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SummitTIMES

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ON TOP OF THE NEWS

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Voter turnout for Lok Sabha elections 2019 in Sikkim

Parliamentary Constituency Poll - Sikkim GE 2019											
Assembly Segments	Total No. of Electors				Poll Turnout				Turnout %		
	M	F	TG	TOT	M	F	TG	TOT	M%	F%	Tot%
1-Yoksam-Tashiding	7161	6616	0	13777	6097	5461	0	11558	85.14	82.54	83.89
2-Yangthang	6467	6440	0	12907	5402	5085	0	10487	83.53	78.96	81.25
3-Maneybung-Dentam	7609	7455	0	15064	6220	6197	0	12417	81.75	83.13	82.43
4-Gyalshing-Barnyak	6313	6039	0	12352	5000	4888	0	9888	79.20	80.94	80.05
5-Rinchenpong	7588	7144	0	14732	6527	5851	0	12378	86.02	81.90	84.02
6-Daramdin	7700	7489	0	15189	6198	6010	0	12208	80.49	80.25	80.37
7-Soreng-Chakung	7824	7715	0	15539	6469	6246	0	12715	82.68	80.96	81.83
8-Salghari-Zoom	5668	5269	0	10937	4607	4155	0	8762	81.28	78.86	80.11
9-Barfung	7651	7167	0	14818	6234	5591	0	11825	81.48	78.01	79.80
10-Poklok-Kamrang	7819	7737	0	15556	6333	6371	0	12704	81.00	82.34	81.67
11-Namchi-Singhithang	6173	6457	0	12630	4659	4930	0	9589	75.47	76.35	75.92
12-Melli	7734	7669	0	15403	6141	6083	0	12224	79.40	79.32	79.36
13-Namthang-Rateypani	7748	7585	0	15333	6304	6123	0	12427	81.36	80.73	81.05
14-Temi-Namphing	7217	6943	0	14160	5817	5557	0	11374	80.60	80.04	80.32
15-Rangang-Yangang	7052	6796	0	13848	5822	5427	0	11249	82.56	79.86	81.23
16-Tumen-Lingi	7965	7851	0	15816	6662	6294	0	12956	83.64	80.17	81.92
17-Khamdong-Singtam	6750	6290	0	13040	5377	4945	0	10322	79.66	78.62	79.16
18-West Pandam	7749	7176	0	14925	6025	5442	0	11467	77.75	75.84	76.83
19-Rhenock	8716	8568	0	17284	6998	6788	0	13786	80.29	79.23	79.76
20-Chujachen	8870	8775	0	17645	6986	6643	0	13629	78.76	75.70	77.24
21-Gnathang-Machong	5986	6000	0	11986	4692	4909	0	9601	78.38	81.82	80.10
22-Namcheybung	7599	7438	0	15037	6049	5970	0	12019	79.60	80.26	79.93
23-Shyari	8010	7661	0	15671	6063	5773	0	11836	75.69	75.36	75.53
24-Martam-Rumtek	8413	8498	0	16911	6723	6634	0	13357	79.91	78.07	78.98
25-Upper Tadong	5140	5175	0	10315	3571	3691	0	7262	69.47	71.32	70.40
26-Arithang	5989	5415	1	11405	3988	3563	0	7551	66.59	65.80	66.21
27-Gangtok	6117	5508	0	11625	3873	3380	0	7253	63.32	61.37	62.39
28-Upper Burtuk	7636	7548	0	15184	5668	5657	0	11325	74.23	74.95	74.59
29-Kabi Lungchuk	6121	6483	0	12604	4568	5172	0	9740	74.63	79.78	77.28
30-Djongu	4550	4973	0	9523	3912	4278	0	8190	85.98	86.02	86.00
31-Lachen Mangan	3746	4051	0	7797	2995	3371	0	6366	79.95	83.21	81.65
32-Sangha	3224	69	0	3293	2198	43	0	2241	68.18	62.32	68.05
State Total	220305	212000	1	432306	174178	166528	0	340706	79.06	78.55	78.81

Turnout% District-Wise	M%	F%	TG	Total%
West District	82.58	81.03	0	81.82
South District	80.82	79.68	0	80.25
East District	75.90	75.42	0	75.66
North District	79.59	82.68	0	81.19
Turnout% in the State	M%	F%	TG	Total%
SIKKIM	79.06	78.55	0	78.81

[Courtesy: Government of Sikkim, Facebook page]

SummitTIMES IN NEPALI

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Campaign managers: Backroom boys who script the poll show

RUMELA SINHA

Kolkata, Apr 13 (PTI): They are the chisel and hammer that sculpt the public persona of contestants, keep them fighting fit playing nutritionists, and plan their every move for that mega democratic event--the general elections.

Meet the backroom boys who toil tirelessly behind the scenes, hardly in the public eye but always seen and heard through the protagonists whose shows they script.

Made famous by the likes of Prashant Kishor, the poll strategist whose campaigns for Narendra Modi, including the seminal 'chai pe charcha' and '3 D rallies', these campaign

managers design, schedule and execute the strategy of the candidates.

Consider Rudradeep Banerjee, a partner in a talent management company who is handling the campaigns of actors- turned-Trinamool Congress candidates Mimi Chakraborty and Nusrat Jahan.

Banerjee's hands are full. He wakes up at 7 in the morning to plan the days action for the two celebrity candidates, who have spiced up the elections in West Bengal with their glamour quotient.

"I along with my team manage all backhand operations to ensure that the ral-

lies are held on schedule and the candidates get to reach out to the maximum number of voters.

My day ends sometimes around midnight. In between, I take small breaks for refreshments," the 33-year-old Banerjee said.

Chakraborty is contesting from Kolkata's Jadavpur constituency and Jahan from Basirhat, bordering Bangladesh.

For Partha Chakraborty, the campaign manager of former India footballer-turned-BJP's Krishnagar candidate Kalyan Chowbey, a series of rallies and door-to-door meetings are followed by daily assessment of the programmes undertaken during the day and planning for the next day.

"Chowbey ji maintains a strict diet regimen to stay calm and fit. I make it a point to keep him hydrated while he is busy meeting people and addressing rallies. Apart from that, I take care of his social media handles," Chakraborty said.

The 34-year-old manager, who also runs his family business, said he is always on the lookout for innovative campaign ideas to create a stir among the electorate.

"In remote areas, where there is no power supply, we arrange for angan baithak (patio meetings) at the residences of local people where Chowbey ji interacts with voters without a microphone. The idea is a big hit in the constituency," Chakraborty added.

SKM reassures people that EVMs are safe

SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 13 APR:

Sikkim Krantikari Morcha party spokesperson, Jacob Khaling, has appealed to party supporters and the people at large not to panic in the face of doubts and suspicions raised by malfunctioning of EVMs and VVPATs and delay in the polling process at several places in Sikkim on poll day, 11 April.

While recognizing that doubts and questions had crept into people's minds over these issues, he has appealed to the people not to panic.

In a press statement issued today, the SKM spokesperson has thanked the people for participating in the polling process enthusiastically and also congratulated the SKM president PS Tamang [Golay] for the same.

The release adds that there were many questions and doubts in the minds of the people with regard to reports of malfunctioning EVMs and delays.

He adds that the party has gone to

the bottom of the various issues raised by the people and that the party has discussed these issues with senior officials of the Election Commission and technical experts, following which it was convinced that the EVMs were safe.

Mr Khaling also appreciated efforts of SKM workers for their vigilant contributions in keeping these machines in safe hands.

He has also criticised the work ethics of a polling party which allegedly took their vehicle off route in Gangtok and informs that the matter has been reported to the EC which has also accepted the mistake.

He also praised SKM worker TB Mukhia of Namchi for his brave stand in registering a complaint claiming that the VVPAT showed an umbrella when he had pressed the button for table lamp at Upper Boomtar. The party worker, Mr Khaling states, registered a complaint despite being told by the polling officer that he might face jail of six years in case of a wrong claim.

Opp gets fresh ammo on Rafale, alleges Anil Ambani got French tax concession due to 'middleman' Modi

New Delhi, Apr 13 (PTI): With a French daily claiming that Anil Ambani's company benefited from a French tax waiver in 2015 when India was negotiating the Rafale deal, opposition parties on Saturday alleged that Prime Minister Narendra Modi was acting as a "middleman" for his "crony businessman" and that layers of corruption were now being unravelled.

The Congress alleged that the tax concession for Ambani was due to Modi 'kripa' (blessings) while the Left parties said the Prime Minister's Office "must own up to this".

The parties, which have been accusing Modi

of helping Ambani get an offset contract in the Rafale deal, were reacting to a news report in a leading French newspaper Le Monde which claimed that France waived taxes worth 143.7 million euros to a French-registered telecom subsidiary of Reliance Communications in 2015, months after India's announcement of buying 36 Rafale jets

However, the Defence Ministry termed as mischievous and inaccurate any attempt to draw a connection between the tax issue and the Rafale deal.

The French embassy here also issued a statement saying tax settlement with Reliance was

not subject to any political interference whatsoever and was conducted in full adherence with legislative and regulatory framework.

In its reaction, Reliance Communications rejected any wrongdoing and said the tax dispute was settled under legal framework which is available for all companies operating in France.

The French newspaper said the French tax authorities accepted 7.3 million euros from Reliance Flag Atlantic France as a settlement as against original demand of 151 million euros. Reliance Flag owns a terrestrial cable network and other telecom infrastructure in France.

Children too catch poll fever, play "vote-vote game"

KOLKATA, APR 13 (PTI): The children have trespassed into the domain of the adults but their parents do not mind, at least in this case.

As the lion's share of reports in media, particularly television, and discussions among people in public transport and at home revolves around the on-going Lok Sabha elections, children take note and improvise it in their own way.

They have invented a new game - the "vote-vote game" - that they play in their pool car while going to or returning from school. "Our parents say vote is very important. But we cannot vote till we grow up. So we are playing vote-vote game," said Samadrita, a 10-year-old girl who studies in class 5.

She plays this new game with her friends in the pool car - Trisrota, Nabanita, Ayush, Vidisa, Soumili and others - who are students of two-three schools in

the north eastern part of Kolkata.

Asked to whom people vote, they said in unison: "Parties".

They do know names of parties. "Trinamool... BJP... Congress..." said Nabanita, a class 4 student.

They came to know form their parents that someone becomes the prime minister after election. So, how is this vote-vote game?

"We divide ourselves into two parties and elect a prime minister. All of us has to listen to the prime minister," 7-year-old Soumili was serious. Trisrota said they elect the prime minister by raising their hands and counting them.

And in case of a tie, the "driver uncle" of the pool car is entitled to a casting vote. "Even I have to listen to the prime minister. I play the song the prime minister wants to listen

to. The prime minister also gets the first share of tiffin," Prabir Haldar, 30, who drives a pool car, said with a smile.

Parents of these children said their wards get excited to inform them about the result of the game.

"My son was very excited after returning from school the other day. He was elected the prime minister," said Shrabani Dutta, mother of Ayush, a class 3 student.

"He asked a lot of questions about elections and political parties. He even asked to which party I am going to vote," she said. Psychologist Shreya Ghosh said children are by nature curious and they learn from their surroundings.

"But parents must take care that the game remains as such. Children try to emulate what they see. They should not indulge in the ugly sides of elections like fights," she said.

Scrutiny of polls in North



MANGAN, 12 APR (IPR): The scrutiny of Form 17A, 17C & Presiding Officer diary was conducted by the District Election Officer cum Returning Officer, Raj Yadav, with General Observer, Dr Pratibha Singh, for all As-

sembly segments of Sikkim Parliamentary and Kabi Lungchuk, Djongu, Lachen Mangan and Sangha here at new conference hall of District Administrative Centre, Mangan.

Returning Officer, Mr Yadav explained to all po-



litical parties the purpose of scrutiny and other rules and regulations to simplify the process of scrutiny as per the request of the political representatives/candidates and direction of General Observer.

Five polling stations

have been selected for scrutiny on the basis of prescribed norms. After completion of scrutiny, everything was found in order and there is no recommendation for repoll made by Returning Officer and General Observer.

