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SummitTIMES

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ON TOP OF THE NEWS

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SU Prof removed after student lodges sexual harassment complaint

**SAGAR CHETTRI
GANGTOK, 14 MAY:**

Sikkim University has divested a professor of all responsibilities and powers after a student lodged a complaint of sexual harassment against him.

The accused professor, Silajit Guha, who is the head of the Mass Communications Department, was removed from his post with immediate effect and replaced by Assistant Professor, Dr Manoj Kumar Das as in charge of the Mass Communication Department.

"The HOD of the Mass Communications Department has been removed from the post pending an inquiry into the allegation of sexual harassment against him by one of the girl students of his department," SU Registrar Prof TK Kaul confirmed.

The victim had submitted a written complaint on Sunday and the decision was made on the basis of the recommendations of the internal complaints committee of the university, the Registrar said.

"The internal complaints committee held a preliminary probe in the matter and recommended action against the accused professor," Prof Kaul said.

The University also issued an office order on Monday barring Prof Guha from visiting the department and also from evaluating answer scripts of its students.

The Registrar mentioned that as far as the victim is concerned, the university has given her full assurance of security and safety.

It is learnt that Prof Guha is currently not in station.

According to some students, the alleged incident of sexual harassment had taken place on 05 May at a marriage reception in a hotel where both the victim and the accused were invited guests along with several other employees and students of the university.

Meanwhile, Sikkim University Student's Association [SUSA] president, Palsang Tamang has also demanded justice for the victim.

The association is waiting for the ICC to submit its report and if there is any injustice the association is ready to come out on the road, he said.

He also questioned Prof Guha leaving the State without taking official leave or without informing the university. He mentioned that there are some more victims but only one has lodged the complaint and added that investigation should also find out if students were pressurised or threatened.

GRC to contest Darj Assembly bypoll on unification plank

**SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 14 MAY:**

Gorkha Rashtriya Congress [GRC] president, Bharat Dong, informed today that GRC was contesting the Darjeeling bye-election on the issue of Sikkim-Darjeeling unification. The GRC, he said, is convinced that the unification of Sikkim and Darjeeling was the "only solution" to all the problems of Darjeeling and the only guarantee to "save" the existence and identity of the Gorkha community.

Addressing a press conference here today, Mr Dong said, "If the people of Darjeeling give their mandate to GRC understanding the logic of our unification argument, then our MLA will

not got to West Bengal Assembly but rather go to the Sikkim Assembly. Darjeeling is a part of Sikkim so we will go to Sikkim."

He stated that after winning the election, GRC will pursue the unification issue more vigorously in Sikkim backed by the people's mandate.

He stated that the party has been working on this issue for the past 16 years but the Sikkim government has not taken up the issue seriously thus far.

The GRC president added that only "unification" can ensure development in both Sikkim and Darjeeling.

He said that Sikkim has the misconception that unification would

dilute the rights and privileges of Sikkim and the Sikkimese and countered today that Sikkim has been suppressing the aspirations of the Darjeeling people by taking lease money for 134 years.

He added that Sikkim, despite its small size, has lots of Ministers, Secretaries and officers whereas the Darjeeling Hills, with a larger population, lacks such representation.

He also stated that the unification would also be consistent to the State's demand for increase in Assembly strength.

Mr Dong further claimed that even UPA and NDA in the centre were in the favour of the unification.

No politics of revenge in SKM Govt: Golay



**SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 14 MAY:**

Sikkim Krantikari Morcha has reiterated that it will form government this time and announced a number of changes that it will bring about after it comes to power.

SKM president, PS Tamang [Golay] has said that his party will not indulge in politics of revenge after it comes to power. SKM will end political victimization of government employees and misuse of Vigilance police for political vendetta, he has said.

He made the announcements while addressing a gathering at Borong-Phamtam GPU under Barfung Constituency today, a press release informs.

He also said that Vidhayak Bhavan in all constituencies will be established, where MLAs need to spend at least 15 days every month at his/her home constituency to execute public works.

Mr Tamang also said that there will be no post poll violence and they will maintain peace after counting. "If any of our workers practice non-violence than party itself will handover that worker to police," the release states.

The other changes he announced are:

1. End of party flag politics where all party flags will be removed from houses of general people. Party flags shall only be allowed to hoist at residences of leaders and party offices.
2. No more misuse of public mon-

ey for purchase of luxury vehicles. CM will use Scorpio brand vehicle.

3. Vigilance department will function independently, genuinely corrupt people will be investigated by this institution without any political pressure.
4. No discrimination on Government benefit distributions. We will give utmost priority to Gram Sabha so that needy people will be benefited and there will be end of nepotism in developmental works.
5. No more service extension. This system is freezing cadre based/timely promotion of junior rank officers. Also disturbing new employment vacancies, as such SKM government will stop service extension policy.
6. Will end misuse of public exchequer. No more misuse of public money for leisure of Netas.
7. Free entry of CBI in Sikkim. CBI shall be given permission to investigate 25 years of rampant corruption by SDF leader and its regime.
8. No more politics of revenge. After elections we will not discriminate common people on ground of political affiliation.

Mr Tamang was accompanied by SKM candidates, Ganesh Rai, Lobzang Bhutia and party executives.

Monsoon likely to hit Kerala on June 4, three days after normal onset date: Skymet

NEW DELHI, MAY 14 (PTI): Monsoon is likely to arrive in Kerala on June 4, three days after its normal onset date, marking the official commencement of the rainy season in the country, private weather forecaster Skymet said Tuesday.

The normal onset date for monsoon over Kerala is June 1.

Skymet said monsoon will be "below normal" in the country with a Long Period Average (LPA) of 93 per cent and an error margin of five per cent.

"Arrival of monsoon over Andaman and Nicobar Islands will be on May 22, with an error margin of plus/minus 2 days. Southwest Monsoon 2019 is likely to make onset over Kerala on June 4, with an error margin of plus/minus 2 days. "It seems that initial advancement of monsoon over peninsular India is going to be slow," Skymet CEO Jatin Singh said.

"All the four regions are going to witness lesser than normal rainfall, this season. Rainfall in

East and Northeast India and central parts will be poorer than Northwest India and South Peninsula," Singh said.

According to Skymet, there are 55 per cent chances of a below normal rainfall, which will have an influence of El Nino, a phenomenon linked to the heating of Pacific waters.

East and Northeast India will get 92 per cent of the LPA which falls under the below normal category. Risk remains high for Bihar, Jharkhand and West Bengal, while it will be marginal for Northeast India, Skymet said. Northwest India that comprises all north Indian states will receive 96 per cent rainfall of the LPA, which falls on the border line of normal and below normal rainfall category.

Hilly states of Jammu and Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand are likely to perform better than the plains of Punjab, Haryana, Rajasthan and Delhi-NCR, the Skymet said.

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Violent clashes, arson mar Shah's Kolkata jamboree

KOLKATA, MAY 14 (PTI): BJP and TMC supporters Tuesday fought pitched battles on the streets of Kolkata during a massive roadshow by Amit Shah, who escaped unhurt but was forced to cut short the jamboree and had to be escorted to safety by police.

Parts of the city plunged into a welter of violence as his convoy was attacked with stones by alleged TMC supporters from inside the hostel of Vidyasagar College, triggering a clash between supporters of the two parties, officials said.

Furious BJP supporters retaliated and were seen exchanging blows with their TMC rivals outside the college entrance.

Several motorcycles parked outside were vandalised and set ablaze. Shards of broken glass littered the lobby of the college where a bust of Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, a noted philosopher and a key figure of

Bengal Renaissance, was smashed to smithereens. Police personnel were seen trying to douse the fire with buckets filled with water.

Contingents of Kolkata Police deployed for the roadshow swung into action and were seen chasing away the warring groups. "There was an attempt by TMC hooligans to attack me.

Mamata Banerjee (West Bengal chief minister) tried to provoke violence. But I am safe," Shah told a Hindi TV news channel. Shah said while clashes erupted police remained a mute spectator.

He said he was told by police that the permission for the roadshow ended near the college and that he will be taken to the ancestral home of Swami Vivekananda on Bidhan Sarani. "They (police) deviated from the planned route and took a way where there were traffic jams. I was

not allowed to reach Swami Vivekananda's house to pay tributes and I am saddened by it," Shah claimed.

Banerjee hit right back, calling Shah a "goonda." "If you lay your hands on Vidyasagar, what will I call you other than a goonda," he told a rally in Behala in the city.

"I hate your ideology, I hate your ways," she said, and announced a protest rally on Thursday against the vandalism of the bust of Vidyasagar.

Earlier, there was a scuffle when a group shouted slogans against Shah outside the Calcutta University campus and showed him black flags. Police, however, swiftly brought the situation under control.

Before the clashing mobs took over the streets of central Kolkata, Shah led a saffron surge in parts of the city as chants of 'Jai Shri Ram, Jai Jai Shri Ram' alternated

turn to pg02

Will all aircraft disappear from radar whenever it rains in India? Rahul's jibe at PM

NEEMUCH(MP)/BATHINDA(PB), MAY 14 (PTI): Congress president Rahul Gandhi Tuesday took a dig at Prime Minister Narendra Modi's 'radar and clouds' remark in relation to the Balakot airstrikes in Pakistan, asking him will all aircraft disappear from the radar whenever it rains in India.

Priyanka Gandhi also joined her brother in taking a swipe at Modi's comment that cloud cover 'helped' IAF planes evade Pakistani radars during the Balakot operation on February 26, saying his truth is now on people's radar.

Addressing election rallies in Neemuch, Ujjain and Khandwa in Madhya Pradesh, Rahul Gandhi said Modi insulted his family during the poll campaign but he will never ever speak ill of the prime minister's parents. "I will die, but will never insult Modi ji's mother and father."

He also made a veiled reference to the PM's interaction with actor Akshay Kumar during which Modi said he loved mangoes as a child and still loves them.

Noting that Modi in the recent days talked about cloud cover "helping" IAF

planes evade Pakistani radars during the airstrikes and about climbing trees and eating mangoes, Rahul Gandhi asked, "Modi ji, whenever it rains in India, do all aircraft disappear from the radar?"

"Clouds and mangoes are being talked about but nothing is being said on issues that matter," Gandhi said. He sought to know what did Modi do for the jobless youth. "Modi ji, you taught (us) how to eat mangoes; now tell the country what you did for the jobless youth," he said.

Addressing a poll rally in Bathinda in Punjab, Priyanka Gandhi said she learnt about the prime minister's rally in the same town on Monday.

I also learnt that the clouds of Bathinda gave answers to his 'spate of lies', while referring to the strong winds that blew away some of the tents during Modi's rally.

Whether it is strong winds or storm or cloudy weather, but his truth has come on radar of people of this country. He indulges in propaganda before you, speaks lies, makes big claims and makes big promises and when you hear his propaganda, then

you will feel as if no development took place in last 70 years and that all development took place only in five years, she said.

Perhaps his own radar should be on his promises, she said while taking a jibe at Modi and reminding him about his unkept promises of putting Rs 15 lakh into bank accounts, doubling farmers income and 2 crore jobs.

In Ujjain, Rahul Gandhi said Modi insulted his father and grandmother during the election campaign but he will never speak ill of the latter's parents.

