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SummitTIMES

Vol 04 | Issue 91 | Gangtok | Thursday | 04 April 2019

ON TOP OF THE NEWS

RNI No. SIKENG/2016/69420

Pages 8 | ₹ 5

SKM condemns delay in releasing OFOJ salaries

SUMMIT REPORT GANGTOK, 03 APR:

Sikkim Krantikari Morcha today complained that employees appointed under the 'One Family, One Job' scheme have not received their salaries yet. On the same, the party has alleged that the Sikkim Democratic Front government had launched this scheme just for votes and has no intentions of following through on their commitments. The OFOJ scheme was launched in January and appointments made in the weeks that followed, it may be recalled. An SKM delegation today submitted a one-point memorandum to the Secretary, Finance Department, demanding that the department release the pending dues immediately.

Addressing a press conference here today, SKM Nari Morcha general secretary, Pavitra Bhandari, pointed out that the State government has extracted massive publicity from this scheme at the national and international level and still dragged its feet on releasing salaries to OFOJ beneficiaries.

SKM has demanded that the dues be deposited in the bank accounts of the employees latest by 09 April.

HSP releases election manifesto, offers Sikkimey Samman Yojna

REBYNA RANA GANGTOK, 03 APR:

Hamro Sikkim Party (HSP) today released its election manifesto promising 'a new model of development' for Sikkim. The manifesto was released by HSP president, Dr Bina Basnett, working president, Bhairung Bhutia and spokesperson, Biraj Adhikari.

In its manifesto, the HSP has promised to usher in a Revolution of Universal Rights that will give new direction to the social, economic and political life of the people of Sikkim.

HSP has said that the manifesto covers all issues that touch the daily life of people and assures to create a Universal Right-Based system which is interwoven with the development of the State.

Sikkimey Samman Yojna (SSY) is HSP's version of Universal Basic Income, which it promises to provide within 25 days of coming to power. Under the scheme, Rs 18,000 per

HSP MANIFESTO HIGHLIGHTS

- Right to Universal Basic Income
- Right to Universal Secure Employment
- Right to Universal Rural Employment Guarantee
- Right to Universal Pension
- Right to Universal Guaranteed Income for Farmers
- Right to Universal Freedom from Poverty
- Right to Universal Access to Sufficient Water, 24X7 Electricity & Good Roads
- Right to Universal Access to Good Public Transport
- Right to Universal Access to Good Public Healthcare
- Right to Universal Access to Good Public Education
- Right to Universal Access to Sports
- Right to Universal Ease of Doing Business
- Right to Universal Gender & Social Justice
- Right to Environment
- Right to Constitutional Safeguards & Democratic Representation

annum or Rs 1,500 per month shall be paid to every Sikkimese man, woman, child, student & youth who resides in Sikkim.

For a family of 5, this

will be Rs 90,000 per annum or Rs 7,500 per month. This amount shall be progressively increased, based on cost of living index. Payments

under SSY shall commence within 90 days of launch; preceded by existing database validation and creation of new database. Transfers shall be made on first day of

every month through bank accounts.

"HSP sees the forthcoming Assembly election as an opportunity to retrieve and, indeed, reclaim from manipula-

tion and subversion, the legacy of Sikkim and the economic and ecological rights of the people of Sikkim," said Dr. Bina Basnett.

The party has assured

turn to pg02



SDF accuses SKM of continuing violence

SUMMIT REPORT GANGTOK, 03 APR:

Sikkim Democratic Front has alleged that Sikkim Krantikari Morcha worker and resident of Lall Bazaar, Rameshwar Tamang misbehaved with SDF convenor, Sanjukta Rai today. Rameshwar Tamang allegedly grabbed Ms Rai's collar and tried to hit her.

The allegation has been made by SDF spokesperson and Lok Sabha MP, PD Rai, in a press release issued today.

In a similar incident in North Sikkim, one woman who is a single mother, was hit and abused by three SKM goons when she was going to attend an SDF meeting, he has alleged further adding that the incident will be reported to the Women's Commission.

On 02 April, two SDF vehicles led by youth president of Barfung constituency, Karma T Denzongpa, who was travelling along with his colleagues, were attacked

by around 30 SKM youth of Barfung on the middle of the road to Rabongla destroying SDF booklets, pamphlets and diaries to ashes, Mr Rai alleges. On the same date, SKM party workers came to intimidate and verbally abuse SDF volunteers and the candidate in Namchey-bong, he adds.

"This begs the question - what ideology and instructions are SKM party leaders disseminating in their meetings?" the SDF spokesperson has asked.

SKM counter-accuses SDF of resorting to muscle & money tactics

SUMMIT REPORT GANGTOK, 03 APR:

Sikkim Krantikari Morcha has countered SDF allegations of poll violence and accused the Sikkim Democratic Front itself of resorting to muscle and money tactics. SKM spokesperson, Jacob Khaling, today alleged that there were many instance of violence and distribution of money by the ruling party to lure the voters.

He claimed that police have also recovered weapons and jars of petrol from an SDF election campaign vehicle from Upper Linkey under Gna-



thang-Machong constituency at around 9:30 AM this morning.

He adds that some SKM workers had recorded the entire incident on

their mobile phones but the observer present on the spot deleted all evidence.

Mr Khaling has questioned the Election Commission on the reason

behind this and has urged the Election Commission and Chief Electoral Officer, Sikkim, to release videos and photographs of

turn to pg02

The Himalayan Cleanup 2020 shortlisted for European Outdoors Conservation Association grant

SUMMIT REPORT GANGTOK, 03 APR:

The Integrated Mountain Initiative and Zero Waste Himalaya, which had collaborated to undertake the much-appreciated The Himalayan Cleanup in 2018, have resolved to continue and upscale their awareness programme on waste in the mountains and have proposed the Himalayan Cleanup for a funding grant by the European Conservation Outdoor Association (EOCA).

The Himalayan Cleanup 2020, it is informed, has cleared the rigorous EOCA selection criteria overseen by its scientific advisors and has been shortlisted for a grant under the mountain category.

This is the only project shortlisted from India and is now among 14 conservation projects in 16 countries and has entered the final voting round under the mountain category where all shortlisted projects are given two weeks to gather as many online votes as possible in order to secure the grant.

The voting window opened on 28 March and closes on 11 April.

IMI and ZWH, it may be recalled, organised the Himalayan Cleanup in 2018 as a pan-Himalayan initiative taken to raise awareness about waste in the Indian Himalayan Region.

Accordingly, on 26 May 2018, an unprecedented 200 organisations

and more than 15,000 volunteers gathered to conduct cleanups in various areas within the 12 mountain states.

THC was also conducted in coordination with a brand audit by Global Alliance Against Incinerators to highlight the pervasiveness of plastics and to ascertain responsibility for the proliferation of problematic plastic packaging in the environment.

The trash collected was sorted, segregated and analysed.

The final waste audit report revealed that more than 97 per cent of the trash collected was plastic of which more than 60 per cent comprised of multilayered plastic waste. Single use plastics (cups, plates, spoons, forks, bags) constituted 18% while PET Bottles (packaged water and soft drinks) collected during the cleanup accounted for 9.10% of the plastic trash. Other plastic items, 5.09% and Tetrapak, 3.32% (juices and milk) made up the rest of the plastic trash.

The waste audit showed that there has been a dramatic increase in plastic waste in the mountains and that there was no place free of plastic waste.

The brand audit revealed that the top polluting brands were the multinationals Pepsi Co, Hindustan Coca Cola, Britannia Industries, Hindustan Unilever Ltd., Nestle, Perfetti Van Malle, Bisleri International, CG Foods India

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India lost 1.1 crore jobs in 2018; 90 lakh lost in rural areas alone: civil society groups

NEW DELHI, APR 3 (PTI): India lost 1.1 crore jobs, including 90 lakh in the rural sector; in 2018 alone, claimed a "chargesheet" released on Wednesday by a group of civil society organisations on the NDA government's five-year tenure.

According to the document, released about a week before the general election starts, demonetisation in November 2016 has resulted in 35 lakh jobs being lost.

It claimed at least 75 people, including children, died of hunger across 10 states since 2015. The cause of death, it stated, was "prolonged hunger."

Also, nearly 42 of these people died because they were denied rations as their Aadhaar linkage did not function or they were not enrolled in the scheme, the chargesheet alleged. It, however, did not cite the source of its data.

Announcing People's

turn to pg02



Commissioning of EVMs and VVPATs in East

GANGTOK, 03 APR (IPR):

The commissioning of the EVMs and VVPATs was conducted and completed successfully for the Parliamentary Constituency and some of the Assembly Constituencies. Held at Brihaspati Parsai Senior Secondary School, Ranipool, the commissioning was conducted in the presence of the DEO-cum-RO, East, Kapil Meena, RO/ E ADC, Bharani Kumar, Asst. Returning Officer and Sector Magistrates.

The commissioning was done in consonance with the guidelines of the Election Commission of India. A team of engineers from BEL (Bharat Electronic Limited) were present to supervise and assist the commissioning process of the EVM and VVPATs.

The Commissioning is being carried out by



12 teams with 1 team for each constituency. The Commissioning of the EVMs and VVPATs for the Assembly Constituencies have also commenced and is expected to be completed within the next one day, i.e the 4th of April.

It may also be informed here that the strongroom at Brihaspati Parsai SSS at Ranipool was opened today.

In the presence of the DEO-cum-RO, Kapil Meena and ARO/ ADC East, Jamyang C Namgyal, the

seals of the strongroom were opened. As per ECI guidelines, the entire unsealing process was videographed and all the necessary regulations were adhered to.

The Commissioned EVMs and VVPATs have

been kept back in the Strong room. After completion of the commissioning process on 04 April, all strongrooms will be sealed which will then be opened only on day of dispatch of Polling Parties i.e the morning of

the 10th of April, 2019.

The General Observers for East District, Mousumi Chattaraj Chaudhuri and B Ram Shastri also visited the strongroom and inspected the Commissioning process today. They took stock of the progress from the Returning Officers and expressed satisfaction at the conduct and the arrangements in place.

The General Observers have been touring all over the district making stops at Polling Stations in the district. Yesterday they visited pollings stations in the areas beyond Singtam, Dikchu and today the Observers made rounds of polling stations in Duga, Rangpo and the adjoining areas.

The Inspector General for Law & Order also visited the strongroom and inspected the area and its surroundings.

Commissioning of EVMs and VVPATs in West Sikkim



GYALSHING, 03 APR (IPR): The Commissioning of EVMs and VVPATs for the Eight Assembly segments of Parliamentary Constituency was done at the Control Room Set-up at Girls Senior Secondary School, Kyongsa.

The Commissioning was done in the presence of DC-Cum-RO West, Karma R Bonpo; General Observer West, Faisal Aftab; State Police Observer, Naveen Arora; SP West, Tenzing L Lepcha; ADC West, Karma L Lepcha; SDM (HQ), Tushar G Nihhare; SDM (Gyalsh-

ing), Gilbert Lepcha and other Officials.

The Commissioning of EVMs and VVPATs machines along with Reserve EVMs and VVPATs for the four Constituencies (Yoksam Tashiding; Yangthang; Maneybong Dentam and Gyalshing Barnyak) were successfully completed on 02 April, 2019 while the remaining 4 Constituencies (Rinchenpong; Daramdin; Soreng Chakung and Salghari Zoom) was completed on 03 Apr, 2019 in the presence of political representatives.

BJP star campaigners arrive in Sikkim

SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 03 APR:

Bharatiya Janata Party national general secretary, Ram Madhav is reaching Sikkim on Thursday for campaigning. He is one of the star campaigners of BJP for Sikkim. The election manifesto of BJP 'Sankalp Patra' is also scheduled to be released on Thursday.

