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SummitTIMES

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ON TOP OF THE NEWS

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Namchi hosts review meeting of Smart Cities Mission of North-East

**PRAKASH CHETTRI
NAMCHI, 11 JAN:**

A daylong capacity building peer-to-peer learning workshop review meeting of Smart Cities Mission of North East region was held at a local hotel today. The meeting was chaired by Secretary, Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoH&UA, GOI), Durga Shanker Mishra, accompanied by Jt. Secretary, Jhanja Tripathy and Financial Advisor (MoH&UA), Kunal Kumar, Jt. Secretary & Mission Director (SCM),

Secretary UD&HD, Ganga D Pradhan, members from MoH&UA, smart city delegates from Assam, Tripura, Mizoram, Nagaland, Meghalaya, Manipur, Arunachal Pradesh, Sikkim and representatives from HUDCO, Bharat Electronics Limited and Gran Thornton India LLP.

At the outset of the workshop, Mr Mishra laid the foundation stone



for developing of infrastructure facilities at the cremation ground of Alley Gumpa which is under the smart cities mission.

Then the Secretary with the team took a brief tour of Namchi town, the smart city mission office followed by various other locations which will be developed under Namchi Smart City.

The Secretary was

also briefed by Namchi Smart City Limited (NSCL), Joint Chief Town Planner, Navin Rai on the plans, proposal and strategy curated by NSCL to upgrade the various areas in and around Namchi. Thereafter, the Secretary and the team visited Samdrupitse and offered prayers to the statue of Guru Padmasambhava.

In his address, the

Secretary, Durga Shanker Mishra spoke about how Namchi was recently adjudged as one of the towns which has been performing extremely well under the Smart City Mission.

He highlighted that under this Mission the selected towns should focus on infrastructure development which can in turn substantially ele-

vate the living standard of the public.

Mr Mishra cited the example of Siddheshwara Dham in Namchi and how this pilgrimage destination has boosted the amount of tourists visiting the state bringing about range of investment value and underlined that projects like this dham needs to be build in other parts of the North Eastern states. He also emphasized that the North East is filled with unique natural resources which has an abundant space for qualitative structural development and encouraged the attendees to utilize these resources.

Mr Mishra also appreciated the Organic Farming initiative of Sikkim and urged the gathering from other North Eastern states to commence on similar kind of unique initiatives.

Additionally, Mr Mishra lauded the NSCL

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SKM Nari Morcha condemns CM's statement on menstruation, demands apology



**SAGAR CHETTRI
GANGTOK, 11 JAN:**

Sikkim Krantikari Morcha has condemned the statement of Chief Minister Pawan Chamling during a speech on 05 Jan wherein he allegedly said that untouchability is also extended to women who are menstruating. The party's Nari Morcha has demanded an apology from the Chief Minister on the statement.

SKM Nari Morcha held a press conference today with black bands on their arms and placards to protest the statement of the CM. Nari Morcha general secre-

tary, Pavitra Bhandari also accused the CM of mocking the natural process of menstruation that women go through adding that it is an insult to all women.

They informed that the CM said this while addressing a meeting of Scheduled Caste community on 05 Dec at Gangtok.

Nari Morcha chief convener, Kala Rai said that SDF boasts about empowering women but the CM's statement has shown the real face of the party.

"CM should immediately apologize for his statement otherwise we will show the power of women," she said.

Another Nari Morcha leader, Kabita Sapkota said that even SDF Cheli Morcha should condemn the CM's statement.

"This is a shameful statement and I am ashamed to belong to a State whose leader makes a mockery of our monthly menstrual cycle," said Nari Morcha member, Jamyang Bhutia.

On behalf of all men, SKM spokesperson, Jacob Khaling apologized to the entire women community of the world for the CM's statement. He added that civil society should come forward to protest and condemn such statements.

Governor lauds rescue of tourists by Armed Forces

**SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 11 JAN:**

Governor, Ganga Prasad has lauded the selfless service to humanity rendered by members of Armed Forces in Sikkim at the time of distress, a press communiqué from Raj Bhavan informs.

Mentioning about recent instances of services rendered by members of armed forces in rescuing more than 150 tourists in Lachung Valley, North Sikkim following heavy snowfall, the Governor has recorded his deep sense of gratitude to the Officers and Ranks of all units for their selfless service to the countrymen.

He has also lauded the role of all units in successfully carrying out the rescue operations of over five thousand tourists along Tsomgmo and Nathula stretch of the JN Road in the recent past, the release adds.

School Land Donors Association demands regular jobs for land donors

**SAGAR CHHETRI
GANGTOK, 11 JAN:**

School Land Donors Association [SLDA] has demanded that the State government provide regular jobs to members of land donor families. The association has alleged that the government has only been providing temporary jobs to members of land donor families and that this was in contravention of original assurances.

In a meeting of the association held at Singtam in East Sikkim on Thursday, members from all four districts demanded that the government fulfill its promise to provide regular jobs to members of land donor families.

SLDA general secretary, Ranjit Rai alleged



that the government is not serious about the rights of land donating families.

He informed that regular jobs were provided to members of 20 families in 2004 but HRDD issued a circular in year 2006 stating that regular

jobs will not be provided to land donor families.

He added that another HRDD circular in 2016 mentioned that land donors could not pressurize the government for regular jobs and this, he said, has suppressed the rights of more than 1000

land donor families.

Mr Rai mentioned that despite repeated assurances by the CM to provide regular jobs, no action has been taken and instead, such circulars are being issued. He informed that at present,

turn to pg02

Regularization being delayed allege 43 ad-hoc Asst Professors

**SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 11 JAN:**

Forty-three Assistant Professors hired by Human Resource Development Department on ad-hoc basis have alleged that the department is not taking action on their regularization that was approved by the Chief Minister on 07 Aug 2018.

In a press release issued today, the 43 Asst Professors have said that following the approval of their regularization by the CM, the Chief Secretary had also approved the file on 10 Aug 2018 and forwarded it to HRDD. After this, the department has not taken any action on the file, they have said.

According to the

group, the department also issued a circular on 12/09/2018 stating that the services of ad-hoc Assistant Professors will not be extended further.

The HRDD had earlier approved the regularization of 19 ad-hoc Assistant Professors in first phase, 08 language Assistant Professors in second phase and 17 ad-hoc Assistant Professors in the third phase, who did not qualify in the examination conducted by SPSC.

The authorities said that the regularization was approved on compassionate grounds for those who have served for more than 5 years (for 19 ad-hoc Assistant Professors) and possessed NET, SLET or PhD,

and less than five years (for 17 ad-hoc Assistant Professors) who too possessed the required qualifications, despite not having passed the exams conducted by SPSC for the same post.

According to the left out 43 ad-hoc Assistant Professors, the same grounds should also apply for them on the condition that they acquire either NET, SLET or PhD within 5 years.

The 43 ad-hoc Asst Professor have expressed gratitude to the CM for approving their regularization but questioned the lack of action by the department on the same. They have requested the CM to look into the matter and provide them justice.

BJP-led Manipur govt urges Centre to exempt state from citizenship bill purview

IMPHAL, JAN 11 (PTI):

The BJP-led government in Manipur has decided to urge the Centre to exempt the state from the jurisdiction of the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill, the latest northeast voice against the proposed legislation.

In a meeting chaired by Chief Minister N Biren Singh, the state cabinet Thursday decided to appeal to the Centre to allow it to not implement the proposed legislation, which was recently passed by Lok Sabha, a press release issued by the chief minister's sec-

retariat said. The BJP is heading a coalition government in the state with the National People's Party, Naga People's Front and the Lok Janshakti Party.

The reservation expressed by the BJP-led dispensation in the state against a bill proposed by the NDA assumes significance. Many NDA allies in the northeast -- including the AGP in Assam, the MNF (ruling in Mizoram), the NPP (heading the coalition government with BJP in Meghalaya), the IPFT (partner in the government in Tripura) and

the NDPP (heading coalition government with BJP in Nagaland) -- have already said they were not in agreement with the saffron party over the sensitive issue. The AGP has already quit the alliance.

The Citizenship (Amendment) Bill provides for according Indian citizenship to Hindus, Sikhs, Christians, Parsis from Bangladesh, Pakistan and Afghanistan after six years of residence in India, instead of 12 years currently, even if they do not possess any document.

Golay's Parivartan Sankalp Yatra tours Rinchonpong

**SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 11 JAN:**

The Parivartan Sankalp Yatra of Sikkim Krantikari Morch continued in Rinchonpong constituency today with SKM president PS Tamang [Golay] interacting with the people of different blocks of the constituency.

An SKM press release informs that Mr Tamang toured Sangdorjee, Hathidunga, Jaubari, Jheel, Lower Tadong and Rinchonpong blocks.

The release informs that in his address to the people at Sangdorjee, Mr Tamang stated that seeing the growing activity of the SKM



party, the State government has started to distribute the government benefits.

He added that the people of the State have benefited because SKM has played a strong op-



position role.

He expressed confidence that SKM will form the next govern-

ment in Sikkim with full majority since the people have decided to bring change.

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Gangtok on Saturday, 12 Jan

Temp: 010°C/06°C
Forecast: Sunny to partly cloudy with a little rain in the evening, then a shower in spots

Sunrise: 07:01 AM
Sunset: 03:49 PM

SPCC president meets Congress core committee in Delhi

SUMMIT REPORT

GNAGTOK, 11 JAN:

Sikkim Pradesh Congress Committee president, Bharat Basnet attended the core committee meeting of the National Congress party at New Delhi on Thursday. An SPCC press release informs that the state president has been successful in drawing the attention of the national committee on serious and sensitive issues of Sikkim. The release states that Mr Basnet spoke for around 25 minutes in the meeting on various issues of the State and reminded the Congress party of its responsibilities towards Sikkim.

HC quashes ex-LDF govt order releasing 209 prisoners in 2011

KOCHI, JAN 11 (PTI): The Kerala High Court Friday quashed an order issued by the then LDF government in 2011, releasing 209 prisoners prematurely, before the expiry of their jail term. A full bench of the high court headed by Chief Justice Hrishikesh Roy, however, directed the governor to examine the details of the released prisoners within six months and if anyone is found ineligible for early release, take appropriate steps to ensure their completion of jail term.

The order was issued on a plea filed by a prisoner's wife, who was aggrieved by her husband's case not being considered for the benefit of remission of sentence or grant of pardon, while granting such benefit to other prisoners. In her plea, she had referred to the premature release of 209 prisoners. All of them were convicted for offences under the Indian Penal Code Section 302 (murder), and in some cases for other offences also in purported exercise of the power under Article 161 of the Constitution (power of governor to grant pardons).

The court noted that the 209 prisoners, who were released prematurely, have been living as free persons in the society. "While the natural legal consequence of our quashing the government order that led to their premature release would have been to subject them to immediate re-incarceration pending a fresh decision of the governor, we refrain from issuing such a direction solely because many of them are not parties in the writ petitions before us," the court said.

"That apart, we are of the view that their conduct subsequent to their release, over the last seven years and more, should also be taken into consideration by the state government/governor, while re-considering their case for premature release from prison," it said.

Law College students take academic excursion to New Delhi

SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 11 JAN:

The final year students of Government Law College (Sikkim) along with two teacher escorts Dr. Tshewang Dorjee Lama (Vice Principal) and Dr. Dilip Pandey (Dean, Student Affairs) had been to Delhi for an academic excursion which began from 24 Dec, 2018 to 04 Jan, 2019.

As part of their ten-day academic excursion they visited Parliament House and fortunately got an opportunity to witness a Parliament Session wherein a historic Triple Talaq Bill was passed. Apart from this they visited many historical places and academic institutions located in Delhi including Red Fort, Qutub Minar, Akshardham Temple, Nehru Memorial, Indira Memorial,



India Gate, etc.

On 02 Jan, 2019 they also visited the Supreme Court of India wherein they got an opportunity to enter the Supreme Court Museum, Judges Library and many areas within the Supreme Court. They also got a chance to meet some renowned Supreme Court Lawyers and had a good interaction with them.

