



BLAKE SHELTON AND GWEN STEFANI'S GRAMMYS DUET HAD A CRAZY DETAIL WE TOTALLY MISSED
pg 08

HOW KURDISH DIASPORA GROUPS ARE PUSHING FOR UNITY OVER THEIR DIVIDED HOMELAND
04

WHAT ARE INTIMACY COORDINATORS? SAG-AFTRA HAS NEW PROTOCOLS FOR SEX SCENES IN HOLLYWOOD
pg 08



SummitTIMES

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ON TOP OF THE NEWS

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Pages 8 | ₹ 5

Munshithang Bailey Bridge on verge of completion

360 feet long bridge will reconnect Lachen to rest of the state

MANGAN, 29 JAN (IPR): Minister for Roads & Bridges, Samdup Lepcha on Wednesday inspected the ongoing construction of the 360 feet Munshithang Bailey Suspension Bridge, which will connect Lachen to the rest of the state.

Minister, Samdup Lepcha, travelled along the entire length of the bridge on foot and took stock of ongoing construction of the bridge which is being jointly built by 86 RCC (GREF) and Corps of Engineering (Army).

Minister, Mr Lepcha was accompanied by Major Prashant Lalotra, OC 86 RCC and SDPO, Chungthang, LB Chhetri.

Major Prashant in-



formed that the said bridge shall withstand a load of 24 tons of track and wheel vehicle. Further, he informed that 95% of bridge construction has already been completed, remaining 5% works such as construction approach road on either side of the

bridge, construction of retaining wall etc, will be done within a month with all necessary safety measures. Vehicles can ply over the bridge by the end of February 2020, he added.

The Minister appreciated the speedy work that was executed by the GREF

and Army Engineers and assured to felicitate them when the bridge is inaugurated. Furthermore, he also assured Major Prashant to provide every possible help from his end for improvement of roads and bridges of the district.

The Minister began

his inspection of the bridge at around 2.30pm and spent nearly an hour on the new bridge today.

It may be recalled that the construction of Munshithang Bailey Suspension Bridge had commenced in the last week of October 2019.

Sikkim launches Rural Management curriculum for BA and MA

GANGTOK, 29 JAN (IPR): Sikkim has become the first State in the country to launch the Rural Management Curriculum for Bachelor's and Master's degree in collaboration with Mahatma Gandhi National Council of Rural Education (MGNCRE) under the Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India. The curriculum was officially launched by Minister of Education, Kunga Nima Lepcha, at his chamber in Tashiling Secretariat today.

Briefing the gathering about the curriculum, MGNCRE Chairman, Dr. W.G. Prasanna Kumar, informed that the Rural Management Curriculum is a BBA/MBA programme that strives to promote rural studies and rural management in order to enable development of sustainable rural livelihoods.

The unique programme aims to equip rural youth with management skills focusing



on rural sector while also providing faculty development support and hand holding of the universities who will adopt the curriculum in the coming days, he added.

Dr. Kumar stated that the curriculum has been initiated in consultation with the best institutes of the country and further added that the State of Sikkim has also been instrumental in the development of the curriculum.

He also highlighted that the curriculum will also bring about a paradigm shift in understanding rural not just as consumers but as producers

and contributors for production and economy.

The briefing session was followed by a discussion session wherein representatives of different universities attending the event enquired about the contents of the curriculum and deliberated on the future prospects of the curriculum.

Education Minister expressed gratitude to MRNCRE for developing an innovative curriculum and congratulated all for the honour received by the State in being the first in the country to have launched the curriculum.

turn to pg 02

RDD Minister launches Soreng towards Rurban Cluster development



SORENG, 29 JAN [IPR]: The Soreng Rurban Cluster, to be developed under the Shyama Prasad Mukherjee Rurban Mission was launched by RDD Minister, Sonam Lama, at the SDM office conference hall here today.

The launch program was also attended by the area MLA, Aditya Golay; CP Sharma, Press Advisor to the CM; CS Rao, Principal Secretary, RDD; Ganga Pradhan, Secretary, Skill Development; Sarika Pradhan, Additional Secretary, RDD; Karma R. Bonpo, DC West; Bishal Mukhia, Director (Capacity Building); Gayas Pega, ADC (Dev, Soreng) and HOD's. Addressing the gathering, the Minister highlighted the importance of the program in that it recognizes that large parts of rural areas are not stand alone settlements but part of a cluster of settlements, which are relatively proximate to each other.

These clusters typically illustrate the capability for the growth, have economic potential and derive locational and competitive advantage hence considering these

factors the Government of India has proposed the 'Shyama Mukherjee Rurban Mission'.

He further added that every individual should cooperate to make the plan successful and reap the benefits of the RRBAN project to the fullest and create avenues for development and economic freedom.

He also congratulated the public of Soreng for having being selected under the Rurban mission and wished them the best of what the project will make of them.

The area MLA, in turn, called on all the officers and the public to work together to make SPMRM a success and also underlines that the project's mission was, "Development of a cluster of villages that preserve and nurture the essence of rural community life with focus on equity and inclusiveness without compromising with the facilities perceived to be essentially urban in nature, thus creating a cluster of 'Rurban Villages'".

Ms Sarika Pradhan mentioned that the Soreng

turn to pg 02

Sikkim to host Global Cinema Festival

SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 29 JAN:

Sikkim is set to host Global Cinema Festival 2020 tentatively from 28 Feb to 01 March in Gangtok, a press release informs.

As a run up to the same, representatives of Sikkim Festival Team attended the 16th MIFF-2020 (Mumbai International Film Festival for Documentary, Short Fiction and Animation films) on Tuesday at Nehru Centre Auditorium, Worli, Mumbai.

On behalf of the State, IPR Secretary, Namrata Thapa, attended the Festival. The Sikkim Film Coopera-

tive Society was represented by its honorary member Dr Rahul Banerjee and Firdausul Hasan who also is the president of the Film Federation of India.

The IPR Secretary invited various leaders, film directors and producers to visit Sikkim during and after the Global Cinema Festival, the release mentions.

Culture Minister, Maharashtra, Amit Vilasrao Deshmukh is likely to attend the Global Cinema Festival in Sikkim.

Further, it is informed that Sikkim is launching its first creative studio compatible with 2D and 3D animation in February 2020.

KOLKATA, JAN 29 (PTI): Political circles in West Bengal are abuzz with rumours that poll strategist Prashant Kishor is likely to join the ruling Trinamool Congress in the state after his expulsion from JD(U) on Wednesday.

Top TMC leaders when contacted did not confirm any such development but neither ruled out the possibility in the near future.

Repeated calls by PTI to Kishor, who is a poll

strategist for TMC, went unanswered.

The JD(U) on Wednesday expelled Kishor, who was its vice-president and Pavan Varma, its general secretary saying their conduct in the recent past has made it clear that they do not want to abide by the party's discipline.

Kishor like West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee has been critical of Citizenship Amendment Act and the National

Population Register.

According to TMC sources, Kishor shares a very good rapport and working relation with Banerjee, who is also the TMC supremo.

"Prashant Kishor as a poll strategist is doing a great job for the party. Now whether he will join TMC or not is to be decided by him and the party's top leadership," TMC secretary general Partha Chatterjee told reporters.

turn to pg 02

2 crore
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Thousands take part in anti-CAA protest at Jantar Mantar

NEW DELHI, JAN 29 (PTI):

Thousands of people from northern states, including many who have been part of a sit-in at Shaheen Bagh, and student groups on Wednesday held a protest at Jantar Mantar here against the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA).

"We want the government to roll back the alliance of CAA, NRC and NPR," said Nadeem Khan, an activist of NGO 'United Against Hate'.

Student groups from Jamia Millia Islamia, Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU), Delhi University, Aligarh Muslim University (AMU), Maulana Azad National Urdu University and Hyderabad Central University were among those who took part in the protest.

Many protesters from Shaheen Bagh, where a dharna against the CAA has been on for over a month now, also joined the demonstration.

The 'Shaheen Bagh dadis' -- as the elderly women who have become a unique part of the sit-in in south Delhi are called -- had come to take part in the protest but could not reach the venue due to traffic restrictions.

Among the protesters were people from Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Haryana and Punjab.

Naim Rabbani (41), a Jaipur-based businessman, said the CAA is discriminatory since it does not include Muslims.

"We will try to save the Constitution till our last breathe. It's a long journey," Rabbani, who had come along with 400 people, said.

Protesters also condemned the arrest of JNU PhD scholar Sharjeel Imam, who was held by the Delhi Police's Crime Branch in Bihar's Jehanabad in a sedition case for allegedly making inflammatory speeches.

"We condemn the arrest of Sharjeel Imam and we condemn the sedition charges levelled against him. His family was also harassed," Nadeem Khan said. Mohammad Javed (37) said he left the Army to sit in the anti-CAA protests. Javed said he has served at the Siachin glacier.

Minister chairs sub-division level coordination meeting at Chungthang

CHUNGTHANG, 29 JAN

(IPR): A sub-division level coordination meeting chaired by the Area MLA-cum- Minister for Roads & Bridges, Samdup Lepcha with all Government Officers, Government Employees, officers of other organizations including Army, GREF, ITBP, Hydro Power companies and other Central Government officers was held today at Chungthang.

The coordination meeting was called on the direction of the Area MLA to discuss various issues related to the development of the Sub-Division and also to deliver better services to the public.

The meeting was also attended by the SDM Chungthang, SDPO Chungthang, BDO Chungthang along with officers including MO PHC, VO, SHO Lachen and Lachen, OC Chungthang, OC Fire Dept, Divisional Engineers and Assistant Engineers amongst others.

The meeting started with a formal welcome address by the SDM Chungthang followed



by an address by the Area MLA.

Minister, Samdup Lepcha, in his address directed all Government officers and employees to maintain punctuality in the office, maintain proper attendance of staff, maintain proper office records, create employee chart in the offices, keep proper work details of all contractual works, financial details, participate in all national festivals and state festivals, etc.

Directions were given for projection of future developmental

prospects by every department and also to monitor and follow up ongoing works to ensure timely completion of the sanctioned project.

GREF officials were asked to maintain the condition of the roads. Necessary directions were also given for installation of road signs, zebra crossing especially in school areas, to upgrade road side drainage system, construction of parapets, etc.

Likewise Army and ITBP were requested to provide more medical and CSD facilities to lo-

cal people and asked to install solar and street lights in public places under local area development schemes. Other organizations were asked to work as per the directions of the state government and also to work for the benefit of the local populace.

The Minister also insisted to work in close coordination with all other organizations and to provide them necessary help and support while delivering services to our local people.

In the interaction session many officers

and employees of different departments placed their grievances to Minister including which were mostly related to unavailable of govt. quarters, insufficient manpower, govt. vehicle etc.

It was also decided to have a similar coordination meeting in every three months wherein every department will bring their employee chart and also present the status of all schemes and programmes under them. The meeting concluded with the vote of thanks from the BDO Chungthang.

AAP seeks 48-hour campaigning ban on Amit Shah

NEW DELHI, JAN 29 (PTI):

AAP has asked the Election Commission to impose a 48-hour campaigning ban on Union Home Minister Amit Shah for allegedly tweeting a "fake" video on Delhi government schools, party leader Sanjay Singh said on Wednesday.

AAP leaders Singh and Pankaj Gupta complained to the EC against the circulation of the "fake" videos of Delhi government schools by BJP leaders to "falsely defame" Delhiites.

The AAP, in its complaint to the EC, also said BJP MPs - Gautam Gambhir, Parvesh Verma and Hans Raj Hans - made "false and fabricated" videos to put out a wrong picture of Delhi government schools to the people. The AAP has also sought action against the three BJP MPs.

"Today we met Election Commission and demanded that Amit Shah be banned for 48 hours from campaigning. FIR

should also be lodged against all their leaders who made and circulated such fake videos and all such tweets be deleted," Singh told reporters.

Eight BJP MPs visited the schools and on Tuesday shared videos of their findings.

Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Tuesday had asserted that the videos of alleged deficiencies in the city's government schools shared by Home Minister Amit Shah were false. Singh said the BJP has been completely baffled by the Delhi's education model, and Shah is running a campaign to insult the 16 lakh children of Delhi, the 32 lakh parents of Delhi and thousands of teachers. "This shows that in these elections in Delhi, the BJP is a party without any mission or vision. It is difficult to even imagine that the Union Home Minister is circulating a fake video and insulting the entire education system of Delhi," he said.

Free Tutorial classes at Pakyong concludes

SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 29 JAN:

Valedictory function of Free Tutorial classes organised by Sikkim Educational Society in collaboration with Sikkim Krantikari Morcha students wing was held today at Pakyong Junior High School, a press release informs.

MLA Namcheybong constituency, Em Prasad Sharma was the chief guest of the day while Chairperson OBC commission, Pabitra Bhandari, Bishal Gurung (Bishal Catering) and Inchung Bhutia were present as special guests.

The Free Tutorial classes started on 27 Dec, 2019, and the formal inauguration ceremony was held in the presence of MP, Indra Hang Subba on 04 Jan, 2020.

In the classes students were provided with counseling classes every Saturday. Indra Hang Subba (MP), Robin Sewa (SDM Gangtok), Joseph Lepcha



(President Press Club of Sikkim), motivated students during this period.

The welcome note was presented by Gagan Gurung of Sikkim Educational Society. Hari Rizal highlighted about the functioning and future plans of Sikkim Educational Society.

The teachers of the classes were felicitated during the program.

Chief coordinator SKM youth wing, Lakpa Moktan provided all essentials like overall expenses and management of the classes.

Sikkim Educational Society members thanked Marwari Samaj, Pakyong branch for sponsoring packed lunch to the students of Free Tutorial classes.

All I want is to express solidarity with Vemula: Kamra

MUMBAI, JAN 29 (PTI): Stand-up comedian Kunal Kamra, banned by three airlines from flying for allegedly heckling TV journalist Arnab Goswami aboard a flight, on Wednesday said he just wanted to express solidarity with PhD scholar Rohith Vemula and at no point he was "unruly or disruptive".

He said the flying suspension was not "shocking" for him and explained why he allegedly heckled Goswami.

In a fresh statement, Kamra said the emotions got the better of him, but if he hadn't reacted -- triggered by the coverage of Vemula's death by Goswami in his TV shows -- he could not have forgiven himself.

Vemula, a scholar at the University of Hyderabad, committed suicide in January 2016 allegedly due to caste discrimination on the campus.

The comedian was suspended from flying by IndiGo and Air India on Tuesday after he allegedly heckled Goswami aboard a Mumbai-Lucknow plane of IndiGo and posted a video clip of the incident on his Twitter handle. In the video clip, Kamra is seen making a reference to the death of Vemula.

On Wednesday, Kamra took to Twitter and shared the link of an

11-minute video, a compilation of multiple past incidents, and wrote, "The emotions did of course get the better of me (referring to the Goswami episode), but if I didn't emote, I'd never be able to forgive myself."

Kamra uploaded the video on his YouTube channel which shows a Republic TV reporter confronting RJD leader Tejashwi Yadav on a flight, despite repeated requests from him and the cabin crew to stop the camera and take seat.

Another clip shows a Republic TV reporter seeking a comment from Congress leader Mani Shankar Aiyar inside a restaurant where he is having his lunch.

It also features a journalist shouting at a Republic TV reporter for allegedly heckling.

The video highlights Goswami using words like "cowards, lunatic, lapdog", calling Vemula's death as a "personal tragedy" of an individual used as a "political mileage".

It further shows dichotomy in Goswami's coverage of Vemula's death, between 2016 and 2017, on his shows. The video ends with the reading of Vemula's last letter before his suicide, sourced from filmmaker

Anand Patwardhan's documentary, "Reason/Vivek".

"I apologise in advance if this video comes across as an extension of my saviour complex. All I want to do is express my solidarity and love for my hero Rohith Vemula," Kamra wrote at the end of the video.

SpiceJet became the third airline which suspended Kamra from flying until further notice on Wednesday.

On Tuesday, IndiGo had suspended Kamra from flying for a period of six months and Air India until further notice.

Shortly after SpiceJet suspended him from flying with the airline, the comedian posted a sarcastic tweet: "Modiji can I walk yaan uspe bhi baan hai (Modi ji can I walk or is there a ban even on that)" and added crying emojis after his tweet.

In a statement issued on Twitter, Kamra said at no point did he not follow the orders of the cabin crew in the (Mumbai-Lucknow) flight.

"It's not shocking at all to me that for exercising my right to speech, which falls under Article 19 of our constitution, 3 airlines have given me a temporary ban from flying. Fact of the matter is that at no point was

I disruptive and at no point did I not follow the orders of the cabin crew or the captain," he tweeted.

"At no point did I endanger the safety of any passenger on board, the only damage I caused was to the inflated ego to the 'journalist' Arnab Goswami," he stated.

Kamra said he had not travelled with SpiceJet or Air India in this event and there is no "pattern of him being unruly".

"This was the first time something like this has happened, so why have they jumped the gun and banned me? I've travelled SpiceJet and Air India in the past. There have been no complaints against me ever, only selfies and love has been shared by the crew," he tweeted.

The comedian said as per his "limited knowledge" no formal complaint was made by the crew, Goswami or anyone else on board the (Mumbai-Lucknow) flight.

"Whenever there was an intervention by any member of the crew I complied. If expressing myself to an important public figure, who himself points a camera day in and day out, catching people off guard is a crime, then Both of us are criminals," he wrote.

Language used by BJP leaders appalling: Chidambaram

NEW DELHI, JAN 29 (PTI):

Senior Congress leader P Chidambaram on Wednesday said BJP leaders have "bid goodbye" to civilised political discourse as they are facing "imminent defeat" in the Delhi assembly elections. He hit out at Union minister Anurag Thakur and other BJP leaders such as West Delhi MP Parvesh Verma and party's West Bengal president Dilip Ghosh, saying the language used by them is "appalling" and asked why the prime minister and the BJP chief are not admonishing them.

"The language used by Minister Anurag Thakur, BJP MP Parvesh Verma, BJP State President Dilip Ghosh and BJP Karnataka Minister CT Ravi is appalling. "It seems that, faced with imminent defeat in the Delhi elections, the BJP leaders have bid goodbye

to civilised political discourse," Chidambaram said on Twitter.

"Why are the PM and the BJP President not admonishing these leaders," he also asked.

BJP MP Verma on Tuesday raised the spectre of Shaheen Bagh's anti-CAA protesters in their lakhs entering homes to rape and kill women, provoking opposition outrage as the Delhi election chief submitted a report on his remarks to the Election Commission.

Verma also said what happened in Kashmir with Kashmiri Pandits could happen in Delhi too.

In another election rally, Union Minister of State for Finance Thakur egged on the crowd to raise an incendiary slogan -- "shoot the traitors" -- after he lashed out at anti-CAA protesters.

Sikkim launches...

The programme concluded with the vote of thanks delivered by Director, Higher Education, Kapil Meena.

The Minister was accompanied by Additional Chief Secretary, Education, G.P. Upadhyaya, Director, Higher Education, Kapil Meena, Joint Secretary, Subha Mukhia, Registrar, Sikkim University, T.K. Kaul, Chairman, MGNCRE, Dr. W.G. Prasanna Kumar, Coordinator, MGNCRE, Moushami Mukherjee, Vice Chancellor, Sikkim Manipal University, Lt. Gen. (Dr.) M.D. Venkatesh, Vice Chancellor, ICAFI Sikkim, Dr. J.N. Pathak, Associate Dean, SRM University, Sikkim, Dr. Govind Pratap Singh, HoD, Department of Economics, SRM University, Dr. Praveen Rizal, and Assistant Registrar, Vinayaka Missions Sikkim University, Benoy Thapa.

Bengal pol...

A senior TMC leader who did not wish to be named said if Kishor is willing he will be welcomed to TMC "with open arms" as a strategist like him would be an asset ahead of the 2021 Assembly polls.

"If he wants to join, I don't think there will be any problem. He has been doing a great job for TMC and will be an asset for our party in the 2021 assembly polls, which is going to be a tough election," the senior TMC leader said.

After its dismal performance in the 2019 Lok Sabha polls TMC had hired Kishor to plan the party's strategy and fix the lacunae before the next assembly polls. a, had

Kishor's strategy worked for the party as it won all the three assembly seats in the by-election held in November last year, a few months after the general election.

As the JD(U) vice-president Kishor had been critical of party president Nitish Kumar over his support to CAA and the NPR and was expelled from the party.

RDD Minister...

Cluster was selected in phase III for Sikkim based on the criteria laid down by the Ministry.

The mission was initially launched on 16 Sept 2015 by the Ministry of the Rural Development, Govt. of India, with the aim to develop a cluster of villages that preserve and nurture the essence of the rural community life with focus on equity and inclusiveness without compromising with facilities perceived to be essentially urban in nature, thus creating a Cluster of Rurban villages.

During the launch, the Soreng Rurban Cluster and Soreng Integrated Cluster Action Plan (ICAP) along with a power-point presentation on Soreng ICAP was also shown and discussed.

~ **SummitTIMES** ~
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Bengaluru look to maintain pace for top spot

BENGALURU, JAN 29 (PTI): Eyeing the top spot, Bengaluru FC will have plenty on their mind when they face laggard Hyderabad FC in their Hero Indian Super League clash here on Thursday.

Bengaluru FC can go a point clear at the top with a win, leapfrogging FC Goa and ATK, although having played a match more than both.

Considering their record at home, the Blues will be favourites going into the match. They have won their last three matches at home and have conceded just four goals at the Kanteerava

this season.

“I don’t feel the pressure. I think we need to get as many points as possible. Goa and ATK will be ahead of us, if they win all the games, so there is no pressure on us,” said Bengaluru FC coach Carles Cuadrat.

Bengaluru are coming off a 3-0 win over Odisha FC that saw striker Deshorn Brown get off the mark for them.

Brown will once again be expected to lead the line against a Hyderabad defence that is yet to keep a clean sheet this season. With Brown

leading the line, Sunil Chhetri can play from the left from where he has been very productive.

Bengaluru have also signed Spanish winger Nili Perdomo and he might get a go on the pitch at some point in the game.

“They (Hyderabad) have changed their tactics and are trying to work in a different way. But tomorrow, the most dangerous thing for us are their players and their coach. They want to show everybody that they are good enough to be on the team for the next season,” said

Cuadrat, whose side was forced to settle for a 1-1 draw in the away clash.

Hyderabad are coming into this game after snatching a point against Mumbai City in a 1-1 draw at home. Though the visitors are yet to notch a point from their away games, new coach Javier Lopez will hope they can build on the result against Mumbai.

“The team is improving a lot. They (youngsters) are understanding our philosophy. We are trying to play as a team, and I think this is the way to success. We are going

to Bengaluru to try and win the game,” Lopez said.

The likes of Marcelinho and Bobo will need to step up and lead the attack against a miser Bengaluru defence which has conceded just nine goals this season.

Adil Khan will also have a huge role to play after putting in an impressive display against Mumbai that saw him win the Man-of-the-Match award. With 19 clearances and five tackles, Adil has had a brilliant game and Lopez will hope the defender continues that form.



Sports Day at KV-Singtam

GANGTOK, 29 JAN: Kendriya Vidyalaya, Singtam, held its annual Sports Day at NHPC Grounds, Balutar, today with Chairman, School Manage-

ment Committee, General Manager (in-charge), NHPC-Teesta-V Power Station, Sahadev Khatua, as chief guest.

Agri Minister on official visit to Tamil Nadu

CHENNAI, 29 JAN (IPR): Minister for Agriculture, Lok Nath Sharma is on a four-day official visit to Tamil Nadu from 28 Jan. He was accorded a warm welcome by the Sub Divisional Magistrate, Vellore District, Government of Tamil Nadu and also received Guard of Honour by the Women Police.

