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Summit **TIMES**

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ON TOP OF THE NEWS

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Dr Shova Kanti Thegim Smriti Puraskar for Rita Thakuri

SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 12 JUN:

Rita Thakuri, a Darjeeling-based writer, has been named for the Dr Shova Kanti Thegim [Lepcha] Smriti Puraskar 2019 for her collection of short stories, "Kolahlbhitrako Spandan."

Ms Thakuri's name was decided at a meeting of the Dr Shova Kanti Thegim [Lepcha] Memorial Trust held on 09 June. Her name had been recommended by a two-tier selection committee constituted by the Trust, a press release informs.

The award is presented on 04 July every year on the birth anniversary of Dr Thegim and carries a cash award of Rs 25,000, a Tamra Patra and a certificate. The awards ceremony will be held at the TNSSS auditorium on 04 July.

This year, the Trust will also be felicitating 12 personalities from the world of Nepali music. The names were finalized by a 3-member committee.

The 12 to be felicitated this year are: the late Dr Ratna Kamal Dewan, Sanu Lama, Lain Singh Yonzon, Dharni Kumar Pradhan, BB Muringla, PT Dong, Deoki Rai, Sant Maya Limboo, Jigme Tenzing Gyaltzen, Thalaram Khanal and Dawa Lama.

HC Registry puts brakes on too many adjournments

SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 12 JUN:

The High Court Registry has made it clear that cases pending for a long time will not be granted further time and directed counsels appearing for such cases not to seek adjournments after being listed by the Registry.

As per the HC Registry Notice, 34 such cases have been listed to be decided after hearing within the next two months. These are cases which have been pending since 2014 on till 2016.

The Supreme Court has directed courts across the country to clear back logged cases.

As of now, 186 civil cases and 87 criminal side cases are pending in the Sikkim High Court.

In the month of May, the High Court registered 24 civil cases and eight criminal cases including appeals and has disposed of 13 civil cases and six criminal cases.

SKM begins prepping for Martam-Rumtek by-election

SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 12 JUN:

A joint meeting of the working committees of zone 1 and constituency level committee of Martam-Rumtek of Sikkim Krantikari Morcha was held here at the party head-office on Wednesday.

The meeting discussed various issues related to the upcoming by-election at Martam Rumtek and decided to constitute a campaign committee immediately and submit the list to the party president for approval, informs an SKM press release.

The release adds that the meeting also decided to hold a constituency-level meeting on Thursday and increase the pace of the party programme in the constituency for the by-elections.

The meeting was attended by Zone 1 vice-president in-charge, Anand Lama, general secretary Nilu Chettri, CLC president DR Giri, general secretary Prince David Rai, Nari Shakti convener Maya Pradhan and other leaders and workers of the party.

CM calls on Modi, seeks Rs 4000 cr one time grant

NEW DELHI, 12 JUN (IPR):

Chief Minister, Prem Singh Tamang (Golay) accompanied by RMD Minister, Sonam Lama made a courtesy call on Prime Minister, Narendra Modi on Tuesday and congratulated him for leading the BJP to a spectacular majority for second consecutive term. He submitted that this phenomenal victory is reflective of the unanimous endorsement of the people of India towards the Prime Minister's far-sighted social-economic and political policies that was initiated and instituted in 2014.

The Chief Minister updated the Prime Minister on various pending issues of Sikkim and sought his intervention in ensuring their early resolution. He elaborated on Article 371F of the Constitution and said that Article 371F of the Constitution of India is the greatest gift to the Sikkimese people which needs to be preserved, protected and implemented, both in letter



and spirit. He further expressed his confidence that Prime Minister, Narendra Modi's second term shall definitely ensure ways and means to further strengthen and stabilize this glaring feature of the Constitution which in turn is to strengthen our Constitutional frameworks.

He further made it clear that the political rights of the Sikkimese Limboo - Tamang tribes must be ensured at the earliest. He reiterated that despite the passing of so many years, Limboo and Tamang still remain deprived from accomplishing their political rights vis-à-

vis- Limboo Tamang seat reservation in the Sikkim Legislative Assembly.

Prime Minister Modi remarked that it was owing to the faulty and unstable stand of the hitherto State government that this long pending demand remained unsettled. He however assured to work on it in

coordination with the new SKM government.

The Prime Minister was quick to respond positively on Chief Minister's presentation towards inclusion of the eleven left out communities of Sikkim namely, Rai, Gurung, Mangar, Bhujel, Sunwar-Mukhia, Thami, Yakha(Dewan),

Khas, Newar, Jogi and Sanyasi in the list of Scheduled Tribes.

The Chief Minister has sought necessary amendments in the existing legislations to pave way for inclusion of these eleven left out communities in the list of Scheduled Tribes given Sikkim's peculiar position in the country which is primarily governed by Article 371F.

The Prime Minister was most sympathetic on the Chief Minister's elaboration on the State's dwindling financial status which is virtually bankrupt and drowned in debt. He further informed the Prime Minister that the circumstances turned from bad to worse owing to the huge loans acquired by a large number of hydro power projects against the State's guarantee from various financial institutions.

Interestingly, Teesta Urja Hydro Project obtained a loan of Rs 11,020 crore from a financial institution against State guarantee. Pertinent to

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CCCT achieves 100% placement

SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 12 JUN:

CCCT has recorded 100% placement for the academic year 2018-19, securing job offers for all students applying for placement at various private industries and institutions.

The placements followed in-campus and off-campus approaches.

For the 57 students seeking placement this session, over 72 offer letters have been issued to the students with many students bagging multiple job offers.

Bhim Prakash Sharma and Nitish Kumar of Electronics and Communication (ECE) bagged four offers each, while Pranish Poudyal of Electrical & Electronics (EEE) received three offers, Chumpila Bhutia and Ritika Sharma of Computer Science (CST) and

Chedem Bhitia (EEE) bagged two each.

CCCT has congratulated and wished them well. The highest salary package offered was Rs 2.16 lakh pa by TransAsia Bio Medicals Ltd, Samardung, South Sikkim. CCCT has thanked all the industries for showing faith in the students and helping them get associated with them.

Some of the other major industries that recruited the students are Cipla Pharmaceuticals, East Sikkim, Titan, East Sikkim, TeamLease, Chennai, Visteon, Chennai, Mphasis, Bangalore and SMIT, Majhitar.

The Placement Cell of CCCT headed by Senior Lecturer Arun Pradhan delivered well this year after a yearlong effort with contact and coordination of many individuals and institutions.

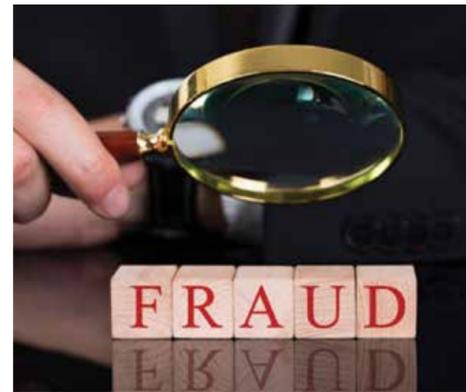
Over Rs 2.05 lakh cr frauds in 11 years: ICICI Bank, SBI and HDFC among top victims

ASHWINI SHRIVASTAVA
NEW DELHI, JUN 12 (PTI):

Of over 50,000 frauds that hit banks in India in the last 11 fiscal years, the ICICI Bank, State Bank of India (SBI) and HDFC Bank reported highest number of cases, according to an RBI data.

Of the total 53,334 cases of frauds reported during 2008-09 and 2018-19 fiscal years, involving a whopping Rs 2.05 lakh crore, a highest of 6,811 were reported by the ICICI Bank involving Rs 5,033.81 crore.

The state-run State Bank of India (SBI) reported 6,793 fraud cases involving Rs 23,734.74 crore followed by HDFC Banks which recorded 2,497 such cases involving Rs 1,200.79 crore, according to the data given by the central bank in response



to an RTI query filed by this correspondent.

The Bank of Baroda reported 2,160 fraud cases (involving Rs 12,962.96 crore), Punjab National Bank 2,047 frauds (Rs 28,700.74 crore) and Axis Bank had 1,944 fraud cases involving Rs 5,301.69 crore public money.

As many as 1,872

frauds involving Rs 12,358.2 crore was reported by Bank of India, 1,783 by Syndicate Bank (Rs 5830.85 crore) and Central Bank of India's 1,613 cases involving Rs 9041.98 crore, the data shows.

IDBI Bank Ltd reported 1,264 fraud cases involving Rs 5978.96 crore, Standard Chartered Bank

1,263 cases involving Rs 1221.41 crore, Canara Bank 1,254 cases of Rs 5553.38 crore, Union Bank of India 1,244 frauds of Rs 11,830.74 crore and Kotak Mahindra 1,213 cases involving Rs 430.46 crore.

In that period, Indian Overseas Bank reported 1,115 frauds involving Rs 12,644.7 crore, while Oriental Bank of Commerce 1040 cases of Rs 5,598.23 crore.

The United Bank of India reported 944 cases of frauds involving Rs 3052.34 crore, State Bank of Mysore 395 cases of Rs 742.31 crore, State Bank of Patiala 386 cases (Rs 1178.77 crore), Punjab and Sind Bank 276 cases (Rs 1154.89 crore), UCO Bank 1081 frauds (Rs 7104.77 crore), Tamilnad Mercantile Bank Ltd 261 cases

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Children's lit fest Bookaroo coming to Gangtok

SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 12 JUN:

Bookaroo, the Children's Literature festival is set to debut in Gangtok, Sikkim on June 28 and 29 Jun, 2019. This festival is organised by Delhi-based Bookaroo Trust - it is India's first literature festival of its kind, a press release informs. The festival, which began in November 2008 as a solo in New Delhi has travelled to 12 cities across India and has completed 32 editions.

The venue for Bookaroo Children's Literature Festival in Gangtok is Taktse International School. Bookaroo is travelling with 18

speakers to Gangtok, and these include storytellers, authors, illustrators and poets along with 3 local speakers from Sikkim, will be conducting 59 sessions - Storytelling, Drama, Workshops and Art & Craft, the release informs.

"This is a fabulous opportunity for 4-14-year-olds to come and meet, interact with them over art workshops, storytelling, puppetry, writing and more," the release states.

According to Festival Director, Venkatesh M, Bookaroo, "Stories from Sikkim will have a special place in Bookaroo in Gangtok this year. Indira Gandhi National Cen-

tre for the Arts (IGNCA) North East Regional Centre, Guwahati is also collaborating with Bookaroo in this project."

Director, Sonam Paljor Denjongpa, Taktse International School, has said, "Taktse teachers and students have made a pilgrimage every November to Delhi, to attend Bookaroo, since 2009. The impact of this event on Taktse students and teachers has been tremendous. We are truly grateful to the organisers for this wonderful opportunity that they are bringing for the children in the hills. We hope that Bookaroo will inspire us to do something similar in the future."

Bookaroo Gangtok will feature Reshma Thapa Gurung, author of The Very Wiggly Tooth, who lives in the city. She will team up with the illustrator of the book, Canato Jimo to tell the story.

Chewang Dorjee Bhutia also from Sikkim, now a teacher at National Institute of Design in Amaravati, will tell the story of the Cloud Eater of Sikkim. An additional treat for the children of Sikkim will be stories from neighbouring countries, Nepal and Bhutan, brought to them by Bandana Tulachan and Chador Wangmo respectively.

In addition, there is Kapil

Pandey, singer-cum-marathoner-cum-storyteller-cum-signage creator and Bhagirathy, a first-time storyteller in Bookaroo from Chennai will add a sprinkling of shadow puppetry in her storytelling sessions.

Author, Shruthi Rao, based in the US, will be at the festival to hold a session on 20 Indians who changed the world, apart from storytelling and writing workshops. Award-winning illustrator Priya Kuriyan will hold art workshops on monsters, jungles and egg children to imagine what they would do if they had superpowers.

Those interested in the world

of wildlife can go on an adventure with Deepak Dalal, the author who loves wildlife, nature, mountains, seas and forests. Deepak writes adventure stories for older children and bird stories for younger ones.

