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SummitTIMES

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O N T O P O F T H E N E W S

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Construction delay in Bhaichung Stadium continues to dismay

BIKASH CHETTRI
NAMCHI, 31 JUL:

It has been six years in the making, but Bhaichung Stadium here, which should have flaunted a pitch of artificial turf by now, continues to be overgrown with weeds instead. The project has seen many delays, but now, the Sports & Youth Affairs Department, the executing body for the project, has again reaffirmed that construction work on the stadium is in progress and assured to complete the stadium by March next year.

The deadline appears uncertain because there continue to be differences between what the department claims and what the contractor has



to say.

It may be recalled that the new stadium was sanctioned by the State government in the years 2012 at a project cost of Rs 33 crore.

This project was however beset with delays and over the years, another Rs 15 crore was added to the project cost.

The frustrated public of Namchi had even

called a public hearing on the matter which was followed by several visits by senior officers and Minister, but one look at the construction site and doubts continue to rise.

When contacted, the Nodal officer of the project, Additional Director, SYA, Kamal Chettri, informed that the Department was trying to com-

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New anti-graft law comes into force; bribe givers to get 7-year jail

NEW DELHI, JUL 31 (PTI): Bribe givers can now be punished with a jail term of maximum of seven years under a new anti-corruption law that has got assent from President Ram Nath Kovind.

Besides, public servants -- politicians, bureaucrats and bankers among others -- have also been given a 'shield' from prosecution in the legislation that makes it mandatory for investigating agencies such as the CBI to take prior approval from a competent authority before conducting any enquiry against them.

The president gave approval to the Prevention of Corruption (Amendment) Act, 1988, recently, an official order said.

The central government has decided July 26, 2018, as the date on which the provisions of the Act shall come into force, it said.

"No police officer shall conduct any enquiry or investigation into any offence alleged to have been committed by a public servant under this Act, where the alleged offence is relatable to any recommendation made or decision taken by such public servant in discharge of his official functions or duties, without the previous approval," the order said.

The Act, however, states that such permission shall not be necessary for cases involving on the spot arrest of a person on the charge of accepting or attempting to accept any undue ad-

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SKM accuses CM of lifting SKM promises

SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 31 JUL:

Sikkim Krantikari Morcha today alleged that Chief Minister Pawan Chamling was "stealing" SKM's programmes and plans and taking them to the people.

Addressing a press conference here today, SKM spokesperson, Jacob Khaling, claimed that the CM has been announcing programmes of the SKM party as the elections approach closer. This, he argued, was the corruption of thoughts.

"If he is really sincere, then the CM should accept in the public that these programmes are of the SKM party," he asserted.

He also stated that these pro-



grammes have not been mentioned in any of the election manifestos of the SDF party, but were part of SKM manifesto for 2014.

Mr Khaling stated that the CM announcement of 'one family, one

job' was the promise of the SKM and was included in its election manifesto of 2014. He mentioned that SKM party had also posted this programme on social media.

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Karate team bags 13 medals in International C'ship at Kolkata



SAGAR CHETTRI
GANGTOK, 31 JUL:

A team of karatekas from the State has returned home with 13 medals from the 4th edition of International Karate Championship 2018 held on 28 and 29 July at Netaji Subash Chandra Bose Stadium in Kolkata. The championship was organised by All India Seishinkai Shito-Ryu Karate-Do Federation,

which had the participation of teams from different parts of the country and Nepal.

A 26-member team represented Sikkim in the championship, which was led by Taraman Gurung as team coach and Hem Kumari Rai as the team manager. The State team bagged 5 gold medals, 4 silver medals and 4 bronze medals.

Gold medallists are

Biswas Gurung, Vivhan Neopane, Sakima Rai, Biswadeep Mangar and Yozna Gurung, while silver medals were won by Drishna Rai, Adarsh Tamang, Manisha Chettri and Upendra Gurung. Likewise, bronze medals were bagged by Buddha Sundas, Anita Gurung, Bimala Tamang and Bigyasha Tamang.

Sikkim State Karate-Do Federation

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Phase II of Project Garima launched in Sikkim

GANGTOK, 31 JUL (IPR): The Human Resource Development Department (HRDD) along with Sulabh International, India's largest non-profit organization and Sulabh School Sanitation Club had initiated a pilot project that provided sanitary napkin vending machines and destroyers in 28 Government Senior Secondary Schools

in 2016. Following the success of the project, Phase-II titled, GARIMA was launched today at Chintan Bhawan.

The Minister for HRDD, RB Subba was the chief guest for the day while the Founder Chairperson of Sulabh International, Padma Bhusan recipient, Dr. Bindeshwar Pathak was the guest of honour.

The event was also attended by Advisor HRDD, OT Lepcha; Chief Secretary, AK Shrivastava, Additional Chief Secretary HRDD, GP Upadhyaya, Secretary Urban Development & Housing Department, LB Chettri, Secretary Rural Management and Development Department, DR Nepal, officials of HRDD, Principals and teachers of various schools in Gangtok, students from several schools and Sulabh Sanitation Club and members of the press.

turn to pg02



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Regularise services before announcing govt jobs for every family, HSP tells CM

SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 31 JUL:

The Chief Minister's announcement of government employment for one member of each family having no members in government employ has been rejected as condemnable by Hamro Sikkim Party which sees this as a superficial election year announcement.

Am HSP press release issued by publicity secretary Punya Koirala has instead suggested that the government regularise services of all those casual employees waiting for service regularisation and that this be done before the next Assembly elections.

Or else, the announcement of MR employment to each family would be an eyewash, the HSP contends.

HSP further suggests that each family get a house in Sikkim, be free of debt, regularisation of MR/adhoc employees, seat reservation for Limboo Tamang communities, tribal status for the left out communities before the coming elections.

Karmapa dispels rumours, says...

contd from pg01

ative to talk and clear the air with the Government of India. Actually, these talks are going on right now," he adds.

He further reiterates, "Once, these talks are over and the outcomes are fruitful, I am all set to go to India... I cannot confirm the exact dates. There is a conference of Tibetan Religious Heads being planned in the month of November at Dharamsala. I consider it important to participate in it. That's when I am hoping I can go back... One reason was to have detailed health check-up and secondly, in these 18 years in India I haven't had any vacation. And also because of facing all kind of challenges both inside and outside, had some problems with both body and mind. Therefore, took this opportunity to have a vacation and also to give both body and mind some rest. That's why stayed here for this long."

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SAATHI offsite training camp

SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 31 JUL:

An offsite training camp was organized for 11 Government Schools of Sikkim at Indian Himalayan Centre for Adventure and Eco-Tourism (IHCAE) in Chenchey, South Sikkim. The camp was held from 28-31 July with the participation of 115 students and 11 teachers, a press release informs.

Schools that participated in the training camp were Enchey Govt. Sr. Sec. School, Rumtek Govt. Sr. Sec. School, West-point Govt. Sr. Sec. School, Assamlingzey Govt. Sr. Sec. School, Biraspati Parsai Govt. Sr. Sec. School, Phudong Govt. Sr. Sec. School, Temi Govt. Sr. Sec. School, Buriakhop Govt. Sr. Sec. School, Soreng Govt. Sr. Sec. School, Namthang Govt. Sr. Sec.



School and Pelling Govt. Sr. Sec. School

During the camp, various motivational and technical sessions on substance abuse along with learning based fun and physical activities were conducted with the

students. The students were trained on physical, emotional and social effects of alcohol, marijuana, tobacco, prescription and other drugs; effects of drug and alcohol abuse in education, goals and future success; and

how to say "no" to drugs in practical situations and to have a positive attitude.

The session on Medical Aspects of Drugs was taken by Dr. Davenendra Singh, Life Skills by Manorath Dahal (Trained

Teacher Coordinator of Rumtek GSSS), Communication skills by Pragyan Deep Dewan. and experience sharing by Bikash Bista, Teacher of Jorethang GSSS who also counseled the students about various consequences of addiction.

Other activities included team building sessions, planning sessions, meditation, nature walk/physical training and talent hunt. The camp successfully concluded on 31 July with pledging and badging ceremony.

Training and broiler poultry distribution

MANGAN, 31 JUL (IPR):

The Department of Animal Husbandry, Livestock and Fisheries Department, North Sikkim organized a training and broiler poultry distribution program for 25 progressive farmers of North Sikkim. The program was organized under Poultry Mission and the farmers received cash component of Rs 15,000 for the construction of poultry sheds, 200 chicks and feed supply, along with other inputs, to start a poultry enterprise.

The beneficiaries were briefed on the technical aspects of poultry farming, ethno veterinary medicines for disease management by Dr. Dichen Kaleon and Dr. Karma Ongmu Bhutia. The Joint Director, Animal Husbandry Dr. Karma T. Bhutia informed that the beneficiaries have been selected taking into consideration their capability, interest and availability of land for poultry sheds.

The department will provide assistance to the farmers in starting the small enterprise and will regularly monitor to make the enterprise



a success. He also stated that marketing support and feedback will be provided to the growers so that they can sell their products. The main mission of the program was to make the farmers self reliant and turn them into micro entrepreneurs.

The progressive poultry farmers of Pakshap have organized themselves into the Pakshap Poultry Growers Society which is currently doing brisk business in the district. The growers of the society are the main supplier of poultry to Mangan town and the adjacent areas.

The secretary of the society who was a resource person at the

session stated that the business had brought them huge rewards and improved their economic status. He stated that a marketing place at Mangan bazaar was required along with uninterrupted power supply at Pakshap to further scale the business. The Society was also ready to provide all support to the farmers to get into the business.

The District Collector, North, Karma R Bonpo who attended the valedictory session urged the farmers to take up the scheme seriously and said that the venture would prove to be very profitable to the farmers. He stated that farmers should produce as per

the requirements of the market and said that demand for poultry products is directly linked to the tourist inflow in the district. The demand will be high during the tourist season and the farmers should prepare well in advance for meeting that demand.

He also stressed the need for proper financial management to make the venture a success and stated that farmers need to plough back their earnings into the business and not use the money for other household needs. He stated that the State Government has been very proactive in rolling out various schemes and the farmers should take advantage of the scheme for their benefit. He also assured that the request for providing marketing space would be taken up on priority.

The Animal Husbandry department intends to make the scheme a grand success in the district and has been working hard to train the farmers and also provide market linkage to sell the products in the market

Karate team bags 13 medals in International...

contd from pg01

te-Do Association [SSKDA] has felicitated medal winners and team members for their outstanding performance in the championship here at Paljor Stadium this evening. The felicitation programme was chaired by the Sports & Youth Affairs Department Deputy Director, Thupten Rapgyal as the chief guest.