During his tour, the Minister is scheduled to visit important Government and Private farms of Agriculture, Horticulture and Animal Husbandry and Veterinary Services in the state of Tamil Nadu. Thereafter, he shall visit Amul and other dairy units in the state of Kerala.

Theatre artist Sanjna Kapoor receives French honour

NEW DELHI, JAN 29 (PTI): Thespian Sanjna Kapoor was awarded the French honour of Chevalier dans l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres' (Knight of the Order of Arts and Letters) on Tuesday for her outstanding contribution to theatre.

Kapoor, who currently runs the Mumbai-based theatre company 'Junoon', was felicitated by Franck Riester, the French Minister of Culture, who was on a state visit to India.

“It is a great pleasure to be able to show France's recognition of your outstanding artistic journey. A passionate woman of theatre, you completely throw yourself into making artistic productions accessible to the greatest number.

“Whether on stage, in front of the camera, or at the helm of the organization you run, you show the same infectious enthusiasm for championing the place of art in our societies,” the minister said.

Born to Bollywood star Shashi Kapoor and British actor Jennifer Kendal, Kapoor (52) debuted as an actor in Aparna Sen's “36 Chowringhee Lane” (1981).

She was also the leading lady in “Hero Hiralal” (1989), and appeared in Mira Nair's “Salaam Bombay” (1988), but eventually went on to dedicate herself completely to theatre. She acted in numerous plays, and also took up the job of reviving Mumbai's Prithvi Theatre, which was founded by her parents.

In 2012, she co-founded ‘Junoon’, an organisation that works towards to increasing the reach of theatre and the arts to wider audiences through innovative initiatives.

The Order of Arts and Letters, instituted in 1957 by the French government, is conferred, regardless of nationality, on people who have distinguished themselves by their creativity in the fields of art or literature, or for their contribution to promoting the arts and literature in France and throughout the world.

Some previous recipients of the award from India include Shahrukh Khan, Hariprasad Chaurasia, Aishwarya Rai, Raghuraj Rai, Ebrahim Alkazi, Habib Tanveer, Upanmanyu Chatterjee, Wendell Rodricks and Aruna Vasudev.

Eastern Army Commander calls on Governor

SUMMIT REPORT GANGTOK, 29 JAN:

Lieutenant General, Eastern Army Commander, Anil Chauhan, met the Governor of Sikkim, Ganga Prasad at Raj Bhawan, Gangtok, on 28 Jan, 2020, a press release informs. He was accompanied by Lieutenant General, General Officer Commanding, Trishakti Corps, Nav K Khanduri.

The Army Commander made a courtesy call on the Governor and apprised him of the close and efficient civil-military bonds in the State besides the secu-



rity situation along the borders and infrastructure related issues. He assured the Governor of all possible assistance from the Army whenever required.

The Governor lauded

the contribution of Indian Army in nation building and emphasised on working jointly with the State Government functionaries during various endeavours aimed at the welfare of the people.

Delhi court sends Sharjeel Imam to 5-day police custody

NEW DELHI, JAN 29 (PTI): A court here sent Sharjeel Imam, arrested on sedition charges, to five days of police custody on Wednesday, his lawyer said.

Imam was produced at the residence of Chief Metropolitan Magistrate Purushottam Pathak in the evening amidst high security, said advocate Mishika Singh, appearing for the JNU research scholar in the matter.

The police had sought a six-day remand for Imam's custodial interrogation, the lawyer said.

Imam was arrested from Bihar's Jehanabad on Tuesday for allegedly making inflammatory speeches at the Jamia



Millia Islamia University here and in Aligarh.

He was brought to Delhi on Wednesday.

The situation in the Patiala House Courts Complex was tense after the Delhi Police informed that Imam would be produced before the magistrate there.

Some lawyers raised slogans against Imam,

held up posters calling him a “traitor” and demanded that he be hanged. One of the lawyers said, “We are here to protest against those who talk about breaking the country. All lawyers are united against such traitors. He does not deserve to be outside jail. Strict action should be taken against him.”

CONTRIBUTIONS INVITED FOR AMBA SCHOOL LIBRARY UPGRADATION


Wandering Souls of Sikkim is excited to announce our plan to upgrade the school library of Govt. Secondary School, Amba, East Sikkim. This will be fourth such upgradation of school libraries by WSOS.

We have successfully upgraded 3 school libraries so far with the support and contributions of our generous patrons and are looking forward to receive more such contributions.

We request all to kindly contribute books either old or new or cash for the upgradation of school library at Amba.

Our Library Initiative is aimed at upgrading School libraries specially in rural areas of the state and for laying a foundation for better future of our young minds studying in these schools.

To Contribute Contact WSOS at 7384639193.



GOVERNMENT OF SIKKIM
OFFICE OF THE SR. SUPERINTENDENT OF PRISONS
STATE CENTRAL PRISONS
RONGYEK

TENDER NOTICE

Sealed quotation are invited from registered firms of Sikkim for Supply of ration, grocery, hardware and electrical items to the State Central Prison, Rongyek and District Prison, Namchi for the period with effect from 01/04/2020 to 31/03/2021. The rates quoted by the firms inclusive of all transportation / carriage charges upto point of delivery i.e. the Central Prison, Rongyek and District Prison, Namchi as and when the items are requisitioned shall be final for all purpose.

The quotations addressed to the Sr. Superintendent of Police/Prison, Rongyek should reach the office of the undersigned on or before 10 AM on 03.03.2020. The Tender Selection Committee shall open the tenders in the office of the Sr. Superintendent of Police/Prison, Rongyek at 11 AM on the same day in the presence of the Tenderers or their authorized agents.

The quotations shall be accompanied by a state Bank of Sikkim T.D.R made in favour of the Sr. Superintendent of Police/Prison, Rongyek for Rs. 20,000/- (Rupees Twenty thousand) only alongwith certified copies of the concerned firms registrations, valid Trade License, GST registration etc. The failure to submit anyone of the above mentioned documents shall render the quotation void.

The tender Selection Committee reserves the right to accept any or all of the quotations without assigning any reason thereof.


The Tender documents can be obtained from the Office of the Sr. Superintendent of Police/Prison, Rongyek between 10.00 AM to 2.00 PM on all working days with effect from the publication of Tender Notices.

Sd/-
Sr. Superintendent of Police/Prison, Rongyek

R.O No. 334/IPR/Pub/Classi./19-20

Date: 22.01.2020

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RURAL DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT
GOVERNMENT OF SIKKIM
GANGTOK, SIKKIM

No: 240/PMGSY/RDD Date: 27/01/2020

PRESS NOTE
“HIRING OF GIS ANALYST”

The State Rural Roads Development Agency, Rural Development Department seeks application for hiring of a GIS Analyst (GA) on contract basis for use of GIS in day to day functioning of SRRDA especially for implementation of Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY). Details are as given under:

Name of post	: GIS Analyst (GA).
Number of post	: 1(one)
Qualification	: M.Sc/ M. Tech./M.Sc(Tech) in Geo-Science/ Geo-Informatics/Remote Sensing and GIS/GIS Geography/Earth Science.
Salary	: Rs. 30,000/- to Rs.45,000/-per month depending on skill and experience in GIS.

Eligibility criteria:

1. The GA should have basic knowledge of GIS, be able to operate QGIS/ArcGIS and prepare/modify/update shapefiles as and when required and compile from various sources such as satellite imagery/ toposheet, reports, etc.
2. The GA should know operations such as buffer, spatial join and conducting geometry/ topology checks.
3. The GA should be able to operate Google Earth and prepare KML files as when required.
4. Experience in AutoCAD and database management is a plus.
5. The GA should have relevant knowledge of IT systems and Excel.
6. Should have 3+years of professional experience in GIS.

The local desirous candidates having requisite qualifications and fulfilling the above criteria's may come for appearing in walk-in-interview along with an application and all the certificates in original in support of their qualification, experience as well as no objection certificate from the present employer, if any , in the Conference Hall of Rural Management Department on 25th February, 2020 from 11 am onwards.

Sd/-
Chief Engineer cum Empowered Officer
Rural Development Department.

R.O.No.338/IPR/Pub/Classi./19-20
Date: 27.01.2020

Facilitate Instead of Monitoring

Yes, private schools need regulation, but monitoring is not the answer

The one thing that government schools have over private efforts in the education sector is a proper campus. Most government schools, even if their infrastructure could do with some upkeep, have more space than what a majority of private institutions have in Sikkim. Government schools also have a load of freebies for students- from free uniforms to free textbooks to the mid-day meal schemes. And yet, even as the number of private schools multiplies in Sikkim, government school numbers have not grown and the only progression one has seen in them is in the elevation of their status – from primary to junior high schools to secondary to senior secondary. Most of these ‘promotions’ have unfortunately come without the matching enhancements in facilities. Clearly then, there is much that the two can learn from each other, but that is unlikely to happen until the government continues playing big brother instead of delivering as a facilitator.

Private schools across the state will soon be reminded again about the rules governing them. This is essentially a reiteration of rules already in place, but because they are circulated afresh, one surmises that the Department is now getting serious about enforcing them. Most of the points cover routine issues like teacher qualifications and some, like the ban on private tuitions, have proven impossible to regulate. And then there is the one about the mandatory inclusion of an Education Department official in private school SMCs which is not only unnecessary, but even counter-productive. For one, if such an inclusion is made mandatory, it will be impossible for schools to organize proper SMC meetings because the sheer number of private schools will make it impossible for the departmental representative to attend all SMC meetings, leave aside make any meaningful contributions to the deliberations. SMC members should be people who are invested in the establishment and have something substantial to contribute towards improving the schools. Token representation will compromise the entire exercise and the moment a government officer is brought into the picture, bring along the problem of hierarchies and entitlements. And the government should be aware of this given the difficulties it faces in the too many ex-officio memberships its officers find themselves in and how that has compromised the functioning of organizations they are expected to help function better. If these SMC members are planned as liaisons to help schools communicate with the Department better, one could still make a case for such inclusions, but the HRDD circular explains this placement as an exercise to “monitor” private schools, and that is inherently problematic. Unless the deputed officials can make the time and spare the effort to get to know the schools they sit in the SMCs of, they should not be allowed extra monitoring powers beyond what the department already enjoys. In all probability, logistical problems will not allow for such appointments to be universally possible, and if the SMC-level involvement cannot be mandated on all private schools, then it should not be attempted at all.

That said, it is not as if the private school sector does not require any regulation. It does, but none of the real matters of concern are addressed in any adequacy thus far. While it would be ill-advised to have the government “regulate” fee structures, what is worth considering is an established process, even in-house regulatory bodies involving parents, by which this is worked out and a system by which increments are made. Common practices at private schools which are in clear contradiction to their not-for-profit requirements are also areas that require attention but remain ignored. What is also required is a programme to facilitate land acquisition for schools at subsidized rates and a screening process by which loans could be secured for expansion plans. If such assistance was made available, maybe the Department could claim some rights towards “monitoring” as well.

WRITE US:

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



How Kurdish diaspora groups are pushing for unity over their divided homeland

VEYSI DAG
theconversation.com

When more than a hundred well known singers from the Kurdish diaspora took part in a large concert in the German city of Leverkusen in early January they had one key goal: putting on a united front.

The concert brought together thousands of members of the Kurdish diaspora under the motto “Em Bibin Yek”, or “Let us unite”. The aim was also to show solidarity for Kurds in northern Syria after the withdrawal of US troops from the region and subsequent Turkish invasion in October 2019.

The artists came from across the four Kurdish regions of Iraq, Syria, Turkey and Iran, and all sang separate renditions of patriotic Kurdish songs. At the end, the singers dressed in traditional Kurdish costumes and came back on stage together to sing the Kurdish political anthem “Herne Pes”, which means “forward”.

Since the Turkish invasion of the largely Kurdish-held region of northern Syria, Kurdish diaspora groups have been vocal in European cities, raising awareness about the betrayal and suffering of the Kurds. They’ve held demonstrations, rallies and solemn vigils; and lobbied MPs to ask for solidarity with the Kurdish population. In early December, a group marched from Lausanne to Geneva in Switzerland in a call for Kurdish unity.

