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SummitTIMES

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ON TOP OF THE NEWS

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WIFA Women's Football League kicks off Friday

MUMBAI, OCT 31 (PTI): A total of 18 teams will be competing for the top honours in Western India Football Association's (WIFA) Women's Football League 2019-2020, which is scheduled to commence at Coopers Grounds here on Friday.

The tournament will feature 11 teams from Mumbai, four from Pune, two from Kolhapur and one from Satara, and is scheduled to conclude on December 22.

Mumbai's Bodilyne SC will clash with Pune's Deccan XI in the opening Group-A match, which is set to kick-off at 2 pm, a WIFA statement said.



HC gives Department 10 days to prevent yak deaths in winter

SUMMIT REPORT GANGTOK, 31 OCT:

The High Court of Sikkim has granted ten days time to the State Animal Husbandry and Livestock Department to come up with short term and long term proposals to prevent death of Himalayan yaks during the winter season.

Last winter, more than 300 Himalayan Yaks had died due to starvation during heavy snowfall in Muguthang and Yumthang. After local media reported the yak deaths, the High Court had taken up a suo moto PIL.

In view of the approaching winter,

the High Court has said that it is time that the State Government comes out with a detailed affidavit so that appropriate consideration can be made by this Court at an early date.

The court has granted 10 days' time to file additional affidavit addressing the issues and concerns raised during the hearing.

Amicus Curiae, Jorgey Namkha, in his affidavit suggested preventive measures from the ICAR-National Research Centre on Yak, at Dirang, Arunachal Pradesh.

Arunachal Pradesh had prepared the State action plan on climate change in 2013, the Sikkim Government should

also adopt and immediately implement, he suggested.

He also suggested adopting success stories of the ICAR-NCR on Yaks and implementing it in the State of Sikkim immediately. The State Government should also take benefit from research work that has been undertaken by ICAR-NCR on Yaks.

He further suggested that both long term and short terms measures including royalty for grazing rights in the alpine area, lack of winter feed leads to heavy weight loss (25-30 percent) of yak over that period, requiring recovery and new weight gain during the summer months.

Post-Diwali transfers

SUMMIT REPORT GANGTOK, 31 OCT:

State Government departments resumed work after the Diwali break with news of seven transfers at the Secretary level.

Principal Chief Engineer, Power Department, Aita Bdr Rai, is now PCE-cum-Secretary, Power Department, with another engineer, PCE [Mechanical], Roads & Bridges Department, has been posted as Secretary, Printing & Stationery Department.

Chief Electoral Officer, Sikkim, R Telang, who is also the Principal Secretary, Election Department, has been shouldered additional responsibilities as Secretary, OBC Commission.

Meanwhile, MT Sherpa, Secretary, Education Department, has been transferred and posted as the new Secretary at Horticulture Department.

ties as the Principal Secretary of Agriculture and Horticulture Departments.

Changes continued in the Agriculture Department with the transfer of Rinzing Chewang Bhutia as the new Secretary. His responsibilities as Secretary, Skill Development Department, have been passed on to Ganga Devi Pradhan who has been repatriated from her deputation as Secretary, OBC Commission.

Meanwhile, MT Sherpa, Secretary, Education Department, has been transferred and posted as the new Secretary at Horticulture Department.

Continuing with

transfers out of Education Department, Special Secretary Tshewang Gyachho was today transferred as Special Secretary, UD&HD.

The Department of Personnel kept a busy day today with another set of seven transfers affecting officers a rung below.

Joint Secy, Home, Suraj Gurung, has been posted to Social Justice Department, while Umesh Sharma, JS-cum-Staff Officer, Office of the Chief Secretary, has been posted as Joint Secy, Home Deptt.

Meanwhile, Under Secy, District hospital, Gyalshing, Bhushan Subba, as been transferred out as Welfare Officer,

Gyalshing, at Social Justice & Welfare Department.

Bharat Rai, Additional Director, Home Deptt, has been transferred as Additional Director [Admn], PHQ on deputation, while Sonam Doma Topden, who was on deputation as Additional Director at Election Department, has been posted as AD, Directorate of Capacity Building.

Surekha Thapa, AD [Admn], Health Department, moves out as AD [Admn], Science & Technology Department while Santosh Alley, posted as Welfare Officer, Gyalshing, has been repatriated and posted as Deputy Director, Education Department.

Two Sikkimese footballers among India U-16 probables

SUMMIT REPORT GANGTOK, 31 OCT:

Kushang Subba and Evan Thapa have been shortlisted to attend the India U-16 (Boys) National Team Camp to be held at Kalinga Stadium, Bhubaneswar, Odisha from 01 to 22 Nov, a press communiqué from Sikkim Football Association informs.

An SFA press release issued today further informs that the SFA president, Menla Ethenpa, congratulated the boys over phone and advised them to take the camp seriously and do their best to secure a berth in the India final list.

West Sikkim awarded for Polio Immunization Coverage

NEW DELHI, 31 OCT (IPR):

West Sikkim was awarded with a certificate and a medal for achieving 90% Full Immunization Coverage under Intensified Mission Indradhanush (IMI) programme.

The award was conferred on the occasion of "Pulse Polio Silver Jubilee" commemorative event held at the Dr Ambedkar International Centre, New Delhi. The event was attended by former Union Minister for Health & Family Welfare, JP Nadda, Union Minister for Health & Family Welfare, Dr Harshvardhan and Minister of State, Health & Family Welfare, Ashwini Kumar Choubey.

The award was received by the District Collector, West, Karma R Bon-

po and Chief Medical Officer, West, Dr Tsheten Namgyal Bhutia on behalf of the District.

West District, Sikkim is among 16 other districts of the country which has achieved 90% immunization coverage. The efforts in achieving 90% immunization coverage was due to the efforts of the front-line workers of the Health Department, doctors, nurses ably led by the Chief Medical Officers and supported by the West District Administration.

Speaking on the occasion, Dr Harshvardhan stated that India has been declared Polio free in the year 2014 and the fight against Polio was a long and momentous journey. He stated that it all began with



a single thought that if ballot papers can reach each person, two life saving drops of vaccination too can reach every child.

The success of the Polio vaccination on 02 Oct, 1994 when Dr Harsh Vardhan was the Health Minister of Delhi led to a countrywide Pulse Polio program from the year 1995. In a span of twenty long year, India was finally free of the virus and the success of the campaign was done to the strong Government leadership, hard work and

dedication of front-line health workers, community and religious influencers, State Government, civil society organization and professional bodies like IMA, IAP, etc, partners such as WHO, Rotary Club and UNICEF.

The Minister stated that the learning from Pulse Polio Campaign has helped in other immunization programme such as the Intensified Mission Indradhanush (IMI) which is a flagship scheme of the Government of India.

Who is happy here? ask Kashmiris

SRINAGAR, OCT 31 (PTI): A sense of despondency pervades the valley after Jammu and Kashmir was downsized to a Union territory following abrogation of Article 370 nearly three months ago, as most people feel the Centre's move is an "assault" on their identity.

The transition from the state into two Union territories of Jammu and Kashmir, and Ladakh on Thursday was met with a complete shutdown in the valley as shops and other business establishments were shut, and public transport were off the roads.

Many in Kashmir are miffed with the Centre's decision, saying it was against the interests of the people of the valley.

"This is a decision against our interests. They have robbed us of our special status and our identity," Mu-zammil Mohammad, a resident of the civil lines area of Srinagar, said.

Mohammad said the Centre's assertion that people here are happy with the decision was a "blatant lie".

"Who is happy here? Do you see anyone happy here except for the leaders and workers of the BJP?" he asked. "People of

Kashmir did not want this. We are sad that the government has done it and whatever they are saying is a blatant lie." Firdous Ahmad, a shopkeeper who has been partially opening his shop for a few hours because of the shutdown, said the Centre's move was a "betrayal" with the people of Kashmir.

"The government has sent Kashmir into an unimaginable chaos," he said.

According to Ahmad, people are observing the shutdown themselves for the past three months and it is not due to any strike called by separatists.

turn to pg02

Shutdown in Kashmir as two UTs come into existence

SRINAGAR, OCT 31 (PTI): Kashmir observed a shutdown on Thursday as two Union territories carved out of the erstwhile state of Jammu and Kashmir came into existence, with some valley residents accusing the government of robbing them of their special status and identity.

While the National Conference termed the move as "unconstitutional", the BJP welcomed the move, saying it will usher in peace

and development in Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh.

Normal life remained affected across the Kashmir valley as a complete shutdown was observed, officials said. Shops remained shut and public transport was off the road. Only private cars and few auto-rickshaws, in some areas of the city here, were plying, they said.

The National Conference (NC) Jammu and Kashmir's grand-old party

termed the Centre's decision to abrogate Article 370 and to bifurcate the state into two Union territories as unconstitutional and not in the interest of the people of the country.

This entire exercise in unconstitutional. Parliament does not have power in terms of Article 3 as applicable to Jammu and Kashmir or otherwise also to fragment a state or divide it into pieces. The only power the Parliament has is to form a new state.

Maybe Parliament can chip away a part of a state and create a new state. There is no power to make a state disappear, NC leader Justice (retd) Hasnain Masoodi told PTI.

The MP said the concurrence of an elected state government was necessary for abrogation of article 370 or the revocation of the special status of Jammu and Kashmir.

However, the BJP welcomed the move, saying it will usher in peace and development in Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh.

North Sikkim observes National Unity Day

MANGAN, 31 OCT (IPR):

North Sikkim observed National Unity Day, 2019 (Rashtriya Ekta Diwas) to commemorate the 144th Birth Anniversary of Late Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel at District Administra-

tive Centre, Mangan today.

On the occasion, the Rashtriya Ekta Diwas pledge was administered by Sub-Divisional Magistrate, Mangan, Karma Thendup Bhutia to the Government employees

present in front of the District Administrative Centre. The pledge taking ceremony had the presence of Head of Departments from various departments of the District. The main motive behind the celebration of Rashtriya Ekta Diwas was to provide an opportunity to reaffirm the inherent strength and resilience of our nation to withstand the actual and potential threats to the unity, integrity, and security of our country.

“Rashtriya Ekta Diwas” was also observed in the different Sub-Divisional Offices, Block Administrative Centres and Private Sector Units of the District.

Similarly, the

bration of Rashtriya Ekta Diwas was to provide an opportunity to reaffirm the inherent strength and resilience of our nation to withstand the actual and potential threats to the unity, integrity, and security of our country.

