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SummitTIMES

Vol 05 | Issue 09 | Gangtok | Saturday | 11 January 2020

ON TOP OF THE NEWS

RNI No. SIKENG/2016/69420

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Elusive conspirator in Gauri Lankesh murder arrested in Jharkhand

DHANBAD (JHARKHAND)/ BENGALURU, JAN 10 (PTI):

An accused wanted in the killing of activist-journalist Gauri Lankesh over two years ago has been arrested in Dhanbad district of Jharkhand, the police said on Friday.

Personnel of the Karnataka Special Investigation Team, set up to probe the killing that triggered a national outrage, arrested Rishikesh Dewerkar alias Rajesh, from Katras town, about 30 km from here, on Thursday evening, Dhanbad senior Superintendent of Police Kisor Kaushal told reporters.

Rajesh, eluding arrest for the past one-and-half years, has been working at a petrol pump in the town, taking an alias name for the last eight months, he added.

He is the 17th accused to be arrested in connection with the killing of Lankesh on September 5, 2017 in front of her house in Bengaluru. Known for her Left-leanings and anti-establishment voice, she was shot dead by unidentified assailants with the incident drawing national outrage and protests. Sharp shooter Parashuram Waghmare, who allegedly fired the bullets, is among the 16 arrested earlier. One more accused is still absconding.

The SIT personnel from Bengaluru, with the help of their counterparts in Katras, arrested Rajesh and took him to Bengaluru after obtaining transit remand from a local court, the SSP said. Rajesh has been working as a caretaker at a petrol pump in Katras and living in disguise for the last eight months in Bhagat colony, he said.

An official of the SIT said Rajesh was suspected to be part of the conspiracy to kill Lankesh.

The official of the Bengaluru team, headed by Inspector Punit Kumar, said they tracked Rajesh on the basis of his mobile phone location. The petrol pump owner, who was interrogated by the Bengaluru police, said Rajesh had claimed to be unemployed and sought the job. The owner also gave him room on rent, the police officer said. According to a SIT statement issued in Bengaluru, the 44-year old man was accused number 18 in the case and part of the conspiracy to kill Lankesh.

The SIT had earlier said Lankesh was killed following a conspiracy hatched by the gang after being inspired by a book brought out by right-wing group Sanatan Sanstha, that had identified Lankesh as a 'durjan' (evil person).

LTVC questions SKM Govt's silence on LT Assembly seat issue

Time for SKM to fulfill promise: Yehang Tshong

SAGAR CHETTRI GANGTOK, 10 JAN:

Limboo Tamang Voluntary Committee [LTVC] today said that Sikkim Krantikari Morcha should not forget its pre-poll promise of reserving seats for Limboo-Tamang in the State Assembly and the party's silence on the issue after coming to power is creating uneasiness within the LT communities.

Addressing a press conference here today, LTVC president, Yehang Tshong stated that LTVC had given time of 100 days to the newly formed SKM government to initiate the basic procedure for LT seat reservation. He added that the organization has also met and



submitted memorandum to few SKM Ministers after election and submitted a copy of memorandum that was earlier submitted to SKM president, PS Goley before the election.

In seven months of the SKM Government, Monsoon & Winter Par-

liament Session has taken place, by-election has been held and many State Assembly sessions have taken place but we have not heard a single word on LT Assembly seat reservation issue inside the Parliament or Sikkim Legislative As-

sembly, said Mr Tshong.

He added that although the Chief Minister and Ministers and MP from Sikkim have placed LT seat reservation issue in the Centre, they have not provided any formula.

This, he said, is pointless and the State gov-

ernment should make its stand clear with formula in the LT Assembly seat reservation issue.

He informed that SKM MLA, KN Lepcha had placed a private member bill on LT seat reservation from existing 32 seats when SDF was

in power and it was supported by another SKM MLA, Sonam Lama.

Now that SKM is in power, the government should pass this formula to reserve Assembly seats for LT from the existing 32 seats, stated Mr Tshong.

He also expressed his disappointment over Lok Sabha MP, Indra Hang Subba not raising the LT issue in the Winter Parliament session.

"Former Lok Sabha MP, PD Rai, had demanded LT seat reservation to be done on the basis of Burman Commission and made SDF party's stand public. SKM should also make its stand clear," said Mr Tshong.

He further questioned SKM's silence on the issue which the party had strongly spoken for before the elections and which had also helped the party to bring 'parivartan' in the State.

Mr Tshong recalled that SKM party had also organized meet-

ings and rallies for LT seat reservation issue as Limboo-Tamang seat Arakshan Yatra on 26 June in 2018 which was led by Sangha MLA Sonam Lama and ahd even promised to resolve LT seat reservation issue 10 days after forming the new government.

"LTVC would like to remind SKM party of their 2019 election manifesto promise that until and unless we do not bring seat reservation for the deprived LT communities in SLA we won't rest," he said.

Mr Tshong informed that SKM had also formed a 10-member committee on LT seat reservation in December 2018 but the report of the committee has not been made public till date. He further asked SKM to reveal what steps and action have been initiated, and what formula has been framed and adopted by this 10-member committee.

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PROPOSAL FOR INTRA AND INTER-STATE CORRIDOR

Consultancy service presents demo on tunnel construction



SUMMIT REPORT GANGTOK, 10 JAN:

The state government has proposed the construction of tunnels at strategic places to de-congest the main route between Rangpo, Ranipool and Gangtok connecting all districts, a press release from the Chief Minister's Office informs.

Through these tunnels the state government proposes to provide an Intra-State and Inter-State Corridor for

all weather connectivity.

The state Road and Bridges Department is the Nodal Department which has planned to appoint some reliable agencies as consultants for preparing the feasibility study and detailed project report for proposed tunnel corridors.

In this context, Lion Marsway JV Tunnel DPR Project of New Delhi gave a project demonstration today to the Chief Minister, Prem Singh Tamang in the presence of Min-

ister Roads & Bridges, Samdup Lepcha, Secretary R&B, TP Shangderpa, Secretary to CM, SD Dhakal along with officers and engineers concerned, the release mentions.

The presentation was part of a plan to explore an alternative to the existing road infrastructure in the State, mainly to facilitate smooth movement of vehicles within the State and outside, as well as to shorten travel time.

SKM condemns GRC claims of Golay's interest in Sikkim-Darj Merger

...SEES SDF CONSPIRACY BEHIND NEW-REPORT

SUMMIT REPORT GANGTOK, 10 JAN:

Sikkim Krantikari Morcha has condemned claims made by Gorkha Rashtriya Congress leader, Bharat Dong, that Chief Minister PS Tamang [Golay] has assured to "take up" Sikkim-Darjeeling merger by the year 2022. Contending that the CM or any other SKM leader has never officially met a GRC delegation and never discussed Sikkim-Darj merger, Political Secretary to the CM, Jacob Khaling, pointing out to attempts by SDF party-workers to make this piece of news "viral,"

alleged today that the report might have been planted by Sikkim Democratic Front.

The news-report in question, datelined Kurseong, was published in an English daily on 08 January and quoted GRC's Bharat Dong as claiming that he had met the CM and while discussing Sikkim-Darjeeling merger, a demand being pursued by GRC, had received the assurance that SKM would take up the demand by the year 2022.

The report had also quoted Mr Dong as admitting that while they had never been able to

meet the previous Chief Minister Pawan Chamling with their demand, the present incumbent was more open and accessible not only to meet but also to their proposal for a Sikkim-Darjeeling Merger.

Responding to these claims, Mr Khaling through an SKM press release issued today, dismissed the claims and condemned them as being patently false and mischievous.

He reiterated that neither the CM, nor any member of the SKM leadership had ever met Mr Dong or discussed the merger idea.

turn to pg 02

AP CM appears before CBI court in Hyderabad

HYDERABAD, JAN 10 (PTI): Amid tight security, Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy on Friday appeared before a CBI special court here in connection with the quid pro quo investments cases filed against him.

This is Jagan's first appearance in the court after he assumed charge as Chief Minister on May 30, 2019.

In view of Jagan's court appearance, security was strengthened near the court's premises. Media was not allowed in the court premises.

The Court of Principal Special Judge for CBI cases had on January 3 directed Jagan, who has been shown as accused number one in the cases, to appear in person before the court, rejecting

the latter's plea for an exemption. The YSR Congress president has been charge sheeted in at least 11 cases as the prime accused in alleged quid pro quo deals.

On Friday, the court also issued summons to Telangana Education Minister Sabitha Reddy, former Andhra Pradesh Minister Dharmana Prasada Rao and others asking them to appear before it on January 17.

The summons were issued after the court took cognisance of the supplementary chargesheet filed by CBI in one of the cases, which is part of the case against Jagan, against them.

Sabitha Reddy was added as an accused in the supplementary chargesheet for allegedly giving undue favours in allotting mine leases to

a firm during her earlier stint as minister in united Andhra Pradesh.

On Friday, along with Jagan, his close aide and YSR Congress Rajya Sabha member V Vijaysai Reddy, Dharmana Prasada Rao and other accused in the cases, too appeared before the court, which posted the matter to January 17.

"Jagan marked his presence (in the court) and the matter was posted to January 17. There is no need for him to appear in person on that day," a defense counsel told PTI.

The counsel further said arguments were on Friday completed with regard to joint hearing on charges pertaining to the 11 cases and also on clubbing of discharge petitions filed by the accused after which the

court posted the matter for orders to January 17.

Jagan had also earlier filed discharge petition.

"Whether all the cases to be heard together or not will be decided on January 17," the defense counsel said.

The cases relate to investments made by various companies in Jagan's firms as quid pro quo for various favours bestowed on them during the tenure of his father late Y S Rajasekhara Reddy as Chief Minister between 2004 and 2009.

Several former ministers and bureaucrats are also accused in the case.

Jagan is currently out on bail, having spent time in jail as an "un-convicted criminal prisoner" in the Chanchalguda Central Prison from May 2012 to September 2013.

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Ufirst
Time to Gift

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Bedi functioning in 'atrocious' manner: Pondy CM

PUDUCHERRY, JAN 10 (PTI): Intensifying his tirade against Puducherry Lt Governor Kiran Bedi, Chief Minister V Narayanasamy on Friday accused her of functioning in an "atrocious" manner by 'blocking' the free rice scheme and interfering in appointment of the state election commissioner.

The Chief Minister, who has been at logger heads with Bedi on various issues, also said he has moved the Madras High Court against the Union Home Ministry and the Lt Governor for their stand 'affecting' the implementation of the free rice scheme in accordance with the Congress government's decision.

While the government has been insisting on distribution of rice to ration card holders, Bedi has pushed for remittance of cash equivalent to the quantum of rice into the bank accounts of the beneficiaries, saying the Centre has given such a direction.

Narayanasaamy claimed approval has been obtained from Union Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution Minister Ram Vilas Paswan for distributing rice to the cardholders through the PDS instead of cash.

"This clearance was available to me after Puducherry PWD Minister A Namassivayam, the newly elected Congress legislator A John Kumar and I met the union minister sometime back," the Chief Minister said.

But, Bedi had, in the meanwhile, written to the Union Home Ministry insisting on direct benefit transfer (DBT), which was accepted by the latter, he said.

"I am really surprised and aghast that the Union Home Ministry and the Consumers Affairs Ministry are adopting an opposite stand in operating the free rice scheme here," he said questioning the necessity for the Lt Governor to seek Home Ministry's clarification on implementing the scheme.

"She is thus functioning in an atrocious manner impeding the welfare schemes," the Chief Minister charged.

Neighbouring states were distributing rice instead of cash, hence Puducherry could not have a different modality, he said.

