



NORTH HOLDS COORDINATION MEETING FOR ELECTION DUTY

pg02

WEB 3.0: THE DECENTRALISED WEB PROMISES TO MAKE THE INTERNET FREE AGAIN

pg04

DHONI BARED HIS SOUL IN 'ROAR OF THE LION': KABIR KHAN

pg08



SummitTIMES

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ON TOP OF THE NEWS

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SKM confirms pre-poll alliance with BJP subject to agreement on common minimum prog

SAGAR CHHETRI

GANGTOK, 12 MAR:

Although the Bharatiya Janata Party high command had announced a pre-poll alliance with the Sikkim Krantikari Morcha a few days back, SKM itself had remained tight-lipped about the development and had not officially commented on it. With the announcement of the election schedule on Sunday and with less than a month left for the Assembly elections in the State, SKM today announced its pre-poll alliance with the BJP for Elections 2019.

This would not be the first election alliance between the SKM and BJP. It may be recalled that SKM had itself not fielded a candidate for the bypolls at Yangang-Rangang in 2014 and had supported the BJP candidate there.

SKM spokesperson,

Jacob Khaling, today confirmed the alliance. Interestingly, he also added that the alliance would be finalised only after an agreement was reached on the eight-point common minimum programme proposed by the SKM.

Addressing a press conference here today, Mr Khaling informed that a high-level meeting chaired by the SKM party president PS Tamang [Golay] at Singling in West Sikkim on Monday took views and suggestions of leaders and workers of the party on the alliance with BJP.

He informed after thorough discussions, the meeting unanimously decided to go in for a pre-poll alliance with BJP for this election.

He mentioned that talks on the alliance were still going on and that after signing on the



common minimum programme, the alliance will be finalised in the next few days. He added after that seat-sharing will also be discussed on the same meeting.

Mr Khaling men-

tioned that the eight-point common minimum programme includes amendment of the Citizen Amendment Bill to ensure that the Bill is not extended to Sikkim, immediate reservation

of Limboo-Tamang seats and tribal status to eleven left-out communities, restoration of Nepali seats, protection of the Article 371F, Rule 4(4) and other old laws of Sikkim, full respect and

protection to all religions and communities of Sikkim and their rights, permanent IT exemption to all Sikkimese and left out old settlers and CBI being allowed to investigate corruption cases in Sikkim.

Speaking on the alliance process, Mr Khaling informed that BJP leadership in Delhi invited SKM to discuss an alliance. The SKM delegation to Delhi was led by Mr Tamang. The party president informed and discussed this invitation in a high-level meeting of SKM on 26 February at Gangtok, it is informed.

He added that after the discussions, the meeting decided to go for a first-round meeting in Delhi and a seven-member high level delegation of SKM met BJP national president, Amit Shah, and other senior leaders on 06 March and had another meeting with BJP general secretary Ram Madhav on 07 March.

The SKM spokesperson also questioned the Sikkim Democratic Front party president on whether he had ever discussed with the par-

ty CEC before extending support to the BJP at the Centre.

He also questioned whether he or his party had placed a common minimum programme before the post poll alliance.

On the same, he alleged that the support extended by SDF to BJP at the Centre was not in the interest of the people but just to save an individual from the CBI investigation.

SKM however decided to have alliance with BJP for the people of Sikkim, he claimed.

Mr Khaling stated that the SDF has been misleading minorities in the State by sowing fears about this alliance. On the same, he said, "SKM party gives full guarantee to Christians, Buddhists and Muslims in the State that there will not be any injustice and suppression. So they should not fear of anything."

turn to pg02

HSP to announce first list of candidates in a week



NITESH R PRADHAN

GANGTOK, 12 MAR:

Hamro Sikkim Party (HSP) will be contesting all 32 constituencies and one Lok Sabha as per the party spokesperson, Biraj Adhikari. The first list of candi-

dates will be announced within a week.

In a function held today, the party welcomed three new members, Research Scholar, Niraj Adhikari [Tumin Lingee], Indra Kumar Suji [Central Pendum] and Pahal-

man Kami [Soreng].

President Dr Bina Basnet and vice president Bhaichung Bhutia, welcomed them into the party at the HSP Headquarter.

"We want to break the vicious circle of money

turn to pg02

State Contact Centre working hours extended

GANGTOK, 12 MAR: With the announcement of the General Elections 2019, the number of calls being received at the State Contact Centre has increased significantly.

Hence, to cope up with the increase in the traffic of calls, the office of the Chief Electoral Officer, Sikkim, has decided to extend the timing of the State Contact Centre '1950' from 9 AM to 9 PM on all days of the week (including Sunday and Holidays).

SPCC selects Bharat Basnet as LS candidate from Sikkim

SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 12 MAR:

The election committee of Sikkim Pradesh Congress Committee [SPCC] has unanimously selected SPCC president Bharat Basnet as the party's Lok Sabha candidate from Sikkim.

The committee has sent his name to the Congress party national president, Rahul Gandhi, for approval.

An SPCC press release informs that a meeting of the election committee on 09 March under the chairmanship of the party

vice-president and chairman of the election committee, PL Gurung, short-listed names of assembly and Lok Sabha candidates.

It is informed that the meeting unanimously selected the state Congress president Mr Basnet as the Lok Sabha candidate of the party from the State and sent it to the national president for the approval.

With this, Congress has become the first party to officially announce a candidate for the upcoming elections.

Tibetan women mark 60th anniv of their uprising day



REBYNA RANA

GANGTOK, 12 MAR:

On the 60th anniversary of the uprising day of Tibetan women today, the Tibetan Women Association of Gangtok, organised a candle light vigil to pay homage to Tibetan women who sacrificed their lives in Tibet's

freedom movement on 12 March, 1959.

The candle light vigil started at 5:30 p.m. and ended at 6:30 p.m. in front of old tourism office, MG Marg. In the morning, the association members also visited a monastery to pray for the departed souls.

The association observes this day every year on 12 March.

Meanwhile, a candle light vigil was also carried out at the same place today to pay tribute to the CRPF jawans who lost their lives in the Pulwama terror attack on 14 Feb.

SILTAC blames SIBLAC for obstructing LT Assembly seat reservation



SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 12 MAR:

Sikkim Limboo Tamang Apex Committee [SILTAC] has again alleged that Sikkim Bhutia Lepcha Apex Committee [SIBLAC] has caused obstructions in the provision of Limboo-Tamang Assembly seat reservation. The organisation has stated that the memorandum submitted by SIBLAC convener and Sikkim Krantikari Mor-

cha MLAs to the Union Home Minister has obstructed the seat reservation process.

Addressing a press conference here today, SILTAC chairperson, CB Subba contended that the date [26 Sept 2016] of the meeting of SIBLAC convener and Sikkim Krantikari Morcha MLAs with the Union Home Minister was a printing mistake and it was held on 28 Aug 2018. He also

thanked SIBLAC convener for correcting the date.

The memorandum submitted in this meeting has obstructed LT Assembly seat reservation and SIBLAC's claims of not being involved are all baseless, said Mr Subba.

Increasing the State Assembly strength to 40 to reserve five seats for Limboo and Tamang is a justified and constitutional proposal while

turn to pg02

SummitTIMES IN NEPALI



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After severing ties over Citizenship Bill, AGP mulls returning to NDA

GUWAHATI, MAR 12 (PTI): Two months after severing ties with the ruling BJP over the contentious Citizenship (Amendment) Bill, the Asom Gana Parishad (AGP) is weighing its options to return to the NDA fold for the Lok Sabha elections.

According to sources in the AGP, the party is divided over the issue of tying up with the BJP again, fearing backlash from ground-level workers.

A senior BJP leader has also admitted that the process of forging a coalition between the former allies have gained momentum in the last couple of days, but nothing has been fixed as yet.

The AGP legislature party is scheduled to hold a meeting later in the evening to take a call on the matter, a legislator of the party told PTI on condition of anonymity.

On Monday night, too, AGP MLAs held a discussion over realigning with the BJP, but the meeting remained inconclusive, he said. "We have been summoned for a meeting. It will start at 9 pm. The alliance issue will be discussed at the meet," the senior AGP member said. "Last night's meeting remained inconclusive. We discussed at length about the pros and cons of joining the BJP. But there was no unanimity. Some of us were in favour of aligning with the BJP, but the others opposed the idea," he said.

On January 7, the AGP withdrew its support to the BJP government in Assam in protest against the Centre's decision to go ahead with the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill, which seeks to grant nationality to non-Muslims from Bangladesh, Afghanistan and Pakistan after six years of residence in India.

When contacted, AGP President Atul Bora told PTL, "Nothing has been

finalised yet." Earlier in the day, Bora said that the party has formed a nine-member panel to finalise its election strategy. "We have had number of sittings. Last night, too, we had a meeting. We will announce our candidates very soon... As for the alliance, we will take a decision in a day or two," he said.

Bora, however, stated that his party had "sincerely fought against the Citizenship Bill" since the very beginning.

A senior office bearer of the BJP also said that alliance talks with the AGP have begun at "some level". "A process is going on, but it has not taken any concrete shape as of now. The AGP had broken ties with us over the Citizenship Bill, on which our stand has been very clear. "Before forging an alliance again, the AGP has to clear their stand on the Bill. The ball is in AGP's court now," said the senior BJP leader, who is aspiring for a ticket in the Lok Sabha polls. BJP National General Secretary Ram Madhav is set to chair a meeting of the Northeast Democratic Alliance, NDA's regional wing, on Tuesday night.

Assam finance minister and senior BJP leader Himanta Biswa Sarma said a meeting between Madhav and the seniors AGP leaders was also likely later in the night. In 2014, the BJP won seven out of 14 Lok Sabha seats in Assam, the Congress and the All India United Democratic Front have three MPs each and one member is an Independent. The two BJP allies, Bodoland People's Front and the AGP, have no representation in the Lower House. Polling for the general elections will be held in three phases in Assam, on April 11, 18 and 23.

Meeting with bankers on election rules



NAMCHI, 12 MAR (IPR): A meeting with bankers of South District was held at the conference hall of DAC today. The resource persons for the meeting were SDM (Namchi), Choden Gyatso along with Chief Pay and Accounts Officer, Sunil Sharma and representatives from various banks.

During the meeting, the resource persons informed the bankers to keep a strict vigil on the accounts opened by the various political parties

and the candidates and also updated if any kind of suspicious cash transactions happens during the election, it should be reported accordingly. They urged the attendees to monitor cash transactions, maintain cash and bank register along with many more important categories relating to the upcoming general elections. The resource persons also highlighted that the bankers need to follow the rules and regulations of Election Commission of India.

Printers and publishers apprised about election rules

NAMCHI, 12 MAR (IPR): A meeting with printers and publishers was held in the chamber of DC cum DEO (South), Ragul K today. He spoke in detail about the rules and regulations which need to be followed by

the concerned printers and publishers. He added that Appendix A is required to be filled by the concerned publishers and that three sets of printing materials need to be submitted at the DEOs office.

North holds coordination meeting for election duty



MANGAN, 12 MAR (IPR): With the announcement of General Election, 2019 by the Election Commission of India on 10 Mar, District Magistrate-Cum-RO, North, Raj K Yadav and SP, North, Kungzang Dorjee Shangderpa conducted coordination meeting with those officials who are engaged in election duty here at DAC Conference hall, today.

The meeting basically convened in connection with Free, Fair and robust Conduct of election.