President, SRC, Pradeep Tamang and vice-president SRC, Tshering Laki, on behalf of all the final year students of Government Law College, Sikkim have expressed their heartfelt gratitude to Member of Parliament, Rajya Sabha, Hissay Lachungpa for giving them this opportunity to observe the Parliament Session and for

the hospitality offered.

They have also thanked Minister, RB Subba for his help and support for this excursion. They also want to express their gratitude to Principal, Dr. Ganeshji Tiwari, Government Law College, Sikkim and Officials of Human Resource Development Department, Government of Sikkim for the excursion.

MNP holds meeting with local businessmen

WANGCHUK BHUTIA

MANGAN, 11 JAN:

Mangan Nagar Panchayat Councillors organized a meeting with all businessmen of MNP wards at MNP Hall on 11 Jan regarding the upcoming Janta Mela 2019.

The programme was chaired by area MLA cum Minister Forest, TW Lepcha as chief guest accompanied by president MNP, Zangmoo Bhutia, Councillors, KJ Bhutia and UP Kazi.

Welcoming the people gathered, President (MNP) shared information on up-coming Janta Mela and submission of beneficiaries lists at MNP office soon.

Councillor MNP, KJ Bhutia in his address said that all the local and non local businessmen have been able to get basic facilities and peaceful environment to operate



their shops and everyone has to understand if they want 'Shanti or Kranti'.

In an open interaction, local youth, Chungchung Saring shared his positive suggestions regarding provision of employment to educated local youth of Mangan Bazaar area, control of rising influx and protection of Mangan Bazaar landslide affected areas. The Area MLA should concentrate on solving the youths' problems, he added.

The chief guest in his address, assured to provide Janta Mela benefits to local and non local voters residing in MNP wards. He also asked local citizens of MNP to show their involvement in government development programmes.

There should be dedication at an individual level for positive development, he said further adding that there is no doubt that SDF will again form government.

Valedictory function for Skill Trainees and VLWs by KVK South



SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 11 JAN:

Krishni Vigyan Kendra South Sikkim organized a valedictory function for skill trainees and three months field attachment programme of VLWs of South District on 11 Jan 2019, a press release informs. Director SAMETI, Nawang Choden TONYOT was the chief guest and Joint Director, F&S&ADD South Sikkim, Balak Das Rai as guest of honour.

IP Shivakoti [Senior Scientist and Head, KVK South Sikkim] welcomed the gathering and high-

lighted about the three months field attachment programme for VLWs and 200hrs Skill development training for farmers on two job roles viz Vermicompost Producer and Nursery Worker, the release mentions.

The VLWs presented a detailed PowerPoint presentation on activities done by them. Farmers' representative from Vermicompost Producer and Nursery Worker shared their experiences and expressed satisfaction over skill training.

Chief guest Ms To-

nyot congratulated the trainees for successfully completing the training programme and encouraged them to take up farming on commercial scale. BD Rai detailed the farmers about ongoing schemes of the Agriculture Department.

HDO, Namthang farm briefed the farmers about the ongoing schemes of the Horticulture Department. The programme also had distribution of certificates to VLWs and Inputs like Tetra Vermibed and Garden tools to skill trainees.

State Level Training for election preparedness

SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 11 JAN:

The Office of the Chief Electoral Officer, Sikkim, conducted a state-level training for election preparedness to Electoral Registration Officers, Assembly Level Trainers, District Level Master Trainers and Supervisory Officers on 10-11 of January, 2019 in the Conference hall of the O/o the CEO, Sikkim.

The training was attended by 95 officers from all four districts.

The training included



sessions on key election subjects like Election Planning and Security Planning, Poll day arrangements, Model Code of Conduct, Paid news, Fake news, Media, Ex-

penditure Monitoring and MCMC. The training was bestowed by State Level Master Trainers, who have been trained at IIHDEM, Election Commission of India.

Winner of Sikkim Idol 2016 to release his first music video

YOGEN THATAL

SINGTAM, 10 JAN:

Winner of Sikkim Idol 2016, Dinesh Dahal is all set to release his first music video this month.

Son of Mahesh Dahal, Headmaster of Lower Tanak Primary School and Geeta Dahal, Dinesh is the winner of Sikkim Idol 2016 and has also been felicitated by the Chief Minister.

"I would like to express my gratitude towards all those who supported me and I shall always remain



thankful for their contributions and encouragement which helped me to achieve success. I would also like to

thank my father and my youngest brother Nimesh Dahal who has stood by me throughout," said Dinesh.

Milching cows distributed in Salghari-Zoom

SAMSING/ JORETHANG,

11 JAN (IPR):

Ten milching cows were distributed to ten families from Samsing, Pipaley and Gelling Baiguney Gram Panchayat Units under Salghari Zoom constituency, this evening.

Minister Arjun Kumar Ghatani, who is also the area MLA, handed over the cow, calves, a milk carrying can, 1 KG mineral mixture vitamin and two bags of cattle feed to the beneficiaries.

Addressing the gathering, the Minister urged beneficiaries to provide proper care to the cows and calves to earn livelihood.

He drew attention to the commitment of the Chief Minister to provide all necessities and basic requirements of the people to uplift their economic status and



further called on them to be thankful to the true vision and leadership of Chief Minister Pawan Chamling.

He urged officials of Animal Husbandry to chalk out a plan for goat farming programme considering favourable climate and topography of the GPU.

Dr NM Cintury, Joint Director, Animal Husbandry and Veterinary

Services Deptt (W), briefed the beneficiaries on technical aspects of providing proper care to the cows and also informed that the department will cover the insurance for the next one year.

The beneficiaries are: Ram Lal Sharma, Jit Kumar Rai, Mohan Singh Rai, Pratiman Chettri, Phurba Tamang, Priya Rai, Dhan Pd. Sarki, Janda

Bir Sharma, Dhan Kr Tamang and Indra Kri Rai.

Earlier, the Minister distributed 200 sets of eyeglasses to patients in a special programme organised at MG Road, Jorethang, in the afternoon.

Mr Ghatani interacted with the patients who were provided free eye check up on 26 December at the same venue by Drishyam Eye Care and Surgical Centre.

4 members refuse to be part of panel to implement Clause 6 of Assam Accord

GUWAHATI, JAN 11

(PTI): Four of the nine members of the high-level committee formed by the Centre to implement Clause 6 of the Assam Accord have declined to be a part of it.

Eminent litterateurs Nagen Saikia and Rongbong Terang, both former presidents of premier literary body Axom Xahitya Xabha, and academican Mukunda Rajbongshi have decided to opt out of the committee.

The All Assam Students Union (AASU), a signatory of the Assam Accord and which has a representative in the panel, has already said it would not be a part of the committee which would examine the effectiveness of actions since 1985 to implement Clause 6 of the Assam Accord.

Clause 6 seeks to provide constitutional, legislative and administrative safeguards to protect, preserve and promote the cultural, social, linguistic identity and heritage of the Assamese people.

A six-year agitation by the AASU demanding identification and deportation of illegal immigrants culminated with the signing of the Assam Accord by the Rajiv Gandhi government and the AASU on August 15,

1985. In a letter to the Joint Secretary (North East) of the Ministry of Home Affairs, member secretary of the panel Saikia said the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill, 2016 was against the secular spirit of the country and Assam would lose its linguistic and cultural identity if it is enacted.

The committee has been set up "to appease the people of Assam. I oppose this stand of the government", he said.

Saikia, a Sahitya Akademi awardee, also said the AASU has already announced it would be not be a part of the panel and without it, the committee "cannot arrive at decisions for which it has been constituted".

Padma Shri awardee Terang also declined to be a part of the committee saying there is no sense in talking about the Assam Accord without the AASU being a part of it. "My conscience does not allow me to be a part of the committee. Besides, I am suffering from cancer and will not be able to attend meetings of the committee regularly," he said.

Rajbongshi, who is undergoing treatment in New Delhi, said the formation of the committee by the Centre while going ahead with the citizenship bill is a mockery of

the Assam Accord.

"The bill has raised many questions on the Centre's intention to protect the interest of the indigenous population and has nullified the provisions of the Assam Accord. In such circumstances, it will not be possible for me to be a part of this committee," he added. Earlier, the AASU has refused to be a part of the panel which

the "BJP-led government formed just three months ahead of Lok Sabha polls to seek votes in Assam".

Besides these four, the panel has former Union Tourism Secretary M P Bezbaruah as its head, and former IAS officer Subhash Das, senior journalist D N Bezbaruah and Advocate General of Assam Ramesh Borpatragohain as other members.

Namchi hosts review...

tie-up with South District Police Department and the development of the Mission Jyoti App which has a multi-platform access and aims to assist the Police personnel and the various stakeholders to reach out to the public and ensure quick and smooth service delivery.

Speaking during the workshop, Secretary, Ganga Pradhan spoke about Namchi and how this small town is on the verge of transforming itself as one of the most sought after smart towns in the North East region. She also brought to light the aims and objectives of the smart city and informed that community participation and public engagement is extremely significant for any smart city to evolve.

During the course of the program the participating states also presented a detailed presentation on the status of smart cities in their respective states. Thereafter, the Secretary Mr Mishra provided feedback and valuable suggestions on these presentations. A video conference with other 100 smart cities was also held during the workshop.

School Land Donors...

members of land donor families have been serving as peon, safai karmachari and night guard on temporary basis on Rs 9,000 per month salaries.

Likewise, the association's treasurer, Dinesh Chettri stated that they have given their ancestral land for the school so the government should give job security to such families. He also demanded a clarification on the government's decision to stop giving regular jobs to land donor families.

Red Panda Winter Carnival from 17 to 19 Jan

REBYNA RANA
GANGTOK, 11 JAN:
Minister for Tourism and Aviation, Ugen T Gyatso Bhutia, will be inaugurating the Sikkim Red Panda Winter Carnival which is slated to be held from 17 to 19 Jan at MG Marg.

Organised by the Tourism and Civil Aviation in coordination with the Cultural Affairs Department, the winter carnival this year is going to be organised on a less grand manner as compared to last year.

That said, Tourism Secretary, TT Bhutia, while talking to SummitTimes, informed that the carnival will showcase the culture, traditions and heritage of the state.

This year's carnival will have the participation of delegates from Bhutan, Nepal, Gorkhaland Territorial Administration, Gangjong, Deoeghar, Kalimpong and British Council (Kolkata).

A band from United Kingdom is scheduled to perform on 18 Jan here at MG Marg.

"We need to keep promoting our State through such carnivals and festivals so that more tourists get attracted to Sikkim," the Secretary said.

He added that this



time there will not be single stall at MG Marg. However, the Sikkim Food Festival in various hotels and restaurants shall be held around town.

Sikkim Film Festival will also be organized during which local films will be screened twice a day at Manan Kendra. Display of organic products is also planned.

The Institute of Hotel Management, Sajong is organising a three-day basic program in preparation of puddings, salads, mocktails and fruit carving at Hotel Mt Jopuno here.

Live demonstration by local artisans under the aegis of the Directorate of Handicrafts and Handloom, kids' entertainment corner, morn-

ing fitness programme, DJ nights are some of the major attractions. The cultural and musical extravaganza will have performances by local artists and bands. The G# School of performing Arts, Remanti Sangeet Academy, The Grand Stave Music School and Wings of Tibet are some of the local institutions participating. The evening will be alive with performances by Her Il-legal Practice, NSPD Collective, Mukaam Boys, PSI and Girish and the Chronicles, Tshering Leezum and the Irregulars. Jorethang Government Senior Secondary School Band, the winner of the National Level Inter School Band Competition will also be a part of carnival.

New Market will vibrate in the evenings with DJ Nights with DJ Rehang and a fashion show by Miss Sikkim contestants under the aegis of Positude, Sikkim on the final night.

STDC will also be conducting helicopter joy ride on Pawan Hans.