Other speakers are Deeptha Vivekanand (storyteller), Kavita Singh Kale (Transmedia artist), Neetu Sharma (award winning activity and picture book author - illustrator), Praba Ram (author), the Bhuli Art duo - Tanya Kotnala (illustrator & crafts fashion designer) & Tanya (nutritionist), Vinita Srimal Garg (Fantasy-Fiction

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CM calls...

mention here, some of these projects are already closed down for reasons best known to either such projects or the then Chief Minister, Pawan Chamling.

It is put on record here that as on 31 March, 2019, the loan of the Sikkim Government stands at whopping figure of Rs 8819.10 crore while its Annual Budget is around Rs 7000 crore and debt burden of more than Rs 8000 crore.

In fact all this has now made it difficult to release funds to settle State government employees' rightful dues as per the pay revision. Chief Minister, PS Tamang accordingly proposed for a one-time grant of financial aid of Rs 4000 crore from the Government of India to bail itself out from this financial disarray.

The Prime Minister assured to help the State out of this massive fiscal deficit. He equally expressed his extreme surprise over the financial situation of Sikkim despite the Union having provided huge and uninterrupted budget allocation to the State over the years. He accordingly requested the Chief Minister to present an account of such misuse of funds.

The Chief Minister submitted that the State shall soon come up with a white paper on the existing financial status of the State and ways to rectify the same.

Mr Tamang expressed his gratitude to the Prime Minister on having accorded blanket permission to the 17th Karmapa Ogyen Trinley Dorje to visit Sikkim anytime. The visiting delegation exchanged customary white scarves, khada with the Prime Minister at his Lok Kalyan Marg residence in New Delhi.

Earlier in the day, the team met Defence Minister, Rajnath Singh and Union Minister of State (Independent charge) for Youth & Affairs, Kiren Rijiju.

The Chief Minister along with Minister Sonam Lama also called on the Union Minister of Tribal Affairs, Arjun Munda in New Delhi today.

Mr Tamang expressed his concern over two issues; Limboo and Tamang seat reservation in Sikkim Legislative Assembly and granting tribal status to all the eleven left out communities of Sikkim.

Mr Tamang and Mr Lama also called on Union Finance Minister, Nirmala Sitharaman today and discussed the financial crisis that Sikkim is right now going through, and urged her to bail Government of Sikkim out of this mess and to meet Sikkim's demands on account of payment of arrears for the State Government employees and pensioners in line with Pay committee recommendations.

The CM requested Ms Sitharaman to release the balance amount which Government of India was supposed to transfer on Finance Commission's recommendations, at the earliest and also to release Rs 300 crore for the purchase of equipments for the newly constructed STNM hospital.

Over Rs 2.05...

(Rs 493.92 crore) and Lakshmi Vilas Bank Ltd reported 259 frauds (Rs 862.64 crore). Some of the foreign banks operating in India also reported fraud cases worth crores during the last 11 fiscal years. American Express Banking Corporation reported 1,862 fraud cases of Rs 86.21 crore, Citi Bank 1,764 cases of Rs 578.09 crore, Hongkong and Shanghai Banking Corporation (HSBC) Ltd 1,173 frauds of Rs 312.1 crore and The Royal Bank of Scotland Plc reported 216 frauds involving Rs 12.69 crore, the RBI data said.

A total of 274 cases of frauds were reported by the State Bank of Travancore involving Rs 694.61 crore, Jammu and Kashmir Bank Ltd reported 142 such cases of Rs 1639.9 crore, The Industrial Finance Corp of India had nine cases of Rs 671.66 crore, The Dhanlaxmi Bank Ltd 89 cases of Rs 410.93 crore and Vijaya Bank reported 639 cases involving Rs 1,748.9 crore, it said. Yes Bank Ltd reported 102 fraud cases involving Rs 311.96 crore and Paytm Payments Bank Limited reported two cases of Rs 0.02 crore (or Rs 2 lakh), it said. PTI had on June 3 reported that as many as 6,801 cases of fraud were reported by scheduled commercial banks and select financial institutions involving an amount of Rs 71,542.93 crore in the last fiscal, quoting data from the RBI.

After the story was published, the Congress party held a press conference the next day and demanded that the BJP government issue a "White Paper" on rising bank frauds in the country. During 2008-09, a total of 4,372 cases were reported involving an amount of Rs 1,860.09 crore. In 2009-10, Rs 1,998.94 crore worth fraud was reported in 4,669 cases.

A total of 4,534 and 4,093 such cases were reported in 2010-11 and 2011-12 involving Rs 3,815.76 crore and Rs 4,501.15 crore, respectively.

In the 2012-13 fiscal, 4,235 fraud cases involving Rs 8,590.86 crore were reported by banks as against 4,306 cases (involving Rs 10,170.81 crore) in 2013-14 and 4,639 cases (involving Rs 19,455.07 crore) in 2014-15. As many as 4,693 and 5,076 cases of fraud were reported in 2015-16 and 2016-17 involving Rs 18,698.82 crore and Rs 23,933.85 crore, respectively, it said.

A total of 5,916 such cases were reported by banks in 2017-18 involving Rs 41,167.03 crore.

Children's lit...

writer), Asha Nehemiah (author of action-packed mysteries and funny stories for all ages) and Simrin Tamhane (creative writer/poet) - share their delightful stories and art.

Festival director, Swati Roy, Bookaroo, informed that in 2019-20, apart from Sikkim, Bookaroo will travel to six other cities, most of which are new ones. Delhi and Srinagar will be repeats from last year. They are also planning an Urdu festival in Srinagar this year in the month of September. Bookaroo will also visit Banaras and Baroda for the first time this year.

"The encouragement we received from Taktse in those early days reinforced our belief in our mission - to bring children and books together. Thanks to that support we feel privileged that we have been able to widen our reach to yet another new city and add more children to our family of readers. We are also thankful to the community of writers, illustrators, storytellers and publishers who pose so much faith with us and travel to new and sometimes uncharted areas of the country," she said.

Sensitization programme on PMMVY and Poshan Abhiyan**MANGAN, 12 JUN (IPR):**

A day long sensitization programme on 'Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana (PMMVY) and Poshan Abhiyan' for members of zilla and gram panchayat of North district was held here at the conference hall of North District Zilla Panchayat Bhawan, today. Zilla Adhakshya, North, Namday Lepcha attended the programme as the chief guest along with Additional Director-cum-State Nodal Officer, PMMVY, Normit Lepcha.

Also present were CDPO, Mangan, LD Denzongpa, CDPO, Dzungpa, CDPO, Netuk Lepcha, CDPO, Chungthang, Sonam Lhaden Lachungpa, Anganwadi & ASHA workers and staffs of ICDS of the district.

Speaking in the programme, Normit Lepcha stated that Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana is a centrally sponsored scheme, using the platform of Anganwadi service scheme under Ministry of Women and Child Development, Government of India. The scheme is being implemented from 01 Jan, 2017 in all the districts of the country in accordance with the provision of the National Food Security Act, 2013.

Under PMMVY, a cash



incentive of Rs 5000 would be provided directly in the account of pregnant women and lactating mothers for first living child of the family subject to their fulfilling specific conditions.

Talking on objective of the scheme, she informed that providing partial compensation for the wage loss in terms of cash incentives so that the women can take adequate rest before and after delivery of the first living child. The cash incentives provided would lead to improved health seeking behavior amongst the pregnant women and lactating mothers.

Further she informed that all pregnant wom-

en and lactating mothers (PW&LM), excluding PW&LM who are in regular employment with the central government of the state government or PSUs or those who are in receipt of similar benefits under any law for the time being in force will eligible for the scheme who have their pregnancy on or after 01.01.2017 for first child in family.

Cash incentive will be disbursed in three installments: First installment of rupees 1000 on early registration of pregnancy at the anganwadi centre approved health facility. Second installment of rupees 2000 after six month of pregnancy on receiving

at least one ante-natal check-up and Third installment of rupees 2000 after child birth is registered and the child has received the first cycle of BCG, OBV, DPT and Hepatitis B, or its equivalent/substitute.

Similarly, Normit Lepcha sensitized the participants on Poshan Abhiyan she said that Poshan abhiyan is a flagship programme of ministry of women and child development to reduce stunting, under-nutrition, anaemia and low birth weight.

The programme strives to address Malnutrition holistically with use of technology, a targeted approach and convergence. The scheme

also calls for action generating social movement towards a malnutrition free India.

Chief medical officer, North, DC Sharma spoke on Pre-Conception and Post-Natal Diagnostic Technique Act, 1994.

He stated that the said Act was enacted to stop female feticides and arrest the declining sex ratio in India. The act banned prenatal sex determination.

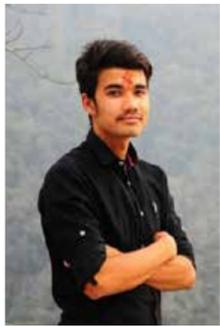
The main purpose of enacting the act is to ban the use of sex selection techniques after conception and prevent the misuse of prenatal diagnostic technique for sex selective abortions. The Act provides for the prohibition

of sex selection, before or after conception.

Chief Guest in her short speech, she urged all the participants disseminate the general information on PMMVY, Poshan Abhiyan and PCPNDT, Act 1994 in their respective areas as to generate more aware among the public.

Further she requested all ASHA & Anganwadi workers to work in tandem with Department as to orient best result and to take north district into a new horizon in terms of holistic development.

The programme also saw the felicitation of frontline workers of North district under Beti Bachao Beti Padhao.

Khem Kumar Bhattarai - an inspiration in organic farming**NITESH R PRADHAN GANGTOK, 12 JUN:**

A progressive farmer by profession, Khem Kumar Bhattarai (23) has been inspiring a lot of individuals interested in taking up farming as a profession.

Hailing from Kamerey village in Duga block in East Sikkim, he was born to Nirmal Chettri and Tara Chettri. After completion of a degree course in ITI College he plunged into organic farming in 2016. In a short span of two years, he has made a gi-



ant leap with his farm in the quaint and beautiful village of Kamerey.

Now he is a proud owner of a farm which closely follows integrated farming techniques with many varieties of crops, plants, flowers and honey. He is also the advisor in Block Farmers Advisory Committee and has helped many interested individuals in counselling.

"One of the most important aspects of becoming an organic farmer is to make sure we have the drive need-

ed to accomplish goals," he says. He states that taking up farming as a profession requires dedication, passion and love for farming.

Guidance and help from state government's ATMA project has helped him to gain theoretical and practical knowledge on farming which he has successfully implemented. His farm is buzzing with activity, helped by his family members, the farm produces many seasonal crops making his farm self sustaining unit.

"ATMA has been a huge help and they even gave me an ATMA farm school in which all local farmers get their problems answered and knowledge to move forward," he says.

Having learned many techniques and farming practices including bee keeping for the past two years, he is ready to help many people who can learn from his success and experience.

He was also awarded for bee keeping by the Agriculture department in January this year.

Tripura keen to operationalise Indo-Bangla waterway project soon

AGARTALA, JUN 12 (PTI): Tripura Chief Minister Biplab Kumar Deb is keen to operationalize the Indo-Bangla waterway project at the earliest as it could be a game changer in the states communication system, a senior official said Wednesday. The proposed waterway project will connect Tripuras Gomati river with Meghna river of Bangladesh to get access to Ashuganj port of the neighbouring country. Presently ships and steamers ply from Haldia in West Bengal to Dawodkandi in Bangladesh, which is only 80 km from Tripura's Sonamura sub-division in Sepahijala district.

At a meeting with the planning department on Tuesday, the chief minister was briefed about the

report of the Joint Technical Committees finding on the 15-km inland waterway project, Transport Secretary L Darlong said.

The report suggested dredging work on a 15-km stretch to operationalize the proposed waterway.

"Of the 15 kilometres, around 13 kilometres need to be dredged on the Bangladesh side and the rest on the Indian part to allow small-medium sized vessels," the official said.

The report of the Joint Technical Committee was based on the hydrographic study carried out on March 12 and 13, Darlong said.

The chief minister has asked the transport department to hold a meeting with the Inland Waterways Authority of India (IWAI) to

give a big push to the ambitious waterway project, he said.

The transport secretary said, he will take up the issue with the IWAI to get the project done "as early as possible".

"Since the state has limited resources, we are of the opinion that the Centre must come forward to incur the expenditure to undertake the dredging," he said.

A technical committee of the Ministry of Shipping had visited Srimantapur area of Sepahijala district just before the Lok Sabha elections, to see the ground reality.