DM brief that 24x7 District Control Room have been established at DAC conference hall with land line No. 03592-234204 and 03592-234438l.

As informed by District Collector cum Returning Officer, people can lodge their complaints in the district control room through Landline No. 03592-234204 and 03592-234438 and online C-Vigil application on any violation of model code of conduct. Nomination of the candidates

will start from 18 Mar, 2019 and polling will be held on 11 April, 2019.

There are 52 polling stations in the district. 6 Flying Squad, 6 Static Surveillance Team, 10 Sector Magistrate(SM) and 10 Sector Police Officers are deputed in the District to enforce Model Code of Conduct (MCC) more effectively.

For Expenditure and Monitoring of the Candidate 3 Video Viewing Team (VVT), 4 Video Surveillance Team (VST), 3 Accounting team and 3

Assistant Expenditure Observer (AEO) have been appointed and are present in the Control Room.

Sector Magistrates are directed to visit all polling stations physically for mapping vulnerability as per direction of Election Commission of India (ECI). During the meeting the DM directed the Sector Magistrate to ensure removal of any political poster; hoardings etc. from the district and to submit report on assured minimum facilities of all polling stations before 18 March and also to ensure facilities like wheel chair and necessary volunteers for PWD voters.

The meeting emphasized on use of C-vigil, National Grievances Redressal system portal (NGRS) online applications. Master Trainer, Mahesh Sharma imparted quick overview of the Model Code of conduct.

Further, DM-CUM-RO asked officials to handle any political events humbly and perform their assigned tasks as mandated.

DEO South holds meeting with Sector Magistrates

NAMCHI, 12 MAR (IPR): With the implementation of Model Code of Conduct in the state, South District DC cum DEO, Ragul K held a meeting with the Sector Magistrates at the conference hall of DAC, today. Present during the meeting were ADC (South), Satyen Pradhan, SDM (HQ), Hemant Rai along with other officials.

Addressing the gathering, the DEO spoke in detail about the various guidelines of ECI pertaining with the sector magistrates. He informed that there are a total number of 16 sector officers and 160 polling stations in the district.

He highlighted that anyone found in violation of model code of conduct will be liable for action by the concerned election officials. The DEO also encouraged that smooth co-ordination need to be arranged between the various officials engaged in the election duty.

The number for District Control Room is: 03595-264404, 03595-264927 the fax number for the same is 03595-264734.

DEO South holds coordination meeting with political parties



NAMCHI, 12 MAR (IPR): A coordination meeting with the representatives of various political parties was chaired by DC cum DEO (South), Ragul K and SP (South), Manish Verma. Present amongst others were ADC (South), Satyen Pradhan, SDM (HQ), Hemant Rai along with other officials.

Addressing the gathering, the DEO briefed about the various aspects of the Model Code of Conduct and its guidelines

with regards to political parties. Mr Ragul spoke about the required permission needed by the political parties from the concerned departments.

He informed that the posters, pamphlets and banners to be used for election campaign have to be printed following the ECI guidelines. He also informed that from this year onwards the ballot paper will also include the photo of the candidate and

urged the attendees that it is imperative for them to fill in the essential forms and submit the required photos.

Speaking during the meeting, SP (South), Manish Verma detailed the permission which needs to be sought from the office of the SP namely for the rally of vehicles, selecting of meeting place and many more significant matters relating with the contesting political parties.

Additionally, the SP emphasized that they need to maintain peace, smooth law and order at all times.

During the course of the meeting, Nodal Officer for expenditure monitoring spelled out the significant of maintaining the expenses of candidates as per the guidelines of ECI.

West DEO holds meeting with political parties

GYALSHING, 12 MAR (IPR): The DC-cum-DEO, Karma R Bonpo along with SP West, Tenzing Loden Lepcha, ADC West, Karma Lodey Lepcha and SDM Gyalshing, Gilbert Lepcha met with the members of political parties of West Sikkim at the DAC Conference Hall, Gyalshing.

In the meeting the DC-cum-DEO informed all that the Model Code of Conduct is in order and must be strictly adhered to. He mentioned that political parties need to follow the guidelines of the MCC. He informed that areas have been designated for them for poster and banner placements. He further informed that spaces to all parties would be made available.

He also mentioned that private areas can be used after availing NOC from the private party and permission from the office of the DEO. He further mentioned that per-



mission for the conduction of Public Meetings and use of public places needs to be sought not earlier than 7 days and not later than 2 days. He informed that a single window system would be created for the easement of the political parties.

A sum of Rs 2500 for the use of small ground and Rs 5000 for the use of big ground needs to be deposited at the Head of HRDD if the political parties choose to use the School Grounds for campaigns.

SP West also spoke in the law and order issues which the parties need to follow under the MCC. He further stated that the political

parties must read and follow the MCC norms to avoid difficulties.

Training on Expenditure and other important Election related issues would be given to the Candidate after 29 Mar, 2019. A half an hour meeting between the DEO and the political parties every day from 29 Mar, 2019 till the day of Poll 11 Mar, 2019 would be conducted where the Political parties can state their grievances and discuss.

Representations during the meeting were from Sikkim Democratic Front (SDF), Sikkim Krantikari Morcha (SKM) and Bharitaya Janta Party (BJP).

Book on RC Poudyal released



SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOOK, 12 MAR: "Saswat Krantikari- RC Poudyal", a book on senior politician and former Minister of Sikkim, RC Poudyal was released here at Press Club of Sikkim on Tuesday. The book was released in a function jointly organised by the Press Club of Sikkim and Nepali Sahitya Parishad [NSP], which was attended by RC Poudyal, NSP president, Rudra Poudyal, senior journalist, Jigme N Kazi and senior litterateurs, KN Sharma, Santosh Bardewa and others of the State.

In the book, senior litterateurs of the State have written on the life of RC Poudyal and his contributions. Santosh Bardewa is the editor of the book which has been published by JP Dahal.

In his address, Mr Poudyal expressed his happiness on the book being released and stated that it was a great honor to have book written on him. He thanked every writer and contributor involved in writing the book.

The release function was also addressed by NSP president, editor, Mr Bardewa and others.

Kharif crop management training in West



SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 12 MAR: The farmers from Dewani Gaon under Chota Samdong Arubotey GPU and Banyadara ward under Tharpu GPU, West Sikkim were provided day long training on Kharif crop management by Mevedir, a Service Provider Agency of the Agriculture Department on 10-12 Mar, 2019.

The training is part of the ongoing organic certification program held in collaboration with

the Agriculture Department, Government of Sikkim. It is mandated that the certified farmers attend these trainings and get briefed about the organic practices.

Farmers were informed about the Organic Input Store which is operation at Jorethang and Gyalshing where vegetable seeds and certified farm inputs can be availed. More than 40 farmers participated in this ward level training program.

SKM confirms...

SKM spokesperson Sonam Bhutia in turn mentioned that following inner-party democracy, SKM was opting for the alliance only after holding extensive talks and interactions with leaders and workers of the party.

He added that BJP invited SKM for an alliance after seeing that SKM would form the next government in the State.

SKM general secretary, Bikash Basnet, mentioned that some anti-social elements have been circulating a fake list of SKM candidates for the upcoming election. He clarified that the SKM has not released any such list.

HSP to announce...

power in Sikkim," stated party president, Dr Basnet. She also stated that politicians only use people but HSP wants to build a new Sikkim with a fresh blueprint.

New member Niraj Adhikari said that HSP is the only party which offers criticism with a solution. Criticizing both SDF and SKM, he stated that HSP is the only party that can "remove the rust" from the system.

Another new entrant, Indra Kumar said that he found the party approachable with direct access to the party president and vice president.

Pahalman Kami, after joining HSP criticized former leader of the party, RB Subba and stated that the party could not have been successful with such leaders.

Vice president, Mr Bhutia stated that the party has been taking opinions from different sections of Sikkim to take forward the policies of the state.

SILTAC blames...

providing reservation from the existing 32 seats as proposed by other political parties and organizations is totally unconstitutional, he argued.

On the LT issue, SILTAC has demanded proportionate increase in number of Bhutia-Lepcha seats in case of the expansion of the State Assembly and this is confusing the Centre, said Mr Subba.

Mr Subba welcomed the SDF government's proposal of providing five seats to LT by expanding the State Assembly to 40 seats. He added that this formula is scientific and fair for all communities of Sikkim. He also thanked the SDF president, Pawan Chamling for his announcement of providing five candidates from LT in this election.

SILTAC advisor, Kalawati Subba said that LT seat reservation would have come to fruition if SIBLAC had not caused obstructions. Sikkim does not have to wait for delimitation since seats can be reserved by Presidential Ordinance, she added.

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12 govt schools felicitated at state-level Earthian School awards ceremony

SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 13 MAR:

Certificates were presented to teachers and students of government schools from Lingdong, Sarchok, Gor, Sirwani, Sang Tshalamthang, Assam Linzey, Pelling, Ohrey, Tashiding, Maniram, Yangang and Kabrey at the State-level Earthian Schools Award held here on 11 March by the ENVIS Hub in collaboration with Bengaluru-based WIPRO Earthian.

Eco-Clubs of these 12 schools were felicitated with Certificates of Appreciation for their meritorious performance in the Earthian Schools programme 2018 which



focused on activities related to sustainability of water and biodiversity at schools, a press release informs.

The schools were presented token grants

of Rs 10,000 each and eco-club kits for swachhata related activities. Participatory certificates were also presented another 21 schools for suc-

cessful implementation of the programme.

The programme was attended by Principal Secretary cum PCCF, ML Srivastava, Earthian WI-

PRO Associate Ashish Shah, Joint Director Kusum Gurung, and was coordinated by Rajen Pradhan, Senior Programme Officer (ENVIS).

Glaucoma Week observed in Singtam



YOGEN THATAL
SINGTAM, 12 MAR:

District Hospital Singtam in collaboration with the Government Retired Employee Association along with Sadbhawana Association of Singtam observed World Glaucoma week here at the Nepali Dharma-sala, Singtam today.

CMO, Dr Laden Tsh Bhutia, Ophthalmologist, Dr Mayal Lepcha, Medical Store Officer, Dr

Dwarika Niraula, DHEO, Sonam G Bhutia, ASHA workers and staffs of District Hospital Singtam along with CP Pradhan member of the Association from RGEA and members of the Sadbhawana Association conducted the program today.

The program was conducted under the banner of National Program for Control of Blindness supported by

the National Health Mission. World Glaucoma Week is observed from 10-16 March.

During the program, an estimated 107 patients were treated which includes patients of all age groups and genders. Medicines were also distributed.

A similar program will be held on 14 and 16 March at Rhenock and Rangpo PHC informed the DHEO, Mr Bhutia.

Rahul attacks Modi on home turf with GST, Masood Azhar swipes

AHMEDABAD, MAR 12 (PTI): Congress chief Rahul Gandhi Tuesday attacked Prime Minister Narendra Modi over his 2014 promise of “depositing” Rs 15 lakh in the account of every citizen.

He was speaking at a rally in Adalaj village of Gandhinagar district, held after the Congress Working Committee meeting.

Gandhi also played to the gallery in the business-driven state by claiming that “Gabbar Singh Tax”, his oft-repeated jibe for the Goods and Services Tax (GST) was beyond the understanding of traders.

“Gabbar Singh Tax (GST) can’t be understood by our traders even today (after its was implemented nationwide last year),” he said.

