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SummitTIMES

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ON TOP OF THE NEWS

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PAUSE FOR MOTHER EARTH: Vehicles stopped plying for seven minutes from 11 am to 11.07 am in Sikkim as part of A Day For Mother Earth observation today. [from WANGCHUK BHUTIA]

Budget preparation to keep CM busy

GANGTOK, 07 JUL [IPR]: As per a communiqué received from the office of the Secretary to the Chief Minister, owing to the preparation for the ensuing Budget Session of the Sikkim Legislative Assembly, the Chief Minister will be entirely pre-occupied and consequently not be able to meet the general public from 08 to 12 July 2019.

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CS convenes coordination meet in South dist, urges officials to deliver on liberty extended to them

NAMCHI, 07 JUL [IPR]: Chief Secretary AK Shrivastava convened a co-ordination meeting with Heads of Departments at DAC, South, today. Present amongst others were ADC [South], Satyen K Pradhan along with senior officials posted in the district.

The Chief Secretary spoke about the importance of punctuality, hard work and assiduousness that government employees should imbibe in their day-to-day affairs.

He also strictly directed that files under concerned departments should be maintained and if certain files are found misplaced, action will be taken against the respective government officials. These filed, he underlined, contain important documents pertaining to projects, schemes, plans, employees track records and many more.

He also stressed that government employees should adhere to the new notification regarding office timings and urged them to be efficient in providing their services to the general public,



stressing, “We are public servants and not masters of public.”

He also informed that the State Government will soon launch ‘Jal Shakti Abhiyan’ which will focus on water conservation, rain water harvesting and rejuvenation of natural water bodies with an aim to reverse water crises in the country.

With regard to water harvesting units, he emphasised that all the State Government buildings and departments have to install such units to save water for future use and said that the South district administration head should look into this on a

priority basis.

Regarding the new directions issued by the State Government, the Chief Secretary said that the government departments and employees needs to comply with these directives, as, he said, currently the State Government has provided the administration with quality liberty to conduct their day-to-day business.

He also reiterated Chief Minister PS Tamang's request where he mentioned that the Chief Secretary should plant 300 saplings which he will attend to as he believes that the environment should

be protected.

Further, the Chief Secretary suggested that the HoDs of South District along with their subordinates also plant saplings and set a target to increase the green cover of the district.

An interactive session with the officials was also conducted wherein grievances, feedback and requirements were discussed in detail.

Furthermore, the Chief Secretary appealed to all government employees to consistently go on field visits and work with vigour and acquire a wider perspective while discharging their duties.

By-election math in favour of SKM continuing in office: Golay

**SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 07 JUL:**

Sikkim Krantikari Morcha president, Chief Minister PS Tamang [Golay], today contended that the by-election mathematics was in favour of SKM continuing in office and underlined that for Opposition Sikkim Democratic Front, forming the government in Sikkim after the by-election was a mathematical impossibility.

Addressing the “Day for Mother Earth” function at Namchi today, Mr Tamang pointed out that with two legislators from SDF and one from SKM winning from two constituencies each, the Assembly strength was now 16-13 in favor of SKM.

“We need to win one seat to continue in government while SDF requires four to be able to form the Government,” he pointed out, adding, “Since only three constituencies are going in for by-elections, there is no way that SDF can form the government.”

“You work out for yourselves what scenario can unfold,” he joked.

He also dispelled as-



persions that an SKM government, because of its current strength in the Assembly will not even be able to pass the budget.

“Of course we can,” he said, reminding the people that the budget session was scheduled to begin on 29 July and the facts on the matter will be clear then.

Meanwhile, the by-elections have thrown

open a host of possible scenarios in which the assembly composition could remain unchanged at 17-15, or tilt even stronger in SKM's favour and there is also the chance, should SDF win all three by-elections where the Legislative Assembly gets tied at 16-16, a scenario which could lead to a possible re-election since no party would have majority.

Gyalshing to host first Eastern India Strengthlifting & Incline Bench Press Championship

**SAGAR CHHETRI
GANGTOK, 07 JUL:**

Sikkim is all set to host the first edition of the Eastern India Strengthlifting & Incline Bench Press Championship from 12 to 14 July at Sikkim Government College, Gyalshing, auditorium in West Sikkim.