The state government wants construction of a jetty at Srimantapur Land Customs Station (LCS) to handle business through the proposed waterway project.

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KUTSE SHEGU

The 49th day Kutse Shegu of Late Doma Bhutia w/o Lakpa Thendup Bhutia who left for her heavenly abode on 01.05.2019 falls on 18.6.2019 (Tuesday). All relatives, friends & well wishers are requested to join us in offering prayers for the departed soul at our residence at Below Law College, Helipad, Lower Burtuk, Gangtok, East Sikkim.

Lakpa Thendup Bhutia(Husband), Kesseng Norbu Bhutia(son) & all family members.
Mob: 9800655921/ 6294186876.

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CLASSIFIEDS**

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SSLA announces 1st Eastern India Championship

SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 12 JUN:

Sikkim Strength Lifting Association [SSLA] has announced the first edition of Eastern India Strength Lifting & Incline Bench Press Championship from 12 to 14 July at Gyalshing College auditorium hall in West Sikkim.

Strength lifters from 11 States will be participating in the championship. Members of SSLA have been working hard preparing for this national level championship in a grand manner. The association held its meeting at Gangtok and discussed various issues related to the championship and handed over various responsibilities to its members.

Welcome programme for Culture Minister at Manan Kendra



GANGTOK, 12 JUN (IPR): Minister for Cultural Affairs & Heritage Department, Samdup Lepcha attended a brief welcome programme at Manan Kendra on 12 June, 2019. The programme commenced with a welcome note by Secretary, CA&HD, Vidya Subba.

The Minister was warmly welcomed by the officials and staff and offered traditional scarves (khada) by all. In his address, the Minister requested all to work sincerely and collectively for the betterment of

the state. He urged the officials to promptly dispose of all files. The State Government has notified new office timings, therefore, he exhorted all to adhere to the new timings and maintain punctuality and commitment towards their work.

Director, Namgyal Institute of Tibetology, representatives from Sikkim Academy and Nepali Sahitya Parishad also had a personal interaction with the Minister after the programme and apprised him about the activities of their respec-

tive institutes.

Thereafter, a coordination meeting was held with the officials of the CA&HD in the Conference Hall, Manan Kendra. All the sectional heads of the various divisions of the Department briefed him on the activities of their respective divisions.

The programme was also attended by outgoing Secretary, Ambika Pradhan, Special Secretary, Chewang Rinzing amongst others.

The meeting concluded with a vote of thanks by OSD, Jagdish Sharma.

WSOS to upgrade Chujachen School library

SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 12 JUN:

Wandering Souls of Sikkim has announced plans to move ahead with its Library Initiative and upgrade the school library at Government Senior Secondary School, Chujachen, East Sikkim shortly.

"This is in line with our objective of laying the foundation for a better future," WSOS conveys in a press release and has appealed that people support the initiative by donating books (old/ new), mag-

azines or cash and help install a "resourceful corner of knowledge for the young minds."

"Old books and magazines lying in your store-rooms, covered with dust can turn out to be a motivation to read books for many students studying in the village school; and the cash that you contribute shall be used for purchasing book shelves and other essential materials for the library," WSOS explains.

Interested persons can contact the group at 7908696173.

NGO Helpline India to set up branch in Gangtok



SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 12 MAY:

NGO Helpline India, a not-for-profit organization with its headquarters in Patna, Bihar, is planning to set up its branch here in Gangtok as well. This was informed by chairperson of the organization, Dr Sanjay Kumar Jha, during a press

meet held today.

The organization has been working for the welfare of NGOs since 1994 and will open its branch here in Gangtok followed by another one in Siliguri, said Dr Jha. The organization focuses on disseminating and ensuring value added

services to the existing NGOs, he added.

He also mentioned that the aspects like legal awareness, technical and financial management will be covered through seminars and workshops once the organization sets up its branch here in the state.

State steering committee of NVHCP meets

GANGTOK, 12 JUN (IPR): Meeting of State steering committee of National Viral Hepatitis Control Programme was held at conference hall, Health Secretariat, Tashiling on 12 Jun, 2019. The meeting was chaired by Commissioner cum Secretary, Vishal Chauhan. The meeting was attended by Director General Health Services, Mission Director National Health Mission, Heads of Departments from New STNM Multispeciality Hospital, Senior officers from Health Secretariat and members from the community. The members were given orientation on the new programme followed by discussion on implementation process.

National Viral Hepatitis Control Programme is a new programme launched by Government of India under the um-

brella of National Health Mission, which will provide awareness, preventive measures, diagnostics and treatment for viral hepatitis. Advocacy at the community level and the launch of the programme at the state level will be taken up in the coming months.

Viral hepatitis is caused by five viruses namely; hepatitis A virus, hepatitis B virus, hepatitis C, hepatitis D and E. viral hepatitis A and E are transmitted by contaminated water and food and prone to outbreaks. Hepatitis B, C, D are blood borne viruses and transmitted by unprotected sex, unsafe injections, use of unsafe blood and blood products and mother to child transmissions. Hepatitis B and C cause chronic infections and can cause cirrhosis and hepatocellular carcinoma.

NPF urges Centre for early settlement of Naga political issue

Kohima, Jun 12 (PTI): The Opposition Naga People's Front (NPF) Wednesday urged the Centre for an early settlement of Naga political issue.

The NPF also called upon all the Naga nationalist groups to stand together on the same platform and adopt the same approach towards solution of the long standing problem.

NPF president Dr Shurhazolie Liezietsu reiterated that the party shall continue to uphold the principles of non-violence and shall strive for resolution of all conflicts through peaceful means.

He was speaking at the central executive council meeting of the party and also felicitated Dr Lorho S Pfoze, NPF candidate for winning the Outer Manipur Lok Sabha seat at central headquarter here.

"We will continue to uphold the uniqueness of Naga political history which, of late, the Government of India had also given recognition and such recognition is considered to be a positive step towards solving the protracted political problem in Nagaland," he

said. Liezietsu affirmed that NPF will continue to strive to work for early political settlement of the long standing Naga political problem.

"We will continue to appeal to the wisdom of our national workers to come closer to one another and stand together on the same platform and adopt the same approach towards solution of the Naga political problem based on ground realities," he said. The NPF president said "we want an early settlement which is honorable and inclusive because piece meal solution is not going to serve any purpose".

On snapping of ties with BJP in Nagaland, the NPF president, clarified that "Our support to BJP government in Manipur may not have any effect either on us or on BJP, but we do not want to vitiate the atmosphere in any manner for the ongoing process of the 'Framework Agreement' signed between the Government of India and NSCN-IM on August 3, 2015".

Leader of Opposition in Nagaland Assembly and former Chief Minis-

ter T R Zeliang lambasted the ruling Nationalist Democratic Progressive Party (NDPP) for engaging in "poaching" of NPF MLAs.

He alleged that present NDPP government in the state has not been able to take up any developmental and welfare activities for the people of the state because it is too busy in poaching NPF MLAs.

Zeliang said NPF does not regret that seven MLAs went against the party because it is better to have unity within a smaller group than to remain divided in a larger group.

Zeliang, while reiterating the stand of the party on Citizenship Amendment Bill reaffirmed that NPF will never accept the PDA government stand that Nagas are protected from CAB by Article 371(A) of the Constitution of India.

"If the present state government feels that Nagas are protected under Article 371A, they are fooling the Naga people," he said while requesting the two NPF MPs - one each in Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha to stand firm against the Bill in the Parliament.

Mizoram to request Centre & Bangladesh to expedite border trade at Kawrpuchhuah

AIZAWL, JUN 12 (PTI): Mizoram Chief Minister Zoramthanga Wednesday said the state government would request the Centre and the Bangladesh government to expedite opening of Indo-Bangladesh border trade at the proposed Kawrpuchhuah border trade centre.

Intervening in the discussion on border trade with Bangladesh and Myanmar during Question Hour in the Assembly, Zoramthanga said he has raised the matter with the Ministry of External Affairs and the Ministry of Commerce as well as with Bangladesh Prime Minister and the ball is in the hands of the leaders of the two neighbouring countries.

"I would again personally take up the matter with the new government at the Centre soon," the chief minister said.

Talking about the



Kaladan Multi Modal Transit Transport Project (KMTTP) to provide road link to Sittwe port in Myanmar, he said that no works have been executed so far on Myanmar side despite financial aid given by the Indian government, which would definitely delay the project.

At least 85.50 per cent of the Kaladan Multi Modal Transit Transport Project (KMTTP) has been completed so far, Mizoram Commerce and Industries Minister Dr R Lalthangliana, said while

replying to questions from F Lalnunmawia and Vanlaltanpuia both members of the ruling Mizo National Front (MNF).

Lalthangliana said that that the project was scheduled to be completed by March next year.

The KMTTP project would link Myanmar border from southernmost Mizoram's Lawngtlai town and the road inside Myanmar would link a river from where the Sittwe port (earlier known as Akyab port) would be approached with the inland waterway.

Nepali Sanskriti Parishad team calls on Governor

SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 12 JUN:

Governor Ganga Prasad today met members of the recently constituted executive committee of Nepali Sanskriti Parishad, Sikkim Unit at Raj Bhavan. The group was led by Anant Bhandari, the Sikkim Unit President of the Parishad.

Mr Bhandari apprised the Governor about the activities of the Parishad, especially its efforts towards preserving the cultural ethos and identity of the Nepali community

in the State, an official press release informs.

The Governor wished them well and urged the Parishad to take the new generation along in its efforts to create a harmonious society based on mutual respect between diverse cultures and traditions.

Underlining that India's identity lies in its unique cultural diversity, the Governor asked the members to put in their best efforts to strengthen cultural bonds and preserve its identity for stronger and vibrant nation.

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Emergence of Darjeeling as a Hill Station

a talk by
Prof. Queeny Pradhan

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Queeny Pradhan is Professor of History at GGS Indraprastha University. She teaches Indian History, Legal History and Women in History. She was awarded the Nehru Memorial Fund Scholarship for the years 1997-1999 for doctoral research. She did her doctoral research from Centre for Historical Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi. She was a postdoctoral fellow at the Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Shimla. Her book *Empire in the Hills: Simla, Darjeeling, Ootacamund and Mount Abu, 1820-1920* (OUP, India) was released in 2017. She was an ICCR Professor (India Chair) at the University of Vienna, to teach Modern Indian History and Colonial Law and Indian Society in Modern India in 2018.

13 June 2019 Thursday 6:00pm entry free

Passenger Safety

Look under the bonnet also, and also check the tyres and brakes

A person driving to Siliguri recently was flagged down by road labourers to stop while the dozers cleared monsoon debris from NH10. As the person waited, a mainline taxi bumped into his vehicle from behind. When the person got out to check the damage and find the cause, the apologetic taxi driver explained that his vehicle's brakes were not in top shape. The vehicle had bumped itself to a stop! The damage was not much, but the real worry was the utter disregard for human lives.

The vehicle was loaded to capacity with 10 passengers on board. And no brakes! It soon transpired that all that the driver could present by way of documents was a year-old General Diary police complaint recording that the documents of the vehicle were lost. As for a driving licence, the driver claimed that he had applied for one in Siliguri and was yet to receive it. What is more, he was not even the actual driver of the said vehicle and was filling in for the regular driver who had decided to take a day off and requisitioned his services for the day! Just about every prescribed rule for passenger vehicles was being flouted in this case. What is frightening is that it was not even a rare aberration as is being discovered by the ongoing checking by the Motor Vehicles Division of the Transport Department.

Little surprise then that in the 2017 for instance there were 198 accidents reported on Sikkim's roads which claimed 68 lives and left 471 injured. This number is lower than the number of accidents reported in 2016, but only marginally so and given the comparatively small pool of vehicles and limited road length, even one accident less can reflect a high percentage differential.

Suffice to say that it is time that more earnest efforts to be initiated to address road safety - the pointlessness of the road safety week tokenism [observed in the first week of May] will just not do any more.

