



SummitTIMES

SU terminates Prof Guha from service
SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 28 JUN: The executive council of Sikkim University today decided to terminate the services of the Head of the Mass Communication Department, Prof Shilajit Guha who was accused of molesting a student of the university.

It is learnt that the internal complaints committee had submitted its report on 10 June following which, as per the UGC norms, a show cause notice was issued to Prof Guha.

The executive council then held its meeting today wherein they deliberated on the internal complaints committee's report and Prof Guha's response. The council then decided to take up the internal complaints committee's recommendations and terminate Prof Guha.

It may be recalled that a complaint had been registered against Prof Guha to the internal complaints committee of the university in May this year. On 13 May, Prof Guha had been removed from his post as the Head of the Mass Communication Department of the University till the inquiry was completed.

Bihar children deaths: Team of doctors blames 'administrative failure', 'state's apathy' for tragedy

NEW DELHI, JUN 28 (PTI): A group of doctors, which conducted an independent inquiry into the recent deaths of children in Bihar's Muzaffarpur district, has blamed "administrative failure" and the "state's apathy towards people" for the tragedy.

It has also claimed that the parents of most of the deceased children had no access to the public distribution system as they did not have ration cards.

Most of the children were malnourished and none had been treated for it. Also, none of them had growth-monitoring cards, a preliminary report prepared by the fact-finding team of doctors under the banner of "Progressive Medicos and Scientists' Forum" (PMSF) stated.

The group also had doctors from the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) here.

These deaths have been happening for the last 10 years and still, there is no preventive mechanism and health awareness for specific illnesses or a common

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INDIA-NEPAL ECONOMIC PARTNERSHIP SUMMIT

Policy makers discuss trade and investment opportunities

GANGTOK, 28 JUN (IPR): The India-Nepal Economic Partnership Summit was held today at a local hotel in the capital which had the presence of Nepalese Ambassador to India, Dr Nilambar Acharya, Chief Minister of Sikkim, Prem Singh Tamang (Golay), Ambassador and Chairperson, India-Nepal Centre, PHDCCI, KV Rajan, other dignitaries, participants, officials from Nepal Embassy.

In order to explore the trade and investment opportunities and to participate in the economic development of both, India's North East Region and Nepal, PHDCCI under the aegis of its India-Nepal Centre (INC)/State Development Council (SDC) and in association with the Embassy of Nepal, New Delhi organized the event today. The Summit focused



on the sectors where India-Nepal co-operation can be further boosted through proactive "East Connection" to achieve the desired goals for Nepal's economic development -Tourism; Agriculture & Food Processing; Energy; Infrastructure; Healthcare; Education,

and investors to come to terms with the strong possibilities that both the places offer for businesses and investments.

While speaking at the Summit as the chief guest, Chief Minister, PS Tamang (Golay) shared his perspectives on the opportunities and about the need for

collaborative efforts, for making a framework for comprehensive regional and sub-regional economic co-operation.

Ambassador of Nepal, Nilambar Acharya pointed out the sectors where India-Nepal co-operation can be further boosted through proactive "East Connection" to achieve the desired goals for economic development.

Minister (Economic), Krishna Hari Pushkar, Embassy of Nepal further substantiated this particular aspect in his detailed presentation.

The Chief Secretary of Sikkim, Alok Shrivastava gave an overview of

Sikkim's developmental profile and policies which are progressive and supportive to the businesses. Thomas Chandy, Additional Chief Secretary, Department of Commerce and Industries, Government of Sikkim welcomed the Nepalese entrepreneurs to engage with Sikkim and start a new chapter of collaboration in particularly two areas - Tourism and Organic Farming.

Prof Mahendra Lama, Professor (South Asian Economies), JNU & Member, EPG on Nepal-India Relations, touched on historical and contemporary facts that are crucial for further expansion of economic cooperation between Sikkim and Nepal. Anukool Bhatnagar, MD & CEO, Nepal SBI Bank Ltd outlined the financing facilities available in Nepal for doing business.

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CS issues fresh communiqué on Cabinet announcements

SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 28 JUN: The Office of the Chief Secretary has released a fresh list of announcements today that does not include five points that were part of the list released by the Chief Minister's Office on Thursday as announcements made by the Chief Minister in a cabinet meeting.

The new list from the CS forwarded by the Information & Public Relations Department excludes announcements on the setting up of a Commission for Identification of genuine BPL families for formulation of suitable schemes for them; Waiver of mutation fee on ancestral land while

registering in the name of siblings; Teaching fraternity acquiring higher qualifications will be made eligible for applying for higher posts; Laptop to Sikkimese students studying in private Colleges and Universities in Sikkim; Land donor of Government schools to be provided job as per their qualification.

The following is the new list of announcements:

- Salary of Primary and Jr High School teachers and staff members will be disbursed from their respective BACs.
- Reinstate of old Academic Annual School calendar from next academic session.
- All syndicate and taxi stand will be handed over to Taxi Driver Association.
- Online booking system of registered taxi to be introduced in coming days.
- Motor vehicle tax payment:
Motor vehicle tax with provision of payment option for one year and five years. This facility will provide more option to the public as per their will -annually or one time for 5 years to be introduced very soon.
Online payment system:
Online payment of motor vehicle tax with an option of payment annually and one time for five years will be made operational very soon.
With the introducing of this new system it would allow the public to pay their vehicle taxes online sitting at home in addition to the existing services. With this reform it will not only provide easy service but also save lot of energy and time of the public.
Further, in the coming months the Transport Department, Govt. of Sikkim shall take steps towards more online citizen centric services like online vehicle registration, transfer of ownership, fitness, online permit in 2nd phase.
- Online systems to be introduced for registration and mutation of land in coming days.
- Online payments of utility bills (Electricity, Sewerage, water and garbage) will be introduced in coming days in the state.
- Online trade license registration and renewal payment system will be introduced in the coming days in the state with an option of payment annually and one time for five years.
- E-services to be introduced through e-district project in the coming days and subsequently the online facilities to be provided in all GPUs.

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East Bengal to felicitate Bhaichung as its 'best product'

SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 28 JUN: East Bengal FC celebrates its centenary on 01 August 2019.

Among a major event too mark the centenary, East Bengal is honouring Bhaichung Bhutia with the 'best product' award of the club in consideration of his outstanding service to the club as a player.

Bhaichung started his football journey with East Bengal when he was 16 years old.

He joined the club in 1993 and played for a stretch of three years till 1995-96. He joined the club again and also played in 1997, 1998, 2003, 2004, 2005 and 2009.

Speaking about the award, Bhaichung said it was a great honour for him



to be recognised as the best product of the club.

"East Bengal is a historic club of the country with lots of history. It has produced lot of iconic and legendary footballers during its 100

years and to be honoured as the best player is a great honour for me. I am very thankful to East Bengal club for this honour," he said.

Bhaichung has won all the top leagues and

tournaments with East Bengal in the nine years that he played for the club. He has scored 148 goals for East Bengal.

The awards function will be held in Kolkata on 01 August.

Former Minister challenges SKM Govt's achievement claims

SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 28 JUN: A senior leader and former Minister of Sikkim Democratic Front, Tshering Wangdi Lepcha, has questioned the list of achievements released yesterday by the Sikkim Krantikari Morcha government on completion of one month in office.

He asserted that SKM government has not been able to give any development to the people of Sikkim in the last one month and that its claims were either misleading or a repackaging of SDF initiatives being claimed as those of the SKM government.

Mr Lepcha mentioned that the Saturday holiday for government employees cannot be taken as an achievement since it was just an administrative process.

He further argues that the claim of the government of having

increased the daily wages of skilled and semi-skilled MRNREGA workers was also not a real achievement. In this regard, he explains that in any work there were only 5% skilled and semi-skilled workers so this measure has touched very few. The latest move was in fact an injustice to the remaining 95% MGNREGA workers and hence cannot be taken as an achievement.

The former Minister has also refuted the claim of the State government on the regularization of 342 employees of National Health Mission and states that the memorandum for regularization of these employees was prepared by the SDF government and that the Model Code of Conduct had postponed the distribution of the orders.

On the same, he stated that the present government has just

distributed these memorandums so the SKM government should not take credit for this achievement.

Mr Lepcha has also rejected the claim of the present government on the appointment of Sanskrit teachers.

He informs that the process for appointment for Sanskrit teachers was started in SDF government and interviews had also been held before the election and that the appointment orders could not be handed out due to the election process.

On the One Family One Job issue, Mr Lepcha asserts that the SDF government had allocated Rs 100 crores for OFOJ employees in the vote of accounts.

He questioned why the present government was not giving salaries to these employees when the budget provision is already there.

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Mamata again warns TMC leaders against taking 'cut money'

KOLKATA, JUN 28 (PTI): TMC supremo and West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Friday expressed her ire once again against elected representatives of the party indulging in corrupt practices and warned that those involved in taking "cut money" from beneficiaries of government schemes will be put behind bars, according to Trinamool Congress leaders.

The chief minister's stern instructions to the party leaders follow the recent reverses in Lok Sabha polls and protests by people outside residences of a number of TMC leaders in the state demanding return of the "cut money" or commission taken from them.

The West Bengal Chief Minister also asked her party leaders to introspect as she rebuked a section of them for the party's poor performance in the general elections. She asked TMC workers to prepare for the 2021 assembly elections in the state and to bring back the old-timers into the party fold, a senior leader said.

Banerjee during the meeting with West Midnapore district TMC unit accused few MLAs of not working properly in their areas and for being keen on taking commission from people for providing social and government benefits.

West Midnapore district president Ajit Maity was among those who were pulled up by the TMC supremo for the poor poll performance. The BJP has won one of the two Lok Sabha seats in the district, which was considered to be a TMC stronghold.

Banerjee also hit out at a section of TMC leaders who, she said, have "surrendered" to the BJP's "lure of the lucre" and sabotaged the party's prospects, a TMC leader who participated in the meeting said.

"Our party supremo has warned us against getting involved in corruption and told us to return cut money, if we have taken any from the people. She has told us if anyone is found seeking cut money to provide benefits from government schemes, he or she will be arrested," a senior TMC leader of West Midnapore district said.

Elected representatives at the municipal and panchayat levels have faced public ire over the issue Of cut money in West Midnapore, Bankura, Birbhum, Burdwan, Kolkata, Coochbehar, Jalpaiguri, Burdwan, Malda, Purulia and Nadia districts.

"She (Banerjee) told us to devote more time to the party and build a strong mass network in our respective areas. A section of party leaders and MLAs has been asked to introspect and work as per the party guidelines or else quit TMC," the senior party leader, who was present in the meeting, said.



Int'l Day against Drug Abuse at Mangshila

SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 28 JUN:

International Day Against Drug Abuse & Illicit Trafficking 2019 was observed by SAATHI team of Mangshila Government Senior Secondary School, North Sikkim on 26 Jun, 2019. The event was attended by Panchayat members, SMC members, parents, teachers, students and local residents, a press release informs.

The students from feeder schools

were invited for the program. Almost 150 people participated in this event. The theme of this year was "Health for Justice and Justice for Health."