"Kiran Bedi is appointed by the Centre. But, we are an elected government, and she has no right whatsoever to run counter to our decision on a welfare scheme," he said. Narayanasamy said he has filed a petition in the Madras High Court in his capacity as chief minister seeking permission for carrying out its decision to distribute rice, adding it was likely to come up for hearing next week.

He said PWD and Local Administration Minister of Puducherry would also soon challenge in the Madras High Court Bedi's current move to appoint State Election Commissioner through a newspaper advertisement.



@SummitTIMES, IN THE NEW YEAR

Ten days into the New Year, the team at SummitTimes was treated to a special function to take stock of an eventful 2019 gone by and plan ahead for a clearer 2020. Also on the occasion, the newspaper's management conferred awards on its staff members in recognition of their excellence

and hard work. Senior Correspondent Sagar Chettri and Copy Editor Raymond Lepcha were presented Employee of the Year recognitions while Layout Artist Mohan Pandey was recognized as the Most Dedicated Employee of the Year. Similarly, Lochna Mainali, News Presenter with

SummitTimes Video News, was presented the Most Exciting Find of the Year award and Senior Executive, Paru Bhattarai, feted with the Soul of the Office award. The function was presided over by SummitTimes Editor, Puran Tamang, and attended by the entire ST team. Happy New Year!

Final preparatory meet for Rimbi Maghey Mela



GYALSHING, 10 JAN (IPR): Final Preparatory Meeting for the Rimbi Maghey Mela and Spot Visit was done by Deputy Speaker, Sangay Lepcha, at Rimbi. The Dy Speaker was accompanied by ADC West, Karma L. Lepcha; SP West, Tenzing Loden Lepcha along with HODs of Line Departments of District Administration, West Sikkim.

Sangay Lepcha in his address to the attendees urged for active partici-

pation during the event. He also wished that the event would be a grand success with the proper cooperation of officials and public.

He also welcomed the suggestions of the Departmental representatives of District Administration and the Rimbi Maghey Mela Committee. He mentioned that the District Level Maghey Mela at Rimbi is an opportunity for District Officials as well as pub-

lic to make the event lively and interesting.

SP West mentioned that the Police Personnel will be stationed at the Mela vicinity along with IRB personnel. He also urged the committee members to guide their volunteers to be vigilant during the evening programs.

He also directed them to instruct the shop owners to not sell liquor to the minors. He also stated that the Police would work co-operatively with the Committee Members to ensure success of the event.

ADC West also highlighted the importance of coordination and participation of the District Officials to make the event successful. He also informed about all the activities that are scheduled to take place.

West Sikkim students visit Kerala on exposure tour



GYALSHING, 10 JAN (IPR): A group of 39 meritorious students from 33 schools across West Sikkim have embarked on a student exposure program, "Explore and Learn" to Kerala between 03-17 Jan, 2020.

The exposure program was initiated as per the vision of the Chief Minister of Sikkim to provide such exposure visits to the rural children of Sikkim. The Chief Minister had flagged off the exposure tour on 30 Dec, 2019 during the Kanchenjunga Tourism Festival at Pelling, West Sikkim.

The exposure program has been facilitated by the Office of the District Collector, West Sikkim with an objective to provide exposure to the students and showcase to them the larger world outside Sikkim.

The exposure program is being funded by REC Foundation as part of their Corporate Social Responsibility

"It was our endeavour to instill upon the young and meritorious students, a sense of larger purpose, a spirit of higher competition and sharpening their abilities to be able to compete with the world outside.

For this, we believed that the best platform would be to send these students for an exposure program

to places where they could learn more. We zeroed upon Kerala as it is one of the model states in terms of education in India and we are positive that the students would learn and explore various facets and come back sharper and more confident through the engagements," says Karma Bonpo, District Magistrate, West Sikkim, also the brain behind the exposure program to Kerala.

The 15-day program entails visiting reputed schools across Kerala, student exchange programs and cultural programs with local schools, classroom interactions at schools, interactions friendly football matches with local school schools and visiting places of historical significance apart from the visit to places of local tourist interests. The students also during the travel have had the opportunity to visit places of historical significance in New Delhi.

Speaking about the exposure program, Rinchen Ongmoo Lepcha a student from Darap Senior Secondary School says, "My exposure during this educational tour has been very good and educating. This is a blessing for each one of us to be here and learn things beyond our text book. It has been a

very engaging and a fascinating trip so far."

Another student, Bindass Chettri of Soreng Senior Secondary School speaking on the experience stated, "The one thing I learnt from the people of Kerala is their mannerisms and decency. They are very committed and that I believe is the reason for their continued progress. We as students have to learn more from them for our progress in the future."

The idea of simple living high thinking was captured effectively by a student Bijay Dahal of Buriakhop Senior Secondary school when he observed, "The people are friendly, students more confident and interactive and the concept of simple living high thinking not only in words but also in action."

The student exchange program has been highly effective in opening up newer vistas of learning for the students and the District Collectorate Office has two more student exposure trips, one to Odisha and one to Gujarat lined up in the month of January 2020.

The entire exposure tour is being managed and coordinated by Chief Learning Officer of 24hr Inspired, Dewakar Basnet, an Education Company based in Sikkim.

Consultancy service office inaugurated in Rangpo



RANGPO, 10 JAN (IPR): The opening ceremony of the consultancy service office of Kossher Infra Services Private Limited and Vishal Experts Services Private Limited was held at Rangpo, East Sikkim, today.

Speaker, Sikkim Legislative Assembly, LB Das along with Minister Agriculture, LN Sharma attended the inaugural ceremony.

During the event, discussions were held on how the consultancy service could benefit the state and its people.

Minister Agriculture urged the board to hire

local candidates and assured them all possible assistance.

The main objective of the office is to provide consultancy services in project development, investment development and facility management. It was also informed that the office would help local entrepreneurs by providing proper platform and ideas.

Also present were CEO, Smart City, Tarzan Subba; Ex-Secretary IPR and Press, BR Subba; Professor Limboo Language, AB Subba, Nar Bahadur Bhandari Degree College, Tadong, East Sikkim and others.

Bhutan team in quarter finals of CM's Gold Cup



CHITISH CHETTRI JORETHANG, 10 DEC:

Transport United, Bhutan, proceeded to the quarter finals of the ongoing 9th All India Chief Minister's Gold Cup International Football Tournament 2020 at Jorethang, South Sikkim.

In the match played today, Transport United, Bhutan defeated India Navy by 1-0 goal.

UDHD Minister, Arun Upreti was the chief guest who was accompanied by area MLA, Sunita Gajmer, Political Secretary to CM, Jacob Khaling,

guest of honour, Kala Rai along with South District Football Association (SDFA) members.

Dorji, jersey no. 23 scored the winning goal for Transport United, Bhutan.

Jigdre Wangchuk, jersey no. 60 of Transport United got "Hero of the Match" title with cash prize Rs. 10,000.

In the end of the programme, the chief guest and guest of honour were felicitated by SDFA. The first quarter final match will be played between Shillong FC and Sikkim Youth Club on 11 Jan.

Barfung in semi-final of Inter-Constituency Football Tournament



SUMMIT REPORT GANGTOK, 10 JAN:

Barfung has entered the semi-finals of the Inter-Constituency Football Tournament, 2020, after defeating Gangtok today by 1-0.

The winning goal

was scored by jersey no. 7, Karma Bhutia from Barfung.

The chief guest of today's programme was SKM In-charge Barfung Constituency, Lopzang Bhutia while guest of honour was Chung Chung Bhutia.

SKM condemns...

Mr Khaling claimed that while the previous CM was inaccessible and forever cordoned behind a layer of security personnel, Mr Tamang was much more accessible and approachable.

He suspects that Mr Dong could have joined the masses at one of the public meetings to greet Mr Tamang and offered him khadas.

But there has been no official meeting, Mr Khaling insists.

He adds that if Mr Dong managed to leave behind his organisation's memorandum among the many petitions and letters that people leave for the CM, it will not be considered an official communication by either the government or the party.

He states further that SKM has no plans of even discussing GRC's Sikkim-Darj merger plans and voiced aspersions that the manner in which the story was made viral on social media suggests that SDF played a role in planting the story as well.

"The intent was obviously to drag the Sikkim CM into a conspiracy," Mr Khaling said.

LTVC questions...

"LTVC demands that the SKM government address and resolve the LT seat reservation issue at the earliest with formula and pass it from Sikkim Legislative Assembly like they had promised before the 2019 election," he said.

He added that there should be no problem for SKM as they are in alliance with BJP in both State and Center and even BJP had promised to resolve the LT seat reservation issue in their 2019 election manifesto.

AP CM appears...

In the run up to the State Assembly polls last year, Jagan's presence in court had reduced after he urged it to dispense with his appearance and the court had allowed his pleas.

Soon after becoming Chief Minister, Jagan had filed a petition seeking exemption from personal appearance as he would be busy with official duties.

Jagan had not been attending trial proceedings citing his official engagements as the reason for his absence.

Not impressed by this, the Court of Principal Special Judge for CBI cases had on January 3 directed that Jagan attend the proceedings on January 10.

Internet access...

On November 21, the Centre had justified restrictions imposed in Jammu and Kashmir after the abrogation of provisions of Article 370 and said that due to the preventive steps taken, neither a single life was lost nor a single bullet fired.

Besides Congress leader Ghulam Nabi Azad, the apex court had heard the petitions filed by Anuradha Bhasin, Executive Editor of Kashmir Times, and few intervenors questioning the restrictions in the Kashmir Valley.

The Centre had referred to terror violence in the Valley and said that for the past so many years terrorists were being pushed through from across the border, local militants and separatist organisation had held the civilians captive in the region and it would have been "foolish" if the government would not have taken preventive steps to secure the lives of citizens.

Provisions of Article 370, which gave special status to the erstwhile state of Jammu and Kashmir, were abrogated by the Centre on August 5 last year.

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An area measuring 1 acre at Sadam South Sikkim near Loretto Convent School at Gupti road. Price negotiable any one interested can contact: 78640-04501,62970-03235, 98320-48410

Green Skill Development Programme on Wild Beekeeping launched



SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 10 JAN:

Forest Minister, Karma Loday Bhutia launched the Green Skill Development Programme (GSDP) on “Wild Beekeeping and Processing” at Forest Conference, Gangtok, on 09 Jan, 2020. A 25-day comprehensive training programme covering 200hrs for a batch of 25 local candidates is being coordinated in the State by Sikkim ENVIS Hub at Forest and Environment Department, Government of Sikkim in collaboration with Sikkim Khadi & Village Industries Board, a press release informs.

The course is aligned

as per National Skill Qualification Framework (NSQF) level 5 and is in line with the Skill India Mission as envisaged by the Prime Minister, Narendra Modi.

The Green Skill Development Programme on “Wild Beekeeping and Processing” is being implemented in the State of Sikkim under the aegis of the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Government of India, to develop green skilled workers duly amalgamating scientific and traditional approach for sustainable development of rural economy.

Addressing the candidates, Minister, Karma

Loday Bhutia urged all the participants to take this opportunity to harness green skills and enhance livelihood through marketing of quality honey and bee products. The Minister also assured to provide incentives up to Rs. 20,000 to progressive bee farmers as a follow up of the training programme.

Principal Secretary cum PCCF, ML Srivastava in his address mentioned that practice of beekeeping is a win-win situation for the farmers as it would generate income and also address climate change issue duly contributing to the Sustainable Development Goal

13 (Climate Action).

He mentioned that most vocational training programmes focus on mechanical/technical skills rather than ‘soft’ or ‘green’ skills. Green skills contribute to preserving or restoring environmental quality for sustainable future and include jobs that protect ecosystems and biodiversity.