It is important to bear in mind that only a few of the 198 accidents last year can be attributed to bad roads or landslides. All the remaining accidents and fatalities were caused by driver error. Here, one may add that the blame for even mechanical failures leading to accidents has to rest with the drivers for having ignored the warning signs or delayed servicing and repairs. One should not be surprised if it transpires that most of the accidents involved vehicles which were not road-worthy, either because of faulty brakes or ineffectual traction due to bald tyres or inept hands on the wheels [a poor driver, after all, makes even the best maintained rides dangerous]. The reason why the opening anecdote was shared is because it is a copybook illustration of all that is wrong with passenger/ road safety in Sikkim. Unfortunately, none of real reasons which are making travelling unsafe for people who opt for jeeps and taxis is being addressed.

This section has often spoken of the need for traffic regulators to focus more on the road worthiness and driving skills than documents and licences. But this aspect continues to remain ignored. Here is a checklist of what could be considered. For one, the State Government needs to ensure that the "T" [Taxi] driving licenses are issued only after proper verification of the applicant's driving skills. If this is done conscientiously, then the government can return more strictly to its policy decision of allowing on people with taxi driving licences issued in Sikkim to drive passenger vehicles here. Each time Motor Vehicle Inspectors or Traffic personnel stop a vehicle for 'document check' they should also inspect the road worthiness of the vehicle [at least the tyres and brakes] and pull the vehicles off the roads until the vehicles in question are brought back to health. A rule, mandatory in all metros now, that all passenger vehicles prominently display the ownership and driver details for all passengers to see clearly should also be considered [This board should also include contact details of agencies to contact in case of rash driving or rude behaviour by drivers]. This will ensure that the regular drivers do not play truant and put the lives of passengers in the hands of unauthorised and potentially unsafe drivers and will also encourage more passengers to complain against dangerous driving. This is important because with the increase in the number of passenger vehicles, too many people with scant respect for traffic rules or human lives are being let loose on the highways.

The gender pay gap for the FIFA World Cup is US\$370 million. It's time for equity

KEITH RATHBONE
theconversation.com

The winner of the Women's World Cup on July 7 will take home more than just a trophy – there's also US\$4 million in prize money at stake, more than double the amount the US women's team won at the previous World Cup in 2015.

Compare this to what the winner of the men's World Cup pocketed in 2018, however: the French team earned US\$38 million for that victory.

As play gets under way at the Women's World Cup, much attention is being focused on the enormous gender gap between the two tournaments. It's not just the winners who are disproportionately underpaid – it's all the teams and players, and even their professional clubs.

FIFA has set aside US\$30 million in total prize money for this year's women's tournament, while the men's pool totalled US\$400 million in 2018. In addition, FIFA gives the men's teams US\$48 million in preparation costs and distributes another US\$209 million to the clubs that release players for the tournament. The women get US\$11.5 million for preparation costs and US\$8.4 million in club compensation.

In April, the Australian women's national team, the Matildas, threatened legal action to redress the pay imbalance, citing FIFA's own statutes that have enshrined a commitment to "gender equality". John Didulica, CEO of Professional Footballers Australia, the trade union that represents male and female pros at the ACTU, called the pay gap:

"...an imbalance of proportions only FIFA could come up with a straight face."

GENDER PAY GAP AT ALL LEVELS

FIFA defends the pay imbalance with the usual claim that it reflects the difference in revenue produced by the men's and women's tournaments. As FIFA President Gianni Infantino so inelegantly said last year:

"Maybe one day women's football will generate more than men's football."

Critics, however, don't buy this argument. Because FIFA refuses to open its books fully to the public, this claim is hard to substantiate. The PFA, for one, thinks the sizeable pay gap is:

"...either couched in diplomacy or politicisation ... or just looking at their balance sheet, it's totally arbitrary, it's got no reference to any economic KPIs."

FIFA, however, is not the only culprit when it comes to pay disparity in football (or other sports, for that matter). Women's footballers also point to pay gaps at both the club and federation level in many countries.

In fact, the world's best player, Norway's Ada Hegerberg, won't even be competing at this year's World Cup in France over a dispute with her national federation over its overall investment in and

treatment of women's football. The Norwegian Federation pledged to achieve gender parity in pay two years ago, but Hegerberg, the first-ever women's winner of the Ballon d'Or, says more needs to be done.

In Australia, the W-League receives considerably less revenue from Football Federation Australia, which doesn't make a huge amount of sense considering that both the men's and women's leagues lose money.

And despite significant increases in women's club salaries over the past few years, there are vast inequities here, too. In 2017, Forbes published a shocking comparison that showed the Brazilian striker Neymar earned more money (US\$43.8 mil-



lion per year) from his club, Paris Saint Germain, than the combined salaries of all the women competing in the seven top women's leagues (D1 Féminine, Frauen Bundesliga, FA Women's Super League, the National Women's Soccer League, Damallsvenskan, the W-League, and the Liga MX Femenil).

There is a major pay gap between club salaries in Australia too. Former Socceroos star Tim Cahill, for instance, earned A\$3.5 million to play for Melbourne City in 2016-17, which was more than all 181 women who competed in the W-League that year.

WHAT CAN BE DONE TO CLOSE THE GAP

In Ireland, Denmark, Australia and the United States, women have used industrial action to earn better pay and working conditions.

Strikes have proved effective, as well. In 2015, the Matildas refused to compete in a two-game series in the US to force the team to raise their base pay from A\$21,000 per year. As midfielder Teresa Polias explained:

"We're not asking for millions of dollars. We're asking for minimum wage, to sustain our lives off the pitch to do well on it."

Following that strike, the players successfully negotiated a pay increase, with star player Sam Kerr now earning a reported A\$400,000 a year. The players' action not only helped the Matildas

earn more, but also all the women competing in the W-League.

While strikes have proved effective for some, others have turned to lawsuits. In March, the US women's national team filed suit against the US Soccer Federation, alleging that its unequal pay for men's and women's footballers violated the US Equal Pay Act.

They have a strong case. In recent years, the women's national team has outperformed the men on the field (winning three World Cup titles and four Olympic gold medals) and attracted more fans to its games and generated more revenue. Yet the women can only earn a maximum of US\$4,950 per friendly, while the men earn on average US\$13,166 for the same type of match.

If the team wins its case, the federation might face steep fines or be forced to pay the women's players retroactively.

WIDER GENDER INEQUALITY ISSUES

The pay issue is just one of many injustices that women's soccer players face. For instance, women routinely play in more difficult conditions than men. At the 2015 Women's World Cup in Canada, players were forced to compete on artificial turf rather than grass, which many blamed for a range of injuries. At the

World Cup, women also often play with fewer rest days between games, stay in less conformable accommodation, and travel in economy class.

Many women also note that FIFA and their national federations have not done enough to promote the women's game around the world. One glaring example of this is the fact that FIFA scheduled the Women's World Cup final this year on the same day as the finals for two other men's tournaments – the Gold Cup and Copa America.

While many obstacles remain, the success that women's footballers have had in challenging the status quo has inspired athletes in other sports to fight for their rights too. Earlier this year, 200 of the world's best women's ice hockey players vowed not to play in any professional leagues in North America this season until they are paid a living wage and provided with health insurance.

The Women's World Cup in France provides one of the biggest stages for women's soccer players to state their case for pay equity. In 2017, the Swedish women's national team turned heads when they took their names off the back of their jerseys and replaced them with empowering messages for young girls. What might the US women's team or the Matildas do when (and if) they get their time in the spotlight in the final in Paris?

[the writer is Lecturer, Modern European History and Sports History, Macquarie University]

As more developing countries reject plastic waste exports, wealthy nations seek solutions at home

KATE O'NEILL
theconversation.com

Less than two years after China banned most imports of scrap material from abroad, many of its neighbors are following suit. On May 28, 2019, Malaysia's environment minister announced that the country was sending 3,000 metric tons of contaminated plastic wastes back to their countries of origin, including the United States, Canada, Australia and the United Kingdom. Along with the Philippines, which is sending 2,400 tons of illegally exported trash back to Canada, Malaysia's stance highlights how controversial the global trade in plastic scrap has become.

Malaysia, Thailand and Vietnam are all halting flows of plastics that once went to China but were diverted elsewhere after China started refusing it. They are finding support from many nations that are concerned about waste dumping and marine plastic pollution. At a meeting in Geneva in May 2019, 186 countries agreed to dramatically restrict international trade in scrap plastics to prevent plastics dumping.

As I show in my forthcoming book, "Waste," scrap material of all kinds is both a resource and a threat. The new plastics restriction allows less-wealthy countries to exercise their sovereign right not to accept materials they are ill-equipped to handle. This narrows options for wealthy countries that used to send much of their plastic and paper scrap abroad, and is a small but symbolic step toward curbing plastic waste.

A TRADE WITH FEW RULES

The Basel Convention, which governs the international waste trade, was adopted in 1989 in response to egregious cases of hazardous waste dumping on communities in Africa,

the Caribbean and Asia. Many of its goals remain unfulfilled, including a ban on shipments of hazardous waste from wealthy to less-wealthy nations for final disposal, and a liability protocol that would assign financial responsibility in the event of an incident. And the agreement has largely failed to encompass newer wastes, particularly discarded electronics.

The new provision, proposed by Norway with broad international support, takes a more aggressive approach. It moves plastic scrap from one category – wastes that can be traded unless directly contaminated – to another group of materials that are not deemed hazardous per se, but are subject to the same trade controls as those classified as hazardous. Now these plastics can be shipped overseas for disposal or recycling only with the express consent of the importing country.

The United States signed the treaty in 1989, but never ratified it and is not bound by the treaty's terms. However, Basel Convention member countries cannot accept any restricted waste imports from the United States unless they have reached a bilateral or regional agreement that meets Basel's environmental provisions. The U.S. already has such an agreement with fellow OECD member countries.

Operation National Sword, China's policy restricting imports of post-consumer scrap, was a major driver for updating the treaty. Before the ban China imported nearly half of the world's scrap plastic and paper. Now scrap exporters in wealthy nations are struggling to find alternate markets overseas and boost domestic recycling.

CRISIS AND OPPORTUNITY FOR US RECYCLERS

Trends in the United States illus-

trate these wrenching shifts. Plastic scrap exports to China plummeted from around 250,000 tons in the spring of 2017 to near zero in the spring of 2019. Overall, U.S. exports of plastic waste to all countries fell from 750,000 tons to 375,000 tons over the same period.

Most U.S. waste and recycling policies are made at the local level, and the past year has been a transformative period. Without ready markets abroad for scrap, recyclers are raising prices, which in turn is leading some municipalities to reduce or eliminate curbside recycling programs. Many plastic products in groups 3-7, the least recyclable types, are being sent to landfills.

More positively, recycling authorities have launched public education campaigns, and investment in recycling infrastructure is on the rise. There is palpable energy at trade meetings around improving options for plastics recycling. Chinese companies are investing in U.S. pulp and paper recycling plants, and may extend into plastics.

Green-leaning states and cities across the nation have passed strict controls on single-use consumer plastics. However, businesses are pushing back, and have persuaded some U.S. states to adopt preemptive measures barring plastic bag bans.

The greatest immediate pressure is on international scrap dealers, who are most immediately affected by the Norway Amendment and vocally opposed it. They are also under stress from the U.S.-China tariff wars, which could make it difficult for them to send even clean, commercially valuable scrap to China.

WASTE OR SCRAP?

Under the Norway Amendment, nations can still export plastic scrap if it is clean, uncontaminated and of high quality. The measure effectively

distinguishes between waste – which has no value and is potentially harmful – and scrap, or discarded materials that still have value.

This bifurcation matters for the U.S. and other countries that formerly outsourced their recycling to China and are having trouble creating domestic demand for recovered plastics, because it makes a legitimate trade in plastic and other marginal scrap possible. However, there is still no guarantee that this scrap can be reprocessed without harm to workers or the environment once it has reached the importing country.

Nor will the Norway Amendment do much to reduce marine plastic pollution directly. Only a tiny fraction of ocean plastics originate from shipped plastic scrap from rich countries. Most come from items that are used and discarded on land and never enter a recycling system.

Curbing plastic pollution will require broader action, with a focus on coordinating scattered global initiatives and building up relevant international law. Implementing extended producer responsibility for plastics, which could require manufacturers to take plastic products back at their end of life and dispose of them in approved ways, would be a useful step. However, it should not supplant ongoing efforts to reduce production and use of plastics, which contribute to climate change as well as waste.

Solutions may come from the top down in European nations or the bottom up in the United States. But as one Asian country after another shuts the door on scrap exports, it is becoming increasingly clear that business as usual will not solve the plastic pollution challenge.