A BJP press release informs that another star campaigner, BJP national general secretary,

Rajnish Kumar Singh has also arrived in Gangtok today and interacted with Chujachen candidate, Devika Basnet.

It is added that BJP Sikkim incharge, Nitin Nabin also met BJP candidates and people of Melli constituency and took note of their issues. BJP is organising a massive public meeting at Ranipool in East Sikkim on 05 April, which will have senior national and state leaders of BJP, the release mentions.

Sensitization on Menstrual Hygiene at Sang School



SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 03 APR:

ESS India conducted a sensitization program on "Menstrual hygiene and Waste Management" in association with BAC-Martam in East District on 02 April at Sang Sr Sec School, a press release informs.

The program was attended by Spruthi Kolipaka (WASH, UNICEF) from Telangana. President, ESS India, Upash-

na Khawas talked about Menstrual Hygiene and solid waste management which mainly included the reduction of use of sanitary pads while opting for more environment friendly alternatives.

The release mentions that the program got positive response from the students, especially male students participated with full enthusiasm.

Commissioning of EVMs and VVPATs in North

MANGAN, 03 APR (IPR):

North district has successfully conducted commissioning of Electronic Voting Machine (EVMs) and Voter Verifiable Paper Audit Trail (VVPATs) for Sikkim Parliamentary Constituency and Assembly Constituency under the guidance of District Election Officer (DEO) cum Returning Officer (RO), North, Raj Yadav.

It is pertinent to mention here that the commissioning of EVMs and VVPATs for Sikkim Parliamentary Constituency was done on 02 April in the presence of General Observer-1 (GO), Sikkim Parliamentary Constituency, Amaya Abhyankar and General Observer (GO), North, Dr Pratibha Singh



and authorized Political Agents of different parties.

On 03 April commissioning of EVM for Assembly Constituency was carried out. On both the days a team of engineers from Bharat Electronic Limited (BEL) were present to supervise and

assist the EVMs/VVPATs commissioning process.

The entire process of commissioning of EVMs/VVPATs was held at new conference hall of the District Administrative Center (DAC), Mangan. On the other side whole process of EVM com-

missioning was videographed by the IPR Team under CCTV surveillance.

The EVM/VVPAT commissioning hall is guarded 24x7 by Police Personnel and all the commissioning process were done as per the guidelines of Election Commission of India (ECI).

Police Observer visits Polling Stations in South



NAMCHI, 03 APR (IPR): Police Observer for Sikkim, Naveen Arora visited Chisopani Junior High School Polling Station at Jorethang today.

Upon his arrival, Mr Arora checked the preparations being made for the forthcoming polls. Additionally, he interacted with various police personnel, sector magistrates, flying squads, static and video surveillance team and extended his valuable inputs in order to conduct a smooth election to these officials.

Election training held for officials in West Sikkim

GYALSHING, 03 APR (IPR):

A daylong training programme of Sector Magistrate, Sector Police Officers, Nodal Officers and Micro Observers (MOs) for the forthcoming General Elections 2019 was conducted at the Conference Hall of West District Zilla Panchayat, Kyongsa.

The training was presided over by General Observer, Assembly Constituency (AC), Faisal Aftab and General Observer, Parliamentary Constituency (PC), Pan-kaj Agarwal, Transport Commissioner Haryana along with District Election Officer (DEO), Karma R Bonpo, Tenzing L Lepcha, SP (W), Karma L Lepcha, ADC (W), Tushar G Nihhare, SDM (HQ) and Master trainers, KSC Tongden Lepcha.

At the outset, General Observer for Assembly and Parliamentary Constituencies held a brief meeting with the respective Nodal officers relating to election preparedness in the West District. The aim of the meeting was to discuss the various issues regarding the smooth conduct of election ensuring the purity of the election.

General Observer (PC), Mr Agarwal advised the MOs not to burden the polling officers with too much of instructions and to stick to their duties of observing the



poll process.

He suggested the MOs to be conversant with the laws and rules related to election conduct on the poll day and to ensure successful completion of polls. He also advised them to take their responsibilities seriously and in any discrepancies same should immediately be brought to the notice of General Observer.

District Election Officer, West, Mr Bonpo in his address requested the Sector magistrates to attend the commissioning of EVMs & VVPAT machines being currently underway at control room, set up at Government Girls Sr Sec School, Kyongsa.

SP, West, in his address briefed the gathering about the Security Deployment Plans (SDP) to be observed during election process, especially on the poll day.

In the PPT presentation given by all Sector Magistrates, Mr Nihhare, Sector Police Officers (SPOs) and Micro Ob-

servers (MOs) were briefed about the rules and responsibilities of the polling parties, conduct of mock poll, information about EVM/VVPAT and Dos & Don'ts to be followed on the actual poll day.

MOs were briefed in details about their task on the poll day and the general reporting format that they need to submitted to the General Observer. He asserted that the MO's have to observe all complaints made to him by the polling agents, election agents and electors during the poll and understand the seriousness and nature of the complaints, he added. He also made them aware that, in case of any serious problem during the poll day, information should immediately reach to the General Observer through any medium.

Both the General Observer shared their experiences as well as answered the various queries raised by the MOs.

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HSP releases...

to safeguard the protections ensured under Article 371F and support democratic aspirations of the various ethnic groups in Sikkim. Hence, HSP shall actively support all efforts for realising such aspirations for reservation of seats and protection of culture and heritage of each ethnic group in Sikkim.

The HSP also has mission Unemployed Free Sikkim and promises to regularise the existing jobs.

Within 6 months, all persons holding temporary, contract, daily wage, guest, Anganwadi, ASHA, MDM or One Family One Job Scheme jobs, will be assured of work till retirement age and equal pay or legal minimum wage. For this, HSP shall make a new law.

All qualified and unemployed will get jobs because all vacant positions shall be filled in Education, Health & other Essential Public Services.

Within 1 year, unemployment shall be eradicated from Sikkim through creation of Employment Commission that will ascertain number and type of jobs required. Recommendations of the Commission shall be implemented by the government and newly formed District-level job creation centres that employ local people to identify employment opportunities.

Under Supporting Entrepreneurship Not Just Self-Employment, adequate public sector funds shall be earmarked for loans to entrepreneurial youth and government shall be the guarantor for these loans. Entrepreneurship in the possible sectors by youth with government hand holding and similar support shall be provided.

It may be mentioned that HSP is contesting in 23 Assembly seats and one Lok Sabha seat.

SKM counter...

the incident taken by election officials present at the spot.

Mr Khaling also alleged today that two SDF supporters were found distributing money at Salghari under Poklok-Kamrang constituency on 27 March. SKM workers stopped them and also filed an FIR on the matter, he adds.

About the incident in which an SDF party worker was stabbed on 27 March, Mr Khaling claimed that in this case, the assailant was also an SDF worker. SDF was however misrepresenting facts by claiming that the victim had been attacked by SKM supporters.

The victim, who is undergoing treatment in Siliguri, should be provided police security, he added.

He also accused former Minister RB Subba who recently rejoined SDF of distributing money in Daramdin and that substantial cash was seized on an SKM complaint on 01 April at Rorathang. He has appealed to the police to investigate the matter seriously.

There have been more incidents in which SDF office-bearers have been stopped from distributing money and one in which SDF supporters assaulted police personnel on duty, he added.

The Himalayan...

Pvt Ltd. (Waiwai) etc followed by ITC Ltd, GCMF (Amul), Dabur India Ltd. and other Indian Brands.

The plastic waste problem is compounded by the fact that the mountains do not have adequate systems of waste management.

IMI and Zero Waste Himalaya have appealed to everyone to support them by firstly voting and also to take forward voting campaigns in their own circles.

India lost 1.1...

Agenda or 'Jan Sarokar 2019' at a press conference here, representatives of various campaigns demanded accountability from political parties, emphasising the "days when political parties made empty promises is over".

They also presented a set of "must-do actions" for progressive and secular parties.

Various civil society groups will come together to raise their concern on April 6 at Talkatora Stadium in New Delhi, it was announced at the press conference. The political parties joining the Jan Sarokar programme on April 6 include Congress, CPI(M), CPI, DMK, RJD, TMC, AAP, TDP, NCP, JDS, CPI(ML), LJD and Swaraj India.

Their demands include enactment of the Women's Reservation Bill for 33 per cent quota in Parliament and state assemblies, implementation of Forest Rights Act in letter and spirit, universalisation of PDS and increase of public health expenditure.

The "chargesheet" also alleged that the NDA government has cut expenditure for Mid-Day Meals, which fell from Rs 10,523 crore in 2014-15 to Rs 9,949 crore in 2018-19, the document alleged.

The pendency of RTI requests jumped from 8.5 lakhs (2014-15) to 14.5 lakhs (in 2017-18), it claimed.

At the presser, Shankar Singh, a social activist with Mazdoor Kisan Shakti Sangathan, alleged the "real issues" such as non-payment of NREGA wages have been "submerged" by religious polarisation, politicisation of the armed forces, and warmongering.

"Political parties must commit to the People's Agenda," he demanded.

Syeda Hameed, representing the Samruddha Bharat Foundation, said, "Women, Dalits, Muslims have been targeted by powers who believe in ruling by division and dissension."

Rahul Roy, of the 2017 campaign Not in My Name, said the 2019 general election is a critical moment. "It is the biggest challenge our democracy has ever faced from the regressive forces of hate. I hope reason and truth win."

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East General Observer inspects polling stations

GANGTOK, 3 APR [IPR]: The General Observer for Assembly elections in East Sikkim, Mousumi Chatterjee Chaudhuri, today visited polling stations in and around Rangpo.

Ms Chaudhuri met with members of the Flying Squad and Video Surveillance teams and urged the officials to discharge their duties effectively to ensure successful and free and fair elections.

She also directed the Sector Magistrates to maintain strict and proper surveillance and keep more vigilant especially in the 48 hours prior to poll day.

The General Observer also enquired after provision for facilities such as drinking water, sanitation and other basic amenities at polling stations.

She also directed that guidelines provided by

the Election Commission of India be strictly followed and enquired after facilities related to Persons with Disabilities (PwD) and directed that such provisions be taken up on a compulsory basis.

Ms Chaudhuri had visited Assam Lingzey, Ranipool, Samdur and Pakyong on 31 March and Singtam, Sirwani, Khamdong and Ralep on 01 April.

South Expenditure Officer tours constituencies

NAMCHI, 03 APR (IPR): Inder Solanki, Expenditure Observer for four constituencies of South Sikkim – Namthang-Rateypani, Temi-Namphing, Rangang-Yangang and Tumin-Lingi - visited various places under his jurisdiction today accompanied by Liaisoning Officer Rajiv Rai and interacted with various election officers stationed there.

He also visited a Polling Station at Patuk Makha where he met and interacted with Sector Magistrates, Static Surveillance Teams, Video Surveillance teams, Video viewing teams, police personnel and briefed them about their roles and responsibilities.

He enquired on the basic minimum facilities available at the Polling Station and also assessed the election preparedness in various places of his visit.

Postal Ballot Drop Box Facilitation Centre

NAMCHI, 03RD APR (IPR): As informed by Returning Officer (South), Ragul K the Postal Ballot Drop Box Facilitation Centre for the General Election 2019 will be established at the Community hall and the auditorium hall of Namchi Girls Senior Secondary School from 04 to 08 April as per the guidelines of Election Commission of India. He also requested the contesting candidates or their election agents to oversee the facilities being extended to them on the afore-mentioned dates.

Two killed in knife attack at primary school in China

BEIJING, APR 3 (PTI): A knife-wielding man attacked primary school children in China's Hunan province on Wednesday, killing two students.