While congratulating the team members, Mr Rapgyal appreciated the continuous outstanding performances

of Sikkimese karatekas in national and international competitions. He expressed that local karatekas have the potential to reach the Olympic level. He also appreciated the hard work and efforts of the SSKDA chief coach and chief technical director, Bidhan Ballav for taking karate to this level in the State. He also appreciated the efforts of president, Bijoy Gurung and technical council chairperson of SSKDA, Bhim Bahadur Subba for their effort in leading the

association.

On behalf of the association, SSKDA president, Bijoy Gurung congratulated the entire team for their outstanding performance in the championship. He mentioned that the association sent mostly beginners in this international championship. They had recently undergone a coaching camp of Sports & Youth Affairs Department held from 05 to 17 July at Paljor Stadium.

"Most of the medals were won by cadet

and sub-junior players, which is a very good sign for the development of karate in the State," Mr Gurung added.

Likewise, SSKDA technical council chairperson, Mr Subba mentioned that the association has now decided to provide more exposure to local players outside the State. He further added that SSKDA will be organising more activities and events in the State to encourage and to provide more platforms to young karatekas of Sikkim.

Construction delay in Bhaichung Stadium continues to dismay

contd from pg01

plete the project. He informed that department had called a meeting with contractor recently and made an agreement with him to complete the construction works by March 2019.

He also informed that Department was releasing the funds to complete the project and that the construction work with be resumed full swing within two or three days.

In the other hand, contractor in question claims that he has carried out his work according to the department's directions and completed around 70% of the construction.

He further contended that he has completed work to the tune of Rs 30 crore, but has received only around Rs 17 crore from the department.

He also informed that all the major construction works have been completed and

even the advance payment for the artificial turf and all the construction materials has been made.

He said that total cost of project is around 49 crores and he has received only Rs 17 crores from the department. If the department released the required funds the project will be completed within 6 to 7 months, he adds.

Meanwhile, the public of Namchi and footballers of South district have appealed

to the state government and Chief Minister seeking his intervention to bring the project to completion.

Speaking to SummitTimes, sports-persons and youth of Namchi said that Namchi was losing footballers and had been put ten years back in sports due to the delay in construction of Bhaichung Stadium.

They informed that Namchi used to host several football tournaments and

sports events at Alley ground (now Bhaichung Stadium) which provided the platform for local sports-persons to get noticed. Ever since construction of the stadium began, however, the number of such events has reduced substantially and robbed local talent of a platform.

They add hat that Namchi Public Ground at Singithang was not up to the mark like Alley Ground used to be, hence young sports talent of Namchi

and the surrounding areas have remained uninterested to play there.

Moreover, the ground at Singithang was not convenient to organize big football events for the district. These were the reasons why they want the State government to complete the stadium construction at the earliest so that Namchi can return on track when it comes to sports once again.



Srijana Samaj Samiti meets

SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 31 JUL:

Srijana Samaj Samiti, Sichey, convened a general meeting on Sunday to discuss the various issues of the organisation and for the overall development of the area.

The meeting unanimously added NL Kapil, Rajdeep Pradhan, Sita

Tamang, Laxmi Sharma and Gauri Sharma as executive members of the organisation, a press release informs, adding that the meeting also resolved to celebrate Independence Day at Sichey and tasked various responsibilities to members for the same.

Phase II of Project Garima launched in Sikkim

contd from pg01

Mr Upadhyaya delivered the welcome address after students from Tadong Senior Secondary School performed a welcome group song. In his speech, he welcomed everyone especially Dr. Pathak and spoke concisely on the importance of hygiene and sanitation.

Minister Mr Subba, in his note, welcomed Dr. Pathak and expressed his gratitude stating that to have a renowned sociologist like him among our people especially the students was a blessing in itself. He then explained that GARIMA is a project that provides a dignified way of dealing with an essential biological process occurring every month.

He said that it empowers them to live a normal life and attend schools and participate

in activities during that period. The project has also been found to have a very positive impact on empowering and improving the self-confidence of the girls as well as improving their attendance in school.

He informed that GARIMA is funded under CSR contribution from Alkem Laboratories, Canara Bank and Sibir group. He thanked the representatives of these organizations for their contribution and support. He ended his note expressing his satisfaction with the result and the progress of the

project and said that he hoped the hygiene and cleanliness would continue improving.

AK Shrivastava said it was an honour to meet Dr Pathak and welcomed the Padma Bhushan recipient with a standing ovation from the gathering in the hall. He spoke on the importance of sanitation citing examples from his personal life.

He praised Dr. Pathak for his work and contribution and informed all about the various recognitions that he has received for his work from Pope John Paul II in 1992, to HRH Prince Carl Philip of Sweden who awarded the 2009 Stockholm Water Prize to him and the Mayor of New York City, Mr Bill Blasio proclaimed 14 April in 2016 as "Dr. Bindeshwar Pathak Day" in the city of New York.

Mr Shrivastava asked the students to take serious note and to make the best of the opportunity given and to take examples from Dr. Pathak's life and his ways.

Dr. Bindeshwar Pathak praised Sikkim for maintaining a pure environment and keeping the region clean. He said that Sikkim was definitely one of the most environmentally conscious places that he has ever visited. He stated that other states and places have a lot to learn from Sikkim.

He said that to tackle every problem in life, he believed in non-violence

like Mahatma Gandhi and urged the students to follow the same path. He spoke with experience and wisdom when he said that it was every individual's duty to work towards building a society that was tolerant, accepting and environmentally conscious. He reminded the students that it was important to train your mind and body to lead a disciplined life. He advised them to be selfless and to help one another for it was the path to success.

Earlier, in the programme, a short film and a song on cleanliness and awareness on hygiene and sanitation by Sulabh International was screened for all. Three students, Pema Rinchen Bhutia from Gyalshing Senior Secondary School, Tanushree Adhikari from Jorethang Senior Secondary School and Pranita Chettri, coordinator of Sanitation Club spoke on her foreign tour to South Africa, the vending machines installed in schools and the role of coordinator respectively.

Tshering Yangzom, a teacher from Deorali Girls Senior Secondary School also spoke on the role of a teacher as a coordinator in implementing rules on health and sanitation in school. The Sanitation Club of Sikkim and Delhi were felicitated and GP Upadhyaya presented mementos and souvenirs to the chief guest and the guest of honour.

Gangtok on Wednesday, 01 August

Temp: 26°C/17°C

Forecast: Considerable cloudiness, a shower or thunderstorm.

Sunrise: 04:58 AM

Sunset: 6:25 PM

LS grants more time to jt panel on Citizenship Amendment Bill

NEW DELHI, JUL 31 (PTI): The Lok Sabha today extended the time for the Joint Parliamentary Committee to submit its report on the Citizenship Amendment Bill.

The committee was given time till the first day of the last week of the Winter Session to submit its report.

Generally, the Winter Session of Parliament begins in November. The Citizenship (Amendment) Bill, 2016 was introduced in the Lok Sabha to amend the Citizenship Act, 1955.

The bill seeks to the grant citizenship to people of minority communities such as Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains, Parsis and Christians, from Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Pakistan after six years of residence in India, instead of 12 years even if they do not possess any proper document.

The Lower House today approved a motion seeking extension of the time for presentation of the panel's report up to the "first day of the last week of the Winter Session, 2018".

New anti-graft law...

contd from pg01

vantage for himself or for any other person.

This 'shield' will be also applicable to retired public servants, according to the Act.

Union Minister Arun Jaitley had recently said that the amendment to the Prevention of Corruption Act will ensure that bonafide actions of public servants are not called into question.

The somewhat loose language of the Act (Prevention of Corruption or PC Act, 1988) enabled investigating agencies to shed their professionalism and follow the investigator's golden rule- 'when in doubt, file a charge sheet', he had said."

SKM accuses CM of lifting SKM promises

contd from pg01

He further alleged that nine other programmes of the SKM have been "stolen" by the SDF party president.

He claims that announcements to increase salaries of ASHA workers to Rs 10,000, grants to the state-level clubs and NGOs upto Rs 5 lakhs, establishment of the State Medical College, 90% job reservation for local in the private industrial units, regularisation of adhoc and MR employees with more than 5 years of service, rights for Sikkimese women married to outsiders, increase of maternity leave from 3 months to 6 months, establishment of the State Library and research cen-

tre and waived of loans of defaulters under the Chief Minister Self Employment Scheme, were all part of SKM's manifesto for 2014

While these were being announced, Mr Khaling stated that the State government has still not taken out a notification on the regularisation of adhoc employees working for more than five years despite of the announcement.

He added that the government has decided to regularise only those employees who completed five years in 2013. On the same, he stated the SKM has announced to regularise all temporary employees who have completed five years.

On the waiving of loans under the Chief Minister Self Employment Scheme, Mr Khaling urged the government to give back all documents of educated unemployed youths which had been mortgaged during loans.

He also demanded that the government should immediately take out the notification abolishing the labour contractor system and make a related law in the State Assembly. He further alleged that the government has even not taken out the notification on 90% job reservation for local in the private industrial units.

Mr Khaling advised the ruling party to copy another set of three programmes of the SKM for the welfare of people of Sik-

kim. He stated that CM should announce SKM's commitment of financial support to students to take coaching camp for elite service examinations, establishment of IIT and IIM in the State and establishment of mini AIIMS in the State in the interest of local people.

He also demanded the government to provide medical reimbursement to C & D employees at par medical reimbursement being received by Secretary-level officers.

Likewise, SKM acting president, KN Lepcha stated that the copying of SKM programmes and policies shows that SDF has not ideology, principles and programmes.

Shops without allotment orders shut down at Lall Bazaar

NITESH PRADHAN

GANGTOK, 31 JUL: Officials from Urban Development and Housing Department and Gangtok Municipal Corporation along with Sikkim Police personnel conducted a raid at Khangchendzonga shopping complex today where shops and vendors operating in the complex without allotment orders were shut down.

Deputy Commissioner, GMC, Sonam Chopel, stated that shopkeepers who have not filed their allotment papers at GMC were shut down today.

The shopkeepers, however, stated that they have been running their business for past two years paying tax of Rs 10 per day to the GMC.



However, the GMC authorities denied taking any tax from the vendors and shopkeepers.

Shopkeepers have questioned the decision of the authorities to suddenly shut down their shops

after such a long time.

Why did it take so long for them to take action, they have asked.

They have further alleged that it is the department that causes delay in processing allotment pa-

pers and therefore, they are not at fault.

The shopkeepers have appealed to the authorities to resolve the matter as they will lose their daily bread if the shops are closed.

CM's statement "inflammatory and intimidating": Denzong Sherpa Association

SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 31 JUL:

Denzong Sherpa Association has registered strong objection to the "inflammatory and intimidating" statement made by Chief Minister Pawan Chamling at the State level Panchayat and Urban Local Bodies Sammelan on Monday.

In a press release issued today, DSA has

alleged that the Chief Minister stated that Sherpas are eyeing to buy Bhutia-Lepcha land while addressing the Sammelan. This was in reference to the demand from some sections that Sherpa lands be brought under Revenue Order No. 1 protection as against the exclusive-to-Sherpas protection proposed in a Bill passed by the Legis-

lative Assembly recently.