[the writer is Associate Professor, Global Environmental Politics, University of California, Berkeley]

Clashes between BJP workers, police during protest rally

KOLKATA, JUN 12 (PTI): Clashes broke out Wednesday between BJP workers and the police here on Wednesday during a rally to protest against post-poll violence in West Bengal with the saffron party claiming several of its members were injured.

Senior BJP leader Mukul Roy and state BJP general secretary Raju Banerjee were injured during the clashes, the state leadership said.

Banerjee was admitted to a nearby hospital while Roy was taken to the party office and his condition is stated to be stable.

The 18 newly-elected MPs of the BJP in the state participated in the protest rally.

As the BJP activists jostled to reach the Bowbazar crossing in the city, police resorted to firing tear gas shells and water cannons to disperse them, the party claimed.

In retaliation, the saffron party workers raised slogans and hurled stones and bottles at the officers, police said.

The BJP leadership, however, claimed none of the party workers were involved in stone hurling and it was police which threw stones and bottles at protesters.

BJP national general secretary Kailash Vijayvargiya along with party president Dilip Ghosh and other senior leaders held a sit-in demonstration at the Bowbazar-Central Avenue crossing in protest



against the violence.

Later on BJP leaders ended the sit-in demonstration.

The BJP's protest march was conducted from the Wellington area of the city towards the Kolkata Police headquarters in Lalbazar, covering a distance of about three KM in the heart of the metropolis.

"West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee has lost her mental balance due to the unprecedented growth of the BJP. She has resorted to politics of violence in order to save her chair. If such a situation continues then the central government should take a call on what should be done or not," Vijayvargiya

said. Ghosh criticised police administration alleging unprovoked water cannon and tear gas shell firing.

"We were conducting a peaceful protest march, then why did the police get into unprovoked water cannon and tear gas shell firing? The TMC government is determined to create an atmosphere of violence and intimidation," he said.

The police said hundreds of BJP supporters were detained and later released.

The Trinamool Congress leadership while reacting to the incident said the BJP is trying to vitiate the peaceful atmosphere of the state.

"The BJP is trying to

violate the peaceful atmosphere of the state. Just because they have won few seats doesn't mean they can do what ever they want to. The people of Bengal will oppose any attempt to vitiate the atmosphere of the state," TMC secretary general and senior minister Partha Chatterjee said.

Following the escalation of violence in the state, Governor Kesri Nath Tripathi Wednesday called all four key political parties--TMC, BJP, Congress and CPI-M-- of the state for a meeting Thursday in an attempt to calm down the situation.

Post-poll violence has been reported from various places of West Bengal

after the BJP secured 18 of the 42 Lok Sabha seats in the state, just four less than that of the TMC.

Buoyed by this performance, the saffron party leaders have been claiming that they would end Mamata Banerjee's rule in the next assembly election in 2021.

Roy Tuesday blamed Banerjee for the clashes in North 24 Parganas' Sandeshkhali on Saturday that claimed three lives, and demanded an investigation into the violence by anti-terror probe agency NIA.

Banerjee had earlier accused the BJP of "spreading false information as part of a game plan to topple her government".

Final phase of Bru repatriation to be over by year-end: Mizoram minister

AIZAWL, JUN 12 (PTI): The final phase of Bru repatriation from the six relief camps of Tripura is scheduled to be completed by the end of this year, Mizoram Home Minister Lalchamliana said Wednesday, maintaining that the state will not entertain anyone who does not wish to return. In a written reply to a query from C Lalsawivunga of the Zoram People's Movement (ZPM), Lalchamliana said preparations were afoot for the last phase of repatriation.

"The state government does not want to

continue entertaining anyone who does not want to return during the final repatriation process. It has held a dialogue in the matter with the Ministry of Home Affairs," he said.

The preparations for the repatriation process, which were temporarily withheld during the parliamentary polls, have commenced, with the administration in Mizoram's Mamit district holding talks with its counterparts in North Tripura and Assam's Kolassib district, the home minister added.

Thousands of Brus had moved to the neighbouring state in 1997 in the wake of communal tension triggered by the murder of a forest guard by militants.

The Centre, in association with the Mizoram and Tripura governments, had been trying to repatriate the displaced Bru members in batches over the past few years.

Several Bru community members in Tripura have shown reluctance to return to the home state, citing inadequate financial assistance and hostile environment.

2 GRP personnel who beat up journalist covering derailment of goods train suspended

LUCKNOW, JUN 12 (PTI): Two railway policemen were suspended for allegedly thrashing a television journalist after an argument with him when he was covering the derailment of a goods train in Shamli, officials said Wednesday.

Journalist Amit Sharma also alleged that "they forced me to take my clothes off and urinated on me." However, this charge has been denied by the Government Railway Police (GRP).

Director General of Uttar Pradesh Police OP Singh ordered that Rakesh Kumar, the GRP's Shamli Station House Officer, and constable Sanjay Pawar be suspended, the state police tweeted Wednesday morning.

A senior UP government official, quoting Shamli Senior Superintendent of Police Ajay Kumar Pandey, said the action was taken after the two GRP personnel thrashed Sharma.

In a purported video of the incident which went viral on social media late last night, the



accused GRP personnel, dressed in plain clothes, can be seen repeatedly slapping and punching Sharma. Subsequently, the GRP personnel detained him.

"The incident took place when the journalist had gone to cover the derailment of a few bogies of a goods train in Shamli. There was a heated exchange of words among them and hurling of abuses," said Ram Laxhan Mishra, the Circle Officer, GRP, Saharanpur.

A senior GRP official said the journalist was released around 7 am Wednesday.

The Uttar Pradesh police tweeted, "We have come across a video where a journalist has been beaten up & put up

in a lock up. DGP UP OP Singh has ordered for immediate suspension of SHO GRP Shamli Rakesh Kumar & Const. Sanjay Pawar. Strict punishment shall be accorded to policemen misbehaving with citizens." Amit Sharma, the journalist, later released a video in which he says, "GRP and railway officials were at the spot when I had gone for the coverage. The GRP personnel along with other cops beat me up. The mobile phone, which I used for shooting the news clip was hit and is missing. They also hurled abuses at me." Sharma added, "I was put in a lock up. They forced me to take off my clothes, and then they urinated on me."

Policemen attacked; workers of BJP, TMC clash in Birbhum

SURI (WB), JUN 12 (PTI): A police team was attacked allegedly by BJP workers on Wednesday when it was trying to lift a road blockade at a village in Birbhum district, a police officer said.

The BJP workers put up the road blockade near a bus stand in Bandar village under Nanoor police station to protest against the arrest of two saffron party supporters following a skirmish in the area on Tuesday night. Eyewitnesses said when the police lathicharged to disperse the agitators, they too attacked the police team and four police personnel, including Officer-in-charge of Nanoor police station Manoj Singh, were injured. District Superintendent of Police Shyam Singh, however, said, "No policemen suffered injuries in the attack.

So far five persons have been arrested." After the blockade was lifted, a clash broke out between the workers of the BJP and the Trinamool Congress. The two parties traded barbs over the clash.

BJP district general secretary Kalosona Mondal said, "Our workers were peacefully protesting against the illegal arrest and harassment of BJP workers when the police resorted to lathicharge. The TMC activists also pelted stones at our supporters."

Heavy influx of tourists chokes roads in Uttarakhand



DEHRADUN, JUN 12 (PTI): As the oppressive heatwave gripping the country's plains pushes a huge number of tourists to the relatively cooler hilly regions, several popular holiday destinations in Uttarakhand are witnessing massive traffic jams, forcing some visitors to return midway.

Choked by traffic jams and the heavy influx of tourists, the commuting time from Haridwar to the four Himalayan shrines (Char Dham) in Garhwal has more than doubled. It is now taking almost 18 hours to reach Badrinath from Haridwar, an official in Chamoli said.

Large swathes of the country have been searing under markedly high temperatures for the past several days, with the mercury hovering around the 50-degree Celsius mark in many ar-

reas in north India.

Over 80,000 vehicles pass through Haridwar on a daily basis these days, Haridwar SSP Janmejay Khanduri said.

Additional forces had been deployed to control the traffic but tourists continue to remain stuck for four to five hours, he added.

The situation is not unique to Haridwar.

Rishikesh, Mussoorie, Dehradun, Rudrapur, Gangotri, Yamunotri and Nainital are facing a similar problem.

According to Joshimath Block Prakash Rawat, the debris left during the construction of all-weather roads had added to commuters' woes beyond Rishikesh.

Though the widening of the roads was suspended due to the pilgrim season, the debris deposited on Chamoli-Joshimath stretch was contributing to traffic

jams, Rawat said.

He said timely removal of the debris would have saved the situation.

However, Chamoli District Magistrate Swati S Bhadoria said the debris had been removed from most places and it was being removed from the remaining places on a war footing.

The biggest factor contributing to traffic jams was the rise in the number of small vehicles entering the state on a daily basis and a shortage of parking lots, she said.

The stretch from Janaki Chatti to Syana Chatti on the way to the Yamunotri shrine and the 13-km road from Ganganani to Sukki Top on the way to Gangotri are witnessing traffic bottlenecks, allowing only two vehicles to pass at a time.

Uttarkashi District Magistrate Ashish Chauhan blamed the increasing rush of vehicles on

the roads to Yamunotri and Gangotri.

Since the opening of the portals at the Yamunotri and Gangotri temples on May 7, 51,480 small vehicles have reached the shrines till now.

The figure for the entire season stood at 56,291 last year.

Nainital-bound vehicles were being parked at temporary parking lots near the Rusi bypass and at Charkhet on the Kaladhungi road to decongest city roads, Nainital ADM Harbir Singh said.

"Those who leave their vehicles at the parking lots are being sent to Nainital by a shuttle service," he said.

There was a long traffic snarl on the Mussoorie-Haridwar road on Monday, which was cleared with deployment of additional police personnel, SP (City) Shweta Chaubey said.

Mizo govt has no knowledge about work done on railroad project to Myanmar border: minister

AIZAWL, JUN 12 (PTI): The Mizoram government has no knowledge about the work done on the proposed construction of railroad from Sairang near here to Hmawngbuchhuah village in Lawngtlai district bordering Myanmar, the assembly was informed on Wednesday.

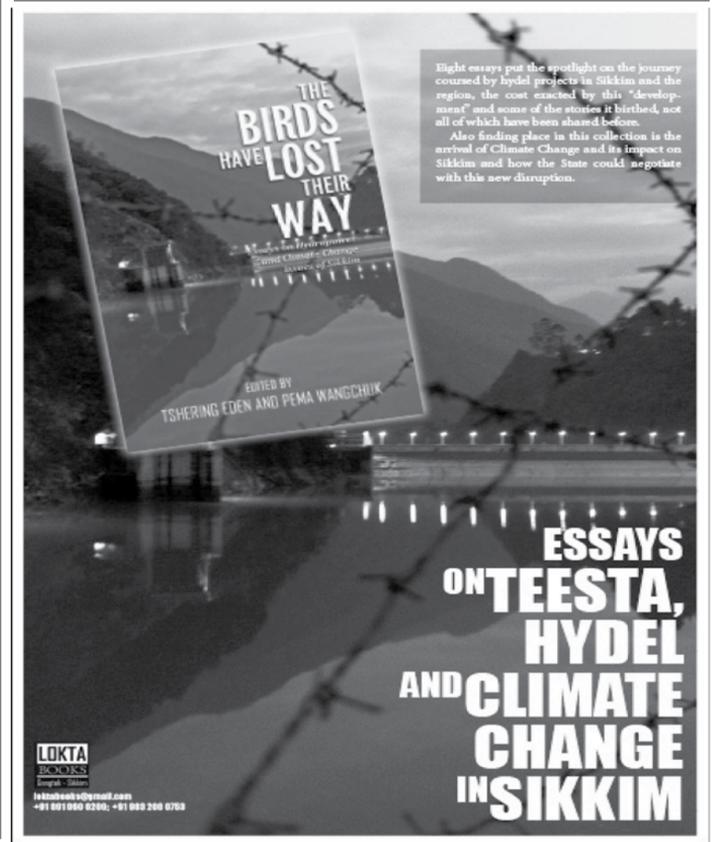
Replying to a question from Lalduhoma

of the Zoram People's Movement (ZPM), Transport Minister T J Lalnunluanga said the 272 kilometre long railroad project was being taken up by the Ministry of Railways and it did not provide any information to the Mizoram government about the progresses made.