Headmaster, Tashi Lepcha, Namok Junior High School and Zilla Member, Zomin Limboo were the resource persons of the event. Mr Lepcha highlighted various issues related to drug abuse and how it is harmful to the individual and the community. Mr Limboo talked about various

social evils of our society and asked people to be careful and alert about their children. Dikila Bhutia from SAATHI was also present and highlighted the role of community members in the fight against addiction.

SAATHI teacher coordinator also spoke about the Rubella virus and asked parents or guardians to approach nearby health centres for vaccination. The program ended with group song by the students.

Lok Sabha adjourns due to lack of quorum

NEW DELHI, JUN 28 (PTI):

Within a fortnight of convening of the 17th Lok Sabha, the business of the House on Friday collapsed due to lack of quorum minutes before it was scheduled to end.

The issue of quorum was raised by AAP member Bhagwant Mann during a discussion on a private member resolution regarding water scarcity and Ken-Betwa river-linking project.

Mann raised the issue of quorum around 5:45 pm when Jagdambika Pal (BJP) was speaking on the resolution.

Raising the quorum issue, Mann said he was also objecting to absence of opposition members in the House and lesser numbers on the treasury benches.

The presence of at least 10 per cent of the total strength of House or about 55 members constitutes the quorum.

Rajendra Agrawal, who was in the Chair, halted the proceedings

of the House and ordered ringing of the quorum bell.

Following this, some MPs came to the House but not in enough numbers to complete the quorum compelling the Chair to adjourn the House around 5 minutes ahead of the scheduled time of 6 pm.

The discussion on the resolution moved by Pushpendra Singh Chandel will continue next week.

Earlier participating in the discussion, Bhanu Pratap Singh Verma (BJP) said farmers of Bundelkhand are forced to leave farming and migrate to cities for work due to shortage of water.

Due to lack of irrigation facility, farmers are unable to do farming despite having their own land.

The government

should also initiate steps for replenishing dams to overcome the problems of water scarcity and practise of 'Anna Pratha' in the region, he said.

'Anna Pratha' refers to the practice of farmers freeing their cows to graze in open fields in times of scarcity of water and fodder, he said.

Adhir Rajan Chowdhury (Cong) said the government should come out with a comprehensive plan to deal with water shortage which has aggravated in the last few decades.

He also suggested that the government think of an alternative to deal with the rising number of stray cattle destroying crops.

With regard to inter-linking of river, he said, intention is noble but difficult to implement as there are acrimony between states over the issue.

The government should find ways to deal with the differences among states over the issue and also examine ecological imbalance that it may create, he said.

There are examples where the linking of rivers have failed, he said.

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INDIA-NEPAL...

Ambassador and Chairman, India-Nepal Centre, PHDCCI and India's former Ambassador to Nepal, KV Rajan shared his reflections on the need of institutionalizing the socio-cultural goodwill and shared ties between India and Nepal for accelerating the economic cooperation.

PHDCCI has been closely working with the Government of Nepal and the leading industry bodies of Nepal. Likewise, PHDCCI's India-Nepal Centre promotes two-way bilateral economic and business relations between India and Nepal.

Former Indian Ambassador to Nepal, KV Rajan is the chairman of India-Nepal Centre and Atul K Thakur is its Coordinator, whereas Vice President, Confederation of Nepalese Industries (CNI) Nirvana Chaudhary is the Chairman of Centre's Nepal Chapter.

The Summit's first Technical Session was Chaired by Ambassador, Mr Rajan who dealt with "Promoting Industry in Nepal; Revisiting Bilateral Trade Policies; Expanding Sub-regional Cooperation; Border Area Development; MSMEs; Destination Sikkim; SAARC; BBIN." The Session was participated by Counsellor, Tirtha Poudel, (Economic), Embassy of Nepal, India; Former MP, PD Rai, Lok Sabha, Sikkim; Vice Chancellor, Dr

Jagannath Patnaik, ICAFI University, Sikkim; Dean, Dr PP Dabral, Central Agriculture University, Sikkim; Former Chief Secretary, Trilok Dewan, Andhra Pradesh; Former Principal

Secretary & Advisor, GTA; Former MLA, Darjeeling; Advisor (Tourism), Raj Basu, Government of Sikkim.

The concluding session focused on "Policy Reforms & Ease of Doing Business in Nepal; Sectoral Possibilities in Nepal; Channelising Investment (both-ways) for Industrial Development in Nepal and Northeast (with special reference to Sikkim" and was moderated by Deputy Secretary & Coordinator, Atul K Thakur, SDC/India-Nepal Centre, PHDCCI.

The panel-members were: CEO, Sunil KC, Asian Institute of Diplomacy and International Affairs (AIDIA), Kathmandu; Editor, Kuvera Chalise, Karobar Daily, Kathmandu; Executive Director, Bikas Rauniyar, Interstate Multi-Modal Transport (P) Ltd/Fleet Logistics (P) Ltd; International Trade Expert, Dr Panu Pazo; Consultant - Infrastructure, Col Mani Gahatraj; Educationist, Gayatri Rai; Agri & Food Processing Entrepreneur, Abhimanyu Dhakal.

Through the Summit, efforts were made to create and sustain a framework of deeper regional and sub-regional economic cooperation.

Bihar children...

ailment like diarrhoea in the area, PMSF national convenor and former president of AIIMS Resident Doctors' Association (RDA) Dr Harjit Singh Bhatti said. "There is a severe shortage of drinking water and no functional sewerage system in the entire Muzaffarpur district. Sanitation is very poor, even at the health facilities," he added.

While experts are trying to pin-point the etiology behind this convulsive illness and the related deaths, the team of doctors arrived at a conclusion that whatever be the specific etiology, these children were "killed by administrative failure and the state's apathy towards people". "ASHA workers, sub-centres and anganwadi services are deficient in their numbers and functions and people do not have faith in the local health system. Immunisation services are poor," the team said in its report. The report highlighted that the nearest primary health centres and community health centres were abysmally dysfunctional in terms of resources and manpower, as compared to the national health standards.

At the Sri Krishna Medical College and Hospital (SKMCH), the nearest medical college, one emergency room catering to 500 patients a day is manned by only four doctors and three nurses and there is a chronic shortage of medications and equipment, the report said, adding that the wards and ICUs are also not well equipped to cater to the patients.

"The doctors are working hard overtime, despite the poor conditions and lack of resources, although proper protocols are not in place for a standardised treatment and the period of stay in the hospital. It has been noted in some cases that after treating for hypoglycemia, the children were discharged in a few hours and they died at home due to developing hypoglycemia," the report said.

The doctors' group claimed that despite faults at various levels, no action was taken against any official. "Rather a senior resident (doctor) was suspended, which is apparently inappropriate action and would be deemed as scapegoating in an attempt to slide the gross negligence under the carpet," the report said.

"Looking at these points, this kind of disasters are always waiting to happen in this area. The government is trying to hide its apathy towards people behind the jargons of etiological research of a 'mysterious' disease. While scientists are working on the etiological research, the focus of the state should be on strengthening the healthcare infrastructure so that such disasters can be prevented," it added.

Former Minister...

Mr Lepcha stresses that the SKM government should instead have told the people of Sikkim about what was happening with what it had promised to achieve within one month of forming the government.

BEFORE THE LD. OATH COMMISSIONER EAST SIKKIM AT GANGTOK

AFFIDAVIT

I, Abhishek Bhagat, son of Shri Om Prakash Bhagat, aged about 19 years, by faith - Hindu, by occupation - Student, resident of Dikchu Bazar under P.O. Dikchu as P.S. Singtam, East Sikkim do hereby solemnly affirm and declare an oath as follows;

1. That the correct spelling of my name is "ABHISHEK" which is recorded and reflected in my academic testimonials and also in my Aadhaar Card issued by Unique Identification Authority of India.
2. That inadvertently, the spelling of my name has been recorded as "ABISHEK" in my birth certificate issued by Chief Registrar of Births & Death, Health & Family Welfare Department, Government of Sikkim.
3. That this affidavit is made to declare that the person by the name "ABHISHEK" and "ABISHEK" are the name of the one and the same person i.e., myself.

SD/-
Deponent

PMMVY sensitization held at Soreng



SUMMIT REPORT

SORENG, 28 JUN:

A two-hour sensitization programme on the Pradhan Mantri Matru Vadaya Yojana was held at B.Ed. College Soreng's auditorium hall today.

The programme was organised by the Soreng Rural ICDS project and focused on empowerment women. The program also

addressed the need to nurture children with full opportunities for growth and development in a safe environment.

The function was attended by area MLA Aditya Golay as chief guest accompanied by Zilla Adhyaksha, Devika Subba, Additional Director Normit Lepcha, Zilla members and panchayat presidents.

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PLOT FOR SALE:

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

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CRITERIA - Academic qualification of minimum higher secondary pass

Complete yoga syllabus will be provided by SYVC Gangtok absolutely free of cost. After one year of basic training and service (karma yoga)/ volunteering in the Centre, the candidate would be sent for Yoga Teacher Training Course at Shivananda Yoga Ashram. After TTC, the candidate would be appointed on part time basis at the Yoga Centre in Gangtok. College students can also apply. If required, food and accommodation would be provided.

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A vacant plot measuring 0.38 Ha. (16552.80 sq - ft) is for sale at Amdo Golai (above the main road), Gangtok. For more information please contact - 9717191985/9474651223.

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Contact: 9933443442/9800500696.

GENERAL INFORMATION

This is for general information of all concerned that Hotel Parasol Residency, Panihouse, Deorali East Sikkim shall remain closed for a period of six months for carrying out necessary repairs. All concerned tour operators and clients are requested to refrain from booking or deal with any sort with regard to Hotel Parasol Residency, Panihouse, Deorali, East Sikkim.

Mr. Subash Lama

Proprietor

Hotel Parasol Residency, Panihouse, Deorali, East Sikkim

BUILDING FOR SALE

A 5 storied building with 3 floor completed having a land area of 30x70 at DABUWA, Melli road (2km from Namchi) is for sale. Rate reasonable. Interested party please contact: **6296370905, 9733284142, 8597088755.**

Farewell ceremony held for three HoDs



GANGTOK, 28 JUN (IPR): A farewell ceremony in honor of three outgoing Heads of Departments, Arvind Kumar, IFS, OSD- Energy & Power Department, Government of Sikkim/ Executive Chairman Teesta-Urja Limited; Samten Dolma, IAS, Secretary-Ecclesiastical Department, Government of Sikkim and Mohammad Shahid,

PCE cum Secretary, Roads & Bridges Department, Government of Sikkim was held in the conference hall of the New Secretariat at Tashiling, today.

The Chief Secretary, A.K.Shrivastava chaired the ceremony. The Additional Chief Secretaries, Principal Secretaries, Commissioner cum Secretaries and Heads of the various Departments

were present.

The Commissioner Cum Secretary, DOP, Tenzing Gelak, gave a detailed account of their contribution to the State Government and their various postings and administrative responsibilities since their date of joining.

The Additional Chief Secretary, S.C.Gupta shared his personal experiences

of working with each of the outgoing HoDs and their contribution in the various tasks and assignments, wishing them a happy and healthy post retirement life.