Don't break the hearts of Gorkhas

SALIL GEWALI

We should always be alert to the thunder of lies and deceit. They often tear the social structure to pieces. There are innumerable people who have become the “victims” of such falsity and propaganda. In the last three years, many leaders in West Bengal (India) have thus been attacking the Gorkha citizens with the brute forces of false narratives, apart from the heartless killing of 15 innocent people during 2017 Gorkhaland peaceful agitation. Without one iota of knowledge of “history”, they branded Gorkhas in India as infiltrators, sometimes as terrorists. In the common parlance of Indian jurisprudence, this amounts to a serious case of defamation and a criminal act of high order.

Yet again, a few days back another TMC activist -- Tanvi Das stirred the hornet's nest. In her TV panel discussion, Ms Tanvi rudely roared to belittle Gorkhas as “infiltrators” and insisted on deporting them all out of India. She talked down other participants in that talk show. Though she was vehemently criticized, but she appeared outrageously unapologetic. However, very coincidentally, on the same day, two Gorkha soldiers were “martyred” while fighting the “infiltrators” on LOC in Tangdhar, Kashmir. How do we describe these incredibly paradoxical situations?

Let's look at history. Even small kids know that India was ruled by the British for almost two centuries. This imperialist British had also eyed Nepal. But keeping in view the rising military power of the British Raj, then the Nepal Kingdom decided to strike a deal with East India Company. It was a deal to break the ice of hostility between the two neighboring nations. Under the Treaty of Sugauli 1815-16, Nepal Kingdom ceded the major portions of its territories to the British India which include a huge swathe of the mountainous, hilly and plain terrains. Thus consequently, areas like Sikkim, Darjeeling, Nainital, Kumaon, and Garhwal had come under the East India Company.

Here comes a question for sober thought and introspection. All intellectuals and leaders must first get

down to study the core history of Gorkhas before being judgmental. The situation in which Gorkhas are living in India certainly calls for a reasonable amount of compassion and rationality. If the vast range of mountains, beautiful hills, rivers, flora and fauna, and all animals and birds therein can be regarded as Indian then why not two-legged human beings inhabiting these areas? Is it not outrageous? Of course, comparatively a very small portion of land that Gorkhas in India are now demanding as Gorkhaland. Moreover, it is only after the Indian Independence in 1954, Darjeeling was merged into West Bengal (India) for easy administrative purposes, prior to that it was marked out as the “Excluded Area”. Not even 5% Indians are aware of this brief history of Gorkhas. It is a big tragedy. The Central and State Governments should immediately consider incorporating the lessons on the history of brave Gorkhas and their sacrifice in all academic school textbooks.

Truly, it is Gorkhas' valor and their military skills over which India always takes pride in. The record has it that, prior to India Independence, Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose had always fondly cherished Gorkha Armies and held them in high esteem. Needless to say, they were the backbone of Netaji's Azad Hind Fauz. INA's patriotic song – “Qadam Qadam Badhaye Ja” was composed by none other than a Gorkha patriot – Captain Ram Sigh Thakur. The life story of a Gorkha soldier, Major Durga Malla of INA, who was sent to gallows in 1944 by the British on sedition charges, is very awe-inspiring. In honor of his sacrifice, the Indian Parliament houses a huge statue of Major Malla. Equally significant is the supreme sacrifice of Subedar Harka Bahadur Rana who fiercely fought with Pakistan to save Kargil immediately after India independence in 1948. There is a huge memorial dedicated to Harka Bahadur Rana and a bridge in Kargil named after him. What more certificate of integrity does one need? Yes, these courageous “Gorkha army regiments” had been the “first choice” to be sent to fight against the Si-

no-Indian War in 1962, the Indo-Pakistani War in 1971, Battle of Sylhet, Kargil War in 1999. And there hardly a month goes without a couple of valiant Gorkha warriors being martyred while fighting against the enemy.

Is it not an absolute madness of our certain leaders who greet the Gorkhas with scorn and derision? Very absurdly, here in India, there are leaders who choose to sing a welcome song for the dreaded insurgent groups and terrorists while they criticize and humiliate those who stand up to protect the country.

One professor from New Delhi has rightly said -- “It is a total injustice to the Gorkhas in India. Such apathy of the Indian Nation towards those brave and loyal soldiers who “came with the land” is undesirable. Even UNO or World leaders will be shocked when they know how Gorkhas are being demonized in their own land.” Are Tanvi Das and her types listening? No joke, what will happen to the sovereignty of the NATION if “Tanvi Das and her party” recruit their “invited citizens” from Bangladesh in the army and give them all arms and ammunition to fight the infiltrators? There will be a secret jamboree of rock-n-roll and jubilation along the borders. Hope you have understood. It will be an open invitation to the disaster.

Alas, should the leaders with ulterior motive be thus allowed to let the common citizens down! So sadly, having lost their power of discretion, they hardly can now differentiate between true friends and sworn enemies. Their narrow party policies have literally bruised the hearts of the patriots, and also damaged the integrity of the nation.

Frankly speaking, it is so important that the scream of the grievance of the aggrieved Gorkhas now must reach up to the UNO. The world leaders must be made aware of that Gorkhas' loyalty to the nation has thus far been undervalued, and their identity crisis is merrily overlooked. Is it not that patriotism comes from within the heart that has been well cared for and loved? It seems the wounded Gorkhas now have to turn to the UNO for the healing balm.

Mamring school celebrates Rashtriya Ekta Diwas

SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 31 OCT:

Government Senior Secondary School, Mamring, East Sikkim observed Rashtriya Ekta Diwas or National Unity Day today in the school premises by organizing various activities for students, a press release informs.

An essay writing competition was organized for the senior level and painting competition was organized for the elementary level.

In the afternoon session, a formal programme was organized in which Thendup Lepcha, NSS Prefect of the school delivered a speech highlighting the importance of the day.

Principal of the school Prahlad Sharma addressed the audience and shared the message of the day. He also en-

lightened gathering about the contribution made by Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel.

Priyanka Poudel of Class VI administered the pledge of Rashtriya Ekta Diwas to Principal, Teachers, staff, students and the public attending the program.

With the support from the Police personnel from Pakyong police station and staff of PHSC Mamring, a 2 km marathon was conducted on the theme ‘Run For Unity’.

Students from class III to XII, teachers and staff of the school participated in the marathon. The Principal flagged off the marathon from Lepcha Dara to School Ground.

In the boys category of the marathon, Bijay Tamang came first, followed by Sameer Regmi and Palden Lepcha

in second and third positions, respectively.

In the girls category, Priyanka Rizal stood first followed by Priyanka Sharma and Reepsongmit Lepcha in second and third positions, respectively.

In the teachers category, Suman Kumar Nepal [PGT Biology] came in first followed by Bikash Bhattari in second position.

The programme was conducted by under the banner of NSS Unit of Mamring School supervised by Bikash Bhattarai, NSS PO of the school.

The Principal extended gratitude to PI, Pakyong Police Station, Zigmee Bhutia for providing personnel to control traffic, staff from PHSC Mamring for First Aid and medical assistance during the Marathon.

Samaj Deusi by SGSS

SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 31 OCT:

Members of Shantinagar Gaon Sudhar Samiti collectively played Deusi to conserve and preserve the rich old tradition of Hindu culture, a press release informs.

More than thirty members met at the premises of former president of SGSS, Mohan Sunar's residence. He was also the Gharpatti of the day.

Senior most member of SGSS, Dew Kumari Pradhan was the chairperson of the day.

Others present on the day included LN



Pradhan, TB Pradhan, LP Chettri, KN Dulal, KB Sundas, Shankhar Lamichanay, Anita Sewa, BB Tamang, NK Sundas, Achen Lepcha and other executive body members.

President, SGSS, Krishna Chettri, gave a brief speech about the Deusi pro-

gram. He also gave information about the materials added towards the Samaj through the collection of last year's Deusi program. Deusi singing team included Mohan Sunar, Gopal Subba, Ayushman Chettri, Sonam Tamang and Anita Sewa.

SPCC pays rich homage to Indira Gandhi

SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 31 OCT:

Sikkim Pradesh Congress Committee [SPCC] has paid rich homage to former Prime Minister of the country, Late Indira Gandhi on her death anniversary here at the party head-office at 6th Mile Tadong on Thursday. On the occasion, the party workers of the State congress paid homage by garlanding the photograph of Late Indira Gandhi.

An SPCC press release informs that SPCC president, Bharat Basnet stated that Sikkim became the 22nd State of the country during Prime Minister Indira Gandhi's tenure and Sikkim got protection under



Article 371F in her amendment of the tenure with the 36th Constitution.

Who is happy here? ask Kashmiris ...

“Had the government not done this, the situation would not have been like it is. Who is to blame for this?” the shopkeeper asked.

The Kashmir Chamber of Commerce and Industry (KCCI) has said the valley had suffered losses to the tune of over Rs 10,000 crore due to the three-month-long shutdown.

A businessman in the Boulevard area of the city who chose not to be identified said it would be difficult for the valley to recover the losses.

“Everything was going very well. The tourists were coming, the fruit season was on, new business were coming up and many start-ups were also taking shape,” he said. “But now, everything has come to a grinding halt.”

The businessman pointed out that this was for the first time a state had been downgraded into a Union territory. “It was the other way round till now and this is very sad.”

Parveena Akhtar, a homemaker, also blamed the Centre for the prevalent situation in the valley.

“This time, there is no call for strike, so they cannot blame us for the prevalent situation,” Akhtar said. “This situation is not good and people, especially the youth, are very angry. We do not know what is going to happen tomorrow.”

Another local, Umer Zargar, described the Centre's decision to abrogate Article 370 as “illegal, immoral and unconstitutional.”

“India cannot abrogate Article 370. This territory is disputed, this issue is in the United Nations and there are various resolutions on it,” he said.

Zargar, however, underlined that making the state a Union territory or removing Article 370 hardly mattered to the people of the valley as the decision cannot change “the basic disputed nature of Kashmir”.

“The dispute remains and India cannot suppress the truth. However, this seems to be a sinister design for engineering a demographic change in the valley,” he said.

~ **SummitTIMES** ~
CLASSIFIEDS

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Roadside plots for sale at Adampool, Ranipool-Rumtek highway.