The CM intends to bring disharmony, feelings of enmity and hatred among the Bhutia Lepcha and Sherpa communities of the state, the Association has alleged.

"Perceiving such grave threat to the Sherpa community in Sikkim, we have written to the President of India, Prime Minister along with all the Sherpa

Organisations of India as well as Global Sherpa Association apprising them about the atrocity meted out to us by the State Government of Sikkim," the release adds.

DSA has also appealed to all community organizations and political parties to clarify their stand on the atrocity meted out to the Sherpas of Sikkim.

BK Pradhan Memorial Open Football tourney gets underway in Rongli

SUMMIT REPORT

RONGLI, 31 JUL:

The 5th BK Pradhan Memorial Open Football tournament got underway here today at Rongli Melatar Playground.

Organized as part of the Independence Day celebrations here by the ID celebration committee (IDCC) with support from Chujachen Sports Academy (CSA), the inaugural day saw CSA (Red) take on TSA-Gangtok in the opening match and winning 13-02.

In the second match of the day, Lingtam Dawa won against Deben-IX by 2 goals to nil. Managing Director, Denzong Agriculture Cooperative Society, Dhiraj Pradhan was present as the chief guest accompanied by various departmental officers, IDCC members, CSA executive, schools, NGOs, football lovers.

In a welcome gesture, the chief guest announced to donate boots and uniforms for CSA players and track suits for the Coach. Being also the sponsor of the tournament, he spoke about the achievements of his late father, BK Pradhan, in whose memory the tournament has been named.

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Murshidabad strength-lifters felicitate Pema Dorjee

SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 31 JUL:

Strength-lifter Pema Dorjee Bhutia was felicitated by Murshidabad Strength Lifting Association during the 27th Bengal Strength Lifting & Inclined Bench Press Championship held from 27 to 29 July at Murshidabad in West Bengal. Mr Bhutia was felicitated his "outstanding perfor-

mances" and for regularly winning medals at international events for the country in strength lifting.

He was invited by the organisers as a special guest to the championship.

Mr Bhutia returned to Gangtok on Tuesday.

He expressed his happiness on the recognition of his hard work and national and internation-

al achievements by the Murshidabad Strength Lifting Association and thanked the organisers for honouring him with an invitation as a special guest.

Mr Bhutia is also the chief coach of Sikkim Strength Lifting Association and has already produced many national and international strength lifters from Sikkim.



USFC downs Boys Club 4-0

SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 31 JUL:

Continuing its winning streak in the league, United Sikkim Football Club humbled Boys Club, Gangtok, 4-0 in the ongoing Sikkim Football Association Premier Division Sikkim-League 2018 here at Paljor Stadium today.

The defending champion's secured three more points from this,

their third consecutive victory in the league.

Playing an attacking game from the start, United Sikkim FC players maintained constant pressure on the opponents and Ong Tshering Lepcha scored the lead in the 19th minute and his teammate doubled it in the 21st minute. With another goal by Rangan Rai, United Sikkim FC finished the first half 3-0 ahead.

While Boys Club players were struggling to make a comeback in the match, Azfal Ansari further extended the lead to an unassailable 4-0 in the 69th minute. Boys Club players played their hearts out but were not able to score any goals in the match. SAI Namchi will be playing its next match against Pakyong United Football Club on Wednesday.

Gangtok rap crew releases music video

SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 31 JUL:

MC (Nistachar), a rap crew from Gangtok has released their new official music video "Imagination" which features Sudharshan Mainali, Pavitra Thami, Peter Ramudamu

and Ranjita Agarwal, informs a press release.

The video was shot in The Grand Silk Route hotel and is directed by Gagan Gurung. Before this, the crew had made many music videos like Saath Temro, Girlfriend, Besi

Vayo, Nepali Mashup and Bedhana. The whole team has expressed gratitude to their family, friends and supporters, the release mentions. The video is available on Youtube or Reverbnation page and other websites.



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SummitTIMES

Theatre & the Distractions of Mass Entertainment

Seeking an audience for the performing arts

The National School of Drama has had a Sikkim campus for some years now. The State now has a handsome repertoire of graduates who boast of some refined skills in all aspects of stage craft. In fact, they now even have a collective which has staged some excellent productions. The theatre artists, those in training and the graduates occasionally put up new plays, entry for which is free. And still, the Mannan Kendra is thinly visited even when the productions are excellent. One would have thought that a people whose only exposure to the arts for a very long time were government-sponsored drab cultural shows would have lapped up the entertainment and joie de vivre that a professionally staged play guarantees. That, unfortunately, did not happen. It is easy to dismiss theatre as a waste of time in these days of instant gratification and 24-hour entertainment channels on TV and dolby digital Bollywood experiences in town. But that would be too simplistic.

Theatre has to be seen as an art form, an expression/ response of local talent to local issues for the local audience, something that the regular mediums of mass entertainment or information cannot deliver. So, why is that theatre remains near nascent in Sikkim?

The problem is not in the lack of topics or even practitioners, it is the absence of the third aspect cited above that keeps theatre down in Sikkim – the audience; there does not seem to be enough of them. Going by the experience of the several festivals and stand-alone shows held of late in Gangtok, the attendance, save on the inaugural and closing functions, have remained slim and disinterested. Here, one needs to also accept that theatre does not have a history as a cultural activity in Sikkim due to which the audience does not feel a connection to it. This can easily be overcome by staging good theatre and winning over new converts. But that has already been attempted with very limited success.

But this again is the chicken and egg situation – what should come first? It will have to be for the handful of theatre enthusiasts to figure out how Sikkim can be introduced to theatre. This is necessary as much for the creativity it sparks as for the sense of community that a unanimous celebration of the arts and craft can instill. And this is something that theatre, because of its immediacy, has always been synonymous with.

Sikkim has been looked down upon for far too long for its preference of consumerist mores over artistic subtleties, theatre should provide an entertaining way out of this stereotype.

HEAVEN CRAWLEY
theconversation.com

I don't remember exactly how Reham and I came to meet on Facebook but I do recall how articulate she was, her love for her younger sister Fatima and her quiet desperation for a new life.

Reham is just nine years old, a Syrian refugee living in a small town in the north of Lebanon with her parents and three siblings, the youngest of whom is just eight months old. Her father Abdul told me that the family moved to Lebanon in 2012 when Reham was three and her sister less than one, fleeing the war in Syria that had ripped their world apart.

Until then he had been a construction worker, one of hundreds of thousands of Syrian workers travelling back and forth across the border filling gaps in the Lebanese labour market during the period of reconstruction that followed the end of the civil war in 1990. Six years later, they are still in Lebanon, waiting for the war to end and a chance to rebuild their lives. He told me:

"We had a house in Syria. There was a garden where there were friends and a school. Now the war has destroyed everything. Everything was ruined and our dreams and the dreams of many children were destroyed."

Reham and her family are among an estimated 1.5m Syrian refugees living in Lebanon, around a third of whom are not registered with UNHCR and most of whom have few if any rights. Research that my colleagues and I undertook with Syrians who risked everything, including the lives of their children, to reach Europe in 2015 shows clearly that the decision to move from Lebanon was often the result of a deteriorating situation and lack of hope for the future.

Three years on and there is evidence from UNHCR and the World Food Programme that Syrian refugees in Lebanon are more vulnerable than ever, with more than half now living in extreme poverty. As the level of humanitarian aid to support Syrians living in Lebanon has declined, so too has their quality of life, with regular reports of fires ripping through the makeshift tents and a lack of basic services including water supplies, latrines and drains. Those who are able to find work report low wages and persistent racism and discrimination. In October 2017, the food rations on which Abdul and his family depended were cut off due to a lack of funding.

But it is the situation for the children, and in particular the lack of access to education for Re-

Stuck in Lebanon: a Syrian refugee family's life in limbo



Reham (aged nine) and her sister Fatima (age seven) have lived most of their lives as refugees in Lebanon.

ham and Fatima, that the family finds most intolerable. An estimated 280,000 Syrian children are out of school in Lebanon and some have never set foot in a classroom. Some families need children to work to supplement the household's very limited income. Others, almost always girls, are forced into early marriages to secure the child's economic future. For Abdul it is the costs of transportation that are the biggest problem:

"We have big issues with transport for school every day. The school is very far away from our house and it costs a lot of money. I do not have enough money to send them to school."

STUCK IN LIMBO

Like thousands of other Syrians, Abdul and his family are stuck in limbo, unable to rebuild their lives in Lebanon or return to Syria, and with few options for the future.

While some Lebanese have shown solidarity with refugees, there are growing tensions over resources and jobs. Even as the conflict in Syria continues, Lebanese politicians have become increasingly vocal since 2017 in calling for the refugees to go home. Since 2016, some municipalities have forcibly evicted Syrian refugees from their homes. Growing numbers of those living in Lebanon worry that they will be forced to return to a war zone.

Meanwhile, EU efforts to prevent Syrian refugees travelling onward to Europe have been increasingly effective. The EU-Turkey deal in March 2016, together with the closure of the Macedonian border, made it increasingly difficult for Syrians and others to seek international protection in the EU, effectively trapping tens of thousands of people in Greece. Despite efforts to increase legal routes and

reduce the dangers of onward migration across the sea, UNHCR estimates for the number of Syrian refugees in need of resettlement vastly exceed the number of places available.

Abdul's efforts to find a long-term solution to his family's situation have been fruitless to date. Reham's grandparents lived with the family in Syria and again in Lebanon before they were resettled to Norway in 2015. Reham's uncle lives in the Netherlands. Neither constitute sufficiently close family connections to make them eligible for family reunification. Abdul says he went to the refugee commission in Lebanon many times, but is still waiting for an answer on whether the family can be resettled.

LIMITED OPTIONS

Abdul's messages to me are full of frustration and despair. He pleads with me to find an organisation that can help him to get out of Lebanon with his family.

"I love my children, I just want to provide a decent life for them," he says. "I just want them to be safe." His fear of what might happen to his children in Lebanon drives his thoughts about the future. He tells me that he is prepared to go to any country and hints that he will do whatever it takes to achieve this objective.

But Abdul's options are limited.

Even as the situation deteriorates in Lebanon, there's a lack of safe and legal routes to enable Syrians and other refugees to access the rights to which they and their children are entitled under international law. There are, however, some new and potentially significant initiatives which could change all that, providing a lifeline for children such as Reham and her sister.

Most notable among these is the Humanitarian Corridors initiative. Launched in 2016 and operating with full cooperation from the Italian government without being state funded, it offers vulnerable refugees the possibility of safe and legal access to protection in Italy and in so doing both widens and deepens the concept of protection. To date, the numbers benefiting have been relatively small, around 1,000 people in total, but for Abdul it remains a possibility worth pursuing.