“Did people get Rs 15 lakh into their bank accounts as promised by Narendra Modi?” he asked at the well-attended rally. Turning his attention on the Pulwama terror attack and the subsequent air strike by India and the aerial engagement with Pakistan Air Force the next day, Gandhi said it was National Security Adviser Ajit Doval who has sent Jaish-e-Mohammed chief Massod Azhar to freedom in a “special plane”.

UGC issues guidelines for setting up of Centre for Women Studies in varsities, colleges

NEW DELHI, MAR 12 (PTI): The University Grants Commission (UGC) has issued guidelines for setting up of Centre for Women Studies in universities and colleges and has sought proposals. According to a senior UGC official, “Women studies centres will have special focus on most marginalised and disadvantaged women in the society. These include women from Schedule Caste and Tribes, women with disabilities, women living in unsafe environments, among others.”

“A women study centre must pursue a comprehensive, critical and balanced understanding of India’s socio-economic realities and governance. Its main components include women’s contribution to society and social processes and their perception of their own lives, the broader social reality and their struggles and aspirations,” the official said.

The focus areas of the centres will be build new knowledge on women in national and global perspectives and developing curriculum in women studies to meet the diverse needs of Indian women with focus to develop inclusive society.

It will also suggest methods to build a con-

ducive environment for women to take up positions of leadership in diverse sectors, conduct evidence based research on women and economic development, and suggest methods to promote inclusion of women in development of all sectors.

“The centres will be monitored and evaluated periodically by the UGC. Every year, the head of the centre will present a report on the working of the centre to its advisory committee and then submit it to the UGC with minutes or comments of the members. The report will describe achievements and actions taken and will have both quantitative as well as qualitative information,” the official said.

Evaluation of the centres will be on teaching, research, extension activities, seminars, workshops, special lectures, field action projects and action research, documentation and archive on women, partnership with other UGC centres and non-UGC centres, government schemes and NGOs.

“We have sought proposals for setting up of new centres while the existing centres will have to give concurrence in the prescribed format to comply with the new guidelines,” the official said.

Lingi Payong conducts self-defense training for girls

SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 12 MAR:

Self-defense training for girl students of class VI-X was held at Lingi Payong Secondary School on Tuesday. The programme was conducted by State Project Office Samagra Shiksha, HRDD and Sports and Youth Affairs department, a press release informs.

Two instructors from Sports department, Binita Rai and Suraj Rai provided training to students in Wushu.

Similar training was provided to the students of Karjee JHS and Lingee Senior Secondary School on the same day. The programme aimed at providing basic skills of self defense to girl children.

Sikkim boy wins gold at All India University Kick Boxing C’ship



SUMMIT REPORT
SINGTAM, 12 MAR:

Sunny Kr Bhagat from Singtam, Sikkim has won gold at All India University Kick Boxing Championship held at Andhra University, Visakhapatnam. The championship was held during 8-11 March, 2019. Sunny Bhagat, born and brought up at Singtam, is studying at Lovely Professional University, Phagwara, Punjab.

He defeated Somesh of Maharishi Dayanand University, Rohtak, Haryana at under 69kg category. Seven matches he played included a walkover, a bye, two knock out and three wins.

Priyanka targets Modi govt in maiden rally on PM’s home turf

AHMEDABAD, MAR 12 (PTI): Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi Vadra Tuesday targeted the Modi government over “unkept promises and spread of hatred” in the country. Addressing her first political rally in Gujarat after assuming charge as Congress general secretary, she said she was saddened by what was happening in the country.

“Our institutions are being destroyed. Wherever you see, hatred is being spread,” she said.

“Nothing matters more to us that you and I protect this nation, work for it and move forward together,” the Congress leader said.

Congress president Rahul Gandhi and UPA chairperson Sonia Gandhi were present at the rally near Adalaj village of Gandhinagar district.

Priyanka said the Modi government did not fulfil its promises of providing jobs to crores of people in the country.

The Congress held a rally in Modi’s home state to sound its poll bugle for the ensuing Lok Sabha elections. Earlier Tuesday, a meeting of the Congress Working Committee was held in Gujarat after a gap of 58 years. The previous CWC meeting was last held in the state at Bhavnagar in 1961.

PAYING GUEST AVAILABLE

PG available for working women & girls at EPCS Church premises, near Primula Lodge at Chruach Road, Gangtok, Sikkim. Contact: Mob: 9064804782/ Whatsapp No: 9641549764.

EU adds 10 countries, including UAE, to tax blacklist

BRUSSELS, MAR 12 (AFP): The European Union expanded its tax haven blacklist by 10 countries on Tuesday, adding the United Arab Emirates and Bermuda despite the objections of powerful member states such as Italy.

The list, now 15 countries long, was first drawn up in 2017 in the wake of several scandals, including the Panama Papers and LuxLeaks, that pushed the EU into doing more to fight tax evasion by multinationals and

the rich. Seven countries are to be moved back from a grey list because reform commitments had not been met. These are Aruba, Belize, Bermuda, Fiji, Oman, Vanuatu and Dominica, an EU statement said.

They are joined by three other countries whose tax policies have grown more aggressive in the past months. They are Barbados, the United Arab Emirates and the Marshall Islands. Italy long resisted the addi-

tion of the UAE. The Middle East powerhouse has recently made significant investments in the economically troubled European country.

Rome had wanted to keep the Emirates on the so-called grey list of countries that have made pledges to get their tax laws in order with a standard set by Brussels.

“Everything will be solved” when new legislation in passed in the UAE, Italian Finance Minister Giovanni Tria said.

MCC IS IN EFFECT

WHAT IS MODEL CODE OF CONDUCT?

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

Visit the website: eci.gov.in

OFFICE OF THE ASSISTANT ENGINEER YANGANG SUB-DIVISION SOUTH SIKKIM

Memo No: 443/R&B/Yangang/SD

Date:12/03/2019

CORRIGENDUM FOR CANCELLATION OF TENDER

The tender inviting bids for the work of “CARPETING OF ROAD FROM PHONGLA BERMOIK ROAD TO THANGSING KOTHI KM 3rd & 4th UNDER YANGANG SUB-DIVISION, SOUTH SIKKIM” vide N.I.T No: 486/GOS/R&B/Rav/Div. dated On 27.02.2019, which was schedule to conduct on 14.03.2019 is hereby cancelled/postponed till further order due to enforcement of model code of conduct for general assembly election 2019.

Sd/-

Assistant Engineer,

Roads & Bridges Department
Yangang.

R.O. No. 778/IPR/Pub/Classi./18-19
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FAQ

EVM with VVPAT Unit

Q 1. What is an Electronic Voting machine? In what way its functioning is different from the conventional system of voting?

Ans. Electronic Voting Machine (EVM) is an electronic device for recording votes. An Electronic Voting Machine consists of two Units- a Control Unit and a Balloting Unit -joined by a five-meter cable. The Control Unit is placed with the Presiding Officer or a Polling Officer and the Balloting Unit is placed inside the voting compartment. Instead of issuing a ballot paper, the Polling Officer in-charge of the Control Unit will release a ballot by pressing the Ballot Button on the Control Unit. This will enable the voter to cast his vote by pressing the blue button on the Balloting Unit against the candidate and symbol of his choice.

Q2. When the EVM was first introduced in elections?

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SummitTIMES

ON TOP OF THE NEWS

Pride with Self-Reliance

Doles clearly don't work, so ask for better

Story goes that a senator in Ancient Rome was put in chains and debarred from ever holding a public post again after he was found distributing bread to beggars. No, and this is as per the same story, the Romans did not detest beggars or ignore poverty, but feared that by making himself popular in this manner, the senator would one day grow to become an all powerful tyrant. It does not matter whether this story is true or not, but the moral still applies - freedom is all important, and while Welfare is also necessary, accountable institutional support should be pursued instead of self-aggrandising doles.

A millennium later, we have managed to reverse the equation and actually demand welfare as a matter of right. Elections see politicians outbidding each other on populist measures. The democracy that we celebrate every five years with the right to decide is pawned to parties which have the best 'welfare' schemes. The current blip where appeals to shallow nationalism also appear to be delivering the goods is, in all probability just that, a blip. Meanwhile, a government which is concerned about the welfare of the underprivileged is preferred, what would have been best was if this concern manifested in schemes which brought relief with self-respect and not just hand-outs. But to make such assurances is no longer politically wise; not in India, not in Sikkim. But fact remains that this remains the only way to progress. But, for that to happen, apart from the political will, what is required in even larger measure is the public commitment to competition.

Sikkim has had it easy for quite some time now, and as the past few years of constricted central funds have show, this will not remain so for ever. The State has to have an economy of its own, its own industries, its own private sector. The economic pressures on the purse-strings in Delhi and the increasingly federal make-up of national politics will see to it that the Central largesse that Sikkim enjoys so lavishly is slowly turned off. It won't happen immediately, but it will happen one day and the process appears to have already begun. There will be those who will continue to expect the State Government to bail them out, but even the State's coffers will become miserly once the doles from Delhi dry up. The only way to ensure that public services and amenities remain operational will be if the people pull their weight more effectively. The State Government has been trying to get this message across by earmarking years for youth revolution and skill development and now, interesting, a Year for Development. These are expressions of intent. For them to succeed, the youth have to be interested in getting revolutionized and get their skills enhanced and aspire for real development and not doles. Awareness and skill enhancement camps will remain token efforts till the time the youth don't demand better and deploy the skills they acquire into productive and profitable enterprises.

It is not enough to aim at self-sustaining efforts any more. The bar has to be raised to target lucrative undertakings, sustenance enterprises might just become possible then. And that will still be the first step, Sikkim has to march on in leaps and bounds from there on to stay proud, something that will come only with self-reliance. Keep the Roman story in mind. Don't seek doles.

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Mail us at: news@summittimes.com



Web 3.0: the decentralised web promises to make the internet free again

EDINA HARBINJA & VASILEIOS KARAGIANNPOULOS
theconversation.com

Have you recently considered deleting your Facebook account, boycotting Amazon or trying to find an alternative to Google? You wouldn't be alone. The tech giants are invading our privacy, misusing our data, strangling economic growth and helping governments spy on us. Yet because these few companies own so many of the internet's key services, it seems there is little people can do to avoid having to interact with them if they want to stay online.

However, 30 years after the world wide web was created, a third generation of web technology might offer a way to change things. The DWeb, a new decentralised version of cyberspace, promises to enable better user control, more competition between internet firms and less dominance by the large corporations. But there are still serious questions over whether it's possible – or even desirable.

The first generation of the web lasted from its creation by Sir Tim Berners Lee in 1989 to roughly 2005. It was mostly a passive, “read-only” web with minimal interaction between users. Most of us were merely recipients of information. Then came Web 2.0, a “read-write web” based on social networks, wikis and blogs that let users create and share more of their own content, which increased their participation and collaboration.

Web 3.0 is the next step. In part it will be a “semantic web” or a “web of data” that can understand, combine and automatically interpret information to provide users with a much more

enhanced and interactive experience. But it could also be a decentralised web that challenges the dominance of the tech giants by moving us away from relying so heavily on a few companies, technologies and a relatively small amount of internet infrastructure

PEER-TO-PEER TECHNOLOGY

When we currently access the web, our computers use the HTTP protocol in the form of web addresses to find information stored at a fixed location, usually on a single server. In contrast, the DWeb would find information based on its content, meaning it could be stored in multiple places at once. As a result, this form of the web also involves all computers providing services as well as accessing them, known as peer-to-peer connectivity.