He said the Congress would defeat Modi "with love".

"Modi ji talks with hatred. He insulted my father, grandmother, great grandfather. But I will never in my life speak about his family, his mother and father. I will die, but will never insult Modi ji's mother and father. "This is because I am not a RSS or BJP man, but belong to the Congress. I will return him love if hatred is thrown at me... We will defeat Modi ji with love, hugging you," he said.

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SummitTIMES IN NEPALI

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Road safety: No helmet, no petrol for bikers in Noida from June 1

NOIDA (UP), MAY 14 (PTI): From June 1, two-wheeler riders without helmets will not get fuel at filling stations in Noida and Greater Noida, the district administration announced Tuesday, in major bid to promote road safety.

Holding a meeting with owners of the filling stations, District Magistrate Brajesh Narain Singh said the order must be implemented in the two cities and later it would also be rolled out in rural areas of Gautam Buddh Nagar.

“Those who reach your fuel stations without helmet should be told that they will only get fuel if they wear a hel-

met. This practice will be implemented from June 1 in Noida and Greater Noida cities initially,” he told them at the collectorate in Surajpur.

Singh, who was joined by district police chief Vaibhav Krishna, said the initiative, primarily aimed at improving road safety, would later be rolled out in rural areas of Gautam Buddh Nagar too with inputs and feedback from the stakeholders.

The district administration also warned legal action, including suspension of driving license for not wearing helmet and arrest if riders without helmet misbehave with staff at filling stations.

“When those without helmet reach filling stations, their details and vehicle numbers would be traced through CCTV footage and legal action initiated against them. Their driving license can also be cancelled,” it said in a statement.

“In case anyone misbehaves with the staff at the filling stations, strict action would be taken against the errant person and they could even be jailed under section 151 of the Criminal Procedure Code (CrPC),” it added. According to the Section 129 of the Motor Vehicles Act, 1988, not wearing helmet while riding a two wheeler is a violation of the law and

can draw imprisonment up to six months under Indian Penal Code section 188.

All filling stations in Gautam Buddh Nagar have been instructed to carry out massive publicity on their premises about the upcoming regulation and consequences of rule violation.

“It is, therefore, instructed that all petrol pumps in Noida and Greater Noida will publicise this order on their premises during the next five days that fuel will not be given to vehicles whose rider and pillion are found without helmets,” it said.

The administration also called on the own-

ers of the filling stations to ensure installation of good quality CCTV cameras on their premises so that in case of any dispute a footage of the incident could be readily available.

“Installing CCTV on your premises is for your own benefit,” Krishna, the senior superintendent of police, told the filling station owners.

“Two-wheelers are used in a lot of criminal activities and they get their vehicles refuelled. Here you can help the police with video footage. Filling stations are also targeted by criminals often and having footage can help in probe,” he said.



Freedom Facility team prays at Gurudongmar

SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 14 MAY:

A 70-member team of Tathangchen-based rehab centre, Free-

dom Facility led by KC Nima visited Gurudongmar and Yumthang in North Sikkim from 11 to 13 May for a spiritual tour.

Parents meeting held at Springdale School

WANGCHUK BHUTIA

MANGAN, 14 MAY:

A parents meeting was conducted at Springdale School in Dikchu, East Sikkim, on 13 May which was also attended by School Managing Committee and teachers. The meeting started with brief introduction and the agenda of the meeting presented by Vice Principal of the school, Mercy Tamang.

The meeting was con-

vened in order to discuss progress in academic performance of the children and also to have co-ordination between the school and guardians.

Ms Tamang also underlined the different activities of the school and informed that the school is providing the best education to children.

An interaction session was also held where in parents put forth their suggestions and inputs.

Nurses Day celebrated at Singtam Hospital



YOGEN THATAL

SINGTAM, 14 MAY:

Nurses from District Hospital, Singtam, celebrated Nurses Day today. The day was supposed to be celebrated on 12 May but due to a holiday the program was rescheduled.

The celebration was attended by CMO, Dr Tshering Laden and DMS, Dr Tempo.

On the day, a farewell was also organized for two senior sisters who had worked with dedication for many years. The senior nurses in turn thanked the department and hospital staff for the honor and support.

CMO, Dr Tshering Laden spoke about the importance of the day

and contribution of Florence Nightingale. The importance of nurses was then addressed by the CMO who emphasized that health is a human right and thanked all nurses for their services.

Citation was then provided to best performing nurses by the CMO and DMS.

India football team's performance can only go up: Udanta Singh

New Delhi, May 14

(PTI): India international Udanta Singh feels that the Kings Cup tournament in Thailand next month will be a chance to show the upward graph in national team's performance after its creditable show at the Asian Cup earlier this year.

The Indian team was on the verge of making to the knock-out rounds of the Asian Cup in the UAE in January before a late goal by Bahrain dashed its hopes. The team will play in the Kings Cup starting June 5 in Thailand.

“In the AFC Asian Cup, we showed what we are capable of. We were

unlucky not to progress through to the next round. But our win over Thailand was a statement of our abilities as a young team,” Udanta said.

“We can only go upwards from here and the Kings Cup will be another good platform to grow,” the India winger was quoted as saying by the official website of the All India Football Federation.

India play Caribbean nation Curacao in their opening match of the King's Cup on June 5 at Buriram, Thailand.

The fleet-footed Manipuri said strength and conditioning plays a major role in the

off-season and one can exceed his athletic capabilities with a proper programme when not engaged with football.

“I took a couple of days off, and I got right back into the grind. I try to train daily, and do some sort of strength and conditioning or stretching daily so as to not only exceed my athletic capabilities but be in better physical form once the seasons starts,” he said.

“It really depends what you want to do in the off-season. You can relax, or you can put the work in and get ready for the next season. I prefer the latter.

Navy to conduct first entrance test for selection of officers in Sep

NEW DELHI, MAY 14

(PTI): In a first, the Navy will conduct an entrance test for selection of direct entry officers after graduation, officials said Tuesday. Currently, officer candidates are short-listed for interviews by the Services Selection Board (SSB) on the basis of marks scored in graduation or post-graduation for certain entries.

“The Indian Navy is introducing computer-based examination for the selection of Direct Entry Officers after graduation. The first Indian Navy Entrance Test (Officers) or INET (Of-

ficers), is scheduled in September 2019 at various centres across the country,” the Navy said in a statement. The INET (Officers) will be used for screening for permanent commission and short service commission officer candidates for all graduate entries, other than those that are screened by the Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) or the University Entry Scheme, it said.

“Currently, officer candidates are short-listed for interviews by the Services Selection Board (SSB) on the basis

of marks scored in graduation (or post-graduation for certain entries). Henceforth, shortlisting for SSB will be taken on the basis of marks scored in INET (Officers),” the statement said.

Under the new process, only one advertisement will be published every six months and applicants will need to exercise their option for entries that they wish to be considered for, on the basis of their educational qualification, officials said.

Details of entries, age and educational qualifications are available on www.joinindiannavygovin.

IndiGo announces 3-day summer sale

NEW DELHI, MAY 14

(PTI): IndiGo on Tuesday announced a three-day summer sale till May 16 across its network that connects 53 domestic and 17 international destinations.

Passengers can avail the all-inclusive fares starting at Rs 999 for travel between May 29-September 28 on domestic and international routes, the airline said in a statement.

The routes include Delhi-Ahmedabad, Mumbai-Hyderabad, Hyderabad-Dubai, Chennai-Kuwait, Delhi-Kuala Lumpur and Bengaluru-Male

among many others, it added.

“With the onset of summer holidays, we are excited to announce this three-day special sale effective (from) today till May 16, 2019,” IndiGo chief commercial officer William Boulter said. “To make holiday season more special, IndiGo is offering attractive discounts up to 30 per cent on pre-paid excess baggage and pre-paid express check-in service.”

The no-frills airline has around 44 per cent domestic passenger market share, according to the DGCA data.

Lord Ayyappa temple opens for five day monthly pooja



SABARIMALA (KER), MAY

14 (PTI): The famed Lord Ayyappa temple here opened for the five day monthly poojas this evening to mark the Malayalam month 'Idavam'.

Chief priest V N Vasudevan Namboothiri opened the sanctum sanctorum of the hill shrine in the presence of 'tantri' Kandararu Rajeevaru.

Travancore Devaswom Board (TDB) President A Padmakumar, board member K P San-kardas, Sabarimala Special Commissioner and district judge Manoj

were among those present when the temple was opened.

A large number of Lord Ayyappa devotees climbed the sacred 18 steps and offered prayers on the initial day, a TDB release said.

There was no special poojas on Tuesday and the shrine would witness customary pujas and rituals, including 'neyyabhishekam', 'kalabhabhishekam' and 'padi puja' in the coming days, the release added.

After the five-day poojas, the shrine would be closed on May 19.

NOTICE

In view of ensuing counting for Lok Sabha/Assembly Election 2019,

this is to inform to the General Public that all the public related official

work will be suspended from 13/5/2019 till 25/5/2019.

By Order.

[Signature]

DISTRICT COLLECTOR/EAST

Govt committed to strategic disinvestment of Air India:

Jayant Sinha

KOLKATA, MAY 14 (PTI):

The government is committed to strategic disinvestment of national carrier Air India, Minister of State for Civil Aviation Jayant Sinha said Tuesday. Speaking at a session hosted by the Indian Chamber of Commerce here, Sinha said the government was taking steps to make Air India a vibrant global airline and benchmark some of its services with the best in the world.

"We want to make Air India a vibrant global airline going forward," Sinha said.

On Jet Airways, which has been grounded due to financial crisis, the minister said "there is a bank-led resolution plan which is underway".

"Some bids have been received and let see how the resolution plan unfolds," he said.

"The Evolution" is on its way

REBYNA RANA
GANGTOK, 14 MAY:

Local band "The Evolution" from Gangtok, has been gaining popularity since it was formed in 2013. Last year the band got more recognition when it got sponsored by VANS India in January 2018.

"The Evolution" lineup is Aditya Rai [Vocals], Lucas Yogan Ruchal [guitar/vocalist], Rahul Limboo [bass guitar], and Indradeep Rasaily [drums]. While they started out from Gangtok, the band is now based in Delhi.

Speaking to SummitTIMES, Lucas Yogan Ruchal explains that the band loves to perform in Gangtok but lack of opportunities led to their decision to work in Delhi.

"Gangtok is our home town and all our friends are here. We love playing in Gangtok but there are not many options for musicians to grow here, hence we decided to ven-



ture outside Sikkim. This step was needed to make our mark in the music scene and to grow as a band," shares Lucas.

Lucas has performed with many bands like Gravity, Rahul Circus, Granite Yard, and Voodoo Magic. He was also the founder member of Granite Yard [a rap metal band], and won at the

BITS Pilani fest in 2017, Red Panda International Band Contest, 2018. He also won the best guitarist in Pyrotechnix 2018 in Guwahati.

"We love what we do and we want to achieve our dreams, so we keep our faith, work harder every day to make ourselves better. At the end what matters the most

is to love what you are doing, never give up on your dreams and keep working hard," he says.

Meanwhile, the band is all set to perform in an event called "Roots" in "What a comic show" restaurant on 18 May in Delhi.

In June, the band will be performing in Pokhara, Nepal and other plac-

es in Delhi. The band is also planning to record an album soon.

