networks and sections of the media had reported anomalies, insisting that many 'doubtful' persons were able to insert their names in the final list.

The Centre on Wednesday asserted that NRC data in Assam was safe even though some technical issues have been detected, which would be resolved soon.

Senior journalist-cum-RTI activist Saket Gokhale had sent an application to the NIC, the IT wing of the government, seeking a copy of the contract with Wipro.

"The Assam NRC data suddenly vanishing from the website (& the lack of data security) is incredibly shady.

I've filed an RTI with the NIC specifically asking about details of the contract with Wipro, name of the cloud service provider, & all contracts signed for hosting this," he tweeted, while attaching a copy of the RTI application.

Leader of the Opposition in Assam Assembly and Congress leader Debabrata Saikia has also written to the Registrar General of India, requesting him to look into the fiasco urgently.

"It is a mystery as to why the online data should vanish all of a sudden, especially as the process to file appeals was yet to begin, all because of the go-slow attitude adopted by the NRC Authority. There is, therefore, ample scope to suspect that disappearance of online data is a malafide act," he had insisted.

IIT-Kgp club cancels permission for discussion on 'citizenship'

KOLKATA, FEB 13 (PTI): A group of research scholars of IIT Kharagpur on Thursday claimed that a discussion on the issue of citizenship on the campus had to be called off, after permission for holding the programme was withdrawn.

A spokesperson of research body "Education Group" said, initially they were given the permission to organise the programme at the IIT employees-run staff club within the campus on February 12.

However, they were informed by the club on Tuesday that it had been withdrawn for "some reasons".

"We were informally told that discussions on such a contentious issue cannot be held within the campus area as per the instructions from higher authorities of IIT Kharagpur," she said.

IIT Kharagpur officials did not wish to talk about it but a faculty, not willing to be named, said, it had nothing to do with the "pro-Centre" or "anti-Centre" policy of the premier educational institute.

"Our policy is not to allow any programme



which may trigger tension, division and untoward incident within the campus.

"The researchers are free to organise the programme outside the campus," he said.

The spokesperson of the research body said, it would have been a general academic discourse on the issue of identity and citizenship without directly referring to the controversy involving the Cit-

izenship (Amendment) Act, National Register of Citizens and the National Population Register.

"We had invited three speakers and none of them were politicians," she said.

Ranjit Sur, a rights activist who had been invited as a speaker, said, "This is a knee-jerk response from IIT Kharagpur which shows they are not willing to allow debate on contemporary issues on the campus.

Two more passengers test positive for coronavirus during thermal screening in Kolkata airport

KOLKATA, FEB 13 (PTI): Two passengers who arrived at NSCBI Airport from Bangkok have tested positive for the novel coronavirus, Airports Authority of India officials said on Thursday.

With this, a total of three passengers have tested positive for the novel coronavirus in Kolkata.

A passenger called Himadri Barman tested positive on Tuesday, and Nagendra Singh tested positive on Wednesday, the Director of NSCBI Airport, Kaushik Bhattacharjee, told PTI.

Both of them were sent to Beliaghata ID Hospital, he said.

"Earlier a passenger called Anita Oraon had also tested positive during thermal scanning," Bhattacharjee said.

Already two airlines which had direct flights between Kolkata and China have suspended



their flights. Low cost carrier IndiGo has temporarily suspended its flights between Kolkata and Guangzhou from February 10 to February 29.

Passengers of flights coming to Kolkata from Kunming and Guangzhou in China, Hong Kong, Singapore and Bangkok were being screened since January 17.

At present, passengers arriving from Hong Kong, Singapore and Bangkok are being screened as no flights are operating to and from China.

Eastern Airlines suspended its flights between Kolkata and Kunming in China from February 10 to February 29.

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Cultural festival 'Arth' to kick-off from Feb 21



NEW DELHI, FEB 13 (PTI): Over 200 scholars, writers, artists and artisans from India and abroad will be part of the mega cultural festival 'Arth' starting here in the capital on February 21, announced organisers of the event.

The three-day festival, touted to be India's one of its kind multi-regional fest, will be held here at the Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium. It aims to "rediscover, reconnect with and revisit India through art, culture, literature, politics, and society", and celebrate the true essence of "indie thought and philosophy".

Some of the prominent names taking part in the festival are Congress leader Jairam Ramesh, Rajya Sabha member and classical dancer Sonal Mansingh, Principal Economic Adviser Sanjeev Sanyal, economist Lord Meghnad Desai, authors Ruskin Bond, Ashwin Sanghi and Hindol Sengupta along with social activists Trupti Desai, Rahul Easwar and Madhu Kishwar.

According to the organisers, the festival, now in its second edition, will include varied activ-

ities like cultural performances, workshops, visual art installations, live art and more.

"I am extremely glad to announce the second season of India's largest attempt to celebrate all things that belong to this land, Arth.