For details contact: 9083826462

FLAT FOR RENT/LEASE

Fully furnished 3BHK flat available for rent/lease at Church Road near DPH. Roadside and five minutes walking distance from MG Marg.

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General land 30X40 (3 Plots) available for sale at Tadong 6th Mile next to Harka Maya College.

Flat Land no cutting required. Price 30 Lakhs (negotiable).

Contact: 9800201335

Baha'i community celebrates Birth Anniv of the Bab

**SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 31 OCT:**

Baha'i Community of Gangtok celebrated Bicentenary Birth Anniversary of the Bab, the Herald of the Baha'i faith on 29 Oct, a press release informs.

Baha'i followers and also many friends of the faith from Siyari, Tadong, and 6th mile attended the program at Baha'i School Tadong.

The celebration was organized by



the Local Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of Gangtok. The chairman of the Spiritual Assembly, Punita Alalay presented the welcome address which was followed

by the chanting of round of prayers and reading holy writings revealed by Mahatma Bab.

Auxiliary Board Member, Devi Kalam presented a talk on the impor-



tance of the day. She narrated the story of the Mahatma Bab and shed light on why Baha'is regards Him as the Manifestation of God.

A film titled

"The Dawn of the Light" about the Bab and His teachings was also shown during the program while the youth and children performed cultural dance.

Rashtriya Ekta Diwas observed in Tashiling

GANGTOK, 31 OCT (IPR):

Chief Secretary, SC Gupta administered the Rashtriya Ekta Diwas pledge to the officers and staff of all the departments situated in Tashiling Secretariat and nearby, at a function organised at Chintan Bhawan today.

The Chief Secretary was joined in the programme by Director General of Police, A Shankar Rao, Principal Secretary DOP, Tenzing Gelek, heads of departments, officers and staff of various departments, and students.

Rashtriya Ekta Di-

was or National Unity Day is observed annually on 31 October to commemorate the birth anniversary of late Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, the Iron Man of India.

On arrival, the Chief Secretary and other dignitaries lit the inaugural lamp and paid their tribute to the portrait of late Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel. Under Secretary, Home Department, Suprina Chettri gave a brief introduction on the observance of Rashtriya Ekta Diwas.

Artists of the Culture Department invoked patriotic fervour through their



renditions to mark the occasion.

The programme came to a conclusion with the vote of thanks proposed by Additional Secretary, Home Department, KD Rechung.

Thereafter, Chief Secretary, SC Gupta flagged off the 'Run

for Unity' from the premises of Chintan Bhawan. The Run was organized by Sports Department in coordination with DC East and Education Department, and had the participation of students from various schools.

The Chief Secretary then flagged off the march past contingents comprising of Sikkim Police, NCC, Scouts & Guides and Sikkim Police Pipe Band. Both the 'Run for Unity' and the March Past culminated at Titanic Park, MG Marg.

Eleven karatekas pass Referee & Judge and Coach Exams

SAGAR CHHETRI

GANGTOK, 31 OCT:

Eleven karatekas from Sikkim have successfully passed Referee & Judge and Coach Examinations conducted by Karate Association of India [KAI]. The examination was held on 12 Oct at Guwahati under the Referee Chairman of South Asian Karate Federation, Shihan Baskar Sinouvasane and result was announced recently. In the examination,



four karatekas successfully qualified as Referee & Judge and seven qualified as Coaches.

Bhim Bahadur Subba qualified as

Referee A, Puran Limboo and Hem Kumari Rai as Judge A and Bishnu Limboo as Judge B. Likewise, Bimala Gurung, Puran Limboo, Mandi-

ra Karki, Babyana Gurung, Dina Rai, Bishnu Limboo and Binam Gurung have qualified as coaches. Sikkim State Karate-Do Association

[SSKA] president, Bijoy Gurung has congratulated all eleven karatekas for successfully qualifying as referee, judge and coaches. He expressed his happiness on the participation of large number of karatekas from Sikkim in the examination for the first time.

He further expressed that the qualified referees, judges and coaches in the State would help to take karate to the next level.

Sikkim E-Swor 2019 second round begins

**ARPAN PRADHAN
GANGTOK, 31 OCT:**

The 2nd edition of Sikkim-E Culture, E-Swor 2019, a singing competition has reached its second round. The audition for the same was held recently and the top 20 singers from different parts of the state have been short-listed for the second round in the competition. Almost 200 participants from across the state had participated in the audition round.

Sikkim-E Culture, E-Swor, is a singing competition based on online or digital platform being organized

by the U-First Magazine Group based in Ranipool, Gangtok, which was started last year. The competition is technically supported and co-organised by Reeyaz Sangeetlaya.

The main objective behind organizing the competition is to create platform and provide exposure to all the young hidden talents across the state, informed member of the organizing committee, Pravin Rizal.

E-Swor is an open singing competition totally based on online platform and for every one view participants get one



point, for one like two points and for comments participants will get 3 points on the basis of which they will advance to the next level or round of the competition.

The competition also aims at preserving and promoting the various cultures and traditions of the state.

The winner of the competition will get cash prize of Rs 40,000, a music album recording, and free music course at Reeyaz Sangeetlaya along with certificates and trophies. The 2nd and 3rd position holders will get cash prize of Rs 15,000 and Rs 10,000 respectively.

The competition has founder Director of Reeyaz Sangeetlaya, Manoj Rai and Lyricist & Composer, Sudarshan Tamang as judges.

The second round of the competition will start from November and the grand finale of the competition will be held in December this year.

Education Department celebrates Rashtriya Ekta Diwas

GANGTOK, 31 OCT (IPR):

The Department of Education today celebrated Rashtriya Ekta Diwas to mark the birthday of the 'Lauhporush' Sardar Vallabhai Patel across the State.

A special programme was held at Rongyek Secondary School where the Minister for Education, Kunga Nima Lepcha administered the Rashtriya Ekta Pledge to the officers, teachers and students present in the school.

The Minister was accompanied by the Additional Chief Secretary, GP Upadhyaya, Sate Project Director, Samagra Shiksha, Bhim Thatal, Director, School Education, Hondala Gyaltzen and other officers from the East District.

While interacting with the students and the staff members of

the schools, the Minister for Education, Kunga Nima Lepcha appreciated the initiatives taken by the schools. He also interacted with the schools about the requirements and possible support to be extended.

The Education Minister and ACS also interacted with the press representatives of India Today who have come to cover some programmes of the Education Department. The India Today representatives were happy to know that Rongyek Secondary School is a 'waste-bin free school' where the children and staff members bring their own bags to collect waste and take them back without dumping the garbage in the school premises.

The team further visited Chongeytar Primary School

where the Minister and the officers visited the classrooms, interacted with the students and visited the school mid-day meal and kitchen garden. Chongeytar Primary School is known for being 'pocket-money free school' as the students are not allowed to carry pocket money in order to stop them from consuming junk food. The mid-day meal is said to be supplementing the needs of the children and there is no need for them to go for junk food in the school premises.

In another programme, the department took part in Run for Unity from Chintan Bhawan till Titanic Park in Gangtok. Similar programmes are being organized and Rashtriya Ekta Diwas is being observed in the schools across the State.



SIKKIM PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION

OLD TOURISM COMPLEX, M.G. MARG, GANGTOK, SIKKIM -737101

Fax: 03592-207572.

Email: spsc-skm@nic.in

Website: www.spsckm.gov.in

No: 87/SPSC/EXAM/2018

Date: 23/10/2019

EMPLOYMENT NOTICE

Online Applications are invited from the eligible local candidates for filling up of the 01 (one) post of Principal, B.Ed College, Soreng in the Level 19 of Pay Matrix under Education Department, Government of Sikkim, through Promotion.

The candidates are advised to visit the Sikkim Public Service Commission website for detail Advertisement, eligibility conditions, and Scheme of Examination etc. from Official website i.e. www.spsckm.gov.in

Sd/-

Deputy Director (IT)

Sikkim Public Service Commission.

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Prevention Is Really Better Than Cure

Police action should be back-up, not frontline

It is not often that one hears a well-heeled addict get picked up by Sikkim Police with “drugs.” That does not however mean that the problem of addiction is segregated to the less well connected or that addicts are not picked up all too often and processed as peddlers and dealers. While addiction among the privileged should not come as a surprise to anyone, it needs to be reiterated often to figure out why Sikkim continues to lose its efforts against addiction.

The obvious reason is that the only defence the State has bothered to erect against drugs and addiction is the police. This is not the force you want on the frontlines of the battle against drugs. Anyone on the wrong side of the law is a criminal for cops. That is their training; a training which does not invest them with any empathy for addicts, nor provide them with the nuances to differentiate between addicts and peddlers. An addict with substances of abuse is clearly breaking the law, but is also a victim, and while no one expects a working professional [as has also happened occasionally] to be treated like a misguided youth, surely, he cannot be slotted in the same category as a peddler. Let’s begin with the quantity recovered from most individuals during “drug busts” – around 100 capsules of Spasmaproxyvon and a bunch of N-10 pills. While these might appear as huge for the non-user, anyone who has been among addicts or has reported enough about these issues will confirm that this is not a peddler-level consignment. For someone habituated to these substances, and with the means to afford more than a daily fix, this is normal one-time pickup. To clarify, this is not a defence of the accused or a condemnation of the police action, the problem of substance abuse is much bigger than taking such potshots. This attempt, yet again, to urge everyone to address the problem in earnest and figure out what is required to build more resolute defences against substances of abuse. And no, getting rid of addicts will not end addiction.

To start with, everyone needs to ask themselves: Who cares what happens to drug addicts? We all should. It is a social problem which wrecks families and triggers crime and disenchantment and lays waste too many people in what should be the prime of their lives. If Sikkim bothered to survey the economic loss caused to the State by “drugs”, the amount will definitely be staggering. Apart from the social costs, there is a monetary aspect as well related to the costs of treatment, cost of policing (and now even sniffer dogs have reportedly been plied into service), loss of service, and the list could go on.