Chief Executive Officer from Sikkim Khadi & Village Industries Board, Gyurmie Yousal in his keynote address mentioned the need of scientific and sustainable approach of beekeeping in the State.

He said that through the Green Skill Develop-

ment Programme, the traditional and scientific knowledge of beekeeping needs will be carefully understood for holistic approach of generating livelihood vis-à-vis conserving the local bee species for ensuring better agricultural and horticultural productivity.

Earlier, the programme began with a welcome address by Director of Forest-cum-ENVIS Coordinator, BB Gurung. The inaugural function ended with the vote of thanks by the Joint Director (ENVIS), Kusum Gurung in an event coordinated by, Rajen Pradhan, Sr Programme Officer (ENVIS).

The programme was then followed by technical sessions presided over by local experts, Shiva Prasad Sharma (SKVIB), Dr Shiva Kr Sharma (Conservation Biologist) and Dr Bharat Kr Pradhan, Scientific Associate (State Biodiversity Board). The hands-on training programme will be conducted at Melli Paiyong, Sumbuk, Rong, Salghari of South District and Upper Aho, East District till 28 Jan, 2020.



Governor meets Hyderabad Lions Club members

SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 10 JAN:

Governor of Sikkim, Ganga Prasad granted audience to 80 people from Lions Club of Hyderabad on Thursday here at Raj Bhavan today, a press release informs.

In his brief address to the farmers, the Governor highlighted how the organic farming practice has put

Sikkim on the world map and offered recognition to the State as the first fully organic state in the country. The Governor spoke about Sikkim’s cleanliness and greenery practices.

The Governor also wished all the members of Lions Club of Hyderabad a memorable stay in Sikkim. A team from Lion Club of Hyderabad is in Sikkim on a 4-day excursion tour.

Governor meets staff, exchanges greetings



SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 10 JAN:

Governor of Sikkim, Ganga Prasad met the Sikkim Police Band team, Police pilot and escort team attached to Governor and Raj Bhavan staff in a small function today at Raj Bhavan, a press re-

lease informs.

The Governor exchanged New Year 2020 greetings and wished for happiness and prosperity for all. The Governor also distributed gifts to Sikkim Police Band team, Police pilot and escort team and Raj Bhavan staff as token of love.

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International Inner Wheel Day celebrated in Gangtok



SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 10 JAN:

International Inner Wheel Day and 96th anniversary was celebrated by Gangtok members on 10 January, a press release informs.

IWC Gangtok, in collaboration with the Traffic police of Gangtok

made a pedestrian crossing at MG Marg, Namnang Road, an area prone to one way vehicular traffic. A sign board showing zebra crossing and ‘go slow’ signal have also been put up.

Later Inner Wheel members of Gangtok also put up a board for Clean

Green Sikkim at Tripti’s, MG Marg, to encourage locals and tourists to keep the area litter free.

District Secretary, Amit Mundra told the gathering about Inner Wheel and the varied works which IWC Gangtok has done in the last 19 years.

Sikkim contingent leaves for National Youth Festival

SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 10 JAN:

A 93-member contingent from Sikkim left today to represent the State in the 23rd National Youth Festival to be held from 12 to 16 January at Lucknow. National Youth Festival is organized every year on the birth anniversary of Swami Vivekananda in the month of January.

The 23rd edition of the National Youth Festival is being jointly organized by Ministry of Youth Affairs & Sports, Government of India, in collaboration with the Youth Welfare Department, Uttar Pradesh, Nehru Yuva Kendra Sangathan and National Service Scheme, Government of India.

The team of 60 men and 33 women including six NSS Volunteers are representing the State



this time. Sikkimese artists are participating in competitive events of folk song, folk dance, One Act Play, Classical Vocal (Solo), Classical Instrument (Solo), Guitar and Elocution (Extempore). Sikkimese artists will also present dance of Lepcha, Bhutia and Tamang during the

non-competitive events.

The aim of the festival is to connect the youth of the country with the mainstream of the Nation. “Youth Utsav” not only provides a common platform to the youth, but also provides them an opportunity to showcase their cultural skills and courageous talent.

Interacting with the artists, Secretary to Sports & Youth Affairs Department, Kuber Bhandari expressed his happiness and thanked the government for giving permission to participate and showcase talents of the youth of the State at the national level. He further advised artists

to give their best and maintain the dignity and prestige of the State.

The state contingent is accompanied by SYA Department Joint Director, Dr RB Bishwakarma as Nodal Officer along with Assistant Director, Kunzang Gyatso Bhutia and PET, Rinchen Bhutia of SYA Department.

Inter-Constituency Football Tournament 2019-20

Results of matches held on 07 Jan 2020			
Venues	Matches between	Score	Result
Paljor Stadium	1 st Match- Upper Barak Vrs. Upper Tadong	3-2	Match won by Upper Tadong
	2 nd Match- Namcheybong Vrs. Arinbang	1-0	Match won by Namcheybong
	3 rd Match- Syani Vrs. Kabi Lunchuk	3-1	Match won by Kabi Lunchuk
	4 th Match- Rhenock Vrs. Marten Rumtek	4-3	Match won by Rhenock
Dentam	1 st Match- Maneybong Dentam Vrs. Soreng Chakung	2-0	Match won by Soreng Chakung
	2 nd Match- Yulsam Tashiding Vrs. Yangthang	4-2	Match won by Yulsam Tashiding
Namchi Singhi-thang	1 st Match- Namchi Singhi-thang Vrs. Rangang Yangang	2-1	Match won by Rangang Yangang
	2 nd Match- Namthang Rateypani Vrs. Poklok Kamrang	2-1	Match won by Namthang Rateypani

DATE: 03-01-2020	
FIRST ROUND OF THE TOURNAMENT (SOUTH- WEST)	
VENUES: NAMCHI SINGITHANG PLAYGROUND AND DENTAM PUBLIC PLAYGROUND	
FIXTURE-II	
Venue: Namchi Singithang Playground (South District Constituencies)	
<div>Tumin Lingee</div> <div>Melli</div> <div>Namchi Singithang</div> <div>Rangang Yangang</div>	<div>Burfung</div> <div>Temi Namping</div> <div>Namthang Rateypani</div> <div>Poklok Kamrang</div>
Venue: Dentam Public Playground (West District Constituencies)	
<div>Rinchenpong</div> <div>Salghari Zoom</div> <div>Yoksam Tashiding</div> <div>Yangthang</div>	<div>Gyalshing Bernyak</div> <div>Daramdin</div> <div>Maneybong Dentam</div> <div>Soreng Chakung</div>
Note:	
1. The first round matches will be played at Namchi Singithang and Dentam Public ground for South & West constituencies respectively.	
2. The duration of the matches will be 35-10-35 minutes	
3. Matches will be played as per FIFA Rules	
4. Organizing committee reserve the right to reschedule the fixture (if required)	
5. Every player should show their Voter ID Card at the time of Technical check up (if player is under 18 years than Aadhar Card)	
6. Each Team should submit one constituency flag (6x4 feet) during registration.	

Don't Camouflage Male Chauvinism

The deck has anyway always been loaded against women

A movie on acid-attack survivors has arrived in the screens. Given its pedigree, expect it to be powerful and sensitive. Clearly, the movie is also about more than shining a light on the male chauvinism which makes stalking, maiming and killing less of a crime than the disgusting depravity it is born from. There is a very thin line, maybe none at all, separating the entitlement that made Kabir Singh a hit and Chapaak such a compelling story. We see it in how the male chauvinists who now have an entire government to themselves target women who take a position and publicly disagree. It is the same mindset which allowed for laws which did not see any difference in a woman being splashed by water or hot tea or acid. Yes, that is how things were; rules and practices born from the depravity which has given leaders who respond to rapes as something that women invite or boys losing control sometimes. But the narrative is changing, hopefully, in how the #MeToo campaign arrived in India and ripped the fig leaf off the ugly preying that women have been subjected to for far too long. And before that, there was the "pinjra-tod" expression, and now the most chauvinistic of governments is been challenged by a disproportionately high number of women on the streets, in parks, in classrooms, and soon maybe even in the corridors of power.

The momentum, some might argue, is not consistent, but the ripples remain and occasional tsunamis will keep rising. Why? Because this is an important conversation to have.

While sexual assault and abuse are clearly criminal offences, the current campaign seeks to address not just the obvious instances of such abuse but also the more complicated situations and assaults in which centuries of internalizing convinces even the victims that they might have hinted consent or, as is often even the case of acid-attack victims, led the perpetrator on. But now that even such misconceptions have been more clearly defined, and a clearer understanding established about what constitutes abuse, and most importantly, that even the mighty will fall if they are called out, the serial abusers [and they are not the ones who prey in offices or stalk and attack], who have traditionally been protected by their positions or social and financial standing and also because of their gender, have much to fear.

The initiative was desperately needed because there is a dangerous regression underway and misogyny and patriarchy are on the ascendant. The society at large needs to thank the women who started the process of calling out their pigs, forcing Courts to recognize abuse and forcing people to address the problem and confronting the madness manifesting in men in positions of power, influence and privilege.

This was one of the reasons why the Trump victory in USA was so deplorable. Given the American dominance of mass media, even if one does not understand the American electoral processes, the elections there are closely followed. When a man who brags about grabbing women gets elected President of the US of A, every entitled male chauvinist pig out their gains strength and mutates into an even uglier version of himself. And not just in USA, because the US elections tend to set off a trend. So, while the eight years before Trump were about an inspirational pursuit of change and inclusiveness, now it is about regression and paranoia. When a person with the obnoxious sexism of The Donald manages to win, apart from imperiling the rights of all the women in USA, he also delivers the packaging within which disgusting worldviews and offensive sexism can not only be repackaged and peddled, but also consumed without guilt. Invoke nationalism, paint a threat to an old/ imagined way of life and anything, no matter how false or patently disagreeable, can be circulated and sold. Think Padmaavat here. The movie, an obnoxiously jingoistic celebration of stereotyping and misogyny gets protested by the most stereotypically misogynist of groups for being, let's say, too liberal and permissive. But noise was made and noise was heard.

WRITE US:

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

Mail us at: news@summittimes.com

The US-Iran conflict and the consequences of international law-breaking

DAVID MEDNICOFF
theconversation.com

1. WHAT ROLE DOES INTERNATIONAL LAW PLAY IN THIS CONFLICT?

The U.S. and other prominent countries established the contemporary system of international law after World War II with three broad goals.

First, and foremost, law should minimize global war.

Second, the only accepted justifications in international law for countries to wage war are obvious self-defense and collective security authorized by the United Nations.

Third, the international legal system expects national governments to pursue their own strategic interests, consistent with the first two goals of global peace and cooperation.

International law has fostered predictable procedures for the conduct of political and economic affairs among countries.

2. BUT WHO ENFORCES INTERNATIONAL LAW?

International law is founded on the idea that nations have authority to run their countries and shouldn't be coerced by a global government. This means that enforcement largely depends on governments accepting the importance of compliance.

Such acceptance happens in general because countries, like people, have diverse incentives to obey law. There is benefit to being known as reliable in one's obligations. International law is made most often through treaties that countries negotiate and sign. They follow these treaties because they see them as helpful. Countries get used to and internalize some international law.

Finally, international organizations have large bureaucracies to exert pressure and resolve disputes around international law. The relatively new International Criminal Court can detain, charge and punish leaders who commit certain severe crimes.

Given its power, the U.S. has been willing to flout some international law. But such violations are noticed and have effects.

Major breaches of international law contribute to erratic and destructive behavior among nations as the norms of good behavior are degraded. The increasing influence of anti-democratic political systems across the globe is partially a result of the U.S., the world's most powerful democracy, retreating openly from its ideals.