The three outgoing HoDs expressed their heartfelt gratitude in having got a chance in serving the State Government and stated that their journey has

been tremendously fruitful and rewarding.

The Chief Secretary thanked each one of them for their selfless service, stating that they carved a niche for themselves and have contributed immensely to the State of Sikkim. He congratulated them on their long and illustrious career and wished them good health and happiness.

Another BJP leader attacks municipal officer in MP

SATNA (MP), JUN 28 (PTI): A BJP leader and his supporters allegedly attacked the chief municipal officer of a civic body in Satna district of Madhya Pradesh Friday, leaving him seriously injured, just two days after party MLA Akash Vijayvargiya was arrested for assaulting an official with a cricket bat.

Ramnagar Nagar Panchayat president Sushil Patel and his supporters allegedly attacked the civic body's chief municipal officer D Soni and a few corporators, police said. Patel, however, alleged that it was Soni who attacked him on the direction of a Congress leader.

Both sides filed cases of assault against each other, police said. No one has been arrested yet. CCTV footage of

the incident was being examined and the guilty will face action according to law, said district superintendent of police Riyaz Iqbal.

According to police sources, Patel reached the Nagar Panchayat's office with more than six persons and attacked the officer and a few corporators with sticks.

A profusely bleeding Soni was first taken to Ramnagar Primary Health Centre and then to the district hospital, and his condition was stated to be serious, the sources said.

According to sources in the Panchayat, Patel had threatened to beat up Soni at a meeting Thursday.

Akash Vijayvargiya is in judicial custody for assaulting the civic official with a cricket bat in Indore while opposing demolition of a house.

DPCC cracks down on 13 illegal polluting units in North Delhi villages

NEW DELHI, JUN 28 (PTI): The Delhi Pollution Control Committee (DPCC) has sealed 13 polluting units operating without permission from authorities in rural areas of North Delhi. The pollution control body has also imposed a fine of Rs 11.42 crore on these units.

Taking cognisance of complaints received against illegal polluting units operating in Jindpur, Mukhmelpur villages in North Delhi, the NGT had asked the DPCC and the sub-divisional magistrate to carry out an inspection and take appropriate action. During the inspection, officials found that 13 illegal units had been engaging in dyeing, annealing, oil-quenching, electroplating, manufacturing of plywood, and packing of drinking water in these villages. These units had

been operating in large plots of more than 1,000 square metres and had a huge pollution potential, a DPCC official said.

"Such industrial activities are not allowed in villages and the units had been operating without any permission from the authorities or consent from the DPCC. All these 13 units have been sealed," the official said. Illegal borewells at these units have been sealed and electricity supply disconnected. The units have been asked to pay environment compensation amounting to Rs 11.42 crore, he said.

"Cases are also being filed against the owners of the lands, where the units were operating, for gross abuse of environmental laws and endangering the health of the villagers," the official said.

Minister inspects under construction State Museum



GANGTOK, 28 JUN (IPR): Minister, Cultural Affairs & Heritage Department, Samdup Lepcha, visited the State Archives and the upcoming State Museum for inspection and meeting with the concerned departments today.

Many pending

issues were discussed and the Minister assured full cooperation from his end.

He further directed the contractor and Department officials that there should be no more delay in work and that construction of the State Museum be completed

by December 2019.

The meeting was attended by Secretary, CA&HD, Vidya Subba, Special Secretary CA&HD, museum contractor, museum consultant and all concerned officers of the Cultural Affairs & Heritage and Building & Housing Departments.

Trump hails 'very, very good relationship' in talks with Putin



OSAKA, JUN 28 (AFP): US President Donald Trump on Friday hailed his "very, very good relationship" with Russia's President Vladimir Putin as the two leaders held talks on the sidelines of the G20 meeting.

"It's a great honour to be with President Putin," said Trump, who last held face-to-face talks with the Russian leader in Helsinki in 2018.

"We have a very, very good relationship," Trump said.

The keenly awaited meeting between the pair has been overshadowed by a probe into Trump's relations with Russia and the controversy that

erupted the last time he held talks with the Kremlin leader.

Asked before travelling to Japan about the planned talks, Trump told reporters the content of the discussions was "none of your business".

"I'll have a very good conversation with him," Trump told reporters at the White House. "What I say to him is none of your business." Trump has been dogged throughout his presidency by allegations of suspicious ties to Russia.

A major probe led by special prosecutor Robert Mueller found there was an organised Russian campaign to

influence the 2016 election won by Trump. It found contacts between Russian operatives and Trump's election campaign, but no evidence of a joint plot.

Trump has characterised Mueller's findings as a complete exoneration. However, he remains under fire from opponents for what they say is his consistently opaque relationship with Putin.

In Helsinki last year, Trump refused at a joint press conference with Putin to criticise Russian interference in the 2016 election and said that he believed the Russian leader's denials.

Circular row: Mamata says wording a "technical matter", scheme to benefit all

KOLKATA, JUN 28 (PTI): Facing flak from the opposition, West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee was on the defensive on Friday over the circular on construction of dining hall in state-run schools having more than 70 per cent Muslim students, saying it was intended to conform to the Centre's guidelines on use of funds.

Asserting that the direction was not aimed at dividing students in any way, she said the circular was worded in the manner to figure out whether minority students are in greater numbers so that "we could channelise Minority Welfare department funds into this scheme" and it was meant to benefit all.

"That's the government of India guideline. We are following that. It's a technical matter, nothing more," Banerjee told

reporters in her state assembly chamber.

"The idea is to pool in funds from different departments so that the scheme can be effectively implemented. It was not supposed to divide students in any way," she clarified.

This was supposed to be for schools which do not have dining halls and where students have to eat outside under the sun. It is meant for all, she stated.

The circular was issued by the Cooch Behar district magistrate office (minority section) on June 25, asking the district inspector of schools to send list of names of state-run and state-aided schools having more than 70 per cent minority students by Friday, for sending a proposal for construction of dining halls for mid-day meals in schools.

The opposition BJP used the issue to attack the TMC government.

West Bengal BJP president Dilip Ghosh said Mamata Banerjee government is only interested in working for the development of Muslims in the state. The decision also drew criticism from other opposition parties in the state- Congress and CPI(M).

The TMC, however, termed the allegations as baseless and defended the decision.

"I had no knowledge of this. This was an old circular which had already been withdrawn. I think some errant officer dredged out an old circular and issued it without the government's knowledge," the chief minister was quoted as saying initially by the TMC.

Sources said the chief minister later spoke to officials who told her that the circular was only for Cooch Behar and clarified the reasons for issuing it.

Bengal govt had looked at junior doctors' strike from a humanitarian angle : Mamata



KOLKATA, JUN 28 (PTI): Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee Friday said that though other states had taken strict action and invoked ESMA when doctors called for strikes, the West Bengal government had looked at the junior doctors' strike earlier this month from a humanitarian angle.

Banerjee told the assembly that she had preferred to solve the situation through love.

She also mentioned the invoking of the Essential Services Maintenance Act (ESMA) by the then chief minister Narendra Modi in Gujarat.

"Our government looked at the doctor's strike from a humanitarian angle. Such problems had also taken place in other states and they had taken action," she said and mentioned the BJD government's invoking the ESMA in 2008.

"If we can solve something through love then there is nothing like it. We can at any time take up disciplinary action but I believe no

punishment is bigger than giving love.

That is the reason we tried to bring people closer through love," Banerjee said at the state Assembly.

"Not only was ESMA imposed in Gujarat, around 150 doctors were arrested," she said referring to the incident in July 2009.

Junior government doctors in West Bengal had staged a seven-day-long protest since June 10 which had paralysed medical services in all the state-run hospitals to press for their security after two of them were assaulted at the state-run Nil Ratan Sircar Medical College and Hospital by the family members of a patient who had died.

Banerjee had to intervene to end the strike and ensure that the junior doctors' demands were met.

State Minister for Health Chandrima Bhattacharyya said he state government has taken preventive measures to prevent such assaults on doctors. Answering a question by leader

of Opposition Abdul Mannan on whether the state government would provide necessary security to private hospitals if they sought it, Banerjee said her government has been providing it.

"Private hospitals run independently and have their own security system. It's the responsibility of the state government to help them, which we have done and will be doing if they want. After all law and order is a state subject. We want the private and government hospitals to serve medical assistance with care," she said.

Banerjee also stressed the need to raise the awareness of patients opting for hospital treatment and their kin that they cannot assault doctors.

At the same time she said, "We have to do some PR while delivering the news of death of a patient to the family members and relatives," she said.

"We are trying to do some counselling for both the patients and the doctors," Banerjee added.

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Forests Cannot be Compensated

Because, saplings cannot replace full-grown trees

The Supreme Court, hearing a challenge to proposed chopping down of trees by the thousands in the National Capital Region of Delhi, questioned how saplings could replace full grown trees. This wondering aloud was in response to the Delhi Government's claim that the removal of trees will be redressed through compensatory afforestation. This is not the first time that the Supreme Court has questioned the concept and practicality of the compensatory afforestation concept. And not without reason either, because most times, this dodge has not even delivered as a fig leaf to the recklessness with which development bulldozes environment and rides roughshod over such niceties as conservation and nurture.

To begin with, compensatory afforestation is not a very scientific option. It does not take a degree in forestry or environmental sciences to deduce that a forest lost cannot be recreated elsewhere as compensatory afforestation seeks to achieve. Frighteningly, even though based on such dodgy logic, even this fig leaf has not been painted with any seriousness in our country. For a nation that has frequent non-forestry needs for forest tracts and has diverted these substantially since the 1950's, the babudom and political combine stand exposed for their short-sightedness and disinterest in the fact that the Supreme Court had to intervene first in the year 2001 after it noticed that even though hundreds of crores were received for compensatory afforestation, there was no appropriate scheme for the disbursement of these funds, no codified guidelines on how compensatory afforestation should be directed. Given how even very specific environmental safeguards are routinely co-opted, it is anybody's guess what our country received by way of compensatory afforestation till the Supreme Court was invoked and the free-for-all stalled.

To get an idea of how incomprehensibly compensatory afforestation funds were utilized, environmental activists from neighbouring Darjeeling point out how the West Bengal government diverted forest lands in Kalimpong sub-division and undertook compensatory afforestation in the plains of Jalpaiguri district!

Back in 2001, the Supreme Court had specified the guidelines and stipulated the checks and balances on how this fund should be utilized. The apex court has also stipulated scrutiny by CAG auditors. At least someone was taking environmental concerns seriously. What is necessary to understand is that compensatory afforestation is a very imperfect science, one that is necessitated by the still disoriented approach to development which looks at 'exploiting' resources instead of harnessing assets. Worse still for the ecological balance of the country, decades of lethargy in the planning process have led to a situation where environmental concerns will be forced to take a backseat [despite whatever the MoEF claims] in the face of energy shortfalls that cannot be compensated if environmental prudence takes prominence. The Supreme Court observations are thus welcome in that at least the tokenisms will be delivered in full, and in some cases, maybe even effectively. But the question which still hangs unaddressed is how saplings in a different location can replace full grown trees in locations where they obviously thrived?