This system would enable us to break down the immense databases that are currently held centrally by internet companies rather than users (hence the decentralised web). In principle, this would also better protect users from private and government surveillance as data would no longer be stored in a way that was easy for third parties to access. This actually harks back to the the original philosophy behind the internet, which was first created to decentralise US communications during the Cold War to make them less vulnerable to attack.

Some of the technologies that could make the DWeb possible are already being developed. For example, the Databox Project aims to create an open-source device that stores and controls a user's personal data locally instead of letting tech companies gather and do whatever they like with it. Zeronet is an alternative to the existing web, where websites are host-

ed by a network of participating computers instead of a centralised server, protected by the same cryptography that's used for Bitcoin. There's even a DWeb version of YouTube, called DTube that hosts videos across a decentralised network of computers using a “blockchain” public ledger as its database and payment system.

However, this technology is still in its early stages. And even once it's ready, it will be difficult to get users to use new, DWeb-based applications. Whereas Web 2.0 provided an obviously more attractive and easy-to-navigate experience to all users in an open marketplace, the DWeb offers something with less obvious benefits, and requires more user responsibility. Yet enough people would have to be tempted to adopt the technology for it to break down the established oligopoly and succeed.

RISKS AND REGULATION

The DWeb also comes with some significant legal and regulatory risks. It would make policing cybercrime, including online harassment, hate speech and child abuse images, even more difficult because of its lack of central control and access to data. A centralised web helps governments make large corporations enforce rules and laws. In a decentralised web, it wouldn't even necessarily be clear which country's laws applied to a particular website, if its content was hosted all around the world.

This concern brings us back to debates from the 1990s, when legal scholars were arguing for and against the influence national laws could have on internet regulation. The DWeb essentially reflects the cyber-libertarian views and hopes of the past that

the internet can empower ordinary people by breaking down existing power structures.

But this relies on users taking more initiative and responsibility for their data and their online interactions. We've seen that large numbers of people are willing to take action when their day-to-day experience of the internet is threatened. However, it's not yet clear whether the current push for more regulation will align with the DWeb's principles of responsibility or place internet freedoms at risk.

Decentralised systems also don't necessarily abolish unequal power structures, but can instead replace one with another. For instance, Bitcoin works by saving records of financial transactions on a network of computers and is designed to bypass traditional financial institutions and give people greater control over their money. But its critics argue that it has turned into an oligopoly, since a large percentage of Bitcoin wealth is owned by a very small number of people.

The DWeb certainly has its benefits and the potential to give ordinary internet users more power. But it would require some major shifts in how we perceive the web and our place in it. Whether its benefits will be sufficient to drive enough users away from the tech giants to make it viable remains to be seen. However, with governments becoming keen to increase regulation of the internet, the DWeb might actually offer a more liberal alternative in the long run.

[Edina Harbinja is Senior Lecturer in Law, Aston University; Vasileios Karagiannopoulos is Senior Lecturer in Law and Cybercrime, University of Portsmouth]

Salt is bad for you: but how it affects your body is still frontier science

ALTA SCHUTTE & MICHÉL STRAUSS
theconversation.com

Research has shown that excess salt intake is harmful to people's health. It can lead to high blood pressure and increase the risk of heart disease and stroke.

Globally salt reduction programmes are gaining traction, whether through awareness campaigns or through governmental interventions.

This has been true in South Africa too. Three years ago it became the first country to implement mandatory salt targets for staple foods such as bread and soups. This is in line with World Health Organisation (WHO) recommendations to reduce salt intake by 30% by 2025. In South Africa a further reduction in sodium targets is set to come into effect later this year.

The approach South Africa took was to target the non-discretionary intake of salt – that's salt already added as an ingredient to food. It's view was that this would be the most cost effective approach to prevent hypertension – a key driver of heart disease and stroke.

Research estimates that reducing the amount of salt people eat could prevent an estimated 23,000 cardiovascular diseases and 5,600 deaths every year in South Africa. And that the new laws to reduce salt intake could save the country US\$ 51.25 million on health care for cardiovascular diseases.

It's still early days on whether the new laws are having the desired effect on health – that will take a few more years to feed through. But the policy is certainly working in reducing salt in staple foods such as bread.

As part of a WHO study on global ageing we reviewed South Africans's salt intake before the new laws were implemented, and are now repeating this exercise to determine whether salt intake has reduced.

South Africa has also made concerted efforts to promote public awareness on excessive salt intake and cardiovascular health. Research suggests that this has been effective in changing people's behaviour such as adding salt to food when cooking

and at the table during meals.

But, in the medium to longer term, will these interventions produce the health outcomes the government has forecast? The key indicators would be lower blood pressure, fewer cardiovascular events such as hearts attacks and strokes.

The answer lies partly in policies being adjusted to take into account new scientific findings about how salt affects the body. This is a frontier that's being explored by scientists around the world. It's also the subject of our research.

Our research challenge some assumptions that have been held for decades about how salt affects the body. Our findings – together with those of other international researchers – suggest that the mechanisms surrounding salt and cardiovascular health may be more complex than originally thought. This in turns suggests that there's significant scope to fine tune policies to improve prevention and treatment of common disorder like hypertension.

We highlight, for example, that salt reduction may significantly reduce the harmful effects of hormones associated with high salt intake. Blood pressure, heart structure and blood vessels can all be affected. This provides further evidence of the important of policies that target salt intake.

WHAT WE KNOW NOW

Compelling evidence over many years has strongly linked high salt intake with raised blood pressure and cardiovascular events like heart attacks. But emerging research has started to raise questions about the physiological mechanisms for the link between salt intake and raised blood pressure.

A common understanding – prevalent in medical text books for decades – has been that a high salt intake results in thirst. The higher water intake consequently leads to increased blood volume which raises blood pressure, and ultimately both water and salt are excreted by the kidneys and blood pressure is maintained.

But German researcher, Jens Titze, recently found salt to be stored in the skin. Researchers have further shown that a high salt intake is accompanied by minimal water loss. These surpris-

ing findings were met with scepticism by the global health sciences community, but underscores that a much better understanding of blood pressure mechanisms is required.

US investigators, Alexei Bagrov and Olga Fedorova, identified another player in how salt affects cardiovascular health. Marinobufagenin is a steroid hormone that has similar properties to active substances found in the venom of the Bufo marinus toad. The hormone's function is to manage salt balance and is thus produced in response to high salt intake.

But very high levels of the steroid hormone, in response to excessive salt intake, resulted in increased blood pressure, affected heart structure and increased the stiffness of the blood vessel walls in animals.

We recently set out to test this for the first time in healthy young humans. We confirmed a strong positive association between increased salt intake and an increase in the steroid hormone.

We found that high salt intake was associated with the stiffness of the aorta, even in very young people. We then tested whether this was due to the steroid hormone or salt itself. When we included both in our statistics, we found that the culprit was the steroid hormone, and not necessarily salt.

Not only was the steroid hormone associated with aortic stiffness, but also with increased blood pressure, and left ventricular mass in young healthy adults who consumed a mean of 11.8 grams (more than two teaspoons) of salt a day. The WHO recommends an intake of less than 5 grams (one teaspoon) of salt per day.

CONCLUSION

Our findings support South Africa's second phase implementation of reducing salt in staple foods to further lower the daily intake of salt.

The evidence also strongly supports the importance of continued public awareness campaigns to reduce excessive salt intake to protect cardiovascular health.

[Alta Schutte is Research professor, North-West University; Miché Strauss is PhD candidate, North-West University]

Exclusion from draft Assam NRC will not affect voting rights for LS polls: ECI to SC

NEW DELHI, MAR 12 (PTI): Allaying the fears of over 40 lakh persons whose names were not included in the draft Assam NRC, the Election Commission of India (ECI) on Tuesday told the Supreme Court that exclusion will not affect their voting rights in the upcoming Lok Sabha polls provided their names feature in the electoral rolls.

The top court asked the ECI to clarify what action it will take if a person's name is not included in the final Assam National Register of Citizens (NRC) to be published on July 31, but it features in the electoral rolls.

A bench of Chief Justice Ranjan Gogoi and Justices Depak Gupta and Sanjiv Khanna asked the ECI to provide it the data by March 28 about the addition and deletion of names from voters' list as revised in January for 2017, 2018 and 2019.

At the outset, the bench asked the ECI secretary, who had been summoned by the court, what will be the status of the persons whose names do not feature in the draft NRC but feature in the electoral rolls.

On March 8, the apex court had asked the poll panel secretary to appear before it for Tuesday's hearing in connection with a PIL alleging that several categories of persons in Assam have been deprived of voting



rights ahead of the Lok Sabha polls.

The secretary replied that exclusion will not have any bearing on the voting rights of such individuals.

Senior advocate Vikas Singh, appearing for the ECI, said it had already been stated this in 2014.

He pointed out that the court should not entertain this petition filed by Gopal Seth and Susanta Sen, residents of Assam, as contrary to their claims, their names were never deleted from the electoral rolls in the past three years.

Any observation from the court in this kind of petition would amount to huge adverse publicity for the ECI as if it were doing something

wrong, Singh said.

The bench said it would further hear the matter on March 28.

The apex court had sought personal appearance of the ECI secretary as despite a notice being issued on February 1, no one had appeared to represent the poll panel.

The PIL alleged that a category of persons whose names were deleted from the voter list included some whose names appeared in the draft NRC published on July 30, 2018.

The petition claimed these people had voted in the last Lok Sabha election held in 2014.

The plea also submitted that there was a second category of people whose names were not

included in the complete draft NRC, but they subsequently filed claims for inclusion of their names in it. They had voted in the previous Lok Sabha elections and were waiting for inclusion of their names in the voters' list.

The third category of people included those who have been declared as foreigners by the foreigners' tribunal as well as the Guwahati High Court. The court's order was stayed by the apex court.

The fourth category of people comprised those who had already been declared foreigners by the foreigners' tribunal and such declarations were set aside by the apex court.

However, their names have been deleted from

the voters' list pursuant to the order of the foreigners' tribunal, the petition said.

According to the petition, the fifth category is of people whose names have not been included in the draft NRC, but other members of their families, including parents, have been included in the NRC and they have filed their claims for the inclusion of their names.

"The above mentioned five categories of people whose names have not been included in the voters' list are going to be deprived of their constitutional as well as statutory rights to vote in the forthcoming Lok Sabha election to be held in April 2019," the petition said.

Gahirmatha may witness 2nd mass nesting of turtles this year

KENDRAPARA, MAR 12 (PTI): Gahirmatha beach in Odisha's Kendrapara district, the worlds largest rookery of endangered Olive Ridley sea turtles, may witness a second mass nesting of these species in coming days, Forest officials said on Tuesday.

Over five lakh turtles have so far converged on the beach for mass nesting, that commenced on February 27, said S A Mishra, Assistant Conservator of Forest, Rajnagar Mangrove (Wildlife) Forest Division.

"We are hopeful of turtles en-masse arrival on the beach to lay eggs for the second occasion this year because of perfect topography of the beach," he said.

"We are of the view that with the climatic condition being conducive and beach topography ideal, the turnout of these marine creatures would recur again anytime from March last week and April first week," the forest official said. Earlier on one occasion, second mass nesting of turtles had been recorded on the Gahirmatha beach.