Still, the challenge of upholding international law is compelling with a country like Iran, which works against U.S. priorities in the Middle East and has threatened Americans.

3. DID THE US ATTACK THAT KILLED SOLEIMANI VIOLATE INTERNATIONAL LAW?

It likely did. For the U.S. to kill another government's official without a major attack or clear threat of attack to its basic autonomy is an illegal act of war.

Doing so on Iraqi territory without apparent Iraqi consent is an additional problem. U.S. activity within Iraq depends on following specific treaties between the two countries, which would not give Washington free rein to attack foreign government officials on Iraqi soil.

U.S. officials have implied that killing Soleimani was self-defense, as he helped plan, or may have been planning, deadly acts against American citizens in the Middle East.

I suspect a typical response in the U.S. to this is "So what." Americans, including the president, may ignore when the U.S. acts against international law. Yet, law-breaking reduces other countries' trust in the U.S. and increases the risk other countries will violate the rules in ways that harm Americans at home and abroad.

There are already practical consequences developing from Trump's violation of international laws about using force against another country.



Yet the use of force in international law has to take account of issues of necessity, immediacy and proportionality. So far, the world has seen little evidence that killing a member of the Iranian government was necessary for basic American self-defense.

Indeed, Iran's compliance and behavior under the 2015 nuclear treaty and evidence of limited cooperation between the U.S. and Soleimani to combat the Taliban and ISIS suggest that he and his government did not threaten the U.S. fundamentally.

4. IS THE IRANIAN STRIKE ON US MILITARY BASES IN IRAQ LEGAL UNDER INTERNATIONAL LAW?

International law does allow for defensive reprisals – which would probably cover Iran's Jan. 8 missile attacks on U.S. bases based in Iraq, which killed nobody but did damage property.

It's most logical to interpret Trump's deliberate killing of an Iranian official as an act of war. The principle of self-defense allows reprisals, so long as they are proportional to the original attack and directed against military targets.

In light of the U.S. withdrawal from the nuclear deal, which Iran appeared to be respecting, and its act of war in killing Soleimani, the missile attacks seem a measured – even minimalist – justified response.

5. WHY SHOULD AMERICANS CARE IF INTERNATIONAL LAW WAS BROKEN?

Illegal acts of war can enrage an opponent, solidifying its determination. Iranians of all stripes have come together to object to Soleimani's killing. The last time Iranian streets saw this level of unified popular outrage against the U.S., it helped consolidate the 1979 Islamic revolution. Iran's fury over a plausible narrative that the U.S. attacked its leaders illegally may yet help bring on devastating, full-scale war.

In addition, when one country violates international law, other nations often get upset. The system of international law requires mutual collaboration and trust.

If, as a result, other nations are reluctant to cooperate with U.S. efforts – say on immigration, trade or international crime – that hurts American interests. Trump's Jan. 8 speech seeking to deescalate the conflict may have come in part because killing Soleimani illegally made U.S. allies reluctant to back Trump in further confrontations.

Some in the U.S. act as if only naked might matters in foreign policy. Yet, the peril of American policy in Iran and Iraq illustrates something different. Law, and the legitimacy it conveys, also count.

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Bushfires, bots and arson claims: Australia flung in the global disinformation spotlight

TIMOTHY GRAHAM &
TOBIAS R. KELLER
theconversation.com

In the first week of 2020, hashtag #ArsonEmergency became the focal point of a new online narrative surrounding the bushfire crisis.

The message: the cause is arson, not climate change.

Police and bushfire services (and some journalists) have contradicted this claim.

We studied about 300 Twitter accounts driving the #ArsonEmergency hashtag to identify inauthentic behaviour. We found many accounts using #ArsonEmergency were behaving "suspiciously", compared to those using #AustraliaFire and #BushfireAustralia.

Accounts peddling #ArsonEmergency carried out activity similar to what we've witnessed in past disinformation campaigns, such as the coordinated behaviour of Russian trolls during the 2016 US presidential election.

BOTS, TROLLS AND TROLLBOTS

The most effective disinformation campaigns use bot and troll accounts to infiltrate genuine political discussion, and shift it towards a different "master narrative".

Bots and trolls have been a thorn in the side of fruitful political debate since Twitter's early days. They mimic genuine opinions, akin to what a concerned citizen might display, with a goal of persuading others and gaining attention.

Bots are usually automated (acting without constant human oversight) and perform simple functions, such as retweeting or repeatedly pushing one type of content.

Troll accounts are controlled by

humans. They try to stir controversy, hinder healthy debate and simulate fake grassroots movements. They aim to persuade, deceive and cause conflict. We've observed both troll and bot accounts spouting disinformation regarding the bushfires on Twitter. We were able to distinguish these accounts as being inauthentic for two reasons.

First, we used sophisticated software tools including tweetbotornot, Botometer, and Bot Sentinel.

There are various definitions for the word "bot" or "troll". Bot Sentinel says:

- Propaganda bots are pieces of code that utilize Twitter API to automatically follow, tweet, or retweet other accounts bolstering a political agenda. Propaganda bots are designed to be polarizing and often promote content intended to be deceptive... Trollbot is a classification we created to describe human controlled accounts who exhibit troll-like behavior.

- Some of these accounts frequently retweet known propaganda and fake news accounts, and they engage in repetitive bot-like activity. Other trollbot accounts target and harass specific Twitter accounts as part of a coordinated harassment campaign. Ideology, political affiliation, religious beliefs, and geographic location are not factors when determining the classification of a Twitter account.

These machine learning tools compared the behaviour of known bots and trolls with the accounts tweeting the hashtags #ArsonEmergency, #AustraliaFire, and #BushfireAustralia. From this, they provided a "score" for each account suggesting how likely it was to be a bot or troll account.

We also manually analysed the

Twitter activity of suspicious accounts and the characteristics of their profiles, to validate the origins of #ArsonEmergency, as well as the potential motivations of the accounts spreading the hashtag.

WHO TO BLAME?

Unfortunately, we don't know who is behind these accounts, as we can only access trace data such as tweet text and basic account information.

Previous bot and troll campaigns have been thought to be the work of foreign interference, such as Russian trolls, or PR firms hired to distract and manipulate voters.

The New York Times has also reported on perceptions that media magnate Rupert Murdoch is influencing Australia's bushfire debate.

WEEDING-OUT INAUTHENTIC BEHAVIOUR

In late November, some Twitter accounts began using #ArsonEmergency to counter evidence that climate change is linked to the severity of the bushfire crisis.

Below is one of the earliest examples of an attempt to replace #ClimateEmergency with #ArsonEmergency. The accounts tried to get #ArsonEmergency trending to drown out dialogue acknowledging the link between climate change and bushfires.

The hashtag was only tweeted a few times in 2019, but gained traction this year in a sustained effort by about 300 accounts.

A much larger portion of bot and troll-like accounts pushed #ArsonEmergency, than they did #AustraliaFire and #BushfireAustralia.

The narrative was then adopted by genuine accounts who furthered its spread.

On multiple occasions, we noticed

suspicious accounts countering expert opinions while using the #ArsonEmergency hashtag.

BAD PUBLICITY

Since media coverage has shone light on the disinformation campaign, #ArsonEmergency has gained even more prominence, but in a different light.

Some journalists are acknowledging the role of disinformation bushfire crisis – and countering narrative the Australia has an arson emergency. However, the campaign does indicate Australia has a climate denial problem.

What's clear to me is that Australia has been propelled into the global disinformation battlefield.

KEEP YOUR EYES PEELED

It's difficult to debunk disinformation, as it often contains a grain of truth. In many cases, it leverages people's previously held beliefs and biases.

Humans are particularly vulnerable to disinformation in times of emergency, or when addressing contentious issues like climate change.

Online users, especially journalists, need to stay on their toes.

The accounts we come across on social media may not represent genuine citizens and their concerns. A trending hashtag may be trying to mislead the public.

Right now, it's more important than ever for us to prioritise factual news from reliable sources – and identify and combat disinformation. The Earth's future could depend on it.

[Timothy Graham is Senior lecturer, Queensland University of Technology; Tobias R. Keller is Visiting Postdoc, Queensland University of Technology]

Mizoram seeks UN assistance to fight AIDS

AIZAWL, JAN 10 (PTI): The Mizoram government has sought assistance from the United Nations to contain the spread of HIV infection in the hilly state, official sources said.

Mizoram health minister R Lalthangliana, who is currently on a tour to the US, had on Monday called on the international director of the 'United Nations Programme on HIV and AIDS' (UNAIDS) in Washington DC, Regan Hofmann, to apprise her of the scenario in the state, the sources said on Friday.

Apart from financial aid, the health minister also sought logistic support from UNAIDS to combat the menace in Mizoram, they said, adding that the UN has promised to provide all



possible assistance.

Officials of Mizoram State AIDS Control Society (MSACS) said more than 2,400 people have died due to AIDS since 1990, when the first case was detected in the state.

According to an MSACS official, 2.04 per

cent of the state's nearly 11 lakh population suffer from the disease.

On an average, nine people are diagnosed HIV positive every day in Mizoram, he stated.

In more than 67 per cent of the cases, the virus has been transmit-

ted sexually, while 28.12 per cent of those infected have contracted the disease from infected needles.

In December, Mizoram Kohhran Hruaitute Committee (MKHC), a conglomerate of major churches in the state, had

passed a resolution to fight the menace.

As part of its campaign to spread awareness, the Mizoram government recently said that it was planning to introduce a chapter on AIDS in school curriculum.

Injured Bengal gymnast doing fine, but ruled out of KIYG

GUWAHATI, JAN 10 (PTI): A 14-year-old gymnast from Bengal suffered from neck and spinal injuries during a practice session on the eve of the Khelo India Youth Games here, leading to her pulling out from the event.

Adita Mandal, however, was discharged from the hospital after MRI reports revealed the injuries were not serious in nature.

The young gymnast from Sports Authority of India (SAI), Kolkata, was attempting double sault backward, but had an awkward landing and hurt her neck and spine area during prac-

tice on Thursday.

"Scans including MRI and X-rays did not reveal any serious injury and she was released from the hospital," SAI coach Dilip Das told PTI.

The athlete from Kankinara, however, could not take part in her competitions on Friday and will be sent back at the earliest.

"She has some pain and we cannot take a risk. So she has been pulled out," Das said.

About 6800 athletes from 37 states are participating in the Khelo India Youth Games here. The event will continue till January 22.

Our demand for VC's resignation stands: JNUSU

NEW DELHI, JAN 10 (PTI): The JNU Students' Union stands on its demand for the removal of Vice Chancellor M Jagadeesh Kumar, but any decision on whether to call off the agitation against the fee hike will be taken later, said its president Aishe Ghosh on Friday after meeting HRD Ministry officials.

She also said that the university students' union has sought the

HRD ministry's intervention in FIRs and proctorial inquiry initiated against them by varsity administration.

"Our demand for JNU VC's resignation stands. We will call meeting with counsellors and office bearers and take call on whether to call off the agitation or not. We have put forward our points, waiting for HRD Ministry's decision to take final call," she said.

Ridhima wins first leg of Hero WPG Tour at Pune

PUNE, JAN 10 (PTI): Ridhima Dilawari finished with a total of one-under 215 to win the opening event of the 2020 Hero Women's Pro Golf Tour ahead of amateur Pranavi Urs at the Poona Club Golf Course here on Friday. Ridhima, winner of five titles in 2019, and Pranavi were engaged in a tense tussle as they came down the final stretch in the third and final round.