Around 250 athletes along with officials from eight States will be participating in this three-day championship. Sikkim Strength Lifting Association [SSLA] has been working on a war-footing to organise the event in a grand manner.

Addressing a press conference here today, SSLA chief coach Pema Dorjee Bhutia shared that it was an honour for Sikkim to host the first ever Eastern India Strengthlifting & Incline Bench Press Champion-



ship and stated that the State association has been working hard to ensure a grand success.

He added that SSLA joint secretary Ganesh Kumar Rai was supervising preparations at the venue. The championship has different weight categories in Senior [men & women] and Master's [men].

“Around 250 lifters and officials from eight States will be participating in the championship. They are very excited to

visit Sikkim and it is also a good opportunity for us to showcase our rich and beautiful natural resources, culture and tradition,” Mr Bhutia said.

The participating states are Manipur, Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, Tripura, Assam, Jharkhand, West Bengal and host Sikkim.

A team of more than 50 SLSA members will represent Sikkim in the championship.

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VBDAS forms Singtam unit



**SUMMIT REPORT
SINGTAM, 07 JUL:**

Voluntary Blood Donors Association of Sikkim (VBDAS) formed its Singtam unit at a programme held here at Nepali Dharamsala today.

The programme was chaired by social activist Mahesh Dahal and attended by VBDAS executive members.

The meeting began with a condolence session in the memory of former Governor of Sikkim, Sudharsan Agarwal, who was the first Chief Patron of VBDAS, and who passed away recently. A two-minute silence was observed by the association members.

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CM launches A Day for Mother Earth from Kitchu Dumra

NAMCHI, 07 JUL [IPR]: Chief Minister PS Tamang [Golay] launched the State Government's ambitious ‘A Day for Mother Earth’ initiative at Kitchu Dumra today. He was accompanied by Deputy Speaker Sangay Lepcha, Forest Minister Karma Loday Bhutia, Cabinet Ministers, MLAs, Political Secretary, Advisors, Chief Secretary, Officials, Panchayats and public at large.

At the onset, the Chief Minister planted a Peepal sapling at the complex while the Cabinet Ministers and other dignitaries also planted saplings of various species.

Addressing the gathering, the Chief Minister congratulated the Forest Department for successfully organising this program which was being celebrated all over the state.

He also pointed out that one of the



unique features of this program was the dedication of seven minutes in Sikkim from 11AM to 11.07AM when no vehicles, except emergency vehicle, plied on the roads. This gesture

was added to reduce air pollution and the State's carbon footprint, he explained, while adding that this will now be an annual feature.

He shared concern over climate

change which was stressing the world and also impacting Sikkim.

The CM emphasised that immediate action should be taken to combat the threat posed by climate change which can result in major natural disasters, droughts and many more irreparable damages.

He said that a resilient long term action plan must be conceptualised to ensure sustainability and to bring about crucial environment transformational change.

He added that the aim of this distinct program was to encourage people to plant an ample number of trees to increase the average green cover in Sikkim.

The Chief Minister also said that the general public must not only rely on Forest Department for plantation

turn to pg02

CM visits ITI

NAMCHI, 07 JUL [IPR]: Chief Minister PS Tamang [Golay] visited the Industrial Training Institute at Kitchu Dumra today.

He was accorded a warm welcome by the Principal ITI, MN Bhutia, along with the teachers and students upon his arrival.

During his visit, he enquired after the functioning of the institution and also patiently heard the grievances put forth by the students, faculty and the concerned public.

A list of pending demands of the institution was also placed with the Chief Minister.

The Principal, staff, students accompanied by the local people thanked the CM for the visit and the CM assured every possible support towards the welfare of the institution.

Namchi too pauses for Mother Earth

NAMCHI, 07 JUL [IPR]: The South District headquarters also saw vehicular movement halt from 11 to 11:07 AM on Sunday as 'A Day for Mother Earth' was launched today by the Forest Department. The initiative was supported by South Traffic Police, South district taxi driver associations, line departments and the general public. The aim for this endeavour was to reduce air pollution caused by vehicular movement along with spreading awareness and other ill effects of climate change.