The incident occurred at 7.16am on Wednesday at Wanquan Elementary School in the town of Baijiaping, Ningyuan county. Two persons were also injured in the attack.

The suspect was arrested, state-run China Daily reported. There has been a series of knife and axe attacks in China in recent years, many targeting children. Such attacks are often blamed on people with mental illness or who have personal grievances. Knives are most commonly used, because gun controls are extremely strict in China.

PNGS taekwondo team bags 11 medals in Kimunyang India C' ship



SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 03 APR: Paljor Namgyal Girls School taekwondo team has returned with 11 medals from Kimunyang India 2019, an Open Taekwondo Championship, held from 29 to 31 March at Guwahati in Assam. The nine-member team has won 3 gold medals, 5 silver medals and 3 bronze medals in the championship.

Gold medallists are Akriti Rai [Class VI], Kritika Dhakal [Class X] and Neha Rai [Class IX], while silver medals bagged by Angelina Lepcha [Class III], Nikila Limboo [Class VI], Ashmit Lepcha [Class VI], Ashmit Lepcha [Class VI] and Ashmita Rai [Class XII].

Likewise, bronze medallists are Jessica Rai [Class III], Smriti Sapkota [Class III] and Ashmita Rai [Class XII]. The team was led by PNG School

coaches, Sabina Sundas and Tenzing N Bhutia.

A press release from the school informs that PNG School started its taekwondo coaching classes in 2011. Accordingly, taekwondo classes were made compulsory as one of its co-curricular activities of the school from Classes I - VIII beginning from the academic session 2019. This was initiated as per the syllabus prescribed under Central Board of Secondary Education, New Delhi for self-defence of the girl child, it is informed.

The release informs that more than 1500 hundred martial artists participated from all the over the country including Nepal in the championship, which was organized by Kimunyang Sport Committee India & India Dojang Sports Organisation.

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For further details please
Contact: 9434117687 / 9083826462



GOVERNMENT OF SIKKIM EAST DISTRICT COLLECTORATE GANGTOK-SIKKIM-737101

Phone- 03592(284444) (O) Fax- 03592 (284222) (F)
Website- <https://eastsikkim.nic.in>
E-mail ID- dmgtangtok@gmail.com

ELECTION URGENT

Memo NO: 154/DCE/2019

Date: 3/04/2019

NOTICE

It is hereby brought to the notice of all contesting candidates for Sikkim State Legislative Assembly Election 2019 and Sikkim Parliamentary Constituency Election- 2019 that the facilitation centre for casting postal ballots for the General Election 2019 will be set up during training/briefing sessions of Polling Parties at Manan Kendra on 4th & 5th of April 2019 and 6th, 7th and 8th of April at Conference Hall of District Administrative Centre, Sichey, Gangtok. Similar facilitation centre will also be set up at Biraspati Prasai Sr. Sec. School, Ranipool, Marchak on 10th of April, 2019. The timing for facilitation centre for 4th to 8th April, 2019 shall be 2pm to 4pm. However, timing for facilitation centre for 10th April, 2019 at Biraspati Prasai Sr. Sec. School, Ranipool, Marchak shall be 7am onwards before the dispatch of Polling Parties to respective Polling Stations.

You are kindly requested to be present or depute your agent to witness the casting of Postal Ballot in above cting of Postal Ballot in above designated places.

Notice No. 145/DCE/2019 dates 1/4/2019 stands superseded.

R.O. No. 03/IPR/PUB/Classi/19-20
Date: 03/04/2019

Sd/-
DEO-Cum-Returning Officer, East

FAQ

EVM with VVPAT Unit

Q12. Is it possible to vote more than once by pressing the button again and again?

Ans. No. As soon as a particular button on the Balloting Unit is pressed the vote is recorded for that particular candidate and the machine gets locked. Even if one presses that button further or any other button, no further vote will be recorded. This way the EVMs ensure the principle of "one man, one vote". The next vote is enabled only when the Presiding Officer/Polling Officer in-charge of the Control Unit releases the Ballot by pressing the Ballot Button. This is a distinct advantage over the ballot paper system.

Q13. How can a voter be sure that the EVM is working and his vote has been recorded?

CALL 1950 FOR ANY ELECTION RELATED QUERIES
Contact Hours : 9:00 AM to 9:00 PM

GOVERNMENT OF SIKKIM EXCISE (ABK) DEPARTMENT M.G. MARG GANGTOK - 737101

exciseabkarigangtok@gmail.com
www.sikkim-excise-gov.in

No: 6/Excise(Abk)

Dated: 03.04.2019

ADDENDUM

In continuation of Notification No. 5/Excise (Abk) dated 29.03.2019, the observation of 'Dry Day' is further extended for a period of 14 hours (fourteen hours) from 5 P.M. of 11.4.2019 to 7 A.M. of 12.4.2019.

The "Dry Days" shall thus be effective from 5 P.M. of 9.4.2019 to 7 A.M. of 12.4.2019.

By Order
Sd/- (T.N. Bhutia) IAS
Secretary-Cum-Commissioner
Excise (Abk) Department

R.O. No. 02/IPR/PUB/Classi/19-20

Date: 03/04/2019



Ref. Pakyong PS Case FIR No. 02/2019, dated: 28.01.2019, u/s 365 IPC, 1860 one 17 yrs old girl child is missing since 22.01.2019 from Lossing, Machong, East Sikkim. The details of Missing girl are as follows:

Name: Divya Sharma
Age: 17 yrs
d/o: Chandra Prasad Sharma
Height: 4' 5" (approx)
Complexion: Fair
Wearing apparel: Blue colour jeans paint & shirt and black & pink colour Nike shoe

All are requested to share any information about the missing child in the below given Contact No.

03592-257834, 73843-49283, 97330-23817

Informant will be suitably rewarded

~ SummitTIMES ~ CLASSIFIEDS

Required for Summit Times

Two field reporters for Gangtok (East) and one for West District. Should be fluent in english. Have basic knowledge in journalism. Walk in interview:

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one kitchen helper. Contact: Hotel
Paramount, Dentam, West Sikkim-
9735909625 / 8348285444

PLOT FOR SALE:

Vacant plot measuring 0.38 Acres for
sale at Amdo Golai, Deorali. Contact:
09717191985/097474651223

ANTHYESTHI KRIYA

The Anthyesthi Kriya of Late. Akal Bahadur Pradhan who left for heavenly abode on 24th March, 2019 falls on 5th April 2019.

All relatives, family, friends and well-wishers are requested to join us in offering prayers for the departed soul at Rhenock, Pradhan Gaon, East Sikkim. We would also like express our gratitude to all those who stood by us during our time of bereavement.

Tika Maya Pradhan (Wife), Khem
Narayan Pradhan - 9593777633, Khush
Narayan Pradhan - 9593267782, Pushpa
Kr. Pradhan - 9593267782, Ganga Ram
Pradhan, Arun Pradhan, Udai Pradhan(Sons)
Sarita Pradhan, Karuna Pradhan
(Daughters) Rekmit Pradhan, Durga
Pradhan (Daughter-in-laws)

KUTSHE SHEGU

Our sincere gratitude and deep appreciation to all our dear friends and well wishers who have been so supportive and forthcoming during our time of bereavement, the sad demise of our beloved daughter Late **Kes-sang Tongden Lepcha** who left for her heavenly abode on 19/02/2019. Once again in all humility we request your benign presence in offering prayer for the departed soul, the 49th day of Kutshe Shegu which falls on **07/04/2019 (Sunday)** at our residence at Tongden Lee, Dikchu Bazar, East Sikkim.

We would also like to take this opportunity to thank all those who stood by us in our hard time and regret our inability to thank them individually.

Wangchuk Bhutia (Husband)
& all family members.



ANTHYESTHI KRIYA

The Anthyesthi Kriya of our beloved mother, Late **SITA MAYA TRIKHATRI** (80 yrs) who left for her heavenly abode on the 23rd of March, 2019 falls on **4th April 2019**.

All relatives, family, friends and well-wishers are requested to join us in offering prayers for the departed soul at Hotel Chowtaro, Deorali Bazaar, Gangtok, East Sikkim.

We also express our gratitude to all those who stood by us during our time of bereavement.

Daughters: Champa Bardewa-9434203706,
Manju Trikhatri -7407181907
Sons: Pratap Trikhatri -9064836436;
Lalit Trikhatri (Son)-9775956554
Daughters-in-Law: Man Maya Trikhatri
-9775405439; Ashu Trikhatri -9647686222;
Mamta Trikhatri -9609115039

ANTHYESTHI KRIYA

The Anthyesthi Kriya of our beloved Mother Late. Sita Maya Trikhatri (80 yrs) who left for heavenly abode on 11th March, 2019 falls on 4th April 2019.

All relatives, family, friends and well-wishers are requested to join us in offering prayers for the departed soul at Hotel Chowtaro, Deorali Bazaar, Gangtok, East Sikkim. We also express our gratitude to all those who stood by us during our time of bereavement.

Champa Bardewa (Daughter)-9434203706
Manju Trikhatri (Daughter)-7407181907
Laxmi Sunam (Daughter)- 8250303207
Pratap Trikhatri (Son)-9735981155
Lalit Trikhatri (Son)-9775956554
Man Maya Trikhatri (Daughter-in-law)-9775405439
Ashu Trikhatri (Daughter-in-law)-9647686222
Mamta Trikhatri (Daughter-in-law)-9609115039
Shyam Sunam (Son-in-law)-8768716297
Bijay Sewa (Son-in-law)

MCC IS IN EFFECT

WHAT IS MODEL CODE OF CONDUCT?

Model Code of Conduct is a set of guidelines issued by the Election Commission of India for the conduct of political parties and candidates during elections. The Model Code of Conduct comes into force immediately with the announcement of the election schedule by the Commission for ensuring free and fair elections.

Visit the website: eci.gov.in

Invest in Learning

Because that is what education is really about

The State Government has made an ambitious commitment to revolutionise education in Sikkim starting from primary schools and building up from that. This was an initiative well-intentioned, and welcome too because it identified the beginning of schooling as the most important years of learning. For far too long, primary schools have received only token attention when human resource should have been prioritised. Hopefully, that is what the government plans in its latest move. And now the State has also put together a State University. It is unclear what will be unique about this institution or what missing component of higher education it will provide a fillip for, but there really cannot be any complaints about more places of learning and there cannot ever be too many of them so long as they are about learning and not dispensing degrees. And please, when the charter of responsibilities is passed along, don't impose employability as a criteria for the courses on offer unless they are technical and skill-imparting trainings. Make the institutions genuinely about learning and then the products will automatically become much sought after human resource for any sector they wish to join. Instill a keenness for learning, and you will have students who can adapt and pick up skills and expertise for any job that catches their fancy. Obsess over imparting employable skills and you will never succeed because the job market is huge and ever changing. The job market needs people with aptitude, not necessarily skills because those can be picked up on the job. Give the young confidence and they will be ready for the world. Obsess over school uniforms and discipline when the young should be discovering and expressing themselves more confidently in their college years and you are only producing order-takers in times which require independent thinkers.

One also hopes that the current interest in revolutionizing education is not limited to civil engineering projects. Where so much money is expended on infrastructure, not enough attention is being paid to the education that these improved infrastructures impart. Education is introduced in every speech by every party as an empowering tool and if it were really so, students from underprivileged families would not drop-out from schools in such huge numbers. The mid-day meal scheme is all very fine if it is malnutrition that the planners intended to address, but if they thought this would keep children in school, then they should have invested in teachers first, on their training next and finally on an effective monitoring system to keep them on duty. And more importantly, the planners should invest on fashioning a syllabus that is contemporary and prioritises learning, not memorising. Students drop out from school not because they cannot afford it, but because they cannot understand how education empowers them. It carries no relevance either for them or for their families. Those from underprivileged families will drop out of school and the better heeled drop out from college. More students drop out because they want to start working at improving their lives, learning by rote does not open their minds to the appreciate how education offers a way out; but, if schools encouraged students to think for themselves, analyse information and situations, they will understand what education means and then struggle to stay in school.