Ridhima led for a good part of the day only to lose the lead towards the end before Pranavi made a crippling triple bogey on 18th to drop to second. Ridhima (74) finished at one-under, while Pranavi (73) was even par 216. Amandeep Drall (77) was third, while Diksha Dagar (72) was tied-fourth with Vani Kapoor (74).

Afshan Fatima (75), Saaniya Sharma (74) and Jyotsana Singh (74) were sixth, seventh and eighth

respectively. Siddhi Kapoor (74) and Sonam Chugh (75) completed the top 10.

Ridhima, starting the day with a two-shot advantage over playing partner Pranavi, birdied the first and fourth to extend her lead. She dropped a shot on sixth, as Pranavi also dropped a shot on fourth but birdied the ninth. At the turn, Ridhima was sitting pretty with a three-shot lead over Pranavi.

Then a series of disasters struck Ridhima with dropped shots on 11th, 15th, 16th and 17th. Pranavi reduced the gap with birdies on 10th and 11th. After 11 holes, with seven to go, the duo was tied at one-under and it was now anybody's game.

When Pranavi bogeyed the 13th, Ridhima went ahead with par. Then came the crucial 15th, which Pranavi birdied but Ridhima bogeyed for a two-shot swing.

Anti-CAA protest: Mizo Zirlai Pawl observes black day

AIZAWL, JAN 9 (PTI): Mizoram's apex and most influential student organisation, the Mizo Zirlai Pawl (MZP), on Thursday observed black day to protest against the amended citizenship law.

MZP functionaries displayed black flags at various places in the state capital, responding to a call given by the North East Students' Organisation (NESO), MZP secretary Lalnunmawia Pautu said.

He said the students' body has been opposing the Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA) since it was a bill as it would have a demographic impact on a small state like Mizoram.

Though the state is exempted under the law, Mizoram is still vulnerable to illegal influx, as the Chakma people from Bangladesh will migrate to neighbouring states and later, come to Mizoram as



they have an autonomous district council here, Pautu claimed.

Hitting out at the BJP-led NDA government, Pautu alleged that it is responsible for the deaths during the nation-wide protests against the law since December last year.

He also blamed the Centre for the death of a Mizo ethnic tribal, who was allegedly beaten to death by illegal Bangladeshi immigrants in Tripura in December.

NESO finance secretary and MZP leader Ricky Lalbiakmawia said that NESO and its partner organisations will continue to oppose the amended citizenship law

till it is scrapped. He said that the Supreme Court will hear a petition filed by NESO on January 22.

Ricky also said that Mizoram is not fully protected from infiltration unless the law is scrapped or the entire Northeast region is exempted from the purview of the law.

He urged the people of Mizoram to extend support to NESO in the fight against the CAA.

On Tuesday, functionaries of MZP waved black flags at Mizoram's lone Lok Sabha member C. Lalrosanga for voting in favour of the citizenship bill in Parliament, as the MP arrived in Aizawl.

Border road project in Mizoram stalled due to strike



AIZAWL, JAN 10 (PTI): The construction of a cross-border road under the ambitious Kaladan multi modal transit transport project is likely to miss its deadline due to an indefinite strike called by a landowners' association based in south Mizoram, state officials said.

The construction of the 87.18 km stretch in the northeastern state under the KMMTT road project is scheduled to be completed by March this year, they said.

The work for the project has come to a standstill from Wednesday, following an indefinite strike by Lawngtlai District Land Owners' Association (LDLOA) over compensation, sources said.

According to a resolution adopted at a meeting of the association, a "stay

order" was served to the constructing agencies to stop work for the project, LDLOA president H Remmawia told PTI.

He said the association will set a deadline for the government to pay compensation to at least 331 people, whose land has been damaged due to the construction, failing which the strike will be indefinite till they are paid.

State PWD officials said that more than 81 per cent of the work has been completed so far.

Remmawia alleged that state chief secretary Lalnunmawia Chuaungo, at the direction of the present government, has recently cancelled the detailed project report and proposals for compensation, which were submitted to the Centre

by the erstwhile Congress government.

He said the landowners have been waiting for 12 years for compensation amounting to over Rs 50 crore.

Launched in 2008 by the erstwhile UPA government as part of its 'Look East' policy, the project was initially scheduled to be completed by 2014 but it was delayed over compensation issues. The original estimate of building the road in Mizoram under the project was Rs 575.69 crore, which was revised to Rs. 1,011.52 crore, the officials said.

On completion, the project will link Mizoram's Lawngtlai district with the western Myanmar town of Pal-etwa by more than a 110 km-long road.

Eighteen teams to compete in second division I-League

NEW DELHI, JAN 10 (PTI): Eighteen teams comprising reserve sides of eight Indian Super League franchises and two I-League clubs will compete in the preliminary round of I-League second division.

Giving the league a miss will be Northeast United FC, Odisha FC, Punjab FC and Indian Arrows.

The preliminary round will kick off in the last week of January. Teams will play on a home and away basis against other teams within a group.

The winners of each group along with the best second-placed team between Group A and C would qualify for the final round.

However, if reserve teams of ISL clubs finish

as winners or runners-up in any group, the position will be passed on to the next non-ISL team.

In the final round, four qualified teams will play at the central venue on a 'single-leg' league system. Eventually, the winners will qualify to the next edition of I-League.

All the teams have cleared Hero Second Division League club licensing process of 2019-20 season except Lonestar Kashmir, who have been granted a special exemption by the league committee as they could not fulfil the criteria entirety due to reasons beyond their control.

Meanwhile, six teams including reserve teams of four teams are slated to make their debut in the second division

league this season. They are as follows: FC Bengaluru United, Rajasthan FC, Indian Arrows (reserves), Punjab FC (reserves), Hyderabad FC (reserves) and Mumbai City FC (reserves).

The groups of the preliminary round:

Group A: Lonestar Kashmir FC, Punjab FC (reserves), Garhwal FC, Rajasthan FC, ATK (reserves), Jamshedpur FC (reserves).

Group B: Moham-medan Sporting, Bhawanipore, Indian Arrows (reserves), Hyderabad FC (reserves), Bengaluru FC (reserves), Chennaiyin FC (reserves).

Group C: ARA FC, Mumbai City FC (reserves), FC Goa (reserves), FC Bengaluru United, FC Kerala, Kerala Blasters (reserves).

PM on two-day Kolkata visit from Saturday



NEW DELHI, JAN 10 (PTI): Prime Minister Narendra Modi will be in the West Bengal capital on Saturday and Sunday to participate in sesquicentenary celebrations of the Kolkata Port Trust and dedication of heritage buildings to the nation.

On Saturday, the prime minister will dedicate to the nation four refurbished heritage buildings in Kolkata to the nation, a statement from the Prime Minister's Office said.

These are the Old Currency Building, the Belvedere House, the Metcalfe House and the Victoria Memorial Hall. The Culture Ministry has renovated these iconic galleries and refurbished them with new exhibitions, while curating the old galleries.

The ministry is developing cultural spaces around iconic buildings in various metro cities in the country. To be-

gin with, Kolkata, Delhi, Mumbai, Ahmedabad and Varanasi are being taken up under the project. Modi will also participate in the sesquicentenary celebrations of the Kolkata Port Trust on Saturday and Sunday.

He will be handing over a cheque of Rs 501 crore towards the final instalment to meet the deficit of pension fund of retired and existing employees of the Kolkata Port Trust, the statement said.

The prime minister will also be felicitating two oldest pensioners of the Kolkata Port Trust -- Nagina Bhagat, 105, and Naresh Chandra Chakraborty, 100.

He will also launch the Port anthem during the event. Besides, he will unveil a plaque of 150 years of commemorative installation at the site of original Port jetties.

The prime minister will also inaugurate the

upgraded ship repair facility of Cochin Kolkata Ship Repair Unit at Netaji Subhas Dry Dock.

He will inaugurate the full rake handling facility while dedicating the upgraded railway infrastructure of Kolkata Dock System of KoPT for smooth cargo movement and improving turnaround time.

A mechanisation of berth number 3 at the Haldia Dock Complex of KoPT and a proposed riverfront development scheme will also be launched by Modi.

In another event, the prime minister will inaugurate Kaushal Vikas Kendra and Pritilata Chhatrai Avas for 200 tribal girl students of Sunderbans.

It is a project undertaken by KoPT with Purvanchal Kalyan Ashram, Gosaba, Sunderbans affiliate to Akhil Bharatiya Vanvasi Kalyan Ashram, the statement said.

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VIDEO NEWS SECTION

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Bopanna-Koolhof sails into Qatar Open final

DOHA, JAN 10 (PTI): India's Rohan Bopanna and Wesley Koolhof of the Netherlands progressed to the men's doubles final of the USD 1,465,260 Qatar Open after registering a straight-game win over second seeds Henri Kontinen and Franko Skugor here on Friday.

Third seeds Bopanna and Koolhof defeated the second seeded Finn-Croatian pair 7-5 6-2 in the semifinals.

The Indo-Dutch combination will meet unseeded British-Mexican duo of Luke Bambridge and Santiago Gonzalez in the summit clash on Saturday.

Bambridge and Gonzalez got the better of Denmark's Frederik Nielsen and Tim Puetz of Germany 2-6 6-2 10-4 in another semifinal contest.

Osaka battles, Kvitova cruises to Brisbane semis

BRISBANE, JAN 10 (AFP): Naomi Osaka battled for two hours while Petra Kvitova cruised to victory on Friday as both players booked spots in the season-opening Brisbane International semi-finals.

Osaka's form slipped after the first set but the world number four eventually saw off sixth seed Kiki Bertens 6-3, 3-6, 6-3 at Pat Rafter Arena.

Bertens was on the attack in the second but lost control in the decider when she began to struggle with her first serve. It was a more straightforward affair for fifth seed Kvitova, who downed American qualifier Jennifer Brady 6-4, 6-2.

Kvitova, a two-time Wimbledon champion who won her first WTA title in Brisbane in 2011, was in superb touch against Brady, who beat Maria Sharapova and Ashleigh Barty in the first two rounds but was never in the hunt.

"I didn't serve well at all the first game, but since then I served much, much better and that's helped me a lot through this match today for sure," Kvitova said.

"My body's still not falling apart yet, so that's good as well." Osaka, who burst to stardom by winning consecutive Grand Slam crowns at the 2018 US Open and 2019 Australia Open, will next play either defending champion Karolina Pliskova or unseeded American Alison Riske.

Kvitova faces Madison Keys, who cruised past fellow American Danielle Collins 6-4, 6-1 to secure her berth in the final four.

Collins seemed flat after two impressive victories in the opening rounds and her opponent never ceded control of the match.

"I don't think Danielle played her best tennis today, but I think I did a really good job taking care of my side of the net," Keys said.

"I served well, returned fairly well, especially in the second set. So I think overall it was just a pretty solid match.

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Unassuming icon Trent Alexander-Arnold leads Liverpool's league quest

ENI ALUK
THEGUARDIAN

In its 46 years, the PFA's Player of the Year award has been given to 41 people, representing 15 clubs and 12 countries from England to Egypt. The winners have been young and old, tall and short, but they all have one thing in common: none of them have been full-backs. There is a lot of football still to be played this season but already it seems there is no doubt about the destiny of the title, and though there are several Liverpool players who will be in the discussion when the individual awards are handed out, I think based on the campaign so far Trent Alexander-Arnold is edging it.

I am a big fan of this kid on so many levels. It's not just his contribution to the team, though that is immense, it is what he represents for English football as a homegrown player of genuine world class, and as a Liverpoolian at a club which has waited 30 years to win the league. Virgil van Dijk has sustained the levels he set when he won the PFA award last year while Sadio Mané has been outstanding in attack together with the hugely likable Roberto Firmino. I don't think Mo Salah has been anywhere near as good this season as when he won the award two years ago, so I think the big award winners will come from that shortlist.

