



**BJP TOURS WEST PENDAM,  
FINDS DEVELOPMENT HAS  
BYPASSED CONSTITUENCY**

pg02

**WHAT 'INTO THE SPIDER-VERSE'  
CAN TEACH US ABOUT RESILIENCE**

pg04

**WOMEN NEED TO HAVE  
MORE REPRESENTATION IN  
FILMS: SONAM KAPOOR**

pg08



# SummitTIMES

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ON TOP OF THE NEWS

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Pages 8 | ₹ 5

## Centre refuses to share details on EWS quota decision-making process

**NEW DELHI, FEB 10 (PTI):**

The government has refused to share details of the decision-making process on quota for economically weaker section (EWS) citing a clause of the RTI Act that bars disclosure of records of cabinet papers and discussions by ministers.

Venkatesh Nayak, who works as Programme Coordinator, Access to information Programme with NGO Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative (CHRI), had sought details like copy of cabinet note on the matter besides correspondence received from the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) in this regard.

The Centre has implemented 10 per cent reservation for economically weaker sections of the general category in central government posts and services from February 1, 2019, onwards.

In reply to Nayak's RTI query, the Social Justice and Empowerment Ministry said the requisite information cannot be provided as it was exempted under Section 8 (1) (i) of the transparency law.

The Section bars disclosure of "cabinet papers including records of deliberations of the council of ministers, secretaries and other officers".

However, the same clause, further says "Provided that the decisions of council of ministers, the reasons thereof, and the material on the basis of which the decisions were taken shall be made public after the decision has been taken, and the matter is complete, or over".

Nayak said there is no press release about this subject on the website of the Press Information Bureau or the Social Justice and Empowerment Ministry.

*turn to pg02*

## Bhaichung accuses SDF Govt of double-speak on LT seats

**REBYNA RANA**

**GANGTOK, 10 FEB:**

Hamro Sikkim Party working president, Bhaichung Bhutia, today accused the SDF Government of double-speak on the Limboo and Tamang seat reservation issue. Addressing a press conference here today, he contended that the Chief Minister was saying different things on the matter to the Centre and the people here.

Mr Bhutia contends that the State Government's demand with the centre was for Scheduled Tribe seats and not specifically LT seats.

The Limboos and Tamangs have a con-



stitutional right to reserved seats in the State Legislature by virtue of having been included

in the Scheduled Tribes list. Sikkim, it may be recalled, does not have reserved ST seats.

Mr Bhutia today argued that while the CM petitions the Centre of ST seats, in speeches here

he refers to them as LT seats. The two, he insists, are not interchangeable. Continuing on this

theme, he pointed out that the memorandum submitted to the Prime Minister on 15 June, 2016 signed by the Chief Minister, 28 MLAs and two MPs of Sikkim seeks reservation of ST seats in Sikkim Legislative Assembly and not LT seats.

"Even in the reservation table submitted to the PM, LT seat reservation is demanded only in brackets while seeking 20 ST seats. This means that LT seat reservation is possible only when the 11 left-out communities are declared as ST. Do the Limboos and Tamangs have to wait till the 11 left out communities

become tribals?" he queried.

Mr Bhutia also claimed today that when an HSP delegation called on Tribal Affairs Minister Jual Oram and enquired after the LT seats, they were told that the SDF Government has sought reservation of ST seats.

"The Minister said that the Centre was confused due to the memorandum of the Sikkim government and said that it seems there is no seriousness on the part of the State government," Mr Bhutia alleged.

HSP has now demanded that the State government send a new memorandum to the

*turn to pg02*

## Cong asks CAG Rajiv Mehrishi to recuse himself from audit of Rafale deal, cites conflict of interest



**NEW DELHI, FEB 10 (PTI):**

Alleging conflict of interest, the Congress on Sunday requested Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) Rajiv Mehrishi to recuse himself from auditing the deal to purchase 36 Rafale fighter aircraft as he, as the then finance secretary, was part of the negotiations.

The opposition party also said that it would be improper on the part of Mehrishi to present the report in Parliament.

The CAG report on the controversial deal is likely to be tabled in Parliament on Monday.

In a press statement, the Congress has alleged that the government compromised "national interest" and "national security" in the purchase

of the 36 aircraft and said the CAG has a constitutional and statutory duty to undertake a forensic audit of all defence contracts, including the Rafale deal.

"It is an act of gross impropriety for you to deal with the audit of the 36 Rafale aircraft deal on account of patent conflict of interest...You are constitutionally, legally and morally discredited to either conduct an audit or to present a report before...Parliament. We urge upon you to recuse yourself and publicly accept the gross impropriety committed by you in initiating the audit..." it said.

Senior Congress leader Kapil Sibal told reporters that Mehrishi is likely to

present the report on the Rafale deal in parliament on Monday. Sibal said that Mehrishi was the finance secretary from October 24, 2014 to August 30, 2015 and in between Prime Minister Narendra Modi went to Paris on April 10, 2015 and announced the signing of the Rafale deal.

"...Finance Ministry plays an important role in these negotiations... Now it is clear that the Rafale deal happened under Rajeev Mehrishi. Now he is CAG. We met him twice on September 19 and October 4, 2018. We told him about the scam. We told him that the deal should be probed because it is corrupt. But how can he initiate a probe against himself," Sibal said.

## AAP to host mega Opposition rally in Delhi on Feb 13, Cong unlikely to attend

**NEW DELHI, FEB 10 (PTI):**

In the run up to the Lok Sabha polls, Delhi's ruling AAP will host a mega rally of non-BJP leaders in the national capital on February 13 against the Prime Minister Narendra Modi-led government at the Centre. "Tanashahi Hatao, Desh Bachao" (Remove Dictatorship, Save

Country) rally will be organised at Jantar Mantar on February 13. All opposition leaders will attend this rally against the Modi government," senior Aam Aadmi Party leader Gopal Rai told PTI on Sunday.

It will be attended by all those who had attended Mamata Banerjee's

Kolkata rally last month, he said. However, sources said, the Congress is unlikely to participate in the rally that will be attended by Mamata Banerjee and Chandrababu Naidu among other opposition leaders. With the Lok Sabha elections just months away, the rally will

help to bring the opposition leaders together and firm up a 'mahagathbandhan' to challenge the BJP-led NDA, they said. Delhi chief minister and AAP convener Arvind Kejriwal had also attended the Kolkata rally, where he gave a call to defeat the Modi government.

## Sewon Rai's art exhibition to open at The People's Studio

**SUMMIT REPORT**

**GANGTOK, 10 FEB:**

The People's Studio at ARTEM will be showcasing the works of Sewon Rai, an art practitioner from Gangtok. The art exhibition, titled, "Death || Longing || Memory," will open on 11 February at 5pm at the People's Studio at Kazi Road, a press release informs, and will be open for viewing till 08 March, Mon-Friday, 11am-5pm.

Sewon's paintings, drawings and inkjet prints curated for the exhibition speak to the viewer of human beings and their deleterious impact on nature. There is a tension between life and death and nature and destruction that is apparent in his works. His work is



inspired by reflections on larger sociopolitical issues as well as very personal memories.

Sewon has studied at The Indian College of Arts and Draftsmanship, Kolkata, where he completed his BFA in painting and then at Rabindra Bharati University, Kolkata where he pursued an MFA, furthering his

painting practice.

He has also been a scholar at the Lalit Kala National Research Scholarship, Kolkata, India (2017-2018).

Sewon will also be conducting a workshop on woodcut printmaking from 15 to 17 Feb at the Studio. Interested individuals can call 9820791324 for further

details. Only 20 slots are available for the workshop.

The exhibition and the workshop are part of The People's Studio at ARTEM's efforts to showcase and exhibit art and artworks from the region and create a culture and audience for art in the region, the release explains.

# HAMRO SIKKIM PARTY

## PRESIDENT - DR. BINA BASNETT





# IMANDAR LAI MOUKA DIU



## Death toll in Uttarakhand-UP hooch tragedy rises to 72, two arrested

**ROORKEE/LUCKNOW, FEB 10 (PTI):** Two people were arrested Sunday in connection with the hooch tragedy that claimed over 70 lives in two adjoining districts in Uttarakhand and Uttar Pradesh, police said. The death toll in Uttarakhand rose to 36 on Sunday, with 11 more people succumbing after consuming the spurious liquor in a village in Haridwar district.

According to an Uttar Pradesh government statement released Saturday evening in Lucknow, 36 died in Saharanpur district which adjoins Uttarakhand. According to the police, the arrested father-son duo, Fakira and Sonu, told investigators that they had procured the spurious liquor from Uttar Pradesh and sold it in Balupur and its neighbouring villages in Uttarakhand's Haridwar district.

The two are residents of Balupur village, Haridwar SSP Janmejay Khanduri and Saharanpur SSP Dinesh Kumar, who held a joint press conference in Roorkee, told PTI.

The accused have told interrogators that the liquor they had bought did not have its usual colour and smelt of diesel, the Haridwar Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) said. "It was white like milk and smelt of diesel," they said in their statement to the police.

The victims, hailing from Haridwar district in Uttarakhand and Saharanpur district in Uttar Pradesh, had consumed the liquor after the 'tehravin', the 13th day of mourning ritual, following a relative's death.

Efforts are underway to nab the residents of Punden village of Saharanpur who manufactured the illicit liquor, the Haridwar police chief said. He said raids have been conducted at their residence but they are on the run. The tragedy took a political hue on Sunday, with UP Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath suggesting the involvement of the Samajwadi Party in "such mischievous acts" and BSP chief Mayawati seeking a CBI probe into the matter.

## BJP tours West Pendam, finds development has bypassed constituency



### SUMMIT REPORT

**GANGTOK, 10 FEB:**

A series of door-to-door meetings of Bharatiya Janata Party's Sikkim unit, led by its vice-president JB Darnal is underway in West Pendam constituency of East Sikkim.

The party has inter-

acted with the people of the area and noted down various problems and issues of the area, informs a BJP press release.

It is added that the people of the area have been mainly facing problems of poor drinking water supply, bad roads, power supply and others.

The release alleges that no physical, social or educational development has taken place in the area and youth have been facing unemployment problem. The party further alleged favouritism in the distribution of the government benefits in the area, as well.



## Beginner's Beekeeper training at Sumbuk

### SUMMIT REPORT

**SUMBUK, 10 FEB:**

A 5-day Beginner's Beekeepers Training organized by Khadi and Village Industry Commission (KVIC), Gangtok, under the Honey Mission concluded here on 09 February for 25 villagers from Lungchok Kamerey and Sumbuk Kartikey GPUs.

Beneficiaries received certificates at a function which was also attended by Panchayat President Radha Sharma, Ward Panchayat Sanjay Rai and Parlahad Rai of Sumbuk Kartikey GPU, Yual Rai, Master Trainer and Nation Youth Volunteer Suyog Pradhan.

The trainees will later be provided 10 bee boxes with live colonies along with the required tool kits.

## Police vehicles torched, trains disrupted, highways blocked as Gujjar quota agitation enters 3rd day

### JAIPUR/NEW DELHI, FEB 10 (PTI):

The Gujjar community agitation demanding five per cent quota in jobs and education turned violent Sunday with shots being fired and police vehicles torched in Dholpur district and protesters blocking road and rail traffic in many areas in Rajasthan.

As a precautionary measure, authorities have imposed prohibitory orders under CrPc section 144 in Dholpur and neighbouring Karauli districts, police said.