"It was learnt that the preliminary engineering

level traffic survey was completed," he said adding that the state government was kept in the dark on the progresses made by the railways.

The only rail link Mizoram has is at the Mizoram-Assam border town of Bairabi. The 51 kilometre long broad gauge railroad between Bairabi to Sairang is under construction.



Mission New Zealand: Dhawan injury, weather pose challenge for India

NOTTINGHAM, JUN 12 (PTI): The Indian team's alternative strategy in the absence of an injured Shikhar Dhawan will be put through a stern test by a feisty New Zealand attack ready to ask a few probing questions if weather does not play spoilsport in their World Cup encounter here Thursday.

The contest, which could be a curtailed one due to inclement weather, will have a quality Black Caps seam attack ready to make life difficult for a new opening pair that is likely to feature KL Rahul at the top alongside Rohit Sharma.

Dhawan has been ruled out of at least the next three games owing to a hairline fracture in his left thumb.

New Zealand have had a good record against India at global events. Kane Williamson's men would be more than determined to win four-on-trot and maintain their pole position.

Dhawan has unintentionally forced Virat Kohli and Ravi Shastri to go for a tactical rejig despite convincing perfor-

mances in the first two games against South Africa and Australia.

If being forced to tinker with a successful opening combination that has cumulatively scored 4681 runs is a bit unsettling, there is also a positive side to the Dhawan injury saga.

It has provided India with an opportunity to test how good their Plan B is. Rahul's probable elevation at the top will certainly bring Vijay Shankar and Dinesh Karthik into the picture as far as the No.4 slot is concerned. Shankar's all-round abilities are pitted against Karthik's experience. The thick cloud cover and damp conditions could also bring in Mohammed Shami into the equation at the expense of one of the wrist spinners.

In case both Shankar and Karthik find a place in the playing XI, then Kedar Jadhav will be the one to miss out.

The situation demands technical nous from skipper Kohli and more so from coach Ravi Shastri, known to be a shrewd tactical operator.



It couldn't have been a more ideal time to go for such a rejig given that the tournament is still in its second week and one of the bounciest yet good batting tracks is on offer on Thursday.

This might not be the best of circumstances to open the batting but the talented Rahul will be determined to make this opportunity count.

Dealing with adversity separates men from boys and if Rahul is able to successfully play out a testing opening spell from Trent Boult, it could work wonders for his confidence going into the next set of games.

He would have a great reference point in the dynamic Rohit Sharma, who will be at the other end of the 22 yards. The

manner in which Rohit has transformed his game according to conditions has been more than commendable.

For a compulsive stroke-player like Rohit, to eschew his ego and let the Powerplays go with minimum risk, is something that Rahul can learn. It has paid dividends for the Indian vice captain and he has a hun-

dred and a fifty to show for his efforts in the first two games.

The duo will be up against Boult, who is expected to bring the ball back into the right handers.

He troubled the Indian batting in the warm-up game at the Oval but that game happened when the team had just landed on English soil.

Nearly two and half weeks have gone by and Boult hasn't got too much swing in the tournament proper even though his style of bowling is not dependent on conditions.

But Boult would not complain if he gets some assistance from the overcast conditions. New Zealand's "150kmph man" Lockie Ferguson is also happy that the Trent

Bridge track promises to provide bounce that West Indies exploited against both Pakistan and Australia.

"West Indies have shown that there's some extra bounce available at Trent Bridge and that can cause trouble. I am looking forward to the challenge as I like Trent Bridge as a ground," said Ferguson, making it clear what he has on mind.

Teams (From):
India: Virat Kohli (captain), Rohit Sharma, KL Rahul, Mahendra Singh Dhoni (wk), Hardik Pandya, Kedar Jadhav, Vijay Shankar, Kuldeep Yadav, Yuzvendra Chahal, Jasprit Bumrah, Mohammed Shami, Bhuvneshwar Kumar, Dinesh Karthik, Ravindra Jadeja, Shikhar Dhawan.

New Zealand: Kane Williamson (captain), Martin Guptill, Matt Henry, Tom Latham, Colin Munro, Jimmy Neesham, Henry Nicholls, Mitchell Santner, Ish Sodhi, Trent Boult, Colin de Grandhomme, Lockie Ferguson, Tim Southee, Ross Taylor, Tom Blundell (wk).

Match starts at 3pm (IST).

Kohli remains sole Indian in Forbes list of highest-paid athletes



NEW DELHI, JUN 12 (PTI): Star cricketer Virat Kohli remains the sole Indian in the Forbes list of world's highest-paid athletes with estimated annual earnings of USD 25 million. However, the Indian captain has dropped 17 spots to be 100th in the rankings.

The list is headed by Barcelona and Argentina football superstar Lionel Messi.

According to the Forbes list announced on Tuesday, Kohli's estimated earnings are USD 21 million from endorsements and USD 4 million from salary and

winnings, taking his total tally to USD 25 million for the last 12 months.

Ranked 83rd last year, Kohli has climbed down to the 100th and last spot despite an increase of USD 1 million in endorsements.

Messi has dethroned retired boxer Floyd Mayweather as the sports world's highest earner, raking in USD 127 million via salary and endorsement deals.

Messi is now ahead of long-time rival Cristiano Ronaldo, the Juventus and Portugal star who is second with earnings of USD 109 million.

Rishabh Pant comes in as cover for injured Dhawan

NOTTINGHAM, JUN 12 (PTI): Young wicketkeeper-batsman Rishabh Pant was Wednesday brought in as cover for the injured Shikhar Dhawan in India's World Cup squad.

Pant, whose omission from the original squad became a topic of heated debates given his stupendous form in the past one year, will reach here Wednesday.

His arrival will be a day before India's game against New Zealand and he won't be considered a replacement till the time the team management takes a final call on Dhawan's availability for the rest of the tournament.

"Rishabh Pant is being flown in from India as cover at the request of the team management," a senior BCCI official currently in England told PTI.

dreds during the tours of England and Australia earlier and was in fine form during the IPL last month.

Several former players such as Sunil Gavaskar advocated for his inclusion in the squad if Dhawan fails to recover quickly enough for India. Dhawan has been ruled out of three matches due to a hairline fracture on his left thumb which he sustained during his match-winning hundred in the clash against Australia on Sunday.

"...Dhawan is presently under the observation of the BCCI medical team. The team management has decided that Dhawan will continue to be in England and his progress will be monitored," the Indian team said in a statement on Wednesday night.

"Dhawan sustained an injury on the back of his left hand in the region between the index finger and thumb...", it added.

World Cup's rain woes: ICC says reserve days for every match not possible

Kushan Sarkar Nottingham, Jun 12 (PTI): Three rained out games and more feared, the ongoing World Cup does seem to be a bit under the weather but the International Cricket Council says there's hardly anything it can do to deal with the "extremely unseasonable" cloud cover in the country right now. Two Sri Lanka games -- against Pakistan and Bangladesh in Bristol have been abandoned without a ball being bowled.

The other game between South Africa and West Indies in Southampton was called off after 7.3 overs, leading to calls for a reserve day. The game between India and New Zealand in Nottingham is threatened by cloud cover and it is not even a fortnight into the tournament, which began on May 30 and concludes on July 14.

The sport's governing body says it couldn't have possibly gone for reserve days given the long schedule of the event.

"Factoring in a reserve day for every match at the World Cup would significantly increase the length of the tournament and practically would be extremely complex to deliver," ICC's outgoing Chief Executive Dave Richardson said in a statement.

As per Met department's report, the United Kingdom is experiencing twice the average rainfall

in June. "This is extremely unseasonable weather. In the last couple of days we have experienced more than twice the average monthly rainfall for June which is usually the third driest month in the UK," Richardson said. "In 2018, there was just 2 mm of rain in June but the last 24 hours alone has seen around 100mm fall in the south-east of England," said the former South Africa wicketkeeper.

He then went on to explain the impact a reserve day could have on the tournament.

"It would impact pitch preparation, team recovery and travel days, accommodation and venue availability, tournament staffing, volunteer and match officials' availability, broadcast logistics and very importantly the spectators who in some instances have travelled hours to be at the game.

"There is also no guarantee that the reserve day would be free from rain either," said Richardson. The abandoned matches could impact a team's position on the points table during the business end of the tournament.

But having a reserve day for each match will require a significant increase in workforce from the current 1200 that is employed per game. "We have reserve days factored in for the knock-out stages, knowing that over the course of 45 group games we should

play the large majority. "When a match is affected by weather conditions, the venue team works closely with Match Officials and Ground Staff to ensure that we have the best possible opportunity to play cricket, even if it is a reduced over game." New Zealand fast bowler Lockie Ferguson, when asked about rain affected games, said: "We want to play for two points. No player personally wants rained out games."

For Bangladesh coach Steve Rhodes, the match against Sri Lanka being called off was indeed frustrating as they had a real chance of victory against the below-par former champions.

"Very frustrating. We really targeted this sort of game as two points, and I know that Sri Lanka would have fought very hard and no pushovers at all. But we do see it as one point lost, and that's disappointing, but realistically, what can we do about it? Absolutely nothing," Rhodes said. But South Africa skipper Faf du Plessis was not complaining after the abandoned match against the West Indies as it helped his side get off the mark on the points table.

"The horse is out of the shed if that's the right wording...The further the game goes, the closer to a T20 game, being two down already, the odds are heavily in their favour.

Bigger bash: Australia's women's BBL gets own timeslot



SYDNEY, JUNE 12 (AFP): Women's cricket in Australia received a boost Wednesday when the Twenty20 Women's Big Bash League moved to its own window away from the men.

Until now, the tournament has been played in tandem with the men from December to February, but this year's fifth instalment will have its own timeslot from October 18 to December 8.

Cricket Australia's head of fan engagement called it "monumental for the women's game", as it allows the focus to rest entirely on female cricketers.

"It's something we've been building towards and last year's final series has proved

that the WBBL is ready to stand on its own two feet," he said.

Televised content nearly doubled last season with 23 matches broadcast on free-to-air and pay-TV.

To build on this, this year seven consecutive family-friendly "festival weekends" will be broadcast live, with all remaining matches streamed on cricket.com.au.

Each of the eight city-based franchises will play 14 matches with the final hosted by the top-ranked team.

Brisbane Heat won their first title last season with four balls to spare in a sold-out thriller against the Sydney Sixers, watched by nearly 500,000 people on TV.

Too hot even for Churu: R'than's desert district sizzles this summer

SANDEEP DAHIYA CHURU (RAJ), JUN 12 (PTI): As almost always this season, it's a hot day in this desert district. But with just hours to go before his wedding, Akash Kumar seems to be on top of the situation.

As he sits under the shade of a tree in the compound of his home at Kalyanpura village near here, a water sprinkler is in operation, constantly cooling the ground around him.

"I am happy that my friends and close relatives are sitting with me in the open at 2 pm, when the heat is at its peak," he tells PTI.

"It is kind of a facility for the guests," he says, talking about the sprinkler.

It helps that the guests around him are likely from Churu itself, infamous for the heat.

But it's a tougher summer this year, people say.

The bridegroom's uncle Harlal has been doing the rounds of the village, meeting people at their homes and reminding them about the wedding procession that will set off in the evening.

"Roads wear a deserted look, no one comes out of their home because of the extreme heat," he says.

"Of the 10 rooms, we have ACs in two and some coolers also. But the number of guests is large. So we have made this arrangement to counter the heat to some extent," he says.

The maximum temperature on Akash Kumar's wedding day is 47 degree Celsius. But the mercury has crossed 50 degrees thrice this season.

The highest day temperature so far this summer in Churu was 50.8 degrees on June 1, beating the 49.8 degree record set in 1993, according to the weather department.

Churu town resident Rajveer Singh says the summer this year has been more severe than the ones they normally face.

"We are used to facing 47-48 degree temperature in summers and below freezing point in winters. But the intense heat that we are facing this time is unprecedented," he says.

"We start our day quite early, because by the time its 8 or 9 am

it starts sizzling. Farmers too start their work by 4 am and finish by 8 am, and they go to the fields again after 6 or 7 pm," Singh adds.