Many Kurdish leaders, intellectuals and artists in the diaspora, who I’ve interviewed as part of my ongoing research on the diaspora movement, are now coming together to push this unified message. But this requires Kurdish groups on the ground in the Middle East – who have traditionally been split among a diverse set of ideological agendas – to unite behind a set of common political goals.

GROWTH OF A DIASPORA

Kurds don’t possess their own state and are wedged between four Iraq, Iran, Syria and Turkey. They are often defenceless and permanently subjected to the threat of repression and violent conflict, particularly from Iranian-backed Shia militias and Turkish-Sunni expansionism in the Middle East.

The repressive politics in the region means

Kurds have been subject to aggressive assimilation processes, forced to deny their own cultural heritage and identity. In response, they have staged several rebellions, including the ongoing uprising in Turkey under the leadership of the Kurdish Workers’ Party (PKK). Such conflicts led to the widespread displacement and migration of Kurds, mainly towards Europe in the 1980s and 1990s when violence escalated between the Kurdish groups and Iranian, Iraqi, Syrian and Turkish regimes.

More than one million Kurds are estimated to live in Europe, more than half of them in Germany. The growth of a Kurdish diaspora has only strengthened the push for a free and secular Kurdish homeland. The Kurdish homeland is like a placenta which sustains the Kurdish diaspora movement, and the links between the two act as a sort of umbilical cord that feeds the diaspora with emotional, mental and spiritual support and a sense of belonging.

Diaspora groups may be free from direct violent conflict and its consequences, but they are not immune from suffering. During my research interviews and at Kurdish demonstrations, I’ve seen members of the diaspora cry when they see images and read social media posts about Kurds who have been displaced, killed or tortured in Iran, Iraq, Syria and Turkey. Their helplessness at preventing atrocities is an integral part of the relationship they have with their homeland and other Kurds.

DIVISIONS AMONG KURDISH GROUPS

Because the Kurds lack their own nation state and the recognition, legitimacy and alliances that come with it, they find themselves excluded from the international community. But the major issue holding back the Kurdish voice is an internal one: the lack of a single cohesive narrative that articulates their demands.

This is largely because of the ideological differences and political agendas between different political groups. In Syria, for example, the Movement for a Democratic Society aims to establish a decentralised, democratic, confederal system in the country based on ethnic and religious diversity and

gender equality. But the Kurdish National Council is pushing for Kurdish autonomy in Syria.

The dominant Kurdish political parties in the Middle East also have diverging political and ideological agendas. The PKK and its affiliated groups across the Middle East are critical of Kurdish nationalism, promoting the idea of a democratic, confederal, multi-ethnic project instead. They don’t question the borders of the national states ruling the Kurdish regions, but rather push for grassroots democracy, recognition of cultural rights and self-administration within the borders of these states.

In contrast, the Kurdistan Democratic Party and its affiliated groups adopt a more nationalist rhetoric and aspire to carve out an independent Kurdish state. These two rivals dominate contemporary Kurdish groups in the homeland, pushing out more inclusive political principles. While these internal divisions weaken the Kurdish cause, they also unite states such as Turkey and Syria who rule the Kurdish homeland.

PUSHING FOR UNITY

It’s in light of these splits that Kurdish diaspora artists are pushing for Kurds to unite behind a single demand for the recognition of Kurdish status for administrative, cultural and political rights in the Middle East. These efforts could lead to the intervention and mediation efforts of Western countries to help end the Kurdish predicament. Events such as the concert in Leverkusen and the march in Switzerland are part of a wider strategy aimed at communicating the political desire for a Kurdish homeland to politicians and governments in Europe.

By transcending ideological differences of the Kurdish political groups in Iran, Iraq, Syria and Turkey, and pressing for the movement to push its agenda with a collective voice, the Kurdish diaspora could play a leading role in uniting political leaders in the homeland in an unprecedented success.

[the writer is Postdoctoral Research Fellow in the Department of Politics and International Studies, SOAS, University of London]

Comma again? Philip Pullman’s Oxford comma rage doesn’t go far enough

ROSLYN PETELIN
theconversation.com

High-profile author Philip Pullman tweeted on Sunday about the new 50 pence English coin due for release by the Royal Mint on Friday, January 31.

“The ‘Brexit’ 50p coin is missing an Oxford comma, and should be boycotted by all literate people,” he said.

An Oxford comma is the comma inserted before “and” or “or” in a list to separate the final item in a list from the items that go before it.

Sir Philip lives in Oxford, which voted to remain in the European Union. He has written several best-selling books, including the fantasy trilogy His Dark Materials. He argues that the commemorative coin requires a comma between “prosperity” and “and” – a very controversial opinion.

When The Guardian republished his tweet in an article, hundreds of responses were posted within hours. Moderators removed many comments – presumably the most heated ones.

EXCITING PASSIONS

The mention of the Oxford (or Harvard or serial) comma unfa-

ingly attracts passionate advocates (of which I am one) and determined detractors.

As Comma Queen Mary Norris, former copy editor at The New Yorker, says:

“Nothing, but nothing — profanity, transgender pronouns, apostrophe abuse — excites the passion of grammar geeks more than the serial, or Oxford, comma. People love it or hate it, and they are equally ferocious on both sides of the debate. Individual publications have guidelines that sink deep into the psyches of editors and writers. The Times, like most newspapers, does without the serial comma. At The New Yorker, it is a copy editor’s duty to deploy the serial comma, along with lots of other lip-smacking bits of punctuation, as a bulwark against barbarianism.”

Although its use is widespread in North America, the Oxford comma is not as widely used in Australia and the UK.

The Australian government’s Style Manual for Authors, Editors and Printers merely says “sometimes a comma is placed between the last two items to ensure clarity” and doesn’t use it in the manual’s title.

The UK National Curriculum authority warns students will be penalised if they use a serial comma in a list of simple items such as “apples, cheese, and milk”.

Many of the detractors say: “I was taught at school not to use it”.

To them I would say: “Well, you were taught wrong!”

As one poster on The Guardian article comments:

“The use of the Oxford comma is not standard practice [in the UK], merely because of the ignorant, narrow-minded grammar school teachers we had.”

Many believe it should be used only to avoid ambiguity, as in Robert Fulford’s example of a blooper that occurred in a newspaper reporting on a documentary about Merle Haggard: “Among those interviewed were his two ex-wives, Kris Kristofferson and Robert Duval.”

My argument is deciding whether or not to use the Oxford comma is an unnecessary burden. I advocate using it at all times, although most journalists aren’t fans of the comma – perhaps because they can save a couple of spaces by omitting it.

THE 50P COIN

To return to the quote on the coin in question, “Peace, prosperity and friendship with all nations”, placing an Oxford comma after “prosperity”, as Pullman advocates, doesn’t go far enough, in my opinion, to sort out the problem with the quote.

The intent of the quote seems to apply “with all nations” to the three nouns, but by parsing out each section we can see this does not work.

Does “Peace with all nations” make grammatical sense? No.

Does “Prosperity with all nations” make grammatical sense? No.

Whatever committee adapted US President Thomas Jefferson’s 1801 inauguration principles “peace, commerce, and honest friendship with all nations” by merely deciding to drop the Oxford comma and echo the rest of his words has resulted in this egregiously inept wording.

As admirable (or pedantic, depending on your feelings about the Oxford comma) as Pullman might be in advocating for the use of the Oxford comma on the coin, it’s clear this coin has committed more than one crime against the rules of grammar.

[the writer is Course coordinator, The University of Queensland]

PIB Siliguri organizes Integrated Outreach Programme

GANGTOK, 29 JAN (PIB): Press Information Bureau, Regional Outreach Bureau, Siliguri, organized a two-day Integrated Outreach Programme at Bakrihaat, Chengmari, Maynaguri, West Bengal from 27 Jan, 2020. The programme was correlated with Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat, Swachh Bharat, Plastic Free India, and on Jal Shakti in coordination with Sunita Cancer Society, Siliguri, State ICDS, BDO of Maynaguri and Panchayat members from Bokrihaat Maabhandani, Ramsai GP, Kazaldighi, Nehru Yuva Kendra, Jalpaiguri, Chengmari School Authority Health Department, ASHA, Anganwadi Workers, SHG's from various sector and with the rural masses from all around from nearby villages.

While the inaugurating Integrated Outreach Programme, the chief guest, Jalpaiguri Lok Sabha MP, Dr Jayanta Roy urged to minimize the use of plastic as the care-



free use of plastics leads to piling up of non-biodegradable waste product causing various types of pollution from water to our environment. He also urged the young generation to take active part in this type of awareness programme so that they can spread the message to their respective areas.

Social Worker, Om Prakash Pandey speaking on Plastic Free India described why we should

refrain from use of single use plastics in our day to day life. Prof Om Narayan Gupta, speaking on the theme Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat informed that through this type of awareness programme the government is trying to exchange the culture and tradition of each and every state by organizing a fair and the Mela.

Social Worker (JOFER), Siddhartha Mukherjee said that by

burning the plastic materials we are forcing ourselves to tremendous health hazard and for the surroundings which ultimately leads to disease like cancer and others. He opined that the minimum or no use of plastic ultimately leads to make our Bharat Shreshtha.

Speaking on this occasion Madan Bhattacharjee, Sunita Cancer Society, Siliguri, briefed the audience about cancer.

He said that one should not afraid of cancer as it can be cured if diagnosis at early stage for which awareness is important. During the programme, an initial check-up of patients were organized.

During the programme, the local artiste performed various dance and play to spread the messages of Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat, Swachh Bharat, Plastic Free India, and on Jal Shakti.

30% NEC funds for neglected sections of society: govt

NEW DELHI, JAN 29 (PTI): The Centre on Wednesday approved allocation of 30 per cent funds of the North Eastern Council (NEC) for new projects for focused development of deprived areas and neglected sections of society.

The decision was taken at a meeting of the Union Cabinet chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

As per the plans, allocation of 30 per cent of NEC funds will be for new projects under the existing 'Schemes of North Eastern Council' for focussed devel-

opment of deprived areas; deprived or neglected sections of society and emerging priority sectors in the Northeastern states.

The balance allocation shall be bifurcated in the existing two components -- state component-60 per cent and central component-40 per cent, according to an official statement.

There will be a revision of the NEC guidelines for simplification of appraisal and approval mechanism.

Projects will be allowed under state component, up to 25 per cent

of each state's normative allocation, for sectors not covered in the mandate of NEC, but which are considered important as per local felt needs as per the recommendations of the state governments.

The projects under the existing 'Schemes of NEC' will accrue socio-economic benefits to the marginalised and vulnerable groups of people in backward and neglected areas of the Northeastern states.

It will lead to faster decision-making and quick implementation of projects, the statement said.

Undertrial prisoner commits suicide in Tripura jail

AGARTALA, JAN 29 (PTI): A 32-year-old undertrial prisoner allegedly committed suicide at the Bishalgarh central jail in Tripura's Sipahijala district, police said on Wednesday. Assistant Inspector General of Police (Law and order), Subrata Chakraborty said Sanjib Sarkar allegedly committed suicide by hanging from a ventilator in the jail on Tuesday.

The prison authorities informed us about the matter. "We are in-

vestigating the case. The body has been sent to Agartala Government Medical College Hospital for postmortem," the AIGP said.

Chakraborty said Sarkar, resident of Gourangtilla village in West Tripura district was arrested by police on August 26, 2019, on the charge of attempt to murder a person and was in the jail since then.

The opposition CPI(M) on Wednesday demanded a high-level inquiry into

the unnatural death of an undertrial prisoner in the Bishalgarh jail.

"How can an undertrial prisoner commit suicide in the jail, when other people were present and the deceased was not alone. We demand a high-level inquiry into the incident," a press statement issued by CPI(M) said on Wednesday.

"The state human rights commission ... should suo-moto register a case and order an inquiry," the statement added.