The fact that a 21-year-old full-back is even in the conversation is a measure of his excellence. People talk about him redefining the position, and he is clearly doing something that right-backs haven't managed before. The vision, finesse, technique and



the number of assists Alexander-Arnold has contributed over the past two seasons have raised the bar for the position.

Next week will be the third anniversary of his full league debut, against Manchester United at Old Trafford in a 1-1 draw. For most of the 2017-18 season he was second choice to Joe Gomez, but then last year he was third in the assist rankings and this season only Kevin De Bruyne has more than him, an astonishing contribution from a defender. Defensively he does his job, but it's his picking out passes, switching play, his crossing ability, his consistency and his overall sharpness in match situations that is just amazing to see.

When he was a child he wanted to be Steven Gerrard, which must have seemed like a far-fetched dream at the

time. Sometimes we grow up wanting to be our idol, but actually we can do more. What Gerrard did as a midfielder for Liverpool was phenomenal but Alexander-Arnold is going above and beyond what he expected of himself, employing those midfielder qualities at right-back.

He has spoken about his brothers, who sacrificed their football ambitions to allow him to realise his own. His first football memory, when he was six, is of watching the open-top bus carrying Liverpool's 2005 Champions League winners drive past his house. His background, his memories of sneaking to Melwood to catch glimpses of his heroes through the gates, mean he will be continuously inspired in that changing room. When he lifts the Premier League trophy after the club's 30-year wait, it will be

completing a full circle. You can't buy that connection in the transfer market.

Jürgen Klopp might be a master of motivation but one of his great skills is the ability to recognise talent in a young player and then develop it to the point where they become what Alexander-Arnold is now, where other managers might just spend a ridiculous amount of money on an established full-back who still wouldn't be anywhere near as good. It seems to be hard sometimes for a manager to see the quality of players he is working with, when others are getting headlines elsewhere – look at De Bruyne, who was not rated at all by José Mourinho at Chelsea but has since become, well, Kevin De Bruyne.

Liverpool focus a lot of their play on getting the ball wide to their attacking full-

backs, but it is what they do with those crossing opportunities that sets them apart. Andy Robertson is exceptional on the left but he is being left in the shade by the man on the other flank. It is not only what he does with those crosses, it's his ability to come inside and see a pass, to shoot from outside the box, to take set pieces, to pull the ball back to the forwards with pace and accuracy. In Liverpool's win over Leicester on Boxing Day, Firmino's movement for their third goal after the ball was played to Alexander-Arnold on the right showed that he knew where the ball was going, and the delivery was perfection. Everyone bangs on about the corner he took against Barcelona last season – the fearlessness, the vision, the quality – but he has just continued from there, making it look almost routine.

Attacking full-backs are

nothing new but what we haven't seen is this level of quality and consistency. The only one I can think of who has made a similar contribution in terms of delivery in attacking areas is Marcelo at Real Madrid, though the Brazilian is 31 and has only once reached double figures for assists in a league season while Alexander-Arnold is on course to do it for the second time at the age of 21. Marcelo has stood out from other full-backs because of his ability to come inside, combine with forwards and get goals, but you could argue that Alexander-Arnold is now the best in the world in that position. And what makes him all the more exceptional is the fact he is a local lad who is quite unassuming, quite shy, says all the right things, and is just quietly going about his business of being an outstanding footballer.

Liverpool play Tottenham on Saturday and then Manchester United, the only team to have taken league points off them this season and who overperform against the top sides, before a long run of games they would expect to win. If they are going to trip up, this is the period when it is going to happen. Already there is little doubt they are going to win the league, but if they win these two I think there's a good chance they'll go unbeaten. They have shown an incredible level of consistency and hunger and when finally, after three decades and generation after generation of gifted but frustrated footballers, Liverpool lift the Premier League trophy there will be no denying the contribution of Alexander-Arnold, an unassuming icon.

Cricket is insignificant to what's happening in Australia: Finch on bushfires

MUMBAI, JAN 10 (PTI): Cricket is "insignificant" compared to the bushfires raging in his country at the moment, Australia captain Aaron Finch said on Friday, hoping to bring smiles on the faces of those affected by the tragedy, with good performances against India.

Australia will be playing a short three-match ODI series, starting on January 14.

"Obviously, it's very unfortunate what's happening in Australia. With everyone affected by bushfires around

Australia, at the end of the day, cricket is insignificant to what's happening there in terms of (like I said), the loss of lives," Finch said.

"Lot of wildlife has unfortunately perished. All we can do is, as players, try and bring some good performances and bring some excitement and smiles on the faces of the people, who are doing it very tough at the moment," he added during a media interaction.

The bushfires have shocked the world and

prompted an outpouring of support from celebrities, athletes and leaders around the world.

Spin legend Shane Warne's baggy green cap sold at auction for nearly USD 700,000 on Friday, with all funds going to help victims of bushfires raging in Australia.

Cricket Australia last week also announced a fundraising drive for the Australian Red Cross Disaster Relief and Recovery Fund during one-day matches between Australia and New Zealand in Sydney in March.

Real Kashmir play out 1-1 draw with Punjab FC

SRINAGAR, JAN 10 (PTI): Real Kashmir FC made a strong comeback in the second half to play out a 1-1 draw against former champions Punjab FC in their home I-League match here on Friday.

The 'Snow Leopards' equalised in the 62nd minute through Gnohere Krizo in front of a partisan crowd of 8,500 spectators after Makan Chothe had given Punjab FC the lead in the 21st minute at the TRC ground.

After Thursday's draw, Punjab FC are placed third on the table with 10 points from seven games. Real Kashmir FC remained at eighth with six points from five matches. This was Real Kashmir's third home match on the trot.

The match was a story of two halves as the first belonged to the visitors who enjoyed a

62 per cent possession of the ball, whereas the second belonged to the home side. Both the teams were looking to gain an early advantage and Punjab FC took the lead after 21 minutes.

A confusion inside the Real Kashmir box because of a long ball from Punjab opened up an opportunity for Chothe and he made no mistake as he smashed the ball at the back of the net.

As the fans cheered on, Real Kashmir created a flurry of chances, but none of the home side players could find the back of the net. Punjab were able to hold on to their slender lead heading into the tunnel.

"We played extremely well. It was a tough game but we managed to play out a draw. We thank the home crowd for turning up on a Friday in huge

numbers and being so polite and well behaved," said Real Kashmir FC co-founder Sandeep Chattoo. The second half resumed with Real Kashmir pressing high up the field and pressurising Punjab.

In the 56th minute, Real Kashmir playmaker Kallum Higginbotham cut through two defenders on the left side of the box and the ball fell to Mason Robertson, whose shot was too weak to trouble the Punjab goalkeeper. Soon after, it was Danish Farooq who tried a curler from a distance but his shot did not have enough bend to trouble the Punjab goalkeeper. The home team's effort finally paid off in the 62nd minute.

A miscalculated header by Danilo Augusto fell at the feet of Gnohere Krizo, who was one-on-one with the keeper.

Injury fears haunt Hudson-Odoi as Chelsea star aims to bounce back

LONDON, JAN 10 (AFP): Callum Hudson-Odoi admits he is battling to banish his injury demons as the Chelsea winger bids to end his sophomore slump when Burnley visit Stamford Bridge on Saturday.

Just months ago, Hudson-Odoi was heralded as the brightest of Chelsea's young stars after his breakthrough season culminated in the teenager signing a bumper new five-year contract in September.

Persuading him to snub strong interest from Bayern Munich was seen as a major victory for new Chelsea boss Frank Lampard. The 19-year-old was tipped to ascend to the ranks of the Premier League's elite stars this term but while several of his young Chelsea team-mates have enjoyed vibrant campaigns, Hudson-Odoi's progress has stalled.

Part of the problem has been the player's attempts to shake off the painful memories of the torn Achilles in April that cut short his stellar run. Finding it difficult to trust that his body would not betray him again, Hudson-Odoi played tentatively at the start of this season and quickly found himself consigned to a bit-part role. While he laboured to find a solution, Tammy Abraham and Mason Mount both surpassed



their fellow Chelsea youth academy graduate.

If Hudson-Odoi was feeling frustrated, he did not let it show.

He finally saw light at the end of the tunnel when he broke a four-month scoring drought in Chelsea's FA Cup third-round win against Nottingham Forest on Sunday.

As well as netting the opener, Hudson-Odoi set up Ross Barkley's goal, but even now those unsettling injury flashbacks have not completely gone.

CONFIDENCE BOOST -

He was left clutching his troublesome right Achilles after a heavy tackle against Forest and said: "Obviously there are still times where I think to myself 'If I get kicked on it like today what could happen?'"

There are times where I think to myself 'If

I do a certain movement it will go again.' "But now as days at training go by, I think if you're confident and do your strengthening work in the gym, it will still be strong and nothing should happen to it again."

With Lampard hoping to bolster his fourth-placed squad with new signings, including attacking additions, in the January transfer window, Hudson-Odoi needs to get back to peak form as soon as possible to avoid falling further down the pecking order.

"I've been doing work every day with the conditioning coaches to ensure it's strong enough and nothing else happens to it," he said.

"I think I'm close to the point I was before. The player trod on my Achilles, which was a bit painful but everything is alright."

Lampard hailed

Hudson-Odoi's confidence-boosting performance against Forest as a "nice step forward" and the England international hopes that triggers a more positive second half of the season.

"I have been a bit agitated, thinking to myself that I have had chances and I need to convert more of them, be more clinical in front of goal," said Hudson-Odoi.

"So in this game I thought to myself 'Hit it low and hard'. Recently I have been thinking 'Be patient, the goal will come if you be yourself, be calm, everything will go your way.'"

"I am really happy that I got the goal and I am looking to build on it and keep going. It is not just about the goal, it is about helping the team, working hard, keeping the ball, and overall I am happy with how everything went.

China threat looms over presidential election in Taiwan

TAIPEI, JAN 10 (AP): Further deadlock and heightened pressure from China is the likely outcome if Taiwan's independence-leading President Tsai Ing-wen wins a second term this weekend, as is widely predicted.

Tsai had been leading by a comfortable margin in most polls before the standard blackout period on surveys was imposed 10 days before Saturday's elections.

Despite her party losing badly in local elections 14 months ago, Tsai has been buoyed by hostile words and actions from China and months of anti-government protests in Hong Kong, which she says proves that Beijing's one country, two systems' formula by which it proposes to govern Taiwan is untenable.

Tsai's position has been bolstered also by stability in the island's high-tech economy, where stock market prices have remained robust and wages shown slight gains, partly as a result of Taiwanese exporters relocating from China to avoid the bruising effects of the U.S.-China trade war.

Her chief opponent, Han Kuo-yu of the opposition Nationalist Party, has slumped in the polls following a series of gaffes and allega-



tions of shady financial deals. He has clung to a pro-China policy despite widespread distrust of the mainland and a strong backlash against Beijing's handling of the Hong Kong protests.

Voters will also elect a 113-member legislature, where Tsai's Democratic Progressive Party currently has 68 seats. The Nationalists hold 35 seats with the rest taken by minor parties and independents.

While Taiwanese elections generally revolve around economic, public welfare and social justice issues, China's threat to annex Taiwan by force always looms large in the background, and even more so this

year. China has taken an especially hard-line against Tsai since her 2016 inauguration, infuriated by her refusal to endorse its claim that Taiwan and the mainland are part of a single China.

Beijing cut off all formal ties with her government, restricted visits by Chinese tourists, excluded Taiwan's representatives from international gatherings and peeled away more of the island's remaining diplomatic allies, leaving it with just 15.