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Why some rebel groups force kids to fight: it depends on how they are funded

ROOS VAN DER HAER, BETH ELISE WHITAKER & CHRISTOPHER MICHAEL FAULKNER
theconversation.com

To sustain their operations, armed groups must have a steady supply of recruits. These serve to fill their fighting ranks and to replace those lost to injury, death, or desertion.

Most rebel groups around the world rely initially on volunteers but resort to some form of forced recruitment when they can no longer attract enough voluntary recruits. This strategy is particularly prevalent among rebel groups that recruit children. But the extent of forcible recruitment of children differs across rebel groups and conflicts and often evolves over the course of a conflict.

The topic of child soldiering has garnered significant attention in academic research. But few studies have considered why rebel organisations resort to the forcible recruitment of children. In cases when research has been done, a prevalent assumption has been that coercive recruitment is a "cheap alternative" to voluntary recruitment and a strategy that "rebel groups will choose to employ ... if given the opportunity".

But is this really the case? In our recent work we tried to understand why some rebel groups forcibly recruit large numbers of children while others don't. To explain this variation, we examined a factor that's often overlooked: the influence of a rebel group's funding. Specifically, we looked at whether rebels profited from natural resources.

To explore the relationship between rebels' funding sources and forcible recruitment, we looked at more than 150 rebel groups operating around the globe, from South America through Africa to Southeast Asia. We collected information on the level of forcible recruitment of children by these groups. For source data, we relied primarily on independent reports from organisations including Child Soldiers International, the International Labour Organisation, Human Rights Watch, and various independent news and academic outlets.

We made a clear distinction between the broader use of child soldiers, a significant portion of whom volunteer to join armed groups, and those forced into fighting for rebel armies.

THE ROLE OF RESOURCES

Why would natural resource funding influence a rebel group's forced recruitment of children? We offer several plausible explanations. First, we argue that rebel groups that do not profit from natural resources are often more dependent on civilian support to sustain their operations. Lacking a steady funding stream, these groups tend to rely more on local people to contribute money and supplies (like food and water) to their rebellions. Not surprisingly, such groups generally refrain from abusing civilians in order to maintain this support.

In contrast, we suggest that when groups successfully profit from natural resources, they become less dependent on the local population. As a result, they tend to be less accountable to local communities and suffer fewer costs for abusing civilians. A group that illustrates this point is the Lord's Resistance Army in northern Uganda. It started to forcibly recruit many children only after solidifying its economic security.

Second, previous research has shown that resource-rich rebel groups are more likely to attract a higher proportion of "opportunistic" recruits who are primarily motivated by a desire for personal benefit. In seeking to maximise their own personal gains, they may be reluctant to share group assets with other members. We contend that in such instances, children become prime targets as they can easily be excluded from the equitable division of assets.

Third, rebels that profit from natural resources generally want to sustain and even increase revenues. But they may need additional labour to do so. Coercive recruitment strategies can help them do this. This is particularly true in situations where the natural resources being exploited don't require skills or equipment. Children can be especially useful in the exploitation of lootable resources, which generally are easier and cheaper to exploit and have low barriers to access. They include commodities such as alluvial diamonds, gems, and drugs like cannabis or coca.

WHAT WE FOUND

We combined our new data on the level of forcible child recruitment by rebel groups with information on whether these groups profited from natural resources. The Rebel Contraband Dataset provides yearly information on rebels' exploitation of over 20 natural resources ranging from charcoal

and diamonds to timber and oil.

Analysing data across a global sample of rebel groups active between 1990 and 2012, our analysis showed that the probability of forced child recruitment increased by 41% when a group profited from natural resources as compared to groups that didn't.

We also found robust evidence for the linkage between forcible recruitment of children and the exploitation of lootable natural resources. Rebel groups exploiting lootable resources were 27% more likely to forcibly recruit children than groups with only non-lootable or no natural resource funding.

The case of the Revolutionary United Front in Sierra Leone offers an illustrative example. The group forcibly recruited children to mine and smuggle diamonds in addition to fighting. Another example is the rebel group M23 in the Democratic Republic of Congo. It forcibly recruited children to aid in the exploitation of valuable minerals including gold.

DIGGING DEEPER

Overall, our findings underscore the importance of identifying rebel revenue streams in efforts to predict which groups will engage in the forcible recruitment of children. Given that resource-exploiting rebels are significantly more likely to forcibly recruit children, policymakers seeking to mitigate child soldiering may want to focus first on those groups.

The international community can also continue to make it more challenging for rebels to profit from the commodities they exploit, particularly those for which they may need children. An example is the Kimberley Process, a certification scheme that regulates the rough diamond trade in an effort to stop the flow of conflict diamonds. Initiatives like this have helped inhibit the flow of conflict diamonds and curtail rebels' demand for labourers, including children.

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Libra: Facebook's cryptocurrency will not help the billions of people currently excluded from banks

KAMINI GUPTA
theconversation.com

When Facebook unveiled its new digital currency libra, it explicitly said the initiative was intended to address the problems faced by the world's unbanked: the 1.7 billion people without a bank account. As well as facing inconvenience, these people generally pay over the odds for financial services like bank transfers or overdrafts.

This is a pretty big potential market for Facebook so it's not surprising that it would target the opportunity. But could libra really transform access to financial services for those who are currently excluded? There are reasons to raise serious doubts.

Across the world, the main reasons people give for not holding a bank account is that they don't have enough money, don't see the need for an account, find it too expensive, or another family member already has one. Not having the right documentation is also a barrier, as is distrust in the financial system.

But the specific barriers to financial inclusion vary significantly by region and are usually a combination of social and economic factors. For instance, while cost is a big barrier in Latin America, lack

of documentation is the big issue in Zimbabwe and Philippines.

This makes it difficult for any one intervention to be a solution to this huge group of people. Worryingly, the Facebook "white paper" that outlines libra does not really engage with these problems or say how it plans to overcome them.

TRUST AND FINANCIAL LITERACY

People's trust in institutions can be very important in influencing the extent to which they use their services, as I have found from my own work into microfinance, which I have presented at conferences but is yet to be published in an academic journal.

I have found that people are more likely to choose something familiar over something novel. Since libra will be a new currency relying on digital wallets and built on blockchain online ledger technology, it is not short of novelties. Inspiring trust is therefore likely to be a major challenge.

And simply signing someone up to an account – be it a bank account or a digital wallet – is only part of the financial inclusion challenge.

In India, 190m people still do not have bank accounts, but the percentage of the population who do have accounts has steadily increased to 80%. In 2017, however, nearly half of

all bank accounts in the country had seen no activity over the whole of the previous year. One of the reasons is financial literacy, which remains low both in India and many other developing countries. Many people in India have said they are simply unaware of the different benefits of a bank account, such as overdraft facilities or credit schemes.

As many as 62% of the world's unbanked have received only a primary-level education or less, and in poorer countries the proportion is almost certainly going to be higher. Expecting such people to make complex currency conversions into a new virtual currency is asking a lot.

In the first place, there is a need for financial literacy measures and initiatives aimed at motivating them to use the services available. Without this additional support, there is a strong risk that Facebook will boast large numbers of sign-ups but very low rates of transactions from the people who are most in need.

BIG WORLD

Only a few days since Facebook's announcement, libra has faced strong pushback from regulators and policymakers around the world. There is much concern about this proposed shift of power from central banks to a private corporation.

But aside from questions about the ethics of data privacy or the creation of a supranational currency, libra faces an important practical question. On the one hand, it is not clear how a model such as libra, where there will presumably be little or no physical presence in many countries, would interact with and adhere to local regulations.

On the other hand, if it does conform to the local standards of each country, it is unclear how it will overcome challenges like signing people up and strict documentation requirements. Will it really be able to serve the unbanked better than local providers who are used to the challenges in that specific market already?

Entrepreneurs and businesses can either start with a problem and think of the best way to solve it; or they can start with a solution and find the biggest and best problem it might solve. I'm not convinced that libra is a good move in either direction. Facebook either has a huge amount of work to do to adapt its solution to fit the problem better, or it needs to redefine the problem that it is trying to fix.

[The writer is Lecturer in International Business and Comparative Management, King's College London]

CBI books brother of former Arunachal CM in corruption case



NEW DELHI, JUN 28 (PTI): The CBI has booked Nabam Hari, brother of former Arunachal Pradesh chief minister Nabam Tuki, his wife and some PWD officers for alleged corruption in government contracts, officials said Friday.

The case pertains to contracts handed by Tuki as the PWD minister in the state to his relatives for “selfish gains without inviting tenders”, the CBI has alleged.

The agency had carried out a preliminary enquiry, on the orders of the Gauhati High Court, into one such work re-

lated to construction of a Kendriya Vidyalaya building in Umroi cantonment, Shillong worth Rs 1.23 crore, the officials said.

It is alleged that several contracts were given to Mary Associate, a firm owned by Tuki’s sister-in-law, Nabam Mary, which was maintaining a current account in the United Bank of India in which her husband Hari is one of the nominees.

The contracts were given between 2005-07, the officials said.

The high court on November 16, 2017 had ordered the CBI to carry out

preliminary enquiry into 11 contracts followed by regular cases where prima facie evidence of corruption is detected.

The work in the Kendriya Vidyalaya building construction was done in two phases with contract for first phase given to the company in 2005.

During the preliminary enquiry, the CBI found that the work was awarded to the company through 25 work orders each below Rs 3 lakh totalling to Rs 63.92 lakh. In addition, another six orders totalling Rs 5.15 lakh were also given.

“It was found that

Arunachal Pradesh PWD followed CPWD manual and does not have its own manual which says that in urgent matters works can be awarded without call of tender if the value of work is below three lakh,” the CBI said.

If its above Rs one lakh the work can be sanctioned by superintendent engineer while below it can be sanctioned by executive engineer, it said.

The PWD officials broke a big order into several smaller orders to avoid call for tender, the CBI alleged.

The firm of Tuki’s sister-in-law was not registered as a civil contractor with PWD, Arunachal Pradesh and did not have requisite licence. It was given trading licence to run business of electrical goods, hardware, motor parts, lubricants and agri-equipment.

After successful completion of the first phase, the company sought second phase of tender worth Rs 90.46 lakh for the construction of 12 staff quarters to be awarded to it.

This work was awarded to them in the form of 27 orders totalling Rs 73.53 lakh keeping the tab of Rs 3 lakh to avoid call of tender.

Apart from Mary Associate, which was a major beneficiary, some works were also given to other companies, they said.

The agency also found that Mary is the owner of the company and nominee of company’s current account is her husband.

Besides Hari and Mary, the agency also booked the then Superintendent Engineer Kuru Sera and Executive Engineer Teba Tedir.

Skill-based trainings to restructure livelihood activities in Nagaland

KOHIMA, JUN 28 (PTI): With 81 per cent of the workforce in eastern Nagaland engaged in agricultural sector and only 18.9 per cent in secondary and tertiary sectors, as per 2011 Census, it is important to restructure livelihood activities for removing such “glaring” gaps, a government official said.

Addressing the valedictory programme of a capacity building training programme here, the official said, according to 2011 Census, 52.7 per cent of the workforce in the state is engaged in agricultural sector and 47.3 per cent in secondary and tertiary sectors.