At least 20 trains were cancelled and seven diverted during the day as the protesters, led by the Gujjar Arakshan Sangharsh Samiti chief Kirori Singh Bainsla, continued their sit-in on railway tracks in Sawai Madhopur district for the third day on Sunday, officials said.

The sit-in began on Friday evening and has affected the movement of over 250 trains through the region since.

The agitators also blocked highways connecting major cities on Sunday.

According to police officials, three cases have been registered in connection with the blocking of traffic.

Violence broke out in Dholpur district as unidentified miscreants



fired 8-10 rounds in the air while a blockade on the Agra-Morena Highway was in place, Superintendent of Police (SP) Ajay Singh told PTI.

The protesters set afire three police vehicles -- two jeeps and a bus, he added.

The SP said the protesters also pelted stones, injuring four personnel, adding that police had to lob tear gas shells to disperse the crowd.

The Hindoli-Uni-yara state highway was blocked in Bundi district, where hundreds of people demonstrated throughout the day.

As traffic movement came to a halt, vehicles were diverted to other routes. The demonstrators, however, allowed the passage of ambulanc-

es and vehicles with patients or pregnant women. Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot called the stone pelting and the torching of vehicles unjustified. "Holding protest is justified but sitting on railway tracks is not. Protesters should come forward for talks. The government is open for dialogue and has constituted a committee," he said.

Referring to the violence in Dholpur, Gehlot said, "Anti-social elements have joined the protest. Administration and police will investigate the reasons of the incident. Gujjar leader Kirori Singh Bainsla has appealed to maintain peace so people should listen to him."

According to the Northern Railways, trains

like 12953 Mumbai Central-Hazrat Nizamuddin August Kranti Rajdhani Express, 19022 Lucknow Jn.-Bandra Terminus Express, 12059/12060 Kota-Hazrat Nizamuddin-Kota Jan Shatabdi Express and 12909 Bandra Terminus-Hazrat Nizamuddin Garib Rath Express were among those which were cancelled.

At least 13 trains were running late in the zone. The 22405 Bhagalpur-Anand Vihar Garib Rath Express, Mumbai-New Delhi Rajdhani Express, Howrah-New Delhi Poorva Express were delayed by around three hours while the Raxaul-Anandvihar Sadbhavna Express was running late by seven hours, it said.

The Northern Rail-

ways said 19024 Firozpur-Mumbai Central Janata Express, Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Katra, 12472 Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Katra-Bandra Terminus Swaraj Express, 12450 Chandigarh-Madgaon Goa Sampark Kranti Express and 12904 Amritsar-Mumbai Central Golden Temple Mail had been diverted.

On Saturday, a state government delegation, including Tourism Minister Vishvendra Singh and senior IAS officer Neeraj K Pawan, had met Bainsla and his supporters to hold talks, but no agreement could be reached.

Bainsla has said that the community will continue their protest demanding five per cent reservation to the Gujjars, Raika-Rebari, Gadia Luhar, Banjara and the Gadaria communities in government jobs and educational institutions as promised.

"We will remain on dharna. We do not want to talk with the government. We are waiting for the government to give the order for five per cent reservation," Vijay Bainsla, son of Kirori Singh Bainsla, said.

He said an appeal had been made for maintaining peace but it was the angst of the people which have come out during the protests.

## IMF warns of global economic "storm" as growth undershoots

**DUBAI, FEB 10 (AFP):** The International Monetary Fund on Sunday warned governments to gear up for a possible economic storm as growth undershoots expectations.

"The bottom-line -- we see an economy that is growing more slowly than we had anticipated," IMF Managing Director Christine Lagarde told the World Government Summit in Dubai.

Last month, the IMF lowered its global economic growth forecast for this year from 3.7 per cent to 3.5 per cent.

Lagarde cited what she called "four clouds" as the main factors undermining the global economy and warned that a "storm" might strike.

The risks include "trade tensions and tariff escalations, financial tightening, uncertainty related to (the) Brexit

outcome and spillover impact and an accelerated slowdown of the Chinese economy", she said.

Lagarde said trade tensions -- mainly in the shape of a tariff spat between the United States and China, the world's two biggest economies -- are already having a global impact.

"We have no idea how it is going to pan out and what we know is that it is already beginning to have an effect on trade, on confidence and on markets," she said, warning governments to avoid protectionism.

Lagarde also pointed to the risks posed by rising borrowing costs within a context of "heavy debt" racked up by governments, firms and households.

"When there are too many clouds, it takes one lightning (bolt) to start the storm," she said.

### Centre refuses...

"The government has denied to share the requisite information citing the Section 8 (1) (i) of the RTI Act. However, the exemption relating to cabinet papers--which the officer concerned has quoted in his reply itself permits the disclosure of all the information I had sought, after the matter is complete or over.

"The 10 per cent quota amendment has already come into force. Nevertheless, the officer (who has replied to the applicant) seems to think that the matter is neither complete or over," Nayak said.

He also cited a June 12 decision by the transparency watchdog Central Information Commission (CIC) in which a direction was issued for the government departments to put in public domains all cabinet papers and materials related to bills tabled in Parliament.

"I will appeal against the denial of the information," Nayak said.

According to an order by the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, persons who are not covered under the existing scheme of reservations for Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and socially and educationally backward classes and whose family has gross annual income below Rs 8 lakh are to be identified as EWSs for the benefit of reservation.

### Bhaichung accuses...

Centre and this time clearly seek LT seats and not ST seats.

Mr Bhutia further claimed the Centre has rejected the 40-seat formula of the State government and that a letter from MHA has sought a fresh proposal to reserve LT seats.

On HSP's formula, Mr Bhutia said the first priority for the party will be deliver the LT seats.

"We will keep this formula open whether it is 32, 34, 40 or even 50 seats, we will keep it open. The main priority is to find which formula can deliver LT seats at the earliest. We do not want something like the 40-seat formula of the CM which makes the rounds of various Ministries for 5-6 years and does not deliver anything. When HSP comes to power, we will keep the formula open, we will invite representatives of various Ministries and our representatives of Sikkim government, we will sit down and discuss and prepare the formula which will give the LT seats at the earliest," he said.

The meet was also attended by the HSP spokesperson, party general secretary Biraj Adhikari, vice president, DS Limboo, and joint secretary [administration], Yogen Rai.

## Braving cold weather, 1.5 crore take dip in last 'shahi snan' of Kumbh

### ARUNAV SINHA

**ALLAHABAD, FEB 10 (PTI):** The chill in the atmosphere in and around the Sangam here failed to dampen the spirit of around 1.5 crore people who gathered Sunday for the third 'shahi snan' at the confluence of Ganga, Yamuna and the mythical Saraswati.

Even before the dawn broke, scores of people hailing from different walks of life had taken the dip with their friends and family. As a bright sunny day progressed, the number of devotees and enthusiasts taking dip went up.

"Around 1.5 crore people have taken dip on the occasion of Basant Panchami. Close to 50 lakh devotees had taken dip before the sunrise," Kumbh Mela Adhikari Vijay Kiran Anand told PTI.

He also said all 'akharas' have completed the shahi snan (royal bath).

With Sunday's figures, the total number of pilgrims taking the holy dip during the Kumbh this year (up to February 10) has touched 16.44



crore, officials said. The continuous cold breeze sweeping the mela area could not deter the devotees from taking the dip in Sangam. They chanted devotional hymns eulogizing various gods and goddesses. Chants of 'Har Har Gangey' and 'Jai Ganga Maiyya' filled the air as devotees poured in and around the bathing ghats.

Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath has expressed his gratitude to all akharas and saints on the successful conduct of three shahi snans and a total of four snans

during the ongoing Kumbh.

He congratulated all the officers of the Team Kumbh for their hard work in the organisation of the Kumbh, a senior UP government official said.

However, UP Cabinet minister and leader of Suheldev Bharatiya Samaj Party (SBSP) Om Prakash Rajbhar questioned the statistics of the pilgrims turning up at the mega event.

"On what basis are they (government) claiming that around 15 crore people have visited the Kumbh Mela? Can

they tell which route has been opted by the devotees and pilgrims, while arriving at the Kumbh and departing from it?" Rajbhar told reporters.

The entire Kumbh Mela area wore an illuminated look (before sunrise), and devotees approaching the Sangam area through Kali Marg were mesmerized by the LED lighting.

Some enthusiasts stopped to click selfies, with an illuminated mela area in the background. Most of the devotees could be seen carrying water of river Ganga in bottles after finishing the ritual bath.

As the number of visitors started going up, senior police officials were heard issuing instructions to the devotees to take a specific exit routes, and finish the bathing formality, so that other devotees could also take the holy dip.

The Kumbh Melapolice used gas balloons as indicator to the public thronging the mela area to locate the lost-and-found centres run by it.

Choppers were also used for aerial monitoring of the



# Community-initiated Saraswati Puja at Lingi Paiyong School

## SUMMIT REPORT

LINGI PAYONG, 11 FEB:

Basant Panchami, celebrated also as Saraswati Puja, was marked with pomp and joy at Lingi Payong School South Sikkim on Sunday. The Puja was organised by villagers, parents, SMC members and the school fraternity, an official press release informs.

Students and teachers along with others offered prayers and sought blessings from Saraswati, the Goddess of Knowledge and Wisdom. Panchayat members from Lingmoo Payong GPU were also present to offer prayers on the occasion.

For this year's prayers, the Idol was offered by Mukti Nath Adhikari of Lingi Paiyong who has also promised to install a metal of Goddess Saras-



wati at the school premises in time for next year's Saraswati Puja.

Kheer and prasad

were distributed to the gathering. The celebration was initiated by Bhim Lal Adhikari and

was equally supported by other parents and guardians. The Headmaster has thanked the

parents, guardians and SMC members for organising the programme at the school.

## Illegal call centre probe: FBI official meets Guj cops

**AHMEDABAD, FEB 10 (PTI):** The FBI attache in the United States Embassy in India met Ahmedabad police officials to assist the latter in an ongoing probe into illegal call centres busted here recently, a senior official said Sunday.

Ahmedabad police had sought help from the FBI attache in the ongoing investigation in illegal call centres involving US citizens and territory, city police commissioner A K Singh said.

The FBI attache visited Ahmedabad Saturday and gathered information and data related to the case, Singh added.

"We are investigating a couple of cases here where we raided such call centres and arrested people. We have data and information about US citizens, bank accounts and US territory connected to the crime," Singh said.

"We sought help from the law enforcement attache in the American consulate under mutual legal assistance treaty since the case involves American citizens and territories," he said.

The illegal call centres busted by the Ahmedabad police's cyber cell were found to be involved in extorting money from US citizens by making deceptive calls, Singh said.

He said money thus extorted from the US citizens was being laundered through Indian shores using hawala, bitcoin and several other investment methods.

"We are exploring the possibilities of using legal aid treaty for getting more information and taking the case to the logical conclusion on our shore and, if they (US) assist us, on their shores as well," he said.

Ahmedabad police had recently busted illegal call centres operating from the city where data of US citizens obtained unauthorisedly was used to target victims and defraud them.

Co-conspirators in the case have been found to be based in the USA, Gujarat police said.



## Assistant Beauty Therapist training in Melli

### SUMMIT REPORT

MELLI, 10 FEB:

Basis Academy for Building Life-long Employability Limited (B-ABLE), along with National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC), is organizing a 3-month long As-

sistant Beauty Therapist training at Melli Bazaar in South Sikkim. 60 trainees will be attending the course which has Mithu Tamang of Melli as the master trainer.