Sri Lanka inaugurates first model village built with Indian assistance

COLOMBO, JUL 7 (PTI): A model village built with Indian assistance as part of a housing project meant for war affected people and estate workers was inaugurated in Sri Lanka, according to a media report. India has partnered with the Ministry of Housing and Construction and Cultural Affairs to build 100 model villages consisting of a total of 2,400 houses all across Sri Lanka with Indian grant of Rs 1,200 million (USD 17.5 million).

Minister of Housing and Construction and Cultural Affairs Sajith Premadasa, former President Chandrika Bandaranayake Kumaratunga and Acting High Commissioner of India Shilpak Ambule jointly inaugurated the first model village at Ranidugama in Gampaha on Saturday, the Daily Mirror reported.

The fully constructed houses were handed over to the beneficiaries.

These 2,400 houses are in addition to the 60,000 accommodations built under the Indian Housing Project meant for war affected people in the north and east Sri Lanka and the estate workers in the plantation areas.

India has undertaken more than 70 people-oriented development projects in various fields including health, education, housing, skill development, infrastructure and vocational training across Sri Lanka.

MoU signed with NDMA for Mangan Landslide Mitigation

Minister leads meetings with multiple agencies to address climate change and disaster preparedness

SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 07 JUL:

Land Revenue and Disaster Management Department signed a memorandum of understanding with the National Disaster Management Authority for Mangan Landslide Mitigation, an official press release informs.

Land Revenue Minister Kunga Nima Lepcha attended meetings with NDMA on 04 and 05 July in New Delhi regarding the progress on various schemes for Disaster Risk Reduction in the State and discussed the issue of implementation of Shendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, Aapda Mitra Programme and Mitigation of Mangan Landslide. .

The MoU was signed



between Land Revenue Secretary Ambika Pradhan and NDMA Joint Secretary Sandeep Poundrik in the presence of the Minister and Secretary NDMA, Dr Pradeep Kumar, along with other members, Dr Kamal Kishor and Dr DN Sharma.

The Sikkim contingent was represented by Sikkim State Disaster Management Additional Director GC Khanal along with UNDP officers Dr Surojit Baruah and Disaster Risk Reduction expert Keshav Koirala.

Apart from the NDMA, the Land Revenue Minister and SSDMA also met with Swiss

Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) led by their Director of Cooperation, Mary Laure Crettaz, and Disaster Risk Reduction Thematic Expert Divya Kashyap, the release adds.

The highlight of the meeting was continuation of support for Sikkim through a four-year project on strengthening State strategies for climate action.

The thrust areas will be on Disaster Risk Reduction and Water.

The SSDMA team led by the Minister also visited Nations House where the team had a meeting with Resident Representative of United Nations

in India, Shoko Nada, Additional Country Director Rakesh Kumar and Chief of Climate Change, Energy and Resilience Unit Dr. Preeti Soni.

The highlight of the meeting was support to be provided to Sikkim under the NITI Aayog's flagship Aspirational Districts Programme and Development of Road Map for DRR and Development Planning for the State.

The team also met Chief of Resilience United Nations Children Education Fund (UNICEF) Lars Bernd and DRR Technical Specialist Sarabjit Singh. The highlight of the meeting was UNICEF

agreeing to provide support to Health and Education sectors of Sikkim with funding support from North East Council under the DONER Ministry. It was also agreed to have meetings with DONER agencies who can provide support in the sector.

A meeting was also held with Union Home Affairs Joint Secretary SK Jindal who appreciated the work being carried out by SSDMA but equally stressed on augmenting the effort to save vulnerable lives and property.

The visit culminated with the Minister briefing Chief Minister Prem Singh Tamang in Delhi about the various meetings with central ministers and international organizations. The Chief Minister appreciated the effort of the Sikkim team and highlighted some major water challenges in Sikkim, which has further worsened due to climate change and tunnelling activities. He called upon the team to work towards a resilient Sikkim.

Minister leaves for State Agriculture Ministers' Conference

SILIGURI, 07 JUL [IPR]: Agriculture Minister Lok Nath Sharma left for New Delhi today to attend the State Agriculture Ministers' Conference, organised by Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare, scheduled to be held on 08 July.