Excellent profile of

the beach, strong southerly winds and atmospheric temperature ranging from 32 to 38 degree Celsius are conducive for turtles mass nesting. This year, everything was perfect leading to virtual invasion of turtles to the nesting ground. So we are optimistic that turtles would reappear on the beach for mass nesting, he said.

Besides this year there was intense crackdown on illegal trawling in Gahirmatha marine sanctuary to ensure the safety of turtles. These marine species often perish after getting hit by trawler propeller or entangled in fishing nets, the official said.

As many as 92 sea-worthy fishing trawlers were seized this year by patrol teams while 762 crews of trawlers were nabbed for sneaking into prohibited sea waters. Fish catch seized from intercepted trawlers were later auctioned and it fetched revenue to the tune of Rs 75 lakh, a record figure, the official claimed.

The nesting ground at Gahirmatha, which recently played host to nearly five lakhs of fe-

male olive ridley turtles for their annual mass nesting, has now got elongated to 2.6 km stretch following natural accretion process.

The beach at the unmanned Nasi-2 Island of Gahirmatha, now rechristened as APJ Abul Kalam Island, is providing perfect and congenial ambience for the nocturnal visitors to lay eggs because of the elongation of the beach profile.

As the nesting beach is widespread in length, the marine animals get ample space to loiter around the beach to dig pits at their favoured spots and lay eggs.

Its only the female turtles that virtually invade the nesting beaches usually at the dead of the night for laying eggs, the phenomenon otherwise described as 'arribada' in Spanish.

After indulgence in instinctive egg-laying, the turtles leave the nesting ground to stride into the deep sea water. Hatchlings emerge from these eggs after 45-60 days. It is a rare natural phenomenon where the babies grow without their mother, said officials.

Initiative to help newspaper editor, publisher meet legal costs

SHILLONG, MAR 12 (PTI): Days after a newspaper editor and publisher were held guilty of contempt of court and fined by the Meghalaya High Court, a civil society group has launched a crowdfunding initiative to cover their legal expenses.

"In our online campaign on www.our-democracy.in, we have collected nearly Rs 1 lakh of the targeted Rs 5 lakh goal with 46 supporters donating to the cause in a span of 24 hours" the group leader of MPC-FOEFP said, requesting anonymity.

The Meghalaya High Court Friday sentenced

The Shillong Times editor Patricia Mukhim and publisher Shoba Chaudhuri to sit in the corner of the court room till the rising of the court besides imposing a fine of Rs 2 lakh each in a contempt case.

The case relates to an article published by the paper on the perks and facilities for retired judges and their families.

A division bench headed by Chief Justice Mohammad Yaqoob Mir had warned that if the two persons failed to deposit the amount they will have to undergo six months simple imprisonment and the paper will be banned. A group

of citizens came together under the banner of the Meghalaya Peoples Committee for Freedom of Expression and Free Press (MPCFOEFP) on Monday to raise funds.

The campaign being made on social media platforms is requesting concerned citizens in the country and across the world to support the cause of the two women journalists, a member of the group said.

The campaign will end on March 16 even as Patricia Mukhim has gone to Delhi to drum up support to take the legal battle to the Supreme Court.

BJP ally BPF to contest only Kokrajhar in Assam



BARAMA (ASSAM), MAR 12 (PTI): The Bodoland Peoples' Front, an ally of the ruling BJP in Assam, Tuesday announced that it will contest only from the linguistically sensitive Kokrajhar seat.

Party MLA and state minister Pramila Rani Brahma will contest from the constituency, BPF chief Hagrama Mohilary told reporters here in Baksa district.

The BPF has decided not to contest any other Lok Sabha seat and will extend its support to the BJP in all other constituencies in Assam, he added. "We have fixed our Lok Sabha candidate for the Kokrajhar constituency. It is Pramila Rani Brahma. We are sure she will win," Mohilary said.

Brahma, 68, is the state's social welfare and soil conservation minister, has won the Kokrajhar East (ST) Assembly seat six times in a row since 1991.

She won as an Independent four times and on the BPF's ticket in the 2011 and 2016 polls.

In 2014 Lok Sabha elections, Chandan Brahma of the BPF came third in Kokrajhar, a Scheduled Tribe seat.

Independent Naba Kumar Sarania, a former ULFA militant, recorded a massive victory bagging 6.34 lakh votes compared to 2.79 lakh votes by Independent Urkhao

Gwra Brahma, who came second. The BPF candidate got 2.44 lakh votes.

Kokrajhar will go to polls in the third and last phase on April 23. It includes 10 Assembly constituencies, of which seven fall under the Bodoland Territorial Area Districts (BTAD) - Kokrajhar, Chirang, Baksa and Udalguri.

Several clashes have been witnessed between the Bodo and non-Bodo communities in those districts since 2003 when the BTAD was set up.

According to 2011 census, 30.5 per cent people in BTAD speak Bodo, while Assamese and Bangla are spoken by 26.8 per cent and 23.7 per cent respectively.

Santali, Hindi, Nepali, Kurux, Rabha and other languages constitute the rest.

Mohilary, who is also the Chief of the Bodoland Territorial Council, was also asked why the BPF was not contesting Mangaldoi Lok Sabha constituency that has a sizable population of Bodo people. "We wanted this seat, but it is not possible in the present circumstances. We have some local issues. So, we have left this seat to the BJP," Mohilary said.

He, however, did not elaborate what he meant by "the present circumstances". Mangaldoi is outside the jurisdiction of the BTAD.

Congress and ZPM forge alliance in Mizoram

AIZAWL, MAR 12 (PTI): The opposition Zoram People's Movement (ZPM) in Mizoram and the Congress have forged an alliance to contest the Lok Sabha election and an Assembly by-poll, Congress sources said Tuesday. According to the understanding, which will be announced later, the Congress will field candidate in the lone Lok Sabha seat in the state and the ZPM will contest the Aizawl West-I assembly seat.

Both the elections

would be held together on April 11. The Congress and the ZPM have five and eight legislators respectively in the 40-member assembly.

The Congress needs a new candidate for the Lok Sabha seat as its sitting MP, 84-year-old C L Ruala, would not contest because of old age.

Ruala had been elected to the Lok Sabha for two consecutive terms.

The by-poll to the Aizawl West-I assembly seat was necessitated after the ZPM's chief ministerial candidate Lalduho-

ma, who won from two constituencies vacated the seat. Lalduhoma had defeated the then chief minister Lal Thanhawla in Serchhip constituency, and former minister K Sangthuama of the Mizo National Front (MNF) in Aizawl West-I in the assembly polls held on November 28 last year.

Meanwhile, the ruling MNF, the BJP and the People's Representation for Identity and Status of Mizoram (PRISM) party had announced that they would go it alone in the polls.

Mizoram to embark on fresh development path, Guv tells House

AIZAWL, MAR 12 (PTI): Mizoram Governor Jagdish Mukhi said Tuesday that the state would embark on a "fresh development path" when the government introduces its flagship programme, Socio-Economic Development Policy (SEDP), which aims to accelerate progress in key sectors.

Delivering his gubernatorial address in the Assembly on the first day of the interim Budget session, Mukhi said the soon-to-be-launched policy would transform Mizoram into a welfare state.

"The objective of the policy is to make Mizoram self-reliant by accelerating growth and progress in key sectors.

The Mizo National Front (MNF) government strives to bring about inclusive and sustainable development through measures that are trans-

parent and participatory," he said.

An apex body would soon be constituted for the coordination of all development works in Mizoram, Mukhi said.

The Zoramthanga-led government has also formed committees to look after the major projects in the socio-economic sector, he said.

"The SEDP, unlike earlier programmes of the erstwhile state governments, will not be given as doles to the beneficiaries. It would provide assistance or 'hand-holding support' for income generation and livelihood," Mukhi stated.

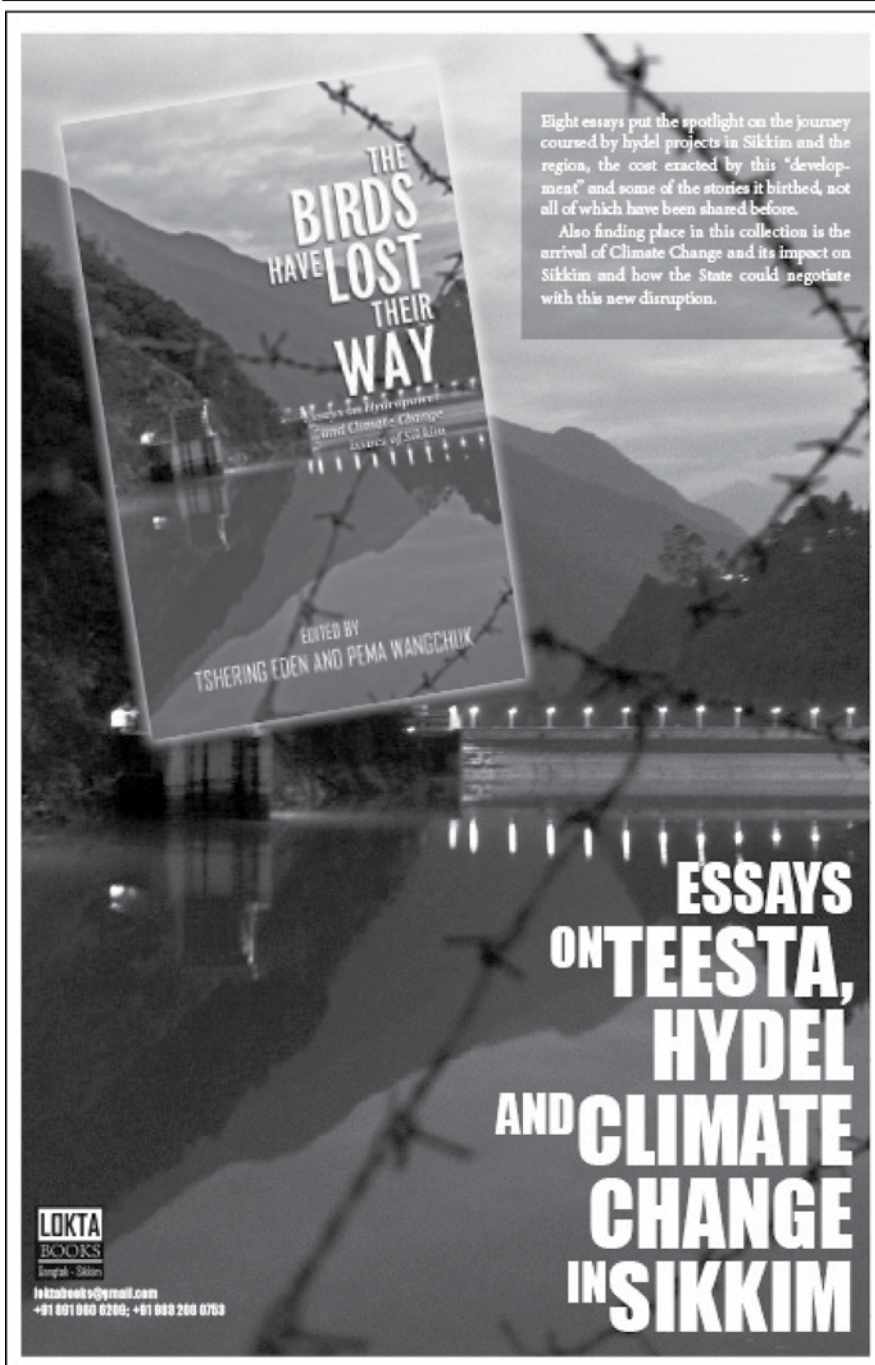
Noting that the state government has vowed to "safeguard the interests of its people", he said the Mizoram Maintenance of Household Registration Bill, 2019, which was approved by the cabinet last week, will ensure only "bona

fide Indian citizens" receive benefits of state-run schemes.