The inaugural programme today was hosted at the Cooperative

Building at Melli and had Sandeep Tamang, the Melli Ward panchayat as the chief guest,

Adarsh Gautam, representative from B-ABLE, also assured 100% placement for trainees upon completion of the course.

## Won't allow politics inside the campus : St Xavier's VC

**KOLKATA, FEB 10 (PTI):** St Xavier's University Vice Chancellor Father Felix Raj has said the new university will never allow politics inside the campus to protect the academic atmosphere of the institution.

"We have a tradition in St Xavier's.....we discouraged politics inside the campus to maintain the academic atmosphere," Raj told PTI here Friday on the sidelines of university foundation day programme.

He was asked about students' agitation rocking many higher educational institutions in recent times but the St Xavier's having been freed from such activities.

Observing the students and their parents are very much in favour of the stance of the St Xavier's management on this issue, he said, "if you allow politics, if you allow parties, if you allow all these things coming into the campus...there will be no academic atmosphere."

Claiming students are not in favour of being divided, Raj said, "you ask students, they are not in favour of being divided."

Raj, who had earlier been the Principal of St Xavier's College, was asked to comment on West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee and Education minister Partha Chatterjee having praised the St Xavier's College and St Xavier's University in recent times.

He said, "the CM cited the St Xavier's example for discipline and for quality education and suggested this type of students council be promoted in other institutions."

"I urge to make the campus a sacred place, there cannot be agitation and violence inside the campus.....we must forget all differences, keep our differences outside and focus on our academic research and studies so that quality cannot suffer....we have to protect our institution and maintain the academic atmosphere," he said.

To another question, Raj said in another five year's time the new St Xavier's University will be able to "fully functionally well."

He said while a sum of Rs 185 crore has already been spent for building and other facilities of the new institution, another Rs 160 crore would be used in the coming three years.

Asked about the support of alumni, he said they have been very supportive.

## Bangladesh makes record drugs seizure amid crackdown

**DHAKA, FEB 10 (AFP):**

Bangladesh seized a record 53 million methamphetamine pills in 2018 -- up 33 percent in a year -- amid a deadly nationwide crackdown on the trade, officials said Sunday. Nearly 300 suspected drug dealers were killed last year, according to authorities, who insisted the seizure figure was proof that their campaign was working.

Rights groups said the record haul showed the deaths had failed to make an impact on the trade. The government Department of Narcotics Control said the drug -- popularly known as 'yaba', a Thai word meaning 'crazy medicine' -- was seized across the South Asian nation of 165 million people.

"It is the highest amount seized in a year," Bazlur Rahman, a department deputy director, told AFP.

Masum-e-Rabbani, another senior official at the department, said the record haul was proof that a crackdown launched in May last year was yielding "positive" results.

He said there has been a significant decline in the use and sale of yaba.

Nearly 300 suspected drug dealers were killed by security forces in the campaign and some 25,000 arrests made, according to Rabbani.

Human rights groups

say many of the deaths amount to extrajudicial killings however.

More than 40 were killed in the town of Teknaf, which borders Myanmar's troubled Rakhine state and is close to the refugee camps housing about one million Rohingya Muslims.

Bangladesh has struggled to control a surge in yaba imports crossing the border from Myanmar, where the pills are manufactured by the millions.

The pills have become an easy source of income for the Rohingya who poured across the border after the Myanmar military launched a clampdown in Rakhine in August 2017.

The refugees act as carriers, handing over the pills to dealers on the Bangladesh side of the border who then take them to major cities, according to police.

In October, authorities made yaba a class-A banned substance and parliament passed a law allowing the death penalty for dealing the drug.

A top rights activist said the record yaba seizure meant the hundreds of deaths had failed to make a serious dent in the drug trade.

"It proves that the police crackdown is not working. They need a different approach," an Nur Khan Liton, a former head of rights group Ain O Salish Kendra, told AFP.

## 'Heavy clashes' as US-backed forces make final push against IS

**OMAR OIL FIELD (SYRIA), FEB 10 (AFP):** US-backed forces were locked in fierce fighting Sunday as they pressed the battle against the last shred of the Islamic State group's "caliphate" in eastern Syria.

The jihadists overran large parts of the country and neighbouring Iraq in 2014, but various military offensives have since reduced that territory to a patch on the Iraqi border.

The Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), supported by a US-led coalition, announced a final push to retake the jihadist pocket late Saturday, after a pause of more than a week to allow civilians to flee.

SDF spokesman Mustafa Bali on Sunday afternoon said his fighters had battled their way forwards against the jihadists, capturing 41 positions from them.

"Our forces are relying on direct combat with light weapons," he told AFP.

The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights monitor group said the SDF had advanced across farming land, backed by coalition air strikes and artillery fire.

Earlier, an SDF field commander reported "heavy clashes" as his fighters gained ground.

The SDF launched an offensive to expel IS from the oil-rich eastern province of Deir Ez-zor in September.

The Kurdish-led alliance has since whittled down jihadist-held territory to a scrap of just four square kilometres (one square mile) between the Euphrates and the Iraqi border.

Up to 600 jihadists could still remain inside, most of them foreigners, Bali said.

Hundreds of civilians are also believed to be inside, he said.

But Bali added the

extremist group's elusive leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi was likely not in the last pocket.

"We do not think he is in Syria," Bali said, without adding further details about the whereabouts of the man who declared a cross-border IS "caliphate" in 2014.

On the Iraqi side of the border, French members of the coalition on Saturday stood ready to pour fury on any jihadists trying to escape.

Dozens of 155-mm shells were lined up ready to be loaded onto three green-and-black Caesar gun-howitzers with a range of 40 kilometres (25 miles).

Coalition deputy commander Christopher Ghika last week said Iraqi forces had sealed their border with Syria.

Since September, more than 1,270 IS militants, more than 670 SDF fighters, and around 400 civilians have been killed in the fighting, the Observatory says.

At the height of their rule, the jihadists imposed their brutal interpretation of Islamic law on a territory roughly the size of Britain.

But military offensives in both countries, including by the SDF, have since retaken the vast bulk of that "caliphate".

On Saturday, Bali said he expected the battle for the last patch of IS territory to be over in days.

The jihadists, however, retain a presence in Syria's vast Badia desert, and have claimed a series of deadly attacks in SDF-held areas.

Since December, more than 37,000 people, mostly wives and children of jihadist fighters, have fled out into SDF-held areas, the Observatory says.

That figure includes some 3,400 suspected jihadists detained by the SDF, according to the monitor, which relies on

sources inside Syria for its information.

The SDF holds hundreds of foreigners accused of belonging to the extremist group in its custody, as well as members of their families.

They have urged Western governments to repatriate their nationals, but politicians abroad have been reluctant. Relatives at home fear alleged foreign jihadists may end up facing tough justice in Iraq, where Human Rights Watch warned they could face "torture and unfair trials".

On Sunday, a Russian diplomatic source says Russia was repatriating 27 children whose mothers are being held in Iraq for belonging to IS.

The issue of jihadist repatriation from Syria has come into sharper focus since the United States in December announced its military withdrawal from Syria.

That announcement has seen the Kurds warn they may struggle to keep jihadists in jail, and pushed them to seek a new ally in the Damascus regime to prevent a long threatened Turkish offensive.

While the Kurdish People's Protection Units (YPG) have been a key US ally in the fight against IS, Ankara views them as "terrorists".

Syria's Kurds have largely stayed out of the country's civil war, instead building semi-autonomous institutions in northern and northeastern regions they control.

The conflict has killed more than 360,000 people and displaced millions since starting in 2011 with a brutal crackdown on anti-government protests.

The regime has made a military comeback with Russian military support since 2015, and now holds almost two-thirds of Syria.

BEFORE THE FAMILY COURT EAST SIKKIM AT GANGTOK	
Memo No. 351 /FC/E	Date: 20.12.2018
F.C.(Civil) Case No. 122 of 2018	
Thupten Tshering	.....Petitioner
-versus-	
Sangmo	.....Respondent
<b>NOTICE</b>	
To,	Sangmo, W/o Thupten Tshering, R/o Alley KTS, Camp No. 2, Ravangla, P.O & P.S Ravangla, South Sikkim
WHEREAS, the above-named Petitioner has filed a case against you under Section 13(1)(a) & (ib) of the Hindu Marriage Act, 1955 seeking the dissolution of his marriage with you.	
You are hereby directed to appear positively before this Court in person on 20.02.2019 at 10 'o' clock in the forenoon without fail.	
Take notice, that in default of your appearance on the date aforementioned despite due service of this notice on you the matter shall be heard and determined in your absence.	
Given under my hand and the Seal of this Court on this the 20 <sup>th</sup> day of December, 2018.	
	 (Prajwal Khatiwada) Judge Family Court East Sikkim at Gangtok



# SummitTIMES

ON TOP OF THE NEWS

## Bring Home the Hivre Bazaar Experience

*Invest social capital and the results will be good*

A remote village in Maharastra easily outshines the more celebrated civil societies of the country's metros. And they do so not because of the brilliance of one man alone, although that helped, but because the residents were willing to push their realities towards a brighter tomorrow. The village experienced mass exodus during the severe drought in 1972. Even as the village folk abandoned agriculture and moved out, those who could not move, stayed back and fell into despondency and alcohol.

And that is how things remained there for slightly over a decade and a half until, in 1989, Popatrao Baguji Pawar, the only postgraduate in the village contested for the post of gram panchayat sarpanch and won. He started by getting the around 22 illicit liquor shops in the village closed. That is a lot of liquor shops for a village with a population of less than 1,000 people! But it was clearly about more than shutting down these outlets, because he had to also reform the alcoholics, realizing early that for any plan to resuscitate the village, the people will have to participate. Alcohol, as Sikkim will know well, does not lend itself very well to collaborations, well, at least collaborations that help build something. This task achieved, Popatrao managed to secure bank loans for farmers and started rainwater harvesting, water conservation and management programs, which involved building 52 earthen bunds, percolation tanks, 32 stone bunds and nine check dams. This was a huge undertaking and partly inspired by what Anna Hazare had pulled off at Ralegan Siddhi, barely 35 km away from Hivre Bazaar. Before his first term as Sarpanch was over, reverse migration started as families started returning home. Today, the village, with its 235 families and an overall population of 1,250, has a monthly per capita income of Rs 30,000, up from Rs. 830 in 1995, plus it has 60 families with an annual income of over 10 Lakh rupees.

What Popatrao did right was that he learned from other examples, was willing to invest in the people, trust them and work with them. What the villagers of Hivre Bazaar provided was a willingness to contribute, persevere and share.

They traded well in social capital.

Social Capital is counted in one's relationship with others in a community in which citizens have a tendency to engage in civic affairs, band together in voluntary groups, come together for collective action. Social Capital buys better futures because it engages the present in collaborative undertakings for a shared aspiration for a better future, encourages sharing of ideas, fosters debate and resolution. When people collaborate, they do not just clean jhoras and undertake plantation drives, they talk, they discuss, they disagree and while they respect discordant ideologies, believe in the community. In the present times of multiple sources of information, it becomes difficult to sift the rumour from the news and judge inspired intent from ulterior motives. A society that can keep up lucid lines of communication becomes the best informed because it keeps the doors open to all points of views and un-layers developments and issues more intelligently. In doing so, the society discovers common intent, and intent modulated in unanimity can only be good. This Social Capital, once it has matured into an instinctive assembly of concerned citizens, becomes what we know as a Civil Society. Social Capital charts the course for collective development and a Civil Society keeps the journey on the right path.