Reham is less sure. "I don't want to go to Italy," she says. "I want to go to Norway so I can be with my grandparents. I miss them so much. I just want to see them and be in their arms."

It's hard to know what will happen next for this family or thousands like them. The world, it seems, has long stopped caring.

[the writer is Research Professor, Coventry University]

HERJEET MARWAY & GULZAAR BARN
theconversation.com

Surrogacy may have become a popular way for many couples in the limelight to have children – notably Kim and Kanye, Elton John and David Furnish, as well as Sarah Jessica Parker and her husband Matthew Broderick. But it isn't just a service for the rich and famous.

People may choose to use a surrogate for all sorts of reasons – fertility issues being the obvious one – but people with health problems or complications with previous pregnancies as well as same-sex couples or single people looking to start a family, are all also common clients.

In the UK, altruistic (unpaid) surrogacy is legal, but commercial (paid) surrogacy is not. At present, however, Britons are the largest consumers of the Indian commercial surrogacy industry.

Surrogacy is reported to bring in US\$400m every year to the Indian economy. But the Indian market has come under fire for being exploitative. Indian surrogate mothers are typically poor, and are paid around £4,500 to carry a foetus to term.

The industry is also unregulated. This gives surrogacy clinics a large amount of power and control over the process. Many surrogates are required to live in surrogacy hostels, run by clinics, for the duration of their pregnancy – away from friends and family members.

A CHANGE IN THE LAW

India is in the process of outlawing commercial surrogacy in favour of an altruistic model, available to Indian nationals only. And surrogacy laws in the UK may also be set to change.

The Law Commissions of England and Wales, and Scotland, recently commenced a three-year project to review and recommend improvements to surrogacy arrangements in the UK. One key area targeted for reform is the way in which uncertainty in the law may be encouraging UK women to look overseas for surrogates.

It may not be enough for countries to amend their laws in isolation. Improvements of national laws are of course welcome, but a collective international re-

Surrogacy laws: why a global approach is needed to stop exploitation of women



sponse is preferable. This is because, even if the Indian bill passes – and the UK maintains its altruistic approach – this does not fix the problem.

Surrogacy agencies in India and elsewhere could make use of loopholes that exist in the law. Eggs, sperm, embryos, surrogates and intended parents could simply be moved across borders to countries where commercial surrogacy is not banned. What's more, when one industry closes, another one can easily open else-

where. This is the case in Ukraine, which is fast becoming a surrogacy hot spot now that other countries have banned the practice.

DEFINING INFERTILITY

Another factor to consider in all of this, is the World Health Organisation's proposal to change the definition of infertility. This would move it away from a clinical disease-based definition – where it is viewed as a disability – to a view that includes a

more social definition, recognising it as a "right to reproduce".

Under the new definition, infertility would no longer be seen as "the failure to achieve a clinical pregnancy after 12 months or more of regular unprotected sexual intercourse". Rather, it would also be considered to include cases when "single men and women without medical issues ... do not have children but want to become a parent".

As yet, the proposed definition has not

been officially adopted by the WHO. In fact, the WHO has stated that it will retain a clinical focus and refrain from making recommendations about fertility service provision – even if there were to be a change to its definition.

Hypothetically, the result of this change would mean that those who fall under the new social account of infertility could also receive access to reproductive services. On the one hand, this is a progressive move – why shouldn't single men and women and same-sex couples receive help to become parents?

But on the other hand, there are concerns that the expanded definition ignores the gender dynamics inherent to the provision of reproductive services.

A RIGHT TO A WOMB

Any change in the law needs to recognise that it is women's bodies alone that can perform this "service". In the case of male gay couples, who cannot carry a foetus themselves, women's bodies will be necessarily in order to treat a couple's infertility. This could be either through international paid surrogacy, or the domestic altruistic model.

If this definition does take hold, there may well be an increase in the demand for surrogacy services and the further liberalisation of surrogacy laws to cater for this demand. Expanding access to reproductive services could lead to an increase in exploitation, health risks and the further commodification of women's bodies. And without proper acknowledgement that it is women who will carry out the labour involved in gestating a child, a key ethical concern is neglected.

This is why there needs to be an international consensus on surrogacy – and a joined-up approach to the law. There may well be difficulties in getting people from different places, cultures or backgrounds to agree the demand for and effects of current surrogacy practices, but surrogacy deserves a global conversation.

[Herjeet Marway is Lecturer in Global Ethics, Department of Philosophy, University of Birmingham; Gulzaar Barn is Lecturer in Philosophy, University of Birmingham]

Torrential rain causes widespread damage in Nagaland

KOHIMA, JUL 31 (PTI): More than 50 families have been evacuated from around 49 houses damaged by the landslides since last night triggered by torrential rain which continued to wreck havoc in Nagaland, official sources said today.

Damage of 13 houses has been reported from Naga Hospital Colony, 36 in Pezielietisie colony within Kohima town affecting at least 54 families since last night, Additional Deputy Commissioner of Kohima, Lithrongla told PTI here.

Properties and agricultural fields have been damaged in terms of crores of rupees but, no human casualty has been reported, the sources said.

The numbers are increasing every hour as the landslides are occurring continuously triggered by incessant rain, she said adding that major mudslide has also occurred this evening at Officers Hill near 4th NAP C Coy camp but details on the damage caused is awaited.

A major traffic easing diversion road for Kohima town Naga Hospital Junction Daklane Census office junction was also completely cut off last night as the retaining wall near wall near Soul Harvest Church was damaged in the mudslide.

ADC Kohima said that the heavy rain also damaged roads in several places along the National Highway-29 connecting Kohima-Mokokchung completely blocking vehicular movement.

However, restoration works are in progress while passage for light vehicle have been cleared by slashing fresh portion in some places, the sources said.

KATHMANDU, JUL 31 (PTI): Bhartiya Janata Party General Secretary Ram Madhav today urged Nepal to adopt the “Look South” policy through which the landlocked country can have access to the Indian Ocean for better sea connectivity.

Madhav, also the director of think tank India Foundation, said that Oceans can play a vital role in Nepal’s development if it pays attention to water connectivity.

Addressing the India-Nepal Think Tank summit here, he advised Nepal to adopt the “Look South” policy which does not necessarily mean to look towards India, but also to have access to the most happening Indian Ocean through India’s Calcutta port and Bangladesh’s Chittagong port.

It will also open opportunities for Tibet, and the autonomous regions of China, he said.



Stressing on Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s policy on the development of neighbouring nations,

Madhav said that Nepal and India are not just two countries but two great civilisations having historical

and cultural linkages.

He said that India has extended its full support to Nepal in its endeavour to move forward in the path of parliamentary democracy.

The summit was also attended by former Nepalese Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal Prachanda, who said that a peaceful, prosperous and stable Nepal is and will be in India’s interest.

There is a need to promote understanding and cooperation between the two countries and the people, he said.

Prachanda, who is also the co-chairman of ruling Nepal Communist Party (NCP), said that recent high level visits of prime ministers of both the countries have created a fresh momentum in bilateral relations.

The summit was jointly organised by the Asian Institute of Diplo-

macy and International Affairs (AID-IA) and Nehru Memorial Museum Library (NMML).

It envisaged to serve as a platform for think tanks, policymakers, business entrepreneurs, diplomats and academicians of the two countries for strengthening bilateral relations.

During the summit, India’s Ambassador Nepal Manjeev Singh Puri, Minister for Industry Matrika Yadav and former Science Minister Ganesh Shah also shed light on the importance of enhancing people to people ties between the two countries for mutual benefit.

Puri viewed that the mutual economic cooperation between India and Nepal would be furthered given the latest agreements such as the Arun III hydro power project and Integrated Check Post in Birgunj.



Meghalaya CM files nomination papers

SHILLONG, JUL 31 (PTI): Meghalaya Chief Minister and National People’s Party (NPP) president Conrad K Sangma today filed nomination papers from South Tura assembly constituency, the by-election to which would be held on August 23.

Agatha K Sangma, his sister, vacated the seat earlier this month allowing Conrad K Sangma to contest from the

seat in West Garo Hills district.

Conrad K Sangma, who is the MP from Tura Lok Sabha seat, was sworn in as the chief minister on March 6 after the NPP-led coalition came to power in the state.

As he did not contest the February 27 assembly polls, his election to the state assembly is mandatory before September 6. The result of the by-

poll will be declared on August 27.

“I am excited about the elections. Every election is tough and I hope that people of South Tura will give me an opportunity to be their MLA,” he told reporters after filing the nomination papers.

He highlighted the need to improve infrastructure of Tura town, which he said is the “de-facto headquarters” of

Garo Hills division.

Before coming to the office of the deputy commissioner to file nominations, Conrad K Sangma visited the grave of his father, Purno A Sangma, to pay his respect.

The Election Commission has announced that bye-polls to South Tura and Ranikor assembly seats in the state will be held on August 23 and the results will be declared on August 27.

Insurance scam by Nepal’s trekking, mountaineering agencies unearthed

KATHMANDU, JUL 31 (PTI): A major insurance scam by Nepal’s trekking and mountaineering agencies has been unearthed after a government probe found that they were involved in fake helicopter rescues and hospital treatment of foreign tourists, according to a media report.

A government fact-finding committee in its 700-page probe report to Tourism Minister Rabinendra Adhikari said that unscrupulous operators have been pocketing thousands of dollars from insurance companies by making multiple claims for a single chopper ride or pushing trekkers to agree to airlifts for minor illnesses, the Kathmandu Post reported.

There were widespread complaints that Nepal’s trekking and mountaineering agencies had been making claims against their customers’ tourist insurance policies for fake helicopter rescues.

They have been accused of presenting fake bills for wide-ranging medical examinations for simple altitude-related

headaches.

As many helicopter operators do not conduct rescue operations directly, “middlemen” or trekking and mountaineering agencies arrange helicopter rescues and make fake private clinic bills on which they get a hefty commission, the daily quoted a member of the fact-finding panel as saying.

Making false travel insurance sickness claims when you are not ill is fraud, and there are many agencies involved in the illegal business in Nepal, the unnamed official was quoted as saying.

Trekking companies get hefty kickbacks when hikers are evacuated from the mountains.

The committee said in its report that there have been widespread complaints of dishonest companies serving adulterated food to make tourists sick so that they can be evacuated by helicopter, and they can re-

ceive commissions from helicopter companies and hospitals and clinics.

The probe committee recommended that from the next tourist season in September-November all rescue activities be entrusted to the Nepal Police to stop the insurance scam that has damaged the country’s reputation.

“We are concerned by the bogus helicopter rescues and false medical insurance claims. In order to stop such offences, we have decided to entrust all tourist rescue-related tasks to the Nepal Police, said Tourism Secretary Krishna Prasad Devkota.

We will prepare a working guideline related to the rescue operation and implement it from the autumn season, he said.