"We want to inspire people to look inward and discover what we as Indians stand for, what we are forgetting, what we criticise and why and ultimately, how we can all move forward. The second season of Arth in Delhi will aim to bind us together by discovering our common ethos," Shreyasi Goenka, founder and director of the festival, said.

For music lovers, the festival will also witness performances by renowned artistes like Gurdas Mann, Bhai Manohar Singh, Mame Khan, Sinam Basu Singh, Qutbi Brothers and Shubha Mudgal, among others.

Performing at the event will also be Bharatanatyam dancer Narthaki Natraj, the first transgender woman to receive Padma Award.

The festival will come to a close on February 23.

Eight essays put the spotlight on the journey caused by hydel projects in Sikkim and the region, the cost exacted by this "development" and some of the stories it birthed, not all of which have been shared before. Also finding place in this collection is the arrival of Climate Change and its impact on Sikkim and how the State could negotiate with this new disruption.

ESSAYS ON TEESTA, HYDEL AND CLIMATE CHANGE IN SIKKIM

LOKTA BOOKS
Bengal - India
978-81-931-000-0-0

Tendulkar versus Lara in Road Safety World Series opener

MUMBAI, FEB 13 (PTI): Two of the biggest names in world cricket -- legendary Sachin Tendulkar and West Indian Brian Lara -- will once again be up against each other for a noble cause.

The two champion players will clash against each other in the opening game of the 'Unacademy Road Safety World Series', a T20 tournament, when India Legends will take on West Indies Legends at Wankhede Stadium here on March 7.

As per the series schedule released on Thursday, a total of 11 matches will be played in the tournament.

The series will feature some big names in cricket from India, Australia, Sri Lanka, West Indies and South Africa like Tendulkar, Virender Sehwag, Yuvraj Singh, Zaheer Khan, Brian Lara, Shivnarine Chanderpaul, Brett Lee, Brad Hodge, Jonty Rhodes, Muttiah Muralitharan, Tillakaratne Dilshan and Ajantha Mendis.

According to the organisers, the series aims to create awareness about road safety.

Two of these 11 matches will be played at Wankhede, four at the Maharashtra Cricket Association stadium in Pune, four at D Y Patil Stadium in Navi Mumbai and the final game will be played at Brabourne Stadium here on March 22.

Pune will host two India matches (against South Africa Legends on March 14 and Australia Legends on March 20), while Wankhede and D Y Patil will host one match each featuring the host team.

India Legends led by Tendulkar will play against Sri Lanka Legends at D Y Patil on March 10. Former India captain Sunil Gavaskar is the commissioner of the series and the games will commence at 7 pm.

Kashmir: Internet restored after being snapped to plug rumours about Geelani's health

SRINAGAR, FEB 13 (PTI): Mobile Internet services was restored in Kashmir on Thursday afternoon, hours after authorities had suspended the facility to prevent rumours about the health of separatist leader Syed Ali Shah Geelani.

The services were snapped late Wednesday night after some social media posts claimed the health of the 90-year-old Geelani deteriorated, they said.

Adequate number of security forces have been deployed at vulnerable places in Kashmir to maintain law and order and prevent miscreants from fomenting any trouble.

Geelani's family said he has been ill for some time but his condition is stable.

Uefa hopes Disney magic can help inspire more young girls into football

SUZANNE WRACK LONDON, 13 FEB [THEGUARDIAN]: Uefa has today launched a radical European-wide grassroots initiative, called Playmakers, targeting girls aged five to eight in line with the ruling body of the European game's aim to double participation in women's and girls' football across the continent by 2024. Uefa's head of women's football, Nadine Kessler, told the Guardian that the programme, which has been backed by Manchester United's Nemanja Matic and Scotland's Erin Cuthbert, two of the countries involved in the initial rollout, shows a commitment to the game from top to bottom.

Kessler, who won the Women's Euro with Germany in 2013 and Fifa's world player of the year in 2014, added: "The growth over the last five years has been significant. We've really worked hard not just to get a strategic plan in place but one that is going to be action-led hence the name: Time for Action."

"The changes to the Women's Champions League format, the centralisation of rights and now Playmakers at the grassroots level are one after the other being rolled out and underline that we are committed and serious and willing to do our bit to build the women's game as much as possible."

The Playmakers programme has been developed following extensive research



carried out by Leeds Beckett University, on behalf of Europe's governing body. The university studied what motivates young girls' participation in sport and looked to identify the best coaching practices. It concluded that there were many positive benefits to play-based education. It also established a knowledge transfer partnership with the Football Association.

"We have devised a programme that offers a different route, a different choice. Something that is for girls who are completely new to football," Kessler said. "We always target those ones that are a little bit interesting but we are also targeting

those that don't have any interest in sport or football at all. We are really trying to capture a whole new generation of girls."