Ruchi Clinic, Gangtok has also offered discounts on various clinical investigations during the Carnival. In addition, various shops and establishments will also be offering Carnival discounts.

"No specific fund is available for the winter carnival but we have requested the Ministry of Tourism for some support and they have said they will provide some funds," the Secretary informed further.

MABFSI conducts induction programme for Junior Associates of SBI

SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 11 JAN:

A four-week Induction training programme was conducted by Manipal Academy of Banking, Financial Services & Insurance (MABFSI) for newly recruited junior associates of State Bank of India at Sikkim Manipal Institute of Technology (SMIT), Majitar, Sikkim from 17 Dec 2018 to 10 Jan, 2019. There were 478 trainees hailing from West Bengal and North East Zones.

The program, comprising of a curriculum with emphasis on banking domain, customer service, practical activities like marketing and selling skills, and feet on street, behavioral skills.

The classes were handled by senior bankers from leading public and private sector banks and behavioral experts.

As part of this program, the trainees were also facilitated to take up NISM certification exams enabling them to sell Mutual Fund products. The trainees were encouraged to come up with innovative ideas to expand banking business.

The trainees showcased their talents in a cultural event, 'Udan,' held on campus.

The trainees showed concern for the needy by contributing Rs 35,000 which reflects their Corporate Social Responsibility even before starting their careers in the Bank

The month-long programme concluded with executives from SBI addressing the trainees.

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DEPARTMENT OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY
GOVERNMENT OF SIKKIM

Ref No: 6/DIT/2019

Date: 04/01/2019

CORRIGENDUM

Reference to the Expression of Interest bearing no: 754/DIT/2018 dated 21/1/2/2018 for "Implementation of Check Post Management System at Rangpo and Melli Check Posts", it is hereby informed that, at page no 3, the last date for submission of EOI may be read as "14/01/2019, 3:00 pm" and not as <12/01/2019, 3:00pm>.

R.O. NO. 590/IPR/Pub/Classi./18-19
Date: 11.01.19

Additional Director.



STUDY ZONE
Mr. Dawchung Lepcha (Chairperson)

OUR COURSE OUTLINES:

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1. Winter Crash Courses running successfully for classes X, XII (CBSE, ICSE,ISC) | tions for the students |
| 2. Study Materials provided according to the standards of the board. | 4. Revision notes for the students to make them much more effective |
| 3. Mock Test and Pre Board examinations | 5. Doubt clearing Sessions held by respective teachers |
| | 6. Separate hostel facilities for boys and girls. |

OUR COURSE OBJECTIVES:

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1. To give clear concept of the chapters | tively and efficiently |
| 2. To give the students proper guidance to excel in their examinations | 4. Greater emphasis would be to excel. |
| 3. To Prepare and deliver answers effectively | 5. Last minute suggestion tips as per board requirements |

For further details please contact: 9002163719, 7319565616, 7432036651
Address: P.N.G Road, Opp. City press , Gangtok



GOVERNMENT OF SIKKIM,
RURAL MANAGEMENT AND DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT,
NAMCHI DIVISION,
SOUTH SIKKIM.

NOTICE INVITING TENDER

N.I.T No.-: 01 /RMDD/Nam/2018-19

Dated:-09/01/2019

For and on behalf of the Governor of Sikkim, Divisional Engineer, Rural Management and Development Department, Namchi Division, invites sealed tenders under single bid system from the eligible contractors of class III grade enlisted with Sikkim Public Works Department vide notification No. 515/R&B/Secy, dated 12/06/2018 and subsequently vide notification No. 556/R&B/PWD/Secy, dated 28/08/2019 and 584/R&B/PWD/Secy , dated: 08/10/2018, through competitive bidding within the territorial jurisdiction of the concerned ward of the GPU/ULB where the work is to be executed. The works are listed as under:-

Sl No	Name of work	Value put to tender (Rs)	Completion time, (in months)	Cost of tender documents (Rs)	Amount of Earnest Money @ 2.5% For issue of tender form (Rs)	Grade of contractor	Name of G.P.U	Name of Constituency
1	Construction of Link Road from Tanzi to Ruchung under Namthang Rateypani Constituency South Sikkim.							
a.	KM (1 st – 2 nd)	1,43,17,104.00	18months	30,000.00	3,57,928.00	Grade III	Nagi - Karek	Namthang - Rateypani Constituency
b.	KM (2 nd – km3 rd Ch.31).	1,49,09,283.00	18months	30,000.00	3,72,732.00	Grade III	Nagi - Karek	Namthang - Rateypani Constituency
2.	Construction of Link Road from Suntaley Zero to Suminkhor under Namthang Rateypani Constituency South.							
a.	KM (1 st – km 2.20)	1,13,30,774.00	18months	30,000.00	2,83,269.00	Grade III	Turung - Suminkhor	Namthang - Rateypani Constituency
b.	KM (2.20 – km 4.60)	1,32,63,642.00	18months	30,000.00	3,31,591.00	Grade III	Turung - Suminkhor	Namthang - Rateypani Constituency

Time Schedule:-

- | | | |
|---|----|---|
| 1. Date of submission of application with bank Receipt For issue of Tender Documents (excluding Tender Form) at respective GPK) | -: | 28 th January 2019
(From 10.00am to 4.00pm) |
| 2. Date of issue of Tender Form on submission of TDR (as Earnest Money) at respective GPK) | -: | 29 th January 2019
(From 10.00am to 4.00pm) |
| 3. Last Date and Time of submission of Tender (From10.00 am to 12.30 pm) at respective GPK) | -: | 30 th January 2019 |
| 4. Date and Time of Opening of Bid (1.30 pm at respective GPK) | -: | 31 st January 2019 |

CONDITIONS OF CONTRACT:-

- Tender is open only to the eligible Contractors/Firms of appropriate Class/Area.
- The intending tenders/contractors should apply in writing for issue of tender documents. The application would invariably be signed by the contractor himself/herself. The tender document will not be issued to any person other than the INTENDING TENDER. The application shall be submitted initially for each work listed above with all required documents.
- The applicants should enclose attested copies of the Validated/Updated Contractor Enlistment Certificate. It is mandatory to produce the Original validated/Updated Enlistment Certificate during sale/issue of the Tender Document for verification. Selected bidder should produce No objection certificate/ Tax clearance certificate from the commercial taxes Division, Finance Revenue and Expenditure Department prior to the issue of Work Order.
- The prescribed Non-Transferable Tender Documents (excluding the Tender Form) can be obtained during the period specified in (As above from the respective Gram Prasasan Kendra, Cost of tender form shall be deposited to the revenue of respective GPU. Earnest money deposit @ 2.5% in State Bank of Sikkim shall be in the form of Deposit Receipt of Schedule Bank which includes deposits in the form of temporary deposit receipts (TDR) in favor of the Sr. Accounts Officer (H.Q) RM&DD, Gangtok. Tender form shall be issued from the respective Gram Prasasan Kendra, only on production of the deposited receipts to that contractors/firm who has obtained the tender documents, on production of toward deposit receipts of 2.5% earnest money.
- The Tender Documents, including the Tender Form with quoted offer should be placed in a sealed cover with the name of the tenderers and the name of the work superscripted on it, Supporting documents listed at Sl. No. 3 above should be enclosed with the offer.
- Sealed tenders may be deposited in the Tender box at respective Gram Prasasan Kendra, on the date and within the time indicated above.
- Tenders will be opened by a Tender Opening Committee as prescribed by the Government in the presence of the tenderness on the date and time indicated above.
- The Tenderer should sign on every page of the tender documents as Acceptance of the general Direction and Conditions of the Contract and other laid down norms. The rate quoted should be both in figures and words and should be inclusive of GST and all other Taxes and Levies. Over writing and correction should be avoided and if made should be authenticated. Incomplete/Conditional tenders shall be rejected forthwith.
- In case of any discrepancy in rate(s) printed in the Schedule of Rates and Quantities issued with the tender documents, rates as per approved Schedule of Rates will be taken as correct. For items outside the SOR, the rates shall be as per the technically checked estimate/analysis. Decision of the Principal Chief Engineer cum Secretary/ Head of the Department will be final in this regard.
- The work value, scope and quantum of work are subject to change, the contractor shall execute the work as per the directives of the Department. No claim on this account shall be entertained whatsoever. If any claim is made, it shall be as per the agreement rates.
- Avoidable damages due to negligence of the contractor shall be at his own risk and cost. The Department shall not be liable for payment of such damages (if any), including accidents to labourer at site.
- The offer shall remain valid for a period of 90 days. The work should commence within 15 days from the issue of work order.
- All the conditions as mentioned in the NIT shall be deemed to a part of the agreement to be entered with the contractor. Security deposit shall be collected by deductions from the running bills of the contractor @ 5% of the value of work done. The Department reserves the right to accept or reject any or all tenders without assigning any reason thereof.
- The recoveries of Royalties on Forest produces shall be as per rates notified by the Government from time to time and applicable on the date of payment. In no case, claim of any contractor for deduction as per rates incorporated in Analysis of Rates or Schedule of Rates on the date of tender shall be acceptable.
- Subletting of contract work is against the norms and if it comes to the notice, the original contract shall be cancelled and appropriate action shall be initiated as per the rules.
- In case the man powers employed by the contractors are from outside the State or neighboring countries, it shall be the responsibility of the contractors to get them registered with the labour department, Government of Sikkim as per the relevant Labour Laws.
- The Department also reserves the right to increase, decrease, alter or modify the item of works as indicated in the NIT without assigning any reason thereof.
- Use of explosives shall be regulated as under:-
 - Transportation, Handling, storage and use of Explosives (if necessary) shall be in accordance with the provisions of the India Explosive Act and General Guidelines, Circulars issued by the department and other competent authorities on the subject from time to time.
 - The rules and regulations issued by the Sikkim Public Works Department or any other competent authority shall strictly be adhered to with regard to transportation, storage; handling and use of explosives shall be maintained by the contractor.
- The contractor shall also make arrangements to have photographs of the works taken at least at three stages of the construction period. i.e. beginning, middle and completion stage.
- Damage to properties in and around the work site must be avoided at all cost. The contractor shall be held responsible for any acts of negligence and shall be made to make good the damages.
- Expenditure involved for material testing, cube strength of concrete, crushing strength of road metals etc., at site or in laboratories shall be borne by the contractor. The contractor shall make necessary arrangements accordingly as and when instructed to do so.
- It is accepted to the tenderer to have inspected the site before submitting his bid. There may be possible site difficulties for which the tenderer should have their own correct assessment before submitting the bid.
- The contractor will have to pay all taxes and duties as applicable and notified by the State/Central Government and no claim shall be entertained in this regard whatsoever.
- The cost of stock materials supplied from the Department store will be deducted from the contractors' bills as per rules.
- The bidders shall produce a Certificate of Residence from the concerned Gram Panchayat Unit where the work is to be executed.

S/d

R.O. No. 588/IPR/Pub/classi./18-19
Date. 11.1.2019

Divisional Engineer
Rural Management & Development Department,
Namchi Sub-Division

SummitTIMES

ON TOP OF THE NEWS

Issues – Explaining vs. Raising

Replacing reasoning with rhetoric cannot lead to resolutions

This might be the Information Age, but there is still a long way to go for it to become the age of understanding. A people fed on headlines and getting issues explained in slogans, leave themselves open to easy excitability and when arguments are thrown from political positions, reasoning gets warped by inferred intents and prejudiced aspersions. With attention spans already shortened by easy distractions, one is left with a situation where faculties in general are not even vaguely conducive to serving better comprehension.