The fact-finding committee said that it had formed its recommendations after studying rescue operations in France, Switzerland, Scotland and Canada.

Photographic history of a place cannot be rewritten: Raghu Rai

KOLKATA, JUL 31 (PTI): History can be written and re-written but ‘photo history’ of a city or its people cannot ever be re-written, eminent photographer Raghu Rai has said.

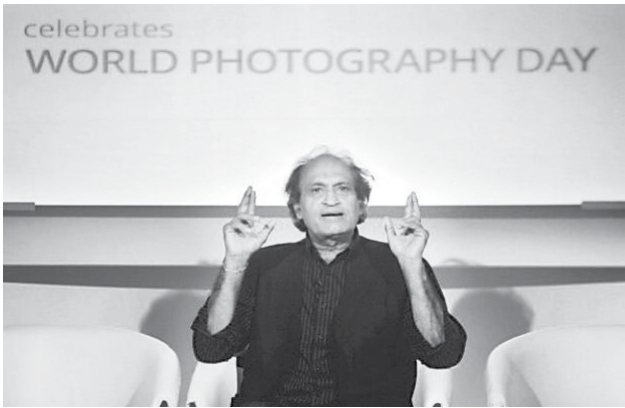
Inaugurating an exhibition featuring digital reproductions of 96 gelatin silver photographic prints from the collection of the Victoria Memorial Hall, Rai said, “...history is written and it is being re-written now. We all know that.

“But this photo history cannot be re-written. These images left by our great masters are like our culture and heritage.”

The exhibition titled ‘Frozen in Time: Late 19th and Early 20th Century Photographs of Calcutta and its Neighbouring Areas’ will continue till September 1.

Ninety-six digitally restored photographs taken from the collection of Bourne and Shepherd and Johnston and Hoffmann and later in the possession of Victoria Memorial are on display at the exhibition.

Bourne and Shepherd was the largest commercial studio in the city during British rule while



Johnston and Hoffmann was the second largest commercial studio.

“They are exhibiting something so precious.

Photography today is the art of tomorrow. It is something very unique for us,” Rai said.

The digitally reproduced black and white photographs were taken from negatives of pictures clicked between 1860 and 1930.

The photographs offer glimpses of the Esplanade Mansion, the old Howrah bridge, a view near Kalighat temple, Durga Puja procession, view of Government Place East with Great Eastern Hotel seen

from a distance in the early 1880s, a view of Chowringhee Road from the then Ochterlony Monument.

After viewing the exhibits, Rai said, “The photos show how things were and how crowded and chaotic things have become today.”

Differentiating between paintings of old Kolkata and photographs of that time, Rai said if one imagines a mood shot of Chowringhee Square by great painters such as Hussein, Satish Gujral or Jamini Roy, it is described as good or wonderful.

“But when you see these old photographs taken 150-160 years ago,

the response is totally different. The first thing that comes to your mind is -- Oh my God’ that’s the way it used to be.”

Victoria Memorial Curator Jayanta Sengupta said, the process to hold the exhibition began three months back.

Of the digitally restored photographs on display, 27 negatives were in the collection of Bourne and Shepherd and the rest 69 prints were created by Johnston and Hoffmann.

All the photographs were bought from the studios by the Victoria Memorial at different points of time, he said.

The exhibition was curated from the collection of the Victoria Memorial by Ranu Roy-

chowdhury, a historian of photography and art and Assistant Professor at IIT Guwahati.



GOVERNMENT OF SIKKIM
SIKKIM STATE TEACHERS' RECRUITMENT BOARD
GANGTOK – 737101

NO. 09/SSTRB DT. 30/07/2018


NOTICE

The written examination for selection to the post of Graduate Teacher (Mathematics) will be held on 19th August 2018 at Sir Tashi Namgyal Senior Secondary School, Development Area, Gangtok.

Candidates fulfilling the eligibility criterion as per the advertisement are advised to collect their Admit Card from the Office of Sikkim State Teachers' Recruitment Board, Upper Syari during office hour from 06/08/2018.

Sd/-
ASSISTANT CONTROLLER OF EXAMINATION
SIKKIM STATE TEACHERS' RECRUITMENT BOARD
UPPER SYARI.

R.O. No. 238/IPR/PUB/Classi./18-19 Dt. 31.7.2018



GOVERNMENT OF SIKKIM
SIKKIM STATE TEACHERS' RECRUITMENT BOARD
GANGTOK – 737101

Ref No: 10/SSTRB Dated: 31/07/2018

NOTICE

In continuation of Employment Notice No. 19/SSTRB/17 dated 22/08/2017 and Notice No. 33/SSTRB dated 23/2/2018 which invited applications for filling up of 233 posts of Language Teachers (PRT, GT, PGT) in different languages, it is informed that the number of vacancies for the post of Primary Teacher (Language) has been increased as under in terms of Letter No. 517/HRDD/ADM dated 02/07/2018.

SL. NO.	LANGUAGE	PREVIOUS VACANCY	PRESENT VACANCY	GRAND TOTAL
1.	Bhutia	06	66	72
2.	Lepcha	15	58	73
3.	Limboo	24	52	76
4.	Newari	05	01	06
5.	Gurung	19	01	20
6.	Sherpa	12	01	13
7.	Rai	51	01	52
8.	Manger	11	01	12
9.	Mukhia	04	01	05
10.	Tamang	21	-	21
	Total	168	182	350

Further, the written examination of Primary Teacher (Language) which was postponed is scheduled to be on 26th August 2018 (Sunday). The venue is same as mentioned in the Admit Card.

Sd/- ASST. CONTROLLER OF EXAMS
SSTRB.

R.O. No. 237/IPR/PUB/Classi./18-19 Dt. 31.07.2018

Ibrahimovic joins Ronaldo in skipping MLS All-Star Game

ATLANTA, JUL 31 (AP): The MLS All-Star Game will feature one of the world's most storied clubs.

Unfortunately for the more than 70,000 fans expected at Mercedes-Benz Stadium, Cristiano Ronaldo is not along for the ride.

After Portugal's elimination from the World Cup and his transfer from Real Madrid, the five-time FIFA Player of the Year took time off rather than accompany Juventus on its American pre-season tour, which includes tomorrow's night's game against top players from Major League Soccer.

The decision will surely be a disappointment to the big crowd that had hoped Ronaldo would make his unofficial debut while touring the United States with the Italian club that has won seven straight Serie A championships.

Juventus acquired the 33-year-old from Real Madrid on July 10 in a deal his new club said was worth USD 131.5 million the largest for a player older than 30.

Also sitting out the US tour, which includes three



other exhibitions, is Argentine striker Gonzalo Higuain. He is coming off a scoreless World Cup in which he didn't start in the round of 16 loss to eventual champion France.

"Obviously these guys are world-class players," said Atlanta United's Brad Guzan, a goalkeeper for the MLS team.

"With or without them, it

will be a difficult game. But their names alone bring a lot of attention. It's a shame for everybody on the outside. For me, personally, hopefully it makes for an easier night."

Most players take three weeks off after the World Cup. Juventus opens its Serie A schedule at Chievo Verona the weekend of Aug. 18-20.

"We are sorry not to have the Ronaldo, and Higuain as well," Juventus coach Massimiliano Allegri said through a translator.

"Unfortunately, they played in the World Cup. They needed some days to rest." Ronaldo and Higuain won't be the only big names missing from the game.

One of MLS' top new stars, LA Galaxy forward Zlatan Ibrahimovic, announced yesterday that he's skipping the All-Star match rather than make a cross-country trip to Atlanta.

The 36-year-old Swede cited the grind of playing three matches in an eight-day span, including Sunday night's 4-3 victory over Orlando City in which he scored his first MLS hat trick.

Ibrahimovic ranks second in MLS with 15 goals. He played with Juventus from 2004-06.

"I am disappointed to miss the 2018 All-Star game against Juventus, one of my former clubs," Ibrahimovic said in a statement.

"I want to thank the fans for voting me to the team. My main focus is to score goals and help the LA Galaxy to the playoffs."

The Galaxy (10-7-5) are unbeaten in nine games and have climbed to third place in the Western Conference.

Per MLS rules, Ibrahimovic will also have to sit out LA's next match Saturday against Colorado, one of the league's

worst teams.

New York City forward David Villa also will skip the All-Star Game after missing six matches with a knee injury.

Ibrahimovic and Villa were replaced on the MLS roster by Minnesota forward Darwin Quintero and New York Red Bulls midfielder Tyler Adams.

Atlanta United coach Gerardo Martino, who will be guiding the MLS team, said the timing of the game does pose problems.

"In reality, I recognise it's a little bit of a challenge for coaches who have players participating," Martino said through an interpreter.

"Some players are coming from teams where they've played three games (in the last week). Some had a long trip to get here, like from Vancouver. I understand it's a very beautiful spectacle for the league and the United States. But I think what we have to look at in the future is to have it at a different time, either before or after the season.

"We have to make sure

the players arriving here in good condition are also returning to their teams in good condition."

But MLS is eager to show off its most compelling success story.

Atlanta shattered the MLS attendance record in its debut season, averaging 48,200 per game, and is on pace to break that mark this year at nearly 52,000 per game. The club already has the five biggest stand-alone crowds in MLS history each more than 70,000 at Mercedes-Benz Stadium.

The league expects another record crowd for its All-Star Game, breaking the mark of 70,728 in Houston for the 2010 match in which Manchester United defeated the MLS squad 5-2. An extra 1,500 tickets have been put on sale to meet the demand.

"It's been fantastic to see the support that the city has given the club," Guzan said.

"There's not many cities around the world that have what we have here in Atlanta. I'm happy to have the opportunity to showcase this to everyone.

Director plans Tokyo 2020 ceremonies 'rich in Japanese spirit'

TOKYO, JUL 31 (AFP):

The opening and closing ceremonies at Tokyo's 2020 Olympics Games will showcase Japan's ancient and modern sides, the traditional theatre actor newly appointed to direct the events said today.

The appointment of Mansai Nomura, who performs in Japan's centuries-old classical theatre and is well known domestically, may suggest the importance that the country's traditional arts will play in the ceremonies.

But Nomura gave little away.

"I will do my utmost to produce Olympic and Paralympic ceremonies that are simple but rich in Japanese spirit," Nomura told reporters.

"I want to show our palette holds paints of many colours," he said, pledging to "cover the entire range, from high art to entertainment."

The overarching concept of the ceremonies will be announced later this year, but Nomura said there would be drama.

"Quiet at times, elevated at times... I want to show big swings," he said.

While Nomura is famed for his performances in Japan's traditional comedy theatre, and is likely to draw on his knowledge of the country's rich artistic heritage, he said he was also a fan of modern entertainment.

A fan of Michael Jackson, he compared the pop star's famed moonwalk to "suriashi", a technique of classical Japanese performance in which actors wearing traditional socks slide on wooden floors.