"The AC and the cooler fail when the temperature is above 45 degree Celsius. The fans too throw hot air. The only natural method to contain the heat is to splash water on the floor to make the place a bit cooler," he says, covering his head with a piece of wet cloth.

"We consume a lot of liquids and avoid heavy meals to beat the heat," he says.

In Churu, ice cream sellers and sugarcane juice vendors do well during the evening hours when most people begin stepping outdoors.

Many shopkeepers keep their shutters down from about 1 pm to 4 or 5 pm when the heat is unbearable, and people walk around with their heads covered.

Churu's chief medical officer, Dr Manoj Sharma, says the government health centres have made special arrangements, including separate

wards, to deal with the heat.

There is some increase in the number of patients suffering from dehydration, but no cases of heat stroke so far, according to him.

Some blame deforestation for the searing heat in the district, which falls in Thar desert.

"Only 0.44 per cent of the total area of Churu is covered by forest," forest officer Banwari Sharma says.

His department plants and distributes saplings during the monsoon, but a small number of them survive to grow into trees.

According to Jaipur's meteorological department director Shiv Ganesh, a combination of anti-cyclonic circulation, clear weather conditions and dry summer winds blowing from the west keeps Churu sizzling in summer.

In winters, mercury dips below zero degree Celsius at times.

Churu is known for the black-buck population in the Tal Chhapar sanctuary. But the district doesn't see much tourism, or agriculture.

Comedian arrested for satirical review of movie in Nepal, triggers criticism of Oli govt

BY SHIRISH B PRADHAN KATHMANDU, JUN 12 (PTI): A popular comedian was arrested in Nepal for posting a "satirical" comment about a film on a social media platform, triggering a criticism of the K P Sharma Oli-led government.

Pranesh Gautam, 24, was arrested on Friday last week under the Electronic Transaction Act on a complaint filed by film maker Milan Chamling after the comedian posted a "satirical review" of his movie 'Birkram-part two' on his

YouTube channel 'Meme Nepal', the Kathmandu Post reported.

The arrest ironically was made three days before Prime Minister Oli's address to the Oxford Union in London where he spoke on the importance of democracy, freedom and human right.

PM Oli's speech highlighted the importance of democracy, while back home his government has been criticized for what is seen as an authoritarian rule, stifling freedom of speech and encroaching on human

rights, the report said.

In his speech, Oli said a person who had spent over five decades fighting for democratic rights and served 14-year jail sentence knew "how important access to education and freedom of speech are for people and society to grow, develop and prosper".

Meanwhile, Mohana Ansari, member of the National Human Rights Commission, tweeted that while Oli's speech celebrating freedom of speech was appreciated, "Nepali citizens want to

see the same at homeland, too". The Oli administration has been criticised for attempting to push through a number of controversial bills, including a Media Council bill and an Information Technology Bill, that many say could be used to stifle criticism and squeeze the media.

"In his speech on Monday, Oli failed to mention that his government is bringing laws to control and suppress the media," said Bishnu Nisthuri, former chairman of the Federa-

tion of Nepali Journalists.

The Federation of Nepalese Journalists is demanding that the government should withdraw the controversial Media Council Bill.

"The prime minister should respond through action, not words... It seems the only purpose of the media council bill is to control and punish the media that does not obey the government. The bill will curtail the freedom of expression," said Krishna Pahadi, a noted human rights activist.

Nirav Modi: UK High Court notes broad consistency in India's evidence



BY ADITI KHANNA LONDON, JUN 12 (PTI): A UK High Court judge on Wednesday accepted a broad consistency of evidence put forward by the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS), arguing on behalf of the Indian government, in the extradition case against fugitive diamond merchant Nirav Modi.

Justice Ingrid Simler read out a detailed judgment at the Royal Courts of Justice, in which she upheld a lower court ruling to withhold bail and also summed up the case against Modi - wanted in India as the "principal beneficiary" of the fraudulent issuance of letters of undertaking (LoUs) in the nearly USD 2 billion Punjab National Bank (PNB) fraud and money laundering case.

"Taken overall, there is a broad consistency of evidence," Judge Simler noted, as she accepted all the concerns raised by the CPS.

Modi's legal team had rejected any of destruction of evidence by him and claimed that any mobile phones disposed of were only to avoid tracking rather than to destroy the material held on them. But the judge dismissed this assertion, accepting the CPS assertion that they were destroyed to obstruct the CBI and ED investigation.

"There is a compelling case that this was done to prevent the investigating agencies from obtaining relevant data," the judge agreed. Describing the case as one of a serious and substantial nature, she went on to ask a series of rhetorical questions on why certain actions were taken by Modi and his co-conspirators, including flying witnesses out of India to Cairo, Egypt.

offer of that payment, she noted.

The judge reiterated that the strength of the evidence will be tested when the District Judge begins hearing the arguments in the extradition trial, expected later in the year, to establish a prima facie case against the diamond merchant at Westminster Magistrates' Court.

But at this stage, she remained unconvinced that Modi did not intend to abscond to a jurisdiction that did not have an extradition treaty with India or that he would not continue to interfere with witnesses and evidence in the case.

There is compelling evidence of interference [with witnesses] in the past and a strong basis of reaching a conclusion on what will happen [in the future], the judge said, adding that Modi's presence in the UK may have been fortuitous but she could not find any significant ties to the country that would prevent him from fleeing. Summarising the background of the Indian government's case against Modi, the judge noted that the 48-year-old jeweller is accused of using a sophisticated corporate structure to give a perception of legitimate trading while misusing the letters of undertaking to defraud PNB in a conspiracy involving staff members of the bank.

An arrest warrant was issued against him in May and then a second one in July last year, with an extradition request made to the UK authorities in August 2018.

The High Court judge accepted that while there is a presumption in favour of bail for a person facing extradition, that presumption is subject to exceptions which include substantial grounds for believing the Requested Person will fail to surrender. And, in Modi's case she concluded that she did find such substantial grounds, which means he will remain at London's Wandsworth prison on one of England's most overcrowded jails.

Japan PM on Tehran mission to ease Iran-US tensions

TEHRAN, JUN 12 (AFP): Japan's Prime Minister Shinzo Abe arrived in Tehran on Wednesday for a rare diplomatic mission, hoping to defuse tensions between the Islamic republic and Tokyo's ally Washington.

State television broadcast footage of Abe being greeted at Tehran's Mehrabad airport by Iran's Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif.

The first Japanese prime minister to visit Iran in 41 years, Abe was expected to go straight into talks with President Hassan Rouhani and to meet Iran's supreme leader Ali Khamenei on Thursday morning.

His arrival was preceded by that of Japan's Foreign Minister Taro Kono, who held closed-door talks with Zarif.

Addressing a cabinet meeting ahead of the visit, Rouhani said Iran's leaders and people were united in their view that "the main culprit is America. Not a single individual doubts it." "The (US) pressure has reached its full strength," he told the cabinet.

Tehran is locked in a bitter standoff with Washington after President Donald Trump withdrew from a landmark 2015 nuclear deal in May last year.

Washington has since reimposed crippling unilateral sanctions, which have forced Japan to halt its once substantial purchases of Iranian oil, and launched a military buildup in the Gulf.

"Amid concerns over growing tension in the Middle East and with the attention of the international community on the issue, Japan wishes to do its best towards peace and stability in the region," Abe told reporters before leaving for Tehran.

"Based on traditional friendly ties between Japan and Iran, I would like to have candid exchanges of opinions with President Rouhani and supreme leader Khamenei towards easing tensions," he said.

Japanese government officials said Abe would not present Tehran with a list of demands, or deliver a message from Washington, but instead



wanted to play the role of neutral intermediary.

Abe discussed "the situation in Iran" in a telephone call with Trump on Tuesday, a Japanese government spokesman said.

A government official said Abe will not be in Tehran to "mediate between Iran and the US" and that "easing tensions" was the prime purpose.

"He might touch upon the subject (of mediation) but that does not necessarily mean he is delivering a message" from Washington, he added.

Japan is hoping to lower the temperature, officials say.

Abe won Trump's blessing for the mediation mission when the US president visited Tokyo last month.

"We believe it is extremely important that, at the leadership level, we call on Iran as a major regional power to ease tension, to adhere to the nuclear agreement and to play a constructive role for the region's stability," Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshihide Suga said.

Iranian newspapers were divided along conservative-reformist lines in their assessment of Abe's visit.

The reformist Sazan-degi daily ran a front-page cartoon of Abe in full samurai armour, a rolled piece of paper in one hand and a shield on the other. In an accompa-

nying article headlined "A samurai in Tehran," the paper said everyone was waiting to see "Tehran's reaction to Japan's initiative to raise its international standing by mediating as both Washington's ally and Iran's friend."

The ultraconservative Javan daily, warned that "Iran and Japan minus America" could be a winning formula for Abe, but "Japan as America's intermediary in Iran" would fail given the deep mistrust of the US.

Other Iranian commentators said Abe could pass messages between the two sides.

"Mr. Abe's visit comes right after meeting Mr. Trump in Japan, so the Americans are interested in using this channel," Ebrahim Rahimpour, a former deputy foreign minister, told Iran's Sharh daily.

But while Tokyo has longstanding trade ties with Tehran and a strategic alliance with Washington, experts say Abe has little leverage with either side and mediation will be an uphill struggle.

The trip by the Japanese premier "faces substantial obstacles and is unlikely to bear fruit," said Tobias Harris, an analyst at Teneo consultancy group.

"While Japan has good relationships with countries on both sides, these relationships do not necessarily translate into influence."

Amir's five-for breaks Australia's back after Warner century

TAUNTON, JUNE 12 (PTI): Fast bowler Mohammad Amir (5/30) sizzled with a fifer to help Pakistan bowl out Australia for 307, built around David Warner's critic-silencing century in the ICC World Cup, here Wednesday.

Owing to Amir's excellent bowling, Australia's innings ended with an over to spare.

Sent into bat after the coin landed in Pakistan skipper Sarfaraz Ahmed's favour, Australia were off to a steady start with Warner and skipper Aaron Finch helping the team to 50 in 10 overs.

Australia seemed headed for a mammoth total as they were 223 for two in the 34th over but Amir's sensational spell changed the complexion of the game.

Amir started with a maiden and going with

only four mainline bowlers, Australia knew they needed to score big to put Pakistan under pressure. The Aussies broke free against Shaheen, with Finch hitting him over the deep square leg fence for a six and Warner employing the pull shot to get a four. As Australia looked for quick runs, Amir showed his class by bowling another maiden over.

Apart from the singles and twos, both managed to find the ropes occasionally, before Finch carted Mohammad Hafeez for 16 runs with the help of a six and two boundaries.

After a stand that yielded 146 runs in 22.1 overs, Amir provided Pakistan the much-needed breakthrough when he had Finch hitting one high up in the air towards

extra cover. Warner hit Hasan Ali for two consecutive fours, and then, there was a classy cover drive by Steve Smith. A couple of quiet overs was followed by a productive one from Australia's point of view, with Warner smashing Shoaib Malik for a six over long-on and a four to pick 15 runs.

Sitting pretty at 189 for two in the 29th over, Smith tried to up the ante but in doing so, ended up giving a catch to Asif Ali, who had dropped a sitter in the slips earlier.

Glenn Maxwell struck 20 in 10 balls even as Warner reached the three-figure mark when an edge flew between the keeper and the wide slip for a four. He got out shortly after celebrating his century with gusto.

The show, then, belonged to Amir.

Pak govt says no change in def budget; documents show 4.5% increase

BY SAJJAD HUSSAIN ISLAMABAD, JUN 12 (PTI): The Pakistan government claimed that its defence budget was kept unchanged at Rs Rs 1,152,535 million for next fiscal (2019-20), but the official documents showed that there was nominal increase of 4.5 per cent in the defence expenditure as compared to the last year.

The original allocation for defence for outgoing fiscal (2018-19) was Rs 1,100,334 million but it was revised later on to shot up to Rs 1,137,711 million, up by 3.4 per cent, by the end of year.

So the actual rise from previous allocation was Rs 52,201 million, which is 4.5 per cent.

But Minister of State for Revenue Hammad Azhar in his 2019-20 budget speech on Tuesday did not provide intricate details and just said that the defence budget would remain unchanged at Rs 1.15 trillion.