And one speaks not just in the context of Sikkim, but expands it to any development almost anywhere in the world. Take the Donald making headlines for instance – he offered to drain the swamp (of political and economic corruption) in the US of A, but continues to speak (tweet, rather) only of the slights he has suffered. Since he never explained how he would drain the swamp and just raised the bogey, there is really no way of knowing whether he is pursuing that agenda or not. Closer home, tribal organizations of Nagaland continue violent suppression of women's empowerment claiming that it dilutes their "old laws" (yes, even they have old laws), but fail to explain how progress equates to dilution. The Old Laws full-stopped in the sixties when ideas of assisted women's empowerment had not yet come about, especially not in a tribal society. It should have taken more than just a call to sentiments to derail such an important step forward as reservation of seats for women urban local bodies. In Sikkim, the current flavor for such raising without explaining is the reservation of Scheduled Tribes seats to accommodate the Limboos and Tamangs. Some have even argued that expanding the number of Assembly seats to 40 will dilute provisions of Article 371F but have failed to explain how status quo forever can be a good thing. Or, for that matter, how they make peace with reservations and quotas in every sphere of activity when the only Old Law reservation in Sikkim was with regard political representation.

Such penchant for raising and demanding without explaining continues around us in the form of statehood demands and claims surrounding demonetization.

In Sikkim, as also in its immediate neighbourhood, inherent paranoia and sentimentality are teased often to foist issues, which, even when vaguely argued by its promoters, snowball into complicated puzzles that become more confounding and intractable as more people join the debate. Issues rarely get resolved with such approaches, and this serves the interests of lazy politics rather well because it sets up issues for easy invocations in the future. While it would be easy to dismiss these complications to political gimmicks born from 'ulterior motives', more often than not, these are situations which have been run to the ground after being born of genuine concern. In all of these, a resolution slips through the fingers because the public debate that is required for any sensitive and emotional issue to be resolved, is left wanting. Following a projected public outcry, the matter starts getting directed by leaders, both, from the ruling as well as Opposition camps, and the public involvement, without which a result is not possible, gets sidelined. The pursuit, once such issues enter the political rhetoric, becomes one of extending the debate and scoring points, not resolving it or even refining it or finding closure. One has seen this routine get played out too often in the past, not to cringe when a new opportunity stands on the brink of being similarly distracted.

Venezuelans reject Maduro presidency — but most would oppose foreign military operation to oust him

DAVID SMILDE
theconversation.com

Venezuelan president Nicolás Maduro, who has led his country into one of the world's worst economic crises, was sworn in for a new six-year term on Jan. 10.

His inauguration at the Supreme Court was a lonely one: Some 40 countries – including the United States, Brazil, Colombia and the entire European Union – are refusing to recognize Maduro's government because they believe his May 2018 re-election was rigged.

How else could a leader with a 21 percent approval rating win 68 percent of the vote?

Oil producer Venezuela, once among Latin America's more prosperous nations, has seen severe food and medicine shortages since 2014. Thousands of people flee dire crisis there every day.

Most Venezuelans hold Maduro – the late Hugo Chávez's handpicked successor, first elected president in 2013 – responsible for their suffering.

But holding Maduro accountable has proven vexingly difficult.

SEEKING CHANGE DEMOCRATICALLY

Citizens can democratically demand change from poorly performing leaders in three ways: vote them out of office, protest for them to change course or resign, or make demands through face-to-face dialogue.

Venezuelans have tried all three.

The last free elections in Venezuela were held in December 2015. Opposition parties won the Venezuelan legislature in a landslide, securing a super-majority that gave them unprecedented strength to check Maduro.

His ruling United Socialist Party responded by progressively stripping the legislature of its powers and ensuring the Socialists would not lose another election.

First, the government-run national electoral agency canceled a proposed presidential recall vote in 2016. Then, in July 2017, the Socialist Party called an unconstitutional vote to elect an alternative legislature. Later that year, party officials openly committed fraud in regional elections.

When Maduro stood for re-election in 2018, Socialist Party officials disqualified leading opposition politicians and parties from running and forced the vote seven months early to prevent them from reorganizing.

Many Venezuelans fought for their democracy.

From April to July 2017, hundreds of thousands of demonstrators took to the streets nationwide, mostly in peaceful protest. Marchers in Caracas who neared the presidential palace or government

ministries were met by police and soldiers in riot gear who scattered them using tear gas, water cannons and, often, live ammunition.

At least 124 people were killed during Venezuela's 2017 protests. Another 4,000 were injured and 5,000 were arrested, according to the Inter-American Human Rights Council. Dozens, perhaps hundreds, were tortured.

Amid all of this, Venezuela's opposition also tried talking with Maduro's government.

But dialogues in 2014, 2016 and 2018 – including one mediated by the Vatican – achieved little. Arguably, the talks weakened the opposition-led protest movement by giving the appearance of government concessions.

THE MILITARY OPTION

After democratic elections, protest and dialogue failed to resolve Venezuela's political crisis, some international leaders proposed a more drastic measure to create political change.

In August 2017, shortly after the U.S. slapped economic sanctions on President Maduro himself, President Donald Trump said that the United States was considering a "military option" in Venezuela.

"Venezuela is not very far away and the people are suffering, and they are dying," Trump said. "We have many options for Venezuela, including a possible military option if necessary."

Administration officials even met with Venezuelan military officials plotting a coup before declining to support their plan.

Latin American governments rejected Trump's "military option."

But some exiled Venezuela leaders have embraced the idea.

"Military intervention by a coalition of regional forces may be the only way to end a man-made famine threatening millions of lives," the former Venezuelan minister and Harvard professor Ricardo Hausmann wrote in a January 2018 Project Syndicate column.

Hausmann pointed to the 1989 U.S. invasion of Panama and World War II as positive precedents of foreign interventions that ended tyrannical regimes.

Former Caracas mayor Antonio Ledezma has used euphemistic language to justify a foreign-backed removal of Maduro, saying it would be a "humanitarian intervention."

Comparing the crisis there to the Rwandan genocide of the 1990s, Secretary General of the Organization of American States Luis Almagro has suggested that military intervention could be justified under international law, which includes the "responsibility to protect."

In the view of "military option" supporters,

Venezuelans would welcome such an operation if it ended their suffering.

Intervention would be "extremely popular" in Venezuela, according to Diego Arria, a former Venezuelan ambassador to the United Nations and a prominent Maduro critic.

WOULD VENEZUELAN SUPPORT FOREIGN MILITARY INTERVENTION?

My research in Venezuela suggests otherwise.

All credible polling in Venezuela says that most Venezuelans desperately want Maduro out. But that does not necessarily mean they are open to desperate measures.

In November 2018, I worked with Datanálisis, one of Venezuela's most respected polling companies, to add several questions about about military intervention and potential negotiations to its nationwide tracking poll.

When asked whether they would support "a foreign military intervention to remove President Maduro from his position," only 35 percent said yes – hardly the warm welcome predicted by advocates. More than half – 54 percent – would reject such an operation.

Venezuelans are also skeptical of renewed talks with Maduro.

Only 37 percent would "agree with a new dialogue between the government and the opposition." Forty percent are "indifferent" to renewed talks or did not answer the question.

SO WHAT DO VENEZUELAN WANT?

Given how poorly past engagement with Maduro's government has gone, their doubts are understandable.

Interest in further talks balloons, however, if the same question is reframed to include a positive result.

When respondents were asked about "a negotiated settlement to remove President Maduro from power," 63 percent said they would support it. That makes negotiations by far the most popular option for restoring democracy in Venezuela, according to this data.

These results should boost current efforts by the European Union and the Boston Group – a coalition of Venezuelan and American politicians – to restore high-level contact between Venezuelan government figures, opposition leaders and foreign officials.

Diplomacy may be slow and frustrating. But a negotiated settlement would have the support of the people who matter most: the Venezuelans who must survive Maduro's rule.

[the writer is Professor of Sociology, Tulane University]



Lake Baikal: how climate change is threatening the world's oldest, deepest lake

ANSON MACKAY
theconversation.com

Lake Baikal, the world's oldest, deepest lake, is feeling the temperature of human-induced climate change. Situated in southern Siberia, Baikal occupies one of the fastest warming regions on the planet and, as a result, the lake itself has got warmer, seasonal ice is present for a shorter period of time and has got thinner, and its waters have become stratified for longer periods. These changes have already had an impact on the lake's microscopic life, including phytoplankton and zooplankton.

Now, our new research has provided the first evidence that some of the lake's unique microscopic plants are being outcompeted by species not unique to the lake, most likely due to climate change. Although these ecological changes are so far confined to the south basin of Lake Baikal, they may act as an early warning signal of what might happen across the rest of the lake in the coming decades.

HISTORY IS PRESERVED IN MUD

To place modern ecological observations into a wider and longer-term perspective, we looked at the mud which accumulates at the bottom of

the lake. This preserves an environmental history that, with careful collection and analyses, can be used to reveal changes in the lake's ecology.

We were especially interested in investigating long-term trends in a key group of organisms called diatoms. These tiny algae are invisible to the naked eye, being only a fifth of the breadth of human hair.

Most of the energy in Lake Baikal's food web ultimately comes from photosynthesis by these tiny diatoms. They are also especially useful in reconstructing long-term changes in the lake's ecology because they have shells made of silica, the same material as glass, which allows their fossils to be preserved in the lake mud.

SOME DIATOMS ARE MORE ADAPTABLE

As with most plants and animals found in Baikal, these diatoms are mainly endemic – that is, they are found nowhere else in the world. Back in 2006, one of us (Anson) predicted that climate change would lead to a decline in Baikal's large, heavy, slow-growing, endemic diatom species, as they would quickly sink out of the photic zone as the lake became increasingly stratified. His work suggested that they would be replaced by smaller, lighter, faster

growing species (both endemic and those found elsewhere), able to better tolerate more stratified water.

In the current study, our colleague Sarah Roberts set out to test this hypothesis as part of her PhD, by extracting "cores" from the mud at the bottom of the lake, to see what diatoms were like in previous years.

Our findings were surprising. In the south of Lake Baikal our data showed that a significant change in the diatoms occurred at the very start of the 1970s, at the same time as the lake began to warm and ice thinned.

As predicted, this change was manifested by a decline in diatoms with thick, heavy shells, alongside an increase in faster-growing species with lighter shells, such as *Synedra acus*, a species also found growing in many other lakes worldwide.

What we didn't expect was the decline in other lighter, endemic species such as *Crateriportula inconspicua*.

When the heavy diatoms decline in abundance, dissolved silica needed to make their glass shells is now available for other diatoms to use. But because *S. acus* can tolerate higher water temperatures with fast growth rates, it quickly outcompetes the other smaller, endemic diatoms.

WHY THIS MATTERS

Why is this important? Climate change is already messing with ecosystems in other large, ancient lakes, such as Lake Tanganyika in East Africa. What happens to plankton has a knock on effect up the food web, causing fish to struggle and also, ultimately, those humans who depend on the ecosystem for their livelihood.

The increasing dominance by non-endemic diatom species in Lake Baikal has the potential to disrupt the lake's own food web, through changes to the types of zooplankton and other fauna that feed on Baikal diatoms, which may ultimately impact on the endemic fish species that feed on the zooplankton communities themselves.

Elsewhere in the lake, we are also seeing an increase in algal mats along the coastline, linked to untreated sewage from coastal settlements. Interacting stressors from both nutrient enrichment along Lake Baikal's coastline, and increasing surface water temperatures and stratification from climate change, could have untold consequences on biodiversity in one of the world's unique ecosystems.

[the writer is Professor of Environmental Change, UCL]

Odisha to host international dam safety conference next month

BHUBANESWAR, JAN 11 (PTI): The best practices followed across the global for ensuring safety of aging dams will be among the several issues to be discussed at an international dam safety conference, to be hosted by Odisha next month.

Central Water Commission (CWC) Chairman Masood Husain, met Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik Thursday and invited him to be the chief guest at the inaugural function.

The two-day programme will begin on February 13.

"A World Bank programme on dam safety is underway in the country. This programme is based on the safety and maintenance issues of old dams and the international conference is a part of it," Husain said.

Delegates from over 20 countries will deliberate on several issues, including challenges in dam safety management, global best practices in dam safety management and governance, major rehabilitation and other risk reduction investments at the conference, he said.

Odisha's Water Resources Secretary, P K Jena said the event will be jointly organised by the state government, the CWC and the World Bank.