"Put the soles of your feet (on the floor) and go forward, it's suriashi. Going backward, it's moonwalking. What appears to be two extremes can be like two sides of a coin," he said.

Neymar under fire after World Cup 'mea culpa' advert

SAO PAULO, JUL 31 (AP):

Neymar's decision to use a sponsored advert to admit he sometimes over-reacted to fouls at the World Cup has backfired, with Brazilian marketing experts saying it had made the Paris Saint-Germain striker's image even worse.

Under the title 'A New Man Every Day', Sunday's video was backed by personal care products maker Gillette and broadcast on several Brazilian TV networks.

"You may think I exaggerate. And sometimes I do exaggerate. But the truth is I suffer on the pitch," Neymar said in the advert, referring to the constant fouls he received at the World Cup.

"I took long to accept your criticism. I took long to look at myself in the mirror and become a new man."

Brazil was knocked out by Belgium in the World Cup quarterfinals earlier this month.

Marketing specialists said the advert damaged the 26-year-old player's brand as much as his histrionics did in Russia.

"The whole market waited 15 days since the end of the World Cup to hear from him," Amir Somoggi, a partner at marketing company Sports Value, told The Associated Press.

"He gave some interviews,



but did not admit his exaggerations then. Now he has hidden behind a TV commercial to do that. This was great for the sponsor, after all we are talking about the brand. But it was not good for Neymar, who now has an even bigger image crisis to handle."

Sports marketing consultant Erich Beting believes the timing of the advert was a mistake.

"Neymar's problems happened on the pitch, and he will not play tomorrow to show he has changed, as the ad says. That fact, and his decision to pick an ad to do it, will make it all sound empty. It will be weeks until he has a chance to show any real improvement," Beting said.

Jose Colagrossi, another

sports marketing consultant, agreed.

"It would be different if he really meant it, in a live press conference, looking eye to eye and not in a sponsored video," he said. It is not the first time Neymar has used an advert to handle an image crisis.

In 2011, he was criticised for constant misbehavior and he used an advert sponsored by phone carrier Nextel to address his fans.

"You cursed at me when I made mistakes, you screamed when I didn't listen," he said in the ad. "You know who I am. Only another happy boy playing with his ball."

Now, some of the criticism

for the image crisis is aimed at Neymar da Silva Santos, his father and the man who manages his career.

Ricardo Fort, who heads global sponsorship deals at Coca-Cola, said the Brazil striker needs to take control of his career.

"After this World Cup, who thinks of Neymar thinks of theatrics, faking. These are attributes that no brand wants to get associated with," Fort wrote in an open letter to the player in Monday's edition of magazine Meio & Mensagem.

"It is time for you to hire a professional to take care of your career. You are too valuable to be treated like that."

Asked to comment on the negativity, Neymar's staff directed the Associated Press to Procter & Gamble, owners of Gillette. The company did not discuss the criticism of the player, or the ad.

"Like many others, Neymar Jr. faces challenges, injuries and defeats, and the objective of Gillette is to encourage every man, with no distinction, to reflect on the opportunity of becoming a new man every day," the company said in a statement. The firm also denied a report by newspaper O Globo saying the striker was paid about USD 250,000 for the ad.

India eye perfect start to English summer in home team's 1000th Test

BIRMINGHAM, JUL 31 (PTI):

India would be driven by the desire to shed the poor travellers' tag, while England would be desperate to arrest the recent slide at home when the two teams clash in a five-match Test series, starting here tomorrow.

The English side will be celebrating its 1000th Test at Edgbaston, and it will be up to world No.1 India to spoil the home party.

India last won a Test series in England in 2007 under Rahul Dravid, and it will be no easy task ahead of the Virat Kohli-led side to duplicate that feat.

Under Mahendra Singh Dhoni, India failed in 2011 and 2014, losing by heavy 4-0 and 3-1 margins, respectively. In fact, India have only won six out of the 57 matches on English soil.

England's Test form coming into this series is also a cause of concern. Since September 2017, England have only won one out of nine Tests against Australia, New Zealand and Pakistan.

They have been beaten twice in their last five home Tests by West In-

dies and Pakistan, with both sides' pace attack exploiting the weaknesses in a batting line-up heavily dependent on Root, Jonny Bairstow and seasoned opener Alastair Cook.

The visitors, meanwhile, will be buoyed by the fact that three out of their six wins here have come since 2002. India's assistant coach Sanjay Bangar was part of the Test squad as Sourav Ganguly's team won at Leeds.

Wicket keeper Dinesh Karthik was part of the 2007 series-winning squad. Skipper Virat Kohli and Ishant Sharma toured here in 2011 and 2014 and seven other players in the current side have also featured during that last trip.

But India's record at Edgbaston is exceptionally poor with five losses in six Tests here stretching back to 1967.

The visitors must pick an optimal playing eleven and avoid the mistakes made on their previous overseas trip to South Africa. There, the team management had backed an in-form Rohit Sharma over Ajinkya Rahane.

Traditional Snake boat races in Kerala to get IPL makeover

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, JUL 31 (PTI): Kerala's famed snake boat races, which have mesmerised visitors for ages, would take a new avatar, on the lines of Indian Premier League (IPL) from this year.

Kerala Tourism department has announced the new format, Champion's Boat League (CBL) in which the competition would held be on a league format in 13 races across 13 venues in the Kerala backwaters.

The CBL would bring all major boat races in the state from the Nehru Trophy in Alappuzha to President's Boat Trophy, Kollam, under one umbrella and would be held from August 11 to November 1, according to Tourism minister, Kadakkampally Surendran.

The objective is to conserve and promote Kerala's traditional festivals, create an annual event to be marketed as a tourism product and showcase the state's backwaters to the world, he said.

The nine snakeboats which emerge with the best timings in the Nehru Trophy, would be participating in the succeeding 12 races of the



maiden CBL.

Teams which get the first three positions in each venue of the league, would be entitled to cash prizes of Rs 5 lakh, 3 lakh and one lakh respectively.

Besides, each of the teams that qualify for

the league would be entitled for a bonus of Rs 4 lakh per venue.

The CBL champion would get a prize money of Rs 25 lakh, while the Runner up would get Rs 15 lakh and the second runner up Rs 10 lakh.

The league would commence with the Nehru Boat Trophy on Punnamad Lake in Alappuzha on August 11.

It would be followed by Pulinkunnu (Aug 18), Karuvatta (Aug 28), Kottapuram (September 1), Thazhathangadi (September 8), Poothotta (September 15), Piravom (September 22), Kainakari (September 29), Kavanatinkara (October 6), Mavelikkara (October 13), Kayamkulam (October 20), Kallada (October 27), and Kollam (November 1).

The tourism department is hoping that at least 5000 to 1000 people would visit each of the 13 races during the three month period.

"The rainy season is a lean period. We wanted a product to sustain tourism for three months and whoever visits the state should get an opportunity to see at least one boat race," Tourism director, P Bala Kiran, told PTI.

Snake Boats or 'Chundan Vallams' as they are called in local parlance are canoe style boats, which are 100 to 120 feet long and hold up to 100 rowers.

India welcomes US' move to ease export controls for high-tech product sales to it

NEW DELHI, JUL 31 (PTI): India today welcomed the US' decision to ease export controls for high technology product sales to it, saying the move will further boost collaboration between the two countries in defence and certain other areas.

The Trump administration announced yesterday granting India the status of Strategic Trade Authorization-1 (STA-1) country, the only South Asian nation to be given the designation along with the US' NATO allies like South Korea, Australia and Japan.



Spokesperson in the Ministry of External Affairs Raveesh Kumar called Washington's decision a logical culmination to India's designation as a major defence partner of the US and a "reaffirmation" of its "impeccable record" as a re-

sponsible member of the concerned multilateral export control regimes.

The STA-1 status will help India getting critical technology from the US in the defence and certain other key areas.

"We welcome the announcement made by US

Secretary of Commerce Wilbur Ross in the Indo-Pacific Business Forum on July 30 about the US government's decision to move India into Tier-1 of the Department of Commerce's Strategic Trade Authorisation license exception," Kumar said.

He said the step will further facilitate India-US trade and technology collaboration in defence and high technology areas adding, "We look forward to the US side operationalising the decision at an early date."

In June 2016, the US had designated India as

"Major Defence Partner" intending to elevate defence trade and technology sharing with India to a level commensurate with that of its closest allies and partners.

Announcing the decision to granting India STA-1 status, Ross yesterday said it was "a very important change" in India's status in the export control regime.

The designation authorises the export, re-export and transfer (in-country) of specified items on the Commerce Control List (CCL) to destinations posing a low

risk of unauthorised or impermissible uses.

Currently there are 36 countries on the STA-1 list. Till recently India was designated as STA-2 countries, along with seven others. The STA-1 status, Ross said, provides India with greater supply chain conditions for defence and other high-tech products.

The decision by the US comes over a month before the talks between India's foreign and defence ministers with their US counterparts here under the framework of the '2+2' dialogue.



Former Trump campaign chief goes on trial for bank and tax fraud

WASHINGTON, JUL 31 (AFP): Donald Trump's former campaign chief Paul Manafort today becomes the first member of the president's election team to face trial on charges stemming from the probe into Russian interference in the 2016 vote.

Manafort, 69, has pleaded not guilty to 18 counts of bank and tax fraud related to his lobbying activities on behalf of the former Russian-backed government of Ukraine.

The indictment was brought by special counsel Robert Mueller, the former FBI director who is looking into Russian meddling in the presidential election, but the charges are not connected to Manafort's time as Trump's campaign chairman.

Selection of a 12-member jury for "USA vs Manafort" begins at 10:00 am (1400 GMT) on Tuesday before US District Court Judge T.S. Ellis in Alexandria, Virginia. The trial is expected to last about three weeks.

Manafort, a veteran Republican political consultant, served as chairman of Trump's presidential election campaign for three months in 2016 before being forced to step down amid ques-

tions about his lobbying work in Ukraine.

He is charged with five counts of filing false tax returns for not reporting bank accounts he held in Cyprus and other countries in a bid to hide millions of dollars in income from activities on behalf of Ukraine's former pro-Russian leader Viktor Yanukovich.

Manafort is charged with failing to report the existence of foreign bank accounts to the Internal Revenue Service and bank fraud related to several multi-million-dollar loans he obtained from various banks.

Prosecutors plan to produce nearly three dozen witnesses during the trial, including Manafort's former associate Richard Gates, who is cooperating with the government after pleading guilty to lesser charges in February.

Five witnesses have been granted immunity from prosecution to testify against Manafort.

Mueller has indicted a total of 32 people so far in connection with his probe into whether any members of Trump's election campaign colluded with Russia to help get the New York real estate tycoon into the White House.