What this requires is not just for the syllabus to change, but also how subjects are taught in our schools, the manner in which learning is evaluated. There are those who believe that the Indian education system is the best, pointing out the achievers that our schools and colleges export. And therein lies proof of the drawbacks – the better minds still need to go out to deliver. As a nation, India produces a lot of educated people, but when it comes to thinkers and visionaries, people who give the world the next big idea, even when their nationality is Indian, they are products of education systems that are not on our shores. So yes, let's invest in infrastructure, make sure that a well-provided-for school is the vicinity of every habitation, but also simultaneously, let's invest thought into how this infrastructure can work with a syllabus and pattern that makes thinkers of the next generation, not just note-takers.

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.

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Leonardo da Vinci revisited: how a 15th century artist dissected the human machine

SUSAN BROOMHALL
theconversation.com

Leonardo da Vinci was fascinated by the human body. His disdain for painters who did not bother to learn anatomy was barely concealed in his criticisms of those who “draw their nude figures looking like wood, devoid of grace; so that you would think you were looking at a sack of walnuts rather than the human form”.

His bodies envisioned something very different – living mechanics – combining ideas that he explored across many fields of investigation, including animal and human dissections.

In doing so, he anticipated many questions that now preoccupy modern scientists, from the mechanics of the human body to the possibility of a mechanical body for humans.

Leonardo was born the illegitimate son of a notary and a peasant woman. He did not attend a university and had a rather haphazard and informal education. His knowledge of the human body was self-taught and largely experiential.

Leonardo's notebooks are filled with an explosion of ideas, in treatises, sketches and jottings. One note mentioned the following:

“Have Avicenna's work on useful inventions translated; spectacles with the case, steel and fork and...., charcoal, boards, and paper, and chalk and white, and wax;.... for glass, a saw for bones with fine teeth, a chisel, inkstand three herbs, and Agnolo Benedetto. Get a skull, nut,— mustard.”

In this jumble of thoughts, we see Leonar-

do's interest in the body, one he would explore through dissection. Perhaps his most famous dissection was that of a man who claimed to be over 100 years old, at the Santa Maria Nuova hospital in Florence in 1506.

Leonardo had chatted to this man on the night he passed away: “And this old man told me, a few hours before his death, that he was over a hundred years old and he was conscious of no bodily failure, apart from weakness.” After he had died, Leonardo proceeded to probe the man's corpse.

ANATOMICAL MECHANICS

Leonardo's anatomical drawings show exploded and multiple views, unusual for his time but similar to modern mechanical drawings and descriptive geometry.

As he wrote: “If you wish thoroughly to know the parts of man, anatomically, you – or your eye – require to see it from different aspects, considering it from below and from above and from its sides, turning it about and seeking the origin of each member.”

Leonardo was thinking outside the box. His approach connects anatomy to engineering.

His interest in machinery linked to his fascination with motion. His drawings vividly illustrate how components of machines, animals and humans are designed to move, and how motion and forces are transferred from one component to another.

Strong analogies are formed between mechanical and biological parts, such as the role of ropes and cords, and sinews and tendons.

Leonardo was fascinated by the change of form over time, whether in the processes of nature or the gradual disintegration of the human body. He found the 100 year-old man's artery, for instance: “to be dry, shrunk and withered.”

Alongside this autopsy, he recorded another dissection: “of a child two years old, in which I found everything the opposite that of the old man”.

Leonardo also had a lifelong interest in depicting decrepitude and the grotesque in human form. In his work, we see the contrast between robust mechanical forms and ageing bodies.

With his designs for various forms of automata – machines that operate alone by following predetermined instructions for movement – some of which witnesses suggest he brought to life, Leonardo moves from the human body, which is subject to weakness and ageing, to the wholly mechanical body.

The mechanical knight, for example, that he sketched in the Forster notebooks appears to have been designed from clockwork and geared mechanisms. It could move its arms, hands and legs, and turn its head.

Leonardo's interest in automata in a human form and replicating human bodily movement foreshadow ideas present in modern robotics.

Through Leonardo's exploration of the human body, we see his fascination with engineering, motion, anatomy and ageing, topics that still preoccupy us scientifically today.

[the writer is Professor of History, University of Western Australia]



Tea, chillies and takeaway: what food choices reveal about British Muslim identity

RIYAZ TIMOL
theconversation.com

Food. We all need it and we all eat it. But what does it tell us about who we are? This was one of many questions I explored in recent research focused on the evolution of Muslim identity in the West.

Given that most British Muslims today are either migrants or the children of migrants, I wanted to understand how their identity changes, not just as it moves across continents, but also as it passes along generations. And so, along with other markers of cultural identity such as language and dress, I examined the types of food eaten by hundreds of respondents over 18 months of fieldwork conducted across the UK and Europe.

Take tea. It's a straightforward beverage that's ubiquitous in everyday British life. Yet how it's brewed matters. South Asian culture, which encompasses around two-thirds of the British Muslim population, frequently distinguishes between “Desi chai/tea” and “English tea”.

Desi chai refers to equal amounts of milk and water boiled on a stove together with a teabag and sometimes flavoured with spices such as cinnamon, cardamom or ginger, whereas English tea refers to boiling water from a kettle poured onto a teabag usually with a splash of milk. First-generation South Asian migrants almost exclusively sip the former and, based on my research, often look askance at the latter. On one occasion, for example, I heard an elderly British Pakistani haughtily dismiss English tea as no more than “weak, flavoured water”.

Their offspring, on the other hand, often drink both English as well as Desi chai (or, as it's sometimes called,

“masala tea”) indicating the emergence of an ambidextrous cultural identity informed by ethnic roots as well as social context.

Let's take another example. The Naga pepper, cultivated in Bangladesh, is one of the hottest chillies in the world. Imran*, a young British-born Bangladeshi I interviewed, told me how a “chilli-eating competition” of sorts developed when an uncle visited his London home from Bangladesh. Both he and his father, who'd been resident in the UK for over two decades, felt obliged to participate in a display of bravado.

After two bites, Imran rushed from the room gulping copious amounts of milk to soothe his burning tongue. While his dad continued stoically on, tears streaming down his face, it was his Bangladeshi uncle who won the day. The implication in Imran's story was that his family's time in England had diminished their capacity to enjoy hot chillies – an important emblem of Bangladeshi culture. When visiting Bangladesh later that year, Imran recounted that the ladies of the village had mockingly called out: “As you're from London, we'll have to cook without chillies or you'll start crying!”

THE SOCIOLOGY OF THE PALATE

In 1979, the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu famously argued that dominant social groups bolster their “cultural capital” by defining their tastes in opposition to the perceived uncouthness of the hoi polloi. In other words, Bourdieu argued that snobbery is socially constructed.

In my own analysis, I've introduced a new twist on his use of the word “taste” by defining it literally – with reference to the flavours felt in the mouth. Just as people's aesthetic or artistic preferences are deter-

mined in no small measure by social factors, so too are the proclivities of their gustatory glands. In other words, socialisation has a physiological dimension. I call this the sociology of the palate.

During my research, it quickly became possible to distinguish between the tastes of first-generation migrants and their British-born offspring. So pronounced did this difference become, I named it the distinction between the “old guard” and the “avant-garde”. To illustrate with a generalisation: the old guard, I found, prefer oily curries and chapattis, while the avant-garde have a penchant for takeaways or other quick and easy foods such as noodles. On one occasion, I recall observing a group of young Muslims gaze in bewilderment at an elderly Indian “uncle” as he tore up a slice of pizza and dipped the pieces in his lamb karahi like naan bread.

FOOD AND SHIFTING IDENTITIES

Food, as the researchers Atsuko Ichijo and Ronald Ranta point out in a fascinating recent study, is also a symbol of national identity. Haggis, for example, often conjures images of kilts and tartan while hummus evokes Middle Eastern exoticism. Yet in 2001, the former British foreign secretary, Robin Cook, claimed that chicken tikka masala is not just the most popular but also “now a true British national dish” – winning its place alongside older classics such as bangers and mash, Yorkshire pudding or fish and chips. This tells us that even national identity, far from being static and inflexible, is a moveable feast. Human palates – and the identities they signify – evolve, chameleon-like, to reflect changing social and cultural conditions often brought into sharp relief by migration.

Let's return to Imran, the young British-born Muslim of Bangladeshi origin. Growing up, he told me he despised the overpowering smell of shutki in his home – a type of dried fish popular in Bangladeshi cuisine. But several events in his teenage years triggered an introspective journey in which he reassessed his relationship with both his faith and ethnic culture. To the delight of family elders, he began during this period not only to pray regularly but also to eat shutki. For Imran, this was a conscious choice to signal a reaffirmation of his Bangladeshi Muslim heritage.

Muaaz, another British-born Muslim of Bangladeshi ancestry I interviewed, had a different relationship with food. During the course of a religious retreat I undertook with him, he served an Italian bolognese proudly declaring he'd cooked it without using a single Asian spice. For Muaaz, unlike Imran, this was a conscious choice to signal a shift from an old continent to a new one. Both Imran and Muaaz are committed Muslims, but the practice of their faith went hand-in-hand with different forms of cultural expression.

The type of food dished up on a plate can tell us more than just the culinary preferences of the diner then. It can offer a window into human identity. And as the type of food on the plate changes – both as it shifts across continents and moves along generations – it's a reminder that identity is never fixed, but subject to the constant pushes and tugs exerted by the forces of society and culture.

* Names have been changed to protect the anonymity of the interviewees.

[the writer is Research Associate in British Muslim Studies, Cardiff University]

Modi calls Mamata a ‘speedbreaker’ in path of West Bengal development

SILIGURI, APR 3 (PTI): Prime Minister Narendra Modi Wednesday made a scathing attack on West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee describing her as a “speed-breaker” in the path of development of the state and insisted she has to go to ensure speedy development of Bengal like rest of the country.

Modi also took on the Congress over its manifesto that talks about reviewing some clauses of the Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA), saying it acts like a “shield” for the security forces in the fight against terrorists and make the soldiers vulnerable.

He also took potshots at Trinamool Congress president as well other opposition leaders for expressing doubts over Balakot airstrike to avenge Pulwama terror attack and mockingly said “more than pain felt in Rawalpindi, it was felt by Didi in Kolkata”.

Modi’s sharp attack on TMC chief came as he kickstarted BJP’s election campaign in the West Bengal which sends 42 members to Lok Sabha, third largest after Uttar Pradesh’s 80 and Maharashtra 48.

“I have not been able to ensure development of Bengal in the same speed as in the rest of the country.

“The reason for this is that in Bengal there is a speedbreaker, and this speedbreaker is known as Didi,” Modi said attacking chief minister



Mamata Banerjee, who is fondly called “Didi” (elder sister).

The PM stressed that she must be voted out of power to remove any impediment in the path of prosperity of the people of Bengal.

Pleased at the turnout at his maiden rally in the state after announcement of Lok Sabha polls, he said “if I had not come here to see the huge crowd, I would not have realised that didi’s boat is drowning”.

Alleging that the Congress manifesto talks of reviewing AFSPA that “provides a shield to the security forces in the fight against terrorists”, Modi said that the grand old party of the country “conspired” to make the soldiers vulnerable by taking this away from them.

In his no holds barred attack on TMC presi-

dent, Modi said that Banerjee has deprived the people of Bengal of getting medical benefits of upto Rs five lakhs under the ‘Ayushman Bharat’ scheme, by withdrawing the state’s consent to it.