SPCC urges EC to take serious note of alleged irregularities on poll day

SUMMIT REPORT GANGTOK, 13 APR:

The Sikkim Pradesh Congress Committee has urged the Election Commission to seriously look into allegations of irregularities in the polling process and take all necessary steps to convince

the Sikkimese electorate that the elections of 11 Apr, 2019 have been free and fair.

In a press release issued today, SPCC has mentioned the malfunctioning of EVMs, slow process of voting, suspicious movement of un-

used EVMs in East district and change in route of vehicles carrying used EVMs.

"This is not the first instance where such suspicious activities have been noted and the Congress party has made similar complaints even

in the past elections," the release adds.

The technical glitches, slow process of voting and the other suspicious movements have only decreased the trust of the electorate on the fairness of the election process, the party has said.

Officials injured in 'stone pelting' over sealing drive in Mayapuri; Kejriwal says locals beaten up

NEW DELHI, APR 13 (PTI): Officials conducting a sealing drive in Delhi's Mayapuri area Saturday sustained injuries when local scrap dealers allegedly pelted stones at them even as Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal claimed that it was Delhi Police that beat up locals in the area and called it an "extremely shameful" action.

Terming the incident as "horrific", the AAP hit out at the Centre by drawing a comparison with the Jallianwallah Bagh massacre, whose centenary is being observed on Saturday.

The Jallianwala Bagh massacre took place in Amritsar during the Baisakhi festival on April 13, 1919, when troops of the British Indian Army under the command of Colonel Reginald Dyer opened fire at a crowd of people holding a pro-independence demonstration, leaving several dead and scores injured.

"Horrifying!!! General Dyer Modi's police brutally pelting stones on the citizens in Mayapuri, Delhi," the AAP tweeted Saturday and shared a

video clip purportedly showing the incident.

AAP MLA Jarnail Singh and Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia also tweeted about the incident, with the Tilak Nagar lawmaker seeking the intervention of higher authorities.

Police, however, said 14 officials -- the SDM, an ACP-rank officer, three DPCC employees and nine police personnel -- sustained injuries in the incident and had to be taken to a hospital.

"A sealing drive was started today by SDM Delhi Cantonment along with the staff of SDMC and DPCC in Mayapuri scrap market in pursuance of the NGT orders. Some of the local scrap dealers started protesting against the sealing and then got violent and resorted to stone pelting," a senior police official said.

He added that security officials took retaliatory action to bring the situation under control but no stone was hurled at the locals.

The team consisted of members of the SDMC and the Delhi Pollu-



tion Control Committee (DPCC) and police and paramilitary personnel, senior SDMC officials said.

Kejriwal also took to Twitter to share a video purportedly showing police officials pelting stones at people and beating them up.

"It is extremely shameful that the citizens are being treated in this manner by the Centre. The trader community has always supported the BJP with money as well as with votes," he tweeted.

"But in return, the Centre-led police brutally beat up the traders sending a clear message that they do not want the community's support in the upcoming polls," he chief minister added.

Police said a case has been registered in con-

nection with the incident and an investigation initiated.

The National Green Tribunal had slammed the Delhi government for not taking action against illegal scrap industries in Mayapuri that cause pollution.

A bench headed by NGT Chairperson Justice Adarsh Kumar Goel had directed the chief secretary and the chairman and member secretary of the Delhi Pollution Control Committee to respond why they should not be jailed and prosecuted if illegal activities are not stopped and people keep suffering on account of illegal activities.

The green panel had also ordered the officials to appear before it on May 3 with a compliance report.



Chowkidar is "100 per cent chor", alleges Rahul Gandhi

KOLAR/CHITRADURGA (KARNA), APR 13 (PTI): Lashing out at Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Congress President Rahul Gandhi Saturday alleged the "chowkidar" was a "100 per cent chor" and the Lok Sabha polls was a fight between Anil Ambani and ordinary people and thieves and honest people.

Stepping up the campaign for the ruling Congress-JDS alliance on a day when the prime minister was also on a blitzkrieg in Karnataka, Gandhi said he wanted to know "why all the thieves have surnames of Modi."

The Congress president said he would not like to be the Chowkidar (watchman), but the voice of the people.

alleged that the prime minister stole Rs 30,000 crore and gifted it to his "thief friend" Anil Ambani.

"You stole Rs 30,000 crore and gifted to your thief friend. You 100 per cent steal money. 'Chowkidar' is a thief.

Nirav Modi, Mehul Choksi, Lalit Modi, Malviya, Anil Ambani and Narendra Modi - There is a group, a team of thieves," Gandhi said, attacking Modi, who has described himself as a "chowkidar" in his battle against graft.

He also mocked the surname Modi, saying, "I have a question. Why all the thieves have Modi in their names, be it Nirav Modi, Lalit Modi and Narendra Modi? We don't know how many more such Modis will come out."

Gandhi also said Modi no longer spoke about farmers, jobs and corruption. "Unlike him, we don't tell lies."

At the Chitradurga rally, Gandhi said the 2019 Lok Sabha election is a fight between Anil Ambani and ordinary people, thieves and honest people and false promises and the truth.

"This election is between Anil Ambani and the common citizens, five years of 'Anyay' (injustice) and NYAY (justice/minimum income scheme), thieves and honest people and false promises and truth," Gandhi said.

He said the 2019 election was also a fight between ideologies, where there is hatred, anger and divisive poli-

tics on the one hand and love, affection and brotherhood on the other.

The fight is also about Modi's "lie" of depositing Rs 15 lakh into everyone's accounts and Rs 3.6 lakh into those of women living below the poverty line as promised by Congress.

Mocking the 'Chowkidar' description of himself by the Prime Minister in his fight against corruption, Gandhi sought to know whom the watchman guarded.

"Have you ever seen a Chowkidar outside the house of a farmer, labourer and unemployed? Chowkidar is found outside the house of Anil Ambani.

Governor's greetings on Ambedkar Jayanti

SUMMIT REPORT GANGTOK, 13 APR:

On the occasion of 128th Dr BR Ambedkar Jayanti, Governor of Sikkim, Ganga Prasad has extended warm greetings and good wishes to the people of Sikkim, as per a Raj Bhavan press communiqué.

In his message the Governor has said, "Regarded as the principal architect of Indian Con-

stitution, Bharat Ratna, Dr BR Ambedkar's 128th Birth Anniversary reminds us of his ideals and principles that he stood for throughout his life. His epic struggle against social discrimination, untouchability and economic disparity and his rise as the crusader of social justice during formative years of Indian democracy makes his entire life an inspirational tale. His concern for

the rights of women folk in society and the safeguards and provisions he incorporated in the constitution also keeps him at distinct league as champion of woman empowerment.

The life and struggles of Dr BR Ambedkar will inspire millions, who have dedicated themselves for the cause of the society and the country till perpetuity. Let us all, the country-

men offer tributes and homage to this worthy son of Mother India and commit ourselves to the path shown by Ambedkar. Let us imbibe the ideals of true service to the masses from the life message of Babasaheb.

Our sincere service to the citizens in distress and our fellow countrymen will be the real tribute to this great soul."

On centenary, India pays homage to Jallianwala Bagh massacre victims

AMRITSAR/NEW DELHI, APR 13 (PTI): India Saturday remembered Jallianwala Bagh massacre victims with Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Vice President M Venkaiah Naidu and Congress chief Rahul Gandhi paying tribute to those killed in the Amritsar tragedy 100 years ago.

The massacre took place at Jallianwala Bagh in Amritsar during the Baisakhi festival on April 13, 1919, when troops of the British Indian Army under the command of Colonel Reginald Dyer opened fire at a crowd of people holding a pro-independence demonstration, leaving several dead and scores injured.

Naidu on Saturday paid his respect by placing a wreath on the memorial and listened hymns being sung by Sikh priests at Jallianwala Bagh. He also released a commemorative coin and a postage stamp to mark the centenary.

The vice-president later tweeted that Jallianwala Bagh massacre was a reminder to each one of us as to how hard-won and precious our freedom is.

"History is not a mere chronicle of events. It shows us the depths to which depraved minds can plunge and cautions us to learn from the past. It also tells us that the power of evil is transient," he said.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi said the

memory of those killed in the Jallianwala Bagh massacre serves as an inspiration to work for an India they would be proud of.

"Today, when we observe 100 years of the horrific Jallianwala Bagh massacre, India pays tributes to all those martyred ... Their valour and sacrifice will never be forgotten. Their memory inspires us to work even harder to build an India they would be proud of," he tweeted.

Congress president Rahul Gandhi paid floral tributes at the Jallianwala Bagh Memorial and said the cost of freedom must never be forgotten.

He was accompanied by Punjab Chief Minister Amarinder Singh, state minister Navjot Singh Sidhu and some other Congress leaders.

They also observed a two-minute silence to remember those who were massacred in the tragic incident on April 13, 1919.

"The cost of freedom must never ever be forgotten. We salute the people of India who gave everything they had for it," the Congress chief wrote in the visitors' book.

British High Commissioner to India Dominic Asquith also visited the Jallianwala Bagh Memorial separately and laid a wreath there.

In the visitors' book, Asquith wrote, "The events of Jallianwala

Bagh 100 years ago today reflect a shameful act in British Indian history. We deeply regret what happened and the suffering caused."

He also wrote, "I am pleased today that the UK and India have and remain committed to developing further a thriving 21st century partnership."

"The events of Jallianwala Bagh 100 years ago today reflect a shameful act in British-Indian history. We deeply regret what happened and the suffering caused," Asquith wrote in the visitors' book at the memorial.

"I am pleased today that the UK and India have and remain committed to developing further a thriving 21st century partnership," he added.

In his brief interaction with reporters later, Asquith said British Prime Minister Theresa May on Wednesday described the Jallianwala Bagh massacre as a "shameful scar" on British Indian history.

May, however, stopped short of offering a formal apology.

Asked why an apology was not tendered by the British government, Asquith said, "I know this is a really important question. I would just ask you to respect what I came here to do, which is to commemorate those who died a hundred years ago and to express

the sorrow of the British government and of the British people.

"But I would repeat what I said earlier that both governments are committed to building a very strong relationship... we have an extraordinarily flourishing relationship today."

Asquith also added that the Queen had spoken of the incident as a distressing example of Britain's past history with India.

The British envoy said his great-grandfather H H Asquith, who was the prime minister of Britain between 1908 and 1916, had referred to the Jallianwala Bagh tragedy as one of the worst outrages.

"My own great grandfather, who was the prime minister for almost a decade, had referred to this as one of the worst outrages in our whole history," he said.

Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) president Mayawati, in a tweet, paid homage to those killed in the Jallianwala massacre 100 years back and sought an apology from the British.

"On the centenary of the Jallianwala tragedy, our homage to martyrs & sympathy to the family members who sacrificed their lives for the country. It would have been most gratifying had the Indian govt. succeeded in extracting an apology from the British for this gruesome massacre," she wrote on Twitter.

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of security convoys.

"Such an unprecedented move is first in the history of Jammu and Kashmir. It has turned out as a nightmare for the commuters on the highway as also various towns, suburbs and rural pockets on the route.

"The proponents of such an order have not applied their mind, which speaks volumes about their disconnect with the people, who have been pushed to the wall," Shaheen said addressing the protesters.

The NC leader hoped that Governor Satya Pal Malik would undertake immediate review of the situation and revoke the ban in the larger interest of the people especially those living along the highway.

NC protests ban on civilian traffic twice a week on Jammu-Srinagar highway



JAMMU, APR 13 (PTI): National Conference activists Saturday protested in the highway township of Banihal against the ban on the movement of civilian traffic twice a week on the Jammu-Srinagar national highway.

The protesters, led by National Conference district president, Ramban, Sajjad Shaheen, staged the protest to press for revocation of the "anti-people" and "authoritarian" order.

The nearly 270-km highway, the only all-weather road linking Kashmir with the rest of the country, will remain closed for civilian traffic on Wednesday and Sunday from 4 am to 5 pm till May 31 to facilitate smooth movement

NHIDCL conducts free eye camp for taxi drivers

**SAGAR CHHETRI
GANGTOK, 13 APR:**

A free eye screening and vision testing camp for taxi drivers was held here at Deorali Mainline Taxi Station on Saturday. The day-long camp on the theme 'Making you see the World Better' was organised by National Highways & Infrastructure Development Corporation Limited [NHIDCL], branch office, Gangtok.