Like the FA's Shooting Stars programme, Playmakers is being run in partnership with Disney. When the FA announced the link-up there was criticism of the idea that girls should aspire to be like Disney princesses. Kessler, though, believes that is short-sighted and says the company can both help reach parents and enhance girls' play using a story-based methodology.

Kessler said: "This is actually more about empowering females and little girls, allowing them to make decisions,

embracing differences and providing an environment where they can be creative and have a lot of choice, instead of just providing the traditional pathway. This programme is all about female empowerment and how healthy they can be doing sport. The message is that football is fun -- just express yourself, try it out, explore it."

"If you look at The Incredibles 2 [which the initial 10 sessions will be based upon] Elastigirl is a woman who saves the world and is a mum. We'll pick stories, films and characters that aren't the stereotypical princess-like stories."

Seven countries are involved in the initial rollout

of the programme, beginning with Belgium in March, with the aim of being in every European country by the end of 2021.

"We really had a close look at where to roll out the programme first. The seven pilot countries were a) countries that were super-motivated in implementing the programme, and b) because we have different countries from different regions it will help us draw the right conclusions from our pilot, work out the scale of the project and ensure the quality of the delivery, which is the most pivotal part of what we're doing."

Delivering the programme in countries where the development and acceptance

of women's football ranges widely will be a test, Kessler said: "The situation in each country is unique and needs to be approached in a unique way. I really hope it will give more proof to encourage more girls but also send the message that football is a sport for girls and women. How we promote and communicate and market Playmakers will be essential in how much we are able to change and challenge perceptions."

With the FA having admitted that it has lacked the coaches to fully capitalise on the interest following the Women's World Cup last summer, could Uefa struggle similarly? Kessler believes not. "Our coaches will follow our coaching methodology strictly, we have coach educators that will train the coaches on the ground and are the most decisive factor in the delivery of the programme," she said. "We see that the interest is there but we have to keep working to find more talent. We don't see that as a stumbling block at the moment but it's certainly an area we need to focus on."

Being flexible in their approach is also important. "Playmakers will not necessarily be rolled out through federations," Kessler said. "It can be through clubs or regions. We want to have a programme that is flexible, that goes where the girls are and helps them to have a choice that they've not had before."

Men's team blasts US Soccer, backs women's equal pay fight

WASHINGTON, FEB 13 (AFP): The US men's national team blasted the US Soccer Federation in support of the equal pay fight by the American women's squad, the reigning World Cup champions.

In a blistering statement released on the website of the US National Soccer Team Players Association, the US men's national team union, the squad backed their female counterparts in their ongoing fight for equal money and support from US Soccer.

"The Federation has been working very hard to sell a false narrative to the public and even to members of Congress," the statement said on Wednesday.

"They have been using this false narrative as a weapon against current and former members of the United States Women's National Team (USWNT)."

A group of 28 players from the US women's national team has filed a class-action gender discrimination lawsuit against US Soccer with a trial expected to begin in May. "The Federation continues to discriminate against the women in their wages and working conditions," the statement said.

"They're trying to protect their monopoly, their massive revenue streams, and their continued ability to exploit US national team players. It's time for this to stop."

Near the message's end, the US men declared: "Soccer is perhaps the most corrupt sport in the World. We do not want a US Soccer Federation that behaves

like FIFA."

Male players attacked US Soccer's complete control over who can play on national teams as a way to support unequal treatment and blunt critics.

"Historically, the federation has used that monopoly power as a weapon against the players," the statement said.

"For many years they refused to pay players at all. The federation benefitted from ticket sales, sponsorship, and merchandising while paying players as little as possible."

"At the same time, every training session and game carries the risk of injury."

The men cited the troubled labor history between US players and the federation, noting players have had to threaten and sometimes employ walkouts to gain pay hikes and benefit increases.

"The federation has justified its unreasonable proposals by claiming its financial future was uncertain," the US players said.

"The federation still claims it cannot afford to pay the players a fair share of the federation's revenue from selling the efforts of those players to fans, sponsors, and television."

- US WOMEN DUE 'AT LEAST TRIPLE' -

US men signed a 2011-2018 deal for a 25% pay hike but claimed "it never came close to a fair percentage of the federation's national team revenues."

They demand the US women receive much more than the federation has spent on them.

Dhoni is best captain India ever had: Raina

NEW DELHI, FEB 13 (PTI): Veteran India batsman Suresh Raina feels Mahendra Singh Dhoni is the best captain India ever had. Raina and Dhoni play for the same IPL franchise -- the Chennai Super Kings --, which is also led by the latter.

"I think we have the best captain who has changed the Indian team like anything. Now we have that same aura in our dressing room," Raina said on 'The Super Kings show' on Star Sports Tamil.

The 38-year-old Dhoni has retired from Test cricket but his future in the limited overs for-



per Kings show' on Star Sports Tamil.