In keeping with its poll promise, the Mizo National Front (MNF) will also take measures to re-impose total prohibition on sale of liquor, the governor said.

Total prohibition was first imposed in the Christian-majority state in 1997. However, the erstwhile Lal Thanhawla-led Congress government replaced it with Mizoram Liquor (Control and Prohibition) Act, 2014, allowing controlled sale of liquor from early 2015.

"A bill to repeal the Mizoram Liquor (Control and Prohibition) Act, 2014, which was implemented in January 2015, would be tabled during the Budget session, bringing the state again under stringent prohibition law from April 1," Mukhi added.



Bouncer king Wagner's two-day demolition of Bangladesh secures series

WELLINGTON, MAR 12 (AFP): Short-ball specialist Neil Wagner engineered an innings victory over Bangladesh in what New Zealand called "an ideal two days" in the rain-shortened second Test to wrap up the series with a game to spare.

After the first two days were washed out, the match finished in the first session of the final day in Wellington as New Zealand completed a fifth consecutive series win for the first time.

In the face of Wagner's relentless bouncer barrage, Bangladesh were all out for 209 to give New Zealand victory by an innings and 12 runs to go with their innings and 52-run win in the first Test.

"It was an ideal two days," said Tim Southee, who took over the New Zealand captain's armband after Kane Williamson left for treatment to



an injured shoulder.

"With the amount of time that was lost through rain, a lot of people thought it was going to be tough to win a Test inside three days but we knew there was always going to be a little bit of

assistance in the wicket.

"The batters need a lot of credit for the way they put us in such a strong position yesterday that we only needed to bat once. I think that was the backbone of another Test win for us."

Of the 20 Bangladesh wickets to fall, Wagner took nine, including five for 45 in the second innings.

After Ross Taylor's 200 steered New Zealand to 432 for six declared in their first innings, a lead

of 221, Bangladesh resumed on Tuesday at 80 for three.

They advanced to 112 before Trent Boult removed Soumya Sarkar for 28 and Wagner made sure the remaining wickets fell quickly. Only cap-

tain Mahmudullah Riyad and Mohammed Mithun, who scored 67 and 47 respectively, offered serious resistance.

"We didn't commit and back ourselves," said Mahmudullah, adding they had discussed "the Wagner factor" before arriving in New Zealand and he believed his batsmen "have the skill level" to handle the short-ball tactic.

"We were handling him well but then we gave it away. We have to bat with more guts for longer periods. A number of our batsmen are playing half-hearted shots, or we are not committed. We are in two minds whether to play a shot or not.

"You need to back yourself. If you want to attack, you should know how you want to cope with your bouncer theory." The third and final Test starts in Christchurch on Saturday.

We are really confident of moving with this squad to World Cup: Carey



NEW DELHI, MAR 12 (PTI): Emboldened by Australia's remarkable turnaround in the ODI series against India, vice-captain Alex Carey Tuesday said they are "really confident" of entering the ICC World Cup with a squad good enough to play like defending champions.

The five-match series is poised at 2-2, thanks to Australia's back-to-back wins after staring down the barrel at one stage.

"As a player in the Australian cricket side we have been working hard in the last 12-18 months. Some success has started to come our way. We are really confident moving with the squad we take to the World Cup," Carey said on the eve of the series-deciding game here.

Carey said it will only add to the strength of the side when Steve Smith and David Warner rejoin the side after serving out their bans.

"Those are definitely some big names that might come back into the line. The guys that are in the side are performing well, so it's only healthy for Australian cricket that the guys in the side are playing well and these guys that have done really well in the past have definitely put their hand up for selection when they are available."

He said he was not surprised by the way the Australian batsmen tackled India's formidable spin duo of Yuzvendra Chahal and Kuldeep Yadav, who have tormented batters with their guile in recent times.

"There has probably been a fair bit of media (analysis) about Australia playing against spin in the past. We have worked

really hard on playing spin bowling in the nets over 12-18 months. I guess to see some reward, again it's no surprise, but the guys are doing so much hard work off the field," said Carey.

The match will be played on a Feroz Shah Kotla wicket which may assist slow bowlers. Carey, though, said they are capable of handling whatever is thrown at them.

"We played some local Indian bowlers that we tried in the nets, so I guess it's really a good experience. Guys getting out there in the middle to have the confidence to take on their spinners got to be a great confidence tomorrow."

He said the strength of the Australian team at the moment is that they have plenty of options.

"We take a lot of confidence that we trust the batters to perform their role. When Ashton did that the other night he did really well. They (Indians) are world class bowlers and I am sure they want to bounce back and it's up to our batters to have a game plan to negate that. We trust the players to perform their role and take on the best bowlers in the world and do a good job."

Carey said it will be a contest to watch for since they have the momentum and India would be keen to bounce back after two defeats.

"We were out under pressure early in the series. Some games were really close and now we have the series level at 2-2. It is obviously exciting going into tomorrow with the series on the line. Obviously (we will) take some momentum from the last game. The boys are feeling confident."

"India are going to bounce back quickly but I guess for us we thought we played some pretty good cricket in the first two games and we just fell short so to have the series at 2-2, really excited. I am really looking forward to and so are the guys."

Football: India U-23 go down 0-1 to Qatar



DOHA, MAR 12 (PTI): The Indian under-23 football team couldn't convert the chances that came its way and suffered a narrow 0-1 loss to Qatar in a preparatory match here ahead of the AFC Championship Qualifiers in Uzbekistan.

Monday evening's game was India's first under the tutelage of new coach Derrick Pereira. Three of the starting XI players were from the Indian Arrows setup, while the likes of Dheer-

aj Singh Moirangthem, Anwar Ali, Rahul KP, and Komal Thatal were a part of the India U-17 World Cup squad two years back.

India got off the blocks early, with Mehtab Singh, Komal Thatal and Rahul KP coming close in the early exchanges.

However, it was Narender Gahlot, who had the best chance in the first half, as he jumped higher than the rest to send a powerful header towards the goal.

However, it was saved by Qatari keeper Yazan Naim Hussein.

Despite the chances created by Pereira's men, it was Qatar, which got the breakthrough close to the half time break, when a Salmin Atiq pass from the right was met by Amro Abdelfatah Surag, who made no mistake.

While a large part of the second half was played with both the teams trying to breach each other's defences, Pereira made a number

of changes. Boris, who had come on for Rahul KP, missed a tap-in after Daniel Lalhimpuia had set him up with a square ball. Rahim Ali had the best chance of the match when he found himself in front of an open goal, just 12 yards away from his target. However, he scuffed his shot, as it flew over the bar in injury time.

With this preparatory game done, the team will now turn its attention to the AFC U-23 Qualifiers later this month.

Hockey: Indian Oil, PSB enter Gold Cup final



MUMBAI, MAR 12 (PTI): Reigning champions Indian Oil from Bengaluru and Punjab and Sind Bank from Jalandhar entered the final of the 53rd Bombay Gold Cup hockey championship on Tuesday in contrasting fashion.

Indian Oil outclassed a depleted Bharat Petroleum Corporation Limited, Mumbai, 7-2 after leading 3-1 at half time at the MHAL-Mahindra Stadium here.

Later, the Punjab bankmen edged out South Central Railway 2-1 to earn a shot on Wednesday in the title clash against Indian Oil. BPCL clearly missed four key

players who had helped them make the last four by playing in the league phase as they all had departed after being summoned on Sunday by Hockey India for the national juniors' camp that started in Bengaluru on March 11.

In their absence, BPCL were no match for the star packed Indian Oil with an array of former internationals. Indian Oil rode roughshod over their rivals and got their goals through veteran Deepak Thakur, who struck twice, Sunil Yadav, Armaan Qureshi, Talwinder Singh, Mohammad Raheel and Nilam Sanjay Xess. Darshan Gawkar

scored both the goals for the losers. In the second semi final, SCR clearly missed their drags flicker Pratap Lakra who had scored a hat trick against UP XI in the semis.

He too had to leave for Bengaluru to join the 21-day national juniors' camp and SCR failed to convert even one out of the seven penalty corners earned.

PSB were clearly the better team on the day and scored in the first and last quarters through Ranjot Singh and Navdeep Singh.

SCR's lone strike came at the fag end of the game from Sandeep Kumar Singh.

Osaka keeps Indian Wells title defense on track

INDIAN WELLS (UNITED STATES), MAR 12 (AFP): World number one and defending champion Naomi Osaka powered past American Danielle Collins 6-4, 6-2 on Monday to book a fourth-round meeting with resurgent Swiss Belinda Bencic at Indian Wells.

Japan's Osaka, whose second straight Grand Slam title at the Australian Open propelled her to the top of the rankings, traded breaks with Collins early in the first set.

But she got the decisive break in the ninth game, giving herself a break point with a backhand winner before pouncing on a short ball and belting a forehand winner to give herself a chance to serve for the set.

An increasingly confident Osaka broke Collins at love for a 2-1 lead in the second. She finished out the next game for a 3-1 lead and led 5-1 before Collins saved a match point to hold and make Osaka serve out the match.

Collins, trying to build on a breakout run to the Australian Open semi-finals, failed in her bid to avenge her 6-1, 6-0 loss to Osaka in their only prior meeting in Beijing last year.

And Osaka, whose first career title came at this prestigious WTA premier mandatory event last year, advanced to a meeting with Bencic, the 23rd seed who defeated Russian Ekaterina Alexandrova 6-4, 6-2.

Bencic stunned two-time Wimbledon champion Petra Kvitova in the final at Dubai last month to capture her first WTA title in four years.

The 21-year-old stunned two-time Wimbledon champion Petra Kvitova in the final at Dubai last month to capture her first WTA title in four years.

She won the WTA title in Toronto in 2015 before a series of back and wrist injuries saw her slide down the rankings.

In other third-round action, three-time Grand Slam champion Angelique Kerber came from a

set down to beat Russian qualifier Natalia Vikhlyantseva 3-6, 6-1, 6-3.

After dropping her serve in the first game of the second set, Kerber won seven games in a row to force a third set and take a 2-0 lead in the decider.

She was unable to convert four match points against Vikhlyantseva's serve at 5-1 and was broken at love when serving for the match at 5-2 before finally putting it away.

"I think it gives me confidence that I can turn around matches, that I can play also three sets, also in the close moments that I'm there, that I can trust myself," said Kerber, adding that it was always difficult to face an opponent for the first time.

- Venus rising -

She'll be doing the same in the round of 16 against Aryna Sabalenka, the ninth seed from Belarus who defeated Lesia Tsurenko 6-2, 7-5.

Seven-time Grand Slam winner Venus Williams also found it tricky facing fellow American Christina McHale for the first time, but she pulled back early breaks in each set to win 6-2, 7-5.

"I never played her, so you're out there learning what they do well, what shots they select," Williams said, adding that it wasn't until the second set that she felt 'OK, I understand.'

"I felt comfortable with trying to control the point from there," said Williams, who fired 20 winners and converted seven of her nine break point chances.