He said that the farmers of the state have also not been able to reap the benefits of direct transfer of money to their accounts under the ‘PM Kisan Samman Yojana’ owing to the “speedbreaker Didi.”

Claiming that the TMC supremo is not worried about the welfare of the poor, Modi said that she thrives on the poverty of the people and her politics will end if people prosper.

“She has put brakes in the path of the development of the poor,” he said.

Modi said that chit-funds have looted the poor of Bengal and were

assisted by ministers in Banerjee’s cabinet, her MLAs and associates.

“Didi has destroyed through her associates the poor people who invested in the chit funds,” he said.

Claiming that Didi, Congress and the Left are on the same boat, Modi said that their designs would not succeed since their fight is with a chowkidar.

The PM said that despite several attempts by the opposition parties at scuttling his development initiatives, his government has been able to provide gas, electricity, toilets and other benefits to the people of the country.

He sought to assure tea garden workers in the Darjeeling hills and the Terai region in the foothills of Eastern Himalayas of their welfare and that closed gardens

would be reopened.

Reiterating his accusation against Banerjee and other opposition leaders, who had posed questions on the outcome of the Balakot airstrike, Modi said “Who was supposed to cry and who started crying?”

“Chot usko laga aur dard inko lagi (The hurt was there and the pain was felt here),” he said.

Modi said that more than pain felt in Rawalpindi, it was felt by didi in Kolkata.

Regarding NRC, he said that rumours are being spread by those in TMC payroll that Gorkhas will be affected by the exercise and assured that the Gorkhas will not be affected by it.

He said that the Left had not allowed the development of the state during its 34 year rule and Banerjee had done the same.

NPF to support Congress Lok Sabha candidate in Nagaland

KOHIMA, APR 3 (PTI): Naga Peoples Front president, Dr Shurhozelie Liezietsu Wednesday said the NPF will support the Congress candidate for the lone Lok Sabha seat in Nagaland.

“In order to defeat the BJP alliance partner NDPP’s candidate, the NPF party has decided to extend issue based support

to the Congress in Nagaland,” Liezietsu said at the consultative meeting of the NPF Kohima Division at Central office here.

He said the NPF took decision not to field its nominee and divide the secular votes and give advantages to the NDPP candidate. Liezietsu said the NPF was supporting

the Congress candidate as the Congress is also against the Citizenship Amendment Bill (CAB).

He said BJP president Amit Shah in his public address in Assam recently stated that if BJP comes to power it will bring the Citizenship Amendment Bill at the earliest.

Mamata launches strong attack at Modi describes him as ‘expiry babu’



DINHATA (WB), APR 3 (PTI): West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee Wednesday attacked Prime Minister Narendra Modi describing him as “Expiry Babu”, and strongly contested his allegations against her as being a ‘speedbreaker’ in the path of state’s development.

Claiming that her government in West Bengal has done a lot for the welfare of the people of

the state, Banerjee told a public rally here in Cooch Behar district that income of farmers in Bengal has increased three times under her rule.

Mocking Prime Minister Modi as “Expiry Babu” and “Expiry PM”, Banerjee dared him to participate in a direct debate with her in television or at a public rally.

“I am not Modi, I don’t tell lies,” she said, alleg-

ing that the PM has made false claims about performance of the TMC government in West Bengal.

She claimed that 12,000 farmers committed suicide during Modi rule in the country.

The TMC supremo strong riposte came after Prime Minister Narendra Modi made scathing attack at her at BJP rally at Siliguri and later at Kolkata.

West Bengal treats only 49 pc of waste water before dumping it in Ganga: NGT

NEW DELHI, APR 3 (PTI): West Bengal treats only 49 per cent of the waste water before dumping it in the Ganga, the National Green Tribunal has said while directing the state government to submit quarterly report on the issue of solid waste management.

The green panel noted that about 90 per cent of municipal solid waste generated in Bengal is being dumped in the open every day in violation of statutory pollution laws.

A bench headed by NGT Chairperson Justice Adarsh Kumar Goel also noted that the state generates 1,311 million li-

tres a day (mld) of waste water and while 34 sewage treatment plants have a total installed capacity of 457 mld, their actual utilisation is only 214 mld, which is only 49 per cent.

The tribunal directed the state government to notify at least three major cities, towns and panchayats as “model cities/towns/villages” in every district within two weeks.

“The remaining cities, towns and village panchayats in the state may be made fully compliant in respect of environmental norms within one year,” the bench said.

It also directed that

performance audit of all regulatory bodies may be conducted and remedial measures be taken, within six months.

During the hearing, state chief secretary Malay Kumar Dey told the tribunal that it was found that out of the 341 blocks in West Bengal, the groundwater in 81 blocks was contaminated with arsenic and in 49 blocks with fluoride.

The tribunal was informed that large tractors, diggers and trucks can be seen lined along many of the rivers in West Bengal. Indiscriminate sand mining has a devastating effect on the environment.

100 per cent webcasting of all polling booths in Tripura: CEO

AGARTALA, APR 3 (PTI): The Election Commission of India has taken initiative for 100 per cent webcasting of all polling booths in Tripura, Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) Sriram Taranikanti said on Wednesday.

“Video viewing and surveillance teams would be deployed across the state, which would monitor all poll activities inside the polling booths on the day of voting.

Sufficient CCTV cameras and mobile teams would be deployed to maintain total security. We aim to maintain 100 per cent webcasting on the polling days,” he told reporters.

The CEO said the concerned district magistrates would monitor everything from their

offices, adding presiding officers would provide inputs to corroborate the videos.

“The areas, where internet coverage is poor, video recording would be done and the recorded clips would be submitted to the District Election Officers. Tripura is the only state in the country which will implement 100 per cent webcasting of Lok Sabha elections this year,” he said.

Elections for the two Lok Sabha seats West Tripura and East Tripura would be held on April 11 and April 18 respectively.

“We have received 44 poll related complaints so far.

The complaints are being verified ... “ the official said.

India pledges relief assistance to storm-hit Nepal

NEW DELHI, APR 2 (PTI): India on Tuesday pledged relief assistance to Nepal that has been hit by a devastating thunderstorm.

“We are deeply saddened to learn of the loss of life and damage to property in Nepal following the devastating thunderstorm that struck Bara and Parsa districts of Nepal,” Ministry of External Affairs Spokesperson Raveesh Kumar said.

“Our thoughts and prayers are with all those who have lost their dear ones, sustained injuries or suffered damage to their property,” he said.

India is ready to provide relief assistance as may be required by Nepal, he said, adding that the Indian Embassy in Kathmandu and Consulate in Birgunj are in touch with the concerned authorities.

Darul Uloom students say development their agenda but fear division of Muslim votes

UZMI ATHAR DEOBAND, APR 3 (PTI): As soon as the bells ring at Darul Uloom Asia’s largest madrasa students prepare to head towards mosque for evening prayers. After stepping outside the institution, some of them stop at a tea shop near the campus. An animated discussion is underway at the kiosk in Saharanpur. The students are discussing the issues that dominate or are being skipped by political parties in their campaign in the district ahead of the general election on April 11. They have their own theories and understanding of the complex election process.

Jamal, 24, says he fears Muslim votes might get divided in the election as two strong Muslim candidates are contesting from the constituency. Congress has fielded seasoned leader Imran Masood, while the BSP has named Faizul Rahman. BSP has formed a “mahagathbandhan” with SP and RLD in Uttar Pradesh for the election.

The BJP has pitted incumbent Raghav Laxhan Pal against the opposition candidates. “Faizul Rahman might have an advantage as he would get the support of haryans along with Muslims,” Jamal tells the students, suggesting caste and religion will play a role in deciding the election. But

his suggestion is immediately countered. Amanatullah, another student at the madrasa, says the agenda of development would be a major factor this time. “It is high time that we decided the capability of candidates based on their knowledge of issues plaguing the city, rather than their caste or religion,” the 26-year-old says.

Saharanpur, named after Sufi Saint Shah Harun Chisti, is home to about 17 lakh voters. Of which, 6 lakh are Muslims and 3 lakh SCs/STs.

A three-way contest is expected between the Congress, the BJP and the mahagathbandhan on the seat. Ashraf, who is in his final year of eight-year-long education at the premier institution, says the election would be very interesting.

But, he adds, the BJP might race through due to division of Muslim votes. “If Muslims decide to join forces with haryans then Faizul Rahman could get a landslide victory,” he said. Saharanpur is an important constituency for all the parties.

The Uttar Pradesh BJP started its election campaign from the constituency and the Bahujan Samaj Party-Samajwadi Party-Rashtriya Lok Dal combine will hold its first joint rally in Deoband on April 7, four days ahead of the election in the district. Ma-

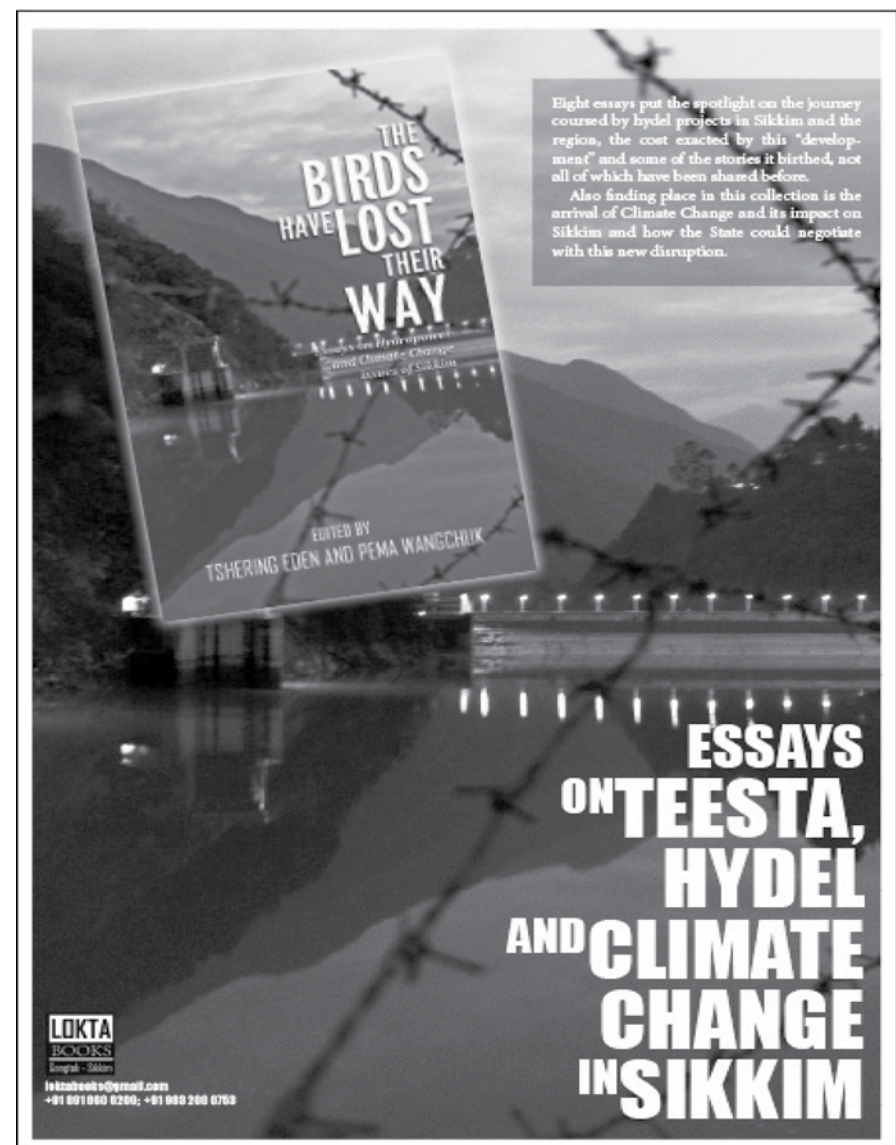
drassa students say the mahagathbandhan wish to woo Muslim voters as they have a tough fight with the Congress, which too has fielded a strong Muslim candidate.