The Minister stated that he was looking forward to meet all the Agriculture Ministers from different parts of the country and said that he will be discussing issues related to agriculture which will help in the welfare and development of the State.

He said that the



stand of the state government is to place the agricultural status of the State to such a level that it helps in eradicating unemployment

and promotes Sikkim globally in the agricultural field.

He will also be meeting Union Ministers, the Minister stated.

BJP begins membership drive from Singtam

YOGEN THATAL

SINGTAM, 06 JUL:

Bharatiya Janata Party's Sikkim unit launched its membership drive here on Saturday with its first general public meeting since the elections.

The drive was launched with Darjeeling MP, Raju Bista, among the Sikkim unit office bearers and supporters

The membership drive was also attended by Ministers Sanjeet Kheral and Bhim Hang Subba along with BJP's Lok Sabha candidate Laten Sherpa.

Mr Bista, while recognising that BJP does

not have a strong base in Sikkim, called on the gathered supporters to reach out to the grassroots level and inform people about what the Modi Government has achieved for the country thus far.

His sentiments were echoed by the Sikkim-BJP president, DB Chauhan, who added that the central party leadership and Union Government were looking forward to a more prosperous Sikkim and stressed that for this to happen, the participation of every Sikkimese was required

Gyalshing to...

He informed that SSLA has already met the Chief Minister and received an encouraging and positive response and support from him.

He added that the association also met the Sports & Youth Affairs Minister regarding this championship and received a positive assurance from him as well.

The Chief Coach expressed immense happiness on the participation of more than 20 women lifters from Sikkim in this championship.

"The participation of such a huge number of women lifters is a good sign of the development of strength lifting in the State," he said.

He stated that the main objective behind organising such a prestigious and big event in West Sikkim was to promote strength lifting in the rural parts and encourage and motivate talented and potential lifters from different corners of the State towards this sport and to take them to national and international levels.

He also shared plans to organise such state and national events in other districts as well in the future.

SSLA has expressed its gratitude to Sikkim Government College Gyalshing for providing its auditorium and other supports to host this event.

The press conference was also addressed by general secretary, Sonam Tshering Bhutia, legal advisor, Prashant F Waiba, treasurer, Thinley Ongmu Bhutia and executive members, Homnath Sharma and Bhim Subba.

VBDAS forms...

VBDAS founder member and advisor, Puran Tamang, presented a brief history of the association and how the former Governor was associated with it.

He also informed the meeting about the support and help extended by the late Mr Agarwal in the early days of the association.

VBDAS general secretary Deepak Rai, in turn briefed the meeting about the formation of the Singtam unit and its responsibilities and delved on the importance of blood donation.

Programme chairperson, Mahesh Dahal, while addressing the occasion, congratulated VBDAS on its journey thus far and for starting its Singtam unit.

The Singtam unit will address the emergency blood donation requirements of the surrounding areas.

Later, the executive body of the Singtam unit was formalized with Dr. Deeke as chief patron and technical expert while Arjun Chettri was nominated president and Srijana Chettri the general secretary.

CM launches...

drives and should take this up individually as well as it was a trait of being a conscious citizens.

He said that he will be planting about 1,000 saplings and directed the Cabinet Ministers, Chief Secretary, Panchayats to plant 500, 300 and 100 saplings respectively and ensure their survival.

Additionally, he also encouraged the people to plant at least 10 saplings as this would help conserve the environment.

He also informed that the State Government will soon set up recycling projects. For this project to work, he urged the general public to understand the nuances of waste segregation at source as efficient segregation will assist the municipal garbage collectors dump the garbage in a systematic manner.

Sharing his concern over water scarcity problem, the CM said that focus should be laid on rain water harvesting units in the State and announced that initiatives towards this will be commenced soon by the State Government.

The Chief Minister also informed that till date, the State Government has closed down two companies for violation of environment rules and regulations and asserted that any company or institution found breaching any environmental guidelines will be held liable.

Additionally, he announced that Kitchu Dumra will be redeveloped as an open area where people can spend their leisure time.

Addressing the government employees, the Chief Minister advised them to absorb a healthy work culture wherein they can work in an effective and efficient manner.