Academic activities come to a standstill at AMU

ALIGARH, JAN 29 (PTI): All academic activities at the AMU came to a halt on Wednesday with students protesting over the CAA boycotting classes and the vice chancellor questioning if the university should remain open in this situation.

Examinations did not take place at AMU's Zakir Husain College of Engineering and Technology for the third consecutive day, with students again blocking the entrance.

VC Tariq Mansoor in

an open letter to the university community said there was "no justification in keeping the university open" if classes and examinations are prevented from being held.

Some posters put up by student groups on the campus described the situation as a "lockdown".

The student groups are seeking the withdrawal of "false cases" against those who took part in protests against the amended citizenship act on December 15.

Book reveals Kolkata's best kept secrets

NEW DELHI, JAN 29 (PTI): A classic by famous Bengali author Hemendra Kumar Roy has been translated into English almost a century after it was published in 1923 and reveals to the contemporary readers the darkest secrets of the erstwhile Calcutta.

"Calcutta Nights" (originally 'Raater Kolkata') tells stories of the city that led a life of glamour and scandal in her youth. Only that, those are not stories but a moving landscape of events that used to happen under a pale hazy moon or perhaps, the dim street lights of Tilottoma.

In the book, translated into English by Rajat Chaudhuri, Roy reveals the darkest secrets of an earlier Calcutta.

From Chitpur bordellos to the Chinese gambling dens of Territi Bazaar, from the green rooms of Bengali theatres to the hideouts of ruthless hoodlums of Mechhobazaar, from

burning ghats to prostitution - the narrative traverses through all the dark, narrow alleys of the city and the self, living in it. And thus, the city becomes a character by itself.

It creates a unique cosmopolitan setting, coloured with shades of debauchery, darkness and crime that this first-hand account brilliantly recounts.

This was a time of a decadent zamindari, a time though turbulent, was nostalgic about its famous Babu Culture' - the gentleman's misdemeanours. Those days, Calcutta (the colonial capital) was teeming with people from different parts of the country besides Europeans and other foreigners.

Published by Niyogi Books, Calcutta Nights acts a guidebook to the dark dens of eeriness where most people are aliens - not only the outsiders but also the Calcuttans.

Two killed, one injured in Mursgidabad clash

BAHARAMPORE (WB), JAN 29 (PTI): Two persons were killed and one was injured in a clash between two groups in West Bengal's Murshidabad district on Wednesday, a senior police officer said.

The incident occurred

after an argument broke out between the groups at Jalangi over the Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA).

The injured has been rushed to Murshidabad Medical College and Hospital here, the officer said.

Arunachal Assembly to go paperless with e-Vidhan project

ITANAGAR, JAN 29 (PTI): The Arunachal Pradesh Legislative Assembly is all set to go paperless with the implementation of e-Vidhan project, which is in the final stage, officials said.

Aimed at making the functioning of state legislatures paperless, the National E-Vidhan Application (NeVA) is all set for roll out to make the Assembly proceedings paperless, probably from the upcoming Budget session, they said here on Wednesday.

Once the e-Vidhan project is implemented, each and every information in regard to the legislative assembly would be available at the fingertips of the members who can then use their tablets/laptops to see the list of business and read questions and other documents pertaining to House proceedings. Assembly Speaker



Pasang Dorjee Sona on Tuesday inspected the ongoing e-Vidhan project, which is being implemented in the Assembly Secretariat here.

The speaker while inspecting the progress of project work instructed the agency concerned to ensure that the project is implemented at the earliest. He suggested to them to maintain the quality of work and also make sure that there is no loophole or lapse in the project,

officials said. Informing that the project work is in the final stage with only installation work remaining, the officials of e-Vidhan informed the Speaker that installation work would start immediately and training to the concerned members would be imparted from the second week of February.

They also demonstrated to the speaker the functioning of the e-Vidhan project.

JD(U) expels Prashant Kishor and Pavan Varma

NEW DELHI, JAN 29 (PTI): JD(U) on Wednesday expelled its vice president Prashant Kishor and general secretary Pavan Varma from the party, saying their conduct in recent past has made it clear that they don't want to abide by the party's discipline.

Both leaders have been critical of the party president and Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar over his support to

the Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA) and the National Population Register (NPR)

A JD (U) statement, issued by party's chief general secretary K C Tyagi, said that these two were "acting against party's decisions as well as its functioning" which amounted to breach of discipline.

The party also accused Kishor of using "insulting words" against the Bihar chief minister

Kumar had on Tuesday slammed Kishor over his critical remarks, and said he had inducted him in the party at the prodding of Union Home Minister and former BJP president Amit Shah. Kishor had reacted furiously and accused Kumar of lying.

The JD(U) said, "it is imperative that Kishor be removed from the party, so that he doesn't fall any lower.

KoPT begin mandatory screening for coronavirus

KOLKATA, JAN 29 (PTI): Kolkata Port Trust Wednesday began mandatory screening of the crew of shipping liners coming and leaving the two ports under it in view of the scare of novel coronavirus (nCoV).

There are no report of positive nCoV case in India so far and preventative measures have been adopted including screening of passengers bound for the country at airports.

"The 100 per cent thermal


scanning of all foreign going(FG) ships was started at both Kolkata and Haldia docks. The crew of foreign incoming vessels are also being screened and they will be allowed in only after thermal screening," KoPT spokesperson Sanjoy Kumar Mukherjee said.

Medical safety gear like gloves, masks and medical kits have been procured and five infrared thermal scanners have been placed at Kolkata and Haldia docks, he said.

So far three ships have been screened in Kolkata port and tests are in progress at Haldia port in one ship which has 75 crew members, KoPT officials said.

If any nCoV case is detected then public health office will be informed and quarantine protocol will be followed, they said.




Most of the foreign vessels in Kolkata port come from Singapore, Port Kelang, Colombo and some other ports of South East Asia.



What is Novel Coronavirus - nCoV?

The Novel Coronavirus (nCoV) is new strain of Coronavirus that originated in Wuhan, China. Notorious for mutating quickly and acquiring new qualities, it is a rising epidemic that was previously not identified in humans.

Symptoms of nCoV	Precautions to Prevent nCoV
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Fever ● Difficulty in breathing ● Dry Cough ● Severe acute respiratory syndrome ● Pneumonia - like symptoms 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Wash your hands often with soap. ● Use an alcohol based hand sanitizer ● Observe good personal hygiene. ● Avoid touching your face with unwashed hands. ● Avoid contact with people with possible symptoms. ● Avoid contact with animals and consumption of undercooked meats. ● Avoid travel to nCoV affected places. ● Wear a mask if you have respiratory syndrome. and cover your mouth while coughing or sneezing.
Treatment	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Treatment is symptomatic and supportive, based on the patient's clinical condition. ● No vaccinations available as of now. ● Visit Doctor in case symptoms detected. 	

If you seek help, you may call :

-Toll free no. 104

District surveillance Officer

EAST : 7029372100

WEST : 9593297809

NORTH : 9641957468

SOUTH : 7407691463

New STNM

AMS : 9434711402

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GOVERNMENT OF SIKKIM



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Mourn Kobe Bryant or don’t: but mourn the whole, flawed man

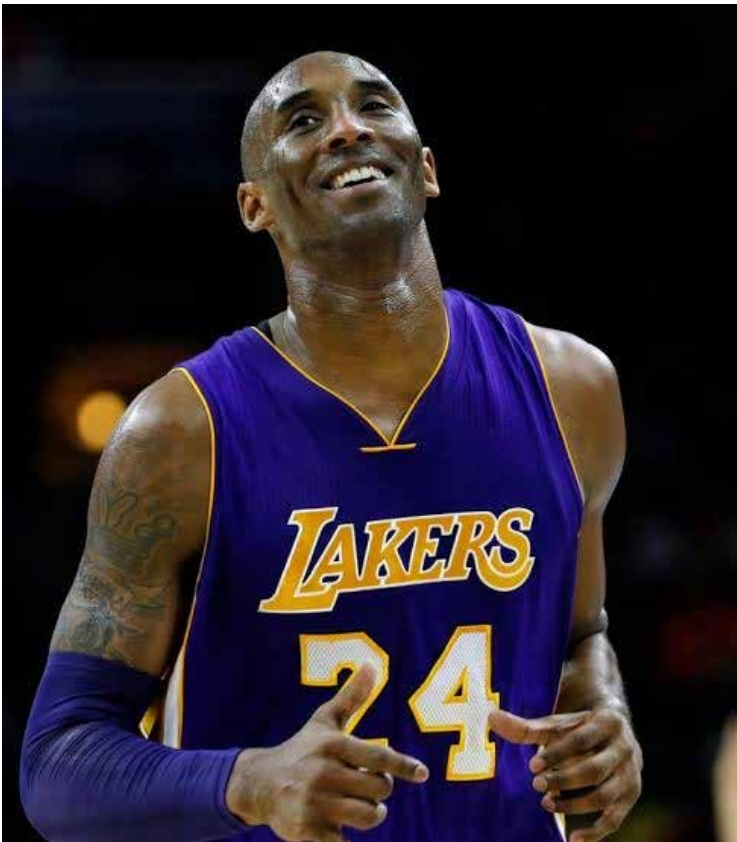
JOAN NIESEN
**LONDON, 29 JAN [THEGUARD-
IAN]:** Mourn him because he was transcendent on the court. Mourn him because he was so young when he was killed on Sunday, just 41, embarking on a post-basketball career poised to be as unexpected as it was impressive.

Mourn Kobe Bryant because he was your favorite player (or your friend’s, or your brother’s, or your daughter’s), and mourn him in spite of the fact that he was flawed – more flawed than some, less than others. It is not a prerequisite for mourning that the man gone too soon is faultless. Bryant was not that, which is as important to remember today as his basketball brilliance, his devotion to his daughters, his post-career arc that was just beginning.

In July 2003, police in Eagle, Colorado arrested Bryant, then 24, after a sexual assault complaint. Bryant, who was married at the time, first denied that he’d had sex with the 19-year-old woman; then, he admitted to what he said was a consensual sexual encounter. During the months of pre-trial discovery, Bryant’s accuser was smeared in the media, and eventually, when she declined to testify, a judge dismissed the criminal charges. The woman then filed a civil suit that was settled privately.

“Although I truly believe this encounter between us was consensual, I recognize now that she did not and does not view this incident the same way I did,” Bryant said in a statement the day the criminal case was dismissed. “After months of reviewing discovery, listening to her attorney, and even her testimony in person, I now understand how she feels that she did not consent to this encounter.”

Bryant’s statement wasn’t an admission of guilt, but it was a nod to something unseemly that much of the world promptly forgot. I did, a teenage girl at the time, just four years younger than Bryant’s accuser. My friends yelled “Kobe” as



they tossed balled-up sandwich wrappers into trash cans, and I felt no righteous indignation as a girl, as a human, as someone who’d grow up to have little patience for the rampant disregard of victims that’s so present in sports – and the world in general. For my generation, Bryant was an icon. I recall gawking at photos of the purple diamond apology ring he bought his wife and moving on. When I began to cover the NBA in 2011, I was impressed on the five or six occasions I talked to Bryant at how deftly he explained the game to a clueless kid reporter. I never once thought about Colorado. Maybe it wasn’t relevant to the questioning, though I’d argue now that a superstar settling a civil sexual assault case is relevant to most conversations about his life, his legacy, even his play.

In 2003, the #MeToo movement was 14 years in the future, almost inconceivable. The public consciousness as it related to consent was less assured. It’s impossible to imagine the news cycle had the whole ugly story unfolded today – and that’s

hardly a productive thought exercise. But there’s no question: it was easier then to forget, acceptable to move on and allow what Bryant did on the court – All-Star nod after All-Star nod, an MVP in 2008, his fourth and fifth NBA titles in 2009 and 2010 – to overshadow the discomfort, the anger, the dissonance of it all.