During the camp, 170 drivers got a thorough eye check-up by eye specialist, Dr Karma L. Bhu-



tia from Central Referral Hospital, Tadong. NHIDCL provided eye drops and other medicines after the check-up to all while 45 drivers received spectacles free of cost.

Speaking to SummitTIMES, NHIDCL Manag-

er [Project], Jayashree Sahoo mentioned that this annual camp is held under the corporate social responsibility programme of NHIDCL. She informed that same camp was organised at Rangpo in East Sikkim

last year, in which 120 people benefited.

"Sikkim being a popular tourism destination keeps drivers very busy and they do not get time to check their health and especially eyes. So, NHIDCL has been reaching out to drivers with free eye screening and vision testing camp with eye specialists," Ms Sahoo said.

She added that the camp has been successful in identifying various problems related to eyes of drivers and they have

been provided with eye drops, vitamins, medicines and even spectacles.

"We are also planning to provide free surgery if required in near future," she informed.

She informed that NHIDCL is also constructing public toilets at Rangpo, Rhe-nock, Rabongla and some other parts of the State.

Ms Sahoo thanked the administration and different organisations for their support in such initiatives.

Collection of poems "The Gorkha's Story" to be launched

SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 13 APR:

Poet and an Assistant Professor of Sikkim Manipal University, Prayash Gupta (Prayash Gorkha) will launch his collection of poems titled "The Gorkha's Story" at Sikkim Manipal University on 23 Apr, 2019. The book is about the aspirations, struggles and dreams of the Indian Gorkhas.

The book launch will be attended by Vice Chancellor SMU, Lt Gen, (Dr) Venkatesh, and Registrar Prof (Dr) Karma Sonam Sherpa. Head, Department of English, Dr Rosy Chamling, Sikkim University and Professor Department of English, Irshad



Ghulam Ahmed, Sikkim University will give review the book.

Trump tweets video edited to suggest Omar dismissive of 9/11

WASHINGTON, APR 13 (AP): President Donald Trump weighed in Friday on the most recent controversy involving Democratic Rep. Ilhan Omar, retweeting video edited to suggest that the Minnesota congresswoman was dismissive of the significance of the Sept. 11 attacks.

The video pulls a snippet of Omar's speech last month to the Council on American-Islamic Relations in which she described the 2001 attacks on the World Trade Center as "some people did something," as well as news footage of the hijacked planes hitting the twin towers.

Trump tweeted, "WE WILL NEVER FORGET!" Omar's remark has drawn criticism largely from political opponents and conservatives who say the congresswoman, one of the first Muslim women to serve in Congress, offered a flippant description of the assailants and the attacks on American soil that killed nearly 3,000 people and pointed the U.S. toward war.

Neither Trump's tweet nor the video includes her full quote or the context of her comments.

Omar told CAIR in Los Angeles that many Muslims saw their civil liberties eroded after the attacks, and she advocated for activism.

"For far too long we have lived with the discomfort of being a sec-



ond-class citizen and, frankly, I'm tired of it, and every single Muslim in this country should be tired of it," she said in the March 23 speech, according to video posted online. "CAIR was founded after 9/11 because they recognized that some people did something and that all of us were starting to lose access to our civil liberties." CAIR was founded in 1994, according to its website, but its membership increased dramatically after the attacks.

Many Republicans and conservative outlets expressed outrage at Omar's remarks.

"First Member of Congress to ever describe terrorists who killed thousands of Americans on 9/11 as 'some people who did something,'" tweeted Rep. Dan Crenshaw, R-Texas, a retired Navy SEAL who lost his right eye in 2012 in an explosion in Afghanistan.

"Here's your something," the New York Post blared on its cover beneath a photograph of the flaming towers.

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi has said she wants to hear from Omar about the comment, but the Minnesota Democrat doesn't seem to be backing down.

Omar tweeted a quote from former President George W. Bush shortly after the attacks, when he said: "The people and the people who knocked these buildings down will hear all of us soon!" "Was Bush downplaying the terrorist attack?" Omar tweeted. "What if he was a Muslim." A pair of 2020 Democratic presidential candidates waded into the debate to condemn Trump's tweet and to stand with Omar.

"She won't back down to Trump's racism and hate, and neither will we," Sen. Bernie Sanders tweeted. "The president is in-

citing violence against a sitting congresswoman and an entire group of Americans based on their religion," Sen. Elizabeth Warren of Massachusetts wrote, also on Twitter.

Omar has repeatedly pushed fellow Democrats into uncomfortable territory over Israel and the power of the Jewish state's influence in Washington. She apologized for suggesting that lawmakers support Israel for pay and said she isn't criticizing Jews. But she refused to take back a tweet in which she suggested that American supporters of Israel "pledge allegiance" to a foreign country.

Her comments sparked an ugly episode among House Democrats when they responded with a resolution condemning anti-Semitism became a broader declaration against all forms of bigotry.

Trump says could send illegal migrants to 'sanctuary cities'

WASHINGTON, APR 13 (AFP): US President Donald Trump has said he is seriously considering funnelling detained illegal migrants into the self-declared sanctuary cities that oppose his tough immigration policies.

Trump's announcement on Twitter reversed a previous White House assurance that the idea - criticised as political retribution against cities led by opposition Democrats - had been dropped.

"Due to the fact that Democrats are unwilling to change our very dangerous immigration laws, we are indeed, as reported, giving strong considerations to placing Illegal Immigrants in Sanctuary Cities," Trump said on Friday.

"The Radical Left always seems to have an Open Borders, Open Arms policy -- so this should make them very happy!" he tweeted.

The Washington Post

earlier revealed the proposal, which would mark a new flashpoint in the ever growing political divide over immigration.

Trump has staked his presidency on his insistence that the United States is being overrun by migrants and asylum seekers.

But opponents, mostly in the Democratic Party, say his push for building more walls on the Mexican border and his almost daily denunciations of migrants as dangerous criminals incites racial hatred.

In comments to reporters later, Trump said that he wanted Congress, where the House of Representatives is controlled by Democrats, to tighten visas and streamline the deportation process.

Otherwise, he warned, he'll order migrants to be dumped on the sanctuary cities.

"If they don't agree we might as well do what they say they want....

We'll bring them to sanctuary city areas and let that particular area take care of it," he said. "We can give them an unlimited supply."

Sanctuary cities are places where local authorities -- usually Democratic-run -- have refused to hand over undocumented immigrants for deportation.

Citing homeland security officials and leaked emails, the Post said White House officials first broached the plan in November, asking several agencies whether members of a caravan of migrants could be arrested at the border and then bussed "to small- and mid-sized sanctuary cities".

The White House told the Immigration and Customs Enforcement agency (ICE) that the plan was intended to alleviate a shortage of detention space, but would also send a message to Democrats, the Post said.

The suggested policy was pushed back within ICE, with a top official saying it was rife with concerns and noting "there are PR risks as well".

After the White House pressed the issue again earlier this year, ICE rebuffed it as "inappropriate." The Post said a White House official and a spokesman for the Department of Homeland Security said the proposal was no longer under consideration.

"This was just a suggestion that was floated and rejected, which ended any further discussion," a White House statement said.

One of the centers targeted was the constituency of House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, whose office on Thursday blasted the plan.

"The extent of this administration's cynicism and cruelty cannot be overstated," said Pelosi spokeswoman Ashley Etienne.

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Jet Airways' employees protest outside T3 over pay delay

NEW DELHI, APR 13 (PTI): Employees of cash-strapped Jet Airways Saturday protested outside Terminal 3 of the Indira Gandhi International Airport here seeking release of pending salaries.

The beleaguered airline, which is flying just six-seven aircraft on Saturday, has asked its lenders to grant some "interim funding". Its employees are expecting to be paid their pending salaries once the fresh funding comes through.

Employees of Jet Airways gathered outside Terminal 3 in their uniform for a silent protest on Saturday afternoon. They



carried banners that read "Save Jet Airways, Save our future" and "Hear our cry, Let 9W fly".

9W is the code for Jet Airways flights, just like 6E is for IndiGo flights.

On Friday, Jet Airways employees took out a silent march in Mumbai.

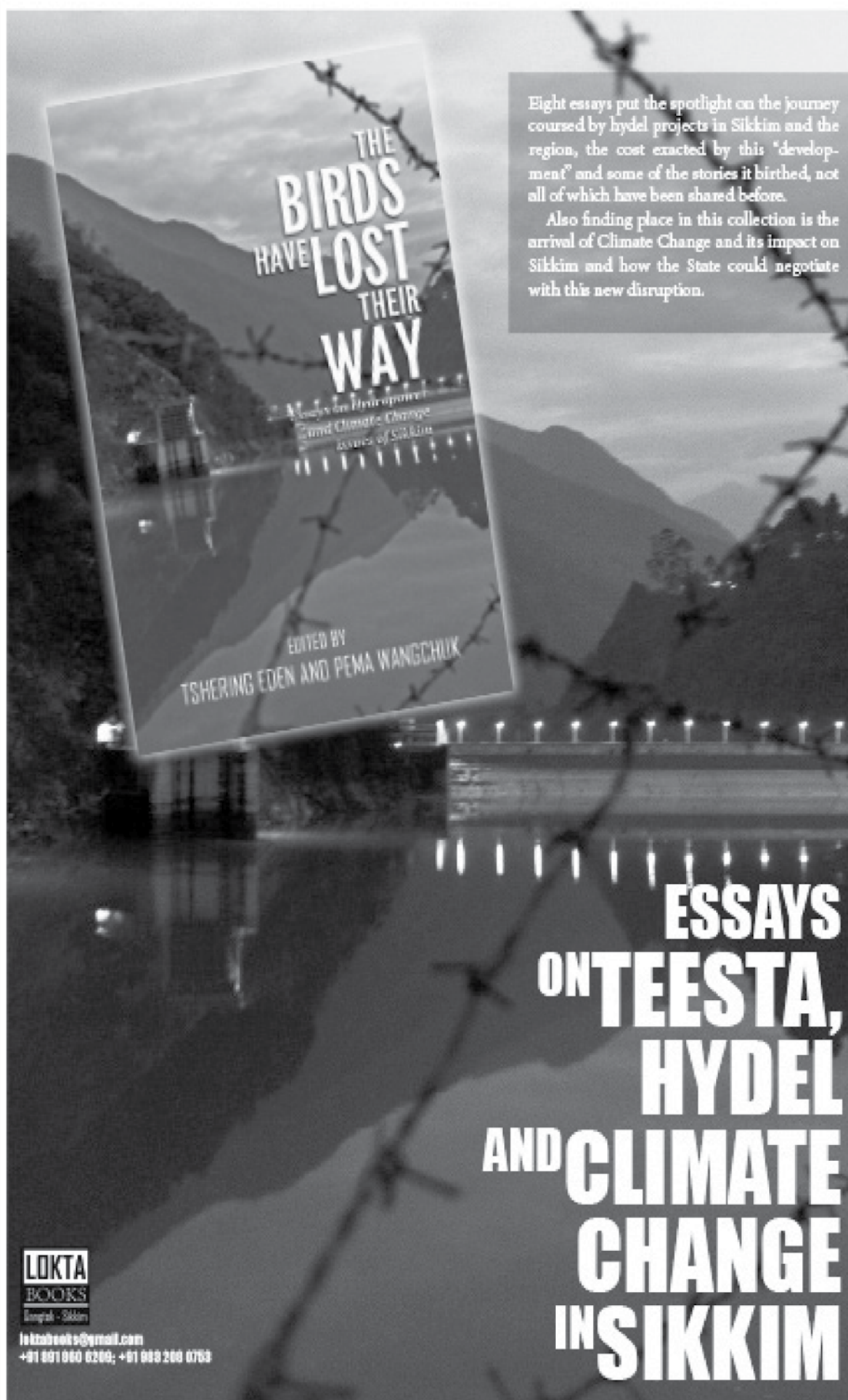
Civil Aviation Secretary Pradeep Singh Kharola had earlier said that the airline would fly just 6-7 aircraft on Saturday and Sunday.

At its peak, the airline

flew a 119-aircraft fleet.

On Monday, the lenders - lead by SBI - would again meet the management of Jet Airways which will present a plan to use the "interim funding", if granted.

Jet Airways on Thursday grounded its services to and from the East and Northeast regions and suspended its international operations till Monday. Consequently, many passengers were left stranded at the airports.