Pakistan Army chief Gen Qamar Bajwa announced last week that the armed forces were "foregoing routine increase in annual de-

fence budget".

Prime Minister Imran Khan also said the military had "voluntarily agreed" to cut its expenditures due to "critical financial situation".

A closer analysis of the current defence allocation showed that it makes 14 per cent of the total outlay and 2.62 per cent of the GDP. In the outgoing year, the amount earmarked for defence was 18.5 per cent of the total pie and 2.87 per cent of the GDP.

These figures do not include Rs 327 billion set aside or pensions of retired defence personnel. Originally pension of retired soldiers was part of defence allocation but it was transferred to civil heads during regime of military ruler Pervez Musharraf.

Dawn reported that freeze on defence budget would affect the civil works' head the most as it has received a 12.77 per cent cut. The civil works head accounts for the funds marked for maintenance of existing infrastructure and construction of new buildings. The other head to get relatively lesser

increase is that of operating expenses, which would grow by 4.4 per cent. Operating expenses cover transport, POL, ration, medical treatment, training, etc.

Meanwhile, employee-related expenses, which include salaries and allowances paid to troops in uniform and civilian employees, are proposed to go up by 6.5 per cent.

In line with the announcement by the civilian and military leadership that defence capacity would not be affected, the expenditure on physical assets' is set to increase by 11.7 per cent. This head provides for local purchase and import of arms and ammunition and related procurements.

Last year when the defence budget was hiked by massive 18 per cent, the physical assets head had received a 16 per cent raise.

The army traditionally had the lion's share in defence budget. This year the allocation for the army would remain static at Rs 523 billion. It still accounts for 45.4 pc of the total defence allocation.

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Kangana Ranaut's Sister Asked Her For Home Design Suggestions

There is no denying the fact that Kangana Ranaut is a doting sister and the latest series of Twitter posts shared by her sister Rangoli Chandel reminds us of just that. On Tuesday, Rangoli Chandel shared a video on her Twitter handle, in which she revealed that Kangana is helping her in designing her house in Himachal Pradesh. In the video, the 32-year-old actress can be seen sharing her ideas and giving her inputs as she stands at the site. In her post, Rangoli revealed that she asked Kangana for design suggestions but the Queen actress got really excited and she decided to do everything from scratch for designing her sisters' dream house.

Rangoli Chandel shared the video on Twitter and she wrote: "Ajay (Rangoli's husband) and I are building our house in Kullu. I simply asked Kangana for some design suggestions and here she is, designing everything from scratch. Sometimes she calls me at 2 am, burst-

ing with ideas and excitement. Every day I get hundreds of reference pictures."

Rangoli shared a picture along with her sister and her family in a separate Twitter post. In her post, Rangoli referred to Kangana as a giving person. An excerpt from Rangoli's post read, "The best thing about Kangana is her ability to give her all to the people in her life, to treat them as if they are an extension of herself, how not to fall in love with her every day."

Rangoli Chandel often doubles up as Kangana's manager and she frequently defends her sister on social media. On the work front, Kangana Ranaut has a busy year ahead. She made an appearance at the 72nd edition of the Cannes Film Festival last month, where she represented the brand Grey Goose.

Kangana Ranaut will next be seen in Mental Hai Kya, co-starring Rajkumar Rao. She also has Panga and Jayalalitha's biopic in the pipeline.



HEY KATE! The actress, Kate Bosworth strolls through NYC rocking some seriously awesome street style.

Deepika Padukone joins Ranveer Singh in '83'



MUMBAI, JUN 12 (PTI) Deepika Padukone is set to star in upcoming sports drama, "83" with her husband, actor Ranveer Singh.

Deepika will essay the role of Romi Dev, wife to cricketing legend Kapil Dev, to be played by Ranveer.

Ranveer made the announcement on Wednesday on Instagram.

"*drum roll* All smiles as All-star @deepikapadukone joins the #83squad! @83thefilm @kabirkhankk," he wrote alongside a photo with Deepika and film's director Kabir Khan.

In another post, Ranveer dished out details about his frequent co-star's role.

"Who better to play My Wife than My

Wife?! @deepikapadukone plays Romi Dev in @83thefilm! Genius casting courtesy @kabirkhankk," he said.

This will be the duo's fourth collaboration after last year's release "Padmaavat".

"83" will chronicle India's win under Kapil's captainship, when the Men in Blue defeated West Indies in the final to clinch their first-ever World Cup trophy in 1983.

The much-awaited film will release on April 10, 2020.

"83" is produced by Madhu Mantena, Vishnu Induri and Kabir, and presented by Reliance Entertainment.

The shooting is underway in Glasgow.

Felt broken towards 'Bodyguard' end: Richard Madden



LOS ANGELES, JUN 12 (PTI) "Bodyguard" star Richard Madden said playing the role of a war veteran with post traumatic stress disorder in the hit BBC series took a toll on him.

The 32-year-old portrayed David Budd who is assigned to protect controversial politician-home secretary Right Honourable Julia Montague MP (Keeley Hawes), dealing with PTSD at the same time.

Madden said there was a point when he thought he needed to "stop doing this" for a while. "It weighed very heavy on me. You spend more time in someone else's clothes, saying someone else's words, thinking someone else's thoughts. You do lose a bit of yourself.

"I'm not a method actor in any way, but you get a huge hangover from this. At the

end of this, I felt very isolated and broken, much like the character was," he said at The Hollywood Reporter's Drama Actor Roundtable.

The actor, who shot to global fame with "Game of Thrones", said he spoke to some soldiers to research for the role, adding it was "tough" to get them to open up.

"... They really don't want to talk about it. People don't want to discuss this at all. (PTSD) is something that people live with everyday. It can be a really trickling level of anxiety you constantly live with, or paranoia, or panic attacks."

Madden added his goal was "to humanise (PTSD) within someone who is in complete denial about it".

The actor was joined by Hugh Grant, Diego Luna, Sam Rockwell, Stephan James and Billy Porter at the roundtable.

'The Sky is Pink' hardest loveliest experience: Priyanka Chopra

MUMBAI, JUN 12 (PTI) Priyanka Chopra says shooting for "The Sky is Pink" was the most challenging and "loveliest" experience. The film is her first Hindi project, which she is also producing, after she headed for Hollywood in 2016.

Priyanka took to Instagram on Wednesday where she posted a picture from the wrap party of the movie, directed by Shonali Bose. "And it's a wrap. This movie is special to me on so many levels. Not just because @roykapurfilms and @rsvpmovies (Sid and Ronnie) partnered with me on my first Hindi production... but also took the chance on me to bring to life a character and a true story that needed to be told," she captioned the photograph with the cast and crew. She gave a shout-out to co-stars Farhan Akhtar, Zaira Wasim and Rohit Saraf.

"@faroutakhtar you made an amazing co actor all over again with all the laughter and fun! (you were missed tonight) and my amazing @zairawasim_ and @rohitsaraf10 who I've made friends for life with!"

Priyanka also thanked Shonali for her trust.

"This was the hardest loveliest experience. Thank you @shonalibose_ for your incredibly unique vision. I'm so proud of your faith in me. Thank you so much to our crew who worked tirelessly for 10 months to make this special piece of cinema. I love you all. See you at the pictures!" she added. The film completed shooting in March.

"The Sky is Pink" is a love story of motivational speaker Aisha Chaudhary's parents. Aisha was diagnosed with pulmonary fibrosis. "October" writer Juhi Chaturvedi has penned the story.

Aubrey Plaza, Kumail Nanjiani to present at MTV Awards

LOS ANGELES, JUN 12 (PTI) Aubrey Plaza, Kumail Nanjiani, Dave Bautista and Jameela Jamil are among the Hollywood stars who will be presenting at the MTV Awards 2019.

According to The Hollywood Reporter, the line-up for this year's movie and television awards also includes Daniel Levy, David Spade, Kiernan Shipka, Maude Apatow, Mj Rodriguez, Shameik Moore and Storm Reid.

This year, MTV will live stream both the red carpet and MTV Movie & TV Awards Game Night.

New categories were introduced this edition, including reality royalty, most meme-able moment and best real-life hero. The awards ceremony, to be hosted by Zachary Levi, will air on June 17.

ARIES: Opinions, opinions! Under today's frustrating face-off between the Sun and Jupiter, people may confuse their POVs with empirical facts. And get ready for some spirited debates! Sure, you could learn something fascinating from a wise soul. Then there are people who seem immune to logic and proof. Don't get caught up in senseless arguments with know-it-alls...or trolls!

TAURUS: You're sexy and you know it, Taurus, but try not to lose your cool because some wildly flattering attention is coming your way. Today, as the Sun faces off with Jupiter in your intense eighth house, those live-for-the-moment adventures can lead you down an obsessive rabbit hole. Although you're turned on and lit up, try to hold out for lasting value in all partnerships.

GEMINI: Under today's stars, you're more naughty than nice, so unleash your mischievous side. Let your hair down and allow your inner bad girl/guy to come out to play. Get yourself glammed up for a night on the town, or inject some spice into your day by sending

the object of your affections a suggestive message or photo.

CANCER: Today, people's expectations (and soon, their demands!) might balloon out of proportion. Here's the rub: This whole situation might be your "fault." With the Sun and supersizer Jupiter working at cross-purposes, your ego could be out to prove something, leading you to take on responsibilities that are above your pay grade. Don't get swept up in the competitive vibes: As it's been said, pride goeth before a fall.

LEO: The world's your oyster as quicksilver Mercury makes a global entry into your ninth house of travel and adventure until May 6, sparking your wanderlust. Grab your car keys—or passport—and enjoy a spur-of-the-moment getaway. If you can't get out of Dodge on such short notice, consider this your long-lead nudge to start planning your late-spring or summer vacay NOW.

LIBRA: Body language isn't just a dialect spoken by a few—it's the universal language of love! And today, your cosmic ruler, sil-

ver-tongued Mercury, flits into your sultry, seductive erotic eighth house until May 6, inviting you to flirt with abandon. It's a time to let your desires be known, directly or with more secretive subtlety.

VIRGO: Even someone with superhuman powers couldn't keep up with everything you've got piled on your plate, Virgo. Compromise is mandatory if you hope to maintain some semblance of sanity, so find ways to scale back and streamline. In order to accomplish your most important work mission today, you'll need to backburner each and every nonessential to-do on your list. Tune out those around you, and you'll cross the finish line before the end of the day. Phew.

SCORPIO: Today's emo moon brings out your empathetic side. Don't fight those feelings, Scorpio! If you feel a surge of sadness or anger in response to a friend's plight, express it! Let the tears flow and open your heart to those who mean the most to you. Go out of your way to let them know how important they are in your world. When you need a steady shoulder and a compassionate ear, they'll be there

for you with bells on.

SAGITTARIUS: Pull off that oversized cashmere sweater and slip into something more glamorous—or better yet, sexier. Today, messenger Mercury wings into your amorous, glamorous fifth house until May 6, turning you into an unabashed flirtatious. Harboring a secret crush? It's time to act on it, Archer. Plan more playful dates over the next few weeks, whether you're single or spoken for. Think: private whisky tasting or an adventurous road trip to see Hamilton on tour. You'll be a magnet for magnates, so don't be shy about approaching the power players in any room!

CAPRICORN: Trying to make everyone happy, Capricorn? Today's stars turn that into an exercise in futility. If you've piled one too many obligations on your plate, your stress levels are liable to peak. Your best bet is to graciously bow out of a few responsibilities in the name of preserving your peace of mind. Don't worry—the people who really count will understand. And if anyone tries to send you on a guilt

trip, remember that their emotions are not your responsibility!

AQUARIUS: The more is not the merrier today if it means being upstaged by someone's off-putting swagger. Don't force yourself to include a "big personality" in your plans. You need to guard your precious group hangs from disruptive forces. Of course, with the Sun in your theatrical fifth house opposing live-out-loud Jupiter in your teamwork zone, it could be YOU who's hogging the spotlight. Bring on the witty one-liners and wildly spontaneous whims. But remember, you're gathering to connect with people, not be the entertainment!

PISCES: It's easy to overshoot the mark today as the Sun and Jupiter face off and pump up your swagger to baller levels. Your ambition is admirable, but ignoring protocol could mean stepping on the wrong person's stiletto. At least for today, pay attention to the power pyramid and play the political game. Take time to add a personal touch to all your professional dealings