Even if the material costs and individual family problems were ignored, it is still a problem for everyone because it is our young who stand exposed and at risk. Sikkim should also realize that unlike other places, where drug use changes like fashion, in Sikkim, it has essentially been prescription drugs for a very long while. Of course, the harder stuff has also arrived, but a majority of the young are going to waste due to abuse of prescription drugs. This consistent pattern could be leveraged to bring in proper experts, roping in recovering addicts and involving parents who have lost children to drugs to fashion a well thought out plan to arrest the problem, not the victims. The current approach offers only two options - arrests and treatment; Sikkim needs to urgently include prevention to its vocabulary of addressing substance abuse. The cops have been doing a stand-up job thus far from the hand that has been dealt to them, but if prevention goes up in priority engagements, then police will be expected to deliver a supporting role, not the leading role. And that really is the only viable approach. The Sikkim Anti-Drugs Act is now more than a decade old in Sikkim and the only success it can claim is in the number of convictions it has secured, not the lives it has saved or problems it has solved because prescription drugs show no sign of becoming more difficult to procure for abuse. As things stand, the law is compounding the problems of drug users by giving them a criminal record, impeding their ability to remain in or gain employment and recover in a broader sense than just health. The society at large needs to step and force some collaborations.

Lebanon uprising unites people across faiths, defying deep sectarian divides

MIRA ASSAF KAFANTARIS
THECONVERSATION.COM

Religion has shaped Lebanon since it gained independence from France in 1943. In this multicultural country of Muslims, Christians and Druze – a medieval faith derived from Islam – religion defines membership and belonging. It is woven into Lebanon’s economic, political and social fabric.

The mass protests that began in mid-October over a proposal to tax WhatsApp calls are challenging that tradition. Over a million Lebanese from all faiths have joined together in these leaderless and nationwide anti-government demonstrations, in which the agenda has now expanded from avoiding taxes to regime change.

“All of them means all of them,” protesters nationwide chant, demanding the ouster of Lebanon’s entire ruling class.

On Oct. 29, Lebanese Prime Minister Saad Hariri, a Sunni, resigned, elating demonstrators. Protesters blame Hariri, along with Lebanon’s Christian president and Shiite parliament speaker, for rampant corruption, a wrecked economy and a ravaged environment.

In repudiation of the idea that religious allegiance comes before national unity, they are demanding fair elections, a stronger judiciary and more government accountability.

‘HUNGER HAS NO RELIGION’
With 18 recognized sects – including the Maronite Christians; Sunni, Shiite and Alawite Muslims; and the Druze – Lebanon is one of the most religiously diverse countries in the Middle East.

When a class struggle broke out there in the mid-1970s, it quickly devolved into a civil war between right-wing Christian and left-wing Muslim militias.

To end Lebanon’s conflict, the 1989 Taif Accords required all fac-

tions to relinquish their weapons and distributed government positions to politicians of different faiths.

This power-sharing agreement has kept the peace in Lebanon. But it has also given it a political order built on religious factionalism.

Patronage networks run by the “za’eem,” as Lebanon’s powerful sectarian leaders are called, protect the interests of their religious communities, doling out favors both legal and illegal. All faiths have their own za’eem.

Religiously based governance has given Lebanon both extreme national debt and staggering inequality. According to the World Inequality Database, the richest 1% of Lebanese own approximately a quarter of the nation’s wealth. Lebanon’s infrastructure is crumbling. Power outages are a chronic problem even in urban middle-class neighborhoods.

Widespread human rights violations – including domestic violence, child labor and abuse of Syrian refugees – are rarely punished.

But, according to the political scientist Bassel Salloukh, Lebanon’s rulers “use sectarian mobilization to camouflage intra-sectarian socioeconomic disparities” – a divide-and-conquer strategy meant to stop class solidarity from emerging.

The beneficiaries of this system argue that Lebanon’s stability hinges on this sectarian balance. And, indeed, sectarianism has been remarkably effective in forestalling dissent for the past 30 years.

It has also instilled a deep distrust in government. A recent poll shows that 96% of Lebanese think political corruption is endemic.

THE SECTARIAN CONSTRUCT

As a literary historian, I study the stories a nation tells itself about belonging, allegiance and identity. In Lebanon, my home country, I recognize sectarianism as a social

construct.

Social constructs, like civility or money, are concepts that only mean something because humans agree they do. Often, social constructs benefit the powerful.

By drawing the boundaries of inclusion along religious lines, Lebanese sectarianism has impeded the rise of more unifying ideologies like nationalism or secularism.

“Sectarianism has been depicted as a monolithic force, unchanging in the face of history,” historian Ussama Makdisi wrote in his 2000 book “The Culture of Sectarianism. But, he continues, “sectarianism was produced. Therefore it can be changed.”

Since the civil war, Lebanese have been raised to see religion as the only marker of kinship and rivalry, but the Lebanese share many things: a multilingual literary heritage, for example, and a love of Fairuz, one of the Arab world’s most admired singers.

Lebanese of different faiths suffer together, too. As one protester told Foreign Policy, hunger has no religion.

Sectarian politics have been dismantled before. Two decades after Northern Ireland’s Good Friday Agreement, the divide between Catholics and Protestants there remains. But it is official government policy to foster peace-building, human rights and religious freedom.

Like protesters in both Tunisia and, more recently, Sudan – who pushed out religiously divisive leaders in hopes of nurturing a more secular democracy – Lebanon’s protests challenge a tired western stereotype that the Middle East is an intolerant, naturally authoritarian place.

HEZBOLLAH IS NO EXCEPTION

In recent days, demonstrators who support Hezbollah have protested the inclusion of their leader, Hassan Nasrallah, in the movement’s calls for regime change. They say accusations of corruption against this powerful Lebanese political and social force are

evidence of a conspiracy by Saudi Arabia, Israel and the United States.

Violence erupted on Oct. 29 when Hezbollah supporters attacked demonstrators, re-opening key roads blocked by protester encampments and setting their tents on fire.

Still, the uprising grows. Past violence has failed to quell protests, as have offers from the government to cut lawmakers’ salaries by half and tax banks to relieve national debt.

Prime Minister Hariri’s resignation opens the door for real change in Lebanon, but protests will likely continue. The za’eem system means Hariri’s replacement may well reinforce the same power-sharing model.

The current grassroots protests build on the momentum of a 2015 uprising called the #YouStink movement. Those protests began when Lebanon’s main landfill was shut down and mounds of trash filled the streets of Beirut, but they came to embody numerous other causes: Children marched for climate action. Feminists defended the rights of domestic workers.

In 2018, women ran for office in Lebanon record numbers.

REBUILDING A NATION
There is an academic theory I like about how nations are built, called “cultural intimacy.”

It holds that communal acts like breaking bread together, say, or self-deprecating humor play a crucial role in creating a shared citizenry.

The 1.5 million Lebanese Sunnis, Shias and Christians who have for weeks been walking side by side, holding hands and raging against the system are not merely protesting. They’re building a society that works for them.

[the writer is Senior Lecturer in English, The Ohio State University]

Cities don’t have to copy hipster trends to prosper – they can embrace what makes them unique

EMILY HOPKINS

THECONVERSATION.COM

London, New York, Tokyo, Paris and Hong Kong – these famous cities dominate the world economy and are home to millions of people, as well as internationally renowned arts, culture and educational institutions. But they are hardly representative of the rest of the world’s cities. While 54% of the global population lives in cities, around half of those live in cities that have 500,000 inhabitants or fewer.

These “ordinary” cities can be overlooked by politicians, investors, researchers and big businesses. But they are dynamic places with many layers of social, cultural and economic significance. After experiencing a period of post-industrial decline, many such cities are looking to change their fortunes, through urban regeneration programmes.

But that doesn’t mean they have to follow the same path as other urban areas. In fact, my research into urban development has found that ordinary cities can avoid some of the ill-effects of regeneration, by embracing what makes them unique.

THE CREATIVE CITY

At the turn of the century, city leaders became increasingly fixated on the idea of the “creative city”, championed by academics-turned-advisers including Richard Florida and Charles Landry. The idea was to encourage a “creative class” of talented workers to make their homes and businesses in cities, by creating urban spaces that are open, inclusive and diverse, as well as attractive and technologically advanced.

“Regeneration” became a buzzword associated with these types of strategies, which seek to repurpose seemingly disused or rundown spaces to support an economy led by creative and technological industries. The apparent success of creative city policies was seen in post-industrial centres such as Detroit, US, following investments in cultural, artistic and musical urban renewal.

Such policies swiftly became the go-to strategy for seemingly “ordinary” post-industrial cities around the world, even resulting in new rankings that pit cities against

each other, based on criteria including entrepreneurship, urban leadership and “liveability”. Having plenty of former industrial spaces that can be adapted for new uses, and a desire to be noticed on the national or global stage, encourages investment in urban regeneration from both public and private sources.

THE DOWNSIDES

Yet regeneration programmes inspired by the creative city agenda can cause problems. Property developers and foreign investors have recognised the economic potential of real estate in “creative” cities. This has led to rocketing land costs, and many low-income residents have felt the effects of being displaced from their homes.

What’s more, creative city policies can lead to similar development techniques being applied to dissimilar places. For example, accusations of “artwashing” are now common in cities across the world, as authorities or developers commission artists and cultural institutions to run creative projects in an area, to help it become more appealing to tourists and young people – sometimes at the expense of those who live there.

But “ordinary” cities can champion their individuality to avoid this fate. Take my home of Coventry, UK, for example: a post-industrial city looking to modernise. Located in the West Midlands, with a population of around 360,000, Coventry will be the third UK City of Culture in 2021 – a title designed to “use culture as a catalyst for economic and social regeneration”.

During my PhD fieldwork there, I’ve investigated how Coventry has drawn on its rich history and culture to resist generic creative city policies. Though the residents I spoke to have not always felt included in regeneration efforts, there is still much to be learned from the city’s approach to urban renewal.

SENT TO COVENTRY

Coventry’s City of Culture bid sought to show how the regeneration programme would be local, personal and inclusive of the city’s diversity. And in some ways, it has been successful. As the home of bands

including The Specials and The Selecter, Coventry was a launch pad for the anti-racist, two-tone music scene in the 1980s. The 2Tone taxi project celebrates the ska scene, as well as Coventry’s role in manufacturing London’s iconic black cabs; while touring the city in a taxi, passengers can find out more about the people and places of Coventry, as well as adding their own suggestions for the itinerary.

Another inclusive project which has been part of the lead up to City of Culture 2021 is the Foleshill Mile Map, co-created with local communities to pinpoint the multicultural offerings in one of Coventry’s neighbourhoods. Not only does this champion local input through collaborative working, it also reflects Coventry’s identity as one of the most ethnically diverse cities in the UK.