Stepping up its threats, Beijing has in recent months held military exercises across the Taiwan Strait, sailed both of its aircraft carriers through the waterway that divides Taiwan

from the mainland and flown air patrols around the island. However, in an apparent effort to avoid antagonizing voters, Chinese leader Xi Jinping didn't renew the threat of using force against Taiwan during his annual New Year's Eve address, though reiterated China's firm opposition to Taiwan's formal independence. Chinese state media have been notably silent on the election campaign.

Analysts say the low-key approach masks a more subtle campaign to back Han and Nationalist candidates for the legislature through media manipulation and social media campaigns.

Seeking to scupper

such attempts, the legislature last month passed an anti-infiltration bill laying out fines and prison sentences for those seeking to manipulate Taiwan's political system on behalf of China or other foreign powers.

In comments to the international media on Thursday, Taiwan's Foreign Minister Joseph Wu said Tsai's government doesn't plan to rock the boat with a formal declaration of independence.

Maintaining the status quo is in the best interest of everyone concerned. We will not provoke any conflict with China, but we are absolutely determined to defend Taiwan's democracy, Wu said.

Hell and ice water: Glacier melt threatens Pakistan's future

SHISPER GLACIER (PAKISTAN), JAN 10 (AFP): The villagers of Hasanabad live in constant fear. Above them the vast Shisper glacier dominates the landscape: A river of jagged black ice moving towards them at as much as four metres per day.

Climate change is causing most glaciers worldwide to shrink, but due to a meteorological anomaly this is one of a few in the Karakoram mountain range in northern Pakistan that are surging.

This means hundreds of tonnes of ice and debris are pushing down the valley at ten times the normal rate or more, threatening the safety of the people and homes below.

"People's lives, properties and animals are in danger," warns villager Basir Ali.

Flash floods caused by glacial lakes, ice and rock falls, and a lack of clean and accessible water are all serious risks for those close to its path.

"When a glacial lake bursts there is an enormous amount of not only ice, water and debris that falls through, but also mud and this has devastating effects, it basically destroys everything that comes in its way," said Ignacio Artaza of UNDP Pakistan.

But repercussions of the Shisper glacier surge extend far beyond its path: The mighty Indus River is reliant on seasonal melt for more than half of its flow and changes in Pakistan's ice fields affect this.

That has implications not just for those living in its basin, but for the whole nation, which relies on it for much of its food. Shifting water levels also have implications for the fragile relationship between nuclear-armed neighbours Pakistan and India. Already ranked among the planet's most water-stressed nations according to the World Resources Institute, both need the Indus and its tributaries.

Their access to the water is governed by the 1960 Indus Water Treaty, which aims for fair usage.

The Karakoram, which contains some of the world's tallest

mountains including K2, is just one of the mountain ranges that criss-cross the Hindu Kush-Himalayan region. Sometimes called The Third Pole, the region holds more ice than anywhere other than the Arctic or Antarctica.

But a third of the glaciers here are expected to melt by 2100, endangering the lives of hundreds of millions, according to this year's Hindu Kush-Himalaya Assessment Report.

Rising in Tibet, the Indus crosses through India and Pakistan fed by a multitude of tributaries before it reaches the Arabian Sea.

The waterway's basin produces 90 percent of Pakistan's food, according to the UN, and agriculture is dependent on irrigation from the river, which heavily relies on meltwater from the ice sheets.

With its surging population experts warn the nation faces "absolute water scarcity" by 2025, with the loss of the Himalayan glaciers a key threat.

While scientists cite climate change and topography, it's not clear exactly what causes the Karakoram anomaly where glaciers are surging and in some cases growing.

But many say these changes will also impact the Indus because they alter meltwater patterns, causing flash flooding or water shortages that are difficult to predict and manage.

"The Shisper glacier is increasing its length and width, furthermore it is also moving downhill," explained Shehzad Baig of the Gilgit-Baltistan Disaster Management Authority.

He warned climate change meant there was heavier snowfall during the winters and warmer temperatures in the summers, leading to the ice mass producing more meltwater, swelling the Hunza River, a churning mountain tributary of the Indus.

"This may cause harm to the local community and deprive the people of the Indus basin blocking or disturbing drinking water and irrigation channels," Baig warned, adding that changing weather

patterns were also creating more glacial lakes.

The UNDP estimates that more than 3,000 glacial lakes have been formed in the region, with 33 posing an imminent threat of 'outburst floods', known as GLOFs, that could impact as many as seven million people.

Last year the surging Shisper glacier effectively dammed a meltwater stream from a neighbouring glacier creating a large lake. Authorities were forced to issue safety warnings to Hassanabad and local villages before the water was drained.

But satellite data shows the lake is already reforming, leaving residents fearing not only the progression of the crushing ice sheet but that they will be swept to their deaths in flash floods.

"This whole area will be devastated...the whole population and people's properties will go into river," cautions villager Didar Karim.

Professor Andreas Kaab from the University of Oslo says Pakistan must adapt its "monitoring and response strategies, and risk management in general" to contend with both surging and shrinking glaciers.

Authorities, working with the UN, are setting up early warning systems using sensors positioned on top of the Shisper glacier and downstream to alert communities.

But the challenge for Pakistan extends beyond crisis management to the long-term water conservation and storage, experts say.

"Pakistan has to increase its water storage capacity which is now 33 days -- it should be at least 100 days to ensure sustainable development," cautions Dr Ghulam Rasul of the International Center for Integrated Mountain Development. He estimates that 60 per cent of water is currently lost as run-off to the sea.

With few functioning reservoirs the nation is ill-equipped to harness the short-term excess water as climate change causes more glaciers to melt, or from the increasingly erratic monsoon deluges.

Canada holds vigils for victims of plane crash in Iran

TORONTO, JAN 10 (AFP): Hundreds of mourners held a candle-light vigil Thursday night in Toronto to remember 176 people killed when a Ukraine-bound plane crashed in Iran. Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said multiple intelligence sources indicate that Iran shot down the Ukrainian airliner built by Boeing, although he conceded it may have been unintentional.

The dead included 63 Canadians and many others headed for Canada.

At the vigil, people in Toronto -- which has a large Iranian community -- expressed anger and sadness over the tragedy.

"Somebody has to answer us back why this happened. They were innocent people who died," said one of those at the ceremony, Yasmin Roshan, age 43.

Roshan, who came with his nine year old daughter, said he lost two friends in the crash.

He said he blamed US President Donald Trump, who last Friday ordered the killing of a top Iranian general in Iraq, sending tensions between Washington and Tehran soaring. Iran retaliated Wednesday by firing a barrage of ballistic missiles at Iraqi military bases housing US troops. The airliner went down just hours later: "They are all gone and we don't know why. It's the right of the community and everybody to know what happened exactly," said a 55-year-old man who gave his name as Sam.

Citizens battle to save China's sickly 'mother river'

Henan, Jan 10 (AFP): Water has been a source of death as well as a source of life for a generation in Shenqiu, a region fed by a tributary of China's heavily polluted Yangtze river and pockmarked with notorious "cancer villages".

Residents often faced a bitter choice: drink dirty, discoloured water and risk sickness, or pay high prices for bottled water and risk poverty.

But artist-turned-environmentalist Huo Yalun has been on a mission to change that, installing filters to purify groundwater in the area in a bid to offer a safe alternative for ordinary people.

"We have seen many people in villages get cancer and skin diseases because of drinking the polluted water. But I wanted to ... actually find a solution to the villagers' drinking water problems," he told AFP.

It has been a monumental task. Decades of rapid development has left the world's third longest river and its tributaries choked with toxic chemicals, plastic and garbage, threatening the main drinking water source of nearly 400 million people -- a third of China's population.

Protecting the Yangtze -- which irrigates an area responsible for 45 percent of the country's GDP -- is now a priority, with President Xi Jinping calling for an end to "destructive" development along it.

But impatient citizens, like Huo, whose father was an award-winning environmental reporter who first highlighted the issue in the 1990s, have already taken action.

His prototype water filters were created before authorities even publicly disclosed the existence of more than 250 "cancer villages" in 2013 -- mostly in the Yangtze river basin, including the provinces of Anhui, Jiangsu and Henan, where Shenqiu is located.

Death rates from stomach, oesophagus or liver cancer in these

places were two or three times the national average, according to the China Centre for Disease Control and Prevention, which linked the increases to water pollution.

Huo has installed more than 50 filters and offered safe drinking water to some 100,000 families.

"Before we installed the filters, a few villagers who could afford it were spending nearly 14 yuan (2 dollars) a day to buy bottled water," said Huo.

"The others were still drinking the discoloured, smelly river water," he added.

Shenqiu sits on the Huai river basin, a major tributary to the Yangtze the country's "mother river" which stretches 6,300 kilometres from Tibet to Shanghai.

The major causes of water pollution in the region were factories producing MSG, paper, and leather, with toxic industrial run-off pouring into the waterways.

The county has more than a dozen cancer blackspots, including Huangmengying village that sits on the Shaying river, which feeds into the Huai.

Here ponds and streams, traditionally sources of drinking water, turned rust-red. Little survived in the waterways and the birds all but disappeared.

Cancer rates rose 196 percent from 1973 to 2004 -- nine times the national average -- according to a government report.

"Many villagers were suffering from cancer. The doctor only started telling us not to drink the river water several years ago. By then I had already helped bury my three neighbours," recalled local Wang Shiying.

Most residents have died or moved away to protect their health, he added.

Earlier this year China unveiled an action plan to restore the Yangtze by the end of 2020.

As part of this, the city of Yichang aims to close all 134 of its

riverside chemical factories, while authorities in Hunan have been using drones with infrared cameras to spot factories dumping unprocessed waste water into the river.

Central government is also considering stricter laws to punish "ecological crimes" such as dumping untreated sewage and industrial waste in the Yangtze basin, state media reported in November.

"There has been a flurry of activity in recent months to save the Yangtze. But many of them are patchwork solutions that don't address core issues" said Ma Jun, a Beijing-based environmentalist.

Lax environmental standards and tampering of pollution data by local officials has meant that "the Yangtze river basin was cleaner on paper than on the ground", Ma warned.

But government pressure has forced more businesses to start investing in water treatment facilities, Huo said.

One such project is a waste-water treatment plant at a leather tannery in Shenqiu where massive concrete vats hold 400 tonnes of chemical-tainted water used to process rawhides.

The frothing black liquid which smells like rotten eggs is now run through special filters and purifiers, while real-time updates on the level of toxins in the purified water are sent to the provincial environmental authority.

Huo is hopeful a combination of citizen environmentalism and government action will soon mean clean water for all.

He spent 15 years honing his system where groundwater is pumped through a series of membranes that remove bacteria.

He uses reverse osmosis to remove pollutants before the water undergoes ozone and UV sterilization, and is filtered through charcoal from coconut shells, a process he says ensures the water is free of contaminants and tastes good.

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GLAM GAL! Actress, Lupita Nyong'o flashed peace signs with both hands at the National Board of Review Annual Awards Gala at Cipriani 42nd Street in New York City on Wednesday, January 8.

I had a chance to do it: David Ayer on 'Suicide Squad' sequel

LOS ANGELES, JAN 10 (PTI): Filmmaker David Ayer says he could have directed a sequel to his critically-panned film "Suicide Squad" but decided against doing it.

The 2016 movie featured a star-studded cast of Will Smith, Margot Robbie, Jared Leto, Joel Kinnaman, Cara Delevingne, and Viola Davis. It was about a group of DC supervillains who are recruited by a secret government agency to execute dangerous black ops missions and save the world from a powerful threat. Though the film was a big commercial success for the studio, Warner Bros, it received unfavourable reviews from the critics. In an interview with SlashFilm, Ayer revealed that he had an opportunity to make its sequel. "I had a chance to do it, but I went another way," Ayer said.