“With such glaring critical gaps, it is important to restructure the livelihood activities with various skill-based trainings and ensure that the unemployed youth get gainful employment,” he said.

The training, conducted by the Department of Underdeveloped Areas (DUDA) in the last two months, ended on Thursday.

Speaking at the programme, Advisor for DUDA, N Bonkhao Konyak said, “unemployment is not only an area of con-



cern in Nagaland but it is also a challenging issue in the country.”

The capacity building training was organised with an aim of inculcating entrepreneurial skills among the youth of underprivileged sections of society.

With the state government reaching its saturation point in the employment sector, the only window of opportunity was to boost entrepreneurial activities and streamline the job roles according to the training, one has received through capacity building programmes, he said.

The DUDA in partnership with the National Institute of Electronics and Information Technology (NIELIT) has set up four computer centres in Tuensang, Mon, Lon-

gleng and Kiphire district headquarters, he said.

Congratulating the trainees, Konyak encouraged them to go back to their areas, open small units, and be an inspiration to others while making an earning with the certificate, tools and equipment along with the seed money provided by the department.

He also said that the department would be closely monitoring their activities to ensure that the training programme had contributed towards improving the socio-economic condition of eastern Nagaland.

Thirty male participants underwent hands-on training on repair and maintenance of power supply, inverter and UPS, while culinary skills were imparted to 24 girls.

Tripura govt increases daily wage under MGNREGA by Rs 15 a day

AGARTALA, JUN 28 (PTI): The Tripura government has increased the daily wage rate under MGNREGA scheme from Rs 177 to Rs 192 per day.

The government claimed that it has generated more man-days under the rural employment guarantee scheme in last one year than done by the erstwhile Left Front ministry.

The BJP-IPFT coalition government assumed office in Tripura in March last year by ending the two-and-a-half decade old communist rule.

Deputy Chief Minister, Jishnu Devvarma, on Friday told reporters

that during the left front government’s tenure in 2017-2018 financial years altogether 28.46 lakh man-days were created, but in the last fiscal (2018-2019) it increased to 34.67 lakh.

The opposition Left Front always blamed us that we shranked the rural job during our tenure, but the facts remain that in our tenure it has increased, Devvarma, who also holds the Finance and Rural Development portfolios, said.

In the first four months of current financial year altogether 56.02 lakh man-days were created and in the current

financial year the government has fixed a target of more than three crore man-days, Secretary of state Rural Development department, Soumya Gupta said.

She said the Union government released Rs 121.96 crore this year for MGNREGA wages, out of which Rs 104.52 crore has been spent.

The opposition CPM earlier alleged that many people from indigenous communities in Dhalai had fled to neighbouring Bangladesh for collection of forest produces in the wake of severe food crisis and lack of jobs under MGNREGA in May this year.

Japanese Encephalitis claims 6 lives in Assam’s Jorhat

JORHAT (ASSAM), JUN 28 (PTI): At least six persons have died of Japanese Encephalitis (JE) during the last fortnight in Assam’s Jorhat district, a health department official said on Friday.

Ten other affected persons are now undergoing treatment at the Jorhat Medical College Hospital.

Four JE patients with high fever were admitted to the hospital and they died, while two

others were brought to the facility when they were already dead, Joint Director of Health and Family Welfare Dr Amrit Saikia said.

The health department has started spreading insecticides in the JE affected areas of the district such as Nakachari, Borhulla, Tipomiya and Soyocotta tea estate.

Medicines and mosquito nets are also being distributed among the people there.

Woman declared foreigner, sent to detention centre



JORHAT, JUN 28 (PTI): A woman, identified as Somiran Bibi, has been declared a foreigner by the Jorhat Foreigner Tribunal in Assam and sent to the detention centre here, official sources said on Friday.

The border police of Jorhat had registered a case against the 40-year-old woman in 2006 suspecting her to be an illegal migrant, but she remained untraced all these years.

The police finally traced her to Faisali area under Jorhat police station where she was living with her husband Israel Khan, originally hailing from Bihar.

Bibi was produced before the Tribunal on

Wednesday and sent to detention centre Thursday, officials said.

Bibi claimed that she is daughter of Lokman Ali of Kortimari village under Gossaigaon Police station in Kokrajhar district.

Assam has about 100 Foreigners Tribunals which are quasi-judicial body to determine citizenship and declare people as foreigners to be sent to the six detention camps across the state before they are deported.

In Assam, the National Register of Citizens is being currently updated under the monitoring of the Supreme Court and the final list is scheduled to be released on July 31 next.

Tripura CM congratulates chess wonder Arshiya for winning gold



AGARTALA, JUN 28 (PTI): Tripura Chief Minister Biplab Kumar Deb has congratulated Arshiya Das, the 8-year-old chess wonder of the state, for clinching a gold medal for India at the Asian School Chess Championship, 2019 organized at Uzbekistan. You are a pride of our state and I wish you all the best for your

won a bronze medal in the tournament.

“Congratulations Arshiya for winning Bronze Medal (under 9 girls category) in Asian School Chess Championship, 2019 organized at Uzbekistan. You are a pride of our state and I wish you all the best for your

brilliant future,” Deb said in a tweet on Thursday.

In another tweet on the same day, Deb said, “She has also secured first position and won gold medal in the Blitz event of the same tournament.” Arshiya is currently the chess champion in the country in the under 9 category.

Row over WB govt directive to build dining hall in state-run schools with over 70% minority students

KOLKATA, JUN 28 (PTI): A row erupted over the West Bengal government’s directive for construction of dining rooms for mid-day meals in state-run schools having more than 70 per cent minority students, with the BJP and other opposition parties accusing the Trinamool Congress of creating a communal divide in the state.

However, senior TMC leader and Minister of State for Minority Affairs, Giasuddin Mollah dismissed the allegations as baseless and defended the decision by saying the ongoing project will benefit all students.

West Bengal BJP president Dilip Gosh uploaded on Twitter a copy of the directive by Cooch Behar district magistrate office (minority section) on Tuesday asking the district inspector of schools to send the names of government-run and government-aided schools having more than 70 per cent minority students by Friday, for sending a proposal to construct

dining halls for mid-day meals in schools.

“The West Bengal Government has issued a circular whereby it has directed the school authorities where 70 per cent or more students are from the Muslim community to reserve a dining hall with seating arrangements for them,” he tweeted.

“Why this discrimination between the students on the basis of religion? Is there some other mala fide motive behind this segregation? Another conspiracy?” Ghosh asked.

Drawing flak over the issue, the ruling TMC initially issued a statement quoting Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee as saying that it was an old circular which has already been withdrawn, but later said they will issue a fresh clarification.

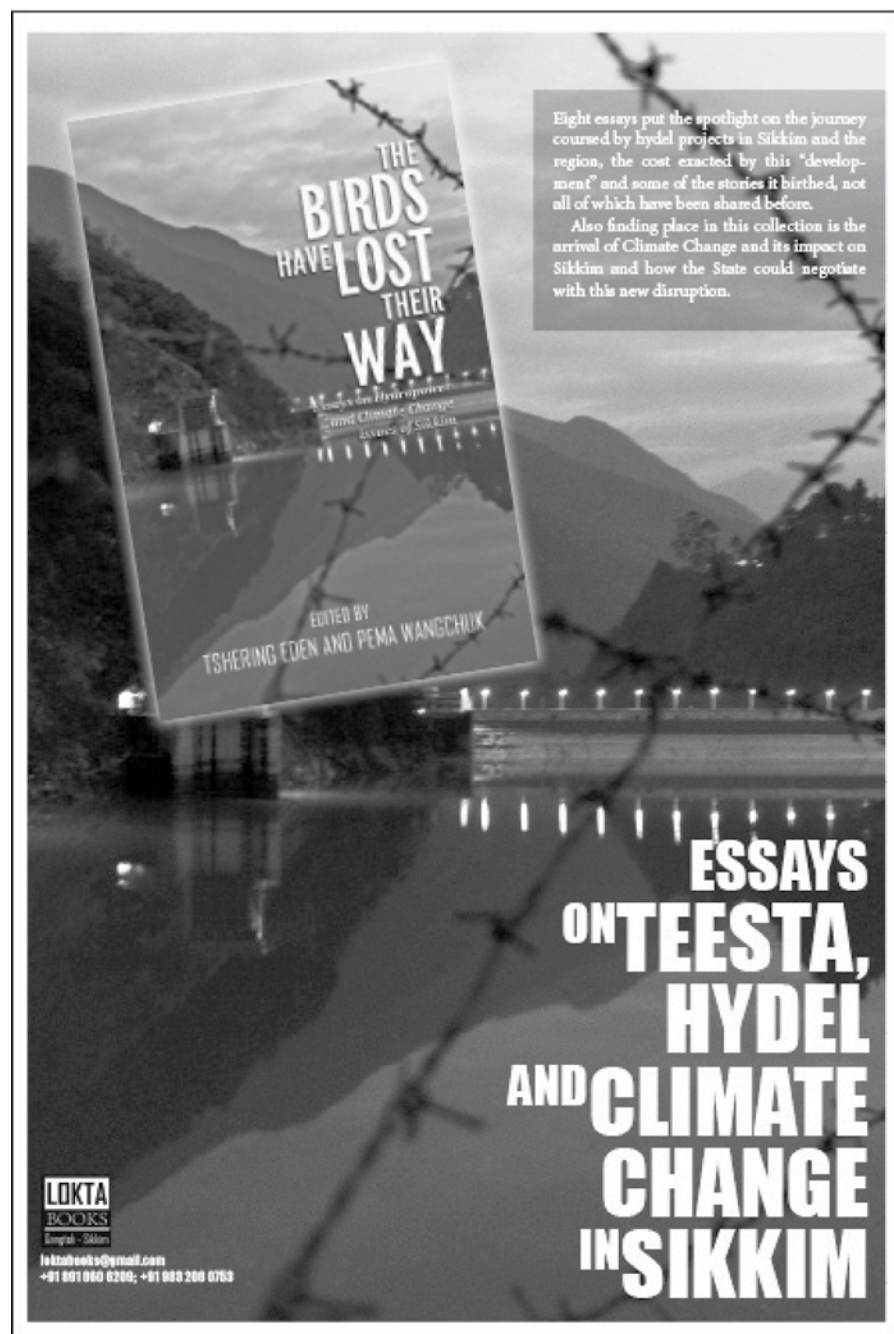
However, Minister Giasuddin Mollah, said here, “Our department is working to upgrade infrastructure of minority-dominated general institutions for the overall development of all

students.” “The dining halls for mid-day meals will benefit all students, and not just Muslims. The funds has been sanctioned so we sought for a list of such schools.”

Leader of Opposition in the state Assembly and senior Congress leader Abdul Mannan criticised the state government over the order and said it cannot just segregate students on the basis of religion. Senior CPI(M) leader Sujan Chakraborty said, “Students cannot be discriminated on the basis of religion. If a dining hall is being created it should be for all. We condemn such move.”

Ghosh alleged that the Mamata Banerjee government is only interested in working for the development of Muslims in the state.

“The TMC government is only interested in working for the development of the minorities, in order to secure its vote bank,” he said and asked, “What wrong has the Hindu students done that it can’t avail the facility of dining halls.”