Yet as more cities seek to emphasise their cultural assets, city leaders and policy makers must be aware of the negative impacts that can arise if local residents are not central to the decision-making process. For example, in Lisbon, Portugal, the arrival of the Time Out Market and LX Factory creative village have increased tourism, leading to anti-gentrification protests and even laws being enforced to avoid displacing long-term residents, as rents continue to rise. This highlights the need to consider local contexts and communities before implementing copy cat creative policies.

As witnesses of vast social and cultural change over the past century, Coventrians can offer a new outlook on an often overlooked city, and prove that being “sent to Coventry” need not be a punishment. Culture-led regeneration processes, such as the UK City of Culture title, can offer opportunities to attract investment and increase the civic pride among citizens. And Coventry shows how other “ordinary” cities can approach urban renewal, with local stories and communities at the heart of the process. But authorities and leaders must be careful to maintain this priority throughout the journey – or risk repeating the same mistakes.

[the writer is PhD Researcher, Royal Holloway]

IIT-KGP implements micro solar dome project to provide affordable clean energy

KOLKATA, OCT 31 (PTI): IIT-Kharagpur on Thursday said 44,000 micro solar domes will be provided to poor households in rural areas of ten states under a project to provide clean energy at an affordable price.

Poor families are often unable to afford the grid-connected electricity while others may find disruption of power supply due to natural disasters, according to a statement from IIT-KGP.

The 'micro solar dome' project, being implemented in collaboration with the NB Institute of Rural Technology, could provide a solution to the problem, it said.

The project in-



tends to provide 44,000 micro solar domes in households of marginalised (SC and ST) communities in rural areas in West Bengal, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Kerala, Assam, Odisha, Tripura, Manipur, Rajasthan, and Bihar, the institute said.

Around 20,000

micro solar domes are to be installed in the first phase from November 2019 to February 2020, according to the statement.

Prof. Priyadarshi Patnaik, joint PI (Project Investigator) from IIT Kharagpur, said, "Micro solar domes will be given to households

based on their need."

With funding from the Department of Science and Technology of the central government, the institute has initiated the unique project to push for "solar energy adaptation among marginalised rural communities".

The project will

help to light up homes of those who are either not connected to the conventional power grid or face irregular power supply for some reasons, the statement said.

A 'micro solar dome' operates as a clean energy source during day and night hours, an official said, adding that it is ideal for slums and rural houses.

In the first phase of the project, solar domes will be installed while the second will involve R&D.

Some micro solar domes have already been installed as preparatory work by NBIRT at villages in Tripura and rural belt, affected by the cyclone 'Fani', at Chandaka in Odisha.

Killer of Nepali labourers arrested in Uttarakhand

PITHORAGARH, OCT 31 (PTI): A man was arrested on Thursday in connection with the brutal killing of three Nepali labourers at a village here last week, police said.

Dhan Bahadur Bora, who himself worked as a labourer in Munsyari, was arrested from Thal. He has confessed to killing all the three in an inebriated state over an argument,

Pithoragarh Superintendent of Police R C Rajguru said.

The bodies of the victims were found with their genitals mutilated at an abandoned house in a forested area on the eve of Diwali on October 26.

A blood-smeared shirt and a pair of trousers were recovered from his bag, the SP said.

The labourers,

who lived together in a house in Mad Kharayat village of the district, had on October 25 invited their relative Dhan Bahadur for dinner.

An argument broke out between them, following which Dhan Bahadur killed all the three with a sharp-edged weapon, the SP said.

Immediately after committing the crime, Dhan Bahadur fled to Munsyari.

Indian, Japanese armies hold joint exercise in Mizoram

KOLKATA, OCT 31 (PTI): The Indian and Japanese armies held a 13-day joint exercise in Mizoram to train and equip the contingents in counter-insurgency and counter-terrorism operations in mountain terrain, a Defence official said on Thursday.

The second edition of the bilateral annual military exercise 'Dharma Guardian-2019' between Indian and Japanese Army culminated on October 31 at the Counter Insurgency and Jungle Warfare School (CIJWS) at Vairengte in Mizoram.

The concluding function was presided over by General

Goro Yuasa, Chief of Staff, Japanese Ground Self Defence Forces, and Lieutenant General Rajeev Sirohi, GOC, 3 Corps of the Indian Army.

The Japanese contingent was represented by 34th Infantry Regiment, 1st Div of Japanese Ground Self Defence Forces (JGSDF), while the Indian side was represented by a battalion of the Dogra Regiment in the joint exercise that commenced on October 19.

The primary focus of the exercise was to train and equip the contingents in counter-insurgency and counter-terrorism operations

in mountainous terrain, the official said.

As part of the exercise, lectures, demonstrations and drills related to counter-insurgency and counter-terrorism operations were conducted, the official said, adding that the participants also shared their experiences in countering such situations.

The exercise culminated with a 72-hour validation phase, the official said.

Besides fostering mutual understanding and trust, the joint exercise marks reaffirmation of India and Japan to further bolster bilateral security and defence cooperation, he said.

Murmu sworn-in as first Lt Governor of Jammu and Kashmir

SRINAGAR, OCT 31 (PTI): Girish Chandra Murmu was on Thursday sworn in as the first lieutenant governor of the union territory of Jammu and Kashmir following the bifurcation of the state.

The oath of office to Murmu, who will turn 60 next month, was administered by Jammu and Kashmir Chief Justice Gita Mittal at a simple function held at Raj Bha-

wan at the foothills of the Zaberwan range.

The warrant of appointment of Murmu, a 1985 batch IAS officer of Gujarat cadre, was read out by Chief Secretary B V R Subrahmanyam.

BJP leader Jugal Kishore and Rajya Sabha MP and PDP member Nazir Laway were among the over 250 guests present at the function.

Murmu, a native of Odisha, had worked closely with Prime Minister Narendra Modi in Gujarat as his additional principal secretary during his tenure as chief minister.

Murmu is an MBA in public service and also holds a post graduate in political science.

Satya Pal Malik, who was the last governor of Jammu and Kashmir, moved to Goa for the remainder of



his tenure as governor.

Malik was first appointed governor of Bihar in September 2017 and moved to Jammu and Kashmir in August last year.

The two union

territories -- Ladakh and Jammu and Kashmir -- came into existence on Thursday after the central government abrogated the special status of the state and bifurcated it on August 5.

'Mother India': US writer's take on spiritual liberation

NEW DELHI, OCT 31 (PTI): About 10 years ago, American writer Tova Reich started visiting India and a few years later, she began to write a novel about Jews who come here seeking transformation and eternal release from the sufferings of life.

She wrote the first section and named it "Ma", setting it in Varanasi and centering on death and dying.

The novel "Mother India" was born out of a lifelong feeling of connection to India and its people and saw the light of the day in 2018 in the US. It was published in India this year by Macmillan.

It focuses on members of a deeply religiously observant Jewish family from New York and Israel who come to India, each in search of something: Ma seeks liberation, her daughter Meena (the narrator) searches for meaning, and her

son (Meena's twin brother) Shmelke, seeks refuge.

Reich describes her book as a darkly comic work of fiction about, among other things, death, religion, the uses and abuses of children, and families, especially mothers - powerful mothers, tender and terrifying.

She says it is a work of fiction, but in creating its characters, she strove to bring them to life on the page and "make them so real that one could smell them".

The powerful mothers, for instance, should be very familiar, especially to Indians and Jews, she says.

Several of her previous novels are set in Israel, and involve American Jews who come to Israel searching for something - spirituality, purpose, enlightenment, holiness, inner peace - very similar to what

people want from India, sometimes in a kind of haze of madness.

"You can think of it as the swami syndrome (India) and the messiah syndrome (Israel), and it is often a quest that is both comic and tragic," the Washington-based author says.

"This sense of something larger than oneself and one's material life is a pull that both India and Israel almost uniquely on the planet possess and exert, and (whether real or not) it is what draws people to those places, and also draws me, as a writer," Reich told PTI.

She thinks of her voice as a writer more as darkly comic than satiric, laced with a profound sense of the absurd. "This is a stance I have developed over the years to keep myself from sinking hopelessly into what is essen-

tially a tragic vision of life."

Her book has made it to the longlist of this year's DSC Prize, which is exclusively for South Asian writing.

"Apart from feeling honoured to be included in this list, I feel quite at home in South Asian writing. It seems to me to be a very natural place for me, and for Mother India' to inhabit, she says.

For research for Mother India, Reich spent good periods of time over the last decade in India, breathing it in, soaking it up and finding quite naturally, just as I expected, most of my familiar references and themes.

In writing fiction, she thinks there is a danger in over-researching. It has been my experience that often a brief glimpse in passing into a dimly-lit room through a half open door can inspire for the

writer a whole universe.

Reich, whose previous novels include My Holocaust and One Hundred Philistine Foreskins, is an avid reader and follower of Indian literature.

I would nevertheless have to say that first of all what attracted me are the ancient texts, The Ramayana', The Mahabharata', and so on, just as in my previous novels (and also in Mother India') I turn again and again to the Old Testament and other classic Jewish sources, she says.

Among the more recent Indian writers she has read, she mentions the names of Rabindranath Tagore, Bibhutibhusan Bandopadhyay, R K Narayan, Nirad Chaudhuri, Mulk Raj Anand, U R Ananthamurthy, Saadat Hasan Manto, Anita Desai, Salman Rushdie and Vivek Shanbhag among others.