The director, however, added that he is not done with comic book movies as yet. "I love the world creation of it and I love the power

of the IP and the fans. It's dangerous. It's like juggling chainsaws, but I am drawn to it and it's definitely an arena I'll play in again," Ayer said.

The studio is currently working on a standalone sequel, titled "The Suicide Squad". Being directed by "Guardians of the Galaxy" series helmer James Gunn, the new mov-



ie will feature Idris Elba, John Cena, Storm Reid, Nathan Fillion, Peter Capaldi, Pete Davidson, Alice Braga, Michael Rooker and Taika Waititi. Robbie, Davis and Kinnaman are reprising their respective characters in the new film.

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'Chhapaak' a glowing gem in your repertoire: Ranveer to Deepika

MUMBAI, JAN 10 (PTI): Calling "Chhapaak" "one of the films of our times", Ranveer Singh praised actor-wife Deepika Padukone for her immensely complex portrayal of an acid attack survivor.

In a lengthy Instagram post, Ranveer called Deepika the soul of the Meghna Gulzar-directed movie, which is based on the story of acid attack survivor and activist Laxmi Agarwal. It released countrywide on Friday. Ranveer said he had the first-hand experience of seeing Deepika, his co-star of films such as "Ram Leela", "Bajirao Mastani" and "Padmaavat", create Malti (Laxmi).

"I've witnessed you toil relentlessly to create this special piece of work. You've been an engine behind the project, and are the soul of the film. This is the most important instalment in your body of work.

"You laboured with such honesty in intent and action. You dug deep and fought through your challenges, faced your fears, overcame your struggles and today you and your team stand triumphant as the creators of one of the films of our times. Your performance is way more than everything I thought it could and would be," the actor wrote.

Ranveer said Deepika's performance in the movie "moved me, stirred me and stayed with me" as she presented a perfect mix of "strength" and "vulnerability". "You blended strength with vulnera-

said after "Talvar" and "Raazi", she has once again mesmerised the audience with her work. "Meghna, your film gives the audience hope and courage. It shows you the best and worst of humanity in a



bility and lent dignity to an immensely complex portrayal in such a fine manner that I'm simply awestruck at your craft.

"Its staggering and astonishing what you've achieved with Malti. A glowing gem in your repertoire. I love you baby. I've never been more proud of you," he said.

Ranveer also praised Meghna and

kaleidoscopic cinematic spectrum. It elucidates a subject that we've only ever heard of but never really fully understood.

"It offers a definitive and insightful deep-dive into the horrific gamut of acid violence. The story shakes you to your core and then lifts you heroically until your emotions soar. 'Talvar', 'Raazi' and now 'Chhapaak'...

Bong Joon Ho to make a limited series on 'Parasite' for HBO

LOS ANGELES, JAN 10 (PTI): South Korean filmmaker Bong Joon Ho is in negotiations with HBO for a limited series based on "Parasite", which has emerged as one of the most talked about movies of the year.

The film is also an award season darling since winning the Palme d'Or in Cannes last May. It won the best foreign language Golden Globe and is expected to earn multiple nominations at the Oscars besides picking up trophies from critics bodies, including the top honour from the National Society of Film Critics.

A series on the movie was hotly pursued by top streamers, including Netflix but Bong decided to go with HBO as it has a strong track record in limited series, according to Deadline.

"Succession" executive producer Adam McKay and Bong will adapt the

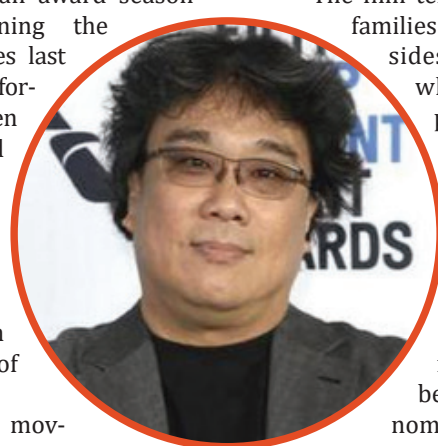
movie for a TV series.

Directed by Bong and written by Bong and Han Jin Won, "Parasite" stars Song Kang Ho, Lee Sun Kyun, Cho Yeo Jeong, Choi Woo Shik, Park So Dam, Lee Jung Eun and Chang Hye Jin.

The film tells the story of two families from different sides of the class divide where members of a poor family scheme and manage to get to work in a wealthy household.

"Parasite", which critics have found hard to slot into a genre, has become a global phenomenon, grossing USD 130M worldwide so far.

It is Bong's seventh feature film following on from "Barking Dogs Never Bite" (2000), "Memories of Murder" (2003), "The Host" (2006), "Mother" (2009), "Snowpiercer" (2013), and "Okja" (2017).



Batman's got a legacy and a lineage: Robert Pattinson

LOS ANGELES, JAN 10 (PTI): Robert Pattinson says DC superhero Batman is one intellectual property that has always attracted Hollywood's best directors and actors.

The actor, who is portraying the Caped Crusader in Matt Reeves' "The Batman" told Entertainment Weekly that the character has "a legacy and a lineage" attached to it.

"There was something that always appealed to me about it. I feel like it sort of exists outside the realm of... Batman movies have always attracted really, really good directors, and really good actors and it's got a legacy and a lineage to it. It's never seemed to me like it's been just a cash-in for something," Pattinson said.

The 33-year-old actor said he has been a fan of the superhero since Adam

West first portrayed the part in the ABC series "Batman", which ran from 1966 to 1968.

"Even how the TV series was done. People still watch the TV series. That is a classic TV show. And it's very, very, very well done. The performances are great. It's a very interesting, kind of pop arty TV show. "It's funny and I just always feel like they never just made a movie so they could sell toys. I'm sure there was a part of them that did it but... There's something very special about it," Pattinson said.

Before Pattinson and after West, Batman has been portrayed by the likes of Michael Keaton, Val Kilmer, George Clooney, Christian Bale and Ben Affleck.

"The Batman", being billed as a grounded take on the Dark Knight, will hit the screens on June 25, 2021.

BMW Tupac Shakur was shot in being auctioned for USD 1.75 million

LOS ANGELES, JAN 10 (PTI): The black BMW 750Li that Tupac Shakur was fatally shot in is being auctioned.

According to Las Vegas dealership Celebrity Cars' latest listing the vehicle in which the rapper was shot several times on September 7, 1996, is on sale for USD 1.75 million.

The car has been upgraded with new tires and rims and has also been given a fresh coat of paint.

According to the listing, there is one indentation on the car from where a bullet struck it.

Tupac was riding in the passenger seat of the BMW with Death Row Records CEO Suge Knight driving the vehicle when it was hit with multiple bullets in a drive-by shooting.

The car was previously up for auction in 2017 for USD 1.5 million.

Got sober because of Bradley Cooper: Brad Pitt

LOS ANGELES, JAN 10 (PTI): Hollywood star Brad Pitt has credited his friend, actor Bradley Cooper, for helping him get over his alcohol addiction.

The "Once Upon a Time in Hollywood" actor, who won the best supporting actor at the National Board of Review awards, gave a special mention to presenter Cooper in his acceptance speech.

"Bradley just put his daughter to bed and rushed over here to do this. He's a sweetheart. I got sober because of this guy, and every day has been happier ever since," Pitt said.

The actor spent a year and a half in Alcoholics Anonymous after Angelina Jolie filed for divorce from him in 2016.

Cooper also quit alcohol in his early 20s.

ARIES: 'Quality over quantity' is a mantra that best describes 2020 for you. You don't have to throw out all your personal belongings or Marie Kondo your life, but you can consume intentionally and live a purposeful existence. You may also feel inspired to apply this philosophy to your personal life. You've had your share of party-hopping and being seen at the right places.

Tip: Live a more purposeful life.

TAURUS: Think of this as the final task of the Triwizard Tournament, Taurus. All you have to do is to get to the centre of the maze to win your trophy. The secret to success is keeping your eyes on the prize. Visualise the win. Use your trusted sword to cut through the illusions. Overheard at the cosmic conference: you are closer to the breakthrough moment than you can imagine.

Tip: Let single-minded focus be your secret weapon.

GEMINI: The phrase, 'the blood of the covenant is thicker than the water of the womb' stands true for a reason. The ties we share with our soul family both ground and liberate us. They hold space for us to express

our most authentic selves sans the fear of being judged.

Tip: Seek the comfort of the familiar.

CANCER: Nothing will go back to being the same. Such is the cycle of life. Understand and embrace the changes, Cancer. Trust that you have the strength and flexibility required to adapt to your circumstances. Everything is ultimately transpiring for your highest good. Choosing the path of least resistance will help you find peace within and without.

Tip: accept the things you cannot change.

LEO: Everybody is born with the gift of spiritual sight, which helps us look beyond the veil that separates our world from the spiritual realm. As we grow, we tend to repress this gift and get fixated on the material world. But you've always known that there is more to our existence, haven't you? Today, the Universe is offering you the chance to, awaken to your gifts.

Tip: Awaken your spiritual gifts.

VIRGO: The creative process is made up of four stages: preparation, incubation, illumination and verification. You've gathered

your ingredients and set the stage. Now it's time for you to move onto stage two. Let your mind wander, Virgo. The aim is to focus on anything but your goal; to stretch your ideas beyond the common.

Tip: Let your mind wander.

LIBRA: This is the time to take focused action, Libra. You have been blessed with the resources needed to get through this situation. Clichéd as it is, all the ideas you seek are within you. This chapter of your life also calls for a greater degree of initiative. Don't wait for somebody else to start the revolution. You go first. Before you know, it will have turned into a movement.

Tip: Let initiative become your power word.

SCORPIO: You've already made a list of pros and cons in your head. In other words, you know the best way forward. So, what's keeping you from making that big move, Scorpio? Say goodbye to the preconceived notions and have an open and honest conversation with the others. You'll be surprised by how open and receptive they are to your ideas. Tip: Clarity is key.

SAGITTARIUS: There's something magical about bringing your true, most authentic self to the table. It helps you build relationships on the basis of truth, honesty and integrity. Sagittarius, you are making space for people who are jamming at a higher frequency. Disillusioned archers are now remembering why they started this journey and reconnecting with their soul's purpose. You have so many gifts buried inside of you. Now is the time to orchestrate a massive excavation. Tip: Reconnect with your soul's purpose.

CAPRICORN: Slow down, Capricorn. There is more to life than bringing home a big, fat paycheck and expanding your empire. Your obsession with work could be making other areas of your life suffer. The cards are reminding the importance of balance. Spend some time nurturing your soul ties. There's nothing more therapeutic than ending the days with your mum's heartwarming stew, or listening to your best friend rant about how she is 100% likely to sabotage her Friday night date.

Tip: Nurture your soul ties.

AQUARIUS: Reality check, Aquarius: you can be multi-talented and still make nothing of your life because you refused to take the required action. Carefully examine your beliefs and thought patterns as you discard the ones that are keeping you from realising your highest potential. Trust that you will make one of your biggest breakthroughs in the process. Calling your power back to you will help you realise that you can achieve anything you set your mind to, and attract opportunities that will take your career to new heights.

Tip: Break out of the mental prison.

PISCES: If caterpillars are to be believed, the transformation process is anything but pretty. The only way to get through is to remember what lies on the other side of this journey. Pisces, trust that you are becoming more you than ever before. For now, focus on stripping away the false layers and letting go of the inauthentic beliefs. Word for the wise: you are no longer obliged to be a product of your conditioning.

Tip: Oh hello, metamorphosis!