Brazil exorcize Paraguay penalty demons to reach Copa semis

PORTO ALEGRE, BRAZIL, JUNE 28 (AFP): Gabriel Jesus scored the winning spot-kick in a tense penalty shoot-out as Brazil exorcized their demons to beat Paraguay and reach the Copa America semi-finals.

Twice before in 2011 and 2015 Paraguay had beaten Brazil at this same stage on penalties at the South American extravaganza.

Willian came closest to scoring in normal time for Brazil when he hit the post as Paraguay held out for a 0-0 draw for more than 40 minutes following the dismissal of Fabian Balbuena for a professional foul on Roberto Firmino on Thursday.

Brazilian media had been almost in a state of paranoia before the match recalling the painful memories from Argentina in 2011 and Chile four years later when Paraguay produced stubborn defensive displays before snatching victory in the spot-kick lottery.

But it wasn't to be this time as Brazil goalkeeper Alisson saved Gustavo Gomez's opening spot-kick at the Gremio Arena in Porto Alegre.

Although Firmino dragged his effort wide, Derlis Gonzalez also fired past the post allowing Jesus, who missed a penalty in Brazil's last match, to be the match-winner.

The tournament hosts will face either perennial rivals Argentina or Venezuela in Tuesday's semi-final in Belo



Horizonte. Brazil started brightly and produced a beautiful passing move in the fourth minute as local favorite Everton drove in off the left wing and found Dani Alves on the edge of the area, with the full-back slipping the ball on to Firmino, whose weak shot was straight at goalkeeper Roberto Fernandez.

Gremio forward Everton's popularity was clear in his home stadium as fans wildly cheered his every touch.

But the game quickly settled into the expected pattern, with Brazil dominating possession and playing countless passes while a well-drilled Paraguay doggedly held their shape and looked

to counter at pace with direct runners.

Brazil lacked a cutting edge and even when Philippe Coutinho seemingly played in Firmino behind the defence following a Richard Sanchez mistake, the Liverpool forward was easily muscled off the ball.

The best chance of the first quarter fell to Paraguay as Hernan Perez found Gonzalez unmarked at back post but Alisson saved his near post shot. It was turgid fare on offer to the Porto Alegre crowd, who started a slow clap just after the half hour.

Brazil reporters had asked coach Tite before the game if he was worried about fouls, which

he replied were part of the game. But three Paraguayan players were booked before half-time for overly robust challenges. It wasn't until five minutes from half time that Coutinho got in behind the defence on the left and fired in a shot from an angle that Fernandez saved comfortably.

-BRAZIL JEERED AGAIN- Predictably, Brazil were booed off at half-time, for the third time in four matches. Tite wasted no time in making a change, but it was a curious one swapping left-back Felipe Luis for Alex Sandro.

Neat interplay saw Firmino tee up Coutinho just outside the box

but his precise finish was easily saved again. Brazil had changed tactic and were driving more purposefully at the heart of the defence, with Arthur flashing a shot over the bar.

It paid dividends on 54 minutes when Firmino won a free-kick on the edge of the penalty area -- overturned from the original decision of a penalty by VAR -- and Balbuena was shown a red card for a professional foul.

Dani Alves's fierce low free-kick was deflected wide, though. Brazil started to pull Paraguay's overworked defenders out of position and Arthur forced Fernandez into a div-

ing save before Jesus dragged an effort wide.

With Paraguay unable to pose any threat Tite withdrew his defensive midfielder Allan and threw on winger Willian, with Jesus pushed into the middle alongside Firmino.

Almost immediately, Jesus missed a gilt-edged chance from eight yards out before Firmino headed a Marquinhos cross wide.

Tite went for broke, bringing on attacking midfielder Lucas Paqueta for full-back Alves and it almost worked but Willian saw his low left foot shot cannon back off the post sending the match into a tense penalty shoot-out.

ATK signs Aussie forward Williams

KOLKATA, JUN 28 (PTI): Former Indian Super League champions ATK Friday roped in Australian striker David Williams, who played for A-League club Welling-ton Phoenix.

“His pace and technique will be valuable to us. He also brings variety to the squad since he can play on either side of the wings as well. His understanding with teammate Roy Krishna will be crucial for us,” head coach Antonio Lopez Habas said. The 31-year-old will also reunite with his fellow teammate Roy Krishna in the forward lineup of the red and whites, who finished sixth last season.

Williams and Krishna

shared 30 goals between them in the A-League last season with the former scoring 11 times in 27 matches.

“I am absolutely delighted that I will be able to play alongside my friend Roy Krishna. Hopefully, together as a team, we will be able to win the title and create memories,” Williams said.

Williams made his debut for Queensland Roar and went onto play for several A-League clubs, including North Queensland Fury, Sydney FC, Melbourne City and Welling-ton Phoenix.

Williams has also represented his country at the U-20 FIFA World Youth Championship.

Lahiri starts with bogey-free 69 in first round of Rocket Mortgage Classic

DETROIT, JUN 28 (PTI): India's Anirban Lahiri carded a bogey-free first round of three-under 69 to make a decent start at the Rocket Mortgage Classic here.

The Indian golfer, who has not been able to get four good rounds together and is trying to gather some good finishes to make a dash for the Play-offs, hit 10 of 14 fairways and 11 of 18 greens in regulation.

Yet his 69 was good enough only for tied 55th as the first round produced a lot of low scores, including leader Nate Lashley's nine-under 63. Lashley, 36, got into the field after being the first alternate, and he leads

Nick Watney and Ryan Armour by one shot.

Lahiri, teeing off from the tenth, parred his entire first nine and then three more to have 12 pars in a row after first 12 holes. On the par-5 fourth, Lahiri's approach shot set him up for the birdie and he went to one-under.

At the 207-yard par-3 ninth, his final hole of the day, Lahiri hit his tee shot from 188 yards to 14-foot for a third birdie.

Lashley birdied the final three holes and five of the last six for a nine-under 63. It was the lowest score in his PGA TOUR career, a day after getting a spot at Detroit Golf Club as an alternate.

Young players thank Arrows for development

NEW DELHI, JUN 28 (PTI): Young footballers, including 2017 U-17 World Cup captain Amarjit Singh, hailed the Indian Arrows side for their development.

The senior national preparatory camp for the forthcoming Inter-continental Cup also has Anwar Ali and Narender Gahlot. All these youngsters have been a part of the Indian Arrows project, with Amarjit and Anwar having been part of the Indian U-17 World Cup team.

“Honestly speaking, the Arrows project has laid the foundation for us. It allowed us to bloom. I am just so grateful,” Amarjit, the first player born in the 21st century to represent the Blue Tigers, said.

“Whatever I have matured as a player, the entire credit goes to the Arrows.”

The Arrows coached by Floyd Pinto came up with an inspiring performance in the I-League 2018-19 to finish 8th among 11 teams. They are a developmental project team with 19, 18, 17, and even a 16-year old in their ranks.

Amarjit expressed that the “invaluable experience” with Arrows helped them “reap the benefits” in 2018-19.

“Had I joined any

other club, I would have struggled to get enough game-time. That would have hampered my growth as a player,” Amarjit, who had captained India in the FIFA U-17 World Cup mentioned.

“The glitz and glamour might be missing in our Arrows, but the results are there for all to see. We struggled in the first season, but gathered some invaluable experiences in the next.”

Narender Gahlot, a defender from the developmental squad who has been called up by national coach Igor Stimac maintained that “rubbing shoulders with foreigners and experienced Indian players” helped hone the skills immensely.

“Playing against quality foreigners, and experienced Indians helped me a lot. In the first season, we had little ideas about facing them. But we matured, learnt, and tried to implement in the second season,” Narender said.

Anwar Ali said, “My confidence as a player has grown immensely as I have been playing against sturdy and quality foreign recruits. I have earned a call-up to the India U23 national team and the senior team camp. Now, it's my duty to repay the faith that the coach has shown to me.

BFI ties up with IIS for five years



NEW DELHI, JUN 28 (PTI): The Boxing Federation of India (BFI) Friday tied up with the Inspire Institute of Sport (IIS), the sports training institute in Karnataka which has Abhinav Bindra and Sourav Ganguly on its Advisory Board, to ensure “state-of-the-art facilities for the pugilists.”

As part of this five-year collaboration starting this month, the BFI will look to conduct camps as part of its high-performance training programme and IIS will play a key role in shaping the boxers as the official High-Performance Partner for the BFI. a press release stated.

The IIS will also provide national boxers access to sports science testing, strength and conditioning experts and professional diet and nutrition support.

The institute, which successfully hosted the Senior National Women's Championships earlier this year, will also host one national level tournament during each year of the association.

“Ensuring state of the art facilities and training environments for all our boxers have been a priority for the Federation and I am glad this partnership with IIS will help us to achieve our goals,” BFI President Ajay Singh said. Speaking about this partnership, Parth Jindal, Founder and Trustee IIS said, “Together with the BFI, we are committed to driving Indian boxing forward to a new era of success at the global stage.”

Led by the JSW Group, IIS is India's first privately-funded high performance training centre. Currently, the facility houses over 150 athletes aged 12-22 training in the sports of athletics, boxing, judo and wrestling.

Led by an Advisory Board comprising senior Indian sporting legends like Bindra, Ganguly, Mahesh Bhupathi and high-performance expert Dr. Tom Patrick, IIS offers young athletes full scholarships in a completely residential, training environment at full capacity.

I credit myself for this turnaround after what all I had to suffer: Shami

KUSHAN SARKAR MANCHESTER, JUN 28 (PTI): India pacer Mohammed Shami says only he deserves all the credit for his remarkable turnaround as it was “me and only me” who suffered for 18 months.

“Credit? Who else but me. I give full credit to myself,” said Shami after India's 125-run victory over West Indies in the World Cup here Thursday, the scribes in the mixed zone taken in by his directness.

Shami has been to hell and back in the last one and half years, fighting accusations of domestic violence. As a result, he was dropped from the BCCI's central contract list pending inquiry, and also sat out a Test match on fitness ground.

But he is now back to his best, asking probing questions to the best in the business with his pace and swing.

“... Because I had to endure all that I was made to go through.



What I went through in the past 18 months, it's me and only me who had to suffer. So credit goes to me,” Shami said without getting into the details about the nightmare that he had endured.

“Yes, I thank the Almighty for giving me the strength to fight everything from family issues to fitness. I am now only focussed on doing well for my country,” said the pacer, who has now taken eight wickets in two games, including a hat-trick.

After two mindblowing performances against Afghanistan and West

Indies, Shami said that working on his fitness has been the turning point. He has shed those extra kilos, and more importantly, it has put him in a good head space.

“It wasn't only about failing YoYo test. There are times when your rhythm goes for a toss. I failed that's a separate thing but then I have worked hard and improved my fitness. I feel I am in a good zone now as I have lost weight, got rhythm and everything is working for me.

“I now try to maintain my diet, training regime

consistently. Because I am feeling stronger, not getting tired easily, my speed has also increased. And as far as skill is concerned, I always knew I can perform well on any track,” he said, the confidence could easily be mistaken as arrogance.