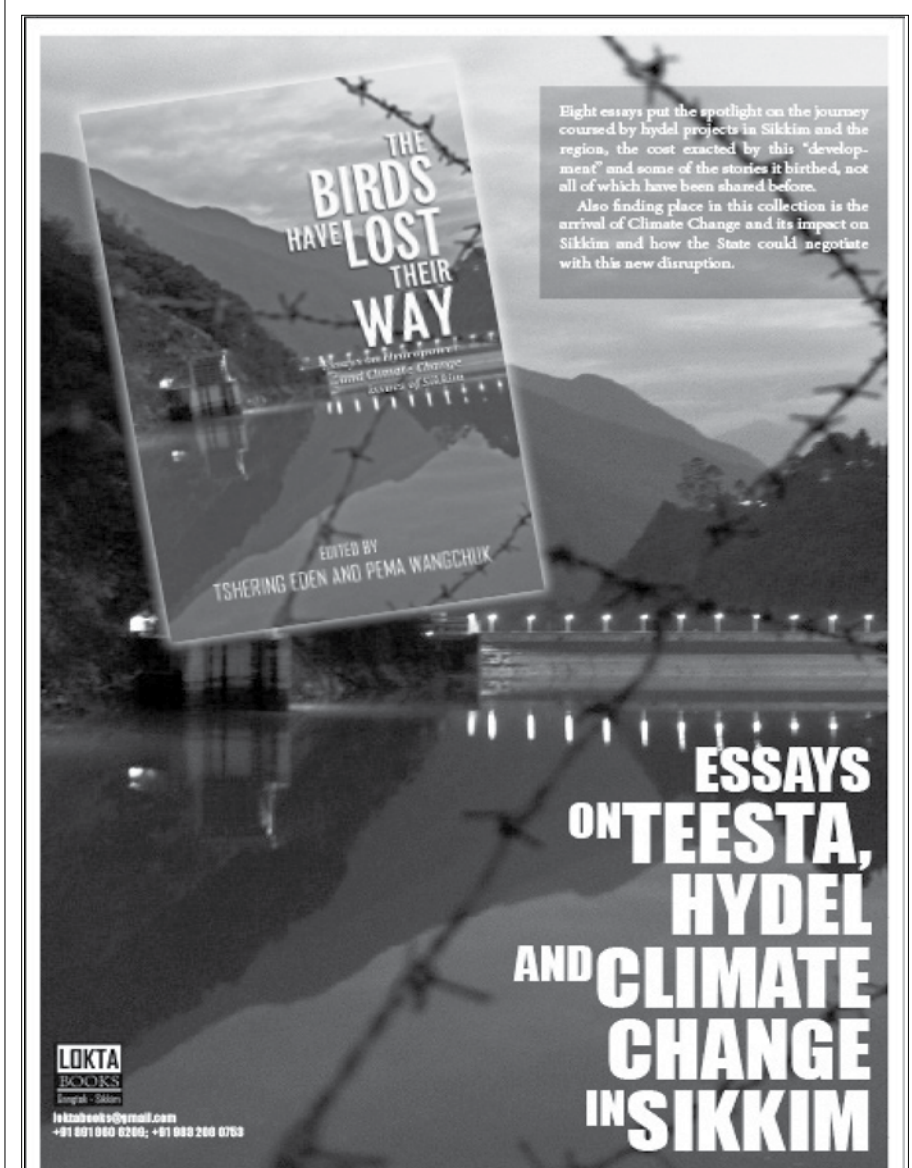
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IOC names Mary Kom in boxing's athlete ambassadors group for 2020 Olympics

NEW DELHI, OCT 31 (PTI): Six-time world champion M C Mary Kom has been included in a 10-strong athlete ambassadors group to represent boxers in the build-up to next year's Tokyo Olympic Games by the IOC's Task Force for the sport, adding to the iconic pugilist's innumerable achievements.

Mary Kom will represent the Asian bloc in the group, which also comprises the likes of Ukrainian legend Vasyl Lamachenko (Europe), a two-time Olympic and world gold-medallist who now plies his trade in the professional circuit, and five-time world champion and 2016 Olympic gold-winner Julio Cesar La Cruz (Americas) among others.

The 36-year-old Indian recently surpassed herself as the most successful boxer in the history of the world championships when she claimed her eighth medal, a bronze, at the marquee event's latest edition in Russia. She is also an Olympic bronze-medallist in the 51kg category besides being a five-time Asian champion and a Commonwealth and Asian Games gold-medallist.

"One female and one male ambassador per region will take on the role of engaging with the boxing community both in person and digitally," the IOC said in a statement.

"They will also help the Boxing Task Force (BTF) take into account the athletes' voice in all areas of its planning for the qualification events and the boxing tournament at the Olympic Games Tokyo 2020," it added.

Boxing has been in administrative turmoil after the International Olympic Committee (IOC) stripped the International Boxing Association (AIBA) of the rights to conduct the Olympic competi-

tion earlier this year, taking complete control of even the qualifying process.

The IOC asserted that AIBA failed to put its house in order as far as administrative integrity and management of finances was concerned.

"In all of the work of the Boxing Task Force we want to put boxers first. We are delighted with this group of diverse and inspirational athletes who make up the Athlete Ambassadors....," said Mori-nari Watanabe, IOC Member and Chair of the Boxing Task Force.

"...look forward to working closely with them in all areas of our decisions and event planning to make sure the athletes are not only at the centre of our work, but also actively engaged in it," he added.

The creation of an Athlete Ambassadors Group was announced in August this year, and they had to be first nominated by the respective National Olympic Committee (NOC), NOC Athletes' Commission and the National Federation (NF).

Other requirements included having competed at international competitions in the past four years, being born no later than December 31, 2001; being an amateur or professional boxer; and not having incurred any measure or sanction in relation to any violation of the Olympic Charter, the IOC Code of Ethics, and the World Anti-Doping Code.

The Athletes Ambassadors' Group:

Men: Lukmo Lawal (Africa), Julio Cesar La Cruz (Americas), Jianguan Asiahu (Asia), Vasyl Lamachenko (Europe), David Nyika (Oceania).

Women: Khadija Mardi (Africa), Mikaela Mayer (Americas), M C Mary Kom (Asia), Sarah Ourahmoune (Europe), Shelley Watts (Oceania).

Ill Djokovic survives scare in Paris opener, Nadal also through

PARIS, OCT 31 (AFP): Novak Djokovic defied illness to survive a scare against French lucky loser Corentin Moutet and reach the third round of the Paris Masters while Rafael Nadal saw off a plucky challenge from Adrian Mannarino.

Top seed Djokovic, locked in a battle with Nadal for the year-end world number one spot, had to save two set points in the first set before beating the 97th-ranked Moutet 7-6 (7/2), 6-4 on Wednesday.

The 32-year-old will play Britain's Kyle Edmund on Thursday in the last 16 as he continues his bid for a record-extending fifth Bercy title.

"I don't feel health-wise 100 percent in the last couple of days, but it is what it is," said Djokovic, who was struggling with a sore throat.

"It affects your energy, your vitality on the court. Obviously it's not ideal, but in these kind of circumstances you just have to accept it and do everything that you can to re-



cover."

Nadal, who is guaranteed to usurp Djokovic at the rankings summit next week ahead of the ATP Tour Finals in London, beat home wildcard Mannarino 7-5, 6-4 to set up a clash with three-time Grand Slam title-winner Stan Wawrinka.

Djokovic, who was beaten by Karen Khachanov in last year's final, found himself in a spot of bother when Moutet broke his serve in the seventh game before saving four break points to seize a 5-3 lead.

But the home hope saw two set points come and go in the following

game, with

Djokovic quickly taking advantage to break back and level the set.

The Serbian took control as the opener entered a tie-break and Moutet smashed a ball into the crowd in anger as his opportunity for an upset looked to have disappeared, with his opponent cruising through the breaker.

Moutet delighted the crowd with an outrageous 'hotdog' lob over Djokovic early in the second set, but the 16-time Grand Slam champion belatedly found his form.

Djokovic did let one break slip after leading 4-1, but

closed out victory on his first match point with a forehand winner.

- NADAL DOES ENOUGH -

Nadal was not at his imperious best against world number 43 Mannarino, but did enough to win with relative comfort.

The 19-time Grand Slam champion, who has never won the tournament but does hold a record 35 Masters titles, will hope to improve in the third round against Wawrinka after the Swiss beat Marin Cilic 7-6 (7/3), 7-6 (7/5).

Nadal, playing his first event since getting married earlier this month,

can secure the year-end top ranking for a fifth time by winning the trophy on Sunday.

"(It's) not easy to come back after a while without being on the tour," he said.

"Tomorrow is another day, another tough match against Stan. Every day on this tournament is so difficult."

Mannarino kept Nadal at arm's length for almost an hour in the first set, but the Spaniard took his fourth set point in the 12th game to forge ahead.

There was a similar pattern to the second set, but again the second seed went through the

gears when necessary and a sloppy service game from Mannarino sealed his fate.

Earlier in the day, fifth seed Dominic Thiem booked his spot in the last 16 by edging out Milos Raonic in a marathon encounter.

Thiem, who has lost the last two French Open finals to Nadal across Paris at Roland Garros, had to dig deep to get past Raonic 7-6 (7/5), 5-7, 6-4 as the Canadian powered down 30 aces in a thunderous serving display.

"It was unbelievable today, his serve," admitted the Austrian.

Thiem will face Grigor Dimitrov in the last 16 after the Bulgarian's 7-5, 6-3 win over 12th seed David Goffin.

World number seven Stefanos Tsitsipas continued his return to form with a 7-6 (7/3), 6-3 victory over American Taylor Fritz.

He will take on Alex de Minaur in round three after the Australian's 7-6 (7/2), 7-6 (7/1) victory over ninth seed Roberto Bautista Agut.

Conflict of Interest: BCCI ethics officer asks Dravid to depose on Nov 12

BHARAT SHARMA

NEW DELHI, OCT 31 (PTI): BCCI ethics officer D K Jain has asked Indian cricket great Rahul Dravid to appear in person for the second time, on November 12, for "further submissions and clarifications" on the conflict of interest allegations levelled against him.

The 46-year-old former India captain had earlier explained his case in the personal hearing held in Mumbai on September 26.

MPCA life member Sanjiv Gupta had filed the complaint against Dravid, alleging conflict of interest in his current role as National Cricket Academy (NCA) Head and being an India Cements employee.

"Jain wrote to Dravid on Wednesday night, asking him to depose on November 12 in New Delhi. Gupta too will be heard," a BCCI official told

PTI.

Dravid is currently the NCA Director in Bengaluru besides being a vice-president in the India Cements group, which owns the IPL franchise Chennai Super Kings.

He was also the head coach of the India A and Under-19 teams before being handed the NCA role, which includes monitoring the progress of these two sides as well.

Dravid has already given a reply and defended himself saying he has taken leave of absence from India Cements and he has nothing to do with the Chennai Super Kings.

As per the BCCI constitution, no individual can hold more than one post at the same time.

The Committee of Administrators (CoA) was in charge of the BCCI when the September hearing took place



but a new set of officer-bearers were elected last week, ending the 33-month tenure of the Supreme Court-appointed panel.

The new BCCI president, Sourav Ganguly, has already said that the conflict of interest is a "very serious issue" facing Indian cricket.

In fact, Ganguly had lashed out after Dravid was issued a notice in August, saying "God help Indian cricket".