Malaysia's civil aviation chief quits over Flight 370 lapses

KUALA LUMPUR, JUL 31 (AP): Malaysia's civil aviation chief said today he has resigned to take responsibility after an independent investigative report highlighted shortcomings in the air traffic control center during Flight 370's disappearance four years ago.

The report released yesterday raised the possibility that the jet may have been hijacked even though there was no conclusive evidence of why the plane went off course and flew for over seven hours after severing communications.

Azharuddin Abdul Rahman said the report didn't blame the civil aviation department for the plane's loss but found that the Kuala Lumpur air traffic control center failed to comply with operating procedures.

"Therefore, it is with regret and after much thought and contemplation that I have decided to resign as Chairman of Civil Aviation Authority of Malaysia," he said in his statement, adding he has served his resignation and will step down in two weeks.

The jet carrying 239 people from Kuala Lumpur to Beijing vanished March 8, 2014, and is presumed to have crashed in the far southern Indian Ocean. The investigative report, prepared by a 19-member international team, said the cause of the disappearance cannot be determined until the wreckage and the plane's black boxes are found.

However, the report said the investigation showed lapses by air traffic control, including a failure to swiftly initiate an emergency response and monitor radar continuously, relying too much on information from Malaysia Airlines and not getting in touch with the military for help.

New Malaysian Transport Minister Anthony Loke said Tuesday the government has formed a committee to investigate and take action against any misconduct based on the report findings.

More than 500 hikers evacuated from Indonesian volcano

MATARAM, JUL 31 (AFP): More than 500 hikers and their guides have been successfully evacuated from an Indonesian volcano after a deadly earthquake triggered landslides that trapped them on the mountain, officials said today.

Tonnes of rock and mud were dislodged on Mount Rinjani in the 6.4-magnitude quake, which struck early Sunday and was followed by scores of aftershocks, blocking the hiking routes that crisscross the mountain.

An estimated 560 stranded trekkers were thought to have included citizens from the United States, France, the Netherlands, Thailand and Germany, as well as many other countries, according to search and rescue officials.

"543 hikers have been evacuated -- they arrived last night," national disaster agency spokesman Sutopo Purwo Nugroho told AFP.



"There are now six people left... They are all healthy and safe." Hikers were able to start descending the mountain Monday after guides discovered an alternate route that was unaffected by the landslides.

Most of the trekkers reached the base of the mountain by late Monday evening, according to I Gusti Lanang Wiswananda, a spokesman for Mataram search

and rescue agency.

"They were all tired, but in good condition and were checked by our medical teams on the ground upon arrival," he told AFP.

Hundreds of other hikers managed to get off the mountain on Sunday, according to officials.

At least 16 people were killed in the earthquake across affected areas of Lombok,

while hundreds of buildings were destroyed including a health clinic.

The quake created panic on the holiday island and sent locals and tourists running outside their homes and hotels.

Helicopters and search teams were deployed to scour the volcano's slopes and drop food supplies for those stranded on the mountain.

Imran Khan's PTI considering inviting Modi for his oath ceremony

M ZULQERNAIN

LAHORE, JUL 31 (PTI):

Imran Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf is considering inviting the leaders of the SAARC countries including Prime Minister Narendra Modi to his oath taking ceremony as the premier next month, a party official said today.

The PTI, led by

65-year-old Khan, has emerged as the single largest party in the National Assembly after the July 25 elections, but it is still short of numbers to form the government on its own. Khan yesterday said that he would take oath as prime minister on August 11.

"The core committee of Tehreek-i-Insaf is considering inviting the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) heads including Mr Modi and a decision on this is expected shortly," a leader of Khan's party told PTI.

He also termed Modi's telephone call to Khan on his victory in the 2018 polls a welcoming sign to begin a new chapter in relations between the two countries.

Spokesperson for Khan's party Fawad Chaudhry also did not rule out inviting Modi to the swearing in ceremony.

"A decision about it will be taken by the party in consultation with the foreign ministry in coming days," he said.

Modi yesterday telephoned Khan to congratulate him on his party's victory in the general elections and hoped that "Pakistan and India will work to open a new chapter in bilateral ties".

Khan thanked Modi for his wishes and emphasised that disputes should be resolved through dialogue.



"Wars and bloodshed instead of resolving disputes lead to tragedies," Khan had said.

Khan in his victory speech had also said that better relations between Pakistan and India would be "good for all of us".

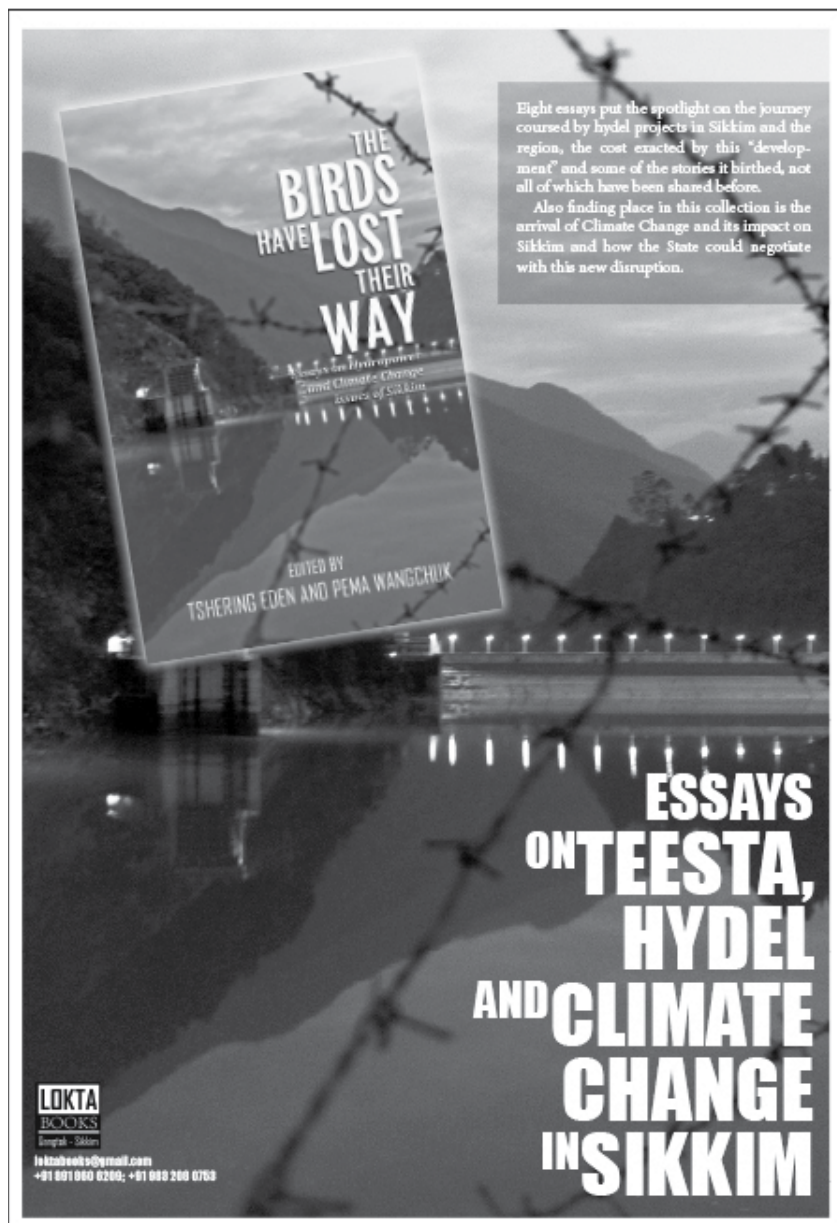
"If India's leadership is ready, we are ready to improve ties with India. If you take on step forward we will take two steps forward," he had said.

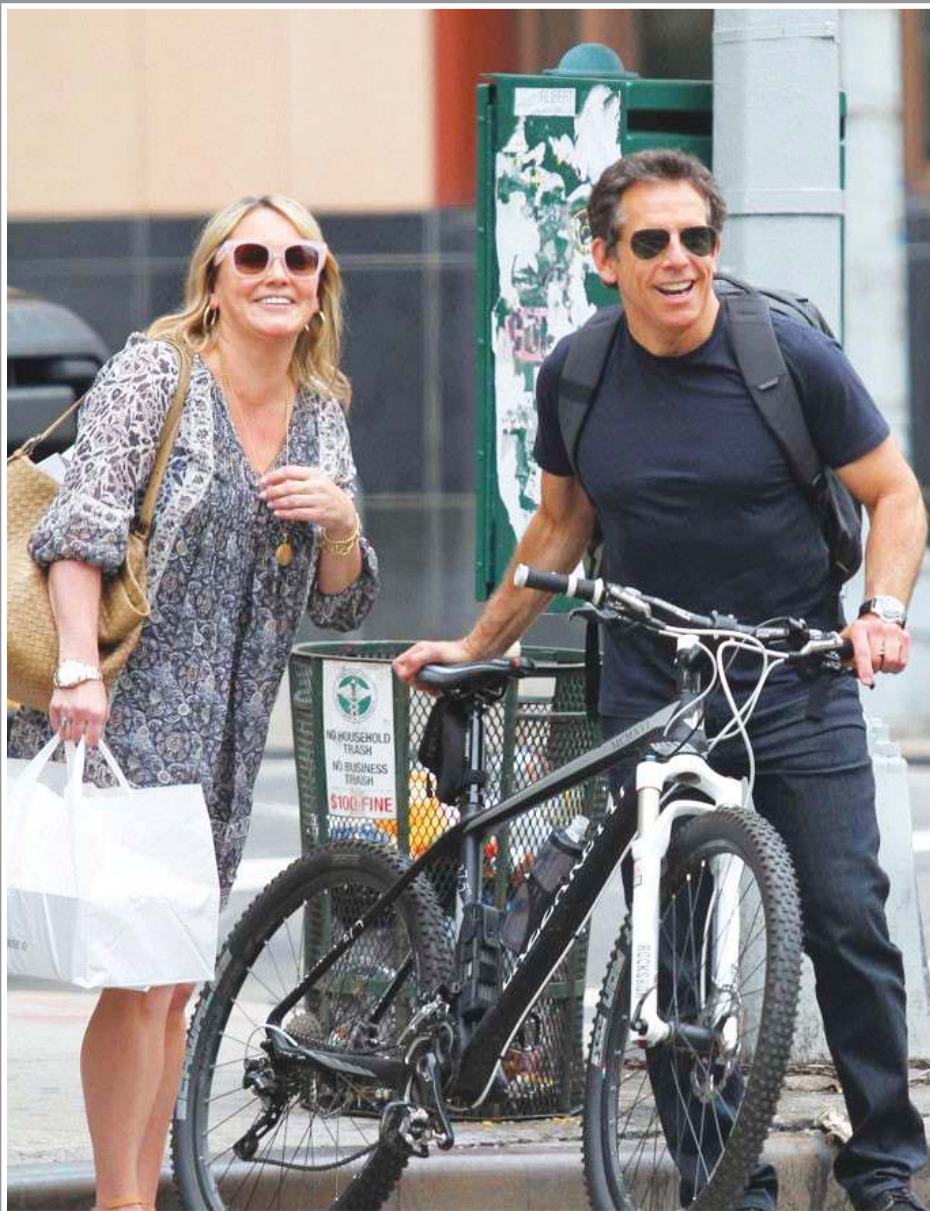
The relations between India and Pakistan remained tense since 2014. Former prime minister Nawaz Sharif had travelled to Delhi to attend Modi's oath taking ceremony and the Indian premier had in December 2015 made a stopover in Lahore to greet his counterpart on his birthday.