Lead by Example

To inspire the youth towards self-sufficiency, hold up some examples

The State Government, currently caretaker, has been trying to convince the youth to opt for the pride of self-employment and becoming producers in what has been a consumer state for a long while. The advice is laudable and the government has backed it with the skill development programme in the hope of equipping the youth with the tools required to make this transition. The programme has however met with less than glorious results, and one of the reasons why the youth who attend these workshops and awareness programmes return less than inspired could be because they do not see too many “examples” worth emulating around them. And since the State is omnipresent, they need to be shown success stories in government undertakings to get convinced that its executive can draft skill development programmes of any real consequence. Instead, what the youth see too much of is funds getting pumped into “development” projects only to deliver failures. Can they be faulted then if they are hesitant to put their scarce resources into similar projects? It is also true that government-run projects fail because of somnolent and corrupt implementation, whereas in the hands of private entrepreneurs, these very investments would have turned profits, but for the youth to accept this, the government will have to set the record straight. This, it can only achieve success by fixing accountability.

To flesh out what is suggested here, let’s share here the case fleshed out in a Comptroller & Auditor General’s Report for Sikkim of many years past. The year is not important, because the lesson rings as true today as it did some ten years ago. The Animal Husbandry, Livestock, Fisheries and Veterinary Department received Rs. 45 lakhs in central sponsorship in August 2000 to establish a backyard poultry farm at Chujachen in East Sikkim. The idea was to maintain a breeding stock of poultry birds requiring low input technology and backed by adequate health coverage for the birds. The Department used up Rs. 39.86 lakhs of this outlay and the poultry farm commenced operations in August 2002. It closed down in August 2003 ‘with no birds and no eggs’! When confronted with a query from the CAG Auditors, the concerned Secretary explained that the farm was struck by ‘some’ uncontrollable diseases leading to high mortality and defect in construction of building!

When youth learn that poultry can be infected by ‘some uncontrollable diseases’ which even a Department with a Veterinary wing under it cannot contain and that a poultry farm requires such complicated construction that even government engineers can end up constructing a defective building, how can they be expected to get excited into opening poultry farms even if it carries a non-intimidating tag like “backyard poultry farm”? Of course, the reasons offered for why the farm closed down are lame excuses and even the CAG auditors had rubbished it as ‘not tenable.’ The farm after all had a Chief Veterinary Officer in charge for it and still the auditors could not come across even a single instance of either the mysterious outbreak being brought to the notice of higher authorities or of the CVO initiating any corrective action himself. It is appears that Rs. 39.86 lakhs were wasted not because the poultry was sick or the construction defective, but because the monitoring and implementation were frail. What is probable though that the official reason will be accepted and the matter forgotten.

This is but an example of how, if the government is serious about wanting to inspire the youth to strike their own futures, it will have to do more than just train – it will have to lead by example. It will have to make success stories out of poultry farms like the failed one at Chujachen for the youth to believe in the promise of alternative careers.

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GUY ZIV

theconversation.com

The close results of the April 9 Israeli elections, with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu as the apparent winner, represent a missed opportunity for his centrist rivals.

As a foreign policy scholar who researches Israeli politics, I believe that perhaps the greatest irony of the election was the failure of Netanyahu’s challengers, the newly formed “generals’ party,” to contest his approach to security.

Security has long been the central issue in Israeli politics. It’s the one area in which this unique party would presumably have had the most to say. Former Israeli generals and retired intelligence chiefs have traditionally been the nation’s most outspoken critics of Netanyahu’s security policies.

Yet, the generals did not capitalize on their security credentials by offering a real alternative to the government’s policies, especially the government’s hard-line policies toward the Palestinians. Instead, their “Blue and White” ticket chose to turn this election into one more referendum on Netanyahu’s character.

In doing so, they failed in their effort to create a new centrist, nonideological bloc that would replace Netanyahu’s ruling right-wing bloc.

MILITARY AT HOME IN POLITICS

The participation of retired generals in Israeli politics is nothing new. The Israel Defense Forces, or IDF, has always been the country’s most revered institution, and it has been common practice for generals to enter the political arena upon retirement.

Three of Israel’s 12 prime ministers – Yitzhak Rabin, Ehud Barak and Ariel Sharon – were retired generals, and numerous other military veterans have entered the political fray over the years, some more successfully than others.

But the unified list of three former IDF chiefs – Benny Gantz, Moshe Ya’alon and Gabi Ashkenazi – who teamed up in February to unseat the prime minister was without precedent.

The generals’ Blue and White ticket was co-led by the popular centrist politician Yair Lapid, whose enigmatic views on security issues mirrored the vague centrism of the three generals. The party tried to attract both right-of-center and left-of-center voters by running a campaign that was largely devoid of substance.

It studiously avoided engaging in key issues, such as the two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Blue and White offered only banal policy pronounce-

ments and a Trump-like “Israel First” slogan.

NETANYAHU’S AGENDA LIVES

Netanyahu received bad news in the midst of his election campaign. In February, Israel’s attorney general announced his intention to indict him on three separate corruption cases.

By focusing on Netanyahu’s flawed character and homing in on his corruption scandals, the Blue and White candidates convinced center-left voters to abandon the traditionally left-leaning Labor and Meretz parties.

But they did not convince right-of-center voters to abandon Netanyahu.

I believe that by failing to offer a coherent alternative to the right’s hard-line national security approach, the leadership of Blue and White failed to sway voters from Netanyahu’s camp over to their centrist slate.

Instead, they took votes from the left-bloc parties. Indeed, Tuesday’s results show that both Labor and Meretz suffered stinging defeats, with Labor falling to historic lows – their voters shifted over to Blue and White.

LIKUD IN THE LEAD

To be sure, replacing Netanyahu’s dominant Likud party was no small ambition – not even for generals who once led their country into the battlefield.

The right-wing bloc has dominated the Israeli political scene for years. That’s due to several factors, including Israelis’ reaction to the violence that accompanied the second Palestinian intifada in the early 2000s, more violence – still ongoing – that followed Israel’s decision to unilaterally leave the Gaza Strip and years of on-again, off-again failed peace talks.

Indeed, a preelection survey found that a plurality of Jewish Israelis, 40%, wanted to see the formation of a right-wing government. Just 25% preferred a right-center government; 16%, a centrist government of national unity; and a center-left or left-wing government was the least preferred option at 15%.

Even so, this election was a missed opportunity to do what the opposition in Israel has long failed to do: to present a distinct alternative security agenda.

Netanyahu’s headline approach on the Palestinian issue is the only approach with which young Israelis, who have grown up with Netanyahu, are familiar. His narrative of Israel’s failure to reach peace with the Palestinians – it’s the Palestinians’ fault – is their only version of that story.

What Nigerian hip-hop lyrics have to say about the country’s Yahoo Boys

SULEMAN IBRAHIM LAZARUS

theconversation.com

Singers use artistic conventions to construct marketable music personas. But that’s not the full picture. In the US, for example, most American hip-hop and rap songs are also a reflection of the artistes’ living experiences and social communities. These mainly involve gang violence, street hustling and thug life. The late rapper, Notorious B.I.G., summarised a part this succinctly in his song “Juicy”:

“Yea, this album is dedicated to all the teachers that told me I’d never amount to nothing, to all the people that lived above the buildings that I was hustling in front of that called the police on me when I was just trying to make some money to feed my daughter.”

Current Nigerian hip-hop artistes also reflect on socioeconomic realities in their songs, performances and records. This landscape includes cyber-criminals, commonly known as “Yahoo Boys” – the people who set up fake internet accounts with the express intention of defrauding their victims.

In a recently published paper I tried to unpack the complexity of the relationship between Nigerian musicians and Yahoo Boys by analysing hip-hop lyrics that feature the cyber fraudsters. While many Nigerian hip-hop artists glamorise Yahoo Boys, some also condemn them.

In my study, I concluded that as the world staunchly condemns Yahoo Boys it should also consider the social environment from which they have emerged.

Through analysing the lyrics of hip-hop artists, I argue that Yahoo Boys are a reflection of Nigerian society and that hip-hop artists, with all their flaws, are often simply attempting to hold a mirror up to these complicated times in Nigeria. In that way, they follow in the footsteps of the hip-hop greats.

THE LYRICS

I examined lyrics from 2007 to 2017 involving 18 hip-hop artists. The theme I sought out in all the songs was the glamorisation of cyber-fraud and cyber-fraudsters. All the songs I studied were by male singers apart from one entitled, “Maga no need pay,” which involved seven multiple artists. This was due to the fact that fewer women celebrated Nigerian men who have become wealthy through cyber-fraud. Clearly, gender cultures apply online as they do offline.

One question I was keen to answer was whether the songs were similar – or different – to other cultural expressions in Nigerian music in general.

Historically, before the emergence and commercialisation of the Nigerian hip-hop, a common subject in many Nigerian music genres – such



The generals who challenged Netanyahu ran a campaign largely devoid of substance

Not surprisingly, a preelection poll by the Israel Democracy Institute found that 18-24-year-old voters overwhelmingly preferred Netanyahu to the more moderate Gantz – the opposite of the trend among Israelis 65 and older.

Letting Netanyahu off the hook on security issues allowed him to maintain his self-cultivated image as “Mr. Security.” It also enabled him to put the generals on the defensive, warning that they would establish a Palestinian state that “will endanger our existence.”

WHO DEFINES ISRAEL’S NATIONAL INTEREST?

The security community, composed of veterans of the IDF and Israel’s intelligence agencies, has for years argued the opposite.

Several organizations of senior security establishment veterans have argued that the two-state solution is the only way to preserve Israel as both a Jewish and democratic state. They include the Peace and Security Association and the more recently formed Commanders for Israel’s Security, and are supported by hundreds of former generals and intelligence chiefs.

The silence of Gantz’s team on the two-state solution also enabled Netanyahu to move the security discussion from a status quo policy, which critics call “creeping annexation,” to a full embrace of the hard-right’s agenda to annex the occupied territories.

Just three days before the election, Netanyahu vowed to annex West Bank settlements, a step he had always resisted but apparently felt he needed to take to shore up his right flank.

It was also a step he could take in the absence of countervailing pressure from his centrist rivals, who could have emphasized – but didn’t – the dangers of annexation to Israeli national interests.

Netanyahu was therefore able to get away with a dramatic policy shift that, if carried out, would bury the prospects for a two-state solution. He endorsed that position in June 2009, but has since abandoned his pledge.

The last two IDF chiefs who beat a Likud prime minister – Rabin in 1992 and Barak in 1999 – offered clear alternatives to the incumbent’s policies. By calling for a reordering of national priorities, they were able to form left-of-center governments, a scenario that is impossible today due to the decimation of the left.

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as high life – was wealthy individuals. How they acquired their wealth – legally or illegally – was immaterial. For example, research shows that a high life singer, Ogbogu Okonji, in his song “Alusi Ego,” meaning the god(dess) of money, personified a ‘prominent’ lawyer, Fred Ajedua as the God of money.

I argue that the glamorisation of Yahoo Boys hip-hop music is a continuation of this tradition, and merely reflects the social communities that created them.

The one big difference is that Yahoo Boys are portrayed differently to other influential or otherwise cultural figures. For example, the lyrics make a sharp contrast between Yahoo Boys and other criminals whom they refer to as “thieves.” This comparison is aimed at suggesting that some fraudulent activities – such as cyber-fraud – is benevolent while other criminal actions are malevolent and should be condemned.

I also point out that, while it’s appropriate to condemn the fraudulent activities of Yahoo Boys, it’s worth noting that many Nigerians who claim to be “law abiding” are involved in different kinds of theft, such as corruption and fraud and the embezzlement of public funds. The point I make is that the line dividing these people and Yahoo Boys is blurred.

JUSTIFICATIONS

To understand the relationship between cyber-fraud (yahoo-yahoo) and Nigerian hip-hop music I used the idea of moral disengagement – that people don’t ordinarily engage in reprehensible conduct until they have justified to themselves the rightness of their actions.

People use many different kinds of justifications. They include blaming the victims of crime for their plight. For example, Yahoo Boys, as represented in music lyrics, commonly refer to their victims as greedy. By doing this they minimise their own responsibility.