The 38-year-old Dhoni has retired from Test cricket but his future in the limited overs for-

mats is a subject of intense speculation. The two-time World Cup-winning former captain took a break from cricket after India's exit from the 2019 World

Cup in England. He is set to be back in action at the IPL, where he will captain the CSK, starting March 23.

With three restricted stands at the MA Chidambaram Stadium in Chennai finally being re-opened, Raina urged the fans to fill the venue in every CSK home game.

"We have all the seats available. Hopefully, we'll have more fans now so that there is it will be more energy on the field," the 33-year-old Raina, a former

India batsman, said. Raina, who last played for India in 2018, also expressed his excitement about the prospect of playing with CSK's latest acquisitions.

"This year we have a lot of new talent in our team. Piyush (Chawla) is there, then we have Hazelwood, Sam Curran, Sai Kishore from Tamil Nadu, he has been bowling really well for them. So, I think we have a lot of mixture of youngsters and seniors."

How China does Valentine's Day

WEI LI theconversation.com

Americans celebrate love on Feb. 14, Valentine's Day -- a holiday named for Saint Valentine, a third-century Roman clergyman who secretly performed weddings for soldiers forbidden to marry under Emperor Claudius II. But other countries honor romance on different days with their own legends.

China's Qixi, which occurs on the seventh day of the seventh month on the Chinese calendar -- early August on the Western calendar -- is a couples' holiday based on the Chinese folktale about two star-crossed lovers: "Niulang," or Cattleman, and "Zhinü," the Weaver Lady.

In Chinese myth, Cattleman was a handsome young mortal who once healed a dying ox. In return for saving his life, the ox helped Cattleman find a wife.

At dusk seven goddesses will come down from heaven to bathe in the nearby lake," he told Cattleman, according to legend, adding that the youngest, Zhinü, was the prettiest. The two met, fell in love and decided to get married.

The goddess was a weaver fairy and the youngest daughter of the almighty goddess of heaven. Her mother, furious that her daughter had married a mere man, sent her celestial soldiers



to return Weaver Lady to heaven. The grateful old ox, now on death's door, told Cattleman to put on his skin after he died. Upon doing so, Cattleman discovered he could fly to heaven to retrieve his wife.

However, just before he reached Weaver Lady, the goddess of heaven threw her silver hairpin toward Cattleman, creating a swirling river that separated the young couple. This river became the Milky Way, or yinhe -- the "Silver River" -- in Chinese.

Cattleman and Weaver Lady's story moved all the magpies on Earth, according to the Qixi legend. They flew up to heaven to bridge the Silver River. Reluctant, the goddess of heaven

allowed the young lovers to meet on the Magpie Bridge -- but only once a year, on the seventh day of the seventh month. Qixi means "seventh day."

Eventually, Cattleman and the Weaver Lady turned into stars, which in English are called Altair and Vega. They twinkle in the night sky as eternal symbols of romantic love.

Qixi traditions In olden times Chinese women celebrated Qixi with weaving, embroidering and paper-cutting. In one popular dexterity contest, ladies competed to thread a bronze needle with seven holes on it under moonlight. Young women would also pray to Vega for a good husband.

Today China's Qixi festival is more of a commercial affair, like American Valentine's Day. Couples go on dates, declare their love and exchange gifts like flowers, perfume or jewelry.

While researching international marriages in China, I've learned the legend of Qixi also lives on in curious ways.

China, with its surplus of young bachelors, has a major industry of online marriage brokers. Some of these businesses are called "magpie bridges," because they bring lovers together -- alas, not gods, but mere mortals.

[the writer is Associate Professor of Sociology, Frostburg State University]

US Senate debates restricting Trump's Iran war powers

WASHINGTON, FEB 13 (AFP): The US Senate opened debate on a resolution to limit President Donald Trump's authority to go to war with Iran, with passage likely after eight Republicans sided with Democrats to advance the bill.

A vote on the war powers resolution could take place as early as Thursday, amid concerns that Trump could embark on open military conflict with Tehran without consulting Congress.

Passage could embarrass the president, who has been able to count on the Republicans' solid majority in the Senate to block legislation he disagrees with.

While Trump is expected to veto the legislation, he warned the Senate on Wednesday to vote it down and not limit his policy choices.

"It is very important for our Country's SECURITY that the United States Senate not vote for the Iran War Powers Resolution," he tweeted.

"We are doing very well with Iran and this is not the time to show weakness... If my hands were tied, Iran would have a field day. Sends a very bad signal. The Democrats are only doing this as an attempt to embarrass the Republican Party."

In January the Democrat-controlled House of Representatives passed its own version of the law, after Trump's order to kill Iranian commander Qasem Soleimani and retaliatory missile strikes by Tehran dramatically escalated tensions and raised fears of a devastating war between the two foes.

Democratic Senator Tim Kaine, the sponsor of the Senate resolution, said it aimed at preventing unilateral war.

"Congress has got to reassert our constitutional role in matters of war and peace," he said.