Meanwhile, the state has finalised plans to build another spillway at Hirakud dam for releasing more flood water, Jena said.

As the existing spillway of the dam is not sufficient for managing flood water, an additional spillway is being constructed at the right embankment, he said.

The work contract for the construction has already been awarded and the project would be completed in three years with an investment of about Rs 500 crore, CWC member (design) NK Mathur said.

"The Hirakud Dam was built in Sambalpur district in the 60s, based on the then available technology. New technologies will now be used for building the additional spillway," Jena said.

The length of the spillway would be 91 metre with five sluice gates and the width of the spillway channel would be around 300 meter.

The new spillway channel will originate from near the Gandhi Minar on the left dyke of Hirakud reservoir and meet the river Mahanadi near the Jawahar Uddyan.

Currently, there are 98 gates to release around 15 lakh cusec of flood water from the Hirakud dam. Of the 98 gates, 64 are sluice gates and the rest 34 are crest gates.

Protesters block roads, burn tyres during 12-hour Assam bandh



GUWAHATI, JAN 11 (PTI): Protesters burnt tyres and kept tree trunks on roads to block movement of vehicles in Bodoland Territorial Area districts during a 12-hour Assam bandh called by a conglomerate of tribal organisations on Friday.

The bandh has been called by the Coordination Committee of the Tribal Organisations of Assam (CCTOA) to protest a bill that seeks to grant Scheduled Tribe (ST) status to six ethnic communities in the state.

The bandh was near total in the Bodoland Territorial Area Districts (BTAD) such as Kokrajhar, Udalguri, Baksa and

Chirang, Bongaigaon, besides in tribal-dominated areas of Morigaon, Nagaon, Hojai, Dima Hasao and Karbi Anglong districts.

Bandh supporters attempted to block movement of vehicles on National Highways and other roads by burning tyres and laying tree trunks in the early hours of the bandh, police said.

Trucks were stranded on NH-36 at Doboka, they said.

Shops, markets, educational institutions, banks, private offices remained closed, while vehicles kept off the road.

Attendance in government offices was thin

due to absence of public transport in the bandh-hit areas, police said, adding that the bandh had no impact in the state capital.

Security arrangements were stepped up in view of the bandh in Assam which is also witnessing massive protests over the Citizenship Amendment Bill.

This bandh comes close on the heels of a 11-hour strike called on Tuesday against the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill.

Bandh sponsors have criticised the BJP-led Central governments move to pass the Constitution (Scheduled

Tribes) Amendment Bill, stating it would eliminate the "genuine tribal people" of the state.

The Constitution (Scheduled Tribes) Amendment Bill seeks to accord ST status to six ethnic groups -- Koch-Rajbongshis, Tea Tribes/Adivasis, Tai Ahoms, Morans, Motoks and Chutia -- was tabled in Lok Sabha on Wednesday.

The bandh is also supported by Dimas Students Union, Hmar Students Association, All Biare Students Association, Hrangkhoh Students Association, All Dimas Students Union, Khasi Students Union, Karbi Students Association.

Madhabbari violence: Tribal outfits call bandh on Jan 12

AGARTALA, JAN 11 (PTI): Five Indigenous political parties have called a dawn-to-dusk bandh in the Tripura Tribal Areas Autonomous District Council (TTAADC) on Saturday to protest against unprovoked police firing at Madhabbari in West Tripura district earlier this week.

The TTAADC area comprises two-third of the state's territory and is home to tribals, who constitute a third of the population of Tripura.

The parties, who have called the bandh, are Indigenous Peoples Front of Tripura (IPFT-Tipraha group), Indigenous Nationalist Party of Tripura (INPT), Twipra State Party (TSP), National Conference of Tripura (NCT) and Tripura Peoples Party (TPP).

At least seven persons were injured on Tuesday in West Tripura district when police and paramilitary jawans resorted to lathicharge and fired in the air to disperse Citizenship Bill protesters.

Un a joint press conference on Thursday night, the leaders of the said parties announced their decision to call a bandh.

Their demands include resignation of Chief Minister Biplab Kumar Deb, inquiry by a sitting judge of Tripura High Court, Rs 25 lakh compensation to all the injured activists of the TSF or government job for them and withdrawal of cases against the leaders, who participated in the protests.

General Secretary of INPT Jagadish Debbarma said, Police opened unprovoked firing and we have demanded judicial probe by a sitting high court judge so that truths are unveiled.

The Tripura govern-

ment on Thursday had ordered a magisterial inquiry into the violence at Madhabbari in West Tripura district and extended a ban on SMS and mobile Internet services in the state.

Police on Thursday said that the situation in Madhabbari and adjacent areas is normal but prohibitory order under section 144 of CrPc would be further extended for 48 hours.

Chief Minister Biplab Kumar Deb told a press conference here that a magisterial inquiry was ordered to look into how the incident took place and under what circumstances did the police open fire.

Earlier on Thursday, Mevar Kumar Jamatiya, the state Tribal Welfare minister and General Secretary of ruling IPFT in a press conference alleged that the opposition CPI(M) and INPT had aggravated the situation at Madhabbari and misguided the movement.

The Tribal Student Federation (TSF), a constituent of North East Student Organisation (NESO), had demonstrated by blocking the road on Tuesday to protest the citizenship amendment bill, 2016.

General Secretary of TSF, Sunil Debbarma said his organization would support the bandh to make it a success.

The opposition CPI(M) has appealed to the political parties to withdraw the bandh as it feels it would not help solve the problems.

We have appealed to the parties to withdraw the bandh, because it could further aggravate the situation in the state, CPI(M) Central Committee member and former state Secretary Bijan Dhar told reporters on Friday.

BJP hopes to cash in on Citizenship Bill in Bengal

KOLKATA, JAN 11 (PTI): With the Lok Sabha polls approaching, the West Bengal BJP hopes to cash in on the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill to reach out to the one crore odd Hindu Bangladeshi refugees in the state once the bill is implemented.

The Citizenship (Amendment) Bill, 2016, passed by the Lok Sabha on January 8, seeks to grant Indian citizenship to the non-Muslims who fled religious persecution in Bangladesh, Pakistan and Afghanistan and entered India before December 31, 2014.

According to a Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leader, the bill will not only endear them to the Hindu refugees in the state but will also help them counter the allegation of being an "anti-Bengali" party.

The ruling Trinamool Congress (TMC) and several opposition parties in the state had levelled the saffron party as "anti-Bengali", following the publication of the National Register of Citizens (NRC) drafts in Assam last year.

Mohit Roy, convenor of the BJP's refugee cell, told PTI that the bill would change the future of the one crore Bengali refugees living in West Bengal. "Various politi-

cal parties have played with the emotions of the Bengali refugees living in the state for the past several decades. Neither the TMC nor the CPI(M), which boast of being champions of refugees, did nothing for the Bengali refugees. It is (Prime Minister) Narendra Modi and the BJP which will give them citizenship. This is a historic decision," he said.

In the next few days, the party will set up camps and make people aware of the bill, especially in the bordering districts such as North and South 24 Parganas, Coochbehar, Uttar Dinajpur and Nadia which have a very high concentration of Bengali refugees, BJP sources said.

These districts account for around 10-12 Lok Sabha seats in the state. The saffron party has identified West Bengal as a priority state and party chief Amit Shah has set a target of winning 22 of the 42 Lok Sabha seats in the state in the upcoming general election.

The Citizenship (Amendment) Bill would be one of the top issues in West Bengal in the Lok Sabha polls, West Bengal BJP chief Dilip Ghosh told PTI. He said the passage of the bill had exposed the "double standards"

of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) and the TMC, who had played politics with the emotions of the refugees in West Bengal.

"The TMC had tried to portray the BJP as an anti-Bengali party when the NRC drafts were published. Now what would they say? We have passed the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill to give rights to Hindus and Bengalis," Ghosh added.

He said the BJP did not believe in vote-bank politics like the TMC, which was busy appeasing a specific community in the state.

Senior TMC MP Saugata Roy dubbed the bill as "divisive" and "insidious" that went against the basic tenets of the Constitution.

State minister and North 24 Parganas president of the TMC Jyotipriyo Mullick told PTI that the people of Bengal were well aware of the kind of development initiatives the Mamata Banerjee-led party had undertaken for the benefit of the refugees in the state.

"Unlike the BJP, we do not believe in dividing people on the basis of religion. We do not differentiate between refugees on the basis of religion," he said.

Bus carrying Odisha Fire Services personnel attacked

SHILLONG, JAN 11 (PTI): A bus carrying personnel of the Odisha Fire Services (OFS) was attacked by unidentified persons Thursday night during the blockade of the National Highways sponsored by at least 14 pressure groups, said Superintendent of Police, Sylvester Nongtynger said.

He said the window of the bus was partially damaged and there was no injury to the occupants. The SP said the team was escorted to

coal mine in the district.

"The bus ferrying rescuers from Odisha was attacked by unidentified persons Thursday night during the blockade of the National Highways sponsored by at least 14 pressure groups," said Superintendent of Police, Sylvester Nongtynger said.

He said the window of the bus was partially damaged and there was no injury to the occupants. The SP said the team was escorted to

their place of stay during the night and rebutted reports that the rescuers were injured.

A group of about 14 pressure groups led by the Hynniewtrep Youth Council called the night blockade of national highways in the Khasi Jaintia Hills region from 7 pm Thursday night till 5 am Friday morning to oppose the Citizenship Amendment Bill which was passed by the Lok Sabha on Tuesday.

Landslide engulfs children in central Indonesia, killing 1



JAKARTA, JAN 11 (AP): A landslide engulfed children playing near a cliff in central Indonesia, killing one and injuring several, the country's disaster agency said Friday.

Agency spokesman Sutopo Purwo Nugroho posted a video online that showed frantic villagers pulling a limp child out of sodden earth on Thursday afternoon.

He said that three children out of a group

of six were injured and two were safe. They were playing by rail tracks in a hilly area when the landslide suddenly hit in Java's Sukabumi district, about 100 kilometers (60 miles) south of the capital, Jakarta. Deadly landslides and floods occur regularly during seasonal rains in Indonesia.

A landslide in Sukabumi on the main island of Java earlier this month killed 32 people.



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End in sight for magnificent Murray

MELBOURNE, JAN 11 (AFP): Reaching world number one in an era of Roger Federer, Novak Djokovic and Rafael Nadal speaks volumes about the drive of Andy Murray, who took up the game as a three-year-old.

But at 31, excruciating pain from a hip injury is drawing the curtain on a professional career that spanned 14 years and ended a decades-long drought for British tennis.

The Scot would prefer to go out in a blaze of glory on home territory at Wimbledon, but may not get that far with next week's Australian Open shaping as potentially his last event.

His has been a glittering career, but it may have been very different.

In a terrifying twist of fate, an eight-year-old Murray hid himself away during the Dunblane school massacre that claimed the lives of 16 children and one teacher in 1996.

A 43-year-old man with 700 rounds of ammunition opened fire on Murray's schoolmates before shooting himself in a gymnasium that Murray had been on his way to at the time.

He is a big football fan and could also have gone down that path when offered a trial with



Scottish giants Rangers. But he opted for tennis instead, encouraged by his mother Judy, and moved to a renowned academy in Barcelona as a 15-year-old.

There he honed his skills -- developing a rare counterpunching style that valued speed, finesse and fitness over raw power -- before turning professional in 2005, making five semi-finals in a breakout year Murray showcased his talent to the world by reaching his first major final at the US Open in 2008, only to lose to the already incomparable Federer, who beat him again in the Australian Open final two years later.

By the time Murray was beaten by the Swiss maestro at Wimbledon in 2012, he feared he would never be able to call himself a Grand Slam champion.

But his remarkable work ethic and intense focus were rewarded during a purple patch under the guidance of demanding coach Ivan Lendl.

In 2012 he emulated legendary Briton Fred Perry's 1936 achievement by winning the US Open, beating defending champion Djokovic in four hours 54 minutes.