The NBA never punished Bryant, nor did the league conduct any kind of investigation. That wasn’t the playbook. Life, hoops, just marched on. Even in 2015, when Bryant revealed that he cultivated his nickname, Black Mamba, as a way to split his personal and professional lives, few blinked. In a documentary, Bryant said he conceived of the Mamba alter ego to remove himself from criticism after his arrest, as a trial loomed. That’s understandable, but it’s just as uncomfortable, because there is no separation: the Kobe Bryant who scored 81 points in a game and another 60 on his final night in the NBA is the same man who at the very least, according to his own statement, made a woman feel that she did not consent to a sexual encounter. Any survivor

can tell you: that is not a minor detail to be tossed to the cutting room floor.

You’ll read a lot this week about what Bryant did after his retirement, or even after 2003, when his life resumed after barely a tremor. You’ll read about his four daughters – one of whom, 13-year-old Gianna, died in the same helicopter crash – and how he became such an active, doting father once he was no longer subject to the grueling NBA schedule. You’ll read about his advocacy for women’s sports, for the arts. You’ll hear about how he was able to leave his maniacal focus behind, how he became a coach, a teacher, a generous fan of the NBA’s next generation.

You won’t read as much about 2003, and you’ll find no discussion at all about how Bryant processed it, improved from it, took any lessons he learned from it into the world. Being a wonderful father – that’s not absolute. There’s so much more Bryant could have done: at the very least, he could have spoken publicly, especially as sexual violence began to drive the news cycle in sports and elsewhere over the past five years, about respecting women. Instead, he told the world to respect women’s sports – an important sentiment that falls a mile short.

Bryant got a second chance. He used it to play his way into the conversation as one of basketball’s all-time greats. There was never another criminal accusation directed at the superstar. He was a family man, a businessman, a man who sat on Jimmy Kimmel’s couch and told the world with a look of satisfaction that his daughter would carry on his basketball legacy. He charmed. He moved on – perhaps more completely than he should have been allowed to.

Mourn Kobe Bryant, or don’t. But if you do, mourn the whole picture of a complex man, good and bad, transcendent and as disappointing as only someone wholly human can be.

A first in Indian football: Rangers FC sign Bala Devi



BENGALURU, JAN 29 (PTI): Renowned Scottish club Rangers FC on Wednesday announced the signing of woman’s national team forward Bala Devi, a first in Indian football.

Subject to international clearance, the 29-year-old will join the club on an 18-month deal after a successful spell on trial at Rangers in November.

This will make Bala the first Indian woman to become a professional footballer anywhere in the world and she also becomes Rangers’ first Asian international footballer. Bala is the current top scorer for the Indian national women’s team, netting an impressive 52 times in 58 games since 2010, which also makes her the top international goal scorer in the South Asian region.

She has also served as national team captain in a distinguished international career, which began when she was called up aged just 15.

Bala has a prolific record at the domestic level with over 100 goals in 120 games. She has been the top scorer in the Indian Women’s League for the past two seasons and has also been named as All India Football Federation (AIFF) Women’s Player of the Year twice, in 2015 and 2016.

Speaking of her delight at signing for Rang-

ers, Bala said: “To play my football in Europe with one of the biggest clubs in the world is something I could never have dreamed of.

“I hope my move to Rangers serves as an example to all the women footballers back home in India who dream of taking up the sport professionally. I’m looking forward to making the most of the top-class facilities and coaching and I am certain I will benefit immensely from the standard of training and competition.

“I’m very grateful to Amy McDonald, the coaching staff and the entire management at Rangers for believing in me. Also, this move wouldn’t have been possible without Bengaluru FC who have been instrumental throughout.”

McDonald, women’s and girls’ football manager at Rangers FC said: “We are thrilled to welcome Bala to Rangers. She is an exciting signing on so many levels. Bala is a playmaker who likes to play as a number 10 and we believe she will contribute goals and assists to the team.

“She will provide us with an attacking threat and a versatility that we can utilise to our benefit going into the 2020 season. Bala is already a role model for girls across India and they will now

be able to see her travel across the world to become a professional footballer.”

Rangers Head of Academy Craig Mulholland said: “I would like to warmly welcome Bala to both Rangers and to Glasgow. We believe this is a huge step for the women’s game both in Scotland and in general.

“Rangers are committed to building a successful women’s team for years to come and the acquisition of a talent like Bala is another step towards our goal of domestic and European success.”

Bala’s arrival in Glasgow has been possible thanks to the network that has been provided through the club’s partnership with Bengaluru FC that was announced in September 2019.

Mandar Tamhane, CEO of Bengaluru FC said: “We are delighted at Bala securing what is a historic move to Rangers Football Club.

“Once we knew that Bala had done more than enough to impress the coaching staff at the club during her trial stint in November, we were determined to help to make the move happen in any way that we could.

“Bala’s signing with Rangers sets a very encouraging precedent for women footballers from India.

Ramkumar gets wild card entry for Tata Open Maharashtra

MUMBAI, JAN 29 (PTI): Ramkumar Ramanathan was on Wednesday handed a wild card for the men’s singles main draw of the Tata Open Maharashtra and the organisers may grant a similar entry to veteran Leander Paes in the men’s doubles event.

India’s top two singles players, Prajnesh Gunnewaran and rising star Sumit Nagal, who claimed fame by taking a set off Roger Federer at the 2019 US Open, have entered the main draw on their own.

For 25-year-old Ramkumar, who has slipped to 185 in the ranking ladder, will make his third appearance at India’s only ATP 250 event in Pune from February 3.

“There are three singles wild cards for the main draw of which we have announced one for Ramkumar. We are yet to decide on the other two wild-card entrants,” said Tournament Director Prashant Sutar.

“First time it has happened that two India players have made to the main draw of the tournament with a direct entry. We wish that an Asian or an Indian wins this tournament,” he added.

‘Dreadful neglect’ of British athletics has squandered 2012 legacy, top coach says

SEAN INGLE
LONDON, 29 JAN [THEGUARDIAN]: British athletics is in its worst state for 60 years having largely squandered the golden legacy of London 2012, one of the sport’s most decorated coaches has warned.

Malcolm Arnold, a former head coach and the first performance director of UK Athletics (UKA) who has guided multiple athletes to Olympic and world titles, said he was reluctantly speaking out because people needed to “wake up” to the scale of the problem.

“This is undoubtedly the most worried I have been in all my years in the sport,” he told the Guardian. “I keep thinking to myself, what the hell is going to happen at the Tokyo Olympics [this year] and who is concerned about it?”

In a scathing assessment of a sport that is one of the jewels in Britain’s Olympic crown, Arnold claimed that since the “Super Saturday” of the 2012 games, in which Mo Farah, Jessica Ennis-Hill and Greg Rutherford won gold medals, UKA had:

- Failed to help enough talented athletes reach their potential while paying massive appearance fees to stars such as Usain Bolt to appear at events including the Anniversary Games.
- Too often ignored coach development which had “decimated” field events in which Britain once led the way.
- Made a mistake in appointing UKA’s former physiotherapist Neil Black

as performance director, who was in post, Arnold claims, during a decline in coaching.

The 79-year-old, who was awarded an OBE in 2012 and was presented with the International Olympic Committee Coaches lifetime achievement award earlier this month, said that while Britain had a handful of exceptional athletes who had recently won world indoor or outdoor medals, such as Dina Asher-Smith, Katarina Johnson-Thompson, Laura Muir and Andrew Pozzi, the talent pool had significantly shrunk since 2012 due to the “dreadful neglect” of elite athlete and coaching development by UK Athletics.

He said he believed the sport’s infrastructure and prospects were no better now than when he was performance director in 1997 – despite it receiving more than £110m in lottery money over the past two decades.

“Coach and athlete development structures barely exist now and have suffered serial and serious decline since London 2012, which was supposed to be a point in time when British sport took off from this incredible launch pad,” said Arnold. “Our homegrown coaches have been ignored and decimated through lack of care by the governing bodies.”

Arnold said the rot had set in after 2012 when a change in strategy from the then UKA chief executive, Niels de Vos, put more stall in “showbiz athletics” and paying massive appearance fees to athletes like Bolt and Farah, than developing the next generation.

Another major mistake, Arnold claimed, was the appointment of Black to replace Charles van Commenee as performance director after 2012. Black left UKA in October 2019, after the team failed to hit its medal target at the world championships and in the wake of his support for the banned US coach Alberto Salazar.

“De Vos appointed Neil Black, who we were all utterly shocked about,” Arnold said. He said Black had been “a bloody good physio” but doubted his coaching credentials.

“My professional apprentice coach lost his job as did a fine cadre of volunteer coaches that I had built up over the years.”

Arnold added that the “serious decline” in coaching was most pronounced in technical events, such as the javelin and triple jump. Britain once led the world in the former but didn’t even have an athlete – male or female – at the world championships. “What has happened to the legacy of Steve Backley, Tessa Sanderson and Jonathan Edwards?” he asked.

Arnold, who also guided hurdlers Colin Jackson and Dai Greene to world titles, said a pattern of appointing chairs who did not have a sufficiently detailed understanding of the sport – such as Richard Bowker who left his post after a year – often meant decisions were not scrutinised deeply enough.

“I am looking to revive the sport at the highest level. It’s heartbreaking to witness this having been in the sport for 42 years. For me it is an attempt to wake people up,” Arnold said.

Guardiola admits ‘mistake’ but pleads with Manchester City fans to fill Etihad

JAMIE JACKSON
MANCHESTER, 29 JAN [THEGUARDIAN]: Pep Guardiola has again urged Manchester City fans to attend the Etihad Stadium, calling on them to ensure it is “full, full, full” for every match.

After Sunday’s FA Cup fourth-round win over Fulham Guardiola questioned why there were not more than 39,223 at a ground that holds 55,097. This drew an unhappy response from the official supporters’ club, whose secretary, Kevin Parker, said: “He’s playing into the hands of the ‘Emptyhad’ critics.”

Tickets remain on sale for Wednesday’s Carabao Cup semi-final second leg against Manchester United, with the attendance expected by City to be around 51,000.

Guardiola’s team hold a 3-1 lead and the manager said: “First of all, I understand – never was it my intention to offend them [fans]. They are part of us. Since I arrived here from day one until the last day what I want is to fight and play as good as possible [and] to see Etihad Stadium full every single

game. It belongs to us to play good to seduce them to come because the only reason we do our job and I do my job is not for the titles. It’s to go to the Etihad Stadium and see it absolutely full.”

Yet Guardiola stated he would “push” for more supporters to attend. “We try to do our best to let them be proud for our team,” he said. “But I will try again to push them to be with us as much as possible – if it is possible, to be every single game full, full, full.

“I know how to appreciate [their support] because I know how many people come when we play away. We feel them, they chant, and it is so nice to have them and I know for them it’s not easy. That is why I will always be grateful to the support.”

Clarifying his remarks from the weekend, Guardiola said: “I understand it’s difficult for the people to do that. It’s not necessary to tell me because I was part of that when I was a little boy with Mum and Dad. Since I arrive here I learn from English football how important

are the Premier League and the FA Cup – more important [at] this club than the Champions League: much more.

“It was my mistake that I thought: ‘Oh it’s Sunday 1pm, today will be full’ and I didn’t know it was on BBC, not Sky, so they can watch it and people can decide whether to go to the stadium or not.”

Guardiola, who will give fitness tests to Aymeric Laporte, Riyad Mahrez and João Cancelo, is conscious of the danger United possess. “They have weapons and quality there,” he said. “I have incredible respect for their history, for Man United as a club. They can do it [go through].”

City announced Fernandinho, who joined in June 2013, has signed a one-year-contract extension until the summer of 2021.

“This is the best possible news,” said the midfielder. “I have enjoyed every second of my time at City. I never expected to build such a meaningful relationship with the club and the fans, but it has happened, and I am grateful every single day.”

London's 'City' is banking on wide appeal post Brexit

London's powerful "City" financial sector, facing reduced access to mainland European markets following Brexit, is banking on its global appeal to forge new ties and remain an international force. With Britain exiting the EU on Friday, the City will eventually lose "passporting" rights that has allowed the driver of Britain's dominant services sector to operate freely across the bloc.