While many thought that it would be the fit Bhuvneshwar Kumar, with his ability to take the ball away from left-handers, but it was Shami who bounced out ‘Universe Boss’ Chris Gayle. “Since we played IPL together, I have a bit of an idea about him when you play together for some time. I knew that if I don't allow him to chance his arms, he will get out in desperation trying to hit me,” he said, the explanation sounding much simpler than his on-field execution.

How did he feel when he wasn't getting chance in the first four games? “Look, 15 people have come to represent the country.

Indian Pro Boxer Neeraj Goyat vows to return stronger

NEW DELHI, JUN 28 (PTI): Indian pro boxer Neeraj Goyat Friday vowed to challenge Amir Khan after recovering from the injuries sustained in an accident that ruled him out of the big showdown against the British star next month.

Neeraj met with an accident on Tuesday night resulting in injuries, including a hair line fracture on his left arm that forced him out of the bout against former world champion in July.

The accident occurred when

Neeraj was travelling from Yamuna Nagar to Mohali for a sparring session arranged for him ahead of his fight against Amir Khan.

“I am really upset that this happened and I had to withdraw. I was really looking forward to fight Amir on the 12th and wanted to get back home with the much coveted pearl championship belt,” Neeraj said.

“I am recovering right now and will be in action pretty soon. I would like to apologise to my

fans who had been eagerly waiting for this fight between Amir and me. I promise to return stronger and challenge Amir once again,” he added.

Khan will now take former two-time world champion Billy Dib.

The World Boxing Council (WBC) has sanctioned the Vacant International Welter-weight title to be contested between Khan and Dib on July 12 at the King Abdullah Sports City in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia.

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China criticizes ‘negative content’ in US defense bill

BEIJING, JUN 28 (AP): Beijing on Friday criticized “negative content” about China in legislation before the U.S. Congress, saying it would further damage relations already roiled by disputes over trade and technology.

Foreign ministry spokesman Geng Shuang said the draft National Defense Authorization Act, if passed, would undermine efforts to mutually overcome obstacles.

“We express firm opposition to the U.S. Senate’s approval of the act containing negative content related to China,” Geng told reporters at a daily briefing.

“Once the act becomes a law, it will damage China-U.S. relations and disrupt bilateral cooperation in some important areas.”

The bill blocks transfer of sensitive technolo-



gy to China and prevents Chinese state companies from receiving U.S. federal funds.

Geng’s comments came a day before President Donald Trump is to meet his Chinese counterpart, Xi Jinping, at the G-20 summit in Osaka,

Japan, amid hopes the leaders will call a truce in the ongoing disputes.

Geng said the two sides are in close communication over preparations for the meeting “We hope that the U.S. can meet China halfway and work together with

us to promote a positive result of the meeting,” Geng said.

“This is in the interest of both countries and also meets the common expectation of the international community.”

The U.S. accuses Beijing of stealing technol-

ogy and forcing foreign companies to hand over trade secrets as part of a drive to end America’s technological supremacy.

Trump has already imposed 25 per cent tariffs on USD 250 billion in imports from China and is threatening to tax an additional USD 300 billion worth, covering virtually everything China exports to the United States. China has retaliated by imposing tariffs on USD 110 billion in U.S. imports.

Negotiations on a resolution have been stalemated since last month after the administration accused Beijing of backtracking on previous commitments.

While the sides are hoping Trump and Xi can agree to some kind of truce in Osaka, the odds of an enduring agreement being reached are considered low.

Clash between liberal, authoritarian values at G20 summit



OSAKA, JUN 28 (AP): World leaders attending a Group of 20 summit in Japan are clashing over the values that have served for decades as the foundation of their cooperation.

European Union President Donald Tusk on Friday blasted Russian President Vladimir Putin for suggesting in an interview with the newspaper Financial Times that liberalism was “obsolete.” In a statement to reporters, Tusk said, “We are here as Europeans also to firmly and unequivocally defend and promote liberal democracy.”

He said, “What I find really obsolete are: authoritarianism, personality cults, the rule of oligarchs. Even if sometimes they may seem effective.” As US President Donald Trump, Chinese President Xi Jinping, Putin and other leaders met on the sidelines of the summit, Tusk told reporters that such comments suggest a belief that “freedoms are obsolete, that the rule of law is obsolete and that human rights are obsolete.”

Putin told the Financial Times that “the liberal idea has become obsolete. It has come into conflict with the interests of the overwhelming majority of the population.” He praised Trump for his efforts to try to stop the flow of migrants and drugs from Mexico and said that liberalism “presupposes that nothing needs to be done.”

That migrants can kill, plunder and rape with impunity because their rights as migrants have to be protected.” The G-20 leaders are meeting at a time of profound tensions over trade, globalization and Iran’s collapsing nuclear deal. While prospects for detente in the trade

war between the US and China are in the spotlight, many participating are calling for a broader perspective in tackling global crises. Trump’s meeting with the Chinese president on Saturday as the G-20 meetings conclude has raised hopes for a detente in the tariffs war between the world’s two largest economies.

US Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer and Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross accompanied Trump to Osaka.

But a Chinese foreign ministry spokesman in Beijing said China intends to defend itself against further US moves to penalise it over trade friction. China often has sought to gain support for defending global trade agreements against Trump’s “America First” stance in gatherings like the G-20.

Threats by Trump to impose more tariffs on Chinese exports “won’t work on us because the Chinese people don’t believe in heresy and are not afraid of pressure,” Geng Shuang said.

Trump has at times found himself at odds with other leaders in such international events, particularly on issues such as Iran, climate change and trade.

Abe has sought to make the Osaka summit a landmark for progress on environmental issues, including climate change. French President Emmanuel Macron reinforced that message on Wednesday during a state visit to Tokyo, where he described climate change as a “red line” issue for endorsing a G-20 communique.

Host Japan also hopes to forge agreements on reforms of global finance, especially strengthening precautions against abuse of technologies such as cyber-curren-

cies to fund terrorism and other types of internet-related crimes.

On the rising tensions between Iran and the United States, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said the world can’t afford the conflict and it was “essential to deescalate the situation” and avoid confrontation. Iran is soon poised to surpass a key uranium stockpile threshold, threatening the nuclear accord it reached with world powers in 2015.

Guterres also urged G-20 leaders to take action on equitable and stable reforms to strengthen the global financial safety net and increase the global economy’s resilience.

Guterres said in a letter to the leaders gathered in Osaka that although the world has made progress fixing some big problems it’s not happening fast enough or shared by all countries.

While there are good plans and vision, what’s needed are “accelerated actions, not more deliberations,” he said.

Fast and equal economic growth should be constructed so that people who live in “the ‘rust belts’ of the world are not left behind,” he said.

The leaders of Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa called for joint efforts to stabilize international trade and oppose protectionism.

Putin, whose country faces an array of the US and the EU sanctions, said at the meeting that “international trade has suffered from protectionism, politically motivated restrictions and barriers.”

Putin also emphasised the need for BRICS nations to take coordinated action to help block sources of funding for terrorist groups.

Jaishankar meets Canadian, Mexican leaders on sidelines of G20 Summit

OSAKA, JUN 28 (PTI): External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar on Friday met his Canadian counterpart Chrystia Freeland and Mexican Foreign Secretary Marcelo Ebrard on the sidelines of the G20 summit here and held talks on strengthening India’s relationship with the two countries.

Jaishankar is accompanying Prime Minister Narendra Modi for the G20 Summit being held in this Japanese port city.

“A pleasure to catch up with my Canadian counterpart @cafreeland on #G20 margins. Look forward to building an even more substantive relationship that reflects both our interests and concerns,” Jaishankar tweeted after the meeting.

India and Canada share a strategic partnership underpinned by shared values of democracy and pluralis. These have expanded significantly in recent years aided by heightened economic engagement, regular high level interactions and long-standing people-to-people ties.

Jaishankar also met Mexican Foreign Secretary Ebrard and held “productive conversation” with him.

“Productive conversation with my Mexican colleague, Minister @mebrard on taking forward the Privileged Partnership,” Jaishankar said on his twitter account.

He also said that he looks forward to welcoming the Mexican diplomat to India soon.

Prime Minister Modi during his visit to Mexico on 2016 signed the India-Mexico Privileged Partnership with Mexican President Enrique Pena Nieto.

The leaders recognised the opportunities to define the path of the India-Mexico Privileged Partnership for the 21st Century that allows the growth of bilateral relations in field of economics, science and technology and in the most important issues reflecting a broad convergence of long-term political, economic and strategic goals.

May tells Putin end ‘destabilising’ acts against UK, allies

OSAKA, JUN 28 (AFP): British Prime Minister Theresa May told Russian President Vladimir Putin Friday that normal relations will not be restored until Moscow ends its “irresponsible and destabilising” activity, a Downing Street spokesperson said.

The comments came as May met Putin for the first time since the row over the poisoning of a former Russian spy on British soil.

“She told the president that there cannot be a normalisation of our bilateral relationship until Russia stops the irresponsible and destabilising activity that threatens the UK and its allies -- including hostile interventions in other countries, disinformation and cyber attacks,” the spokesperson said.

May also told Putin, in the talks on the sidelines of the G20 summit in Ja-

pan’s Osaka, that Britain “has irrefutable evidence that Russia was behind the attack” on the former spy. “The prime minister underlined that we remain open to a different relationship, but for that to happen the Russian government must choose a different path.”

London has made clear that May’s meeting with Putin does not represent a thawing of ties with Russia, despite calls from Putin for the two countries to “turn the page”. Ties have been severely strained since the March 2018 poisoning of the former Russian spy and double agent Sergei Skripal in the English city of Salisbury.

The incident led to dozens of tit-for-tat diplomatic expulsions and a breakdown in already fragile relations between Moscow and London.

Russia has repeatedly denied any part in his killing.

Trump jokes to Putin: ‘Don’t meddle in the election, please’



OSAKA, JUN 28 (AP): President Donald Trump came face to face with Russia’s Vladimir Putin on Friday for the first time since the special counsel found extensive evidence of Russian interference in the 2016 US election.

When asked if he would warn Russia not to meddle in the next election, Trump wore a bit of a smile, pointed his finger at Putin and dryly said: “Don’t meddle in the election, please.”

The tone of the president’s comments were immediately open to interpretation but would seem to do little to silence questions about Trump’s relationship with Russia in the aftermath of special counsel Robert Mueller’s conclusion that his campaign did not collude with Russia in 2016.

Their meeting in Japan was the first time the two sat together publicly since their summit in Helsinki nearly a year ago in which Trump pointedly did not admonish Putin over election interference and did not side with U.S. intelligence services over his Russian counterpart.

The leaders traded brief remarks about issues they planned to discuss when a reporter shouted if the president would tell Putin “not to meddle” in the 2020 election.

The president answered “Of course I will,” before he turned to Putin and said, “Don’t meddle in the election, please.” He playfully repeated request.

The meeting with Putin, which came amid a

gauntlet of negotiations on international crises, trade wars and a growing global to-do list, was the main event on Trump’s agenda Friday at the G20 summit in Osaka.

But the president also kept an eye on the race to replace him back home, where 10 Democrats met in Miami as part of the first debates of the 2020 presidential race.