It was the equal-longest final at Flushing Meadows in history, and finally gave Murray the

major title he had been craving. "When I realised I had won, I was a little bit shocked, I was very relieved and I was very emotional," he later said.

In another era, another generation less golden -- one shorn of epoch-making greats like Federer, Djokovic and Nadal -- he may have been all conquering.

Instead, a nagging sense of underachievement shadowed his career. But that only made his successes all the more sweet -- never more so than on the afternoon of July 7, 2013.

When Djokovic's baseline shot hit the net with a clipped thwack it shattered the tense

silence of Wimbledon's centre court and sent his native country into pandemonium.

An exhausted Murray dropped his racket, shook his fists in the air and broke down on the ground in tears. 6-4, 7-5, 6-4. Victory. The first British man to win Wimbledon for 77 years, ending the nation's obsession with finding a champion to follow in the footsteps of Perry.

"I didn't know what to do with myself," said Murray. "The noise levels during the whole match were just incredible."

That final was watched by more than 17 million viewers in Britain and, according to the ATP tour, was the most talked about among British Facebook users, outshining the "birth of a future King, appointment of a new Pope and passing of an iconic Prime Minister".

In 2015, he married his long-term girlfriend Kim Sears, often spotted supporting him from the stands at his tournaments, and the couple now have two children together.

Knighted "Sir Andy", he is still the only person to be named British sports personality of the year three times. But his relationship with the United Kingdom was not always simple, drawing

criticism for backing Scotland's failed 2014 bid for independence.

When he split with Lendl in the same year, Murray went into a funk that lasted two years.

He began working with former women's world number one Amelie Mauresmo, winning plaudits as a feminist pioneer in the macho world of men's tennis, but the relationship yielded no more Grand Slam titles.

But he returned to winning ways in 2016, lining up against big-serving Canadian Milos Raonic in the Wimbledon final after upsetting Federer in the semis, and rallied to a 6-4, 7-6 (7-3), 7-6 (7-2) victory.

He then became the first player to win two Olympic singles gold medals when he successfully defended his title in Rio, defeating Juan Martin del Potro in "one of the hardest matches" of his career.

But the injuries began to take their toll and he pulled out of last year's Australian Open to have hip surgery. He only returned in June, and all was not well.

The grind of professional tennis had taken its toll and with the pain not going away, Murray has reluctantly faced the fact that his time at the top is over.

After Test high, India begin final preparations for World Cup



SYDNEY, JAN 11 (PTI): Hit hard by an unexpected controversy after the high of the Test triumph, India will look to fine tune their World Cup preparations in the three-match ODI series against an under-fire Australia, beginning here on Saturday.

On the eve of the opening game, the BCCI suspended Hardik Pandya and K L Rahul pending an inquiry for their unsavoury remarks on women during a TV show, effectively ruling them out of the series.

While Pandya was a certainty in the playing XI, an out-of-form Rahul was not in contention to play on Saturday.

Skipper Virat Kohli on Friday condemned the comments made by his two teammates and said the team does not align with the "individual opinions".

"The two concerned players (have) felt what has gone wrong and they have understood the magnitude of what's happened," he said in the pre-match press conference.

Rahul was unlikely to get a go owing to both his poor form and the presence of a well-settled opening pair in Rohit Sharma and Shikhar Dhawan. More significant is Pandya's absence as the all-rounder provides crucial balance to the ODI side with his ability to bowl 10 overs as well as bat in the middle order.

Pandya's absence means that India will have to rejig their attack. Jasprit Bumrah has already been rested for this series, as well as the tour of New Zealand, and this allows the think-tank to conduct one final experimentation with their bowling attack.

Bhuvneshwar Kumar is a shoe-in, and thereafter it depends if Kohli wants to go in with a three-man pace attack to compensate for Pandya's loss.

In such a scenario, Mohammed Shami and Khaleel Ahmed are expected to get the nod, as India continue zeroing on the pace quartet for the World Cup squad. There is a sprinkling of grass on the SCG pitch and it could push the Indian skipper to opt for a three-pacer and two-spinner combination.

Kohli also stated that, in Pandya's absence, Ravindra Jadeja would step up as the all-rounder. He would partner up with left-arm wrist spinner Kuldeep Yadav as India's five-pronged attack, with Kedar Jadhav fulfilling any part-time bowling duties if needed.

With the two openers, and Kohli at number three, the remaining batting line-up picks itself. Jadhav, MS Dhoni and Ambati Rayudu will form the middle order, and there will be keen interest in the latter duo's form here. Dhoni had

an off-colour 2018, managing 275 runs in 20 ODIs at average 25 without a half-century. While this is a meagre return for a batsman of his stature, the worrying aspect is Dhoni's strike-rate of 71.42, which is remarkably lower than his ODI career strike-rate of 87.89.

India brought in Rayudu for the all-important number four role, and since the Asia Cup last September, have given him a long run in the middle order. In this interim, Rayudu scored 392 runs in 11 ODIs in the Asia Cup and against West Indies at average 56 including a hundred and three half-centuries.

While he put in a more consistent showing than any of the other previously tried contenders, this run came in conditions different from those in England. As such, how Rayudu fares on this twin tour of Australia and New Zealand will be a closer representation of whether the Indian team has finally cracked the number four quandary.

Similar middle-order issues plagued the visitors when they last toured here for an ODI contest, losing 4-1 in January 2016 when Dhoni was still captain. Sharma and Kohli topped the charts with 441 and 381 runs in the five-match series, respectively, while Dhawan also scored 287 runs.

But there were no sizeable contributions from the middle, and only Manish Pandey's fighting hundred in the final ODI had saved India from a 5-0 scoreline.

India's ODI record in Australia is quite poor. Apart from the 1985 World Championship and 2008 CB Series wins, they have lost 35 out of 48 ODIs played against Australia on their home soil.

The absence of David Warner (220 runs in three matches in 2016) and Steve Smith (315 runs in five matches in 2016) might help them again though, as also the absence of Mitchell Starc, Pat Cummins and Josh Hazlewood, with the trio rested from this series.

Australia have named their playing eleven ahead of the first ODI, with Nathan Lyon featuring as the lone spinner and Peter Siddle returning to this format for the first time since 2010. Keeper-batsman Alex Carey will open in ODI cricket for the first time, and will pair up with skipper Aaron Finch, while Usman Khawaja, Shaun Marsh and Peter Handscomb will form the middle order.

The hosts bat deep with Marcus Stoinis and Glenn Maxwell lined up at numbers six and seven, albeit their pace attack seems weak on paper. With Siddle returning to the format after eight years, left-arm pacer Jason Behrendorff will make his ODI debut on Saturday.

Teams: India: Virat Kohli (c), Rohit Sharma, KL Rahul, Shikhar Dhawan, Ambati Rayudu, Dinesh Karthik, Kedar Jadhav, MS Dhoni (wk), Hardik Pandya, Kuldeep Yadav, Yuzvendra Chahal, Ravindra Jadeja, Bhuvneshwar Kumar, Khaleel Ahmed, Mohammed Shami, Mohammed Siraj.

Australia (playing XI): Aaron Finch (c), Alex Carey (wk), Usman Khawaja, Shaun Marsh, Peter Handscomb, Marcus Stoinis, Glenn Maxwell, Nathan Lyon, Peter Siddle, Jhye Richardson, Jason Behrendorff.

Match starts 7.50 am IST.

Oceans warming much faster than previously thought: Study

LOS ANGELES, JAN 11 (PTI): Heat trapped by greenhouse gases is raising ocean temperatures faster than previously thought, according to a study which provides further evidence that earlier claims of a "hiatus" in global warming over the past 15 years were unfounded.

"If you want to see where global warming is happening, look in our oceans," said Zeke Hausfather, a graduate student at the University of California, Berkeley in the US. "Ocean heating is a very important indicator of climate change, and we have robust evidence that it is warming more rapidly than we thought," Hausfather said.

Ocean heating is critical marker of climate change because an estimated 93 per cent of the excess solar energy trapped by greenhouse gases accumulates in the world's oceans.

Unlike surface temperatures, ocean temperatures are not affected by year-to-year variations caused by climate events like El Nino or volcanic eruptions.

The new analysis, published in the journal Science, shows that trends in ocean heat content match those predicted by leading climate change models, and that overall ocean warming is accelerating. Assuming a "business-as-usual" scenario in which no effort has been made to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, the Coupled

Model Intercomparison Project 5 (CMIP5) models predict that the temperature of the top 2,000 metres of the world's oceans will rise 0.78 degrees Celsius by the end of the century, researchers said.

The thermal expansion caused by this bump in temperature would raise sea levels 30 centimeters on top of the already significant sea level rise caused by melting glaciers and ice sheets.

Warmer oceans also contribute to stronger storms, hurricanes and extreme precipitation.

"While 2018 will be the fourth warmest year on record on the surface, it will most certainly be the warmest year on record in the oceans, as was 2017 and 2016 before that," said Hausfather. Four studies, published between 2014 and 2017, provide better estimates of past trends in ocean heat content by correcting for discrepancies between different types of ocean temperature measurements and by better accounting for gaps in measurements over time or location.

"The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's (IPCC) Fifth Assessment Report, published in 2013, showed that leading climate change models seemed to predict a much faster increase in ocean heat content over the last 30 years than was seen in observations," Hausfather said.

Pandya, Rahul suspended pending inquiry; to be issued fresh show cause notices

KUSHAN SARKAR

NEW DELHI, JAN 11 (PTI): Indian cricketers Hardik Pandya and K L Rahul were Friday suspended pending an inquiry into their outrage-evoking comments on women during a TV show, ruling them out of the ODI series against Australia starting Saturday.

The cricketers, who have been in the eye of a storm following their sexist remarks on 'Koffee with Karan', were omitted from the line-up for the opening match in Sydney.

"Both Pandya and Rahul have been suspended pending an inquiry," the Committee of Administrators (CoA) chairman Vinod Rai told PTI.

A source in the BCCI said the two will be issued fresh show cause notices before a formal enquiry begins.

"Whether it will be an internal committee of the BCCI or an ad hoc ombudsman who will conduct an inquiry, is yet to be ascertained," the official said.

"The Indian team management will take a call on whether they would want to keep the two with the team or send them back. There is a school of thought that they be kept with the team as the backlash back home could be severe but majority in BCCI brass is against the decision," he added.

In case the two are brought back from Australia, the likes of Rishabh Pant and Manish Pandey will be in contention to be their replacements.

"It won't be surprising if two from Vijay

Shankar, Shreyas Iyer, Manish Pandey or Rishabh Pant are flown Down Under," the source said.

The decision to hand them suspensions came after Rai's CoA colleague Diana Edulji recommended suspension till further action against the two. This was after the BCCI's legal team refused to declare the duo's comments a violation of the code of conduct.

Edulji had initially suggested a two-match suspension for the duo but referred the matter to the legal cell after Vinod Rai agreed with her and recommended the same.

"It is imperative that players be put under suspension till further course of action is decided for this misconduct as was done in case of (BCCI) CEO (Rahul Johri) when he was sent on leave on sexual harassment matter," read Edulji's response to the legal opinion which is in possession of PTI.

Their remarks on the show were also condemned by India captain Virat Kohli, who called them inappropriate and asserted that the side does not stand by "those individual opinions".

Pandya had boasted about hooking up with multiple women and being open about it with his parents during the interview. Rahul was, however, a shade more restrained in his responses on relationships and women.

It is speculated that the BCCI might bar players from appearing on entertainment shows owing to the ongoing furor.

US-led coalition says Syria withdrawal has begun

BEIRUT, JAN 11 (AFP): The US-led military coalition in Syria has begun pulling out troops, a spokesman said on Friday without elaborating on locations or timetables.

"CJTF-OIR has begun the process of our deliberate withdrawal from Syria," spokesman Colonel Sean Ryan told AFP in a statement, referring to the US-led anti-jihadist force.

"Out of concern for operational security, we will not discuss specific timelines, locations or troops movements," he said.