"We have been working on our originals. In the past few months we completed 4 songs, which we are planning to record soon. We are working on the remaining 4 songs. We hope we get to release the album soon," says Lucas.

India chosen co-chair of consultative group of global forum on disaster reduction

NEW DELHI, MAY 14 (PTI): India has been unanimously chosen as co-chair of the consultative group for Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery for the 2020 fiscal, the Home Ministry said in a statement issued Tuesday.

The decision was taken during the group's meeting in Geneva, Switzerland, on Tuesday on the margins of the 6th session of the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction (GFDRR)-2019, it said.

The consultative group's meeting was co-chaired by the Africa Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) group of states, the European Union (EU) and the World Bank.

GFDRR is a global partnership that helps developing countries better understand and reduce their vulnerability to natural hazards and climate change.

It is a grant-funding mechanism, managed by the World Bank, which supports disaster risk management projects globally. It is presently working on the ground

with over 400 local, national, regional, and international partners and provides knowledge, funding, and technical assistance.

India became a member of the GFDRR's consultative group in 2015 and had expressed its interest to co-chair its meeting in October 2018.

India's candidature was backed by its consistent progress in disaster risk reduction in the country and its initiative to form a coalition on disaster resilient infrastructure, the statement said. This will give the country an opportunity to work with member countries and organisations of GFDRR with a focused contribution towards advancing the disaster risk reduction agenda during the course of the year.

This is the first time that the country has been given the opportunity of co-chairing the consultative group's meeting, it said. India would like to pursue a focused agenda and develop synergies with ongoing work streams of GFDRR, the Home Ministry said.

A Recent Write

by AAKRITI THATAL
[Hansraj College, New Delhi]

I have been asked
A several times,
"What will you miss the most about your hometown when you move elsewhere?"

I start to foment, and scrutinize my own thoughts.

I picture the green.

In harmony with the mellow, yellow Sun.

I feel the Blue,

Grey clouds above me,

Sing hello, with patting raindrops,

I picture the faces I see,

Dressed in layers of colours,

However, never ceasing to remain singular.

I think of the crossroads I walk,

To reach my place of shelter.

Embroidered and edged with the pink, purple, white and yellow petals.

I hear,

The crickets and the leaking pipe,

Whilst I knit possible reasoning of what I hear.

Also, the bamboo rustle, and the birds chirp,

In the dawn of the day,

However, unable to distinguish each sound.

I hear, still.

I also, picture the crowd,

Hot and rapid.

The traffic,

Static.

The storm,

To me, calm.

I draw my favourite hangout in my mind,

That bench by the edge of the cliff,

From where I feel my Acrophobia

Seep into deeper sheets of savour.

Savouring the moment, breathing in the beauty.

I breathe in the imaginative petrichor.

Woody, rusty, rainy.

I taste Chaha's Aloo Chiura,

In my heart's taste buds-

Not very spicy,

Not very sour.

Subtle.

Just the way I like it.

Of time and place,

Our people are stars,

Red filters, gentle showers

A walk by the park.

I think of and about,

I draw images.

The ones I construe.

Brings me back to the question,

I, in my most cognizant state,

now, answer honestly,

"I will not Move."

2 dead, 2 ill after taking homoeopathy medicine laced with intoxicants

BEGUSARAI, MAY 14

(PTI): Two persons died while two others were taken ill after taking homoeopathy drug allegedly laced with some intoxicating substance in Bihar's Begusarai district on Tuesday, police said

Sadar, Sub-Divisional Police Officer (SDPO), Rajan Sinha said the deceased have been identified as Murari Ram (35) and Bahadur Shah (40), both residents of Kharidi village of the district.

The two ill persons have been admitted to a private hospital in Begusarai, he said, adding that both are stated to be out of danger.

The SDPO said nothing can be said about the cause of the death as police are investigating the matter.

Dr Arun Kumar, who conducted post mortem, said that prima facie it does not seem to be the case of death by consuming spurious liquor. It seems to be the case of poisoning may be caused by some kind of homoe-



opathy medicine which was laced with some other material.

Viscera has been sent to Forensic Science Laboratory, Patna as the cause of death is not clear, the doctor said.

Local villagers alleged that the two persons died after taking homoeopathy drug allegedly laced with intoxicating material from a clinic run by a homoeopathy practitioner.

Villagers claimed that people in large number visit the homoeopathy practitioner, who allegedly would add some intoxicating material with the medicine in view of the prohibition enforced since April

2016 in the state.

Police raided the clinic of of the homoeopathy practitioner, who is absconding since the incident, the SDPO said, adding that police have seized homoeopathy medicines from the clinic.

Angry villagers blocked the Matihani-Begusarai main road for several hours demanding payment of Rs 4 lakh to each of the deceased's family as compensation.

The blockade was lifted after the Matihani Block Development Officer Bhuvanesh Mishra and Circle Officer Upendra Kumar assured to look into their demands.

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Now is the time that every eligible girl students must give a try instead of repenting later.

Eligibility

- | | |
|------------|---|
| (a) Age | - Born between 01 Oct 1998 to 01st Apr 2002 |
| (b) Height | - 142 cms |
| (c) Weight | - proportionately to height |

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Sd/
Col D N Bhutia
Secretary

CHANGE OF NAME

I, DEV GURUNG son of Shri Tika Ram Gurung aged about 32 years, by faith Buddhist resident of Padamchey, East Pendam P.S. Pachak & P.S Pakyong, East Sikkim do solemnly affirm and declare the I wholly renounce/relinquish and abandon use of my former name "DEVI PRASAD GURUNG" and henceforth be called as "DEV GURUNG" for all official records, dealing, purpose and proceeding, before the learned Oath Commissioner at Gangtok, East Sikkim on 21st Day of August, 2010.

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Accident Care

More needs to be done in response to accidents and mishaps

Imagine a scenario in which a road mishap, say right on NH10 near a district hospital or even in remote North Sikkim, leaves a group of people injured and in immediate need of medical attention ranging from the routine first-aid to specialist interventions. You do not even have to stretch your imagination if you have been following news on a regular basis and are aware of such accidents in different parts of Sikkim in the not so distant past. There is no real difference between the remote and the better connected places.

While accidents cannot be averted with certainty, what can be assured is that accident victims receive the required medical attention sans the red tape and without having to bounce through a circuitous route to medical attention. But that is invariably what happens. Continuing with the scenario outlined earlier, the injured will first be rushed to the nearest PHC if they are far from the district hospitals. There can be no qualms with this since trained medical attention is necessary in the early hours to establish the nature of injuries. Of course, it would be ideal if the first responder teams to accident sites included doctors and paramedics so that such diagnosis can be made on the spot. After this, the injured will be taken to the nearest district hospital where they will be checked again and then, if required, referred on to STNM Hospital in Gangtok and chances are that from here they will be driven onwards to CRH down in Tadong. The more complicated cases will then be referred out of the State to Siliguri or Delhi.

From the time of the accident to their eventual discharge from hospital, the victims (the less injured ones) of a road mishap end up spending more time on the road, moving from one 'referral' to the next, than they spend recuperating or coming to grips with their trauma and grief. Sikkim's roads are a punishment for even able-bodied passengers, the trauma that injured bodies suffer careening from one medical inspection to the other should not be wished on anyone. The doctor with referral powers at the final end of the state is just as capable as the doctor who must have attended to the accident victims first. Why then, should the power to refer patients out of the State not rest with the first doctor itself depending on his/her prognosis. That would cut down on travel time substantially, and time is of essence in such cases, all will agree.

There is still more that needs to be done when it comes to handling accident trauma cases. Accidents, as mentioned, cannot be avoided, but what defeats all explanation is the scenario which definitely confounds everyone – the level of medical assistance available for trauma victims in Sikkim. This basic facility remains unattained even though by now, speciality wings should have been added to district hospitals and even Primary Health Centres here at least on paper. Given the hilly terrain, poor driving etiquette and unreliable roads, every PHC in Sikkim should have reasonably advanced infrastructure and manpower to attend to accident cases. Tourist destinations in high altitudes [like Nathula and Gurudongmar] should have personnel and equipment to allow visitors with high altitude sickness symptoms to recuperate. This facility, one may add here, need not necessarily be provided and maintained by the Government and could even be sponsored by tourism stakeholders; after all, it is tourists who develop complications there, with the residents mostly acclimatized. Agreed the army assists in times of emergencies, but this should still be a service that is more accessible and specifically dedicated to tourist emergencies. These should already have been in place, and yet, one stares at a reality where in the event of a medical emergency, a victim's fate depends on the presence of mind of the people around, the speed at which the referral can be typed out and the road worthiness of the ambulance which zips the victim from one referral pit-stop to the other. Unfortunate...

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Mail us at: news@summittimes.com

India: a businessman's dream, a citizen's nightmare

ARVIND ASHTA & AMARENDRA SAHOO
theconversation.com

India's general elections kicked off on May 11 and run until May 19, with the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party facing off against the main opposition force, the Indian National Congress. One of the main issues opposing the two are charges of "crony capitalism" against Prime Minister Narendra Modi, as epitomised by the ongoing "Rafale scam".

Modi has been accused of favouritism toward his friend and political ally Anil Ambani, a multi-millionaire at the head of Reliance, a 1.7 billion dollar firm. In 2015, Ambani formed Reliance Defence Limited, which bypassed the mandated procedures to obtain a deal with French defence company Dassault for the sale of 36 Rafale fighters for 8 billion euros. Ambani's company won the contract over the government-owned HAL and the deal reportedly pushed up the price of the aircraft by more than 40%. Yet Ambani's firm was not a defence specialist.

BILLIONAIRES IN POLITICS

Such examples of intertwined relationships between government and business figures in India are so frequent that a book by Financial Times journalist James Crabtree, *The billionaire raj: A journey through India's new gilded age*, has become a bestseller.

In 2002 (the latest year for which figures are available) 30 of the 245 members of the upper house (the Rajya Sabha) were from business. This involvement of business directly in politics is common. In France, 21 senators are listed as being heads of enterprises. In the United States, two notable if very different examples are the current president, Donald Trump, and the former mayor of New York (2001-2013), Michael Bloomberg.

As pointed out by Paul A. Baran of Stanford and Paul M. Sweezy of Harvard, it is rare for politicians to be open with voters about their business dealings. **DOES BUSINESS MEAN DEVELOPMENT?**

Most such politicians describe their approach as "business friendly" or connections as "progress", which in Hindi is translated as vikas. The word has been at the heart of Narendra Modi's campaign since 2014.

Yet the country faces serious economic and development issues. The table below is based on selected indicators from World Bank and other sources, and is important for understanding the background to the statistics being banded. For example, when inflation was running at above 10% during 2009-2012, it was a serious election issue, but today it is not because inflation is down to 5%.

Data indicate that in India poverty levels have fallen from 40% to 20%. But with a population of 1.4 billion people, the 20% figure means that 280 million of the country's population is living in poverty – the combined total population of the biggest four or five European countries.

Certainly, India's gross national income per capita has quadrupled, but has only tripled in purchasing

power parity terms. This means that the currency is devalued against the US dollar and the real progress is significantly less. GDP growth rates have been as high as 10% in a few years, and given that the poverty ratio is reduced, part of this seems to have trickled down, as can be seen from the World Bank data. For example, almost all Indian villages have now been electrified, even though this may mean that only a small number of people actually have electricity.