The two chambers' versions will have to be reconciled before being sent to the White House, which could all take place by the end of February.

Kobe Bryant and daughter buried in private ceremony

LOS ANGELES, FEB 13 (AFP): Kobe Bryant and his daughter Gianna were buried last week near their family home in Newport Beach, California, in a private ceremony, according to death certificates.

A death certificate for the basketball legend, who was killed in a helicopter crash outside Los Angeles on January 26 along with his daughter and seven others, states that he was buried last Friday at Pacific View Memorial Park in Corona del Mar, US media reported. A memorial service for Bryant and Gianna is planned February 24 at the Staples Center in downtown Los Angeles which can hold 20,000 people. The Center, also the home of the NHL's Los Angeles Kings and venue for concerts and events such as the recent Grammy Awards, has hosted memorials for recording artists Michael Jackson and Nipsey Hussle.

Coronavirus: China purges regional leaders hours after spike in deaths and new cases

MARTIN FARRER
HONG KONG, 13 FEB [THE GUARDIAN]: The number of deaths and infections caused by the coronavirus in China has risen dramatically after authorities changed the way they calculate the figures amid an ongoing purge of party officials in the stricken province of Hubei and in Hong Kong.

Figures released on Thursday morning showed deaths in Hubei, the epicentre of the deadly outbreak, had increased by 254 and new confirmed cases rose by over 15,000 – a jump of about a third on the total so far.

With data from other provinces still being collated, the number of people who have died from the infection on the mainland is now 1,380.

In Shiyan, a city in central Hubei, authorities have instituted "war-time measures," where only those actively involved in fighting the virus are allowed to leave their homes. From Thursday, all buildings will be sealed. Residential areas will also be sealed and put under 24-hour watch. Public security will enforce the measures.

"Residents without prior approval are forbidden from leaving their home, building or residential compound," the government notice said. Those who break the rules "will be detained without exception," it said.

Hubei's health commission said on Thursday that it was now including in its confirmed tally those people diagnosed via CT scans as well as via testing kits. Previously, authorities had included only those cases confirmed by the diagnostic testing kits, which are in short supply.

The change in diagnostic criteria appeared aimed at heading off complaints



about the availability of tests and treatment for residents, as well as questions about whether officials have been underreporting.

The shortage of the testing kits has meant that many sick residents have been unable to seek treatment, with hospital admission contingent on the test result. Health workers have been calling for authorities to broaden the parameters for diagnosing the virus in order to treat more patients. Some have also questioned the reliability of the tests.

"From a medical transparency point of view it's good, but it raises a lot of new questions," said Sam Crane who teaches Chinese politics and ancient philosophy at Williams College. "What was the actual infection rate in early January? Are other provinces and cities going to revise their numbers upward?"

"I suspect many people in China will see this as another reason to not believe what the government says," he said.

The political fallout from the outbreak continued on Thursday with several senior

officials fired. Jiang Chaoliang, the party chief of Hubei province, was replaced by the deputy party chief in Shanghai, Ying Yong. The party chief of Wuhan, Ma Guoqiang, was also fired, to be replaced by Shandong's chief Wang Zhonglin. Zhang Xiaoming, the head of China's Hong Kong and Macau Affairs office was also removed on Thursday.

"This is clearly Xi's move," said Dali Yang, a professor of political science focusing on China at the University of Chicago, adding that the decision would have been approved by the politburo. "The stakes are high and he needed time to find the right people for the positions to salvage the Hubei, Wuhan situation," he said.

Ying Yong came up through the ranks in Zhejiang where Xi previously served as party secretary and was also part of anti-corruption campaigns, the president's signature initiative.

Earlier this week two other senior Hubei officials were replaced: Zhang Jin, the Communist party chief of Hubei's health commission, and Liu Yingzi, its director, were both

fired. They were replaced by a national-level official, Wang Hesheng, the deputy director of China's national health commission.

On Wednesday, the state-run China Daily news site reported that a powerful Beijing official parachuted into Wuhan to supervise the fight against the virus had reprimanded local officials for failing to organise treatment quickly enough for people reporting to hospitals with symptoms of the illness.

Thursday's jump in infections may have been another impetus for the purges. "I suspect Xi would have wanted the personnel change to project a sense that he is in control of the situation. The bad numbers undermine that message," said Crane.

While authorities give daily updates on the death toll and infection rate, questions remain over the transparency of the released data. Authorities have not disclosed all of demographic data of those who have died, making it harder for experts to analyse what groups are most vulnerable. Victor Shih, a

specialist in Chinese politics at the school of global policy and strategy at University of California San Diego, said the switch in methodology was "disturbing". "The adjustment of the data today proved without doubt that they have had two sets of numbers for confirmed infected all along," he said. "If that were not the case, the government could not have added so many new cases in one day."

"A very disturbing aspect of today's new numbers is that the vast majority of new cases accrued to Wuhan, but what if the rest of Hubei province still did not adjust their reporting methods?"