The long-standing bilateral arrangement, which has convinced especially large US and Japanese lenders to set up massive operations in London, formally ends with the conclusion of a Brexit transition period due December 31.

Britain must now move onto so-called "equivalence", whereby financial firms agree to meet EU rules to maintain access to its market.

But the new set of rules are not without risk for City companies working out of London skyscrapers nestled among medieval buildings.

"Equivalence is not ideal for the City... because it can be revoked very easily and it has in the past been very politicised," noted Kay Daniel Neufeld, head of macro-economics at the Centre for Economics and Business Research.

"There will have to be trade-offs" between London and Brussels, Neufeld added, as he referenced recent rows between non-EU member Switzerland and the bloc over third-party equivalence agreements concerning Swiss financial services.

- 'Step in the right direction' -

UK finance minister Sajid Javid's recently insisted that Britain's future trade in financial services with the EU should be on the basis of "outcome-based" equivalence of rules.

In other words, Britain should have its own rules producing the same outcomes as current EU arrangements existing between the bloc and non-member countries.

While British industry, notably the food and car sectors, voiced concern about Javid's insistence that there would be "no alignment" with the European Union after Brexit, his comments were welcomed by the City of London Corporation, or local government authority for the capital's financial district. Its policy chair Catherine McGuinness said the current third-party equivalence system the EU offers to countries such as Japan is "patchy and prone to politicisation". "Securing an 'outcome-based' equivalence of rules... would be a step in the right direction," she added.

McGuinness was this week visiting India "to highlight the fundamental strengths of London and the UK's financial sector", the City of London Corporation said. Large financial institutions, including British bank HSBC and US giants JPMorgan and Morgan Stanley, have decided to move some London staff to the continent because of Brexit -- but the number of workers has been small.

Airlines halt China flights as virus toll hits 132

Foreign airlines began suspending flights to and from China on Wednesday as global fears mounted over a coronavirus epidemic that has killed 132 people and infected nearly 6,000. The announcements came hours after countries began airlifts to evacuate foreigners trapped in Wuhan, the quarantined central Chinese city of 11 million people at the epicentre of the health emergency.

A growing number of governments, including the United States, Britain and Germany, have in recent days advised their citizens to avoid non-essential travel to China over concerns about the viral outbreak. China has itself urged its citizens to delay trips abroad, with at least 15 countries having confirmed cases of the disease.

The United Arab Emirates reported the first known case in the Middle East on Wednesday. British Airways was the first major airline to announce a total suspension of flights to and from China, citing the travel advice of the foreign office. "We apologise to customers for the inconvenience, but the safety of our customers and crew is always our priority," BA said in a statement on Wednesday.

Indonesia's Lion Air Group, Southeast Asia's biggest carrier by fleet size, then said it would halt services to and from China from Saturday "until further notice".

In Myanmar, the three airlines that have routes into neighbouring China also said those flights would also be suspended from Saturday.



Cathay Pacific also cut flights, citing low demand and the Hong Kong government's response plan against the virus.

And in one of the most dramatic measures, the tiny Pacific nation of Papua New Guinea announced Wednesday that travellers from Asia would not be allowed in.

However many other airlines said they were continuing their China services.

- Foreigners escape -

China has taken other extraordinary measures to try and stop the disease spreading, including bans on tour groups travelling overseas, suspending schools and extending the Lunar New Year holiday.

Authorities also last week imposed transport bans in and around Wuhan in an unprecedented quarantine ef-

fort, leaving more than 50 million people shuttered in their homes. "This is the first day since the lockdown that I've had to go out," a man in his 50s told AFP on the mostly deserted streets of the industrial city on Wednesday.

"I have no choice because I need to buy food today."

Thousands of foreigners have been among those trapped in Wuhan, which has become a near ghost-town with car travel banned and residents staying indoors. Countries have scrambled for days to try and get their citizens out of Wuhan safely, but have faced huge logistical, medical and bureaucratic hurdles.

A US charter flight left Wuhan on Wednesday with about 200 Americans on board, including consulate staff. Another 200

people were aboard a Japanese flight which landed in Tokyo on Wednesday morning.

Medical professionals were on the plane to carry out checks but officials said they had no legal basis to forcibly quarantine people who have not tested positive for the virus.

They would instead be asked to remain at home and avoid crowds until the results of the tests were known.

Other countries were planning more stringent quarantine measures, with Australia to evacuate its citizens from Wuhan and temporarily house them on an island normally used to detain asylum seekers.

France said it would keep its returnees in a holding facility in Paris for 14 days -- the estimated incubation period

for the virus.

- Highest priority -
Meanwhile, the virus continued to spread and kill in China. The number of confirmed cases across the country climbed to 5,974, while the death toll nationwide jumped 26 to 132. The scale of the deepening crisis was emphasised with the total number of infections on the Chinese mainland exceeding that of the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) outbreak in 2002-03.

SARS, another respiratory coronavirus, went on to claim nearly 800 lives around the world, with most of those fatalities in mainland China and Hong Kong.

The virus is believed to have originated in a wild-animal market in Wuhan, where it jumped to humans before spreading across the country as

the peak travel period for Lunar New Year festivities got under way. The World Health Organization said Tuesday it would send urgently dispatch international experts to China "to guide global response efforts".

Until Tuesday, all reported cases overseas had involved people who had been in or around Wuhan. But Japan and Germany then reported the first confirmed human-to-human transmission of the illness outside China. Vietnam is investigating another case.

Germany now has four confirmed cases, all of them employees at a Bavarian firm recently visited by a Chinese colleague, health officials said.

The US asked China on Tuesday to step up its cooperation with international health authorities over the epidemic. Washington had offered China assistance three times so far without success, Health and Human Services Secretary Alex Azar told reporters.

- Economic pain -

The virus has rattled global markets and started to dent an already-slowing Chinese economy. Japanese automaker Toyota said Wednesday it would keep its plants in China closed until at least February 9 in part due to government guidelines.

Apple was closely watching the outbreak in China, home to the firm's third-biggest consumer market and much of its supply chain, chief executive Tim Cook said. Global coffee chain Starbucks said it expected a significant earnings hit after closing more than half of its stores across China.

Brexit sealed with final Brussels vote



Britain's departure from the European Union was set in law Wednesday as London returned a signed treaty and MEPs prepared to vote to ratify the divorce.

After half-of-century of sometimes awkward membership, the United Kingdom will leave the EU at midnight Brussels time on Friday.

The day began with Britain's permanent representative -- soon to be ambassador to the EU -- Tim Barrow handing back the withdrawal agreement.

This had already been signed by Brussels' top figures and had been sent to London for Prime Minister Boris Johnson to sign for the UK government.

"This step ensures that the UK has fulfilled its legal obligations regarding our exit from the EU," his office said.

- Leaving the church -

Then Nigel Farage, leader of Britain's Brexit Party and for two decades a thorn in Brussels' side in the European Parliament, addressed reporters.

"At 11:00pm UK time on January 31 will leave the European Union and we pass the point of no return," he declared at a triumphant news conference.

Farage said he had loved playing the "pantomime villain" in the Strasbourg assembly, feeding opposition to Europe at home with theatrical YouTube clips.

But he insisted on the seriousness of Brexit, comparing its significance to Henry VIII taking

Britain out of the Catholic church in 1534.

"He took us out of the Church of Rome, and we are leaving the Treaty of Rome," he said, referring to the EU's 1957 founding document.

Later in the day, Farage's colleagues in the European Parliament were to gather for a historic vote to incorporate the withdrawal agreement into EU law.

This will be the last legislative act of the 73 remaining British MEPs, and will be followed by a ceremony of farewell.

After Brexit the United Kingdom will become what the EU calls a "third country", outside the union, but the political and economic drama will continue.

Britain and Europe will continue to apply EU rules on trade and free movement of citizens until the end of the year while negotiating a free trade agreement.

In the face of scepticism in EU capitals, Johnson insists he is optimistic that a comprehensive free trade deal can be reached before the next cliff-edge.

But negotiations will be tough between Britain, the world's sixth biggest economy, and the EU, a 27-nation single market with a population of 450 million.

Fishing rights; residency and working rights for citizens; tariff free trade; access to Europe for Britain's huge services sector: all will be on the table.

"Brexit is a loss for us all," European Commission Vice President Maros Sefcovic said Tuesday.

He said it was important for the EU "to maintain our unity" as Europe negotiates the future partnership with the UK.

The British minister for Europe attending the meeting, Christopher Pincher, expressed optimism on what the talks would yield.

"We're looking forward to a very different world and a very different relationship," he told reporters on Tuesday.

- UK goes solo -

Farage will leave Brussels on Wednesday, but the other Brexit Party MEPs, will march out of the parliament on Friday morning with the Union Jack in hand.

They will join their leader in London at a Brexit party, before the houses of parliament. EU chief Brexit negotiator Michel Barnier on Monday warned "it is absolutely clear that there will be negative consequences" from Brexit.

"Whatever agreement we reach on our future relationship, Brexit will always be a matter of damage limitation," he said in Belfast.

Johnson's government hopes more trade with the United States and Asian powers can help offset the costs of Brexit.

But the British premier was facing difficult talks on Wednesday with President Donald Trump's secretary of state Mike Pompeo.

Trump backed Brexit, but Washington opposed Johnson's decision to allow Chinese telecoms giant to work on Britain's 5G telecoms network despite security fears.

Past 'evils' are resurfacing, Germany and Israel warn at Holocaust event

The "evil spirits" of racism and anti-Semitism are re-emerging, the presidents of Germany and Israel warned in Berlin on Wednesday as they marked 75 years since the liberation of the Auschwitz death camp. Speaking at a special parliamentary session in the Bundestag, Frank-Walter Steinmeier said Germans had a responsibility to never forget their Nazi past and to stop hatred from spreading.

"The evil spirits of the past are reappearing today under a new guise," he said. "More still, they are presenting their ethno-nationalist, authoritarian thinking as a vision, as a better answer to the questions of our time."

Israeli President Reuven Rivlin echoed those concerns in his own speech, warning that

the continent was being "visited by ghosts from the past". "Ugly and extreme anti-Semitism is hovering over the whole of Europe," Rivlin told German lawmakers. Both men were speaking after attending high-profile anniversary events in Jerusalem and at Auschwitz-Birkenau in Poland in recent days.

The solemn occasions were dominated by fresh fears over the safety of Jews in Europe, more than seven decades after the Nazis murdered over six million Jews during World War II.