AN UNEQUAL ACCESS TO PROGRESS

This unequal access to progress is disturbing, as indicated by India's Gini coefficient, a measure of inequality. A Gini coefficient of 0 shows perfect equality, while 1 indicates maximal inequality. A recent OECD working paper shows that income inequality is higher in emerging economies – including India, where it is almost 0.5 – than those in developed countries.

The Gini coefficient is usually looked at in terms of income or wealth: Income is a "flow" concept of what one earns over a year, while wealth is a "stock" concept of the assets one owns at a point in time. The Gini coefficient of wealth inequalities are much higher than Gini coefficients of income inequalities even in the OECD – for example, the wealth Gini of France would be 0.70, and that of the United States and most Scandinavian countries would be over 0.80.

However, for emerging countries the data required to calculate these is not available and other proxies must be used. For example, Credit Suisse reports that wealth inequality in India is second only to Russia: the top 1% and the top 10% control more than 50% and 70%, respectively, of the country's wealth.

DECLINE OF THE INDUSTRIAL WORLD

One of the reasons for such disparities is the tendency of capitalism to limit wages and increase profits. This is enhanced by mergers and acquisitions that increase monopoly power. This in turn leads to the rise of the "happy few" who concentrate and aggregate wealth, stock options and companies. However, there is a limit to what these few people can consume. As a result, aggregate demand falls, limiting growth and pushing into poverty greater numbers of those who need to consume but do not have the purchasing power. They in turn search the cheapest solution, which is often to purchase Chinese-made goods.

In China, growth is fuelled by global demand, economies of scale and high productivity of its workers. In India, however, the share of industry seems to be rapidly declining, unable to compete with imports. Some observers such as Dani Rodrik, Amrit Amirapu and Arvind Subramanian consider that it is unlikely that industrialisation will return to India and that the country still relies heavily on its software services.

The table above shows that the value added by agriculture and industry has reduced to 16% and 27% of GDP, respectively. However, these sectors

still employ a lot of people, 43% and 24%, respectively. During the elections, the votes of farmers and industry workers remained important and politicians have to appeal to the two sectors, as much as to services, whose share has grown to 33% of the occupational structure.

The working class in India are no longer the traditional voters of the waning communist parties which now rule only in the southern most Kerala State. The other major state is West Bengal, where the working class brought them to power two decades ago but have now changed their support to the regional party, Trinamool Congress, headed by Mamata Banerjee.

This partly explains why the farmers remain the core of support for several political parties. For example, the Congress Party has promised a farm loan waiver. During the ongoing elections it has also pushed its "Nyuntam Aay Yojanan" (NYAY) scheme, which would assure minimum income to all farmers.

DAY-TO-DAY DEVELOPMENT LEFT OUT

Many in India feel that the basic infrastructure has improved, the digital divide remains a major problem for those who do not have electricity to charge phones or get Internet.

Primary education has taken a great leap forward, but secondary education has still a long way to go. Nevertheless, the secondary enrolment rate has increased by over 60% in the 15-year period reported from 45% to 74%. The life expectancy has increased very little – 68 years in India compared to 80 in developed countries, indicating that public and private investments in health have not kept up.

At the same time, pollution has doubled since 2000, as indicated by the CO2 emissions. According to a recent statement by Greenpeace 22 of the world's most polluted cities are in India.

UNEMPLOYED YOUTH, A DEMOGRAPHIC TIME BOMB

Unemployment today in India is only 6.7%, considerably below that of France and many developed countries, but 80% of the jobs are vulnerable or within the informal sector. This represents a demographic time bomb, as most of those who fall victim to unemployment are men and women between 15 and 24 years. As indicated in the table, their unemployment rate in 2015 was 10.4%, almost three times the overall figure of 3.5%.

The impact of youth unemployment is particularly severe, as recent studies have demonstrated that it can create or increase substance-abuse issues and mental problems.

But with India's GDP growing at 8% per year, the impact on politics has been considerable. Many Indian voters seem willing for the moment to overlook the everyday struggles they may face, hoping that the trickle-down effect of a "business friendly" government will help the overall economy.

[Arvind Ashta is Professor Finance and Control, Burgundy School of Business; Amarendra Sahoo is Economist, SRM University]

Safeguarding women after disasters: some progress, but not enough

KRISTIN BERGTORA SANDVIK
theconversation.com

Hundreds of Mozambicans were killed and thousands made homeless recently by Cyclones Idai and Kenneth. Almost immediately, there were reports of a sadly familiar story: women being forced to trade sex for food by local community leaders distributing aid.

Globally, international organisations appear to be grappling with the issue more seriously than before. Yet reports about sexual exploitation keep coming. How does the aid community strategise to protect women's safety in disaster situations?

Over the past 15 years, I have done research on sexual exploitation of displaced women in Uganda and Colombia. I have also worked with a variety of humanitarian organisations on accountability and legalisation. Through this, I have identified the factors necessary to bring justice to the victims of predatory aid workers.

Sexual exploitation must be recognised as a real and widespread problem. There must be staff and management accountability. Transgressions must be sanctioned through disciplinary or penal measures. But there are also major dilemmas that need to be understood and tackled by governments, agencies and, most importantly, local communities.

SEXUAL EXPLOITATION IN AID

The sexual exploitation of disaster and conflict victims is a global – and longstanding – phenomenon. Over the last 25 years, there have been radical changes in the standards of global public morality around the conduct of personnel working for international organisations and NGOs when vulnerable adults and children are involved.

Nevertheless, the willingness to see sexual exploitation as an inherent feature of the international community's intervention to bring development, humanitarian aid or peace has been much slower to evolve.

It was only 24 years ago that UNHCR issued guidelines on sexual violence and refugees that expressly men-

tioned international refugee workers as being implicated in sexual violence against refugees.

The sexual abuse of vulnerable women and girls in several African countries by international aid workers was recently described as "endemic". It was also noted that perpetrators easily moved around the sector undetected.

Several recent cases have been reported from Cote d'Ivoire, to the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Namibia, Liberia, Sierra Leone, South Sudan and the Central African Republic.

These have involved aid workers and peacekeepers, as well as local aid workers and government employees.

In my research on refugees, accusations concerning "sex for resettlement" registration surface regularly. I found these to be frequent while working on refugee resettlement in Kampala 15 years ago. Despite the UNHCR's promise to reform, similar accusations keep resurfacing, most recently in Kenya. The time has come for the international community to seriously debate the power mechanisms embedded in the resettlement process that enable sexual exploitation to fester.

WHAT WILL FIX THE PROBLEM?

The first step is to organise accountability.

Humanitarian accountability first emerged as a concern in the 1980s. It was institutionalised in the 1994 Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and NGOs in Disaster Relief. The 1996 Joint Evaluation of Emergency Assistance to Rwanda was a defining moment.

That report resulted in several sector-wide initiatives. Five years ago efforts were made to streamline these in the revised Core Humanitarian Standards.

Throughout this period, sexual exploitation has been considered the worst possible behaviour humanitarian workers can be guilty of. But it has not been clear what constitutes exploitation and in which relationships it takes place. The lack of a definition, the unwillingness to articulate and enforce robust norms for professional behaviour and the absence

of effective complaint mechanisms and protections for whistle-blowers have contributed to a culture of impunity for predatory behaviour against aid recipients.

Early policy responses to sexual exploitation were concerned with reputational issues. But over the past 15 years the humanitarian sector has seen a flurry of institutional initiatives to grapple with this specific issue. The effort to prevent sexual exploitation and abuse is led by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee.

The aid sector is now engaging in "safeguarding exercises". These emerged after the Oxfam scandal in Haiti. The organisation was seen as failing to act on sexual misconduct by staff in the aftermath of the 2010 earthquake, and then to have attempted a cover-up.

Safeguarding includes all actions by aid actors to protect staff from harm (abuse, sexual harassment and violence) and to ensure staff do not harm beneficiaries.

This broad definition represents both a welcome recognition of the scope of the problem and an opportunity for a comprehensive approach. But it also creates some new challenges. Three are particularly worth noting.

THE CHALLENGES

Who gets a voice: There has been vocal concern about the lack of inclusiveness in how safeguarding is practised. Critics have noted that a safeguarding industry was hatched with little attention to local and national context or participation. There is a view that safeguarding is yet another Western-centric practice. I think this critique is true. But it also creates a dilemma: should global norms about sexual exploitation in international aid be up for local negotiation?

Regulation and criminalisation. In recent years, there have been calls to regulate foreign aid actors more robustly. This is understandable. Aid actors have operated with a great deal of license and even impunity under the humanitarian banner. But drawing up

new laws also creates problems. This is particularly true in a context where African civil society generally is under pressure from new restrictive laws that curtail their activities.

Responding to the call to "do something", the international community has embraced criminalisation and criminal prosecutions to promote and strengthen the fight against impunity. But opting for criminal law and the courtroom rests on a deeply simplistic framing of structural power imbalances in aid. Legal strategies are costly and slow. The focus on sexual violence in disasters and conflicts also risks crowding out concern for other aspects of women's lives.

Localisation: Since 2016 there has been a significant focus on the localisation of aid. The Charter for Change focuses on contracting, resource allocation, transparency and communication. It highlights the importance of not undermining local capacity. The process is generally painfully slow and a shockingly small percentage of international aid funding is actually allocated to local actors.

At the same time, there is a persistent call for international actors to do, control and know more about what goes on locally to limit corruption, incompetence and abuse. This call comes partly from media in donor states addressing taxpayers, but also from watchdogs within the sector.

This is also the case for sexual exploitation. In its report, Human Rights Watch demands that "international partners, particularly the UN, should ensure greater oversight of the conduct of local officials during the distribution of humanitarian aid". This will not come for free.

The question is how a balance can be found between control and localisation – and who gets to determine what this balance should be.

[the writer is Research Professor in Humanitarian Studies and Professor of Sociology of Law, Department of Criminology and Sociology of Law, University of Oslo, Peace Research Institute Oslo (PRIO)]

Mamata's morphed picture: SC grants bail to BJP activist, asks her to apologise

NEW DELHI, MAY 14 (PTI): The Supreme Court on Tuesday directed immediate release of BJP's youth wing leader Priyanka Sharma on bail, days after she was arrested by the West Bengal police for allegedly posting a morphed image of Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on social media.

The top court directed Sharma to tender a "written apology" at the time of her release from jail for sharing the meme on Banerjee saying that freedom of speech of an individual ends when it infringes upon others' rights.

Sharma was arrested on May 10 by the police under section 500 (defamation) of the IPC and under other provisions of the Information Technology Act on a complaint of a local Trinamool Congress leader Vibhas Hazra.

She was sent to 14-day judicial custody by a trial court there.

A vacation bench, comprising justices Indira Banerjee and Sanjiv Khanna, which initially said that Sharma's apology will be a bail condition, later clarified that it will not be a condition for bail but she should apologise for sharing the post at the time of her release.