Before demitting the office, the CoA, in its 11th and final status report submitted

to the Supreme Court, had recommended some key amendments to a "straight-jacketed" conflict of interest clause in the BCCI constitution.

If the amendment is accepted by the apex court, former players with less than two-year contracts with the BCCI or state associations, will be allowed to have multiple roles.

They will also be allowed to join multiple committees like the Cricket Advisory Committee (CAC) and won't be barred from commentary stints.

Latest Guinness World Records include 80 Indian feats

NEW DELHI, OCT 31 (PTI): The longest hair on a teenager, the shortest woman alive, and the largest collection of paper cups are among the 80 record breaking achievements by Indians that have made it to the latest edition of the Guinness World Records, publisher Penguin Random House announced Thursday.

The book, "Guinness World Records 2020", lists thousands of new record titles and holders that will "educate and entertain curious readers of all ages" across topics such as the classics amazing animals, jaw-dropping geography and spectacular sporting achievements to the cutting-edge including streaming, viral sports, robots, and artificial intelligence.

While 16-year-old Nilanshi Patel recorded the longest hair on a teenager for her 5 ft 7 inches long hair, Jyoti Amge of Nagpur made the cut for her 24.7

inch height, making her the shortest woman living (mobile).

The record of "longest fingernails on a single hand" was achieved by Shridhar Chillal from Pune City who boasts of an aggregate length of 909.6 cm (358.1 in) on his left hand.

Jotshna Mishra and Durga Charan found themselves a place in the records for "The longest journey by scheduled public transport in a single country" by travelling for 29,119 km across India, from February 18 to March 30, 2018.

V Sankaranarayanan from Tamil Nadu recorded the largest collection of paper cups with 736 units, while Naveen Kumar recorded the fastest time to skate under 10 bars at 2.06 seconds, the book noted.

The book also features some achievements, definitely not worth being proud of.

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Colombia to deploy elite forces after killing of indigenous leader

BOGOTA (COLOMBIA), OCT 31 (AFP): Colombia's government on Wednesday ordered the deployment of 2,500 elite troops to combat dissident FARC guerrillas after an attack that killed an indigenous leader and four guards.

The country's main indigenous organization for its part denounced the "bloodletting" of its people and called for a national demonstration.

President Ivan Duque accused guerrillas who rejected a historic 2016 peace deal with the government that ended a half-century of armed conflict of wanting to use "weapons to silence and terrorize indigenous communities."

In response, he announced the creation of an elite force of 2,500 troops that will have the mission of taking control of territory, "closing the drug trafficking routes" and "dismantling" the dissident organization.

Leaders of the National Indigenous Or-

ganization of Colombia (ONIC) meanwhile said its people were being "persecuted, murdered and massacred."

"We call all of Colombian society to stand up in defense of life, rights and territories," said Luis Fernando Arias, a top ONIC adviser, at a press conference in Bogota.

The indigenous group expects to march alongside unions, peasants and students on November 21 during a strike against the government's policies.

The ONIC will also seek an "extraordinary visit" from the Inter American Commission on Human Rights and the UN's Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, Victoria Tauli-Corpuz.

The organization wants to highlight its "situation of humanitarian, social and economic urgency," and called on Duque to "end the bloodletting" stemming from the indigenous communities rejecting drug traffickers' demands to take part in the illicit trade.

At least 71 killed in Pakistan train fire

At least 71 people were killed and dozens injured after cooking gas cylinders exploded on a train packed with pilgrims in Pakistan on Thursday, some dying after leaping from carriages to escape the inferno, authorities said.

Television footage showed flames pouring out of three carriages as people could be heard crying during the incident, in a rural area of central Punjab province.

Some of the passengers -- many of whom were pilgrims travelling to one of Pakistan's biggest annual religious gatherings -- had been cooking breakfast when two of their gas cylinders exploded, Ali Nawaz, a senior Pakistan Railways official, told AFP.

Many Pakistanis carry food on long train journeys, but gas cylinders are banned, and Nawaz said an inquiry had been ordered.

Dozens of people crowded along the tracks staring at the burning carriage-

es, which had been disconnected from the rest of the train, television images showed.

Firefighters rushed to the scene near Rahim Yar Khan district, extinguishing the blaze. Rescue workers and the army could also be seen, as bodies were carried away covered in white sheets.

Muhammad Nadeem Zia, a medical superintendent at the hospital in Liaquatpur, the nearest town, told AFP 71 people had been killed and 44 wounded.

A rescue services official for the district, Adnan Shabir, gave a slightly higher toll of 73 dead.

Zia said that some of the victims were killed by head injuries sustained as they leapt from the moving train.

The wounded were being rushed to hospitals in the nearby city of Bahawalpur and elsewhere in Rahim Yar Khan district. Officials said many of the bodies were charred beyond recognition.



"Deeply saddened by the terrible tragedy... My condolences go to the victim's families & prayers for the speedy recovery of the injured," tweeted Prime Minister Imran Khan.

"I have ordered an immediate inquiry to be completed on an urgent basis."

- Religious pilgrimage -

Khan said the train was the Tezgam, one of Pakistan's oldest and most popular rail services, which runs between the southern port city of Karachi to the garrison city of Rawalpindi, next to Islamabad.

But the railways official Nawaz said it had been diverted to facilitate religious pilgrims travelling to Lahore.

They were going to attend the annual Tablighi Ijtema, one of Pakistan's biggest religious gatherings, which sees up to 400,000 people descend on a tented village outside Lahore each year for several days to sleep, say prayers and eat together.

The majority of those killed were pilgrims from southern Sindh province, Nawaz said.

The Tablighi Ijtema, which begins Thursday and concludes on Sunday, was founded by religious scholars more than five decades ago and focuses exclusively on preaching Islam.

It usually sees hundreds of camps and sub-camps set

up on the dusty site outside Lahore to accommodate people from across Pakistan, giving the gathering a festival feel.

Stalls sell cooked food, raw chicken and meat, vegetables and fruit, and even electrical appliances and batteries for mobile phones at a subsidised rate.

- 'Could have been avoided' -

Nawaz said two of the carriages were economy coaches, while one was business class, and that up to 88 passengers can fit into each carriage.

"A tragedy that could have been avoided but ever since I can recall while travelling by train no bag-

gage check or restrictions enforced," human rights minister Shireen Mazari tweeted.

Train accidents are common in Pakistan, where the railways have seen decades of decline due to corruption, mismanagement and lack of investment.

In July, at least 23 people were killed in the same district when a passenger train coming from the eastern city of Lahore rammed into a goods train that had stopped at a crossing.

Accidents often happen at unmanned crossings, which frequently lack barriers and sometimes signals.

Rural Punjab has witnessed several gruesome accidents over the years, including an oil tanker explosion in 2017 which killed more than 200 people.

The tanker crashed on a main highway. Minutes later it exploded, sending a fireball through crowds who had gathered to scavenge for the spilled fuel.

Deadly new quake hits south Philippines

MANILA, OCT 31 (AFP): A powerful earthquake struck the southern Philippines on Thursday, crushing a man under falling debris and sparking searches of seriously damaged buildings that had already been rattled by two previous deadly tremors.

The 6.5 magnitude quake hit the island of Mindanao, the US Geological Survey said, causing locals to run to safety in the same area where a strong tremor killed eight people on Tuesday.

The powerful shaking caused serious damage to a condominium building in the major southern city of Davao, which was about 45 kilometres (28 miles) from the epicentre.

At least eight people were hurt at the building, and rescuers had launched a search to determine if residents might be trapped inside, police told AFP.

A collapsed structure in another town

crushed and killed a local official who was inside to help with an improvised medical treatment centre set up after the previous quakes.

A hotel partially collapsed in another area, but a disaster official told AFP the building had already been evacuated.

Locals have been left terrified by a string of powerful quakes, and hundreds of aftershocks since the first powerful tremor struck on October 16.

"Everyone rushed outside," said Reuel Limbungan, mayor of the Tulunan town, which was once again near the epicentre. "It was as strong as the previous one." Hundreds of families on Mindanao island, which makes up the southern third of the Philippines, have been living in shelters because they are afraid to go home.

USGS initially said the quake had a magnitude of 6.8, and add-

ed there was no threat of a tsunami.

The Philippines suffers regular tremors as part of the Pacific "Ring of Fire", an arc of intense seismic activity that stretches from Japan through Southeast Asia and across the Pacific basin.

In the 6.6 magnitude quake on Tuesday, a teenage boy was crushed by a falling wall as he tried to escape his school in Mag-saysay, the town spokesman told AFP. Though other students were injured in a "stampede" to escape the building, they survived.

Rock and landslides unleashed by the violent shaking killed four others, while a collapsed wall crushed a man, authorities said.

At least 50 people were hurt by falling debris, including some seven pupils and teachers hurt escaping their collapsed elementary school.

The area was

still suffering the effects of a 6.4-magnitude quake that hit less than two weeks ago, killing at least five people and damaging dozens of buildings.

Residents fled homes across the Mindanao region and a mall caught fire in the city of General Santos shortly after the quake struck on October 16. Hundreds of people were still displaced two weeks after that quake when the new one struck earlier this week, forcing hundreds more from their homes.

One of the deadliest quakes to hit the Philippines recently was in April, when 16 people were killed as a building near the capital Manila collapsed and the secondary Clark airport was shut down due to damage to the passenger terminal.

High-rise structures in the capital swayed after the April quake, leaving some with large cracks in their walls.

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K-pop's BTS finish tour with millions generated

Tearful and screaming by turn, tens of thousands of BTS fans gathered in Seoul for the finale of the boyband's lucrative world tour, some flying thousands of kilometres to pay homage to their idols and swell their backers' bulging coffers.

The septet's global prominence reached unprecedented heights this year, becoming the first K-pop group to top charts in the US and Britain and performing a string of sold-out shows in Los Angeles, Paris, and London's Wembley Stadium.

The floppy-haired musicians, all in their 20s and often sporting earrings and lipstick, appeal to a generation comfortable with gender fluidity.

They connect with their largely female fans -- collectively known as ARMY -- by opening up about their struggles through their music and on social media, which they flood with selfies and personal messages.

"I love them so much and they are one of the most important things in my life," said Milena Marunova, 20, who travelled from Russia to Seoul for this week's concert, her voice trembling with excitement.