Equally, Yahoo Boys diminish the harm they cause by shifting responsibility to circumstances beyond their control, such as poverty and unemployment.

This isn’t new. Socioeconomic realities have often been reflected in music and culture. And in the case of Nigerian hip-hop lyrics, it’s possible that some songs, may provide ways for listeners to appreciate cyber-fraud (yahoo-yahoo).

I’m not suggesting that hip-hop causes crime. What I’m arguing is that they offer vivid vocabularies of motive, which justify cyber-fraudulent activities and provide a way for listeners to understand and appreciate them.

[the writer is Visiting lecturer, University of Greenwich, UK, Royal Holloway]

FIELDWORK REFLECTIONS

Changes in the Death Rituals of the Lepchas



RONGNYOO LEPCHA

Everything has its end, so do humans. And since the notion of death lingers on all of us like a shadow we are posed with yet another question. After death, where do we go? Unfortunately no one has ever returned from the other side to share the details.

All of us fear the unknown and the question of what awaits us after death is something all wonder about and fear. Death rituals are elaborate in the hope of a proper farewell of the deceased. Before Buddhism and Christianity, Lepchas believed that their souls went to Pum Zoo as the final resting place with their ancestors. If a woman dies, her soul rests with her grandmother and if a man dies his soul rests with his grandfather. But today, this concept has been infiltrated with notions of heaven and hell, the soul going to Mahakala instead of the ancestors.

After a person dies in the community, the Mun (female Shaman), usually a Pildon Mun (a shaman who specialises in guiding the souls), calls out to the soul of the deceased, as it is believed that the deceased has no idea of having left the physical body so it has to be convinced of its death and then taken to Pum Zoo. The duty of the Pildon Mun is to guide the souls to their final

resting place that is Pum zoo. She makes a small opening in the roof of the house with an arrow and calls out the name of the deceased three times. The Mun tries to convince the soul of its death and not to keep any bond with his/ her family, property or pets. The dead body is not allowed to be brought out through the door as Lepchas believe that it is only for the living, so the body is taken out through the window or in olden

days wooden planks of the Dokemoo Lee (traditional of the house) were removed and the body passed through it and taken to the burial ground to a hill top called chyaok braam.

After burial, thorns are placed around to secure the grave from scavengers and a stone is placed on top. For three nights, family members heat long creek White stones and throw them outside calling the name of the deceased because they believe that demons that come to eat the souls of others in the family will be struck by the red hot stones and run away.

After three days, the Sunglyon ceremony is performed. It is always performed outside the house as it is a sad event. A big branch of Sa ngaa Kung (a tree) a tanggar (bamboo basket) is hung on the branch. A branch of promoo kung is placed a few distance away and a bamboo sleek is tied to each branch and then 7 knots are made on the sleek which the mun holds in her hand and calls out the name of the deceased three time after sprinkling chilok (auspicious alcohol offering mixed with other ingredients) before she starts the ceremony.

With her power, she takes the soul

to lingmo longmoo dah (a lake) and asks the soul to look at its reflection in the clear water of the lake. There will however be no reflection. And to further convince the soul that it is no more alive, she takes the soul to the Lingmoo Longmoo tsaot (the shore of the lake) and makes it walk on the sand and then points out that no footprints have been left behind. The soul is then taken to posing dang and made to sit on a small bamboo branch. Since a soul is very light, the branch can easily support its weight. Finally, as the soul is convinced of its death, it is guided through the Rongnyoo and Ronggya-ong rivers towards Pum Zoo.

After all the worldly ties are broken and the soul ready to move to the other side, the Mun makes it bathe in a waterfall and then instructs the soul that after crossing a small stream at the foot of the chew (mountain) it will see its clan's to lep (mountain pass/gate), the door manned by guards who will demand the aageet (Clan) and after the identity is confirmed s/he is placed with their respective ancestor.

It is believed that a woman is placed on her grandmother's lap and a man is placed on his grandfather's lap.

Today, the place of the mun has been taken over by the yekmun or lamas who perform the death rites according to Buddhist rituals from guiding the soul to the afterlife to taking the corpse to the cremation ground. And for those converted to Christianity, the priest performs the funeral. There are those in between, especially among the Buddhist Lep-



chas who use both the traditional rituals, but in the end the Buddhist rites are overriding.

A lot has changed due to the advent of Buddhism. The dead are cremated nowadays and Christianity has had its own impact on the already changing scenario of the Lepchas. What caused this change? Was it easier to understand and visualise heaven and hell or was it the fear inculcated within the cognition popularised by the dominant religions. The fear that is that if you don't do enough good deeds, the doors of heaven will not open for you and if we have sinned, our souls will forever burn in the fires of hell. Fear, used very cleverly against our kind to indoctrinate appropriate conduct.

Suddenly, the mountains and laps of our ancestors were made occult; suddenly we all started visualising the glory of heaven and how our souls would be carried there after death if we walked on the right path. And with this, the concept of Rum Lyang (place where the gods live) and Nyo Lyang (hell) came into existence. We can only read of the traditional practices or hear it in what remains of the oral traditions.

Mamata criticises Ram Navami rallies in Bengal



KOLKATA, APRIL 13 (PTI): Hundreds of Ram Navami rallies, including some armed rallies, were taken out by BJP and VHP in various parts of West Bengal Saturday drawing sharp criticism from West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee.

Ram Navami rallies were taken out in West Midnapore, Purulia, Jhargram, Bankura, Howrah, Kolkata and in North and South 24 Parganas districts among others, officials said.

At Kharagpur in West Midnapore, BJP state president Dilip Ghosh took out Ram Navami rallies and were seen displaying swords and maces.

"Ram Navami rallies are a part of our tradition. We are carrying arms to protect ourselves. It has nothing to do with elections. If TMC has a problem with

armed rallies then they should change their thought process," Ghosh said when asked why he took out rallies with swords and maces.

Banerjee while addressing a rally at Sili-guri criticised BJP for taking out armed rallies and said they were trying to "sell religion" for political advantage. She also charged BJP for using religion as a tool to mislead the people.

Kolkata Police said that no political, apolitical, religious organisations are allowed to carry out bike rallies in the city.

The BJP was denied permission to take out bike rallies across Kolkata on the occasion of Ram Navami. However, normal rallies by the party and VHP were allowed to be taken out.

The West Bengal Police too denied per-

mission for carrying arms by the participants in the Ram Navami rallies.

In some places there were scuffles between police officials and BJP workers after they were stopped from taking out bike rallies.

The Vishva Hindu Parishad, which planned as many as 700 rallies in the state on the occasion of Ram Navami, took out several in South Bengal.

The organisation said that no arms would be carried in rallies held by it this year.

"We have received permission for rallies. We will abide by the direction of the police and no one will carry arms during Ram Navami rallies conducted by us," VHP organisational general secretary (eastern region) Sachindranath Sinha said.

SFIO arrests former IL&FS Fin Services CEO Ramesh Bawa

NEW DELHI, APR 13 (PTI): Making its second arrest in the IL&FS case, the Serious Fraud Investigation Office (SFIO) Saturday arrested former IL&FS Financial Services chief Ramesh C Bawa, official sources said.

They said Bawa, who had served as managing director and CEO, was arrested on the grounds

of abusing his powers at the company through fraudulent conduct. He also granted loans to entities which were not creditworthy and caused wrongful loss to the company and its creditors, they added.

Earlier this month, the probe agency arrested former IL&FS vice chairman Hari Sankaran.

The sources said IL&FS Financial Services Ltd had borrowings of around Rs 17,500 crore through debt instruments and bank loans.

Provident funds, pension funds, gratuity funds, mutual funds as well as public and private sector banks are among the entities that have invested in these debt in-

Tripura HC cancels interim bail of 5 involved in assault of doctor

AGARTALA, APR 13 (PTI): The Tripura High Court has stayed an interim bail order of five persons involved in assault of a government doctor of Indira Gandhi Memorial Hospital here.

The HC passed the stay on the interim bail order on Friday night.

Earlier that day a First Class Judicial Magistrate had granted interim bail to the five accused in the case.

A special court was convened by the Chief Justice of Tripura High Court, Sanjoy Karol, late last night following an appeal from the state government, and stayed the order of interim bail that was granted by the judicial magistrate, Tripura Law Minister Ratan Lal Nath told reporters on Saturday.

"We challenged the lower court's order because we thought it was a punishable offence and they could not be released," Nath said.

"The police had arrested the accused immediately," the minister added.

The doctor was beaten up by family members of a patient after she died in the hospital's labour room in the early hours of Friday, police said.

The 25-year-old pregnant woman was admitted to the state-run Indira Gandhi Memorial Hospital around 1.20 am and she died of cardiac arrest around 2 am on Friday.

Alleging medical negligence, the patient's family then attacked and injured the doctor, police said.

The gynaecologist was admitted to the trauma care centre of the G B Pant Hospital, Indira Gandhi Memorial Hospital where his condition was stated to be improving.

83.12 per cent polling recorded in lone Nagaland LS seat

KOHIMA, APR 13 (PTI): An overall 83.12 per cent voter turnout was recorded in Nagaland for the lone Lok Sabha constituency, on April 11, a senior election official said on Saturday.

For the 26-Aonglenden bye-poll, held simultaneously with the Lok Sabha elections, around 84.35 per cent voters cast their ballots, Nagaland Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) Abhijit Sinha said.

Interacting with media persons here, the CEO said altogether 10,02,670 electorate out of 12,06,287 general voters exercised their franchise for the Lok Sabha polls in the state.

The voter turnout in this election is 5.13 per cent lesser compared to the 88.25 per cent figure in the 2014 Lok Sabha polls, he said.

Sinha added that 5,07,404 were male voters and 4,95,266 female.

Meanwhile, General Secretary of All Tripura Government Doctors Association (ATGDA), Dr Rajesh Chowdhury said they had called off their movement as Chief Minister Biplab Kumar Deb assured that stern action would be taken against the accused persons.

He also assured to set up police pickets in government hospitals.

"A six-member delegation of ATGDA and Indian Medical Association (IMA) met the chief minister on Friday night and the matter was discussed with him. We are satisfied with his assurances," Chowdhury said.

He alleged that in last one year 12 doctors were attacked in different places and despite filing FIR no action was taken.

The ATGDA and IMA on Friday demanded arrest of culprits, trial in first-track court for speedy disposal of the case, setting up of police pickets and installation of CCTV cameras in all government hospitals, and arrest of all culprits involved in the incidents of attack on doctors in last one year.

"This attack was inhuman and barbaric and we cannot keep mum if anybody tries to take the law in his hand. The police have been asked to take stern action," the chief minister had said on Friday.

In spite of being granted interim bail, the accused are still in jail because they could not produce bail bonds, officials said.

Police pickets were set up in three major hospitals of the city, G B Pant Hospital, Indira Gandhi Memorial Hospital and Tripura Medical College, all located in the state capital.

Four candidates Congress's K L Chishi, PDA consensus candidate and NDPP's Tokheho Yephthomi, NPP's Hayithung Tungoe and Independent M M Thromwa Konyak were in fray for the lone Lok Sabha seat in Nagaland.

The bye-poll to the 26-Aonglenden assembly constituency was a straight contest between Congress nominee Alemjongshi Longkumer and Shringain Longkumer of the ruling NDPP.

The by-poll was necessitated following the demise of sitting MLA Imtikumzuk in September last year.

Meanwhile, Returning Officer M Patton said that following the scrutiny of documents of presiding officers on Friday, no recommendation for repoll at any polling station has been necessitated.

Formers bureaucrats, media barons in fray in Odisha polls

BHUBANESWAR, APR 13 (PTI): At least six former bureaucrats and half-a-dozen media barons are in the fray for the Lok Sabha and the assembly elections that are being held simultaneously in Odisha.

No former bureaucrats or media barons, however, were in the fray during the first phase of polling in the state on April 11.

The former bureaucrats who are contesting the elections in the next three phases are Aparajita Sarangi, Arup Patnaik, Prakash Mishra, Nalini Kanta Pradhan, Sarmistha Sethi and Ramesh Chandra Sai.

They are contesting the elections for the first time.

Polling for the next three phases will be held on April 18, 23 and 29 in the state.

Aparajita Sarangi, an IAS officer who recently quit the government service, is a BJP candidate from Bhubaneswar Lok Sabha seat.