"The detainee, Priyanka Sharma, is directed to be immediately released on bail. The detainee shall, however, at the time of release, tender an apology in writing for putting up/sharing the pictures complained of on her Facebook account. It is made clear that this order is being made in the special facts



and circumstances of this case and shall not operate as a precedent," the bench said. The court also sought response from West Bengal government on whether a person can be arrested for sharing a post or meme on social media and posted the matter for further hearing after the summer vacation.

At the outset, senior advocate Neeraj Kishan Kaul, appearing for Priyanka's brother Rajib Sharma who has filed the plea in the apex court, said she was arrested and sent to 14-day judicial custody just for sharing the post which was already widely viral.

"She is not the creator of the meme but only shared it on social media which was already shared by thousands of people," Kaul said.

To this, the bench said, "There cannot be any equality to the wrong. Your freedom of speech and expression is non-negotiable but your freedom ends when it infringes upon the rights of

other." The top court said it could direct her forthwith release but she has to tender an apology for sharing the post.

"We have seen the picture which has been shared. If someone is hurt then you can apologise for it," the bench said.

Kaul contended that apology will have a chilling effect on the fundamental right of freedom of speech and expression.

"We do not see that there should be any difficulty for you in apologising for your post on social media. We are not asking you to apologise for others.

"Let her tender an apology we will forthwith grant bail. You take instruction. Since you are member of BJP the insinuation is different. The other side may have taken it differently. Had you been a common person, then may be it could have been no problem," the bench said.

Kaul said the provisions of IT Act and IPC under which she was



arrested does not apply in this case. Referring to the apex court's verdict in Shreya Singhal case in which the court had scrapped section 66A of the IT Act, Kaul said Sharma has been arrested by the police under this provision also.

The court said that it was keeping the question of law open on whether arrest can be made for sharing such posts and at present is only dealing with the bail.

"You are a member of a political party. Elections are going on. We understand all these things," the bench said, adding that "you cannot put anybody's face on anybody. If it is going round. It is wrong."

Kaul contended that such an apology would have a chilling effect on freedom of speech and expression and tomorrow West Bengal police can arrest anybody for four days for giving a statement and then ask for an apology. "If you say sorry, it does not bring you down. We are

not going on the angle of freedom of speech and expressions," the bench told Kaul at the fag end of hearing.

On Monday, Kaul had mentioned the matter in the top court for urgent hearing saying Sharma was forced to move the apex court as there was a complete strike in local courts till May 14 in Howrah and moreover, she had been remanded in 14 day judicial custody by a Howrah court on May 11.

Section 500 of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) entails punishment for defamation with simple imprisonment for a term which may extend to two years, or with fine, or with both.

Sharma had allegedly shared on Facebook the photo in which Banerjee's face has been photo-shopped on to actor Priyanka Chopra's picture from the MET Gala event in New York.

Her arrest was followed by protests from the BJP and other social media users.

Centre approves 2nd ICP for Tripura

AGARTALA, MAY 14 (PTI): The Centre has approved the Tripura government's proposal for setting up a second Integrated Check Post (ICP) and two new border 'haats' in the state to improve trade and bilateral relations with neighbouring Bangladesh, an official said on Tuesday.

The decision was taken during an inter-ministerial meeting chaired by the secretary of border management of the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) in Delhi on Monday, Special Secretary, Industries and Commerce of Tripura, Kiran Gitye told PTI.

The Land Port Authority of India (LPI) would construct the ICP at Sabroom sub-division in South Tripura and this will be the second ICP along the Indo-Bangla border in the state after Akhaura ICP here, which was set up in 2013.

Gitte, who represented Tripura in the meet-

ing said, the two border 'haats' (markets) would also be set up at Raghna in North Tripura district bordering Sylhet district and Ghosh Khamar in South Tripura district bordering Feni district of Bangladesh.

The ICP project would be directly monitored by the Prime Ministers Office (PMO) due to its geo-political importance, the official said.

The state government had sent the ICP proposal to the MHA for linking the bridge on river Feni with Chittagong division of the neighbouring country in 2016.

The Chittagong port, considered one of the best ports in south-east Asia, is about 70 km from the bridge that connects Tripura with Bangladesh.

Tripuras Industries and Commerce Department has already identified 49 acres, including 9 acres of government land, for setting up the ICP at Sabroom. The first

border 'haat' was set up at Srinagar in Sabroom in January, 2015 and the second border 'haat' was set up at Kamalasagar in Sipahijala district in June, 2015. Business takes place in the 'haats' once a week with people living within 5 km radius of the border selling and buying locally produced goods and crops.

No local taxes on the products are collected from the items sold in the 'haats'.

Meanwhile, Indian High Commissioner in Dhaka, Riva Ganguli met Tripura Chief Minister, Biplab Kumar Deb here on Monday and discussed issues such as trade and commerce and connectivity between India and Bangladesh.

"We discussed how to increase trade and commerce between India and Bangladesh and improve connectivity between Bangladesh and Tripura," Ganguly told reporters on Monday.

Normal seivices restored at Kol airport after 9 hrs: Official



KOLKATA, MAY 14 (PTI): A day after scores of passengers were inconvenienced at the Kolkata airport due to technical glitches in the check-in system, a senior official said it took the authorities nine hours to restore normal services.

"The system, which slowed down and conked off around 5.15pm yesterday (Monday), was up and running by 2.30am," Airport Director Kaushik Bhattacharjee said Tuesday.

A tweet by Kolkata Airport thanked passengers and other stakehold-

ers for their patience. "The Local Area Network has been restored at around 0230hrs. We thank our passengers, airlines and all the stakeholders for the patience and cooperation," it said.

Five Kolkata-bound flights were also diverted Monday evening owing to bad weather in the city. The technical snag did not affect the arrival of flights to Kolkata, thunderstorms and subsequent rain did, a spokesperson of Airports Authority of India (AAI) said. "A Singapore Airline flight was diverted to

Dhaka, three others were diverted to Bhubaneswar and one to Lucknow," the spokesperson said.

The AAI owns and manages more than 100 airports - including the Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose International (NSCBI) Airport in Kolkata.

A fault was detected at the local area network (LAN) of NSCBI Airport Monday evening, hampering check-in process of the passengers.

Around 30 flights were delayed by an average of 20-25 minutes as boarding passes had to be issued manually.

DRI seizes gold bars worth nearly Rs 8 cr smuggled into India from Myanmar, arrests six

KOLKATA, MAY 14 (PTI): The Directorate of Revenue Intelligence (DRI) has seized gold bars worth nearly Rs eight crore which was smuggled into India from Myanmar, and arrested six people for allegedly being a part of the smuggling racket, according to an official statement issued Tuesday.

The gold was smuggled into India from Myanmar through the porous Indo-Myanmar border at Moreh in Manipur.

Acting on specific inputs, DRI officials Monday seized 24.15 kg gold bars valued at Rs 7.99

crore from the possession of six people who were travelling by bus from Manipur to Siliguri via Coochbehar, the statement said. The six people who have been arrested are residents of Manipur and were engaged in carrying smuggled foreign-origin gold for quite some time now, the DRI said in the statement.

In the last financial year, the DRI had seized over 464 kg of gold within the geographical precincts of West Bengal and Sikkim, smuggled from Bangladesh, Myanmar, Nepal, Bhutan and even China, valued at Rs 145.69 crore in 46 cases.

BJP-TMC clashes in Diamond Harbour LS seat ahead of polling

Kolkata, May 14 (PTI): A number of houses, shops and vehicles were damaged and several policemen injured in clashes that went on for three days between workers of the TMC and the BJP in Diamond Harbour Lok Sabha seat where polling will be held on May 19, officials said Tuesday.

The situation there in South 24 Parganas district is peaceful now and the West Bengal government has sought a report from the district administration. "Several houses, shops and vehicles were ransacked during the clashes that began on Friday night and con-

tinued for three days. No casualty was reported," a senior official at the state secretariat told PTI.

"This is a political clash, not communal. We have sought report from the district administration on this," the IAS officer said. Enquired about the current situation there, he said, "At the moment everything is normal and peaceful. We have posted a police picket there."

The clashes broke out in places of Satgachhia assembly segment under Diamond Harbour Lok Sabha seat and several policemen were injured in clashes, a district official said.

Curfew relaxed in Assam's violence-hit Hailakandi

HAILAKANDI (ASSAM), MAY 14 (PTI): Curfew in violence-hit Hailakandi district was on Tuesday relaxed from 7 am till midnight following improvement in situation, an official order by the Deputy Commissioner Keerthi Jalli said here.

Night curfew, however, will remain in force for eight to 10 days.

Banks, markets, educational institutions and government offices remained open and public and private vehicles were seen plying on the roads during the relaxation period, officials added.

Internet services, which was suspended since Friday night following the unrest on that day, resumed on Tuesday morning.

In a letter addressed to the people, the deputy commissioner said the need of the hour is to maintain peace and communal harmony "as the district is going through a difficult phase".

"I am aware that imposition of curfew has caused inconvenience to you. I promise you that it is a temporary measure and done to act as a deterrent to the anti-social elements," she said.

Urging the people not to be swayed

by emotions and not to believe all that is being circulated on social media, Jalli said, "I appeal to everyone to cross-check and verify the information with the district administration."

The administration is wholly committed to ensure peace and security to all the citizens, she said in the letter.

The deputy commissioner assured the people that those who had triggered the violence will be brought to book and stringent action will be initiated against them as per law.

Following the clashes on Friday, curfew was imposed initially in Hailakandi town from 1 pm and later extended to the entire district from 6 pm, as the authorities apprehended breach of peace.

One person was killed in police firing and at least 15 people were injured, while more than 15 vehicles were damaged and 12 shops vandalised and set on fire in some parts of the town during the clashes. The Assam government has instituted a one-man inquiry panel headed by Additional Chief Secretary Rajiv Kumar Bora to conduct a probe into the incident.

5 BRO personnel killed during construction of bridge in Arunachal Pradesh

ITANAGAR, MAY 14 (PTI): Five personnel of the Border Road Organisation (BRO) has been killed in Upper Subansiri district of Arunachal Pradesh while constructing a steel Bailey bridge, an official said Tuesday.