The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights reported that the coalition had started scaling down its presence at Rmeilan airfield in the northeastern province of Hasakeh.

"On Thursday, some American forces withdrew from the Rmeilan military base in Hasakeh province," Rami Abdel Rahman, the head of the Britain-based monitoring organisation, said.

"This is the first such pullout of American forces since the US president's announcement" of a full troop withdrawal from Syria last month, he said. On December 19, Trump said he had ordered the withdrawal of all US forces in Syria, which are believed to number around 2,000.

His announcement, which came after a phone call with Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, was criticised even within his own camp and is already having major repercussions on the nearly eight-year-old conflict.

Myanmar Reuters journalists lose appeal against 7-year sentence



YANGON, JAN 11 (AFP): Two Reuters journalists jailed for seven years while investigating atrocities committed against the Rohingya in Myanmar had their appeal dismissed Friday, dismaying colleagues and tearful family members who had held slim hopes they would walk free.

Reporters Wa Lone, 32, and Kyaw Soe Oo, 28, were arrested in Yangon in December 2017 and later jailed for violating the state secrets act, a charge Reuters said was trumped up to muzzle their reporting.

Prosecutors say the two had classified information regarding security operations in Rakhine state, from where hundreds of thousands of Rohingya Muslims fled during an army-led crackdown the United

Nations has described as "ethnic cleansing".

Aung Naing, a judge at the Yangon Regional High Court, said the original verdict was a "reasonable decision" delivered in line with the law.

"The court decides to dismiss the appeal," he said.

The reporters' wives cried after the decision, which condemns the pair to continue their incarceration at Yangon's notorious Insein prison, where they have been held for the last 13 months.

"I feel really sad that what we hoped for did not happen," a stone-faced Chit Su Win, who is married to Kyaw Soe Oo, told reporters outside the court.

Wa Lone's wife Pan Ei Mon -- who has given birth to a baby girl since

her husband was put behind bars -- was similarly despondent.

"I don't want to talk about the decision today as it is not good news," she said.

The two men -- who were not present for the decision -- have insisted they were victims of a police set-up, pointing to testimony from a serving officer who said a superior ordered others to entrap them.

At the time of the arrest they were probing the extrajudicial killing of 10 Rohingya at Inn Din village in northern Rakhine state. "They remain behind bars for one reason: those in power sought to silence the truth," Reuters editor-in-chief Stephen J Adler said in a statement Friday.

The original trial

was widely regarded as a sham and seen as punishment for their investigation and a warning shot to other media.

Outside the country, the two men have been hailed as media freedom heroes and jointly named Time Magazine's Person of the Year 2018, alongside other high-profile journalists.

But they have gained little sympathy within Myanmar.

The violent military campaign in 2017 forced more than 720,000 Rohingya across the border to Bangladesh, with refugees bringing accounts of murder, rape and arson.

UN investigators have called for top generals to be investigated for genocide and singled out de facto civilian leader Aung San Suu Kyi for criticism for failing to condemn

the operations.

The image of the formerly renowned champion of human rights has been further damaged by the Reuters conviction.

In her most comprehensive comments on their case in September, Suu Kyi denied the pair had been jailed "because they were journalists" and endorsed the court decision that "they had broken the Official Secrets Act".

Options are dwindling for the two young men.

The legal team can lodge an appeal with Myanmar's Supreme Court but some see a presidential pardon as another way out, even though the president Win Myint is a Suu Kyi loyalist.

Reacting to the verdict outside the court the European Union ambassador to Myanmar Kristian Schmidt said he looked to the president to "correct the injustice".

Speaking on the BBC, UK Foreign Secretary Jeremy Hunt urged Suu Kyi "to look at whether that due process" was followed in the case, calling on the fallen rights icon to take "a personal interest in the future of these two brave journalists."

Myanmar's army gets 25 per cent of parliamentary seats unelected under a constitution it wrote and runs all defence affairs without input from the civilian government.

India-born Republican survives motion to oust him as county leader for being Muslim



HOUSTON, JAN 11 (PTI): Shaid Shafi, an India-born Republican facing removal as Texas county leader for being a Muslim, will remain in office as his party officials have overwhelmingly slapped down a motion to oust him from the post of vice chairman.

The Tarrant County Republican Party rejected the motion to strip Shafi, a trauma surgeon and member of the Southlake City Council, at a contentious meeting on Thursday.

The committee voted 139-49 in favour of Shafi, with 10 abstentions, Washington-based news website The Daily Caller reported.

"This vote reaffirms the commitment by a majority of Tarrant County Republicans to our core values and moral compass, a demonstration of our allegiance to the Texas Republican Party Platform and the Constitutions of the United States and Texas, which strictly prohibit religious and racial discrimination of any kind," Tarrant County Party Chairman Darl Easton said.

Shafi said he was "honoured and privileged to receive the support of my fellow Republicans" and emphasised that he held no ill will towards those who voted against him.

A small but vocal minority of the county's 269 precinct chairs was behind the push to remove Shafi from his leadership position.

Shafi received an outpouring of support from Republicans across the state, including from Republican Texas Governor Greg Abbott and Texas Land Commissioner George P Bush, leading up to the vote.

Shafi, born in India and raised in Pakistan, travelled to the US to study medicine. He became a naturalised citizen in 2009 and, since then, has been involved with the Republican Party. "Religious litmus tests are wrong, whether they occur in my party or whether its Democratic Senators who have questioned Catholic judges' ability to be unbiased. What matters is a person's character, judgment and values. Shahid Shafi has all three," Bush said on Twitter.

Shafi was appointed to the position in July with overwhelming support from Republicans in Tarrant County, which is Texas' third-largest county in terms of population.

A sole precinct chair Dorrie O'Brien opposed Shafi at that time and tried to whip up opposition for him in the six months since then.

O'Brien cited the Muslim doctor's faith as her reason for opposing him in a Facebook post last month.

"We don't think he's suitable as a practising Muslim to be vice chair because he'd be the representative for ALL Republicans in Tarrant County, and not ALL

Republicans in Tarrant County think Islam is safe or acceptable in the US, in Tarrant County, and in the TCGOP, and there are big questions surrounding exactly where Shafi's loyalties lie vis a vis Democrat and Republican policies," she wrote.

In a January 4 Facebook post, she falsely accused Shafi of having ties to the Muslim Brotherhood.

Another precinct chair James Scott Trimm wrote Tuesday on Facebook he would vote against Shafi because he "refused to renounce and repudiate" an endorsement from the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR).

Shafi denied any ties to CAIR.

In an open letter, he wrote that he believed "much of the hate against Muslims is driven by a fear of terrorism", he said. "Here are the facts. I have never had any association with the Muslim Brotherhood nor (the Council on American-Islamic Relations) nor any terrorist organisation," he wrote.

"I believe that the laws of our nation are our Constitution and the laws passed by our elected legislatures. I have never promoted any form of Sharia Law. I fully support and believe in American Laws for American Courts. I am honoured to be an American and a Republican," he was quoted as saying by The Texas Tribune.

Thai police: Canada, Australia willing to accept Saudi woman

BANGKOK, JAN 11 (AP): Several countries including Canada and Australia are in talks with the UN refugee agency to accept a Saudi asylum seeker who fled alleged abuse from her family, Thai police said Friday.

Thailand's immigration police chief, Surachate Hakpam, told reporters the U.N. was accelerating the case, though he gave no indication of when the process would be complete.

Rahaf Mohammed Alqunun was stopped at a Bangkok airport on Saturday by Thai immigration police who denied her entry and seized her passport.

While barricading herself in an airport hotel room, the 18-year-old launched a social media campaign via her Twitter account that drew global attention to her case. It garnered enough public and diplomatic support to convince Thai officials to admit her temporarily under the protection of UN officials.

The UN High Commissioner for Refugees eventually granted her refugee status on Wednesday.

Alqunun's case has highlighted the cause of women's rights in Saudi Arabia. Several female Saudis fleeing abuse by their families have been caught trying to seek asylum abroad in recent years and returned home. Human rights activists say many similar cases have gone unreported. By Friday, Alqunun had closed down her Twitter account.

Ghosn hit with more charges, release unlikely

TOKYO, JAN 11 (AFP): Tokyo prosecutors on Friday filed two new charges of financial misconduct against former Nissan chief Carlos Ghosn, meaning the auto tycoon is unlikely to be leaving his jail cell soon.

Lawyers for the former jet-setting executive filed a bail application hours later, but have acknowledged that he will probably be detained until a trial.

Ghosn denies any wrongdoing and argued in a dramatic first court appearance on Tuesday that he has been "wrongly accused and unfairly detained."

He was already facing a first charge for allegedly under-reporting his compensation over five years to the tune of five billion yen (USD 46 million) in official documents to shareholders.

The charges filed today allege that the under-reporting continued for another three years.

And they include a charge of "aggravated breach of trust" over a complex alleged scheme in which Ghosn is said to have tried to transfer losses on foreign exchange contracts to Nissan's books.

As part of the scheme, he is accused of also using company funds to repay a Saudi acquaintance who put up collateral for the contracts.

Prosecutors also filed charges Friday against Nissan and Ghosn aide Greg Kelly over the additional three years of under-reporting pay.

"We took these steps today because we believed that they are cases worthy of indictment and going to trial," said deputy chief prosecutor Shin Kukimoto.

A prosecutor's office spokeswoman said charges against Ghosn carry a maximum prison sentence of 15 years.

The breach of trust charge is regarded as particularly serious, and Ghosn's lawyer Motonari Otsubu admitted Tuesday it would be "very difficult" to secure bail for his client.

"In general in such cases in Japan, it is indeed the case that bail is not approved before the first trial does take place," he said, adding



that it could be six months before the case comes before a judge.

Ghosn has appeared in public just once since his shock November 19 arrest, during the Tuesday court hearing called after his lawyers requested judges explain the tycoon's ongoing detention.

One of the most recognisable foreign executives in Japan, Ghosn was led into Tokyo District Court in handcuffs and with a rope around his waist and was noticeably thinner.

He spoke in a strong voice and said he had acted "honourably, legally and with the knowledge and approval of the appropriate executives inside the company".

The judge said his ongoing detention was justified because he poses a flight risk and could tamper with evidence if released.

A request filed the same day by his lawyers to end his detention was rejected.

Ghosn's prolonged detention has put the spotlight on Japan's justice system, which has come in for some international criticism.

With each allegation against Ghosn, prosecutors can seek up to 22 days of detention to investigate the claims - the period for the aggravated breach of trust allegation expired Friday.

And with each formal charge, prosecutors can hold Ghosn for two months of pre-trial detention, which is renewable.

The jet-setting high-flyer who once sparked criticism for his lavish lifestyle has gone from spacious digs in international capitals to a one-man cell.

He was initially held in a small room with traditional Japanese tatami floor mats to sleep on, but has now been moved to a larger cell with a Western-style bed.

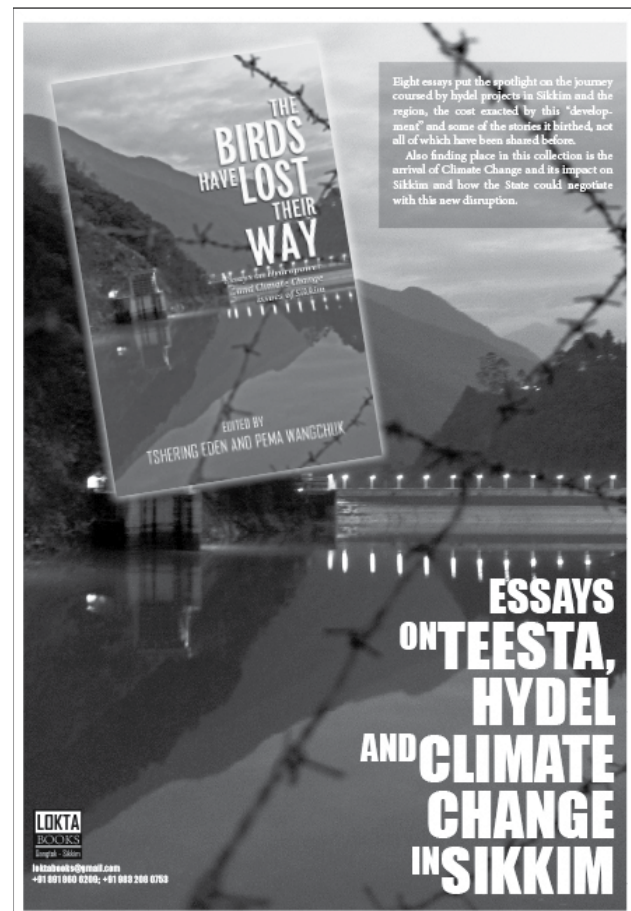
He has reportedly complained about the rice-based diet at the detention centre, with his family saying he has lost up to 20 kilos (44 pounds).