The Hivre Bazaar experience needs to be attempted more widely; it might be in Maharastra, but the model can be replicated anywhere in the world, and surely in Sikkim as well.

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

Mail us at: [news@summittimes.com](mailto:news@summittimes.com)



## What 'Into the Spider-Verse' can teach us about resilience

NIKKI MARTYN  
*theconversation.com*

What can the movie Spider-Man: Into the Spider-Verse teach us about child development?

All stories and fairy tales contain symbols and archetypes. These are what make stories universal and relatable to everyone. Such symbols and archetypes can represent human conflicts, struggles or experiences we have or may encounter — such as trauma and loss.

Stories provide us with options for how to deal with the adversity we face. They provide a way of experiencing how things could be resolved and show us that we are not alone in how we feel or experience events.

The film Spider-Man: Into the Spider-Verse helps us to learn the importance of relying on people and fighting through life's adversity to save ourselves and the world.

Resilience is the process of adapting to adversity, the ability to bounce back after difficult experiences throughout life. It helps children manage stress and feelings of anxiety and uncertainty — think of it as a balancing scale, with protective or positive experiences and coping skills on one side and adversity or negative experiences on the other.

Resilience is evident when the scale tips to the positive experiences even when there is a heavy load on adversity.

Spider-man: Into the Spider-Verse shares this message of resilience, frequently encouraging the main character, Miles Morales, to get up and keep fighting. In one scene, Peter Parker tells Miles: "No matter how many hits I take, I always find a way to come back."

The theme of bouncing back and continuing the fight is consistent throughout the film.

As viewers watching the film, we find ourselves rooting for a teenage boy who has newly developed superhero abilities and is struggling to become a hero: Spiderman.

### STRONG TOGETHER

The story is about the Spider-heroes throughout the multiverse who come together to help Miles Morales learn how to be a hero, to be himself, to fight through the pain, loss and tragedy.

It's a reminder that we are not on our own and that we need each other; we are stronger together. It reminds us of the importance of connection, relationships and asking for help.

Relationships help children develop the ability to monitor, plan and regulate behaviour as well as adapt to changes which help children respond to adversity.

Miles Morales searches for the support of loved ones. His mom supports him, while reminding him: "Our family doesn't run from things."

Research indicates the most common factor for children who do well after experiencing a trauma or stressful time is to have the support of at least one loving and committed relationship, such as with a parent.

Such relationships are the most important factor in building resilience. They protect children from negative outcomes by providing a loving, personalized response while helping the child understand and manage their feelings.

Important relationships help Miles cope and discover who he is and his capabilities. Peter's friend Gwen Stacy tells Miles: "I know how hard it is to have to figure this stuff out on your own. It's kind of nice not being the only Spider person around."

"We are probably the only ones who... understand."

And Uncle Aaron says:

"You are the best of all of us, Miles."

Relationships help children develop the ability to monitor, plan and regulate behaviour as well as adapt to changes.

This process is a critical aspect of learning to cope with manageable threats. The movie tells us we cannot do that all on our own.

Miles's dad speaks to him through a closed door and says:

"I see this...this spark in you. It's amazing, it's why I push you."

But Miles's father also tells Miles the spark is his and whatever he chooses to do with it, he'll be great. Then he tells him:

"I love you... You don't have to say it back though."

These are important lessons for children and parents.

When adversity or stress feels overwhelming to the child and the parent is not available, the stress can feel toxic and create an opportunity for more negative outcomes.

This movie is a great reminder that not all stress or adversity is harmful.

### TAKEAWAY TIPS

Spider-Man: Into the Spider-Verse provides important tips for helping children develop resilience:

1. Make connections: Create a strong family network and teach your child how to be a friend and make friends. This will help deal with stress.
2. Help your child remember they are not alone and others may feel as they do at times. This is important for trusting others and developing empathy.
3. Teach children how to move towards goals: focus on accomplishments rather than failures. Break down the desired outcome into smaller achievable goals and support your child in seeing them through.
4. Nurture a positive self-view and keep things in perspective: in this way, a child learns to trust their ideas, solve problems and make appropriate decisions, to understand past challenges, to build strength to handle future challenges.
5. Look for opportunities for self-discovery: tough times are often when children learn the most about themselves. Help your child look at what they can learn from whatever they are facing.

The movie ends with a quote from Stan Lee:

"That person who helps others simply because it should or must be done, and because it is the right thing to do, is indeed, without a doubt, a real superhero."

It's a beautiful message reminding us the importance of resilience and connection with others. These are two key factors in childhood development that will help our future generations become healthy and productive citizens — and save the world.

*[the writer is Program Head of Early Childhood Studies, University of Guelph-Humber]*

## Young people drowning in a rising tide of perfectionism

SIMON SHERRY & MARTIN M. SMITH  
*theconversation.com*

We recently conducted one of the largest-ever studies on perfectionism. We learned that perfectionism has increased substantially over the past 25 years and that it affects men and women equally.

We also learned that perfectionists become more neurotic and less conscientious as time passes.

Perfectionism involves striving for flawlessness and requiring perfection of oneself and others. Extremely negative reactions to mistakes, harsh self-criticism, nagging doubt about performance abilities and a strong sense that others are critical and demanding also define the trait.

As a clinical psychologist in the department of psychology and neuroscience at Dalhousie University and a lecturer in research methods at York St John University, together we have extensive experience in understanding, assessing, treating and studying perfectionism.

We are greatly troubled by what we see.

We believe there is an urgent need for prevention efforts — to reduce the harsh and controlling parenting practices and socio-cultural influences, such as unrealistic media images, that contribute to perfectionism. Interventions for distressed perfectionists are also clearly needed.

### MILLENNIALS ARE SUFFERING

To gain a more complete understanding of perfectionism, we conducted a large-scale meta-analysis involving 77 studies and nearly 25,000 participants. Around two thirds of these participants were female and many were Caucasian university students from western nations (such as Canada, the United States and the United Kingdom). Our participants ranged in age from 15 to 49.

We found today's young people are more perfectionist than ever before. In fact, we found perfectionism has increased substantially since 1990. This means millennials struggle with perfectionism more than previous generations — a finding that mirrors past research.

The causes of perfectionism are complex. Increases in perfectionism come, at least in part, from today's dog-eat-dog world, where rank and performance count excessively and winning and self-interest are emphasized.

Controlling and critical parents also hover too close in raising their children, which fosters perfectionism's development. With social media posts showcasing unrealistically "perfect" lives and glossy advertisements depicting unobtainable standards of perfection, millennials are surrounded by too many yardsticks upon which to measure their success and failure. Keeping up with the Joneses has never been harder.

This epidemic of perfectionism in modern western societies is a serious, even deadly, problem. Perfectionism is robustly linked in the research to anxiety, stress, depression, eating disorders and suicide.

**AS PERFECTIONISTS AGE, THEY UNRAVEL**

We also found that, as perfectionists grow older, they appear to unravel. Their personalities become more neurotic (more prone to negative emotions like guilt, envy and anxiety) and less conscientious (less organized, efficient, reliable and disciplined).

Pursuing perfection — a goal that is intangible, fleeting and rare — may result in a higher rate of failures and a lower rate of successes that leaves perfectionists more likely to neurotically stew about their imperfections and less likely to conscientiously pursue their goals.

Overall, then, our results suggest life does not get easier for perfectionists. In a challenging, messy and imperfect world, perfectionists may burn out as they age, leaving them more unstable and less diligent.

Our findings also revealed men and women report similar levels of perfectionism.

This suggests modern western societies do not involve gender-specific pressure to be perfect. Gender roles appear to allow (or to encourage) both men and women to strive for perfection.

Future research should test if men strive for perfection based more on achievement motives (such as competing for resources) and women strive for perfection based more on relationship motives (such as pleasing other people).

### UNCONDITIONAL LOVE IS AN AN-

### TIDOTE

Perfectionism is a major, deadly epidemic in modern western societies that is seriously under-recognized, with many distressed perfectionists concealing their imperfections from those who might be able to help (such as psychologists, teachers or family doctors).

We need to respond to the perfectionism epidemic at the parental and the cultural level.

Parents need to be less controlling, critical and overprotective of their children — teaching their children to tolerate and to learn from their mistakes while emphasizing hard work and discipline over the unrealistic pursuit of perfection.

Unconditional love — where parents value children for more than their performance, rank or appearance — seems as good an antidote to perfectionism as any.

Perfectionism is a myth and social media is its storyteller. We need to teach a healthy skepticism toward the suspiciously "perfect" lives promoted through social media posts and mainstream media advertisements. Unrealistic images achieved through photo-shopping, airbrushing and filters are less compelling once you learn the game is rigged.

*[Simon Sherry is Professor, Clinical Psychologist, and Director of Clinical Training in the Department of Psychology and Neuroscience, Dalhousie University; Martin M. Smith is Lecturer in Research Methods, York St John University]*



BJP’s Mukul Roy, 3 others named in FIR for TMC MLA’s killing; blame game on

**KOLKATA (WB), FEB 10 (PTI):** The killing of Trinamool Congress MLA Satyajit Biswas drew sharp reactions from the ruling party and opposition BJP as a police complaint named saffron party leader Mukul Roy alleging his involvement in the incident.

Roy, a former TMC general secretary who joined the BJP last year following differences with party supremo Mamata Banerjee, denied the allegation, claiming that Biswas was a “victim” of the TMC’s internal feud.

Amid allegations that there was no security cover despite the presence of the MLA and a minister at the venue of a Saraswati Puja where the incident occurred, the officer in-charge of local Hanskhali police station and the personal security officer of Biswas were suspended.

A departmental inquiry has also been initiated against the OC and the PSO, who was reportedly on leave on Saturday, police said.

Roy is among the four persons against whom an FIR has been lodged in connection with the killing of Biswas, police said.

An officer of the West Bengal Police told PTI that two of the four people named in the FIR have been arrested.

“So far, we have arrested two persons in this case and detained another three. A country-made re-



volver used to shoot the MLA has also been recovered.

“As per our primary findings, it seems that the victim was fired from behind and the act was the result of a well-planned plot,” he said.

Asked about the chances of the assailants fleeing the area, the officer said the state police have been put on a high alert.

“Nadia shares border with Bangladesh and there could be a possibility of them (assailants) trying to escape to the neighbouring country. Police have been put on

high alert to check the movements along the border,” he said.

The country-made revolver was recovered from a ground near the place of the incident.

Biswas (41), who represented Krishnaganj constituency in the Assembly, was shot from a point blank range by unidentified assailants Saturday evening inside a Saraswati puja marquee at Phoolbari area, which is about 15 km from the Bangladesh border.

He was immediately taken to a local hospital where doctors announced him “brought dead”.

His body was brought home from the hospital Sunday morning for last rites, amid a blame-game between the ruling party and opposition BJP leaders over who was responsible for the death.

A large crowd gathered to pay last respects to the deceased MLA at his residence, a few metres away from the Saraswati Puja marquee where he was shot.

Roy, a former TMC member of Parliament, said that the legislator’s killing could be a result of infighting within the TMC.

“Naming me in the FIR is abso-

lutely a politically motivated move. I am sorry about Satyajit’s death, but the manner in which they (TMC leaders) are trying to hold the BJP responsible is nothing but a dirty conspiracy,” Roy told PTI.

TMC secretary general Partha Chatterjee, however, alleged that goons who killed the 41-year old leader belonged to the saffron party.

Along with party’s Nadia district observer Anubrata Mondal, who asserted that the “none of the perpetrators will be spared”, Chatterjee accompanied the MLA’s hearse to his residence from the hospital.