“But our agenda is development, not religion-based politics. We have to get above the politics of caste and religion, (because) that is where we are giving fringe groups an upper hand. We need to vote on development and then only real development would take place,” Raziul, 30, said.

Darul Uloom spokesperson refused to comment on the campaigning or party prospects ahead of the election, saying the institution has no political stance. “We are a Islamic academic institution and we don’t support any political party and that is the reason we don’t accept any donation or grant from parties and government,” said its spokesperson Ashraf Usmani. The 152-year-old institution is home to nearly 5,000 students who study Islam there.

“Our course is very intense and it runs for eight years. All our graduates are gainfully employed. You will not find a single unemployed graduate of the madrasa,” Usmani said.

He said students from all over the country could be found here. Rameez has been associated with the institution since he was 12 years old.



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Lapses in dam management aggravated floods: amicus curiae report



THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, APR 3 (PTI): In a setback to the Kerala government, a High Court-appointed amicus curiae has pointed out that lapses in dam management had aggravated the impact of August floods which had claimed over 400 lives besides causing widespread devastation last year.

It has also recommended that an inquiry be conducted by an expert committee headed by a former Supreme Court judge.

The opposition Congress and BJP held the CPI(M)-led LDF government responsible for the loss of life and destruction and demanded the resignation of Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan.

In the 49-page-re-

port, amicus curiae(-friend of the court), Jacob P Alex, stated that none of the 79 dams in the southern state were operated or used for the purpose of flood control or moderation, as per the stipulations under the National Water Policy, National Disaster Management Authority guidelines on floods and similar directives.

The report, submitted to the High Court and accessed by PTI, also recommended a detailed enquiry into the floods by an independent expert committee headed by a former Supreme Court judge and a hydrologist, dam management experts and engineers as members.

The amicus curiae was appointed by the

court based on a slew of petitions including the one submitted by 'metro-man' E Sreedharan, also the president of the Foundation for Restoration of National Values, alleging that the devastating floods was a man-made disaster.

According to the report, dams in the state had not maintained effective Flood Control Zone and the Flood Cushion, said to have been maintained, was not as mandated by the BIS report, RTIOR and Q&M Manuel.

Most of the major reservoirs were almost full before the heavy rainfall that occurred on 14-16 August, 2018 and they did not have the capacity to accom-

modate the additional

flow generated by extreme rainfall, it said.

"Sudden release of water simultaneously from different reservoirs, during extreme rainfall aggravated the damage," it said adding that various alerts--blue, orange and red--had been issued not in accordance with the EAP guideline.

"No proper follow-up action and effective precautionary steps (especially for evacuating people and accommodating them in safe location) were taken after issuance of Red Alert," it said.

None of the dams in the state had updated Rule Curves based on which the same were operated during the floods, it said.

The report also pointed out that the dam man-

agers ought not to have 'solely' relied on IMD predictions for dam management and variation in the forecast or prediction cannot be counted as a justification for delayed release of water from dams.

It also suggested that the proposed enquiry panel be directed by the court to investigate various aspects including the causes of the August floods and the factor that had led to or aggravated the damage, whether the high reservoir storage and sudden release of water had worsened the deluge and so on.

Meanwhile, State Power Minister, M M Mani Tuesday evaded questions when journalists sought his reaction on the report. A visibly

angry Mani told reporters: "I have nothing to say on this.. you clear out from here... If I ask you people to go out, you should get out from here." Leader of Opposition in the assembly, Ramesh Chennithala said the LDF government was responsible for the deluge.

"We had said that the releasing of dam water, without taking any precautionary measures, was the cause of the floods. Our allegations have now proved to be true with the amicus curiae report.

Chief Minsiter Pinrayi Vijayan should answer for the life which had been lost and property destroyed", he said.

There was grave lapse in the management of dams by the government, the leader added.

BJP state president, P S Sreedharan Pillai demanded the resignation of Vijayan in the wake of the adverse report.

"The left government cannot hide away from the responsibility of the worst ever flood which had hit the state. Murder charges should be slapped against the Chief Minister, power minister and the concerned officials," he said. According to the amicus curiae report, the August floods had claimed 433 human lives, affected 5.4 million people and displaced 1.4 million.

The total loss incurred by the state was to the tune of Rs 26,720 crore and the total recovery needs are estimated at 31,000 crore, it added.

Dismissing Kohli and AB best moment of my cricketing career, say Shreyas Gopal



JAIPUR, APR 3 (PTI): Claiming the coveted wickets of Virat Kohli and South African run-machine AB De Villiers was the best moment of my cricketing career, says young Rajasthan Royals spinner Shreyas Gopal.

The leg-spinner took 3 wickets for 12 runs in his magical four-over spell, which helped Rajasthan Royals secure their first win of the season, a seven-wicket victory over struggling Royal Challengers Bangalore on Tuesday night.

"Getting Virat Kohli and AB Villiers in same match is a dream for any youngster. It is the best moment of my cricketing career and definitely one of biggest moments of my IPL cricket," Shreyas said at the post match conference here.

"Any wicket is a big wicket but obviously these two are big names so it feels that much more better. But I feel I shouldn't be getting ahead of myself and stay calm," he added.

The 25-year-old said that it was hard to devise a plan against batsmen of Kohli and De Villiers' stature.

"Honestly, I feel it is hard to plan a dismissal for batsmen like them (Kohli and De Villiers). You just need to be able to bowl your best ball and try and hit the best area on that particular wicket. It is all based on the situation," Gopal said.

"When you land on the ground you obviously do your homework. What

the type of ground is, how the wicket is reacting, how the opposition has been playing. So for example (Krishnappa) Gowtham bowling three of his overs in powerplay felt like a good idea at that moment."

The youngster said he was keen to learn from more experienced cricketers in the team, including captain Ajinkya Rahane and Steve Smith.

"In between overs I just go to Ajju Bhai (Rahane), Jos (Buttler) or Smith and have a couple of words and try to understand what they think about the game because they have a lot of experience."

Asked about his side leaking runs in the death overs, Gopal said it was part and parcel of the game and the entire bowling unit should take responsibility and lift the team.

"In this cricket (T20) you will definitely be hit for boundaries depending on the kind of overs you are bowling. Look at Jofra (Archer), he is bowling two overs in the powerplay and then bowling back in the death overs. So he is bowling hardest overs in the game," he said.

"Jofra and fast bowlers are probably bowling the hardest overs in the match so it is understood that they will go for 6-7 runs per over, they will have bad days. It is more important that guys who are having a good day should lift the team," Gopal said.

2 cricket betting rackets busted, 7 arrested in Rajasthan

KOTA (RAJASTHAN), APR 3 (PTI): The Kota police have busted two cricket betting rackets and arrested seven people, an officer said Wednesday.

Acting on a tip-off, police teams raided two locations in Borkheda and Kaithunipole police station areas and arrested seven people while they were betting on matches of the T-20 Indian Premier League (IPL) on Tuesday night, Assistant Superintendent of Police (Kota City) Harsh Ratnu said.

At least 40 mobile

phones, 2 laptops, records showing cricket betting in crores of rupees and Rs 40,000 in cash were recovered from the two locations, he said.

Rajendra alias Lucky, Praveen Mewada alias Jony and Harshit Hora were arrested from a rented house in Borekhe-da, Ratnu said.

Anwar Khan, Abeer Khan, Arif Mohammad and Manohre Chawla were arrested from Anwar's home in the Kaithunipole area, the officer added.

MHA issues show cause notice to wife of Mamata's nephew for giving false info for OCI, PAN cards

NEW DELHI, APR 3 (PTI): A show cause notice has been served on Rujira Naroola, wife of West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee's nephew Abhishek Banerjee, for allegedly making false representation and concealing material facts while submitting documents before the competent authorities to get her Overseas Citizen of India (OCI) and PAN cards, officials said Wednesday.

In the notice, the home ministry said discrepancies have been detected in the declaration of Naroola's nationality and father's name in separate applications for PIO card, conversion of Person of Indian Origin (PIO) to OCI card and PAN card and hence her registration as OCI card holder is liable for cancellation in public interest.

Naroola, an Indian-origin Thai national, has been asked to reply within 15 days as to why she had made false representations and concealed facts. The show cause notice was served by the home ministry on March 29, an official said.

She was issued PIO card by the Indian embassy in Bangkok on January 8, 2010, mentioning Nippon Naroola as her father in the card. She later applied for conversion of her PIO card to OCI card at the office of FRRO, Kolkata, on November 8, 2017, submitting certificate of her marriage to Abhishek Banerjee, issued in Kolkata on February 3, 2013, as one of the supporting documents. However, she mentioned Gursharan Singh Ahuja, resident of Rajouri Garden, New Delhi, as her father in the marriage certificate.

Abhishek is a Trinamool Congress MP from West Bengal. The central government has also learnt that Naroola had applied for PAN card on November 14, 2009, by filling Form 49A without intimating her real status as a Thai national holding OCI card and mentioning Gursharan Singh Ahuja as her father, another official said.

According to the home ministry, Rujira was required to fill Form 49A to get PAN by declaring herself as a foreigner holding OCI card.

However, as per her Form 49A application, she obtained PAN card as an Indian citizen.

"The central government has examined the matter and noticed discrepancies mentioned above and is prima facie of the opinion that registration of Ms Rujira Naroola as an OCI card holder is liable for cancellation in the interest of general public under sub-clauses (a) & (e) of Section 7D of the Citizenship Act, 1965," the ministry said.

EC seeks details of Namo TV from I& B Ministry

NEW DELHI, APR 3 (PTI): The Election Commission is learnt to have sought details of Namo TV from the Information and Broadcasting Ministry after the issue was flagged by the Congress and the Aam Admi Party which wanted to know whether political parties having own channels was violative of the model code of conduct.

The Commission, among other issues, is learnt to have asked about details of the launch of the channel. The channel, also called 'Content TV', carries the picture of Prime Minister Narendra Modi as its logo. It was

launched ahead of Lok Sabha polls beginning April 11. It is available on various DTH and cable TV platforms.

It shows speeches of the PM and interviews of BJP leaders.

The AAP had recently written to the EC complaining against Namo TV, asking the poll panel if political parties having TV channels was in adherence to the model code of conduct.

The Arvind Kejriwal-led party asked the EC if the BJP had sought approval for the launch of the channel, which has Prime Minister Modi's photograph on its logo and runs all his speeches.

"Can permission be

granted to a party to have its own TV channel even after the model code is enforced? If no permission was given by the ECI, then what action has been taken?," the AAP said in its letter to the poll panel.

It had also asked if the Bharatiya Janata Party had approached the Media Certification Committee, established to certify content and cost of a telecast.

The Congress had also moved the poll panel over the channel, saying it was violative of the poll code and the Representation of the People Act.

The EC has also learnt to have written separately to Dordarshan for tele-

casting live the 'Main bhi chowkidar' programme of Modi on March 31 evening for one hour.

The Congress had written to EC against the BJP's alleged "misuse" of Doordarshan in broadcasting certain speeches by Prime Minister Modi.

The Congress has called for a level playing field for all parties in election campaigning.

The 'Main Bhi Chowkidar' programme of the prime minister was being broadcast live on DD News and its YouTube channel, and the said programme was even being promoted on social media handles of DD News, the Congress memorandum said.