Vaguely worded direction from central health authorities about how to deal with asymptomatic patients has caused more uncertainty. Earlier this week, health authorities in China's northern province of Heilongjiang reduced the number of confirmed cases by 14, 13 of which were patients who were not showing symptoms of the virus.

The move appeared to come after advice from China's national health commis-

sion last week, which said asymptomatic patients who had tested positive would no longer be counted. Instead, they would be included in another category of asymptomatic infections. The crisis also deepened in Hong Kong, where the education minister announced that schools would remain closed until at least the middle of March. They have been closed since the start of the lunar new year at the end of January.

In Cambodia, health officials were preparing to board the MV Westerdam cruise liner to make health checks before they allow 1,455 passengers and 802 crew to disembark. The passengers include 650 people from the US, 271 from Canada, 127 from the UK and 91 from the Netherlands, with smaller numbers of people from Australia, Germany, China and other countries.

The vessel, which was turned away from five countries over fears that passengers or crew could be infected with Covid-19, is anchored off Sihanoukville port after being granted permission to dock in Cambodia.

And Japan will allow some elderly passengers on a quarantined cruise liner who test negative for the new coronavirus to disembark ahead of schedule, the health minister said on Thursday, as another 44 new cases were confirmed aboard the Diamond Princess.

As UK health officials prepared for more cases of the virus after the first confirmed sufferer in London, US officials said a second case has been confirmed in San Diego.

The person was an evacuee from Wuhan and was among 232 people who had been placed under quarantine at the Marine Corps Air Station in Miramar after being airlifted from Wuhan.

Ahead of Trump's India visit, US senators raise human rights, religious freedom issues

LALIT K JHA
WASHINGTON, FEB 13 (PTI): Ahead of President Donald Trump's maiden visit to India, four influential US senators, who described themselves as "longtime friends of India", have sought an assessment of the human rights situation in Kashmir and religious freedom in the country, saying hundreds of Kashmiris remain in "preventive detention".

The bipartisan group of senators, in their letter to Secretary of State Mike Pompeo dated February 12, said that India has now imposed the longest-ever internet shutdown by a democracy, disrupting access to medical care, business and education for seven million people.

The Indian government abrogated Article 370 of the Constitution on August 5, 2019 that granted special status to Jammu and Kashmir, and imposed severe curbs including on movement of people as well as on mobile telephone and internet connectivity. The crackdown drew international criticism with several countries expressing concerns over the situation in Kashmir.

India has categorically told the international community that its move to scrap Article 370 was an internal matter. According to officials, internet is being restored in the Valley in a phased manner after reviewing the security situation.

The US lawmakers, describing themselves as "longtime friends of India", wrote in the letter that "more than six months after Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government unilaterally revoked the autonomy of Jammu and Kashmir, the government continues to block most internet in the region."

"Hundreds of Kashmiris remain in 'preventive detention', including key political figures," they said.

Signatories to the letter are Chris Van Hollen, Todd Young, Richard J Durbin and Lindsey O Graham.

"In addition, the Indian government has taken other troubling steps that threaten the rights of certain religious minorities and the secular character of the state. This includes the passage of the controversial Citizenship Amendment Act which is being challenged in India's Supreme Court," the senators wrote.

In the letter, the Senators requested Pompeo for a State Department assessment of a number of issues in India including the number of individuals detained by the government for political purposes and their treatment; current restric-

tions on communications in Jammu and Kashmir; current accessibility of Jammu and Kashmir; and restrictions on religious freedoms in Jammu and Kashmir.

The actions taken by the Indian government in Jammu and Kashmir, they said, have severe consequences. That is why, in the Fiscal Year 2020 State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programmes appropriations report, the Congress urged India to fully restore telecommunications and internet services, lift its lockdown and curfew and release the individuals detained pursuant to the Indian government's revocation of Article 370 of the Constitution.

Trump will pay a state visit to India on February 24 and 25 at the invitation of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who on Wednesday said the US President's visit it will be a "very special one" and it will go a long way in further cementing India-USA friendship.

India maintains that the Indian Constitution guarantees fundamental rights to all its citizens, including its minority communities.

It is widely acknowledged that India is a vibrant democracy where the Constitution provides protection of religious freedom, and where

democratic governance and rule of law further promote and protect fundamental rights, a senior official of the Ministry of External Affairs has said.

According to the CAA, members of Hindu, Sikh, Buddhist, Jain, Parsi and Christian communities who have come from Pakistan, Bangladesh and Afghanistan till December 31, 2014 following religious persecution there will get Indian citizenship.

The Indian government has been emphasising that the new law will not deny any citizenship rights, but has been brought to protect the oppressed minorities of neighbouring countries and give them citizenship.

Defending the CAA, Prime Minister Narendra Modi last month said that the law is not about taking away citizenship, it is about giving citizenship.