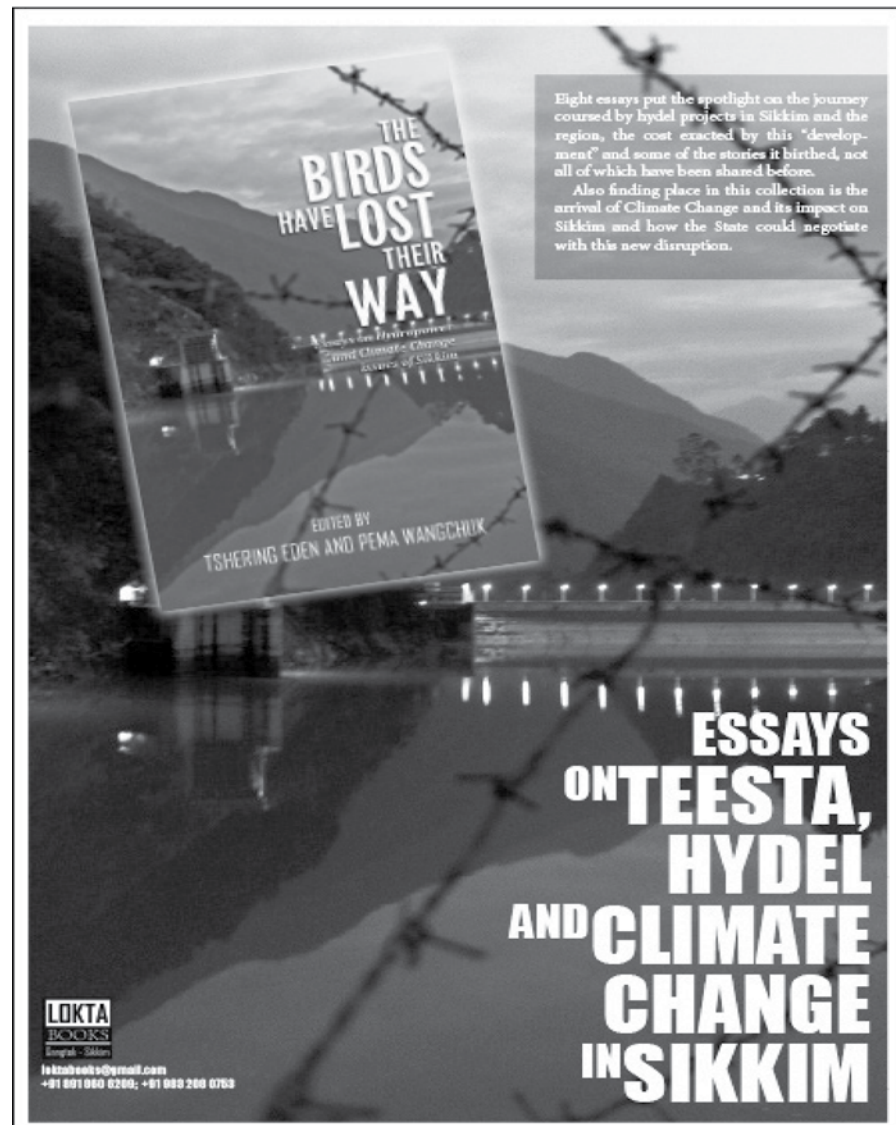
The incident happened on May 11 when the personnel of Project Arunak were constructing the 180-feet-long bridge along the strategically important Natcho-Tama Chung Chung Road near the remote

Limeking circle in the district that shares border with China, Project Arunank Chief Engineer Brigadier R S Rawal told PTI. He said that he received the information of the incident on Tuesday from officials at the accident site due to poor telephone connectivity.

Pioneers Baidur Rehman, Pramod Kumar, Mahabir Sah and Tapan Nath died instantly, while hydraulic operator Anil Budhwar, who had suffered grievous injuries in

his spine and pelvis, died during evacuation to district headquarters Daporijo, Brigadier Rawal said. "The body of the four pioneers got stuck at the bridge but three were recovered when the last report was received and being sent to their native places," he said.

Brigadier Rawal said rescue operations were affected due to incessant rains, besides very strong water current and high water level of the Subansiri river and steep cliff of the accident site.



Family affair as Serena, Venus set up Rome rematch

ROME, MAY 14 (AFP): Serena Williams will take on sister Venus in the second round of the Italian Open more than two decades after they last met on the red clay of Rome after both advanced in different styles. Four-time Rome winner Serena, 37, returned after two months out injured easing through 6-4, 6-2 against Swedish qualifier Rebecca Petersen.

But 38-year-old Venus, whose only Rome title came back in 1999, needed over three hours to battle past Belgian Elise Mertens 7-5, 3-6, 7-6 (7/4). Serena has not played since a hard-fought three-set win also over Petersen in the second round at the Miami Open in March before withdrawing with a knee injury. The 23-time Grand Slam winner -- now ranked 11th -- also withdrew from Indian Wells in March complaining of illness. Watched by her husband Alexis Ohanian, Williams sealed victory on her second match point against her 64th-ranked opponent after 76 minutes on court.

"I felt good, I wasn't sure how it was going to feel," said Williams.

"It's been a while, I haven't played a ton of matches this year, not by choice, just by force.

"I really, really, actu-



ally desperately wanted to be on the tour and to be playing, but it hasn't been able to work out.

"It felt good to finally be back out. Hopefully I'll be able to keep it up."

Despite her lack of practice, tenth-seeded Williams was never threatened by Petersen, despite 22 unforced errors by the American in the first set. "I haven't been able to train or practice a lot, I was out much longer than I expected," she explained.

"I did everything I could to stay fit and keep my cardio up. I love the clay season and wanted

to do everything to be a part of it and I'm here.

"I've just been on this diet basically. It's been awful. When you're sedentary, it becomes hard to manage your body. So it's just basically you have to eat grass.

"It was a nightmare. But it worked and it paid off. I feel like I'm taking it one day at a time."

- FIERCE SIBLING RIVALRY -

In the meantime she has been enjoying sharing her favourite sites in Rome with her daughter Olympia who turns two in September.

"It's really fun be-

cause I took her to the Colosseum, then I took her to the (Trevi) fountain," she said. "It was really cool to share my favourite city with her, some of my favourite things to see. Obviously the pasta and the food."

"It's okay," she said of all the tourists. "I just smile and take pictures. I don't mind so much."

It will be another family affair on the courts of the Foro Italico, when she plays Venus, with the sisters last meeting in 1998, 21 years ago. "That's crazy," laughed Serena.

"I mean, it was like the semi-finals or the fi-

nals. No, the quarter-finals? I vaguely remember that. "We play each other a lot. It seems like every tournament nowadays we meet early. Yeah, it is what it is. We'll see.

"She has a tough first round," she predicted.

Venus, meanwhile, came out on top of a tight contest that went all the way to a third-set tie-break despite letting the Belgian back in by missing six match points on her serve. She missed a further two match points as Mertens battled to level the set at 6-6, before finally taking the match in the

tie-break and setting up a 31st clash with her sibling. "We're just as fierce. Venus is just as fierce. We both really want to get some match play. We'll both do the best that we can," warned Serena, who leads 18-12, the most recent at last year's US Open.

Venus said she remembered "pretty much zero" about their last meeting in Rome which she won all those years ago. "I know that's she's going to play well and compete really well, that's a given," added the 7-time Grand Slam singles winner.

Ex-Olympic cycling champion Samuel Sanchez banned

ORBETELLO, ITALY, MAY 14 (AFP): Spain's Samuel Sanchez, the 2008 Olympic road race champion, has been given a two-years back-dated ban after testing positive for human growth hormones in 2017.

The International Cycling Union accepted Sanchez's explanation that a contaminated sup-

plement was at the root of the problem but said Monday it was banning him until August 2019.

The 41-year-old was sacked by his then team BMC at the time of the test, just ahead of the Vuelta a Espana 2017.

Sanchez, who won five stages at the Vuelta over his career, is free to contest the decision.

Tiger chases 16th major, No. 1 spot as PGA pratice begins



BETHPAGE, UNITED STATES, MAY 14 (AFP): Tiger Woods launched his quest for a 16th major title, and a possible return to world number one, with a PGA Championship practice round in cold and rainy conditions. The 43-year-old American, who snapped an 11-year major win drought by capturing last month's Masters, toured the front nine at Bethpage Black in just under 2 1/2 hours ahead of Thursday's start to the year's second major tournament.

"I feel good," Woods told Golfweek on Monday. "Got a couple more days of work to get in and I'll be ready to go."

Woods hopes to pull within two of the all-time record 18 majors won by Jack Nicklaus and take a fifth PGA crown, which would match the career record hauls of Nicklaus and Walter Hagen. "To tie Walter Hagen and Jack Nicklaus with five wins would be a very special accomplishment," Woods said.

With a victory, Woods would also match the all-time career US PGA wins record of 82 by Sam Snead. Woods, whose career had been jeopardized by years of nagging back pain before 2017 spinal fusion surgery, won the 2002 US Open at Bethpage Black and shared sixth in the 2009 US Open, but those were in warmer mid-June conditions. This marks the first PGA Championship since 1948 to be played in May after the event was shifted this year from its traditional August spot in golf's lineup.

Woods practiced four times last week, including an 18-hole session at the Long Island public layout last Wednesday, two days after accepting the Presidential Medal of Freedom in a White House ceremony.

The in-depth shot-making session at Bethpage was the first time Woods had seen the facility since the 2012 US PGA Barclays tournament.

Sixth-ranked Woods is among five players with a chance to top next week's rankings. Top-ranked Dustin Johnson, defending champion Brooks Koepka, England's second-ranked Justin Rose, four-time

major winner Rory McIlroy of Northern Ireland and Woods all have a chance at the top spot.

Johnson, Rose, third-ranked Koepka and fourth-rated McIlroy could take number one with a triumph while Woods would need to win, have neither Rose nor Koepka finish second alone and have Johnson finish worse than solo 11th place.

- TIGER OLDEST NO. 1? -

Woods, who has not been world number one since March 2013, has spent a record 683 weeks atop the rankings.

Should he return to the top, Woods would become the oldest world number one, overtaking Australian legend Greg Norman for the distinction. Las Vegas Westgate Superbook oddsmakers have Woods as a 10-1 co-favorite with Johnson and two-time US Open winner Koepka with four-time major champion Rory McIlroy just behind at 12-1. Woods jumped 13th to sixth after winning the Masters but hasn't played since his Masters triumph. This marks only the sixth time in his career Woods has played two majors without at least one event between them, the first time since the 2013 British Open.

Woods had fallen to 1,199th in the world rankings in December 2017 after spinal fusion surgery as a last-ditch move to ease nagging back pain that made simple movements difficult.

From there, Woods contended at last year's British Open and PGA, won his first title in more than five years by taking the 2018 Tour Championship. That set the stage for Woods to win his fifth Masters green jacket.

- THOMAS WITHDRAWS - Fifth-ranked Justin Thomas withdrew from the tournament with a right wrist injury, denying this from being the first major tournament with all of the world's 100 top players in the field. "As a past champion this tournament is extra special to me," Thomas said in a statement. "It consistently has the strongest field in golf and I'm disappointed not to be among those competing this year but I'm optimistic about a return in the near future.

Every team to have dedicated anti-corruption officer during ODI WC: Report

LONDON, MAY 14 (PTI): In a first, all the 10 participating teams of the upcoming ODI World Cup will have a dedicated anti-corruption officer attached with it to deliver a corruption-free tournament, according to a report.

The report in the 'Daily Telegraph' said the ICC will attach an anti-corruption official with each team starting from warm-up matches till the end of the tournament.

"Previously, the International Cricket Council's Anti-Corruption Unit had personnel deployed at each venue, meaning that teams would deal with a number of officials over the course of a tournament," the report said.

"Now, the same official will be assigned to a

team from the warm-up matches to the end of the competition, staying in the same hotel as the players and travelling with them to training and matches."

It said the move was part of ICC Anti-Corruption Unit's effort to deliver a fixing and corruption-free World Cup and also an effort to build better relations between players and the ACU.

"By being with teams throughout the competition, it is also thought that anti-corruption officials will be better placed to spot any potential corruptors who lurk near players or back-room staff and so identify any behaviour that may be suspicious," the report further stated.

4 students get LaLiga football schools scholarship

MUMBAI, MAY 14 (PTI): The LaLiga Football Schools Scholarship has been granted to four Indian students, who will travel to Spain and train with a first division club.