Stating that the chief minister was shocked to learn about the incident, he said, “Those who think that they will gain by eliminating Satyajit, are living in a fool’s paradise.”

Meanwhile, the chief minister has spoken to the family members of Satyajit Biswas and assured them all help.

Chatterjee, also the state Education minister, said that attempts are being made to create divide among the Hindus and the Matua community, of which Biswas was a leader in Nadia district.

Urban Development minister Firhad Hakim alleged that “BJP is importing the politics of violence and murder in West Bengal from Gujarat. “They think that they will

win the seat if they eliminate him,” he said accusing the BJP.

Hakim also squarely blamed the BJP for the killing of Biswas, who belonged to the Matua community - deemed vital as a support base in Bengal.

“The prime minister came to woo the Matua community in Thakurnagar last week. Now the local BJP leaders are resorting to criminal activities to gain political turf,” he said.

TMC Nadia district president Gouri Shankar Datta also accused Roy of being involved in the incident.

“Roy is the main mastermind behind this killing. We demand his immediate arrest,” Datta told PTI.

Denying allegations of BJP’s involvement, the party’s state president Dilip Ghosh demanded a CBI investigation into the killing.

An independent probe will reveal the truth, he said.

Ghosh also echoed Roy’s sentiments and said that Biswas was a victim of internal feud within the ruling party.

“If an MLA gets killed like this, how can the common feel safe?” he maintained.

CPI(M) state secretary Surjakanta Mishra said that this incident shows that nobody is safe under TMC rule.

He demanded an impartial probe to reveal the truth.

WB to develop 900MW Bandhunala pump storage proj in PPP mode

**KOLKATA, FEB 10 (PTI):** The West Bengal government has decided to develop the third pump storage power plant at Purulia under the public-private partnership (PPP) model and it has already received early interest proposals from investors, a state government official said.

JSW Group Chairman and Managing Director Sajjan Jindal recently announced plans to set up a 1,000 MW pumped

storage energy project in West Bengal which appears to be the third Purulia pump storage Bandhunala power project, the official said.

Jindal had made the announcement at the recently concluded Bengal Global Business Summit (BGBS) - the state’s showpiece industry event.

JSW officials however, remained tight-lipped on the details of the announcement. “We will be developing Turga pump

storage power plant with help of Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) loan but Bandhunala project will be executed through a private player,” state Power Minister Sobhandeb Chattopadhyay told PTI.

The project will, however, take the competitive bidding process route to select a developer.

Bandhunala project is presently at a nascent stage. For the second Purulia pump storage proj-

ect of 1,000 MW at Turga, the state government and JICA had executed a Rs 5,000 crore loan agreement. The pumped storage project is estimated at Rs 6,922 crore, JICA had said.

The project entails building four reversible pump-turbine of 250MW each. The state has been seeking a grant from clean energy cess from the Centre but there has been no sign of progress till now.

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Arun Prabha to be linked to Airtel, Dish TV services: Official



**ITANAGAR, FEB 10 (PTI):** ‘Arun Prabha’, the 24th Doordarshan satellite channel inaugurated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi here, will be linked to Airtel and Dish TV platforms, a senior official said.

The channel, presently available via Doordarshan’s DTH (direct to home) service, was launched Saturday, exclusively for the northeast

states. Modi dedicated the channel to the people of Arunachal Pradesh.

Doordarshan Director General Supriya Sahu said Arun Prabha, once linked to Airtel and Dish TV, will give global viewers an opportunity to learn about the diverse culture of north-east India.

The region already has another exclusive channel, ‘DD North-

East, which telecasts entertainment and information- based programmes in Assamese, Bengali, English among other local languages.

We have written to the central government and measures will be taken to ensure that viewers across the world get to learn about the Land of Rising Sun and other states in the region, Sahu told PTI.

Indian doctors protest UK’s ‘unfair’ health surcharge

**ADITI KHANNA LONDON, FEB 10 (PTI):** UK-based Indian doctors and healthcare professionals are campaigning against what they describe as an “unfair” doubling of a health surcharge imposed on professionals from outside European Union (EU) living and working in Britain.

The “Immigration Health Surcharge” was introduced in April 2015 and from December last year it was hiked from 200 pounds to 400 pounds per year.

It is imposed on anyone in the UK on a work, study or family visa for longer than six months in order to raise additional funds for the country’s state-funded National Health Service (NHS). The British Association of Physicians of Indian Origin (BAPIO), the UK’s largest representative body for Indian-origin doctors, is lobbying the UK Home Office for a rethink over the charge, arguing that it would have an adverse impact on their attempt to recruit more healthcare professionals from India to meet staff shortages in the NHS.

Clinicians wishing to work in the UK are already facing burdensome processes relating to regulation and immigration, and this surcharge is only going to see UK losing out on quality healthcare professionals from



non-EU countries, notes a letter from BAPIO president Ramesh Mehta and secretary Parag Singhal, sent to UK home secretary Sajid Javid last week.

The current policy adversely affects the attraction of working in the NHS and will sabotage our own requirements of providing quality health services to our patients. Therefore, in the interest of patient safety and improved morale of the immigrant workforce, we request that this unfair and highly discriminatory health surcharge for NHS-employed professionals should be reversed with immediate effect, the letter states.

According to the organisation, one in 11 NHS clinical posts are currently unfilled, rising to one in eight for nursing vacancies, and the severe shortage is likely to grow to around

250,000 by 2030.

Doctors, nurses and other healthcare professionals from countries like India are often referred to as the backbone of the UK’s healthcare system as they take up critical posts across hospitals and clinics in the country, the BAPIO pointed out.

BAPIO has been at the centre of organising fellowship programmes for doctors from India to fill NHS shortages while completing their training in Britain as a win-win arrangement.

But it fears these efforts would be hit as a result of the additional financial burden imposed by the health surcharge.

These professionals are paying their taxes, including National Insurance (NI) contributions, in addition to providing quality health services in over-stretched

hospitals. Such an additional burden will make them feel demoralised and discriminated, said Prof. Singhal.

The health surcharge is payable by nationals from countries like India if they are seeking to live in the UK for six months or more, or to extend their stay.

The payment is made at the time the immigration application is made and is payable annually until such time as the person is granted indefinite leave to remain (ILR) in the UK, or returns to their home country at the end of their visa period.

Short-term migrants, including tourists on visitor visas, are charged differently for secondary care treatment by the NHS at the point of visa access.

Other groups have also questioned the ex-

remely high surcharge on the grounds that it amounted to double taxation for long-term migrants, who are already expected to make tax contributions towards the care system.

Most people who do move here will work and they will pay tax. So doubling this charge is a form of double taxation. People are going to be ending up paying for the NHS twice, said Satbir Singh, chief executive of the Joint Council for the Welfare of Migrants.

The UK government says since the surcharge was introduced in 2015, it has raised over 600 million pounds, which has been ploughed back into health budgets.

It expects to raise an estimated 220 million pounds in extra funding with the doubling of the surcharge, with the funds aimed at “sustaining and protecting” the country’s healthcare system.

We welcome use of the NHS by long term residents who still need leave to remain, but we believe it is right that they make a fair and proportionate contribution to its long-term sustainability,” a UK Home Office spokesperson said.

“Parliament agrees and has approved the order we proposed to increase the immigration health surcharge so it better reflects the actual costs to the NHS, the spokesperson added.

SummitTIMES as TOP OF THE NEWS informed, inquisitive, relevant



*Palekar hits out at NGMA after being interrupted at event*

**MUMBAI, FEB 10 (PTI):** Veteran actor-director Amol Palekar, who was last week interrupted during his speech by some members of the National Gallery of Modern Art (NGMA) here, on Sunday said he was only trying to seek reasons behind the cancellation of retrospectives of two senior artists.

Retrospective is an exhibition or compilation showing the development of an artist's work over a period of time.

At the opening of an exhibition in the memory of artist Prabhakar Barwe on Friday evening, Palekar was repeatedly interrupted during his speech by some NGMA members. A video available on social media showed Palekar criticising the Ministry of Culture for reportedly scrapping the advisory committees at the gallery's Mumbai and Bengaluru centres. The actor-filmmaker told reporters in Pune on Sunday that the artistes' advisory committee at NGMA had approved holding of retrospectives of three artists, of whom Prabhakar Barwe's work was inaugurated.

"But I came to know that without any communication to the committee, the next two retrospectives have been cancelled by Mumbai NGMA's new director Anita Rupavartam. I wanted to raise these issues. How and when these decisions were taken, we wanted to know," he said.

Palekar said he was told that as per the new director, four floors of NGMA would be used for displaying the works and the dome (fifth floor) will showcase only fresh exhibitions. "It is shocking. Propriety of my comments is being objected to by NGMA. As I was talking about NGMA at their own venue and invited by the gallery itself, how can it be improper?" he wondered.

Despite being interrupted during his speech on Friday, Palekar had refused to stop. He went on to mention that writer Nayantra Sahgal was invited to speak at the Marathi literary convention recently but at the last minute the invitation was withdrawn because what she was going to say "was slightly critical of the situation around us."

## Napoli stumble at Fiorentina, Martinez gets Inter back winning



**ROME, FEB 10 (AFP):** Napoli could finish the weekend trailing Serie A leaders Juventus by 11 points after Carlo Ancelotti's wasteful side stuttered to a 0-0 draw at Fiorentina, as Lautaro Martinez scored the only goal to get Inter Milan back winning against promoted Parma.

Both sides start their Europa League campaigns this week after crashing out of the Champions League with Napoli travelling to FC Zurich and Inter Milan away to Rapid Vienna in their round of the 32, first leg ties.

Fiorentina goalkeeper Alban Lafont produced a string of saves to deny Piotr Zielinski and Dries Mertens as Napoli failed to score away from home for the

third game running.

"We dropped two points that we would've deserved for attacking from start to finish," said Ancelotti. "In some ways, it was an impeccable performance, but we weren't clinical enough in front of goal and were forced to make do with a point."

Ancelotti's side have now been held twice in the past three games while hosts Fiorentina drew for the 11th time in 23 matches this season to sit ninth, but just six points off the Champions League berths.

The Tuscany side's best chance came just after half-time when French midfielder Jordan Veretout was denied by an excellent stop from Alex Meret.

Inter Milan, in third, got back winning after Martinez came off the bench late, scoring after 79 minutes at Parma, after an earlier Danilo D'Ambrosio headed goal was ruled out after a VAR video review for a handling offence.

Belgian midfielder Radja Nainggolan crossed nicely for the Argentine blast in Luciano Spalletti's side their first league goal and win of 2019.

Inter are now nine points behind Napoli, with Roma in fourth, a further five points behind, and Lazio fifth after their wins over Chievo and Empoli earlier this week.

"I'm well suited to overcoming difficulties," said under-pressure Inter Milan coach Spalletti.

"Just as the defeat against Bologna (last week) caused despair, this victory will give us enthusiasm and strength.

"We must now keep a low profile to rediscover stability. We showed positive things tonight, but we need to produce further performances like this to gain consistency."

Parma are in 12th position with just one goal from their last five games, despite their heroics last week with a late Gervinho double holding champions Juventus 3-3. Unbeaten Juventus could stretch their advantage to double digits on Sunday when they travel to mid-table Sassuolo, firming on track for an eighth consecutive league title.

## Indian women's team loses 3rd T20I despite Mandhana's 86, suffers 0-3 series whitewash

**HAMILTON, FEB 10 (PTI):**

The Indian women's team almost pulled off a dramatic win but failed to score a boundary in the final delivery to lose the third and final T20 International against New Zealand by a mere two runs here on Sunday.