Book brings alive genius of KL Saigal

NEW DELHI, APR 3 (PTI): The genius of KL Saigal, his timeless compositions and the golden era of Indian cinema have been brought alive in a book on the legendary singer.

Kundan: Saigal's Life & Music, authored by documentary filmmaker and former DDG of Doordarshan Sharad Dutt, has been transcreated in English by Jyoti Sabharwal of Stellar Publishers. Dutt won the National Award (Swarna Kamal for best book on cinema) in 2005 for the original book in Hindi.

The book will be released on April 4, the 115th birth anniversary of Saigal. Archival records, rare photographs and posters of Saigal's films in this tome, give insightful glimpses, and beckon collectors and connoisseurs.

Dutt says he wanted to cogitate

as to what was that luring quality in Saigal's music - the classical facet or the popular element.

It was a resplendent blend of both these components. For chaste classical renditions tend to be dry, given its dalliance with mind and intellect. And mere popularity is jugglery of transitory pleasure that doesn't last, he says.

According to Dutt, the litmus test of any artistic endeavour lies in the fact that even with a classical base, it invades the realm of popularity and enchants the masses.

This was the warp and weft of Saigal's craft that immortalised his songs. At one end, he impressed the maestros, and at the other, captivated a commoner on the street. That is why his music continues to resonate and remembered with much veneration.

"His unqualified devotion to the ragas and rhythm had entwined the pathos in such a mesmeric manner that it gently stirred emotions evoking sadness and melancholia became his hallmark, he says.

A unique voice and singing style that could not possibly be emulated, and an acting prowess that complemented the gifted throat, earned Saigal a distinct place in the annals of Indian cinema.

A bilingual actor, he commenced his cinematic sojourn with New Theatres, and touched the zenith with Devdas in 1935, that was to become an all-time classic.

With each successive venture President , Dharti Mata , Street Singer , Zindagi , Bhakt Surdas , Tansen , Shahjahan , et al - he

kept soaring to reach the skies.

With the release of his maiden Bengali film Didi , he captured the hearts of Bengal's cognoscenti. And his songs in Bangla received approbation of Rabindranath Tagore.

An artiste, nonpareil in past or future, he became a legend in his lifetime. His repertoire in varied genres of songs, ghazals, bhajans, as also in other modes of classical style enthralled the masses, as these renditions made them laugh and cry.

A film career that merely lasted 15 years, he performed in just about 36 films and rendered about 185 songs in Hindi, Urdu, Persian, Punjabi, Bangla and Tamil, thus proving the dictum that it is not the extensiveness but the intensity of those renderings that bequeaths the mantle of immortality.

Brunei introduces stoning to death for gay sex, adultery

BANDAR SERI BEGAWAN (BRUNEI), APR 3 (AFP): Brunei on Wednesday introduced harsh new sharia laws, including death by stoning for adultery and gay sex, despite a storm of global criticism from politicians, celebrities and rights groups.

The tough penal code in the tiny country on tropical Borneo island -- ruled by the all-powerful Sultan Hassanah Bolkiah -- fully came into force following years of delays.

The laws, which also include amputation of hands and feet for thieves, make Brunei the first place in East or Southeast Asia to have a sharia penal code at the national level, joining several mostly Middle Eastern countries such as Saudi Arabia.

Rape and robbery are also punishable by death under the code and many of the new laws, such as capital punishment for insulting the Prophet Mohammed, apply to non-Muslims as well as Muslims.

The decision to push ahead with the punishments has sparked alarm around the world, with the United Nations labelling them "cruel and inhumane" and celebrities, led by actor George Clooney and pop star Elton John, calling for Brunei-owned hotels to be boycotted.

In a public address to mark a special date in the Muslim calendar, the sultan called for stron-



ger Islamic teachings but did not mention the new penal code.

"I want to see Islamic teachings in this country grow stronger," he said in the nationally televised speech at a convention centre near the capital Bandar Seri Begawan.

The sultan, who has been on the throne for over five decades, also insisted that Brunei was a "fair" country and the environment for visitors was "safe and harmonious".

Government officials later confirmed the laws had entered into force.

The sharia laws have triggered worldwide condemnation, and Phil Robertson, deputy Asia director at Human Rights Watch, described the code as "barbaric to the core, imposing archaic punishments for acts that shouldn't even be crimes".

The European Union said in a statement that

some of the new punishments "amount to torture, acts of cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment".

They are particularly upsetting for the country's small lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) community. Before the new laws, sex between men was already illegal in Brunei and punishable with up to 10 years in jail.

But the new code stipulates death by stoning as a punishment for sex between men, while women convicted of having sexual relations with other women face up to 40 strokes of the cane or a maximum 10-year jail term.

A 33-year-old gay Bruneian man, who spoke anonymously, said the new laws were "unfair, cruel and should not happen".

"It really takes away my happiness and freedom to express myself,

and depresses me so much," he told AFP.

Zulhelmi bin Mohamad, a transgender woman who fled Brunei last year and is seeking asylum in Canada, told AFP that the environment will be more terrifying for the country's LGBT community, who were already leading "very secretive" lives.

"Some worry a lot and would like to escape the country before they are found out not to be... heterosexual," the 19-year-old said.

Confirming the new penal code was now in force, a religious affairs ministry official told AFP: "The statement from the prime minister's office last weekend on (the code's) implementation prevails, hence (April 3) marks the date of its implementation."

A second government official, speaking anonymously, confirmed it had entered into force.

Malaysia ex-PM Najib to go on trial for corruption

KUALA LUMPUR, APR 3 (AFP): Malaysia's disgraced former leader Najib Razak will go on trial Wednesday over a multi-billion-dollar financial scandal that contributed to his long-ruling coalition's downfall last year and sent shockwaves around the world.

The 65-year-old will face the first of several trials over his alleged involvement in the looting of sovereign wealth fund 1MDB, a state investment vehicle established to develop the economy of the Southeast Asian nation.

The former premier and his cronies are accused of plundering billions of dollars from the fund and spending it on everything from high-end real estate to artworks in a fraud that stretched around the world.

He had been tipped to win another term in office easily last year and extend his coalition's six-decade stranglehold on power, only to be soundly defeated by his former boss, Mahathir Mohamad, who rode a wave of public anger to the premiership.

In the months that followed, once-dormant investigations into 1MDB were relaunched and Najib was hit with dozens of corruption charges linked to the scandal.

In Wednesday's trial, due to start at 2:00 pm, Najib will face seven charges of corruption and money laundering over the alleged theft of some 42 million ringgit

(USD 10.3 million) from SRC International, a former 1MDB unit. It is only a fraction of the money allegedly stolen from 1MDB, and hundreds of millions of dollars are believed to have ended up in Najib's accounts alone.

He has denied any wrongdoing.

Najib was initially due to stand trial in February, but appeals by his defence team over procedural matters saw his case put on hold until a judge last week ruled the trial should finally proceed. While many of his cohorts have been caught and charged in Malaysian courts, the alleged mastermind behind the 1MDB scandal, playboy financier Jho Low, is still at large.

Local media reported the former premier made a bid on Monday to delay his trial yet again, although this failed.

Cynthia Gabriel, head of the non-profit group The Centre to Combat Corruption and Cronyism, told AFP that Malaysians had been waiting "too long" for the trial to begin. "The multiple delays are so obvious and deliberate, it's a way of pushing the trials further," she said.

"It's apparent that the former ousted PM, isn't quite ready to sit in the dock and face trial, be cross-examined, and get embarrassed," Fahmi Reza, a graphic artist who was slapped with a jail term and fined for depicting Najib in a caricature as a sinister clown, said it was the ex-premier's turn to "face justice".

Trump says '100pc' ready to shut down Mexico border

Washington, Apr 3 (AFP): President Donald Trump said Tuesday he is "100 per cent" prepared to close down the US-Mexico border, warning Congress and Central American governments to take action to stem the flow of migrants into the country. Delays were already rising at several key border crossings as Trump ratcheted up pressure on Democrats in Congress to toughen US laws against illegal immigrants, threatening to hurt the US economy in the name of border security. "It is a national emergency on the border," Trump said.

If Mexico does not stop migrants from transiting across its territory, and if Congress does not act, he said, "the border's going to be closed, 100 per cent." "Sure it's going to have a negative impact on the economy," he said. "Security is more important to me than trade."

Trump said Democrats were blocking reforms for political reasons but could fix the problem "in 45 minutes." He was not specific, but Homeland Security Secretary Kirstjen Nielsen has asked Congress to give border officials the power to forcibly repatriate Central American illegal immigrants, including children who arrived alone, back to their countries.

The threat to close the border, which handled some USD612 billion worth of trade in 2018, sent shivers through the economy, and drew

warnings from allies of the president. "Closing down the border would have potentially catastrophic economic impact on our country, and I would hope we would not be doing that sort of thing," Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell said.

His call was backed by the Chamber of Commerce, which said in a statement that while it backed immigration reform, closing the border "would inflict severe economic harm on American families, workers, farmers and manufacturers across the United States."

Homeland Security officials said they were preparing for the possibility of a shutdown of at least some border entry points as they divert staff to deal with the flood of migrants from Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador, expected to hit nearly 100,000 a month. Nielsen cut short an official trip to Europe to return for meetings early Tuesday on the border crisis, and on Monday Acting Defense Secretary Patrick Shanahan said he would be meeting Nielsen and Secretary of State Mike Pompeo on the crisis.

Officials said facilities for handling the migrants -- who for the moment cannot be sent back after they cross the border and request asylum -- are overtaxed and understaffed, creating hazardous conditions.

"We are in a full blown emergency. The bottom line is all options

The sultan -- who is one of the world's wealthiest men and lives in a vast, golden-domed palace -- announced plans for the code in 2013. The first section was introduced in 2014 and included less stringent penalties, such as fines or jail terms for offences including indecent behaviour or skipping Friday prayers.

Clooney's call to boycott nine Brunei-owned hotels in Europe and the United States last week catapulted the issue into the international headlines.

Since then, a series of well-known figures have lined up to add their names to the chorus of condemnation.

The sultan, who is the world's second-longest reigning monarch, first called for the penal code in the late 1990s and it appears to enjoy broad support in the former British protectorate of about 400,000 people.

Analysts say he is seeking to burnish his Islamic credentials and shore up support among the country's conservatives due to the waning fortunes of the oil-dependent economy, which has been ravaged by recession in recent years.

It is also unclear whether death by stoning will actually be implemented, as a high burden of proof is needed to hand down the punishment and Brunei has not executed anyone for decades.

Pak's anti-graft body recovers Rs 60 crore from Zardari's aide

ISLAMABAD, APR 3 (PTI): Pakistan's top anti-graft body on Wednesday recovered Rs 60 crore in the fake accounts case from prime suspect Younas Kudwavi, who is believed to be a business partner of former president Asif Ali Zardari, according to a media report.

The National Accountability Bureau's (NAB) Rawalpindi chapter recovered Rs 60 crore from Kudwavi, Geo News reported, citing sources.

The NAB has also presented its interim challan before the accountability court - approved earlier by its executive board.

Kudwavi is facing the charge of issuing illegal allotment letter on properties registered for a temple and library.

Quoting sources, it said that Kudwavi is a business partner of former president Zardari in the Park Lane Es-

tate Company, a Karachi-based real estate firm co-owned by Zardari and his son Bilawal Bhutto Zardari.

The Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) was investigating 32 people, including Zardari, his sister Faryal Talpur, Omni Group chairman Anwar Majeed, in relation to money laundering through fictitious bank accounts.

Zardari's close aide Hussain Lawai was arrested in July last year in connection with the probe. His other close aide and Omni Group chairman Anwar Majeed and his son, Abdul Ghani, were arrested by FIA in August 2018.