"We must all know that any person of any religion from any country of the world who believes in India and its Constitution can apply for Indian citizenship through due process. There's no problem in that," he said.

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Billionaire Bezos buys estate for \$165 mn: report

SAN FRANCISCO, FEB 13 (AFP): Billionaire Amazon chief Jeff Bezos has purchased a Los Angeles-area estate for 165 million, setting a new record for the region, The Wall Street Journal reported on Wednesday.

Bezos bought the Warner Estate from media mogul David Geffen, according to the Journal.

It said the deal topped a Los Angeles-area home price record set last year when Lachlan Murdoch paid around 150 million for a Bel-Air estate seen in "The Beverly Hillbillies," a 1960s television show.

The Warner Estate spans nine acres (3.6 hectares) in Beverly Hills.



It is a Georgian-style compound with a floor once owned by Napoleon, guest houses, a tennis court, and a nine-hole golf course. It was originally built in the 1930s by the late Jack Warner, former president of Warner Brothers, the Journal reported.

Bezos, whose worth has been estimated at more than 110 billion, started internet colossus Amazon and is considered

the richest person in the world. Amazon has expanded from its original mission as an online retailer and now is a major force in cloud computing.

Its digital assistant Alexa has been incorporated into thousands of consumer products, and the firm operates one of the largest streaming video services.

Bezos also owns The Washington Post newspaper.

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There's no story in my mind without some man-woman dynamic: Imtiaz Ali

NEW DELHI, FEB 13 (PTI): Director Imtiaz Ali says there can be a movie without romance at its core but it would be difficult for him to conceive a story that doesn't feature some sort of a man-woman dynamic. With "Love Aaj Kal", starring Sara Ali Khan and Kartik Aaryan, Imtiaz is revisiting the theme of his 2009 original that explored the idea of love over two time periods.

"I am comfortable (with love stories) but it's not that every story has to be like this. I will not want this comfort to restrict me from making any other kind of story that comes to my mind. It could be a story where there is no romance at all but that's difficult to conceive (at this point of time)," the director told PTI.

Asked whether it was possible for an Imtiaz Ali film to have no romance, the director said he was wondering the same.

"Even in a story like 'Highway', it has a man (Randeep Hooda). I don't have any story yet that doesn't have a man and woman thing going on in some way. With the growing understanding of life and relationships things will change, but in my mind there's no story without some sort of a man-woman dynamic."

The follow-up, he said, is not a sequel in the typical sense. It looks at the man-woman relationship with changing times.

"I'm not into making part twos or sequels but I realised 'Love Aaj Kal' is the only story of mine which is franchisable in a way. Over the years, I found myself thinking, 'If 'Love Aaj Kal' was made today, this is what would happen'.

"The previous generation was seeking absolutely something else... I have seen this dynamic changing so drastically in the last 10 years. Things that were pious like physical intimacy for a young man or woman... that was the final post. Now it's the first thing, it means nothing now. It's so dynamic. That's how this film came through," he said.

The 48-year-old filmmaker, who has come to be known as the master of modern romance in Hindi cinema with movies such as "Jab We Met", "Rockstar" and "Tamasha", agrees that his idea of love

is more evolved today and his films will continue to reflect this growth.

"More than a shift, it's an evolution. The earlier concepts, I had, 'Let's say 'Socha Na Tha', of love relationships has not replaced itself by another concept. It's become more detailed and varied. It's not that I'm looking in a different place. I'm looking at the same place, but

Zoe or anybody of that age, they come from parents that largely have broken marriages and where the relationship has gone south. How is it possible for her to be so blind when she falls in love? So there's a conflict... In this generation no one can force you to be with a person or the other way around. The conflict is internal as it's in Zoe's case," he said.

The decision to cast Kartik, who has suddenly burst on the Bollywood scene with a spate of comedic hits, had nothing to do with his past performances, the filmmaker said.

"I wanted to cast a person who could understand small towns and understand metro life. Somebody who's living the absolutely uber metro life but at the same time understands the traditional values of the relationship, so Kartik is that person. He understands things very easily. I'd not seen any of his films before.

"Lot of people told me he's not this kind of an actor. He does comedies. But ultimately, if you look at previous films and cast an actor, then you're not casting an actor, you're casting a character that you've seen in films. You have to meet the person and see what he can do."