Chasing 162 for a win, star opening batswoman Smriti Mandhana took the Indian team on course for a consolation win with a career-best knock of 86 from 52 balls but the visiting side failed to build on her scintillating knock to end their innings at 159 for 4.

With the three-match series already lost after defeats in the first and second T20Is, India surprisingly named senior player Mithali Raj in the playing eleven and she contributed 24 not out from 20 balls after coming to bat at the fall of

captain Harmanpreet Kaur (2). But she failed to hit a four from the final delivery bowled by Leigh Kasperek as India lost the match by two runs.

India needed 16 runs from the final over and Raj and Deepti Sharma (21 not out) raised hopes of a remarkable win by hitting boundaries in the first and third deliveries but were left to hit a four off the last ball.

Captain Harmanpreet Kaur, whose indifferent form has hurt the team, said she was disappointed at the result and the 0-3 series defeat. India had won the three-match ODI series 2-1 before this T20 contest.

"We are disappointed to lose the series like this, we could have done better. We have a lot of work to do," she said after scoring just two on Sunday. She had scored 17 and 5 in the first

two matches. "In T20 Internationals we need to make improvements in the final 10-over batting. More importantly, we need to sort out the batting order.

"But there are positives from this series like the batting of Smriti and Jemimah as well as the performance of bowlers," she added. Mandhana, who had scored 58 and 36 in the first two matches, continued her red-hot form by notching up her eighth T20I fifty and second of the series as she dominated against New Zealand bowlers yet again.

With one-down Jemimah Rodrigues (21), the other batswoman who has been in fine touch, India reached 92 for 2 at the halfway stage.

But after that, India could not force the pace of scoring and with captain Kaur failing to make a mark, the asking rate

kept on climbing. When Mandhana was out in the 16th over, India needed 39 from 4.3 overs which was not an easy job. Raj and Deepti could not get too many boundaries and they were left with 16 to win from the final over.

Electing to bat, New Zealand looked set to post a much bigger total by reaching 80 for 2 at the halfway stage but India came back strongly to force a batting collapse as the home side ended their innings at 161 for 7.

Hard-hitting opener Sophie Devine top-scored with a sparkling 52-ball 72 which was laced with eight boundaries and two sixes while captain Amy Satterthwaite contributed 31 from 23 deliveries. The duo's 71-run stand for the third wicket from exactly eight overs was the highlight of the New Zealand innings. The oth-

er opener Suzie Bates (24) and one-down Hannah Rowe (12) were the other batswomen who reached to double-digit figures.

Devine dominated against all the Indian bowlers, especially against leg-spinner Poonam Yadav whom she hoisted for two big sixes during her onslaught.

But once Devine was dismissed in the 17th over, New Zealand suffered a batting collapse, scoring just 21 runs from the remaining 3.2 overs. From 140 for 2 in the 17th over, New Zealand ended their innings at 161 for 7.

The Indians got a wicket each in the 18th and 19th overs and two from the final over to make a remarkable comeback in the final five overs from which they conceded just 34 runs.

Despite talks, 'not yet reached' any conclusion to end hostilities: Af Taliban



**ISLAMABAD, FEB 10 (PTI):**

The Afghan Taliban has said that despite the ongoing talks with the US and other regional powers, it had "not yet reached" any conclusion that would entail an immediate end to hostilities against America and its allies, according to a media report.

"We are forced to wage war. Our enemies are attacking us; therefore, we are also combating them," Taliban spokesman Zabiullah Mujahid was quoted as saying by DawnNewsTV.

The Taliban control nearly half of Afghanistan, and are more powerful than at any time since the 2001 US-led invasion after the 9/11 terror attacks in 2001.

In a series of tweets after six days of talks with the Taliban representatives in Doha last month, Special US Representative for Afghanistan Reconciliation Zalmay Khalilzad said the US has made "significant progress" in its peace talks with the Taliban.

"We have a draft of the framework that has to be fleshed out before it becomes an agreement," Khalilzad said at the time. "The Taliban have committed, to our satisfaction, to do what is necessary that would prevent Afghanistan from ever becoming a platform for international terrorist groups or individuals."

Since being appointed in September, Khalilzad has met with all sides in an attempt to end America's longest war in which the US has lost over 2,400 soldiers in more than 17 years.

But Mujahid said that, even in Moscow talks, nothing concrete was achieved that would compel them to end the war and military pressure, the channel reported.

He insisted that the Taliban are holding talks with the United States "on their own initiative".

Responding to a question regarding the timing of the talks, the militant commander explained that, even prior to the US invasion, the Taliban had asked Washington to engage in dialogue instead of war, the channel said.

He said that they had eventually even opened a political office in Doha, Qatar in 2013 for this purpose, but Washington had been unwilling to negotiate at the time.

The spokesperson said that now that the US is willing to talk, they have decided to engage with them. When asked about Pakistan's role in bringing the Taliban to the negotiating table, Mujahid said: "There is no role being played by any outside country. This has always been our own initiative and policy."

He, however, said that if the Taliban do end up having a say in the Afghan polity one day, they

will approach Pakistan "as a brother and a neighbour", seeking "comprehensive ties based on mutual respect."

He acknowledged that Pakistan had remained "the most important hub" for Afghan refugees during the Soviet invasion.

Mujahid said that while the Taliban do not have a codified manifesto, their "clear" objectives were the end of the occupation of Afghanistan, establishment of an Islamic government, establishment of peace and security, reconstruction of Afghanistan and the provision of administrative services.

He also said a new constitution will be drafted and "implemented in light of the teachings of (the) Shariah."

On a question regarding the possible formation of an interim government in Afghanistan, he said that the Taliban had neither held any discussions regarding an interim government nor had they proposed such an idea.

Explaining the Taliban position on refusing to talk to the government in Kabul, Mujahid said that any talks with Afghan President Ashraf Ghani regime would have symbolic ramifications.

If the Taliban were to hold talks with the Kabul government, it would mean that they had "accepted this stooge regime as a legitimate government (even though it was) imposed upon us by aircraft and (the) bombing of invaders", he said.

He said that talks between two opposing powers are meant to achieve a mutual resolution to outstanding issues and the re-establishment of peace and stability. "This process does not mean [a] partnership with anyone," he said.

Mujahid added that the Taliban believe that as long as Afghanistan is occupied, ceasefires and intra-Afghan talks would not amount to much.

"We first and foremost have to put an end to the occupation and then focus on resolving our internal issues."

Responding to a question regarding the Taliban's support to the al-Qaeda leadership, which led to the 2001 invasion of Afghanistan, Mujahid said that: "The Islamic Emirate sheltered those foreign Mujahideen (Al Qaeda operatives) that had arrived in Afghanistan during the period of jihad against the Soviet Union and remained behind as [an] inheritance. Their protection was a religious and cultural necessity."

However, he said that currently there was "no one that needed (the Taliban's) shelter".

"The Islamic Emirate (Taliban government) shall never allow anyone to harm others from our soil," he asserted.

## Amid no jobs chorus, govt claims over 3.79 lakh new jobs in central govt depts

**ASHWINI SHRIVASTAVA**

**NEW DELHI, FEB 10 (PTI):** As debate intensifies over rising unemployment in the country, the Modi government claims to have generated over 3.79 lakh jobs between 2017 and 2019 in its various establishments, according to the interim budget for 2019-20.

The government said it has generated 2,51,279 jobs in central government establishments between 2017 and 2018. This is estimated to go up by 3,79,544 to reach 36,15,770 on March 1, 2019, shows an analysis of documents of the interim budget, presented by Finance Minister Piyush Goyal on February 1.

The data assumes significance as the Congress and other opposition parties have been targeting Prime Minister Narendra Modi over rising unemployment. The government has rejected the charges.

Replying to the debate on the Motion of Thanks to the



president's address to Parliament on Thursday, Modi cited data from provident fund, National Pension System (NPS), Income Tax filings and sale of vehicles among others to say crores of new jobs were created in the formal and unorganised sectors, including transport, hotels and infrastructure.

Most of the recruitment

was done by the Ministry of Railways, police forces and the direct and indirect tax departments.

The budget documents give a sector wise break-up on how the jobs were added in central government establishments.

It said Indian Railways will generate the highest number of jobs -- 98,999 by March 1,

2019 against its actual strength of 12,70,714 in March 2017.

There will be 79,353 additional jobs in police departments by March 1, 2019, up from the actual strength of 10,52,351 as on March 1, 2017.

Similarly, jobs in direct tax departments will touch an estimated 80,143 by next month as against 50,208 in

March 2017 (an increase of 29,935 jobs).

In indirect tax departments, the government said there were 53,394 employees in March 2017. This went up to 92,842 in March 2018. It also gave the same figure (92,842) as the estimated strength of indirect tax establishment as on March 1, 2019.

The Ministry of Civil Aviation will have 2,363 more personnel by March 1 this year against its actual strength of 1,174 in March 2017, the document shows.

Similarly, for the Department of Posts, it said there will be 4,21,068 personnel on March 1, 2019 as against its actual strength of 41,88,18 in March 2017.

In the Ministry of External Affairs, 11,877 people are estimated to be working by next month as against its actual strength of 10,044 in March 2017, which was estimated to have reached 11,870 in 2018.



# Indian historian wins Israel's prestigious USD 1 mn Dan David award

**HARINDER MISHRA**

**JERUSALEM, FEB 10 (PTI):** Noted Indian historian Sanjay Subrahmanyam has won Israel's prestigious Dan David Prize for this year for his work on inter-cultural encounters between Asians, Europeans and people of North and South America during the early modern era.

Subrahmanyam, son of strategic analyst K Subrahmanyam and brother of former foreign secretary S Jaishankar, won the award in the category of 'past time dimension' for his work in macro history.

He shares the USD 1 million award in this category with Prof Kenneth Pomeranz of University of Chicago.

The international Dan David Prize is awarded annually to those who have made outstanding scientific, technological and humanistic accomplishments in fields representing the past, present and future of human achievement. Three Dan David Prize are given every year.

The recipients in the "Past" category are generally drawn from the fields of history, archaeology, paleontology and biography; the "Present" from arts, media, policy and economics; and the



"Future" from one of the exact or natural sciences.

This year's winners were chosen from the three categories for their work in macro history, defending democracy and combating climate change, respectively.

Subrahmanyam, an alumni of University of Delhi, holds the Irving and Jean Stone Endowed Chair in Social Sciences at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA), which he joined in 2004. He is also the recipient of the Infosys Prize for humanities for his "path-breaking contribution to history".

The eminent historian, who did his doctorate from Delhi School of Economics, began as an economic historian but later branched out to work on

political, intellectual and cultural history.

The Dan David Prize is a joint international enterprise endowed by the Dan David Foundation headquartered at Tel Aviv University.

The award ceremony is likely to be held at the university in May.

The prize, now in its 18th year, was established by late Dan David, an international businessman and philanthropist who envisioned a project that would extend beyond traditional academic categorisations.

The winners in the "Present" category for "Defending Democracy" this year has been won by Reporters without Borders, an organisation that works for the free-

dom of the Press and Prof Michael Ignatieff.

Ignatieff is a Canadian author, academic and former politician who headed Liberal Party of Canada and was also the leader of the official opposition for almost three years.

Christina Figueres, a Costa Rican diplomat has been awarded the prize in the "future" dimension for her role in combating climate change.