He also directed the Chief Secretary to float new tenders wherever there was any requirement.

The Forest Minister in turn said that the objective of 'A day for Mother Earth' was to preserve the fragile ecology of the state along with spreading awareness about adverse effects of climate change.

He also spoke about various climate issues plaguing the world and added that the public should be mindful and that they should avoid using plastic bags and any other amenities that can hamper the environment.

The Minister said that compensation provided by companies located in Sikkim will be rightfully utilised in saving the environment.

Furthermore, he urged contractors to work in co-ordination with conservation of the environment as it was extremely vital in today's world.

PCCF and Principal Secretary Forest, ML Srivastava, presented a brief report on the program and pointed out that today was also the closing day of Van Mahotsav week, pointing out that Sikkim was one of the biodiversity hotspots of distinct vegetation and said that it is our responsibility to maintain these natural resources through various green activities.

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Sapling distribution at Kitchu Dumra

NAMCHI, 07 JUL [IPR]: A sapling distribution booth was set up at Kitchu Dumra today as part of 'A Day for Mother Earth' initiatives. The aim behind setting up this booth is to cope with uncertainties and building community resilience and eco system for climate change in Indian Himalayan region. Organized

by International Union for Conservation of Nature in collaboration with the South Division of Forest Department and supported by National Mission on Himalayan Studies, saplings were distributed free of cost and included native species such as Pani Saaj, Ashoka, Nebara and many more.

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SSA and Namthang FA begin strong in U-17 League



SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 07 JUL:

State Sports Academy and Namthang Football Academy started their Sikkim Football Association U-17 Football League 2019 campaign with victories here at Paljor Stadium on Sunday.

Registering a strong presence in the league, SSA posted an easy victory over Dzongu Football Club 06-nil.

Lawrence Rai scored a hattrick while his teammates Lakpa Norbu Sherpa scored a brace and Amoje Chettri added a

goal to the team's victory. To their credit, Dzongu FC played a good game but could not find the net.

The second match of the day was more contesting and Namthang Football Academy edged past Chujachen Sports

Academy 2-1 to pocket the full three points.

Diwas Chettri and Dewan Rampal contributed a goal each for Namthang FA, while the solitary goal for Chujachen Sports Academy was scored by Pem Tshering Lepcha.

The inaugural

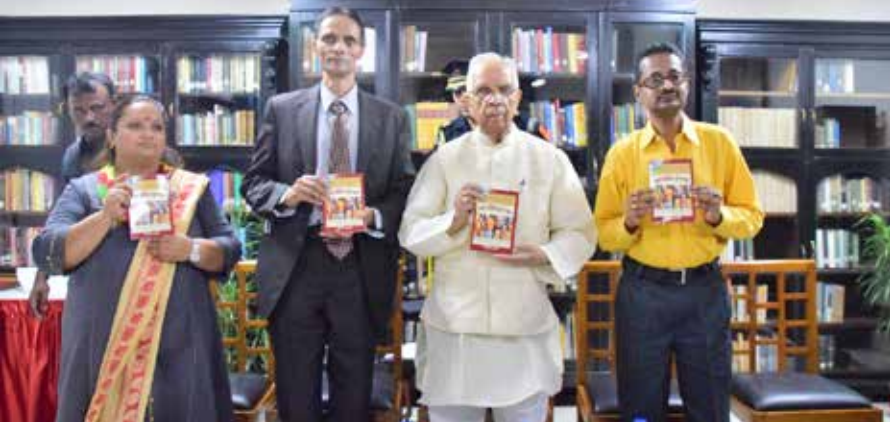
match had Secretary, Sports & Youth Affairs Department, Dr RK Tamang, as chief guest, while Director SYA, NK Pradhan, was present as guest of honour.

Ten teams from across the State are participating in the U-17 League being organised by Sikkim Football Association for the first time.

Teams have been divided into two groups and will play league matches with the top-two teams from each group making it to the semifinals.

Meanwhile, SFA has also constituted a three-member selection committee to shortlist players from the league for the upcoming junior nationals. SFA also plans to make this league an annual event.

Salil Gewali's book on great minds of India released



SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 07 JUL:

The Bengali translation of 'Great Minds on India' authored by Salil Gewali was launched by the Governor of West Bengal, Keshari Nath Tripathi, at the Raj Bhavan, Kolkata, today.