Last month, Zardari and Bilawal appeared before the NAB, which questioned them on corruption charges. They appeared before the NAB in connection with

an alleged loan obtained by the Park Lane Estate Company. The NAB has claimed in the case that a piece of land belonging to the Punjab forest department was illegally transferred to the company by some government officials.

The Supreme Court in September 2018 constituted a joint investigation team to probe the fake accounts case. The JIT had filed its report and also recommended a directive for NAB to conduct a thorough inquiry.

In January 2019, the Supreme Court had referred the JIT report to NAB to launch its probe and complete it within two months.

On March 15, a banking court in Karachi approved the NAB chairman's petition and transferred the money laundering case to an accountability court in Islamabad for trial.

S Korean ship detained for violating UN sanctions: Seoul

SEOUL, APRIL 3 (AFP): A South Korean ship has been detained for six months on suspicion of violating UN sanctions against the nuclear-armed North, Seoul's foreign ministry said Wednesday.

Pyongyang is sanctioned over its weapons programme under multiple UN Security Council resolutions, which include curbs on shipments of oil and fuel to the isolated regime.

But the North has been seeking to get around the measures, with a recent UN report saying that Pyongyang was securing deliveries of fuel through ship-to-ship transfers in international waters.

Seoul's foreign ministry said a South Korean ship and three others had been detained in the country, suspected

of undermining the economic measures against the North.

"This is the first time a South Korean vessel has been detained for allegedly violating UN sanctions," a ministry official told AFP.

The ship -- held in the southern port of Busan since last October -- is suspected of carrying out an illicit ship-to-ship transfer of oil to a North Korean tanker, according to the Yonhap News Agency.

If it is found to have made the transfer, the South Korean vessel would likely be blacklisted by the UN, Yonhap reported.

The foreign ministry official did not explain the delay in the authorities making the detention public.

South Korean President Moon Jae-in has

sought to engage the North to bring it to the negotiating table, dangling economic carrots before it in the form of inter-Korean projects -- many of which would violate the current sanctions rules if implemented. Questions were also raised over whether it had undermined the measures by providing supplies to set up an inter-Korean liaison office north of the border.

Last year three South Korean firms were caught importing millions of dollars worth of coal and iron from the North in 2017.

Immediate sanctions relief was a key demand of the cash-strapped North when leader Kim Jong Un met with US President Donald Trump in Hanoi in February for a second summit that ultimately broke down.





NICE GAME! The friends, Pete Davidson & John Mulaney enjoy a Knicks match together in the Big Apple..

Kangana Ranaut exits Anurag Basu's 'Imali'



MUMBAI, APR 3 (PTI): Actor Kangana Ranaut has opted out of filmmaker Anurag Basu's next "Imali" as she wants to focus more on her directorial venture.

The project, which will also feature Rajkumar Rao, would have marked her third collaboration with Basu after her debut "Gangster" and "Life in a Metro".

The actor said "Imali" was supposed to go on floors in November 2018 but she had to direct and reshoot "Manikarnika", so the film was pushed. "Anurag and I have spoken about it. I feel extremely bad because 'Imali' was giving me an opportunity to work with

my mentor again, but I'm on the verge of announcing my own film in a few weeks from now. That has taken a lot of my time and I have conveyed it to Anurag, who understood my situation," she said in a statement.

The actor said her focus right now is on her next directorial.

"We will work together at some point. 'Imali' is a beautiful love story and we can do that later. But right now, my focus is on my next directorial venture."

Kangana is currently working on three films -- "Mental Hai Kya", "Panga" and the recently announced Jayalalithaa biopic.

Kalank: Varun Dhawan Was Asked About Replacing Shah Rukh Khan In The Film

Varun Dhawan interacted with the media at the trailer launch of Kalank in Mumbai on Wednesday, wherein he spoke about replacing Shah Rukh Khan in the film, SRK's reaction to the film's teaser and more. The period drama, which features Varun

Dhawan, Alia Bhatt, Sonakshi Sinha, Madhuri Dixit, Sanjay Dutt and Aditya Roy Kapur, was earlier supposed to feature Shah Rukh in the lead role. When Varun was asked about replacing the Zero actor in the film, he told news agency PTI: "Honestly, I never spoke to him on how I should approach the role. I was aware that Shah Rukh sir and the other star cast was supposed to do the film. At that time, Karan was going to direct it and Mr Yash Johar was producing it."

During the trailer launch, Varun not only spoke about stepping into Shah Rukh's shoes, he also talked about Shah Rukh's reaction to the teaser of Kalank. "He had seen the teaser and I had asked him for his opinion. He had some good things to say about that. He was happy too when I told him I applied 'soorma (kohl)," PTI quoted Varun as saying. The 31-year-old actor add-

ed, "He smiled at me and said good, you're working hard and doing these roles. These are roles that will get you closer to the audience."

The Judwaa 2 actor also spoke about how Karan Johar was supposed to direct the



film. However, he decided to back out after the death of his father Yash Johar. During the interaction, Varun revealed that he had never imagined that he would be a part of the magnum opus. "Abhishek had told me how Karan narrated the story to him. At that time, no one would've imagined that he will direct it someday and I will act in it," PTI quoted Varun Dhawan as saying.

Kalank is a period drama directed by Abhishek Varman and produced by Karan Johar's Dharma Productions. The film is set in the Forties and it slated to release on April 17 this year.

Michelle Williams felt 'paralysed' after finding out about pay gap with Mark Wahlberg



LOS ANGELES, APR 3 (PTI): Actor Michelle Williams has opened up about being paid significantly less than her "All the Money in the World" co-star Mark Wahlberg for the film's reshoots.

The 38-year-old actor, who joined Speaker of the US House of Representatives, Nancy Pelosi, and other members of the Democratic Women's Caucus to mark Equal Pay Day on Tuesday, credited Jessica Chastain for spreading awareness about her case.

Williams said she was "paralysed in feelings of futility" when she learned that Wahlberg was paid USD 1.5 million compared to her paycheck of less than USD 1,000 for reshoots after Kevin Spacey's firing from the project, according to Entertainment Weekly.

"Guess what, no one cared. This came as no surprise to me, it simply reinforced my life-learned belief that equality is not an inalienable right and that women would always be working just as hard for less money

while shouldering more responsibility at home," she said.

Williams said Chastain asked for permission to share her case with her followers on Twitter as the actor's "audience was much wider than mine".

"She wasn't afraid to pick up a megaphone and be heard. Heard she was, there was an uproar and a public shaming within my industry that resulted in a USD 2 million donation to the Time's Up Defense Fund," she added.

The actor said things have changed so much for her since the incident.

"I could tell my workplace was shifting. Rather than being grasped too tightly or hugged for too long as a morning greeting, my hand was shaken and I was looked squarely in the eye and I was welcomed to my Monday morning," Williams said.

"On the job I just completed two weeks ago, I have to tell you, I was paid equally with my male co-star," she added.

Evan Peters says he will not appear in season 9 of 'American Horror Story'



LOS ANGELES, APR 3 (PTI): Actor Evan Peters has ruled out his return for the next season of anthology show "American Horror Story".

The 32-year-old actor has been with the FX show since its inception, making appearances in all of the eight previous seasons. During the WonderCon event, the actor was asked whether he will be involved with the show's yet-untitled ninth season. "No, I'm gonna sit a season out," Peters replied.

The actor is currently gearing up for "X-Men: Dark Phoenix" where he reprises his role of mutant Quicksilver.

ARIES: You could hit on a brilliant idea for a work or creative project today, and while it's no doubt inspired, the question is, is it viable? You may have a hard time distinguishing fantasy from clear-eyed reality thanks to a square between magnifying Jupiter and the moon in your dreamy twelfth house!

TAURUS: Rather than force yourself to work on things you can't wrap your brain around today, see if you can shuffle your to-do list to be optimally productive. A clash between big-picture Jupiter and the moon in your social sector might make it challenging to analyze that quarterly report or proofread an important storyline. Pro tip: Let the calls from friends go to voicemail and stay as focused as you can, working in short, intense bursts. In between, take a walk to clear your head—but then hustle back to the grindstone.

GEMINI: In your quest for career success, are you taking the not-so-little people for granted? You've been getting your name out there, but at what cost? Gemini in relationships might need to hit pause (instead of fast forward) and give some serious love to their

partner. Today is the perfect day for that, with generous Jupiter in your dynamic-duos zone zapping the moon in your professional sector.

CANCER: Trying to get a straight answer over the last three weeks has been nearly impossible, thanks to communicator Mercury's backspin through your truth-telling ninth house. You can now breathe easy as the messenger planet turns direct and forges ahead. No more dancing around an issue—insist on the complete story. Steer clear of even slight exaggerations and aim to be fully authentic. Since the ninth house also rules travel, you've got a cosmic thumbs-up for a winter getaway.

LEO: Today's cosmos shine a light on hidden realities as expressive Mercury turns direct in your covert eighth house. Over the past three weeks, while the messenger planet was retrograde, you've held your cards close to your vest, but guarding one secret could be taking a toll on your psyche. Mercury's forward motion could attract a worthy confidante—which is a good start to releasing

your burden.

VIRGO: Your routine-driven sign isn't generally considered erratic, but Mercury's retrograde through your relationship house over the past three weeks might have made you flip-flop. Perhaps a BFF hasn't had much time for you since finding "The One" or an ex resurfaced without an offer of commitment. Enough already!

LIBRA: Channel-surfing or downward-dogging? If you've been doing more of the former over the past three weeks, you can thank Mercury, which has been retrograde (backward) in your self-care sector. But don't throw in the towel! Today, the quicksilver planet turns direct, helping you find sustainable routines.

SCORPIO: You're back! On March 5, expressive Mercury turned retrograde in your passionate fifth house. You may have felt like you were missing the love boat. Or perhaps you couldn't get a clear read on a romantic interest. Get ready to shake off the confusion and insecurity today, as the communication planet powers forward and calls

forth your most radiant self!

SAGITTARIUS: Baby, it might (still) be cold outside, but it wouldn't hurt to open a few windows and air out Chateau Sagittarius. With Mercury retrograde in your domestic fourth house since March 5, home and family matters might have felt a bit dazed and confused. Your survival instincts kicked in, causing you to retreat from the insanity. You can breathe a sigh of relief and re-engage today, as Mercury turns direct. Call a truce with your roomies, make up with your S.O., seek out a solution with your mother!

CAPRICORN: Banish that either-or thinking, Capricorn. After a confusing three-week Mercury retrograde in your communication house, the messenger planet powers forward today. While you prefer to pour your (prodigious) energy into one thing at a time, this approach may not be serving you. Don't be afraid to dip your toe into multiple ponds, like those librarian-slash-actors or entrepreneur-slash-activists. Commuting or living in two cities is even a possibility for some earthbound Goats.

AQUARIUS: Loosen those purse strings,

Aquarius. Since Mercury went retrograde on March 5, you may have had a few budgetary breakdowns. But the messenger planet resumes forward motion today, making it safe to once again enjoy your hard-earned cash. This is a perfect time to revisit (and if necessary, revamp) your plans to strike a healthy balance between saving and spending. Invest in your greatest resource: yourself! A personal growth workshop, meditation retreat or life-coaching sessions can awaken your creativity and usher in a tsunami of entrepreneurial ideas.

PISCES: Got a big ask to make? This is the perfect moment! The moon is in your sign all day, making you approachable (and loveable). And since la luna is trading fire with auspicious Jupiter in your career corner, other people might be in particularly generous spirits. A word of caution with aggrandizing Jupiter: Don't get carried away! There may be a fine (if invisible) line between what they're willing to give and what's too much. Vibe them out, and if possible, try to get them to put an offer on the table.