Subrahmanyam, with this honour, joins the elite group of other prominent Indian laureates of the Dan David Prize which includes author Amitav Ghosh, music conductor Zubin Mehta, renowned chemist CNR Rao and astronomy professor Shrinivas

Kulkarni. In order to encourage and foster new generations of scholars, the laureates are required to donate 10 per cent of their prize money towards scholarships for graduate or post-graduate researchers in their respective fields.

Other prominent recipients of the award include former US vice president Al Gore, former British premier Tony Blair, cellist Yo-Yo Ma, novelist Margaret Atwood, Wikipedia co-founder Jimmy Wales and filmmakers Joel and Ethan Coen.

Meanwhile, reacting to Subrahmanyam's achievement, eminent Indian historian and writer Ramachandra Guha tweeted, "Delighted that my college contemporary Sanjay Subrahmanyam has won the Dan David Prize. Our teacher Dharma Kumar said when he was a student: Sanjay will be India's first truly world-class historian. And so it has proved."

He further said, Subrahmanyam "is a true polymath; in his command of languages and sources, his brilliant analytical mind, his interdisciplinary framework, his literary flair. Incidentally all his degrees are in economics, all from the University of Delhi."

## Abu Dhabi includes Hindi as third official court language



**DUBAI, FEB 10 (PTI):** In a landmark decision, Abu Dhabi has included Hindi as the third official language used in its courts, alongside Arabic and English, as part of a move designed to improve access to justice.

The Abu Dhabi Judicial Department on Saturday said it has extended the adoption of interactive forms of statement of claims filed before courts by including the Hindi language alongside Arabic and English in labour cases.

This is aimed at helping Hindi speakers to learn about litigation procedures, their rights and duties without a language barrier, in addition to facilitating registration procedures via unified forms available through the ADJD website, the judicial body said.

According to official figures, the UAE population is estimated to be around nine million

of which 2/3rd are immigrants from foreign countries. The Indian community in the UAE, numbering 2.6 million, constitutes 30 per cent of the total population and is the largest expatriate community in the country.

Yousef Saeed Al Abri, undersecretary of the ADJD, said the adoption of multilingual interactive forms for claim sheets, grievances and requests, aims to promote judicial services in line with the plan Tomorrow 2021, and increase the transparency of litigation procedures.

"This is in addition to facilitating registration procedures to the public through simplified and easy forms and raising litigants' legal awareness via interactive forms of the statements of claims, to ensure access to the legal materials related to the subject of the dispute," Al Abri was quoted as saying by the

Khaleej Times. He indicated that the extension of the adoption of interactive forms in several languages comes under the directives of Sheikh Mansour bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Presidential Affairs and ADJD Chairman.

Al Abri explained that the adoption of new languages comes as part of the bilingual litigation system, the first phase of which was launched in November 2018, through the adoption of procedures requiring the plaintiffs to translate the case documents in civil and commercial lawsuits into English, if the defendant is a foreigner.

"The foreign investor receives the case files translated, thus contributing to the provision of a global judicial service that meets the requirements of residents in the Emirate of Abu Dhabi," he added.

## S Korea announces hike in payment for US troops

**SEOUL, FEB 10 (AFP):** Seoul said Sunday it agreed to hike its payment for maintaining American troops on its soil, settling a dispute with its longtime ally ahead of a second summit between the US and North Korea.

The two countries have been in a security alliance since the 1950-53 Korean war, which ended with an armistice rather than a peace treaty -- with more than 28,000 US troops stationed in the South to guard against threats

from Pyongyang. But US President Donald Trump has repeatedly complained about the expense of keeping American forces on the peninsula, with Washington reportedly asking Seoul to double its contribution toward costs.

The negotiations ended with South Korea's foreign ministry saying Seoul will pay about 1.04 trillion won (USD 924 million) in 2019, 8.2 per cent more than what it offered under a previous five-year pact which expired at the end

of last year. The ministry said although the US had demanded a "huge increase" in payment, they were able to reach an agreement that reflects "the security situation of the Korean peninsula".

"The two countries reaffirmed... the importance of a strong South Korea-US alliance and the need for a stable stationing of the US troops," it said in a statement issued after a signing ceremony. The row had raised concern that Trump may use it as an excuse for US withdrawal.

## It's a cream game: Cagliari players stalled by farmers' milk price protest

**ROME, FEB 10 (AFP):** Players from Italian club Cagliari missed their flight to Milan for Sunday's top flight game after being locked inside their training ground by local farmers protesting over milk prices, according to reports in Italy.

The Sardinian team had been due to fly out to Milan on Saturday evening before Sunday's game against AC Milan at the San Siro.

But the players were unable to leave their Asseminello training ground in the south of the Mediterranean island after all the exits were blocked by a group of 100 local farmers.

Coach Rolando Maran and the club's director general Mario Passetti negotiated with the protestors to allow the team bus to leave for the airport. But only after Sardinian-born player Nicolò Barella and Brazilian teammate Joao Pedro joined in the protest and were filmed kicking over milk pails in a gesture of solidarity.

"We simply want to defend our rights," a protestor told Gazzetta Dello Sport.

"We produce milk at 1 euro (1.3) plus VAT and we aren't going back. If they aren't able to sell it at a decent price, that's not our fault."

Cagliari are 15th in Serie A, four points off the relegation zone, and held AC Milan 1-1 earlier this season.

## As Kagame steps down, Egypt takes helm at African Union

**ADDIS ABABA, FEB 10 (AFP):** Rwandan President Paul Kagame, who led an active, reformist tenure as African Union chair, on Sunday passes the baton to Egypt, seen as more likely to focus on security issues than expanding the powers of the body.

Egyptian President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi will officially take over the post of ceremonial head of the AU which rotates between the five regions of the continent at the start of a two-day summit in Addis Ababa.

While multiple crises on the continent will be on the agenda of heads of state from the 55 member nations, the summit will also focus on institutional reforms, and the establishment of a continent-wide free trade zone.

The Continental Free Trade Area (CFTA) was agreed by 44 nations in March 2018, but only 19 countries have ratified the agreement, with 22 needed for it to come into effect.

The single market is a flagship of the AU's "Agenda 2063" programme, conceived as a strategic framework for socioeconomic transformation.

Cairo is backing the initiative, but analysts say it will be less likely to focus on the financial and administrative reforms pushed by Kagame.

Sisi is however expected to focus more on security, peacekeeping and post-war reconstruction, issues closely tied to the AU's 2019 theme of "Refugees, Returnees and Internally Displaced Persons".

"Egypt has an interest in Africa, they want to



strengthen their position on the African continent and they don't want to be seen as a country only focused on the Arab world," said Liesl Louw-Vaudran, an analyst at the Institute for Security Studies.

United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said Saturday that peaceful elections in DR Congo, Mali and Madagascar, as well as peace deals in South Sudan and Central African Republic and the truce between Ethiopia and Eritrea, were signs of a "wind of hope" on the continent.

Kagame, who has been leading institutional reforms since 2016, pushed for a continent-wide import tax to fund the AU and reduce its dependence on external donors, who still pay for more than half the institution's annual budget.

But member states have resisted this along with reform of the AU Commission, its executive organ. In November 2018, most states rejected a proposal to give the head of the AU Commis-

sion the power to name deputies and commissioners.

Like other regional heavyweights Nigeria and South Africa, Egypt is not keen on a powerful AU, an African diplomat told AFP.

Especially because Cairo has "never forgotten" its suspension in 2013 after Egypt's army deposed Islamist president Mohamed Morsi, who in 2012 became the country's first democratically elected president, the diplomat said.

"Traditionally, leaders of big powers have not really helped the position of AU chairperson, as they don't want an AU which is too strong or too intrusive," said Elisa Jobson of the International Crisis Group.

"The AU and the AU commission are only as strong as its members want them to be. Unlike the EU, African countries have not transferred some of their sovereignty to the AU," Kagame suffered a crushing blow from the AU after expressing "serious

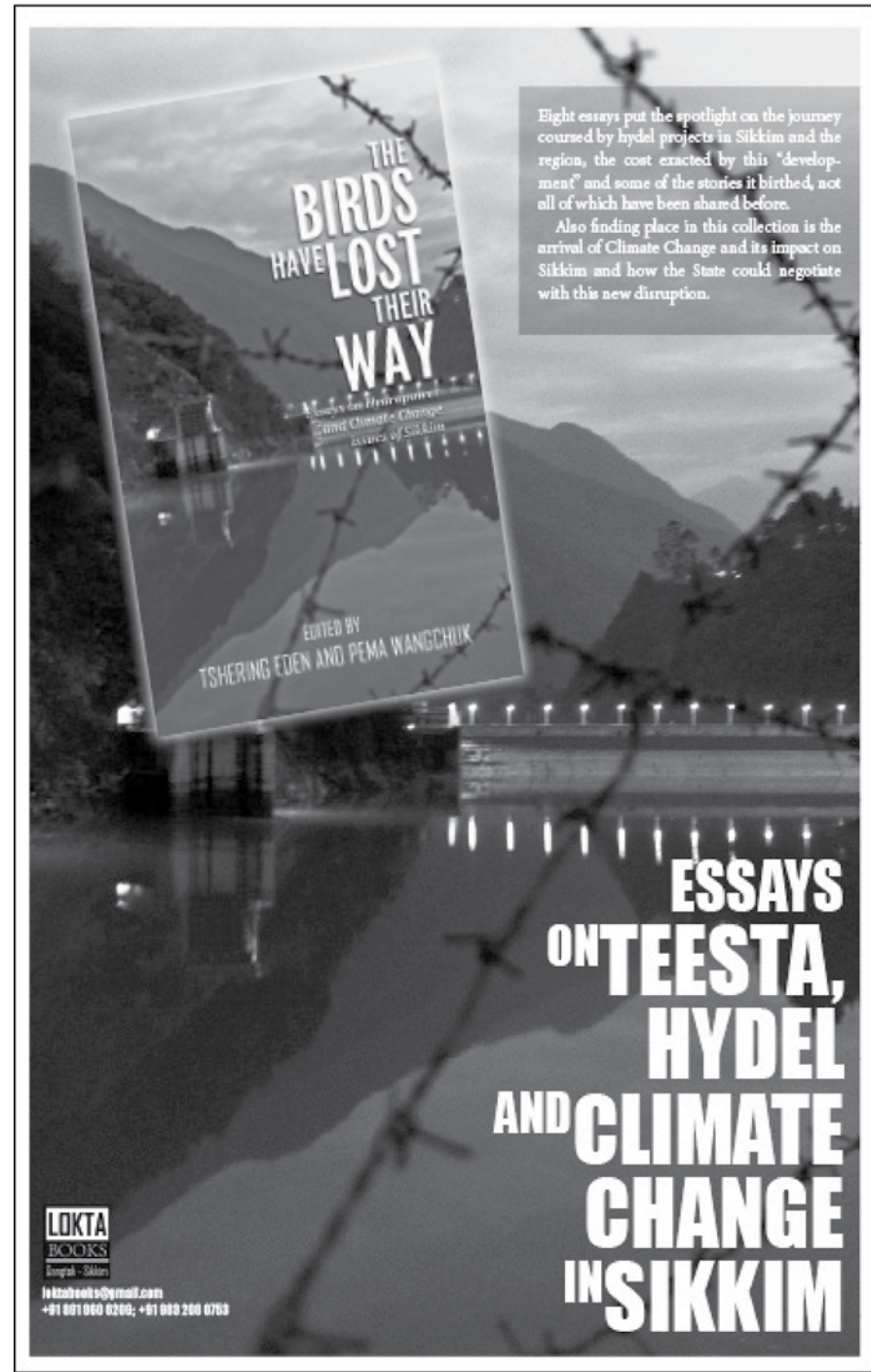
doubts" about the results of Democratic Republic of Congo's recent presidential election, which was officially won by Felix Tshisekedi.