She'll fight for a quarter-final berth against Mona Barthel, a 7-5, 1-6, 6-4 winner over Julia Goerges in an all-German contest. Fifth-seeded Czech Karolina Pliskova relied on a solid service game in a 6-3, 6-2 victory over Belgian qualifier Ysaline Bonaventure.

She next faces Estonian Anett Kontaveit, who was leading 5-0 against 11th-seeded Anastasija Sevastova when the Latvian retired from their match.

Industrial growth slows to 1.7 pc in January

NEW DELHI, MAR 12 (PTI): Subdued performance of manufacturing sector, especially capital and consumer goods, pulled down the growth in industrial production to 1.7 per cent in January from 7.5 per cent a year ago.

The data of Index of Industrial Production (IIP), released by the Central Statistics Office (CSO) on Tuesday comes ahead of the Reserve Bank's monetary policy statement on April 4 and may increase the clamour for cut in interest rates to boost economic activities.

Meanwhile, the CSO has revised upwards the growth in IIP for December 2018 to 2.6 per cent from the earlier estimate of 2.4 per cent.

As per the CSO data, the growth in manufacturing sector slowed to 1.3 per cent in January from 8.7 per cent in January 2018. There was also slump in the power generation segment

as the expansion was almost flat at 0.8 per cent compared to 7.6 per cent in the year-ago month.

However, the silver lining was the mining sector as it grew by 3.9 per cent in January this year compared to 0.3 per cent in the year-ago period.

Giving more details about the factory output in the country, CSO said the capital goods segments, considered to be barometer of investment, witnessed a contraction and so was in case of intermediate goods segment.

Data also revealed that both growth in production of consumer durable and non-durable goods too grew at slower rate in January compared to the year-ago period.

The IIP growth during April-January period of the current fiscal stood at 4.4 per cent compared to 4.1 per cent in the same time frame a year ago.

Raw materials behind half of global emissions: UN



NAIROBI, MAR 12 (AFP): Extracting and processing materials, fuel and food contributes as much as half of the world’s greenhouse gas emissions, the UN said Tuesday, as experts gathered in Kenya to find ways to rein in exploding global consumption.

Using dozens of data sources, the authors of a major new report presented lawmakers and businesses with a stark choice: drastically reform the global economy to get more from less, or risk the collapse of global infrastructure.

With countries already committed under the Paris climate deal to curb emissions to fend off the worst impacts of global warming, ex-

perts said there was little hope of meeting that goal without an “urgent and systemic transformation” in how we use Earth’s resources.

The Global Resources Outlook 2019 said that worldwide consumption of basic commodities such as water, minerals and fossil fuels had tripled since 1970.

With high-population nations such as China and India rapidly expanding their economies, the team behind the report called for a drastic overhaul in how that growth is fed.

“Nobody is claiming that the countries which are on the lower level of development should not have the right to develop,” said Janez Potocnik,

co-chair of the International Resource Panel.

“The question is, is it possible to do it differently to how we have done it, with fewer consequences than we see today?” The report paints a grim picture of relentless demand for resources as the global population ticks towards eight billion people. The use of climate-warming fossil fuels has increased worldwide from 6 billion tonnes in 1970 to 15 billion tonnes in 2017 despite decades of efforts to steer nations towards greener energy.

Water use for agriculture and industry outstripped population growth in the second half of the 20th Century. In 2017, 3,900 km3

of water was withdrawn for commercial purposes -- 70 per cent of which went to farming.

“The bad use of natural resources has a big impact on our quality of life and environment,” said Bruno Orbele, Swiss former environment minister and one of the report’s co-authors.

In line with most economic measurements, the study found that per capita consumption of raw materials in high-income nations was more than double the global average.

Richer nations use 27.1 tonnes of raw material per person per year, compared to just two tonnes a head in low income countries.

The “Towards Sustainability” scenario

boosts policy measures to slow the growth of resource use, leading to reduced pressure on food and water supplies and boosting global economic growth by 8 per cent.

Conversely, the “Historical Trends” projection -- which assumes a business-as-usual approach to resource use -- would see greenhouse gas emissions shoot up 43 per cent by 2060.

The corresponding agricultural pressure to feed a global population expected to tip 10 billion by mid-century would see land given over to agriculture increase by 20 percent, reducing forest cover by 10 per cent and other habitat such as grasslands and savannah by a fifth. Such a trajectory would shatter any remaining chance mankind has of limiting global temperature rises to 1.5 Celsius, as countries committed to achieving in the landmark 2015 Paris accord.

“The way we are currently organised, it isn’t simply enough,” said Potocnik.

In a message to lawmakers and heads of state due in Nairobi for Thursday’s One Planet Summit, Potocnik said the time for vague political commitments on the environment had passed.

“If you are in public office, defend public interest. And it’s clear what is public interest today: we have to survive.”

Boeing 737 MAX 8 planes will remain grounded until security clearance: China

BEIJING, MAR 12 (PTI): China said on Tuesday that Boeing 737 MAX 8 planes will not be allowed to fly until their security is guaranteed, as it ruled out any politics behind its decision to ground nearly 100 such aircraft after the deadly Ethiopian Airlines crash.

China’s civil aviation regulator on Monday ordered domestic carriers to ground all Boeing 737 MAX 8 planes, citing flight safety, a day after an aircraft of similar model operated by the Ethiopian Airlines crashed in Addis Ababa killing all 157 passengers and crew, including 10 Indians and Indian-origin Canadians.

The crash of Ethiopian Airlines plane came five months after another Boeing 737 MAX 8 of Lion Air crashed in Indonesia that killed 189 passengers and crew. Reports said there were similarities between the

Ethiopian and Indonesian air crashes as they both occurred during take-off, involving new aircraft that had just been delivered.

Apart from China, Indonesia and Ethiopia have also ordered the airlines to ground their Boeing 737 MAX 8 planes.

“As for China, the Civil Aviation Authority of China (CAAC) has said that they will stay in touch with the US and Boeing,” Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Lu Kang told a media briefing here.

After guaranteeing the security of the aircraft, they will resume operations. So we don’t have a time table yet.

“Only after we confirm that there is no risk for security can we resume their operation. It shows our sense of responsibility for passenger safety,” he said.

In a bid to rule out any politics behind China’s decision, Lu pointed to

several other countries and airlines that have grounded the particular aircraft after Sunday’s accident due to safety concerns. “First I want to emphasise not only the CAAC but also many countries in the world and regions are grounding the commercial operations of this aircraft after the accident,” he said.

China and the US, the world’s two largest economies, are locked in a trade war since Trump imposed heavy tariffs on imported steel and aluminium items from China in March last year, a move that sparked fears of a global trade war.

Trump imposed tariff hikes of up to 25 per cent on USD 250 billion of Chinese goods. In response, China imposed tit-for-tat tariffs on USD 110 billion of American goods.

Top trade officials from America and China are holding talks to negotiate a comprehensive trade deal.

UK and Germany table Resolution on Sri Lanka at UNHRC

COLOMBO, MAR 12 (PTI): Sri Lanka is once again under international pressure to implement fully the measures identified by the UNHRC in 2015 to address human rights concerns after the United Kingdom and Germany on Tuesday tabled a resolution at the UN body in Geneva.

The UN rights office calls for international investigations into alleged war crimes and encourages member states to prosecute Sri Lankans suspected of war crimes in accordance with universal jurisdiction principles.

Titled “Promoting reconciliation, accountability and human rights in Sri Lanka”, the rollover resolution requests the Office of the High Commissioner to continue to assess progress on the implementation of its recommendations and other relevant processes related to reconciliation, accountability and human rights in Sri Lanka.

It also calls for presenting a written update to the UNHRC at its 43rd

session, and a comprehensive report, followed by a discussion on the implementation of Council resolution 30/1, at its 46th session, a foreign ministry source said.

The resolution which Sri Lanka is expected to co-sponsor is termed A/HRC/40/L.1 and was also endorsed by Canada, Germany, Montenegro, North Macedonia, the United Kingdom and Northern Ireland, according to the source.

The resolution follows the report submitted by the UN Human Rights High Commissioner Michelle Brachelet last week. The report reviews the progress made by Sri Lanka since October 2015 and January 2019.

It assessed Sri Lanka’s pledge on promoting reconciliation and human rights accountability. Brachelet’s report said that her office has been receiving credible information on cases of abduction, unlawful detention torture and sexual violence by the Sri Lankan security forces allegedly taken place

from 2016 to 2018.

The report has acknowledged the government’s progress in human rights issues and its engagement with civil society.

The Resolution requests the Office of the High Commissioner and relevant special procedure mandate holders in consultation with the concurrence of the Government of Sri Lanka to continue to strengthen their advice and technical assistance on the promotion and protection of human rights and truth, justice, reconciliation and accountability in Sri Lanka.

Sri Lanka has resisted calls for international investigations citing constitutional constraints for foreign judges to operate in the island.

The UNHRC resolutions since 2013 had censured Sri Lanka on its alleged human rights abuses.

They called for probing of the rights abuses by both the LTTE and the government troops by setting up an international investigation.

US joins Ethiopian-led investigation at Boeing crash site

ADDIS ABABA, MAR 12 (AP): US aviation experts on Tuesday joined a global investigation into the crash of an Ethiopian Airlines jetliner that killed 157 people, as a growing number of airlines grounded the new Boeing plane involved in the crash. The Federal Aviation Administration arrived at the crash site outside the capital, Addis Ababa, with representatives from the National Transportation Safety Board. They join an Ethiopian-led investigation.

The FAA said it expects Boeing will soon complete improvements to an automated anti-stall system suspected of contributing to the deadly crash of another new Boeing 737 Max 8 in October, and update training requirements and related flight crew manuals.

Boeing has said it has no reason to pull the popular aircraft from the skies. The Ethiopian Airlines plane crashed in clear weather six minutes of taking off for Nairobi, and a growing number of countries and airlines have grounded the new Boeing model as a result.

One witness has told The Associated Press that smoke was coming from the plane’s rear before it crashed in a rural field. “The plane rotated two times in the air, and it had some smoke coming from the back then, it hit the ground and exploded,” Tamrat Abera said.

Theresa May claims Brexit breakthrough ahead of crunch vote

ADITI KHANNA
LONDON, MAR 12 (PTI): British Prime Minister Theresa May claimed to have secured the breakthrough required to get her Brexit withdrawal agreement through a crunch vote in Parliament on Tuesday evening.

However, it was received with caution by British MPs unsure of the legal ramifications, leaving Britain’s exit from the European Union (EU) still precariously poised ahead of the March 29 Brexit deadline.

In a last-minute dash to the European Parliament in Strasbourg, France, on Monday night, May emerged alongside European Commission President Jean Claude-Juncker to declare that the UK and EU have agreed “legally binding” changes to the controversial Irish backstop clause to ensure any such arrangement would not be permanent.

The move is aimed at addressing the concerns of hard-Brexiteers in her own Conservative Party and the Northern Irish Democratic Unionist Party (DUP), which provides her government with its majority in the House of Commons. “MPs were clear that legal changes were needed to the backstop. Today we have secured legal changes. Now is the time to come together to back this improved Brexit deal,” May said at a joint press conference with Juncker.

The EU said it had made significant conces-



sions as two additional documents were agreed to back up the withdrawal agreement struck in December last year a joint legally binding instrument which the UK could use to start a “formal dispute” against the EU if it tried to keep the UK tied into the backstop indefinitely and a joint statement committing both sides to find an alternative to the backstop by the end of the Brexit transition period of December 2020.