She is pitted against former Mumbai Police Commissioner and retired IPS officer Arup Patnaik of the BJD and veteran CPM leader Jannardan Pati.

Similarly, former Director General of CRPF and Odisha DGP Prakash Mishra is trying his luck as a BJP candidate from the

Cuttack Lok Sabha seat.

Mishra is facing five-time MP Bhartruhari Mahatab of the BJD, and former Odisha minister and Congress candidate Panchanan Kungo in the prestigious Cuttack seat.

Former secretary of the Works Department, Nalini Kanta Pradhan, who quit the government service in February this year, is a BJD candidate from Sambalpur Lok Sabha seat and he facing BJP candidate Nitesh Gangdeb, a sitting MLA from Deogarh. The Congress has fielded former MP Sarat Patnaik.

Sarmistha Sethi, who resigned from the Odisha Financial Services, barely a few days before the announcement of the election dates, is a BJD candidate from Jajpur, a reserved Lok Sabha seat.

Sethi is facing Amiya Mallick of the BJP and Manas Jena of the Congress.

Former Odisha Administrative Officer Ramesh Chandra Sai is a BJD candidate.

He is trying his luck from the Atthalik assembly segment against Bhagirathi Pradhan of BJP and Bijayananda Choliya of the Congress.

Similarly, half-a-dozen media barons are in the fray.

While BJD's Cuttack Lok Sabha candidate and sitting MP Bhartruhari Mahatab is the editor of Odia daily 'Prajantra',

129.51 crore in cash has been recovered till Friday.

Gold and silver ornaments, besides liquor, laptops and clothes worth Rs 422.72 crore were seized since the code of conduct came into effect, he told reporters here.

On preparations for the April 18 Lok Sabha elections, he said 5,874 zonal teams

Soumya Ranjan Patnaik, the editor of the state's highest circulated newspaper 'Sambad' is a regional party candidate in the Khandapada assembly seat.

Soumya Ranjan Patnaik, a sitting Rajya Sabha MP also owns Kanaka TV.

Former four-time MP Baijayant Panda's wife Jagi Mangat Panda is the co-founder of Odisha Television Limited.

Panda is a BJP candidate from the Kendrapara Lok Sabha seat.

His family's OTV is considered as the most popular news channel in the state.

Similarly, the owner of Kalinga TV Achyuta Samanta and proprietor of News World Odisha Rabindra Jena are contesting as BJD's Lok Sabha candidates from Kandhamal and Balasore Lok Sabha seats respectively.

Congress candidate from Jagatsinghpur assembly segment Chiranjibi Biswal's family runs 'Samaya', an Odia daily.

However, four-time BJD MP Tathagat Satpathy, who is editor of Odia daily 'Dharitri' and English daily 'Orissa Post' this time preferred not to contest the polls.

There are 21 Lok Sabha and 147 assembly seats in the state. Counting of votes will be held on May 23.

have been formed to take up poll related work.

He said 7,225 poll booths have been identified 'vulnerable' in the State and steps are being taken to monitor them using surveillance cameras.

Central armed forces and micro observers will also maintain vigil at these booths, he said.

EC seizes Rs 552.23 crore unaccounted cash, jewellery in TN

CHENNAI, APR 13 (PTI): Unaccounted cash, gold and other valuable items worth Rs 552.23 crore have been seized in Tamil Nadu since the Model Code of Conduct came into effect on March 10, the Election Commission said Saturday.

Chief Electoral Officer Satyabrata Sahoo said Rs

It's totally opposite here compared to Delhi: Dhawan on Eden pitch

KOLKATA, APR 13 (PTI): Having roared back to form with an unbeaten 97-run knock, Shikhar Dhawan said the pitch at the Eden Gardens was better than the one at Delhi Capitals' home ground.

Dhawan batted through the innings to guide Delhi Capitals to a seven-wicket victory over Kolkata Knight Riders in an the IPL here on Friday night.

He was however denied his maiden T20 century, as Colin Ingram smashed one into the stands to finish the game in style.

"I knew it could be my first T20 hundred but the team goal is more important, hence I took that single rather than taking a huge risk," Dhawan, who bagged the man of the match award, said at the presentation ceremony.

Talking about the Eden track, the India opener said, "It's totally opposite here compared to Delhi. I was telling Dinesh (Karthik) the same thing. It's a good wicket to bat on. Good for the bowlers as well as the batsmen, makes it interesting. In Delhi we have to adapt ourselves, hence we got to have that skill."

Delhi Capitals coach Ricky Ponting had slammed the Feroz Shah Kotla ground staff, who provided the home team with a pitch that proved to be more helpful for the Sunrisers Hyderabad earlier this month.

Dhawan added, "I really enjoyed in the first six overs but I knew I had to stay till the end. I was getting the right thoughts and I had to take the game deep. Rishabh is such a big hitter he can always hit it out of the park."

Rishabh Pant, who got out after scoring 46, said the plan was to "take the game deep".

"I just try to keep my head clear. When you're chasing 180, you need to pace the innings in a way that you complete the match in 18-19 overs. We were just talking about taking the match deep and that both of us should remain there till the end," Pant said.

KKR captain Dinesh Karthik said taking wickets has not been easy on this ground.

"Picking wickets has been pretty hard on this ground. Having said that, couple of areas for the bowlers to work on and come back harder," said Karthik.

Perez heads Newcastle closer to Premier League safety



LEICESTER (UNITED KINGDOM), APR 13 (AFP): Newcastle took a huge step towards securing their Premier League survival as Ayoze Perez sealed a 1-0 win against Leicester on Friday.

Rafael Benitez's side moved 10 points clear of the relegation zone thanks to Perez's first half header at the King Power Stadium.

Newcastle's first away league win since December ended a run of four games without a victory which had threatened to drag them into the relegation dogfight.

They should be assured of maintaining their top-flight status after a difficult season tarnished by Benitez's discontent over a lack of backing in the transfer market from controver-

sial owner Mike Ashley.

Leicester remain seventh after a first home defeat for boss Brendan Rodgers since his move from Celtic in February.

Salomon Rondon almost gave Newcastle the lead midway through the first half with a ferocious 30-yard free-kick that cannoned back off the woodwork.

Leicester went close when Ben Chilwell exchanged passes with James Maddison before hitting a low strike that Martin Dubravka kept out.

Miguel Almiron spun away from the Leicester defence and forced Leicester keeper Kasper Schmeichel into action with a powerful effort.

Harvey Barnes was a constant threat for Leicester and he surged

past two defenders for a shot which Dubravka was equal to.

But it was Perez who broke the deadlock in the 32nd minute as the Spanish winger met Matt Ritchie's cross with a glancing header that flashed over Schmeichel.

Perez wasted a good chance to double Newcastle's lead early in the second half when he volleyed wide from Rondon's cross.

Almiron fared no better after Fabian Schar carried the ball out of Newcastle's defence and picked out his team-mate with a superb pass that demanded a better finish than the hurried shot that cleared the crossbar.

The last time Leicester won a Premier League game in which they trailed at half was

in October 2015 against West Bromwich Albion.

Foxes boss Brendan Rodgers would have settled for even a draw as time ticked away, but Buttler's 43-ball knock studded with eight fours and seven sixes set the tone before Royals survived a scare to finish the game in 19.3 overs.

The match was a forgettable one for young West Indies pacer Alzarri Joseph (0/53 in 3 overs), who was hampered for eight fours and three sixes and then was injured trying to save a boundary.

The 13th over changed the game's complexion as Buttler smashed two sixes and four fours off Joseph to bring down the equation to a manageable run-a-ball.

Buttler first conjured a 60-run opening stand with skipper Ajinkya Rahane (37 off 21 balls, 6x 4; 1x6) to lay the foundation and then added 87 runs for the second wicket with Sanju Samson (31 off 26 balls; 2x4, 1x6).

Buttler initially played second fiddle to Rahane but then upped his ante once skipper was gone. The Englishman in the eighth over, hit Rahul Chahar for a six, and then in next over, smashed two sixes off Krunal Pandya as he raced to 50 off

ers Hyderabad and Kings XI Punjab this season.

"It was pretty similar. I don't think there's too much of a difference. It is a very good pitch. I don't know if they read the pitch better. Obviously both the teams read the pitch normally. There was nothing different we could have done," said Karthik.

On Sunday, KKR will be up against table toppers and defending champions Chennai Super Kings, who had restricted them to a paltry 108/9 before cruising to a seven-wicket win in the first leg.

"Obviously it's a big game. They're a good team. Two good teams playing against each other will be a good game. That's the beauty of IPL you win two on the trot and you lose two out of two. These things happen. It's about how balanced you can stay as a team," Karthik said.

The home team is hit by a bout of flu with their opener Chris Lynn missing out of action against Delhi, while Karthik said he too is down with the virus.

"I'm also down with a bit of a fever and flu. I've also not feeling well since yesterday," the KKR skipper said.

matter," he told reporters here on Saturday.

He also said the annual turnover of the gem and jewellery industry is around Rs 4 lakh crore, which is expected to double in the next couple of years.

The GJC also launched a sensitisation programme - 'Labham' - for jewellers, providing information on regulatory compliance and best business practices.

Buttler, Gopal guide Rajasthan Royals to 4-wkt victory

NIKHIL BAPAT

MUMBAI, APR 13 (PTI): Englishman Jos Buttler laid the platform with a rampaging 89 while Shreyas Gopal held his nerve at the death to power Rajasthan Royals to a four-wicket victory over Mumbai Indians in an Indian Premier League encounter here Saturday.

This was Royals' second victory of the season in seven games after losing a last ball thriller to CSK less than 48 hours back.

Put into bat, Mumbai Indians rode on an aggressive 81 by South African Quinton De Kock to post an imposing 187/5, but Buttler's 43-ball knock studded with eight fours and seven sixes set the tone before Royals survived a scare to finish the game in 19.3 overs.

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Took up boxing after watching Muhammad Ali on TV: Mary Kom

PANAJI, APR 13 (PTI): Six-time women's world boxing champion and Olympic medallist M C Mary Kom Saturday said she turned to this combat sport after getting inspired by watching legendary boxer Muhammad Ali's fight on television.

The pugilist from Manipur said she also drew inspiration from action movies of Jackie Chan as well as fight sequences of Bollywood films starring Akshay Kumar and others initially.

She was speaking during an interaction with the delegates at the ongoing 'Goa Fest 2019', an annual event organised by advertising bodies in the country.

"My inspiration in the boxing field came when I saw Muhammad Ali's fight on television...I said to myself, if a man can fight, why can't a woman," she said.

"I also used to watch Bollywood movies like those of Akshay Kumar, Sanjay Dutt, Sunny Deol and others," she added.

She said when she took up boxing, people were talking about it "very negatively".

"Before marriage, it is easier for everyone. But after marriage,



29 balls.

When Buttler departed in the 14th over, Rajasthan needed 41 runs. But then came the twist in the tale when Mumbai did make a comeback of sorts sending four batsman -- Samson, Rahul Tripathi (1), Steve Smith (12) and Liam Livingstone (1) -- back to the pavilion as Rajasthan slumped to 174.6 from 147/2.

However, Shreyas Gopal (13 not out) and K Gowtham (0 not out) held their nerves to take the side home in a tense situation. Gopal hit the winning boundary off Hardik Pandya as celebrations erupted in the Rajasthan camp.

Joseph was the costliest bowler having conceded 53 runs in three overs.

Earlier, Quinton de Kock hit a belligerent 81 as he powered Mumbai Indians to an imposing 187 for 5 against Rajasthan Royals in their Indian Premier League game here Saturday.

South African De Kock was the wrecking-chief as he hammered six fours and four sixes in his 52-ball knock and got able support from skipper Rohit Sharma (47 off 32 balls), who made a comeback after missing out the last Mumbai game due to a leg injury.

A late cameo from Hardik Pandya (28 off 11 balls), in which smashed three sixes and one fours ensured Mumbai neared



the responsibilities increase," she said.

During her address before the interaction, she said, "Now I can say, we have everything. Only we don't have champions. They are not creating new champions, that is what we are lacking."

However, she clarified that she was not blaming the government, the companies or the federation for it.

"I am blaming the athletes. They still have more to learn," she said, adding that she was upset because athletes from the younger generation never approach her.