The India-Pakistan ties nose-dived in recent years with no bilateral talks taking place.

The ties between the two countries had strained after the terror attacks by Pakistan-based groups in 2016 and India's surgical strikes inside Pakistan-occupied Kashmir. The sentencing of alleged Indian spy Kulbhushan Jadhav to death by a military court in April last year further deteriorated bilateral ties.

The two sides often accuse each other of ceasefire violations along the Line of Control, resulting in civilian casualties.





KEEPING THE PEACE! The former couple, Ben Stiller & Christine Taylor, seen in public for the first time since their split last year. The two looked very happy to reunite.



Saif Ali Khan denies feud with Nikkhil Advani

MUMBAI, JUL 31 (PTI): Saif Ali Khan has dismissed reports that he and "Baazaar" director Nikkhil Advani had any argument over the release of the film.

The film has faced delays and there were reports that the actor, who was recently seen in Netflix show "Sacred Games", was upset with that.

But in a statement, Saif's spokesperson denied that he and Advani had any fallout.

"The rumours floating are ridiculous. Everyone

is excited about the film (Baazaar) and the way it's shaped up. There was no argument whatsoever as Nikkhil Advani and Saif Ali Khan are friends and share a great equation over the years," the spokesperson said in a statement.

Set against the backdrop of share market, the film features Saif in the role of a businessman. The film also stars Radhika Apte, Chitrangda Singh and debutant Rohan Mehra.

'Newton', 'Village Rockstars' shine at BRICS Film Festival

NEW DELHI, JUL 31 (PTI): "Newton", directed by Amit Masurkar and Rima Das' "Village Rockstars" have bagged the top honours at the 3rd BRICS Film Festival.

BRICS Film Festival took place in Durban, South Africa, along with the International Durban Film Festival (DIFF) from July 22-27.

The last day of the festival was celebrated as India Country Day, followed by Awards and Closing Ceremony.

"Newton", starring Rajkummar Rao in the lead, won the Best Film, while "Village Rockstars" received Best Actress (Bhanita Das) and Special Jury Award.



BRICS Film Festival is aimed at celebrating world-class film productions from the BRICS nations with the objective of inspiring more collaboration from these nations.

The format of the festival consisted of screening two feature films from each country in the competition category and three feature films in the non-competition category. A total of twenty-four films were screened during the duration of the festival.

I can't be a pure actor if I feel insecure: Rajkummar Rao

NEW DELHI, JUL 31 (PTI): Acting is the "art of giving" for him and Rajkummar Rao says he would not be truthful to this belief if insecurities overpower him as a performer.

Rao is the man of the moment in Bollywood with back-to-back projects and while he calls his routine "hectic", he is not complaining.

"I always feel secure. I can't be a pure actor if I feel insecure. I can't let other things take over my love for acting. For me it's a giving art. It is not something which I am doing for myself. I am doing it for my co-actors, unless it is something like 'Trapped'. Acting for me is giving to your co-actors," Rao told PTI in an interview.

Not insecurities, but nervousness does trouble the 33-year-old actor at times.

"There are times when I do feel very nervous when I start a film. And I feel very nervous before the release. I do get stuck in some scenes but that's very natural and human. It happens to all the artistes in the world," he adds.

Rao believes the change in the definition of a "hero" in Hindi cinema has opened a lot of avenues for actors like him and he credits writers, new age directors and audiences for this shift.

"They are the ones who are writing such characters and audiences are interested in watching them. People are falling in love with characters now and that is why writers are creating such stories. I am really happy that such stories are getting prominence.



"That is the reason why actors like me are getting the chances to portray great characters on-screen. I think it's the relatability factor which works between me and the audiences. I am one of them. They connect with me as they see a part of them in me," he says.

The actor is currently one of the busiest stars in the film industry with films like "Fanny Khan", "Street", "5 Weddings", "Ek Ladki Ko Dekha Toh Aisa Laga" in his kitty, but he does not mind switching from one set to the other.

"It is hectic. But as long as I am enjoying what I am doing and I am getting different parts to play I have no complaints. It is definitely manageable and practically possible. I am getting the chance to work on some amazing stories and I will keep doing it.

"People like Anil sir (Anil Kapoor), Amit ji (Amitabh Bachchan) inspire me to keep moving forward and apart from that, the fact that I love my job as an actor keeps

pushing me ahead. I never had a plan B. I honestly wanted to be an actor and dedicate my life to movies," Rao says.

The actor is excited about his upcoming film, "Fanny Khan", which also features Kapoor, Aishwarya Rai Bachchan, Pihu Sand and Divya Dutta.

Rao says the film, directed by debutant Atul Manjrekar, is an important story which needs to be told.

"It is a great story and I loved my part. It was very exciting to work with Anil sir and Aishwarya. It was a fascinating experience.

"My whole romantic side with Aishwarya was really fun. It was great. My character is in awe of her in the film. And I am in awe of her in real-life. It was a very weird combination."

The film has been produced by T-Series, Anil Kapoor Films & Communications Network and Rakeys Omprakash Mehra Pictures. It will be released on August 3.

Challenging to get a foothold in new industry: Jassi Gill on Bollywood debut

MUMBAI, JUL 31 (PTI): Punjabi singer-actor Jassi Gill, who is making his Hindi film debut with "Happy Phirr Bhag Jayegi", believes it is hard to find one's footing in a competitive industry like Bollywood.

"There is a challenge. It takes time to find one's footing in a new industry. There is a lot of competition in Bollywood and today if people know Diljit Dosanjh, an actor-singer from Punjab, then it is really good," he told PTI.

Dosanjh, who like Jassi started as a singer-actor, has become popular in Bollywood with the success of films such as "Udta Punjab" and "Soorma".

Jassi says Dosanjh's Bollywood journey is inspiring.

"I respect him. He is making a name for himself. He is a sardar, representing Punjab industry, he came here and did it all. That's an achievement."

Before "Happy..." there were other Bollywood offers



for Jassi but the actor says they were not that good.

"I felt I couldn't do justice to the work that came my way earlier. I was getting cameo roles, I don't have issues doing it but if I am entering a new film industry, I should do roles where I am noticeable. I felt 'Happy Phirr Bhag Jayegi' was apt for me."

Jassi has seen the first part - "Happy Bhag Jayegi" and insists the sequel is more entertaining.

"It is my debut film here and the story was good, the

star cast was amazing, there was no reason for me to let go of it."

Jassi is pinning his hopes on the Anand L Rai produced film, which releases on August 24. The film also stars Sonakshi Sinha, Diana Penty, Jimmy Shergill.

"This film is the best opportunity for me to show my talent. I am hoping I get good offers post this film. I have done my best, the rest depends on destiny and how it is marketed and its business," he says.

ARIES: Walk to the beat of your own drum, Aries. If you try to latch on to the smooth-talking, fast-paced information of the day, your voice could get lost in the crowd. But if you plant your feet firmly and try to plan, you might deprive yourself of spontaneous events that prove the most fulfilling. Chart your own course and don't be afraid if no one else follows along.

TAURUS: Connect with the fellow sitting next to you or perhaps the woman behind you in line at the store. He or she could share a piece of wisdom that changes your life forever. Be aware that you also could be that person who changes someone else's life with a single thought or slice of wisdom that you've picked up in your travels. Communication is the key to expanding your world in

many ways.

GEMINI: Your self-esteem may be challenged today by a fast talker or unpleasant situation, Gemini. Don't accept things at first glance. There's a much deeper meaning brewing below the surface, and you'd be foolish not to recognize that. Stick to your guns and stay grounded. Newfangled devices and big promises may not be all they're advertised to be.

CANCER: Jump on board the fast train and see how far it takes you, Cancer. You'll be surprised at how far you can go with minimal effort. Your grace and polite social manners will help you navigate quickly to where you need to be. You have the wind at your back today. Make the most of this energy by aiming for the top and not resting until you get there.

LEO: Flexibility is an important part of today, Leo. Take a relaxed, laid-back approach. Trying to ram your ideas through isn't the best tactic. Having tunnel vision will restrict you in many ways. Keep an open mind and be receptive to others' ideas and opinions. You have a lot of power readily available. It would be a shame to waste it by lacking the breadth of vision to see all your options.

VIRGO: Things coming at you from all sides are forcing you to make a move, Virgo. Don't be pressured into something you don't want to do. A nervous restlessness may urge you to act. Don't let other people boss you around. Secure your position and be strong. Try not to be tempted into situations that you know are going to be bad for you.

LIBRA: Lock into the practical, grounding force of the day that is not only realistic but also flexible. Attend to details and organize yourself, Libra. Be aware that you may need to alter your course a bit in order to fit the group dynamic. Try to work with those around you to achieve a common goal. Initiating the help of others is easier than you think as long as you stay focused and motivated.

SCORPIO: Today is one of those days in which prosperity is much closer than you think, Scorpio. You may know what you seek, but it's up to you to take the first step toward going after it. You're probably looking for solid answers to your deep, probing questions. Don't let your inquisitive mind rest until you find answers that ring true for you.

leave you helpless at a crossroads today, Sagittarius. Others may be just as undecided regarding which way to go. At the same time, you may feel pressured to take immediate action, and you're tired of waiting for others to make the first move. Find the answers in simple solutions. There's more than one correct way. Your choice is always the right one if you believe it to be so.

CAPRICORN: Latch on to the expansiveness that comes when you connect with others in a social arena, Capricorn. Communication is a key aspect of the day. If you go with the flow you will land exactly where you need to be. Take the adventurous route and skip around from one thing to another. There's no need to pin yourself down to one route or way of doing things.

AQUARIUS: Connect with the stable, grounding energy of the day, Aquarius, but beware that tension may come in the form of fast talk and misinformation. People could be fickle and frantic. Wait for the dust to settle before you pick a road to travel. Impulsive decisions may lead you down paths that aren't the best choice for you now. Relax and try not to think about it too much!

PISCES: Any expansive feeling you experience may be rained on today. You could get the feeling that you've lost touch with reality. Make sure you connect with real life, Pisces, and do a bit of planning to balance your whimsical side. Things that you haven't accounted for might crop up to serve as a reminder that you need to deal with real life.