“I just passed a television set on the way here. I saw that health care and maximum health care was given to 100% of the illegal immigrants coming into our country by the Democrats,” Trump said, telling German Chancellor Merkel that a debate the previous night “wasn’t very exciting.” “So I look forward to spending time with you rather than watching,” he said. Merkel did not react.

Trump had said in advance of his meeting with Putin that he expected a “very good conversation” with the Russian leader but told reporters that “what I say to him is none of your business.”

His aides had grown worried that Trump could use the meeting to once again attack the Russia probe on the world stage, particularly since Mueller recently agreed to testify before Congress next month, he did not utter the special counsel’s name.

Senate Democratic leader Chuck Schumer had pressed the president to directly challenge the Russian leader on election interference and send a signal “not merely to Putin but to all of our

adversaries that interfering with our election is unacceptable, and that they will pay a price a strong price for trying.”

The United States and Russia are also on opposing sides of the escalating crisis with Iran, which shot down an American drone last week. Trump nixed a possible retaliatory air strike and stressed Friday that the “there’s no rush. There’s absolutely no time pressure” to ease the tension with Tehran.

The Mueller report did not establish a criminal conspiracy between Trump associates and the Kremlin to sway the outcome of the election. The finding lifted a cloud over the White House even as tensions have increased between Washington and Moscow. While Trump has long placed a premium on establishing close personal ties with Putin, his government has increased sanctions and other pressures on the Russian government.

At a summit last November in Argentina, Trump canceled what would have been the leaders’ first post-Helsinki meeting after Russia seized two Ukrainian vessels and their crew in the Sea of Azor. Those crew members remain detained, yet Trump has opted to forge ahead with the Osaka meeting, which will likely include discussions about hotspots in Iran, Syria and Venezuela, as well as nuclear weapons.

Trump said Friday alongside Putin that the fate of the sailors had yet to be discussed.

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Haven't got anything super exciting in commercial space, says Sayani Gupta

MUMBAI, JUN 28 (PTI): Sayani Gupta believes she has successfully straddled between mainstream and independent cinema but the actor says she is currently not picking any commercial movie due to paucity of time.

The actor said she chooses meaty roles in independent films over less exciting mainstream offers.

"I have done 'Margarita with a Straw', 'Parched' with 'Jagga Jasoos', 'Jolly LLB 2', 'Baar Baar Dekho'. I have been able to balance. But in the last one and a half year, I did not have a single day off. I was doing 'Four More Shots', I did a British series and then I did two films. I had no time. You need to have time to say yes. I don't have the dates.

"I did 'Article 15' because one of my films got cancelled. In the commercial space in the last year, I haven't got anything that is super exciting for me to do. I have said no to three big films that are yet to be released because the roles were not meaty," Sayani told PTI in an interview here.

After "Mulk", Anubhav Sinha had offered Sayani a film - a farcical comedy, but things did not work out and then "Article 15" happened.

"He liked my work in 'Jolly LLB 2' and since then we both have been wanting to work with each other for a while. Things were not working. Even this time when 'Article 15' came up I had a Bengali film already in my hand. But I got to know that the Bengali movie is not happening and my dates just freed up." According to Sayani, Anubhav was initially a bit apprehensive to cast her as a Dalit woman in the crime-drama, after her last outing as a glamorous girl in web-series "Four More Shots".

The film, featuring Ayushmann Khurrana in the lead, is based on Article 15 of the Indian Constitution which pro-

hibits discrimination on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth.

Sayani believes Anubhav has presented an honest take on discrimination through the film.

"When I was reading the script, I couldn't put it down, I was crying, smiling, was overjoyed and very rarely you come across a script that you feel really grateful to be part of it. He had written the story with so much honesty and right intent.

"It is an entertaining investigative

sic education, hygiene, medication, portable water and when you empower that is true development. They can't be exploited."

Sayani also praised her co-star Ayushmann.

"Ayushmann has single-handedly changed this narrative. You are no longer depended on a huge star for the film to do well, you are actually successfully able to market a film where you have the content.

"If content is the king, then Ayush-



GOOD VIBES! The singer, Madison Beer is all smiles while out in Los Angeles.

'Final Fantasy' getting live-action TV adaptation

LOS ANGELES, JUN 28 (PTI): Popular video game "Final Fantasy" is coming to small screen in form a live-action series.

Production company Hivemind has announced that it is working with Sony Pictures Television and Square Enix to develop a live-action TV series based on the game. According to Entertainment Weekly, the show will be mainly inspired from "Final Fantasy XIV", one of the franchise's multiplayer online games.

Set in the land of Eorzea, the show will focus on "the struggle between magic and technology to bring peace to a land in conflict".

"Final Fantasy XIV and Eorzea are the perfect gateway into Final Fantasy for longtime fans and newcomers alike.

"This show is about embracing and em-

bodily all of the elements that have made the mythos such an endlessly captivating phenomenon, and it's an immense honour to



be bringing all of Eorzea's iconic characters, settings, and concepts including fan-favorites like Cid and, of course, the chocobos to life for a television audience," Sony Pictures Television Co-President Chris Parnell said in a statement. The makers are yet to announce the casting for the series.

Idris Elba pens song for his 'Hobbs & Shaw' villain



LOS ANGELES, JUN 28 (PTI): Hollywood star Idris Elba has revealed that he has written a song based on his "Hobbs & Shaw" antagonist, Brixton, and the track will feature in the upcoming movie.

The film follows Dwayne Johnson's Luke Hobbs and Jason Statham's Deckard Shaw, as they join forces to stop cyber-enhanced villain Brixton from stealing a globe-threatening virus and unleashing it upon the world.

"People know that I DJ and I make music and all that, but the hybrid of being able to put something that I've made specifically for a movie I'm in is new territory for me," Elba told Entertainment Weekly.

The 46-year-old actor said he wrote the song in between the scenes while filming the David Leitch-directed movie.

He then recorded the track with Cypress Hill and sent the final mix to the director, who decided to add it in the movie.

"Idris is an artist in so many ways; he's an incredible actor and also a martial artist and a musician. And when you're surrounded by artists like that, you want to just take advantage of it and support the creativity and see where it goes," Leitch said.

Tom Hiddleston to make Broadway debut with 'Betrayal'



NEW YORK, JUN 28 (PTI): Actor Tom Hiddleston is all set to make his debut on Broadway with the revival of Harold Pinter's "Betrayal". The actor will star in the play alongside Daredevil series actor Charlie Cox and Zawe Ashton, according to The Hollywood Reporter.

The Jamie Lloyd Company production, a partnership between Ambassador Theatre Group and artistic director Jamie Lloyd, will begin previews at the Bernard B Jacobs Theatre on August 14.

The story is set around the dissolution of a marriage in the wake of an extramarital affair.

The play captures the events of the affair and its consequences in reverse as it probes questions of the heart, infidelity, and friendship.

"Betrayal" has had a long history on Broadway. It premiered in 1980 in a Peter Hall production with Roy Scheider, Blythe Danner and Raul Julia.

In 2000, David Leveaux directed its revival, featuring John Slattery, Juliette Binoche and Liev Schreiber. It once again returned to stage with 2013 production, which was directed by Mike Nichols and starred Daniel Craig, Rachel Weisz and Rafe Spall.

ARIES: There's no such thing as TMI for you today, Aries. With the moon in your sign, you're in your live-out-loud element. Don't feel bad about being so...overt. Your bold authenticity will actually create a safe space in which others can open up. Own your past, Ram! Those "embarrassing" mishaps birthed golden lessons that you can pass on to others who are struggling with the same issues.

TAURUS: You're in an emo groove today, Taurus, so just go with it. This is one of those days when you'd benefit from setting aside that intense work ethic so you can bond with the people in your environment. Power down your laptop and go have lunch with a colleague. You could even have a chance to pass along some of your sage wisdom to someone who is struggling with an issue you've overcome. Reach up to mentors too, especially a powerful woman who's been in your corner in the past.

GEMINI: Lighten up about love today, Gemini. With the moon in your "the more the merrier" eleventh house, you could turn

that table for two into a table for six or eight. If your entourage has yet to meet your amour du jour, this would be the perfect day for a getting-to-know-you gathering. Single? Sparks could fly with a friend of a friend.

CANCER: Be more "purpose-driven" in your personal life today. People adore you, and there are plenty of friendships you COULD cultivate. But since each one requires an investment of time, you want to reserve your energy for folks who fill your cup—not a bunch of small-talking randos. Have you been loading up your calendar with "meh" events out of fear of being lonely?

LEO: Bigger, stronger, faster: Well, why not, Leo? Today's moon in your expansive ninth house could bring rapid expansion to one of your goals. Take your foot off the brake, but keep your hands on the wheel. You of all people know that progress CAN happen at supersonic speed. People from other parts of the globe could be involved, so get ready to fire up Skype or Zoom and brainstorm away! To accelerate the process, you might have to take a risk. Make sure it's a

calculated leap instead of an impulsive gamble.

VIRGO: Got secrets? One of those skeletons is rattling the closet door, begging to be freed. Time for a confessional conversation, Virgo—the truth will liberate your soul. Connect with a trusted confidante tonight, over the phone or huddled in a private corner. If you just want them to listen without offering advice, make that clear up-front.

LIBRA: Forget all those parental advisories about the dangers of talking to strangers. Today, your usual people-watching could erupt into a fascinating dialogue when you see someone at a coffee shop who's reading a book that changed your life or who's wearing an indie-label designer that only a few insiders know about.

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

SAGITTARIUS: Put a little luxe in your life. Today's decadent fifth-house moon gives you a hall pass to be a little hedonistic. This doesn't have to be harmful to your health or the Earth. Skip the avocado toast and sip a smoothie made with young coconut milk, which requires less water to produce. Looking for a signature accessory for spring? Find a sustainable jeweler who repurposes gold and gems from antique pieces. This romantic lunation can turn up the heat with a love interest. Slip off for a lunch date, and don't be surprised if it turns into a spicy nooner. Though it's a weeknight, do what you can to lure friends out for some cultural activities—or at least happy hour!!

CAPRICORN: Bless this mess? Not today! With the Aries moon percolating in your domestic fourth house, tidying up your spaces could lead to sharper thinking. As within, so without, right? Now, here's the rub: The piles in your space might be a metaphor for situations you've been avoiding. As you're folding laundry and deleting junk mail, you may become acutely aware of emotions that you

swept under the rug.

AQUARIUS: The Aquarius social butterfly is bursting out of the cocoon thanks to today's lunar lift in your communication corner. Since you won't have much patience for desk work, rejig your schedule so you can handle the people-oriented tasks on your to-do list. A spontaneous lunch date with a coworker could turn into an amazing brainstorming session that leaves you buzzing with inspiration. With the moon in active Aries, slip out for fresh-air breaks. Who says you can't listen in on a conference call while walking the trail of an urban park?.

PISCES: Would you care to upgrade, Pisces? With the moon beaming into your sensual (but sensible) second house, you're willing to splurge on quality. Review your financials: Is there room to indulge? As long as it's practical and functional, you can consider it an investment. Funds too tight for that go-with-everything Celine bag or the cold-pressed juicer? Create a special savings account and make your first deposit today. This will motivate you to keep on hustling, even if your gratification is delayed.