The launch was attended by a galaxy of scholars, academicians and representative of various colleges, univer-

sities, media houses, and social organizations.

The Governor heaped praise on Mr Gewali's work, saying, "The book showcases the exceptionally rich civilization of India and its remarkable contributions to the world in the development of the Modern science, Mathematics, Linguistic, Metallurgy, Cosmology, Psychology, and

other areas of studies."

This book has been translated into Bengali by Dr RN Das and edited by Prof Nirmal Maity. The preface for the original was by a NASA Chief Scientist, Dr Kamlesh Lulla.

The book was first published in the Xerox format in 1998 and in 2009 by Academic Publications of Shillong (Meghalaya).

Peace seminar at Kartikey



SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 07 JUL:

Kanchanjyoti Youth Club of Sumbuk, South Sikkim, in collaboration with Universal Peace Federation's Sikkim branch, organized a peace seminar at Kartikey JHS Hall themed "Ideal Family: Foundation for Peace and Development" on 06 July, a

press release informs.

The programme was addressed by Krishna Adhikari as the main resource person and also by Zilla Panchayat Jamuna Rai, Sumbuk Kartikey panchayat president Radha Sharma, Lungchok Kamarey GPU panchayat president Deoraj Rai and YSP-Sikkim president Anjana Tamang.

CIC admonishes DoPT for 'wrongly' invoking exemption clause to deny info under RTI Act

NEW DELHI, JUL 7 (PTI):

The CIC has rebuked the Department of Personnel and Training, the nodal ministry for Right to Information Act, for denying records related to appointment of Information Commissioners and framing of rules of the transparency law, saying it stifles "the very letter and spirit" of the legislation.

Information Commissioner DP Sinha lambasted the ministry for allegedly wrongly invoking Section 8(1)(i) to deny activist Commodore Lokesh Batra (Retd) information related to appointments of Information Commissioners and framing of RTI rules by the government.

"It is ironic even further that the information that has been denied in the instant case pertaining to the appointment of Information Commissioners under the RTI Act, who are ordained with the statutory authority of securing the regime of transparency," he said.

The Commission admonishes the then Central Public Information Officer (CPIO) for invoking Section 8(1)(i) of the RTI Act without assessing its applicability and the present CPIO is also warned against mindlessly endorsing the reply, Sinha said.

He directed that this order be placed before the Secretary of the Ministry to take note of "ad-

verse findings" of the Commission.

Batra had filed two separate RTI applications seeking the information, but was refused on the grounds that these were Cabinet papers which cannot be disclosed before a final decision is arrived at.

However, the ministry had been disclosing records related to appointments of Information Commissioners during the UPA era even when the process was underway.

After he was denied the information, Batra had approached the Commission, the highest adjudicating body for RTI matters.

The Commission issued two separate orders after listening to him and the CPIO of the Department of Personnel and Training (DoPT).

The CPIO, the officer responsible for answering the RTI applications, said the response was given by a different officer who was handling the position before him.

He also submitted that the process of appointment of Chief Information Commissioner and Information Commissioner was going on at the time.

The officer said that the documents sought by the appellant were to be submitted to the Search Committee (Committee of Secretaries) and subsequently to a Committee chaired by Prime Min-

ister and consisting of Leader of Opposition and a Union Cabinet Minister.

The ministry also refused to disclose the file related to framing of 2017 rules of the RTI, saying it was "under process".

Rejecting the arguments in both cases, Sinha said the submissions of the CPIO appear incoherent and do not convey any substantial justification for invoking Section 8(1)(i) of RTI Act.

"The conduct of the then CPIO as well as the present CPIO reflects on their sheer evasiveness and non-application of mind in dealing with the instant RTI application," he noted.

Sinha agreed with Batra that "this kind of conduct amounts to stonewalling RTI Applications and stifling the very letter and spirit of RTI Act weighs in". "Complainant has rightly pointed out that such mindless application of exemptions of RTI Act to deny information by the CPIO(s) of DoPT casts serious aspersions on the commitment of the nodal agency of RTI to the tenets of probity and transparency," Sinha said.