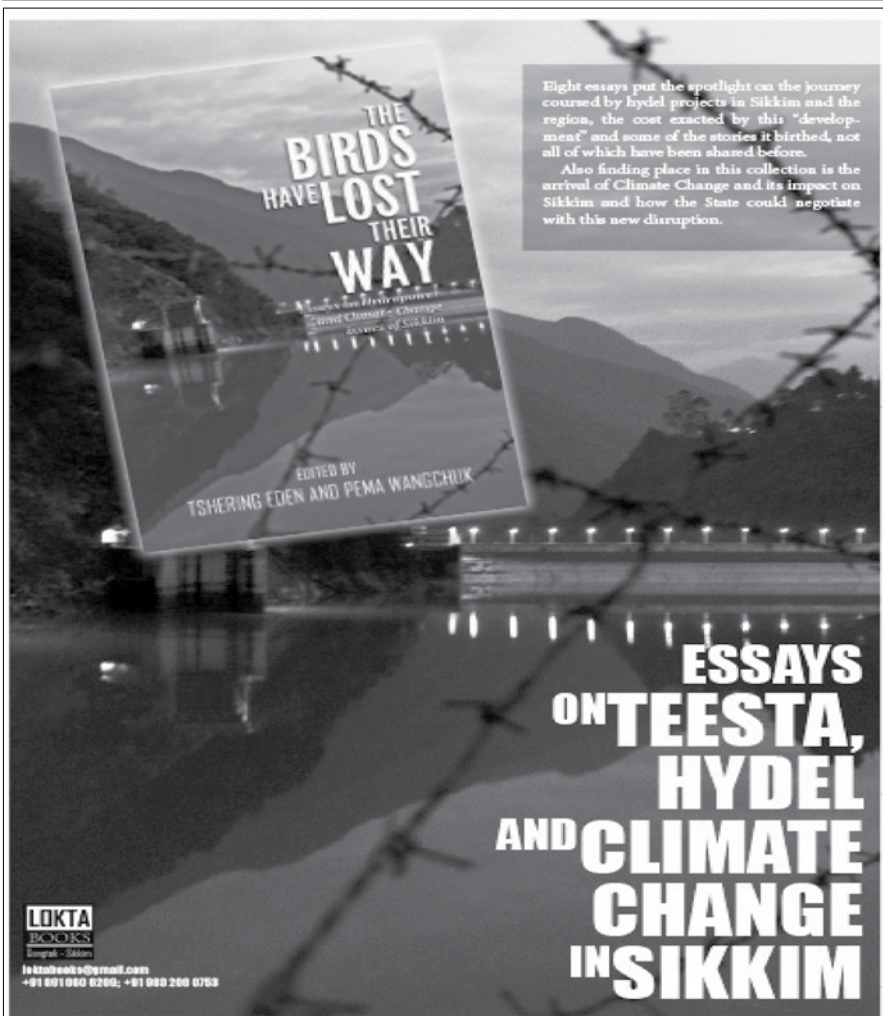
Sitting in the audience in Berlin were MPs from the far-right AfD party, whose leaders have openly railed against Germany's remembrance culture and its ongoing atonement for the atrocities com-

mitted under Adolf Hitler's Nazi regime. Leading AfD lawmaker Alexander Gauland in 2018 described the Nazi era as "a speck of bird shit" in German history. Quoting Holocaust survivor Primo Levi, Steinmeier warned: "It happened, so it can happen again."

- 'Very negative influence' -

Rivlin was only the second Israeli president to speak at the German parliament's annual remembrance event, after Shimon Peres in 2010.

Peres used his speech at the time to issue an emotional plea for the world to bring the remaining perpetrators of Nazi crimes to justice. But faced with a dwindling number of people who lived through World War II, attention is shifting to making sure that the horrors of the Holocaust are not forgotten.



What are intimacy coordinators? SAG-AFTRA has new protocols for sex scenes in Hollywood

In the wake of the #MeToo movement, more Hollywood productions have been calling in intimacy coordinators, who watch over sex scenes as they're filmed.

But what are the guidelines? And what do intimacy coordinators actually do?

On Wednesday, the Screen Actors Guild (SAG-AFTRA), which represents 160,000 actors and entertainment professionals (such as announcers, puppeteers and stunt performers), released new recommended standards and protocols for the use of intimacy coordinators, defined by the guild as "an advocate, a liaison between actors and production and a movement coach and/or choreographer in regards to nudity and simulated sex and other intimate and hyper-exposed scenes."

The goal, says SAG-AFTRA national executive director David White, is to help standardize how intimacy coordinators are used.

The guidelines directly address the problem of sexual harassment on sets, says White, who notes that given intimacy coordinators are relatively new in the industry and "productions have been seeking them out, frankly, and calling us" for protocol. The guild says intimacy coordinators should be hired for scenes

involving nudity or simulated sex or upon request for other intimate scenes. They also suggest the coordinators undergo a state and federal background check.

"These protocols and guidelines will help to normalize and encourage the use of intimacy coordinators in productions, therefore ensuring the safety and secu-

dences, SAG-AFTRA has not received "a single complaint," says White.

The SAG-AFTRA advisory follows standards for intimacy coordinators recently included in the Time's Up Guide to Working in Entertainment. That guide suggested actors request an intimacy coordinator for all nude and sim-



riety of SAG-AFTRA members while they work," SAG-AFTRA president Gabrielle Carteris said in a statement.

White points to how effective new industry standards can be. Since advising members in 2018 against meetings in private hotel rooms or private resi-

ulated sex scenes and specified actors can also expect all performers to wear "mutually approved cover-ups" during filming, such as flesh-colored underwear, modesty patches or pouches, and intimacy barriers or padding so no genital contact ever occurs.



STYLE STAR! The fashion icon, Blake Lively wore a yellow ensemble outside of Good Morning America in New York City.

Blake Shelton and Gwen Stefani's Grammys Duet Had a Crazy Detail We Totally Missed



Did we just watch a Blake and Gwen wedding or..?

Gwen Stefani and Blake Shelton's Grammys performance has everyone talking.

They sang their new duet "Nobody But You" and everyone at home thought the couple was giving off major wedding vibes.

Um, what exactly did we just watch between Blake Shelton and Gwen Stefani?

The Voice power couple debuted their new duet "Nobody But You" at the 2020 Grammy Awards. The "earth-rattling" song already had the 'ole engagement rumor mill buzzing, and this didn't do anything to squash that.

After watching the intimate performance, fans could not resist calling the couple out for layering in some super-subtle elements that had everyone thinking: "Sounds and looks like I'm at Blake and Gwen's wedding."

At first glance, Blake and Gwen seemed to be putting on their average awards show lovefest. But look a little closer and you might notice that Gwen is in a white ballgown that's awfully bridal. She even wore white on the

red carpet! As for Blake, he's got on a black suit jacket that doesn't not resemble a tux.

Then there was the fact that they couldn't take their eyes off of each other as they belted out the intense lyrics. "I don't want to look back in 30 years and wonder who you're married to" and "I want to say it now, I want to make it clear for only you and God to hear" might as well be vows, according to some viewers at home. They even held hands and stared in each other's eyes while performing the final chorus. All that's missing is someone saying "I do."

As far as we know, these two aren't planning to walk down the aisle anytime soon (though Blake did give a cagey response when someone asked if they're already married). But we do think there's some validity to this Twitter user who suggested the couple is trying to make "Nobody But You" the wedding song of 2020:

After this steamy performance, we're only further convinced they're made for each other.

'Arrow' Series Finale Imports A Major DC Superhero Into The CW

SPOILER WARNING: This article reveals major plot points from tonight's series finale of Arrow on The CW.

The Green Arrow is dead. Long live...the Green Lantern?

The 170th and last episode of The CW's Arrow aired on Tuesday night with a misty farewell to the late Oliver Queen, the stolid Bowman played by Stephen Amell for eight seasons on the linchpin show of the so-called Arrowverse. That's the name of the shared continuity that links The CW's still-growing list of DC Comics adapta-

tions and, after Tuesday night's swan song episode, there's at least a possibility that list might someday include the wielder of glowing green power ring of undreamed power.

A late scene in the finale episode show's grieving buddy, John Diggle (portrayed by David Ramsey since the show's 2012 pilot), flattened by the thunderous impact of a compact object that gouged into the ground near the stunned ex-military man. In the crater is a unscathed box and inside of it an emerald ring.

Miley Cyrus Apparently Isn't Invited To Award Shows Now

If you've been missing Miley Cyrus at award shows, there may be a reason behind it all.

The "Slide Away" singer was famously missing from the 2020 Grammy Awards, as were personalities like Lady Gaga and Taylor Swift. But while many artists had their reasons for skipping out on the show, it hasn't been particularly clear why Cyrus wasn't in attendance. According to a new throwback clip the pop star posted via Instagram, however, she might have an idea.

On Monday (January 27), Cyrus posted a clip of herself from the 2013 MTV EMAs, where she was shown taking a joint out of her black Chanel clutch and lighting up on stage in the middle of her presenting duties. Clad in a bodysuit and furry stole, she oozed an effortless amount of cool as she appeared to smoke up during the show. Your fave could never.

"& we wonder why I'm not invited

to award shows anymore" she captioned the post. Wait, what? Not-so-subtle shade being thrown? Do tell!

She didn't elaborate, and it certainly isn't clear if she's joking or not, but it has been some time since we've seen Miley hitting up the awards show circuit. And it looked like her celebrity friends, like designer Alexander Wang, found the dig humorous enough. "Don't ever change," Wang wrote. Real Housewives of Beverly Hills star Lisa Rinna chimed in to let Miley know she'd totally let the singer at her award show if she had one. There are likely several others in her corner, too. Who doesn't love a good time with Miley?

Whether it's true or not, once Miley's latest album She Is Miley Cyrus is finally here, we'll no doubt be hearing more of her from all kinds of shows — because from what we've heard so far, it came to slay.



ARIES: Where is your need to say yes to everything stemming from? Do you fear being rejected because you are unable to meet the expectations of others? Could your low self esteem be the reason you are unable to stand up for yourself? Raise your vibrations, Aries. As you do, call your power back to yourself.

Tip: Call your power back to you.

TAURUS: The cards are bringing with them the message that you are playing it too small by thinking you can do everything by yourself. Spirit wants to co-create with you, Taurus. Your teammates want to make magic with you, if only you would allow them. Get rid of the limiting beliefs that others will take away what is rightfully yours. Tip: Allow Spirit to co-create with you.

GEMINI: Just because you have been doing things a certain way does not mean you have to continue to. Embrace the magic of transformation, Gemini. Become the person you were always meant to. And if this means letting go of dated beliefs then so

be it. Some of you will be looking at your friendships in a brand new light. Celebrate the people who stood by you through thick and thin; the sacred bonds that only got better with the passage of time.

Tip: You are undergoing a process of transformation.

CANCER: The trouble is, you think you have to figure out everything on your own. Cancer, be aware of how you are operating from your small, three dimensional self. The drama playing out in your head is keeping you from opening up to the blessings and the support that is being offered to you right now and in this moment. Turn to a wise mentor for advice.

Tip: Open yourself up to help, support, and guidance.

LEO: Limitations versus possibilities. Where are you operating from? What are the ways in which you are holding yourself back? Leo, be aware how you are being your own worst enemy right now by playing it small and bringing the energy of self-

doubt into the game. You are enough and you have the resources required to triumph over the given challenges.

Tip: Tap into your hidden potential.

VIRGO: Hiring and training people is merely the first step. How you nurture your talent will make all the difference here, Virgo. As human beings, we all crave connection. So create an environment that propagates unity and fosters growth and learning. The crew looks up to you for a reason. Freelancers stay open to new ideas and interactions.

Tip: Nurture the talent at hand.

LIBRA: The trouble is, you think you need to do everything on your own. It is this burden that is making you feel limited. Take a deep breath and step back. Let go of your need to control everything and let Spirit work it's magic. You will be led to the right people and circumstances that will assist growth and take your work to the next level. Remember, the future is collaboration.

Tip: The future is collaboration.

SCORPIO: Oh, to be a flag-bearer of originality in a world that prides itself on replicas! Not everybody is going to appreciate your courage (it makes them uncomfortable!). Don't waste your breath thinking about the opinions of the muggles. Baby, you were born this way. Some of you may feel inspired to take the freelance route or strike out on your own. .

Tip: Remember, you were born this way.

SAGITTARIUS: What a long way you've come, Sagittarius! But you didn't get here by following all the rules and adhering to societal standards. A certain degree of rebellion is integral to the creative process. Keep this in mind as you move to the next stage, which requires you to put that larger-than-life vision into action.

Tip: Rebel with a cause.

CAPRICORN: When someone deceives you or disrespects your boundaries in any way, it says little about you and everything about them. Don't take this person-

ally, Capricorn. Focus your energy not on what's gone but what you want to create instead. This will help you vibrate higher and fulfil your sacred purpose.

Tip: Focus on your sacred purpose.

AQUARIUS: Statutory warning: you will be triggered. Before you react, ask yourself if it is the lack of inner balance that's causing havoc on an external level. See how and where you need to realign. You have the strength required to deal with the crises in a calm and composed manner.

Tip: Make your mental health a priority.

PISCES: To quote Oscar Wilde: "Be yourself. Everybody is already taken." Pisces, your relationship with yourself is undergoing a major transformation. Accepting yourself, flaws and all, is the key to your empowerment—it will change in the way you interact with the world. Practice being your most authentic self in your interpersonal relationships as well.

Tip: Gift yourself the acceptance you seek from others.