"They never come to me and ask about my experience. I feel very bad. After I retire whether we will have a champion or not, I don't know," she said.

"Come and ask me about my experience. Boxers those who are

the 190-run mark.

Earlier, Rohit and De Kock took the opposition attack to the cleaners as the two added 96 for the first wicket. They started the onslaught in the third over amassing 18 runs with the South African hitting a six and four off Krishnappa Gowtham.

Then Rohit ripped apart pacer Dhawal Kulkarni, striking three fours, including a splendid cover drive, as Mumbai gathered 14 runs from it.

De Kock kept playing shots at will even as Mumbai reached 57/0 after Powerplay period. Then De Kock dispatched spinner Liam Livingstone for two sixes over deep mid-wicket as runs came thick and fast. He raced to his fifty in 34 balls.

Rohit, who struck six fours and a lone six, threw his wicket away giving a sitter to Jos Buttler off Jofra Archer.

And then Rajasthan made a good comeback removing Surya Kumar Yadav (16) and Kieron Pollard (6) to reduce the hosts to 136/3.

Rajasthan bowlers made a splendid comeback as they removed De Kock and Ishan Kishan before the Hardik show.

Meanwhile, it was Rohit's 100th match as captain for Mumbai Indians (including the now defunct Champions League T20 games) and it was Mumbai's overall 200th match.

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New Sudan head resigns, army says 'not a coup'

KHARTOUM, APR 13 (AFP): Sudan's new military leader has resigned just a day after being sworn in, as the country's army rulers insisted they would pave the way for a civilian government.

The head of Sudan's new ruling military council, General Awad Ibn Ouf, announced his departure on Friday after being sworn in late Thursday following the ouster of long-time president Omar al-Bashir.

His move came shortly after the council's political chief Lieutenant General Omar Zain al-Abdin told Arab and African diplomats at a meeting broadcast on state television: "This is not a military coup, but taking the side of the people." Ouf's departure was an apparent sign of confusion among the northeast African country's new leaders after Thursday's ousting of iron-fisted Bashir.

But there was jubilation at the news on the streets of Khartoum.

Tens of thousands of protestors had kept up a vigil at the army headquarters in the Sudanese capital Friday angrily demanding that the military make way for a civilian government.

"I hereby announce my resignation as head of the Transitional Military Council," Ibn Ouf said in an address to the nation, announcing he had chosen General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan Abdulrahman to replace him.

He said he trusted in Abdulrahman's "experience and suitability I trust to bring this ship to a safe shore".



The Sudanese Professionals Association which has spearheaded the nationwide protest campaign hailed Ibn Ouf's departure as "a victory of the people's will".

The demonstrations against Bashir's 30-year rule first erupted in December, triggered by a tripling of the bread prices in one of the world's most impoverished countries.

But vast crowds have been thronging outside the army headquarters since Saturday in unprecedented scenes.

Many were preparing to defy a night-time curfew for the second time, denouncing Ibn Ouf's leadership as a military coup.

That was denied by Abdin who said the transitional military council, due to stay in power for two years, would "open dialogue with political parties".

There "will be a civilian government and we will not intervene in its composition," he vowed.

He also appealed to foreign diplomats for "your donations, as we

have some economic issues," alluding to fuel and food shortages.

"The role of the military council is to protect the security and stability of the country," Abdin added.

Thousands of men and women, dressed in white, again braved the searing Sudanese heat on Friday to offer prayers outside the sprawling army complex which has become a focus point of the protests since Saturday.

The imam leading the prayers was draped in the Sudanese flag.

The police said 16 people had been killed in live fire in Khartoum in the past two days, without elaborating.

Hussein Mohamed, an elderly man from Omdurman, said he was attending the protest for the first time in response to a call to hold Friday prayers there.

"It is too, too hot but I'm impressed by what our young men and women are doing here," he said. "I'll surely come again."

Bashir, who took

charge in the northeast African country in a 1989 military coup, remained in custody Friday, but Abdin said the council would never extradite him or any other Sudanese citizen.

The International Criminal Court (ICC) has issued two arrest warrants against Bashir for suspected genocide and war crimes.

The military council had announced a two-year transition period, but Sudan's UN envoy told the Security Council in New York that this could be shortened "depending on developments on the ground and agreements between stakeholders".

Protesters have defied repeated deadly attempts by riot police and the feared intelligence services to crush their movement.

But when Bashir's overthrow was finally announced on Thursday in an address to the nation by Ibn Ouf, it was met not with joy but anger.

Protest leaders dismissed the transitional

military council as the "same old faces" from a regime which led the country into multiple conflicts, worsening poverty and ever-widening social inequality.

Thursday's announcement meant "we have not achieved anything," said one protester, who gave his name only as Adel.

"We will not stop our revolution. We are calling for the regime to step down, not only Bashir." Analysts said Bashir's overthrow in a "palace coup" made the transition to democracy in Sudan a more distant prospect.

"The power struggle within the security cabal that took power yesterday is just beginning," said Alex de Waal, a Sudan specialist at Tufts University.

"Bashir had kept their rivalries and ambitions in check; his removal brings in its wake an unregulated uncertainty."

Multiple world powers have made calls for a peaceful transition.

Washington urged the military council "to exercise restraint and to allow space for civilian participation within the government".

The European Union urged the army to carry out a "swift" handover to civilian rule.

Britain's Foreign Secretary Jeremy Hunt has said that a two-year transition overseen by the military "is not the answer." "We need to see a swift move to an inclusive, representative, civilian leadership," Hunt said.

G-20 chiefs: World economic growth to revive later this year



WASHINGTON, APR 13 (AP): The global economy is likely to pull out of a brief growth slump later this year with a little help from the world's central banks and from U.S. and Chinese trade negotiators.

Global finance leaders gathered for the spring meetings of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank agree that the global economy has lost momentum this year. But they expect growth to pick up in the second half of 2019, as central bankers ease up on interest rates.

Still, a trade standoff between the United States and China threatens to dim the economic outlook.

"We must be mindful of an escalation of trade tensions," Japanese Finance Minister Taro Aso told reporters Friday.

Japan holds the chairmanship of the Group of 20 major economies.

The G-20 on Friday said that world economic growth sputtered late last year and early this year because of height-

ened trade tensions, turbulent financial markets and rising interest rates.

The IMF cut its forecast for global growth from 3.6% last year to 3.3% in 2019, the slowest since the recession year 2009, but it predicts growth will return to 3.6% in 2020.

Haruhiko Kuroda, head of the Bank of Japan, told reporters on Friday that the G-20 officials saw the IMF's revised forecast as "highly likely" but said all the countries would need to do their part to boost growth.

Forecasters are worried about the U.S.-China trade conflict. The world's two biggest economies have slapped tariffs on 350 billion worth of each other's goods.

They are battling over U.S. allegations that China deploys predatory tactics including cyber-theft and forcing foreign firms to hand over trade secrets -- in a sharp-elbowed effort to challenge American technological dominance.

Financial markets have rallied this year on

hopes that the two countries will reach a settlement.

Changyong Rhee, director of the International Monetary Fund's Asia and Pacific Department, said at a briefing Friday that market could falter if negotiators can't reach a deal after all.

Even a U.S.-China trade deal could create new problems, Rhee said.

If the Chinese agree to take in more imports from the United States, as widely expected, those purchases could come at the expense other countries that have been doing business with China. Rhee also expressed concern that China would give American companies "preferential access," undercutting other countries and leading to "broader worries" about the future of free trade.

Rhee also said a U.S.-China trade peace could prove "short-lived" if the two countries can't reach a long-term deal that requires Beijing to improve protection of intellectual-property and make other economic reforms.

Kim Jong Un says he's open to another summit with Trump

Pyongyang, Apr 13 (AP): North Korean leader Kim Jong Un says he's open to having a third summit with President Donald Trump if the United States could offer mutually acceptable terms for an agreement by the end of the year.

Pyongyang's official Korean Central News Agency on Saturday said Kim's speech came during a session of the North Korea's rubber-stamp parliament.

Kim during the speech blamed the col-

lapse of his summit with Trump in February on what he described as unilateral demands by the United States. But he said his personal relationship with the American president remains good.

Kim repeated earlier claims that North Korea's crippled economy would persevere through heavy international sanctions imposed over its nuclear weapons programme and that he wouldn't "obsess over summitry with the United States out of thirst

for sanctions relief."

The United States has said the summit broke down because of the North's excessive demands for sanctions relief in return for limited disarmament measures.

"We of course place importance on resolving problems through dialogue and negotiations. But US-style dialogue of unilaterally pushing its demands doesn't fit us, and we have no interest in it," Kim said during the speech.

Algeria activists fear tougher police tactics after Friday clashes

ALGIERS, APR 13 (AFP): Algerian civil society groups voiced concern Saturday about toughening police tactics, a day after officers in riot gear clashed with protesters, and reaffirmed their commitment to peaceful pro-democracy rallies.

Friday's initially peaceful rally in central Algiers deteriorated into the worst street violence seen so far since marches began in mid-February demanding an end to the 20-year-rule of president Abdelaziz Bouteflika, who finally resigned on April 2, and his regime.

Police used tear gas and water cannon and scuffled with demonstrators, who in turn hurled stones and bottles, set alight at least one police car and turned large dumpsters into barricades.

Injuries were reported on both sides, and activists raised fears that the standoff has entered a new phase.

"Friday's mobilisation was different because of the scale of the repression," according to Said Salhi, vice president of the Algerian League for the Defence of Human Rights.

Demonstrators have vowed to push on with rallies against the interim government of Abdelkader Bensalah and

its plan for July 4 elections, arguing that leaders who emerged from the Bouteflika "system" cannot guarantee free and fair polls.

Salhi noted that the mood was different from early Friday outside the main post office in central Algiers that has become an emblematic protest site.

"It usually starts joyfully at the post office, but there was a desire on the part of the authorities to clear the area," he said.

Salhi said a turning point had come three days earlier when police had for the first time tried to disperse a student demonstration in Algiers with tear gas and water cannon.

Political scientist Cherif Driss said that, while the demonstrations have continued unabated, "the police are trying to refocus, and are beginning to reduce the public space for expression".

Driss added however that "the response remains moderate and professional, with mostly water cannons and tear gas. There is no brutal repression".

Police put Friday's violence down to "delinquents" infiltrating the crowds, and said 108 people had been arrested, while some protesters also blamed "trouble-

makers" for the clashes.

Driss said it was too early to tell whether Friday's clashes were the result of "a strategy to limit demonstrations or a reaction to groups infiltrating" the protests.

The General Directorate of National Security reported that 83 police had suffered injuries. It denied having resorted to repressive tactics and said it was merely maintaining public order.

Several protesters were also injured, and at least one was hit in the chest by what appeared to be a rubber bullet, said an AFP photographer.

Activist groups stressed their commitment to non-violence.

"The protesters are very committed to the continuation of the movement in its peaceful form," said Abdelwahab Ferfaoui of civic group the Youth Action Rally (RA)-Algeria). "It's the key to success."

At Friday's clashes, some demonstrators had placed themselves between rioters and police, raising their hands and chanting "silmiya" (peaceful) until the situation calmed, AFP journalists witnessed.

"People did not respond despite the repression, we saw citizens defending police officers," said Salhi.

ISIS claims responsibility for deadly suicide attack in Pak's Quetta

KARACHI, APR 13 (PTI): The Islamic State Saturday claimed responsibility for a suicide attack that killed 21 people and wounded more than 50 others in Quetta, the provincial capital of Pakistan's restive Balochistan province.

A suicide bomber blew himself in the Hazarganj fruits and vegetable market in Quetta on Friday morning, in an attack believed to be targeting the minority Hazara Shia community.

The ISIS on Saturday released a photograph of the suicide attacker along with his name and said the attack targeted Shia Muslims, according to the Site Intelligence Group, which monitors jihadist activities.

"The Islamic State's Khorasan Province (ISKP) claimed killing and wounding 70 Hazara Shias and Pakistani soldiers in a suicide bombing in Quetta," it said.

The Pakistani officials have repeatedly denied presence of the ISIS in the country, but the Middle Eastern terror group has claimed a number of attacks in the past.

On Friday, a faction of the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) claimed responsibility for the attack, saying it collaborated with the banned Lashkar-e-Jhangvi (Lej).