The four students - Rian Katoch and Asik Shaikh, both from Mumbai, and Ishan Murali and Vidwath Shetty, from Bengaluru, will visit Spain from May 26 to June 5 to train with CD Leganes, said a media release issued here on Tuesday.

During their visit, the students would be trained in various technical and non-technical aspects of football through sessions with club officials and Spain's best youth players, the release said.

Launched in association with the Embassy of Spain in India and private firm India On Track, the LaLiga Football Schools Scholarship aims to reward the best Indian talent and fast-track their sport goals annually, it added.

Voices critical of CPEC being suppressed in Pakistan, US lawmakers told

BY LALIT K JHA WASHINGTON, MAY 14 (PTI): People and the media in Pakistan are "scared" of speaking against the multi-billion-dollar China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) as those critical of it are being suppressed, treated as anti-national or branded as terrorists, a former official in the Obama administration has told US lawmakers.

The USD 60 billion CPEC, which connects Gwadar Port in Pakistan's Balochistan with China's Xinjiang province, is the flagship project of the multi-million dollar Border and Road Initiative (BRI) launched by Chinese President Xi Jinping when he came to power in 2013. It aims to link Southeast Asia, Central Asia, the Gulf region, Africa and Europe with a network of land and sea routes.

Testifying before a Congressional committee, Shamila Chaudhary from the Johns Hopkins University School for Advanced International Studies, told the lawmakers last week that at the very local level, people who criticise the CPEC are often labelled as terrorists. "Rarely will you read an article that's critical about CPEC in the Pakistani media. Very rarely. There's been a media capture essentially and there's only the CPEC narrative because people are scared or they've been intimidated or threatened not to do certain pieces," Chaudhary said.

"There are anti-terrorism laws that can be used against them. Worse things could possibly happen. So it's a



very real threat," she said. "It has already done a lot of damage to the civil society and the democratic culture that's fairly vibrant, despite their country's history with democracy," she added.

Responding to questions from the lawmakers about the Chinese model of development, Chaudhary said unlike America's soft power, it does not increase people-to-people relationship. "The Chinese don't have that and the Chinese nationals that are going to, say, Pakistan, for example, they're not there to become part of the culture or learn about the communities or have cross-cultural dialogue," she said.

Chinese are in Pakistan to make money, she alleged. "They live in enclaves and essentially what people call Chinese colonies and go to their own restaurants. And that's not something that's going to favour China, Pakistan or China's cooperation with any country for that matter over the long run. Local communities will be very upset by those things, I believe," Chaudhary said.

Informing the lawmakers that the Chinese financial assistance to Pakistan is being kept secret, she said the information now has been shared by Pakistan with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) so that it can be bailed out of the current financial crisis. "The deal (with IMF) is almost complete and it's my understanding that information has actually been shared, and so, you know, what Pakistan won't share publicly as part of a bilateral deal with the Chinese, I think it's more willing to share when it needs it," Chaudhary said.

The CPEC, she said, hurts US regional interests by disrupting the fragile India-Pakistan ties, a nuclear-fuelled dynamic that demands US stewardship from time to time during times of crisis.

"China's provision of surveillance, data collection capabilities and new hardware to the Pakistani military may seem like it improves security, but such tools also increase the likelihood of invasive data collection, misuse of information and violations of privacy," she said.

"The notion that the Pakistani military might start to mimic Chinese authoritarianism is no longer theoretical. Pakistani civil society and media report more aggressive tactics by the military to silence critical voices. They share a common refrain, that the military is more powerful than ever and that's because of China," Chaudhary said.

She told the lawmakers that in Pakistan, Chinese influence stands alone, changing the rules of the game for everyone else. For example, Pakistan no longer publicly discloses the terms of its loans from China. Indeed, the CPEC pretends immense geo-economic and geopolitical advantages for China in Pakistan, but its repercussions will dwarf any comparable American influence, she said.

To protect US geopolitical options in the future, the US should support the Pakistani and regional actors most threatened by Chinese influence. Ultimately, countering China's rise will require the US to create policies that both address and benefit from the needs of other countries, Chaudhary said.

Putin meets Pompeo as US seeks 'a way forward' in ties

SOCHI (RUSSIA), MAY 14 (AFP): Russian President Vladimir Putin on Tuesday meets US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo in the highest-level talks between the rival powers in nearly a year as they see if they can make headway on a raft of disagreements from Venezuela to Iran to arms control.

Pompeo will visit Putin in the Black Sea resort of Sochi less than two weeks after US President Donald Trump voiced optimism about improving relations with Moscow during a more than one-hour telephone conversation with the Russian leader.

The new diplomatic push followed the long-awaited report in the United States by investigator Robert Mueller which found that Russia interfered in the 2016 election but that the Trump campaign did not collude with Moscow, partially lifting a cloud that had hung over the mogul-turned-president for two years.

Putin is expected to receive Pompeo Tuesday evening after the US secretary of state holds talks with Moscow's top diplomat Sergei Lavrov.

"My meetings in Russia will highlight a number of important topics," Pompeo tweeted on Tuesday.

"On some issues we may agree, on others we may disagree, but when it's in our national interests, it is our responsibility to find a way forward." Pompeo is the highest-ranking US official to see Putin since July when Trump met him in Helsinki and stunned the US political class by appearing to accept the Russian leader's statement at face value



that he did not meddle in the US election.

Despite Trump's conciliatory attitude toward Putin, Washington and Moscow are at loggerheads on an array of urgent strategic questions, including the Venezuelan crisis, Iran, the Syrian civil war and the conflict in Ukraine.

Hours before he meets Pompeo, Putin is expected to visit a top military flight test centre and inspect new weaponry on Tuesday.

At a meeting Monday evening, Putin stressed that Russia was developing hypersonic weapons and tasked his top brass with also developing defences against such weapons.

"We understand full well that leading countries of the world will sooner or later get such weapons," Putin said.

"This means that we should get hold of defences against such types of weapons before" Western countries put such weapons into combat service.

Both the United States and Russia hope to make some progress on arms control, with Mos-

cow seeking a five-year extension of the New START treaty, which caps the number of nuclear warheads well below Cold War limits and is set to expire in 2021.

The Trump administration earlier this year pulled out of another key arms control agreement, the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces treaty, with NATO allies saying a Russian missile system was in violation. Moscow has denied the claims.

Last year Putin revealed a new generation of "invisible" nuclear weapons and warned of a new arms race if America pulled out of weapons treaties.

The Venezuela crisis is expected to be another key point of contention.

The United States has been trying for more than three months to topple Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro, a leftist firebrand whose re-election was widely criticised for irregularities, and Pompeo has repeatedly blamed Russia for giving him a lifeline.

Trump has, however, contradicted Pompeo, saying the Russian president assured him that

Moscow is not involved in Venezuela.

The US president's enthusiasm for courting Putin has little support in Washington, even within his own administration, which has kept up a campaign of pressure including sanctions on Russia over alleged election meddling and Moscow's support for armed separatists in Ukraine.

Pompeo, despite his close relationship with Trump, left little doubt on where he stood in remarks Saturday in California.

Addressing the conservative Claremont Institute, Pompeo said that US policymakers in recent decades had "drifted from realism" and chastised them for believing that "enfolding the likes of China and Russia into a so-called rules-based international order would hasten their domestic evolution towards democracy."

"But we can see now 30 years on, after the end of the Cold War, that the Putin regime slays dissidents in cold blood and invades its neighbours," Pompeo said.

Pompeo cancelled a

stop in Moscow scheduled for Monday to meet with European foreign ministers in Brussels, who have been uncomfortable with the hawkish direction of the United States, especially on Iran. The United States has pulled out of a nuclear deal backed by the Europeans, Russia and China and instead has slapped sweeping sanctions on Iran in an all-out effort to curb Tehran's regional clout.

The United States has recently ramped up the pressure by deploying to the region an aircraft carrier strike group and nuclear-capable bombers, warning vaguely of imminent threats from Iran, which UN inspectors say is complying with the 2015 accord.

Russia's Lavrov said he would have a "frank conversation" with Pompeo on Iran.

"We will try to clarify with Pompeo how the Americans plan to get out of this crisis, which was created by their unilateral decisions," Lavrov told reporters as he met his Chinese counterpart Wang Yi in Sochi on Monday.

Brother of Sudan's Bashir not in detention: army

KHARTOUM, MAY 14 (AFP): Sudan's ruling military council said Tuesday that a brother of ousted president Omar al-Bashir who it previously announced had been detained was actually not in custody.

On April 17, the military council had announced that it had detained two of Bashir's five brothers -- Abdallah Hassan al-Bashir and Al-Abbas Hassan al-Bashir.

"This statement was not accurate," military council spokesman Lieutenant General Shamseddine Kabbashi told reporters early on Tuesday.

He said on April 17 Abdallah had been arrested, and the next day Abbas was seen in an area bordering with a neighbouring country.

"Sudanese authorities have been in contact

with this country but it has refused to hand him over to us," he said without naming the country.

"Then news came that he is in Turkey," Kabbashi said without specifying whether he was referring to recent media reports of Abbas being in Turkey.

Bashir himself is being held in Khartoum's Kober prison, according to the council.

On Monday, Sudan's prosecutor general's office said Bashir had been charged over the killings of protesters during anti-regime protests that led to his ouster on April 11.

The charges form part of an investigation into the death of a medic killed during a protest in the capital's eastern district of Burri, the prosecutor general's office

said in a statement.

Ninety people were killed in protest-related violence after demonstrations initially erupted in December, a doctors' committee linked to the protest movement said last month.

The official death toll is 65.

On Monday, five protesters and an army major were shot dead in Khartoum, according to the committee, just hours after protest leaders and the ruling generals reached a breakthrough agreement on transitional authorities to run the country.

The army rulers who took power after Bashir's ouster and protest leaders are engaged in negotiations over handing of power from the generals to a civilian administration.

Iran too 'great' to be intimidated: Rouhani



TEHRAN, MAY 14 (AFP): Iran's President Hassan Rouhani has pledged the Islamic republic is "too great to be intimidated by anyone" in a late night meeting with clerics.

"God willing we will pass this difficult period with glory and our heads held high, and defeat the enemy," Rouhani said late Monday as he met Sunni clerics to mark the holy Muslim month of Ramadan, the official government website dolat.ir said.

He was speaking after four ships, including two

Saudi oil tankers, were reportedly attacked off the UAE coast on Sunday, in a sign of mounting regional tensions.

Iran has called for an investigation into what it called an "alarming" incident.

Iran and the United States have engaged in a war of words in recent weeks since Tehran began to roll back commitments set out in a landmark 2015 nuclear deal with world powers.

US President Donald Trump withdraw the United States from the

deal last year and have unilaterally reimposed stringent sanctions on Iran. Last month, Washington designated Iran's revolutionary guards as a "foreign terrorist organisation", the first time that part of a foreign government has been branded as such.

The dispatch of the USS Abraham Lincoln carrier group plus an amphibious assault ship, a Patriot missile battery and B-52 bombers by the US to the region has triggered fears of possible military clashes.

3 people dead, 2 injured following St Louis shooting

ST LOUIS, MAY 14 (AP): St Louis Police say five people have been shot, including three who have died, following a shooting on the city's north side.