This week he suffered a fever that prompted prosecutors to suspend their interrogations, though his lawyer said Friday that Ghosn's temperature had gone back down.

The arrest of the 64-year-old has exposed rifts in the alliance he forged and led between Nissan, Mitsubishi Motors and France's Renault.

While the two Japanese firms quickly ousted him from leadership roles, Renault has kept him on and its board said Thursday that an ongoing audit has found no sign of fraud in the last two years.

Nissan said Friday it has filed its own criminal complaint against its former chief "on the basis of Ghosn's misuse of a significant amount of the company's funds." It said it took the charges filed against the firm "extremely seriously" and was continuing its investigation into the case.





SHADES OF BLUE! Oscar winner Matthew McConaughey is spotted leaving the gym after a workout in West Hollywood, Calif.

Senseless addition: Emraan Hashmi after 'Cheat India' becomes 'Why Cheat India'

NEW DELHI, JAN 11 (PTI): Emraan Hashmi's upcoming feature "Cheat India" is now "Why Cheat India" after the Central Board of Film Certification (CBFC) reportedly raised objections to its title but the actor is clearly not amused.

The film features Hashmi as a conman who ropes in toppers to write entrance exam papers of others in exchange for money. The film is a commentary on the state of education in India. The censor board had objected to the title saying that it is misleading. The producers are thorough discussions with board had bowed down to its demand and changed the title to "Why Cheat India".

Hashmi, who has turned producer with the project, said 'why' was a senseless addition to the title.

"It (title) has been in the public domain for

the past one year. We had the censor clear every promo of ours and suddenly now, ten days before the release, they put a 'why' in the title. It doesn't make sense and we couldn't fight

it because we are days away from the release," Hashmi told PTI. He said the original title, "Cheat India", does have a negative connotation but contends that it should be viewed in the context of the film.

"Unfortunately, it is how the system is. The film is showing mirror to the system. There is nothing objectionable in it. We are just showing people what lies in the system. This is what the education system is right now, it is in shambles. It is a big problem," he added.

"Why Cheat India", produced by T-Series Films, Ellipsis Entertainment and Emraan Hashmi Films, is set to release on January 19.



Credit should go to Sun Pictures, Karthik Subbaraj: Rajinikanth on 'Petta'

CHENNAI, JAN 11 (PTI): Tamil superstar Rajinikanth has expressed "happiness" that "Petta" is being received warmly by the fans and has credited the director for getting the best out of him.

The superstar, who arrived here Thursday after a brief stay in the United States, was addressing reporters at his residence.

"First, I express my new year and Pongal wishes to one and all. I came to know that the movie is liked by everyone. Very happy for that. The credits should go to Sun Pictures (film producer), Karthik Subbaraj (director) and his unit," Rajinikanth said.

The superstar said as an actor, his utmost priority is that his films should deliver on the expectations of his fans.

"My job is to make them happy. That is very important. I am happy that they are happy. As I said earlier, the credits should go to Karthik Subbaraj. He made sure that he got the best from me in every shot, every scene."

"Petta" hit screens worldwide amid much fanfare Thursday with two couples choosing the occasion to tie the knot.

Elated fans danced to drumbeats and poured milk on huge cuts-out of the 69-year-old actor outside theatres across the state, which has become something of a tradition



with all Rajinikanth releases.

Produced by Sun Pictures, the music is scored by Anirudh. The film's cast also includes Nawazuddin Siddiqui, Vijay Sethupathy, Simran, Trisha and actor-director Sasikumar.

"Petta", roughly translating into one's local stronghold in Tamil, released along with Ajith Nayanthara-starrer "Viswasa

Ranveer Singh Reveals His 'Single Point Agenda.'

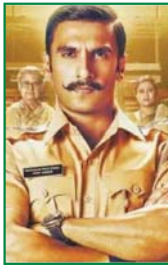


With the success of his two projects "Padmaavat" and Simmba, Ranveer Singh has delivered Rs. 500 crore nett box office in India within a single year. The actor says he wants to stay away from letting this get to his head, and that he is focussed towards becoming the "best entertainer." On his success, Ranveer said: "I'm uncomfortable in these scenarios, in these discussions. People discuss money and I start scratching my head. I feel I should protect myself now more than ever before from these sorts of things. I find myself receding because I don't know where this will take me, whether it will colour my thinking because I have been a certain way."

"So far it has worked for me, and I hope to continue as the same kind of artiste and very committed to protecting that integrity that I have towards my art, craft, and I don't want to start with making choices that I have to do with anything other than honesty, that will be the death of me," Ranveer Singh added. He knows the number game and what it means. But Ranveer said: "I also want to stay away this getting into my head. I want to protect the sanctity of my craft and my love for cinema. I have followed a certain ethos that has brought me to this position and I don't want to change that and don't want to get into making choices thinking when we do that film, it seems like a Rs. 300 crore prospect."

"It is not about the numbers for me, it is basically to entertain people, to entertain as many as I can and as much as possible. I keep that purpose of life, I'm an entertainer and I want to be the best entertainer. It's a single point agenda for me and a personal ambition," he added.

The actor, who married actress Deepika Padukone last year, will next be seen as a street rapper in Gully Boy, the trailer of which has already set the bar of expectations high from Ranveer.



The Accidental Prime Minister Director Explains Why Casting Was 'Difficult'

The Accidental Prime Minister, in which Anupam Kher plays the role of former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, director Vijay Ratnakar Gutte said casting was a difficult process. Speaking the first time director said it was important to get the right actors to play each part of the narrative, which is based on Sanjaya Baru's

book of the same name. "I spent around nine months to cast actors in the film. Since the film is based on real characters and people know them all, they live in the public memory, as a film director, I had to choose the right actors for it. There is a thin line between caricature and capturing the essence of the character. Only good actors can execute the latter," Vijay Ratnakar Gutte. Apart from Anupam Kher as Dr Singh, the film features Akshaye Khanna as Sanjaya Baru, who was Manmohan Singh's media advisor from 2004 and 2008. However, Akshaye's portrayal of Sanjaya Baru is slightly deviated from the real-life person. "Yes, there are many fictional elements that I added on the portrayal of Akshaye's character because I wanted it to look entertaining. In real life, Baru is intelligent, and so is Akshaye's character in the film but I wanted him to look in a certain way. So I made him wear good clothes and added some swag. It is entertaining that way, but the essence of the character is intact. The authenticity should



be there in the story, in the essence of the character... the visual presentation can be entertaining. At the end of the day, we make cinema to entertain people," the director said.

In the film, Suzanne Bernert plays the role of Sonia Gandhi, Aahana Kumra plays Priyanka Vadra and Arjun Mathur will be seen as Rahul Gandhi. "Hansal Mehta and his team who are in the business for the last 20 years helped me to get the actors I wanted. It was such a daunting task," Vijay Ratnakar Gutte said.

ARIES: Power up! The Sun teams up with irresistible Pluto in your tenth house of career ambition today, giving you—and some pretty impressive people—a glimpse into your hidden talents. If you've been hoping to take on more responsibility at work or assume a leadership role, make your move, Aries. But be sure your goals align with your highest values. Pluto's energy has a nefarious edge and can push you to be more competitive than necessary. Remember:

TAURUS: Hold your fire! Your words pack more of a punch than you realize, thanks to the volatile mashup of the Sun and powerhouse Pluto in your outspoken ninth house. You think you're just "calling it like you see it," but those may be fighting words to someone else. Your patient sign has the longest fuse of the zodiac, but when you're provoked, look out! You might be easily rattled today, which could cause you pick a fight. Give people the benefit of the doubt and presume innocence until they're proven guilty!

GEMINI: Watch your back, Gem! Today, the Sun mashes up with piercing Pluto,

shining a blinding light on certain people's less than honorable sides. Pluto, lord of the underworld, rules mystery and behind-the-scenes activities. Trust your gut. If a situation trips your alarm system, don't just naively go along with the status quo. Do some deep sleuthing—but hold off making any accusations until you have all the cold hard facts.

CANCER: Watch out for an uncerebral monster visit by the green-eyed monster today. An alignment of the fiery Sun and controlling Pluto in your seventh house of relationships could leave you feeling deeply jealous. But if your sweetie or crush is acting sneaky, don't leap to conclusions. Be direct. Ask questions and listen to your gut when they respond. And no secretive snooping yourself. For all you know, they could be planning a surprise for you.

LEO: Do you sense something dodgy going down? Your natural inclination in cases like these is to blow the whistle. Not so fast, Leo! With the Sun beaming alongside undercover agent Pluto, your

personal investigation could reveal that there's more going on than meets the eye. Your best intentions to be helpful could suck you into a situation that's heavier than you bargained for. Stay out of other people's entanglements and think twice—make that thrice—before getting involved.

VRGO: an you feel the power of your pur? You're a head turner of the first degree, thanks to today's sunny sync-up of the Sun and seductive Pluto in your glamorous fifth house. Grabbing the spotlight takes minimal effort on your part, but be careful what you do with that gift today, Virgo. You've got the power, but you need to wield it carefully!

LIBRA: Is your blood boiling, Libra? Your easygoing sign can turn fierce when you suspect someone is messing with your inner circle. Today's conjunction of the passionate Sun and possessive Pluto in your sensitive fourth house could throw up red flags. Did someone cross your line in the sand? Since you might be too emotional to confront them directly, call a dispassionate third party who can help you determine the best course of action.

SCORPIO: The pen—and the voice—are

mightier than the sword today, Scorpio, so make every word count. Potent Pluto (one of your galactic guardians) syncs up with the Sun in your third house of communication, turbocharging your confidence and helping you speak your truth. This isn't the time to confuse, conflate or manipulate. By honestly expressing yourself, you could move the masses. But make sure you know what you want to say. Anger or resentment will only serve to water down your message.

SAGITTARIUS: Read the fine print, Sagittarius, especially the digits on your financial statements. Today's keen connection between the illuminating Sun and probing Pluto could reveal a hidden charge that you forgot to cancel (your ex's phone service) or a contract clause that needs amending. Keep your eyes wide open when making any new fiscal transactions.

CAPRICORN: Magnetic doesn't begin to describe you today as the Sun simmers alongside seductive Pluto in Capricorn. You're in the power position; a subtle assertion of leadership is all that's required for people to fall in line with your ideas. Wield

this influence carefully. Today, others may see you as their capable queen, but if you hand down orders without asking for feedback, your royal court could turn mutinous.

AQUARIUS: Don't be so quick to trust today, Aquarius. People may not be totally on the up-and-up, and with the Sun aligned with secretive Pluto, you could put your faith in the wrong folks—and land in a heap of trouble. Even if you had nothing to do with their misdeeds, others may deem you guilty by association. Worse, you could get ensnared in activities that tarnish your reputation!

PISCES: It's never a wise move to judge a book by its cover, and today, under a mashup of the Sun and secretive Pluto in your teamwork zone, you'll do better to keep an open mind—even while playing your own cards close to your vest. Keep your standards high when considering collaborators and don't leave the process up to chance. Write up a job description or outline the qualifications you're seeking. Then tap Pluto's investigative powers to learn what people have to offer.