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Mackenzie Davis joins political comedy 'Irresistible'



Los Angeles, Apr 12 (PTI): "Blade Runner 2049" star Mackenzie Davis has boarded the cast of filmmaker Jon Stewart's "Irresistible".

The 32-year-old actor joins Steve Carell, Chris Cooper, Rose Byrne AND Topher Grace in the political comedy, according to The Hollywood Reporter.

Stewart, who previously directed incarceration drama "Rosewater", has also penned the script. It tells the story of a Democratic political consultant (Carell) who helps a retired ex-Marine colonel (Cooper) run for mayor in a small Wisconsin town.

The project, backed by Focus Features and Brad Pitt's Plan B Entertainment, will also be produced by Stewart.

Davis is currently working on the Tim Miller-directed and James Cameron-produced "Terminator: Dark Fate", which will hit theatres worldwide in November.

Aaron Eckhart to headline thriller 'Wander'

LOS ANGELES, APR 12 (PTI): Actor Aaron Eckhart is all set to topline the cast of conspiracy thriller "Wander".

The film will be directed by "Below Her Mouth" helmer April Mullen from a script by Tim Doiron, reported Deadline.

The story follows Arthur Bretnik (Eckhart), a mentally unstable private investigator, who, after being hired to probe a suspicious death in the small town of Wander, becomes convinced the case is linked to the same 'conspiracy cover up' that caused the death of his daughter.

The project is set to start shooting in June in New Mexico.

Mullen and Doiron will also be producing the film alongside Andre Relis.

Not approaching politics as a star: Urmila Matondkar

By KOMAL PANCHAMATIA

Mumbai, Apr 12 (PTI): Urmila Matondkar, the star of 90s hit Hindi films like "Rangeela", "Daud" and "Judaai", is contesting the Lok Sabha election but says she isn't approaching politics as a star and would rather be known as people's representative.

"I am not approaching this whole thing as a star with my star image. I am trying to get to grass-root and connect to people. I know it is going to be difficult.

"I want to generate confidence in them about me as their representative more than just another star coming in, waving and asking for votes. Because that is not the thought with which I have gotten into it," Urmila told PTI in an interview.

Considering she is a known face, ask her if Bollywood celebrities can be vote pullers, pat comes the reply, "I can't talk about others, it is not fair. Media generally likes to generalise things as it makes their life easy."

She will be contesting the election from Mumbai North constituency, a seat held by Govinda. Urmila, who has been campaigning and meeting the locals, says some of the major issues of the area are housing, water scarcity, sanitation.

"The most important issue is housing and it is too deep rooted for anyone to get a solution quickly. The slum redevelopment needs to be looked into. Water is another big issue, it is also a deep rooted so overnight solution is not possible. Women's health, local trains. But we need to do things.

"This area is issue-ridden probably the most in Mumbai. People have been telling me about need for public toilets, water in Gorai area is another problem. Also (need for more) local trains as the population is more here and there is no infrastructure."

She is fighting against BJP's Gopal Shetty, a seasoned politician who has called Urmila naive and zero in politics. But the actor isn't affected.

"That shows his mentality in the whole thing. He started of saying that



this is going to be a battle of vichardhara (ideology) but non-stop he is speaking derogatory things about me, which I have never done.

"I think there can be two things behind it - someone who is not very confident and all these things stem out of deep rooted fear that must have come in."

The actor said the kind of politics him and his party indulge in focuses more on "emotional battles", keeping people occupied with "all kinds of emotional, religious and socio-economic issues."

"So that they do not come to main issues like what is progress? And where is the progress?"

"If that is the politics he is referring to, I am happy to be political zero. For me politics is giving your word, standing by it and abiding by it no matter what."

The 45-year-old actor, who was last seen in a special appearance in Irrfan Khan's "Blackmail", felt it was time for her to do something for the society.

"I was against contesting the elections. I was interested in joining another party and wanted to campaign for whoever they wanted me to. They were interested that I contest the election and when you join a party you go with the decision the party makes and stand by it and give it your best."

According to Urmila, the 2019 Lok Sabha Polls is going to be a "very decid-

ing election for the country".

Since her childhood, the actor says she was socially responsible and has been working towards issues related to women, children's education, AIDS awareness among others.

Talking about Rahul Gandhi as a Prime Ministerial candidate, Urmila believes he will be a "phenomenal" Prime Minister.

"He is a person, who is constantly trolled and degraded for the last five years but has worked non-stop without stooping to any such levels that the opposition constantly has like trolling and criticising on wrong issues.

"He has gone to grassroot level tried to understand the problem of people. The outcome of all that is the Congress manifesto, which is remarkable achievement."

She further says Gandhi has utilised the time to build the party and take the nation somewhere up without being in power.

"If he comes in power he will be capable of delivering it well," she adds.

There have been celebrities who are dabbling into both, politics and acting, but Urmila intends to focus only on her political career at the moment.

"As of now I don't see any film thing happening. This is something so huge and challenging. It has been extremely challenging because I was prepared coming from a line of film industry to be criticised and not given your due or to be looked down up but to be ridiculed and trolled completely that all is a lot and that is a separate thing.

"It is a huge challenging career so I think it is already taking lot of time. I don't see film bit happening."

Ask her about the issues faced by the industry and Urmila says, their issues are "same as that of normal people."

"The fact that our freedom of speech or freedom of any sort has come under tremendous danger. Here is the issue that everybody is facing be it media or film industry or common man.



CHEETALICIOUS! The actress, Emma Stone makes an appearance at The Tonight Show starring Jimmy Fallon rocking a leather black skirt with a cheetah print blouse.



Disney reveals launch date of its streaming service

Los Angeles, Apr 12 (PTI): Disney has announced that it's highly anticipated streaming service, which is set to take on the likes of Netflix and Amazon, would launch in the US on November 12.

The company said the viewers would be able to watch its content on Disney+ after paying a subscription fee of USD 6.99 per month.

Disney CEO Bob Iger and other executives, including Marvel Studios President Kevin Feige, unveiled new details about the streaming service during an investor presentation on Thursday.

The service will offer Disney's films and TV shows, including Marvel Studios' superhero films and "Star Wars" franchise, along with the products it acquired from Rupert Murdoch's 21st Century Fox.

Disney's animated films including the classics such as "Snow White", "Cinderella", "Aladdin", "Beauty and the Beast", "Moana", and "The Little Mermaid" will all be available to stream when Disney+ launches. The entire library of Pixar will also be available within the year, the company said in a statement.

The company had started developing potential shows for the service long back and many of them hails from Star Wars, Pixar, and Marvel.

From the Star Wars universe, a spin-off series "The Mandalorian" is already in works. Being directed by "Iron Man" and "The Jungle Book" helmer Jon Favreau, the eight episode series will feature actor Pedro Pascal in the titular role.

Disney+ would also launching be a prequel series to 2016 film "Rogue One. Mexican actor Diego Luna will reprise his character of Cassian Andor in the show.

Feige, the man behind Disney's revenue minting Marvel Studios, said that the company is currently working on two standalone series -- "The Falcon and The Winter Soldier" and "WandaVision" -- apart from the previously announced Loki series, featuring Tom Hiddleston.

"The Falcon and The Winter Soldier" will feature actors Anthony Mackie and Sebastian Stan reprising their fan-favourite roles from the Marvel Cinematic Universe, while "WandaVision" will focus of the love story of two other superheroes -- Elizabeth Olsen's Wanda Maximoff aka Scarlett Witch and Paul Bettany's Vision.

Marvel Studios is also working on animated series "What If", based on a past Marvel Comics series that featured out-of-continuity stories with unusual team-ups or alternate versions of previous tales.

According to Entertainment Weekly, Feige said these Marvel series will focus on "major plotlines" and have "ramifications" for the rest of the MCU, especially after the events of the much awaited tentpole "Avengers: Endgame".

"A post-Endgame MCU will be extremely different and extremely focused on Disney+ tying into our future movies," he said.

Disney, which recently completed its acquisition of 21st Century Fox, also announced that the entire 660-episode-plus library of Fox's "The Simpsons" will be coming to Disney+ when it is launched.

ARIES: Disrupt the status quo on Saturday, Aries, but aim for mild tremors instead of extreme shockwaves. With the Sun and moon trading friendly fire, it's obvious to everyone that change is necessary. But leadership is sorely needed to reveal the next stage of the game. That's where you come in: Make proactive suggestions or simply lead by example!

TAURUS: ETrue success doesn't simply hinge on climbing tirelessly to the top. Saturday's evocative angle between the Sun and moon points you down a more soulful path. Pause from "doing, doing, doing" and think big picture. Beyond putting food on the table, how is your work helping other people and the world at large?

GEMINI: Start your weekend on an inspired note! Pull a motivational or spiritual book off the shelf for some morning reading. Try a little "bibliomancy": opening to a random page and letting the words be your divine directive for the day. Avoid complainers like the plague and seek "high-vibrational" groups of people to spend time with,

especially if you could use an infusion of positive energy.

CANCER: Trying to get a straight answer over the last three weeks has been nearly impossible, thanks to communicator Mercury's backspin through your truth-telling ninth house. You can now breathe easy as the messenger planet turns direct and forges ahead. No more dancing around an issue—insist on the complete story. Steer clear of even slight exaggerations and aim to be fully authentic. Since the ninth house also rules travel, you've got a cosmic thumbs-up for a winter getaway.

LEO: Today's cosmos shine a light on hidden realities as expressive Mercury turns direct in your covert eighth house. Over the past three weeks, while the messenger planet was retrograde, you've held your cards close to your vest, but guarding one secret could be taking a toll on your psyche. Mercury's forward motion could attract a worthy confidante—which is a good start to releasing your burden.

VIRGO: Your routine-driven sign isn't

generally considered erratic, but Mercury's retrograde through your relationship house over the past three weeks might have made you flip-flop. Perhaps a BFF hasn't had much time for you since finding "The One" or an ex resurfaced without an offer of commitment. Enough already! .

LIBRA: Channel-surfing or downward-dogging? If you've been doing more of the former over the past three weeks, you can thank Mercury, which has been retrograde (backward) in your self-care sector. But don't throw in the towel! Today, the quicksilver planet turns direct, helping you find sustainable routines.

SCORPIO: You're back! On March 5, expressive Mercury turned retrograde in your passionate fifth house. You may have felt like you were missing the love boat. Or perhaps you couldn't get a clear read on a romantic interest. Get ready to shake off the confusion and insecurity today, as the communication planet powers forward and calls forth your most radiant self!

SAGITTARIUS: Baby, it might (still) be

cold outside, but it wouldn't hurt to open a few windows and air out Chateau Sagittarius. With Mercury retrograde in your domestic fourth house since March 5, home and family matters might have felt a bit dazed and confused. Your survival instincts kicked in, causing you to retreat from the insanity. You can breathe a sigh of relief and re-engage today, as Mercury turns direct. Call a truce with your roomies, make up with your S.O., seek out a solution with your mother! **CAPRICORN:** Banish that either-or thinking. Capricorn. After a confusing three-week Mercury retrograde in your communication house, the messenger planet powers forward today. While you prefer to pour your (prodigious) energy into one thing at a time, this approach may not be serving you. Don't be afraid to dip your toe into multiple ponds, like those librarian-slash-actors or entrepreneur-slash-activists. Commuting or living in two cities is even a possibility for some earthbound Goats.

AQUARIUS: Loosen those purse strings, Aquarius. Since Mercury went retrograde

on March 5, you may have had a few budgetary breakdowns. But the messenger planet resumes forward motion today, making it safe to once again enjoy your hard-earned cash. This is a perfect time to revisit (and if necessary, revamp) your plans to strike a healthy balance between saving and spending. Invest in your greatest resource: yourself! A personal growth workshop, meditation retreat or life-coaching sessions can awaken your creativity and usher in a tsunami of entrepreneurial ideas.

PISCES: Vote with your dollar on Saturday, Pisces. An auspicious Sun-moon angle sends a reminder of how loudly money talks. Perhaps you'll choose socially responsible companies over those with murky or questionable practices. Supporting a small business owner can keep the unique character of your neighborhood thriving. This cosmic confab could inspire you to do business in different ways yourself or even earmark some of your earnings for a very specific cause you want to support.