Authorities say the shooting happened just before 9 pm Monday in the 4000 block of Shreve.

Police said one victim is in critical condition, while another is in serious but stable condition.

No further information was immediately available.

UN chief meets NZ mosque victims, decries online hate



CHRISTCHURCH, MAY 14 (AFP): UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres warned hate speech was spreading online "like wildfire" at a meeting with victims of the Christchurch mosque shootings Tuesday, vowing the world body will lead efforts to extinguish the problem.

Guterres visited the Al Noor mosque, one of two Muslim centres in the New Zealand city where a self-described white supremacist killed 51 people in a March 15 shooting that the attacker live-streamed on Facebook. The UN chief

is travelling the South Pacific to highlight the impact of climate change but said he also wanted to show his support for Christchurch's Muslim community during Ramadan. "I know there are no words to relieve the hurt and sorrow and pain, but I wanted to come here personally to transmit love, support and total and complete admiration," he said.

He told victims of the worst mass shooting in modern New Zealand history that there had been "a dangerous upsurge in hatred" as social media was exploited to

promote bigotry.

"Hate speech is spreading like wildfire in social media. We must extinguish it," the Portuguese diplomat said.

"There is no room for hate speech - online or offline." He highlighted a previously announced plan for his special adviser on genocide prevention Adama Dieng to combat online extremism.

He said Dieng's mission was to "bring together a United Nations team to scale up our response to hate speech and present a global plan of action". His remarks

come as New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern, who hosted Guterres when he arrived in Auckland on Sunday, embarks on her own quest to tame social media in Paris this week.

Ardern will co-host a meeting of world leaders and tech firms to promote a "Christchurch call" aimed at curbing online extremism.

She has been highly critical of social media giants in the wake of the Christchurch killings, saying they should be "taking ownership and responsibility over their platforms".

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RAINY DAY GLOW! The actress, Jessica Alba is all smiles while doing her rounds of visits in The Big Apple.

Actress Felicity Huffman pleads guilty in college admissions scandal

New York, May 14 (AFP): American actress Felicity Huffman pleaded guilty on Monday for paying bribes to help her daughter gain admission to a prestigious university, avoiding what was sure to be a well-publicised trial and probably also dodging jail time. The former "Desperate Housewives" star was the latest celebrity brought down by the wide-ranging college bribery scandal that's snared a slew of wealthy American parents. In a tearful appearance before federal judge Indira Talwani in Boston, Huffman pled guilty to paying 15,000 to boost her daughter's SAT college entrance exam score.

The crime is punishable by up to 20 years in prison and a fine of as much as 250,000, but by admitting guilt Huffman will likely avoid those penalties. Federal prosecutors have recommended a sentence of a year's probation and a 20,000 fine, though the judge can modify the penalty if she pleases.

Huffman announced her intention to plead guilty last month, saying she was

"ashamed" of what she had done. Sentencing is scheduled for September 13, US attorney for Massachusetts Andrew Lelling said.

Among the 50 people charged in the



admissions scandal -- a group that includes CEOs and partners at major law firms -- 10 have already pled guilty, including five parents.

Another 10 parents have said they will also plead guilty in the scandal that saw some of the accused pay as much as 400,000 to get their children into their chosen college.

'Empire' to end with season six

LOS ANGELES, MAY 14 (PTI): Fox has announced that its hit musical drama series "Empire" will be concluding after the upcoming sixth season.

According to The Wrap, Fox Entertainment CEO Charlie Collier on Monday said that the show's final season will be turned into a "television event".

"If you think about it, one of the great benefits of announcing a final season is that you actually allow the fans to lean in and have the ending they deserve, and that's everything we're trying to do with this iconic series," he added.

"Empire", featuring Taraji P Henson and Terrence Howard in the lead, is about a fictional hip hop music and entertainment company, Empire Entertainment. The drama surrounding the enterprise follows a family fighting for control over it. During its fifth

season, the show had hit rough weather after actor Jussie Smollett, who plays a pivotal role in the series, claimed that he was the victim of an assault which he said was racially and politically motivated, as well as homophobic.

He was, however, later accused by the police of staging the attack so as to save his character from getting axed from the show. The actor has denied any wrongdoing.

The controversy resulted in his character being written out of the show's final two episodes of season five.

Asked about the actor's return to the show, Collier said, "At this point, we have no plans for that."

"Empire" was created by Lee Daniels and Danny Strong, who executive produce alongside Brian Grazer, Francie Calfo, Sanaa Hamri, Dennis Hammer, Matt Pyken and Diane Ademu-John.

George Clooney advised Ben Affleck to not take up Batman role

LOS ANGELES, MAY 14 (PTI): George Clooney knows a thing or two about the perils of taking on a fan-favourite role, which is why he suggested his good friend Ben Affleck to turn down the offer to play Batman on screen.

The 58-year-old actor famously took up the role for 1997's "Batman & Robin" but he failed to deliver on the expectations of fans with the film proving to be a major critical and commercial failure. During his appearance on The Hollywood Reporter's Awards Chatter podcast, Clooney recalled his experience working on the film and how it taught him an important lesson.

"(Arnold) Schwarzenegger was paid, I think, USD 25 million for that, which was like 20 times more than I was paid for it, and, you know, we nev-

er even worked together! We worked together one day. But I took all the heat," Clooney said. "Now, fair deal; I was playing Batman and I wasn't



good in it, and it wasn't a good film, but what I learned from that failure was, I had to rethink how I was working. Because now I wasn't just an actor getting a role, I was being held responsible for the film itself," he added. The

actor said when he was working with Affleck on their 2012 Oscar-winning film "Argo", he advised him to decline the offer to play Batman in Zack Snyder's

"Batman v. Superman: Dawn of Justice". "I actually did talk to him about it. I said, 'Don't do it. It was only from my experience, which is, you know...'" Clooney said.

The actor, however, believes Affleck did a "great" job with the part.

Aladdin gave me the chance to use myself fully: Will Smith



LOS ANGELES, MAY 14 (PTI): Actor Will Smith says the Disney's live-action feature, "Aladdin", where he plays the fan-favourite character of Genie, has been the most fulfilling experience for him since his 1990s breakout sitcom "The Fresh Prince of Bel-Air".

The 50-year-old actor said the film offered him the "great opportunity" to employ all of his skills in order to play the character.

"This was the first project since 'The Fresh Prince of Bel-Air' that has used so many of the things that I like to do. In this film I get to sing and dance and rap and perform and do comedy and drama, so it was

a great opportunity to use myself fully as an artist," Smith said in a statement.

The actor described his version of the beloved character as both "trickster and a mentor".

"He is trying to guide Aladdin to the truth of the greatness that's already within him and I love that idea... to be yourself. For me at this point in my life, I love playing a character that is trying to help a young boy become a man," Smith added.

The Guy Ritchie-directed film, which also stars Naomi Scott as Princess Jasmine and Mena Massoud as the title character, is set to release on May 24.

Shia LaBeouf, Mel Gibson

to star in 'Rothchild'

LOS ANGELES, MAY 14 (PTI): Actor-director Mel Gibson is set to team up with Shia LaBeouf for the black comedy, "Rothchild".

According to The Hollywood Reporter, the film will be directed by Jon S Baird, best known for movies such as "Filth" and "Stan & Ollie".

The story follows Becket Rothchild (LaBeouf), who was cast out from the family. As an adult, the charismatic Becket hatches a plan to get back into the family and claim his birth right.

There are nine Rothchild family members who stand between him and his fortune including Whitelaw (Gibson), the family patriarch and villain of the piece.

"Rothchild" is being produced by Unified Pictures.

Keith Kjarval and Tyler Jackson will produce alongside Black Box Management's Lowell Shapiro and Mike Dill.

HanWay Films recently boarded the project and will be looking for international buyers at the ongoing Cannes Film Festival.

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ARIES:

You could receive some sort of windfall today, Aries. Use it wisely. Consider buying some time to figure out what you want to do with your life. It's likely that your career isn't exactly ringing your bells these days. You're ready for new challenges and opportunities. Meditate on what would make you happy and then take a systematic approach to achieving it.

TAURUS:

It's likely that you will succeed at whatever you set out to accomplish today, Taurus. If you've been held back by worries over the integrity of a relationship or the long-term prospects of a partnership, you can dispel concerns by confronting the person directly. You may find he or she has the same feelings about you! Honesty is important today.

GEMINI:

Your energy may flag a bit today, Gemini. There's nothing to worry about, though you could take better care of

your health. What happened to that exercise regimen you vowed to start? It's never too late to improve your eating habits and begin working out. Even if you only walk three times a week, you will notice a dramatic difference in your appearance and outlook.

CANCER:

Today is meant for socializing and connecting, Cancer. Your creativity is at an all-time high, so also try to work in some quiet time where you can do some writing or painting. If friends invite you out in the evening, by all means, take them up on the offer. You may meet someone who could be pivotal to your career. Be open to all possibilities

LEO:

There's no other way to say this, Leo - you're in the mood for love. Tonight you may feel a strong urge to be with your partner. If there isn't one in your life, you should take steps to correct that. You may meet someone who sweeps you off your feet. You want to be head-in-the-clouds in love, which is the only way to be!

VIRGO:

You have a generous spirit, Virgo, which could get you into trouble if you aren't careful. When you get a gift of money or even a hint of one, your tendency is to buy presents for all your friends. It's hard to fault you for this, but there are other ways to show your affection. You could bake cookies to distribute, for example. This will keep your money safe and earning interest.

LIBRA:

You're ready for a career change, Libra, or at least a change of venue. Have you considered telecommuting one day per week? That might give you the variety you seek without needing to find a new job. You may meet someone today or in the near future who will have a dramatic influence on your career decisions. Listen carefully.

SCORPIO:

What is your dream, Scorpio? Answer that question as specifically as possible today, then set about attaining that goal.

All signs indicate that whatever you begin today will pay off big time. Even though you may feel that your dreams are too ambitious, there's no need to feel overwhelmed. Vow to take things one step at a time. Keep in mind the old adage, "Once begun is half done."

SAGITTARIUS:

This may seem odd, Sagittarius, but you may not be the person you think you are. There are indications that you have hidden talents. If they come out today, no one will be more shocked than you! This could take your career in an entirely new direction. Strategize ways to incorporate this talent into your career. Your work will take on a new dynamic, and you will take a major leap forward.

CAPRICORN:

You're about to experience a major change in your life's direction, Capricorn, and it may occur today. Keep your mind open to all sorts of possibilities. You're likely to receive some important information. Of course, you may not re-

alize its importance right away. It's only with the passage of time that you will look back on this event as pivotal. Make sure you don't miss it.

AQUARIUS:

You're unstoppable today, Aquarius. It seems you can do anything. Your confidence and energy are high. There's no question that you're ready to take the world by storm. Is the world ready for you? Think carefully as you formulate plans for your new project. Whatever you do will succeed, but be sure you're doing what you really want to do rather than what others expect of you.

PISCES:

It's likely that you're being held back by certain traumatic past events. Before you can make further progress in your life, Pisces, you must address these painful memories for the last time. If it feels too frightening to do alone, seek professional help. You will find that mustering the courage to do this difficult, emotional housecleaning is more than half the battle.