While also disputed by the Catholic church, the results were validated by DRC's constitutional court and saluted by continental heavyweights South Africa, Kenya and Egypt.

"This whole thing was an embarrassment for the AU, it showed the limitations of what the AU chairperson can do," said Jobson.

Amnesty International expressed fears that Egypt's chairmanship could undermine human rights mechanisms in the AU.

"During his time in power President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi has demonstrated a shocking contempt for human rights. Under his leadership the country has undergone a catastrophic decline in rights and freedoms," said Najia Bounaim, Amnesty's North Africa Campaigns Director.





## Women need to have more representation in films: Sonam Kapoor

KOMAL PANCHAMATIA

Mumbai, Feb 10 (PTI): From "Neerja" to "Padman" to her latest "Ek Ladki Ko"

achieved stardom and it all should be used in the right way," Sonam told PTI.

The actor, who made her debut

in films with Sanjay Leela Bhansali's "Saawariya" and starred in a few cliché romantic dramas, shifted her focus to content driven projects with Aanand L Rai's "Raanjhanaa". She then featured in films like "Bhaag Milkha Bhaag" and "Khoobsurat" among others. Sonam believes with content becoming the hero of the film, there is no "safe" or "unsafe" zone for actors.

"What is playing safe? I have done commercial films and they did not do well at all. And some of my films that were not commercial did well. I am wondering what is safe today?"

"Today we have films headed by Ayushmann Khurrana, Vicky Kaushal and Rajkumar Rao and they are so successful. Nobody knows what the audience is going to like or not like at this point. There is no formula. The only thing that works

is honesty, integrity and a good story," she added. "Ek Ladki Ko Dekha Toh Aisa Lager", which released on February 1, has

minted about Rs 20 crore and Sonam is happy with the critical appreciation.

"I think commercially we are going in the right direction. I wish it was a wider release, we only released it in 1,000 screens. With the kind of response we are getting and due to word-of-mouth if we had a wider release we would have had better numbers. It was the producer's call. "This is the film that should reach more people. It has exceeded the expectation of the producer and next time they will have a wider release for a film like this," she said.

She further revealed the film will be released on a digital platform with an aim to expand the reach. The 33-year-old actor said the response to the movie on a broader level is a tiny step towards acceptance. "It is too early to celebrate anything as there is a long way to go. We are constantly stereotyping people in the film industry and it is important to move away from that and making sure the labels are disabled."

Sonam believes Indians are liberal and progressive people and cinema should be used in the right way to make the common aware.

"We need to have some kind of representation of certain things through art, cinema. I want to be part of films like that. I want to be responsible in the choices I make, if you are not responsible you are not an artiste. Art is one way through which you can make people change the way they think," she added.



Dekha Toh Aisa Lager" Sonam Kapoor has made some unconventional choices in her career and the actor says her aim is to support stories which have strong women representation.

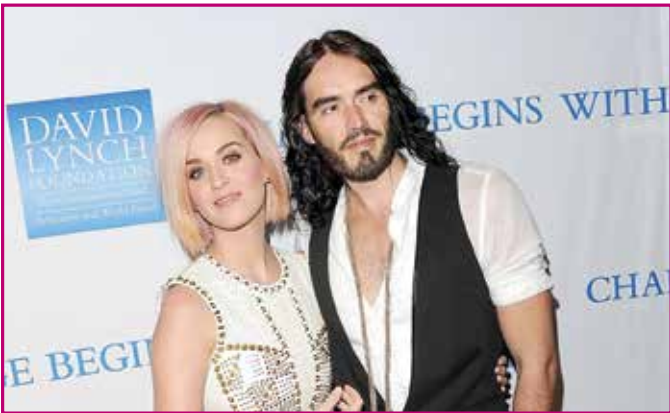
While "Neerja" was the story of slain flight attendant Neerja Bhanot, "Padman" talked about menstrual hygiene and it was her character who helped the protagonist (Akshay Kumar) to make low-cost sanitary napkins. "Veere Di Wedding" revolved around four contemporary Indian women and with "Ek Ladki Ko Dekha Toh Aisa Lager" she became the first A-list actor to have played a homosexual character.

"Women need to have more representation in this film industry. Women don't have it. Last year we have had 'Veere Di Wedding' and 'Raazi' doing well commercially. There should be more women representation in terms of lead, more thought and content for them. "There are talented women in the film industry here, who have also



**COUNTRY LEGEND! Singers Miley Cyrus & Dolly Parton hug during MusiCares Person of the Year honoring Dolly Parton in Los Angeles.**

## I'm not so sure that idea is for me: Katy Perry on marriage



**LONDON, FEB 10 (PTI):** Pop star Katy Perry says she does not think she will get married again.

The singer, who tied the knot with comedian Russell Brand in 2010 and got divorced in 2012, said she has become more 'pragmatic and logistical' than she used to be. 'I'm very pragmatic and logistical and I am less

fantastical about things. I mean, I was married when I was 25. I'm 34.

"It was almost 10 years ago. I was like, 'One person for the rest of my life,' and I'm not so sure that that idea is for me. I'm just such a different person than I was," Perry told Paper magazine.

The singer is currently dating actor Orlando Bloom.

## John, Anil, Nana to feature in 'Welcome 3' and 'Welcome 4', filming to start this year

**MUMBAI, FEB 10 (PTI):** John Abraham, Anil Kapoor, Paresh Rawal and Nana Patekar are set to star in the third and fourth installments of "Welcome" franchise and the makers have already started working on the projects. The 2007 comedy film "Welcome", directed by Anees Bazmee and produced by Firoz A Nadiadwala had Akshay Kumar, Katrina Kaif, Feroz Khan, Kapoor, Patekar, Rawal and Mallika Sherawat. The film was a blockbuster.

The makers came with "Welcome Back" in 2015 with Abraham. The sequel saw Kapoor and Patekar reprising their roles of underworld dons - Majnu and Uday.

"We are planning to do 'Welcome 3' and 'Welcome 4' back-to-back. We will start shooting soon. The actors will remain same - John,



Anil, Nana, Paresh bhai. The third one will be directed by Ahmed Khan (the first two were helmed by Bazmee)," source close to the makers told PTI.

The producers are planning to release the third part in 2020 and the fourth one in 2021.

"This time we will have lot of action. We will have fun and stylised action, like how it was in 'Mission Impossible' series. So, there will be laugh-

ter and action both. First time we will incorporate the action thing in 'Welcome' series," the source added.

Shooting for the third instalment will commence this year abroad.

"The moment 'Welcome 3' will get over in two month's time we will start 'Welcome 4'. It will be the first Indian franchise to have a movies back-to-back. We had planned this four-five months ago."

## REQUIRED FOR CANADA

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



Walk for Interview & Resume Submission  
**7SEA OVERSEAS CONSULTANCY**  
Paribahan Nagar, Opp. Webel IT Park, Matigara, Siliguri  
Email ID: [sevenseainfo8@gmail.com](mailto:sevenseainfo8@gmail.com)/  
[sevenseasconsultancy5@gmail.com](mailto:sevenseasconsultancy5@gmail.com)  
Contact No. +9170764 21789 / +9183487 14807

**ARIES:** Reunited and it feels so good. Saturday's friendly angle between Mercury and Uranus could lead you back to a group you once cherished. From an indoor sports league to an activist organization to people you just like drinking IPAs with, you've been missing that bond. If you can't convene in person, set up a time to video chat.

**TAURUS:** Kill 'em with kindness Saturday, Taurus, and a megadose of compassion. A stressed out friend or relative could make everyone's life miserable if you don't intervene. Rather than going mutinous, get to the source of this person's angst. Maybe they feel overwhelmed or upset about a recent "failure." Preempt and prevail! Find out what support is needed before they ask.

**GEMINI:** Were you a little too quick to judge a group as weird or "not your thing." Gemini? Saturday, you could have misgivings about your hasty write-off. Give this cutting-edge crew a second chance. Are they really asking you to become a devotee, or are they simply

offering a fresh perspective on life? If you still find them intriguing, dip your toe in the water without fear.

**CANCER:** If you can't beat 'em, join 'em? This Saturday, collaborating with the so-called competition might bring the win-win you're both looking for...If you can set aside your differences. The trick is to test the waters slowly small instead of trying to resolve every difference in one day. If you've been gasping for air—or maybe just a change of scenery—the next ten weeks could send you on some amazing adventures.

**LEO:** This Saturday, a refreshingly honest conversation can move the needle on a stuck relationship. Don't get hung up with saying the "right" thing, Leo; just speak your piece in a non-blaming way. And make sure you extend that open-minded courtesy to the other party as well. Of course, sometimes these sentiments are best expressed in a letter—one that you don't send, but rather write, then rip up and burn as a ceremonial release.

**LIBRA:** Who says February 14th gets to have all the fun? Saturday's playful pairing of Mercury and Uranus could bring an early visit from St. Valentine. A scintillating conversation could lead to a dinner date that lingers on for hours. If you're already spoken for, Saturday could be like a V-Day prequel. Reserve a table for two or pick up a pair of tickets for a raved-about show.

**VIRGO:** Thoughts are swirling through your head this Saturday, but don't let them evolve into an epic work of fiction. With analytical Mercury getting a boost from innovative Uranus, talk to people who can help you see the situation from an enlightened perspective. Everything happens for a reason, Virgo, even if it makes zero sense in the moment.

**SCORPIO:** Is it a fact or just a feeling? Saturday's Mercury-Uranus mashup brings some much-needed objectivity to a situation that's been hitting all your emotional buttons. While you don't want to ignore your intuition, what's bothering you might be a result of a past trigger rather than something that's actually occurring in

the here and now. The surest way to find out? Investigate, as only a Scorpio can! Your inner bon vivant takes the wheel this Sunday as social Mercury high-kicks into Pisces and your flamboyant, fun-loving fifth house!

**SAGITTARIUS:** If other people are slowing you down this Saturday, no need to drag those stragglers along for the ride. Enjoy a day of independence, allowing yourself to come and go as you please without checking for approval. The dedicated alone time will refresh your feed and you'll be ready to reign as life of the party come sundown. Avoid any venues that feel stuffy or elitist!

**CAPRICORN:** Anyone can dazzle you with a first impression—but can they actually walk their talk? Under Saturday's convivial alignment of Mercury and Uranus, you might not be the best at separating the wheat from the chaff. Enjoy the magic moments you share with people socially, remembering that only time can tell the true story about their integrity and character. Reserve judgement, one way or

the other, because it's equally possible that someone you wrote off as annoying could start to grow on you!

**AQUARIUS:** Chat up strangers this Saturday, because at any moment, random banter could reveal a serendipitous spark. The fateful encounter could happen during an espresso run or while you're rolling up your yoga mat after class. One thoughtful comment on an Instagram-friend's feed could lead to a DM exchange—and one bold right swipe could swiftly evolve into a Saturday night date!

**PISCES:** You don't have to make excuses for other people's bad behavior, Pisces, but it's possible that you overreacted to a recent slight. You're rightfully disappointed but is this really grounds for a freezeout? Maybe you extended the benefit of the doubt a little too quickly or projected qualities onto people that were never really there. Accept their limitations then consider letting go of your anger. Going forward, you can't count on these people for certain things—but that doesn't mean you can't still be cordial.