That depth of engagement is key to their appeal enduring, according to CedarBough Saeji, a specialist in Asian languages and cultures at Indiana University Bloomington, contrasting it to rapper Psy's 2012 megahit Gangnam Style.

"Psy didn't have a fanbase, he had one viral hit song," she said. So when the follow-ups "weren't quite what the audience was looking for, they moved on. But BTS has many very loyal fans."

She added BTS' music was well produced with excellent videos, "and performed by incredibly handsome and charismatic young people".

- BTS dolls -

That popularity has enabled a hugely profitable variety of spin-off products and activities.

Their merchandise ranges from pens and notebooks to pillows and blankets, and they collaborated with Barbie manufacturer Mattel for BTS dolls, which the US toymaker said lifted its international



sales by 10 percent.

They are starring in a TV drama slated to air next year, their agency Big Hit Entertainment said, and South Korea's largest gamemaker Netmarble launched the first mobile game featuring the band in June, with a sequel already in the works.

The group are also brand ambassadors for companies like Coca Cola, FILA and Hyundai Motor.

Their world tour -- which ran from August last year -- drew a total audience of more than two million at 62 shows in 23 cities, according to Big Hit Entertainment.

The entertainment company said it posted record revenues of more than 200 billion won (US\$171 million) in the first half of 2019, and with only a handful of other artists on its books, the vast majority is likely to have been generated by BTS.

But the band's wider economic impact is far larger.

BTS are worth 4.1 trillion won to the South Korean economy annually, the Hyundai Research Institute said in a 2018 December report, boosting the image of South Korean products abroad and driving tourism.

The country has long relied heavily on China and Japan for visitors, and was hit hard in March 2017 when Beijing banned group tours in a row over the installation of a US missile defence system.

Recently, an intensifying dispute between Seoul and Tokyo over wartime history has also slowed growth of Japanese visitors, government figures show.

But nearly 90 percent of overseas K-pop fans in 111 countries said they

would like to visit South Korea in future, according to a study published this week by the Korea Tourism Organization.

Incoming K-pop fans "expanded the age groups and diversified the nationalities of visitors that were likely to return to South Korea", said Kim Sung-eun, who led the KTO study.

- 'Very rich' -

Hours before Tuesday's concert fans crowded into the 44,000-capacity Olympic Stadium, laughing and posing in front of giant BTS photo walls.

Many of the foreigners attending were making their first pilgrimage to South Korea.

Nurul Nadiyah, 28, a financial analyst from Malaysia, said as well as historic palaces, she had visited fan hotspots -- including the House of BTS, a multi-storey pop-up store in the posh Gangnam district that sells more than 200 types of BTS goods.

"I think I'm already broke," she said.

Big Hit Entertainment declined to specify how much of its turnover was generated by BTS, nor the band's own earnings.

K-pop is notorious for the power of its management companies. They often create their bands, control almost every aspect of their lives, and retain comprehensive rights to their output.

However, BTS members' benefited from songwriting and producing royalties, said Saeji, and would receive greater shares of modelling and endorsement contracts -- and their "phenomenal" merchandise sales -- than for music alone.

"They are certainly very rich at this point," she said. "Keeping such a very successful group happy is hugely important for Big Hit."

Taylor Swift to receive Artist of the Decade award at AMAs



LOS ANGELES, OCT 31 (PTI):

Singer Taylor Swift will be conferred with receive the Artist of the Decade award at the American Music Awards.

The announcement was made by Dick Clark Productions on Wednesday, saying that 29-year-old singer will be honoured during its November 24 ceremony.

Swift will also hit the stage to perform some of her biggest hits of her more-than-a-decade-long career.

"Taylor's impact on music this decade is undeniable and her performances on the American Music Awards have been truly spectacular. We're thrilled to honour her as our Artist of the Decade and can't wait for her to blow everyone away with an epic, career-spanning performance unlike any other," Mark Bracco, executive vice president of programming & development at dick clark productions, said in a state-

ment.

At the show, the singer has an opportunity to break pop legend Michael Jackson's record for most wins.

Swift has won 23 AMAs and is nominated in five categories this year, including Artist of the Year. Jackson currently holds the record for most wins with 24 trophies.

The 2019 American Music Awards will be held at Microsoft Theatre here and live telecast on ABC.

Hotel maid puts Lady Gaga's 'stolen' Valentino dress up for auction

She found the gown in Gaga's hotel room

After the star wore it to the Golden Globes A hotel maid who found the dress worn by Lady Gaga at this year's Golden Globes has put it up for auction. Gaga wore the periwinkle silk Valentino gown, (featured in our list of looks that slayed the 2019 Golden Globes) to the awards ceremony back in January at the Beverly Hilton hotel, where she left it expecting -- she says -- a member of the Valentino team to pick it up.

But hotel maid Sara Corea claims that she put the dress into lost property after finding it had been left in Gaga's room. After going unclaimed for several months, it was then given back to her. Ms Corea then decided to put it up for sale. Auctioneers Nate D. Saunders have listed the dress, which will go under the hammer on Halloween at 5pm, and have included in the lot a "letter of authenticity" written by Ms Corea.

"Hello, my name is Sara," the note reads. "I work as a Housekeeper at the Beverly Hilton Hotel. I'm always present working in the Golden Globe events on January every year for 24 years.

"The artist 'Lady Gaga' left me this dress that she used for the day of the awards. I turned in the dress to lost and found on the 8th of January 2019. After the time legally held by lost and found they gave it to me as a gift from her and today I want to auction the dress."

According to TMZ, "someone from Valen-



tino" reported the dress as stolen to Beverly Hills Police on October 25, although upon investigating, the force determined that "no crime had taken place". The issue is now being resolved between the designer and the hotel, TMZ reports, which could result in the dress being removed from the auction. At the time of writing, two bids have been placed on the dress with the highest currently at \$9,680 (£7,506). Valentino had no comment.

Gerard Butler to star in action thriller 'The Plane'

LOS ANGELES, OCT 31 (PTI):

Actor Gerard Butler has found his next project in action thriller "The Plane".

The film has a script from Charles Cumming and JP Davis, based on the book by Cumming, reported Deadline.

Butler, 49, will portray commercial pilot Ray Torrance, who after a heroic job

of successfully landing his storm-damaged aircraft in a war zone, finds himself caught between the agendas of multiple militia who are planning to take the plane and its passengers' hostage.

The project is backed by Di Bonaventura Pictures and MadRiver Pictures.

It will be produced by Lo-

renzo di Bonaventura and Mark Vahradian along with Marc Butan, Ara Keshishian, Butler and Alan Siegel.

"The Plane" is expected to start shooting next year.

Butler most recently featured in "Angel Has Fallen", the third chapter of his "Falling" franchise. He will next be seen in Jamie Foxx's "All-Star Weekend".



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Aries: Dreams, visions, signs, and symbols. The underworld is where the magick is at. Scorpio season is helping you get in touch with your inner sorceress. Maintain a psychic journal (that encompasses more than just dreams) to keep track of all the information that's coming through. You'll love connecting the dots later. Self-care will continue to be an important theme for you. As always, nurture your own garden.

Cancer: Self-care isn't just about sneaking in blow-dry at lunch or indulging in a Thai massage once every month. It's about understanding where you are at energetically, and nurturing yourself on a mind, body and soul level. Remember, saying yes to yourself sometimes requires you to say no to the world. As an empath, you have to understand that drawing certain boundaries is a form of preservation. You're also at a point in your journey where you're not looking for fleeting romances. If somebody wants to be a part of your life, they'll be willing to meet you halfway.

Leo: Here are some things you need to keep in mind as you navigate your life, Leo. #1: Make your rules; #2: Do what feels authentic to you; #3: Don't feel the need to adhere to the norms if they don't resonate with you. You are an inspiration, one who is at the forefront of the revolution. What you are encountering at this moment is a personal victory that deserves to be celebrated.

Virgo: Don't give into your own drama, Virgo. Things are not that complicated. Ask yourself this simple question before you move ahead: does my heart feel aligned with the given choice? If not, refuse the offer politely. You don't owe anyone an explanation but yourself. If you're contemplating between spending time with others or staying in and nurturing your own temple, opt for the latter.

Libra: Librans in the market for love, prepare to be swept off your feet. Surprise, surprise! The suitor at hand stands for loyalty and wants a long-term commitment. Remember, love at first sight is a myth. Allow things to build slowly and you will be surprised in more ways than one. Venusians who've said 'I do' are likely to experience a deeper level of commitment. This phase also brings with itself great news on the financial front. If you're looking for an investor, trust that you will find one soon.

Scorpio: While the rest of the world is struggling to find their

centre, you are reconnecting with your most authentic self and shining your light on the world. It is Scorpio season, after all! Not to mention, your favourite festival of the year. Look for magick in the mundane. Simple, everyday rituals like lighting a candle or brewing tea, when done with intent, can help manifest your wildest dreams. Speaking of wild, your energy is attracting a host of suitors. In the mood to love and be loved? Don't be afraid to take a chance on the one your heart feels aligned with.

Sagittarius: Some of us have the privilege of living in our family homes with our parents or partners. Others find their home in the mountains, forests or on beaches. But there's no reason you can't experience a sense of belonging exactly where you are, Sagittarius. This day brings with itself the reminder that you are surrounded by your soul family, people who care about you deeply despite how little they've known you in 'human time'.

Capricorn: Your journey is different from theirs. Understand and accept this, Capricorn. Comparing your milestones will only lower your vibration and take you away from your sacred purpose. If you are having a hard time trusting somebody, there's a good chance your old

wounds are playing out at this moment. Instead of anticipating the worst, put your mental gymnastics to rest and talk to them. If they truly care about you, they'll be more than willing to allay your fears.

Pisces: This is the day to apply Sting's wisdom to your life: if you love somebody, set them free. Know that this will only give them the time and space they need to evolve and reach their full potential. It will also give you freedom to explore who you are outside this relationship, and the things that matter to you. If the connection you share is strong, know that you will survive the most turbulent storm. On the upside, some of you could be in the mood to explore your freedom together. Did somebody speak about a cabin in the woods?

Pisces: "Everything can be taken from a man but one thing: the last of the human freedoms—to choose one's attitude in any given set of circumstances, to choose one's own way." Golden words from Ikigai that accurately describe where you are in your journey. Pisces, you have experienced the lowest of lows and made your way back to the light. You know that everything is transient, that your failures do not define you, and that true happiness can only be found within.