“In politics, sometimes you get a second chance. There will be no third chance it is this deal or Brexit might not happen at all,” Juncker said, issuing a stark warning to Britain’s MPs over the importance of the parliamentary vote in the UK on Tuesday.

Ireland’s Indian-origin Prime Minister, Leo Varadkar, also stressed that the new agreements were an “unambiguous statement” of both sides’ “good faith and intentions” even if they did not “undermine” the

principle of the backstop or how it might come into force. The Irish backstop, an insurance policy designed to maintain an open border on the island of Ireland between UK territory Northern Ireland and EU member-state the Republic of Ireland has been the biggest sticking point for many MPs in the UK who voted against the withdrawal agreement tabled by Theresa May in January, by a massive margin of 230 votes.

The historic bruising for May had led her to seek changes to the agreement in order to table a second meaningful vote before Parliament that would stand a better chance of being voted through.

Brexiteers from within her own party and the DUP have refused to comment if they feel the changes she has secured will be enough for them to vote in favour of the deal before they take full legal advice on the changes. The Opposition Labour Party, mean-

while, has declared that the British PM has secured nothing new.

“This deal isn’t the right deal. The PM is giving us basically the same deal,” said Labour’s shadow Brexit secretary Kier Starmer, who is calling for a “pause” and more time to consider the next steps. The legal arguments around the new changes will be the focal point ahead of the vote scheduled for around 1900 GMT, with UK Attorney General Geoffrey Cox set to update his advice on the deal and whether it will stand up to legal scrutiny and be enough to convince sceptical MPs to vote in favour of May’s deal.

If, however, the deal fails to pass through yet again, Theresa May’s previously set timetable is set to kick in with MPs given a vote by Wednesday on leaving the EU without any agreement in place, which is expected to be defeated because there is very little support for such a no-deal Brexit option.





IN THE FIELD! Aquaman star, Jason Momoa, supports the New Zealand All Blacks Sevens rugby team in Vancouver, Canada.

'The Blacklist' renewed for season seven at NBC



LOS ANGELES, MAR 12 (PTI): NBC has renewed its hit crime drama series "The Blacklist" for seventh season.

The show, headlined by James Spader and Megan Boone, follows the story of a wanted man, Raymond "Red" Reddington, who surrenders before the FBI and helps in capturing some of the most notorious criminals.

The sixth season of the show currently airs on NBC.

According to Variety, both Spader and Boone will be coming back for the seventh season. The show joins "Chicago Fire", "Chicago Med", "Chicago PD" and "New Amsterdam" as NBC dramas to score early renewals for the 2019-2020 broadcast season.

ARIES: Criticism CAN be valuable, Aries—and we're not just talking about the unsolicited feedback you've been known to dole out. (Glug.) Before you push a project to the next stage, seek objective insight. Instead of Googling for advice and answers, reach out to a few trusted mentors. Maybe you could hop on a 30-minute call or treat for lunch and run your ideas past them.

TAURUS: It may be too late to reverse past "mistakes," but that doesn't mean your future isn't bright. Feeling like a rejected proposal still has potential? Start reworking your idea. This time around, avoid any shortcuts and put in the elbow grease required to bring your vision to life. Give some love to your closest relationships too.

GEMINI: Power surge! Today's Sun-Saturn collaboration blesses you with an added measure of authority. With the Sun amping up your leadership skills and Saturn in your intuitive eighth house, listen to your gut. People will follow your lead, Gemini, so step up and take charge. You don't have

to show your entire hand or spend all day justifying the decisions you make.

CANCER: Relationships will benefit from unapologetic honesty today, Cancer, but there's just one hitch. Don't confuse your opinions with the gospel truth. The way something SEEMS may not reflect the way it actually is, but you run the risk of flinging false accusations based on assumptions. If you are unhappy with a partnership, lay down your weapons and advance with curiosity..

LEO: Forget about going with your best guess today, Leo. A precise angle between the illuminating Sun and structure hound Saturn insists that you take exact measurements in all that you do. Do the cost breakdown of an upcoming project or travel plan. You may need to simplify or tweak an aspect to keep within budget. If you "heard it through the grapevine," do your detective work. Unless you have facts and empirical data to back up the case, consider it an unsolved mystery—and perhaps even "fake news."

VIRGO: Right swipe! Today's lust-positive angle between the flirtatious Sun and steady Saturn could bring a hot prospect with staying power. You certainly won't meet this person while clearing out your Netflix queue. Follow the Sun's motivation to dress up and meet friends out on the town. Coupled Virgos, don't get lazy. Take a pause from co-hibernating and reserve a table for two.

LIBRA: Go ahead, Libra, let your inner control freak have the wheel today. With the can-do Sun productively angled to structure fanatic Saturn, you could really whip a plan into shape. Be a stickler for the details. If people's promises aren't making sense or their deadlines don't seem realistic, call it out. You don't have to go along with the first offer people make.

SCORPIO: WYYou're a creative force today, Scorpio, so use that magnitude to push a project to the finish line. You'll create some real tremors if you dare to color outside the lines. Don't just do this for shock value, however. With a message behind your "mad-

ness," you can wake people up to important issues or ideas they haven't thought of yet.

SAGITTARIUS: So many people, so little time. You've been spreading yourself thinner than angel hair pasta lately, Archer. The person suffering most is you, and if you keep running at this pace, you won't have anything left to give others. Be firm when a close friend or family member pushes for more of your time than you have to give. Today, make sure your schedule includes plenty of pauses in between appointments, a longer lunch break and a spot of time tonight to soak in the tub, listen to music and just relax!

CAPRICORN: You've been mulling over some pretty big ideas ever since hard-hitting Saturn entered Capricorn on December 19, 2017. Today, take another step toward putting those visions into words. With the expressive Sun forming a propitious angle to Saturn, take time to write out your thoughts, even if you're scrawling in your journal or typing into a private Excel document. You might find it helpful to bounce these visions

off of more experienced people. Do your research. Some not-so-random Googling could unearth a Eureka!-level discovery.

AQUARIUS: Lift your nose from the grindstone and give your personal life attention today, Aquarius, as the Sun gets a supportive boost from your co-ruler, structured Saturn. If your house isn't in order—literally and metaphorically—it's going to be difficult to focus and be productive. Even cleaning your space can be meditative. Or maybe it's time to hire a cleaning service to deal with the dust bunnies you simply don't have the space to clear away anymore..

PISCES: Under today's cooperative Gemini moon, step out of the spotlight and help others shine. Your otherworldly brand of support is a powerful force and can inspire those around you to rise to their greatness. Can you hustle on behalf of a gifted friend? Maybe you could connect them with an important influencer or lend a hand as they take a crucial project to the finish line. Heads up: Don't expect an immediate thank-you for the favor. This person might be too busy to properly acknowledge your actions.

Dhoni bared his soul in 'Roar of the Lion': Kabir Khan

JUSTIN RAO

MUMBAI, MAR 12 (PTI): Kabir Khan has documented the fairy-tale comeback of the Chennai Super Kings last IPL season, following a two-year suspension for spot-fixing, in the upcoming, "Roar of the Lion" and the director says the series will see a "very personal" side of cricketer MS Dhoni.

CSK, the Chennai franchise of the IPL, had served a two-year ban for its management's role in the 2013 spot-fixing scandal.

The Hotstar Special docu-series, directed and executive produced by Kabir, chronicles how the Dhoni-led team made a comeback, winning Indian Premier League 2018.

In an interview with PTI, the director says the series is a human exploration, one beyond the obvious, to show what the phase did to the people involved. "We know all about the broad strokes, the legal side and the uproar. We don't know what was happening to the individuals beyond those headlines. This is a story behind the headlines. Were these headlines affecting Dhoni? Of course they were, but he never spoke about it, until now," Kabir said.

The critically-acclaimed filmmaker said the series aims to bring out the emotional journey, which the mainstream narrative missed out.

"The controversy was hurting other players but we never heard their perspective. That's what the USP of the show is. It's a story we all know how it played out, but we don't know the de-

tails and layers of the emotional journey of the protagonist."

The episodic series was shot on a tight schedule of three months and involved a series of intense, honest and

ed project for Kabir, who is gearing up to shoot his next feature, "83", which chronicles Indian cricket team's iconic first World Cup win.

The director, however, said it is "pure



long discussions with Dhoni.

"Our interviews with him on tape lasted sometimes seven to eight hours. He trusted me and had the confidence that I'll be sensitive in the way things are going to be portrayed. He was ready to bare his soul.

"You've never seen Dhoni speak like this. He has always been silent about these matters. You'll see Dhoni in a very personal, emotional way on this series."

The "Bajrangi Bhaijaan" director said the team was conscious regarding the timing of the release, as they needed to bring out the series before the start of the next IPL season. "Roar of the Lion" becomes the second cricket-relat-

coincidence" that the two projects have cricket as the backdrop.

"Even if I wasn't working on '83', I would've done 'Roar of the Lion' because it was a fascinating and heartwarming story of the triumph of the human spirit. It has a classic sport story graph.

"The most successful IPL franchise has a match fixing allegations against them and the icon of the country: Dhoni. They get banned, they cope with that, come back after the allegations are cleared, build a team which is ridiculed and go on to win again. How could I not have done this?"

"Roar of the Lion" starts streaming on Hotstar from March 20.

Parineeti Chopra considering to take digital plunge



Actor Parineeti Chopra says she is not averse to doing web series and has even received some interesting offers.

The actor's co-star "Kesari" co-star Akshay Kumar recently announced that he would be making his digital debut.

Parineeti said there are a lot of options for actors to choose from, content wise "I'm getting a lot of interesting content for shows. I have three-four show offers but I don't know which one, or if I'm even going to do any of them. It happens that I'm about to say yes to a show and an amazing film comes up," she said in a group interview.

This year, Parineeti will be seen in three films: "Kesari", "Sandeep Aur Pinky Faraar" and "Jabariya Jodi".

The actor said she was supposed

to have only two releases this year but "Sandeep Aur Pinky Faraar" got pushed.

"You cannot plan. When you plan, God laughs, the film industry also laughs, things change everyday! But that's the beauty of it," she said.

Parineeti is waiting to see how the year unfolds as she awaits the announcement of three projects.

One of those is rumoured to be "Baa-hubali" director SS Rajamouli's next "RRR", starring Jr NTR and Ram Charan.

When asked if she is doing the film, Parineeti said, "I'll only say that you guys should wait and believe the things we announce. Whatever my films are, they'll be announced within this week."

She is currently awaiting the release of "Kesari" on March 21.

Chance The Rapper gets married to Kristen Corley



LOS ANGELES, MAR 12 (PTI): Chance the Rapper has got married to his longtime girlfriend Kirsten Corley. The rapper, whose real name is Chancelor Jonathan Bennett, and his fiancée had dated for over 10 years before tying the knot on Saturday at the Resort at Pelican Hill in Newport Beach, California, reported People.

"The Bennetts," wrote the rapper on social media while posting a photo of his with Corley. In the photo, the rapper is seen wearing a white tuxedo while the bride donned a strapless gown.

The ceremony was attended by Kim Kardashian West and her husband Kanye West, who has long been friends with Chance.

Comedian Dave Chappelle and gospel star Kirk Franklin were also in attendance, according to photos posted by Chance on Monday.