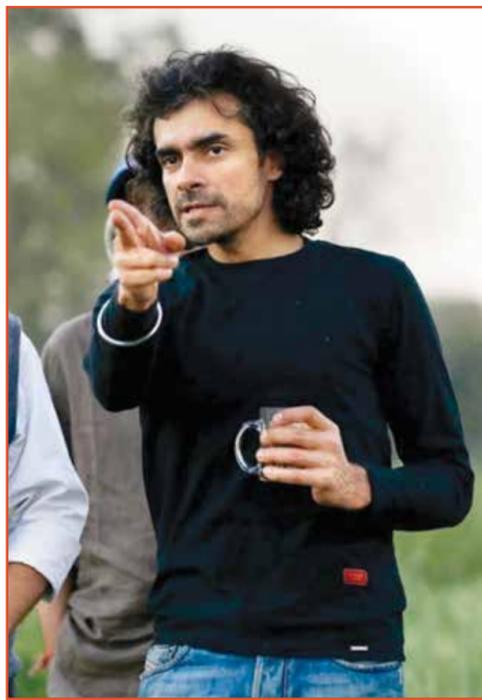
Asked about the criticism that his films have often been told from the male protagonist's point of view, Imtiaz said, "The honest truth is that I cannot help it."

"I have a certain point of view towards women. If it's a man's point of view of looking at woman, I hope it is respectful and loving. The reason there are these women in my films is that I have seen bits and pieces of them in my life," he said.

The director said though he was open to collaborating with a woman, the gender of a writer should not matter.

"You don't have to be a woman to understand another woman. You have to be an empathetic person to begin with and even if a woman writer writes about Zoe, she is still not writing about herself. She is still writing about another person."

Also starring Randeep Hooda and Arushi Sharma, the film is set to be released on Friday.



you see different shades within that. I think movies that I make will have no option but to reflect that in some way or the other," he said. The idea of generational change in romance somehow reflects in Sara's casting as Zoe, though the director said it was not the sole reason to get her onboard.

"I knew that it would be in the minds of people that watch this film. There's a certain happiness and warmth in the fact that there was Saif and now it's Sara. But that's not the reason why I cast her, that's not what I was aiming for. But it seemed nice and warm that the connection exists," he said.

Sara and Kartik as Zoe and Veer are playing a young couple in a metropolitan city. Zoe, Imtiaz said, is the principal protagonist in the sense that the story is happening to her. "When we look at

Disney working on 'Aladdin' sequel

LOS ANGELES, FEB 13 (PTI): Disney has officially started developing a sequel to its 2019 live-action hit "Aladdin".

According to Deadline, the studio has roped in scribes John Gatins and Andrea Berloff to write the script for the sequel.

Guy Ritchie is set to return to the director's chair, while Will Smith, Mena Massoud and Naomi Scott are expected to reprise their roles as Genie, Aladdin and Jasmine, respectively.

The 2019 film was a remake of Disney's 1992 animated classic which follows the adventures of the titular street urchin who, with the help of a magic genie, wins the heart of Princess Jasmine.

"Aladdin" opened world-



wide in May last year, receiving average reviews from the critics but that did not stop the film from earning over USD 1 billion at the global box office. Meanwhile, Disney is

also working on a live-action spin-off version of "Aladdin" focusing on actor Billy Magnussen's minor character Prince Anders. The series will debut on Disney Plus.

'Chhalaang' to now release on June 12

MUMBAI, FEB 13 (PTI): The release of Rajkumar Rao-Nushrat Bharucha starrer "Chhalaang" has been pushed to June 12, the makers announced on Thursday.

Originally titled "Turram Khan", the film was earlier scheduled to be released on March 13. Directed by Hansal Mehta, the film is a social comedy based in a small town in Uttar Pradesh and also features Mohammad Zeeshan Ayub and Saurabh Shukla.

The project is produced by Ajay Devgn, Luv Ranjan and Ankur Garg. "Chhalaang" marks the fifth collaboration between Mehta and Rao after critically acclaimed films such as "Shahid", "Citylights", "Aligarh" and "Omerta".



CITY SUIT! Singer Miley Cyrus is seen visiting the Marc Jacobs office in New York City.

'Haathi Mere Saathi' not an easy film to make: Rana Daggubati

MUMBAI, FEB 13 (PTI): Actor Rana Daggubati says mounting his upcoming action spectacle "Haathi Mere Saathi" involved lots of challenges as they were focused on doing justice to the story.

Directed by Prabhu Solomon, the movie is about 'a man who fought for the jungle, the animals and against the society'. It will release across the country in three languages -- Hindi, Tamil and Telugu -- on April 2.

"It's not an easy film to get done. There were challenges. We were dealing with nature, dealing with three languages and the elephants. You have so many factors that are not going to be with you everyday but that's what it is about, completing a story."

"I went back two years while watching the making. I'm a different man today because I was able to do all these things," Rana told reporters.

The actor said for his character in "Haathi Mere Saathi", he had to shed to his weight by 30 kgs.

"After 'Baahubali', when Prabhu sir met me, I was looking like a bull. He said we have to try and figure something else out. We started un-



derstanding how will a person be if he's lived in the jungle for so long, what the nature of his food be and that's the physicality we brought along," Rana says the film is a reflection to the environmental crisis across the world.

"It's a mirror to the soci-

ety. This happening in many parts of the country, the world. Everywhere there's an elephant corridor and urbanisation around. There are cit-

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