By resorting to such unwarranted opacity, the DoPT is setting a bad example for other public authorities and at the same time is discrediting its own footing as the nodal agency for implementation of RTI Act, he said.

Cleanliness drive at Shanti Nagar



SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 07 JUL:

Shanti Nagar Gaon Sudhar Samity members, led by their president Krishna Chettri, chief advisor LN Pradhan and general secretary Sisir Pradhan, conducted an

cleanliness drive at Shanti Nagar as part of its 'A Day for Mother Earth' initiative. The Samity also installed protective cages around saplings planted recently on the occasion of World Environment Day.

Writers using creativity to double as skill coaches

NEW DELHI, JUL 7 (PTI): Skill coaches, who have authored books, are gradually gaining popularity in helping improve personal and professional lives, be it in life, sports or business. According to these writers, coaching is a natural extension to the expression of their ideas, stories and beliefs.

Seeing your coachee reach his or her goal, makes it all worthwhile, says Jaykumar Hariharan, author of Rewire: How to be the Leader of your own Life (Leadstart) and an internationally certified professional coach who has been coaching senior leaders in organisations across India, South East Asia and the US for many years.

I have had the privilege of working with more than 100 CXO's and logging more than 2,000 hours of coaching across industry spaces such as information technology, automobiles, banking and financial services, consulting, oil and gas, pharmaceuticals, venture capital etc, he adds. Runjhun Noopur, another coach who wrote Nirvana in a

Corporate Suit (TreeShade Books), a hilarious take on corporate life, says, Being an ex-corporate lawyer and having a spiritual bent of mind inspired me to take up training and coaching as a means to facilitate and identify ways we could be happier in our personal and professional spaces.

Noopur, who is out with her debut book and has written articles in various newspapers and magazines, says, Even before I took to training and coaching as a career, I was writing for spiritual and wellness columns like the Speaking Tree' (the Times of India). In a way, my writing allowed me to explore my ideas and develop them into something profound and conscious, but at the same time practical and applicable.


Writing, she says, is a kind of meditation that has connected her with her consciousness which in turn gave her the tools and the confidence to take up training and coaching.

For Hariharan, on the other hand, writing was a natural extension of the creative

process of putting ideas and frameworks down. His book Rewire touches upon key subjects of corporate culture and how leaders can sail through conflicts keeping this healthy culture intact, highlighting the need to laugh to lead better, with the help of interesting anecdotes and case studies.

Vocalist, writer and trainer Rashmi Joshi, whose book Here and Beyond (Bloomsbury) deals with handling depression and fighting abuse, decided to quit her corporate career as a human resource professional early in life. She has been coaching corporates, institutes and groups since, on the potential and ability of the human brain to rewire and reboot at will with some practical exercises followed by a self-awareness meditation' that help recognise the afflictions and do away with them.

There are also many writers who take up professional coaching of groups and corporates on skills they excel in, as a parallel profession.



PRINTING & STATIONERY DEPARTMENT GOVERNMENT OF SIKKIM TADONG, GANGTOK, EAST SIKKIM

RE-ADVERTISEMENT OF EMPLOYMENT NOTICE

Application are invited from the local eligible Schedule Tribe (Limboo/Tamang) Women candidates for filling up of 01(one) post of Driver in the Level – 6 of Revised Pay Matrix through Direct Recruitment in the Printing and Stationery Department, Government of Sikkim, Gangtok. However, during the period of Probation/Apprenticeship/Training, pay shall by governed by Notification No.489/GEN/DOP dated: 31.10.2011.

01. ELIGIBILITY CONDITIONS FOR THE POST OF DRIVER:

(1) Minimum Education Qualification	Class VII Passed from a recognized board. However, the School certificate should contain the date of birth of the applicant.		
(2) Other requisites	(a) the applicant should possess a valid Driving License for Light Motor (T/NT) category of vehicle issued by the Motor Vehicle Division of Transport Department as specified in the Central Motor Vehicle Act. 1988. (b) Candidate must be in possession of Sikkim Subject Certificate or Certificate of Identification (COI). (c) Should have valid Local Employment Card. (d) Should be in possession of Caste Category Certificate. (e) No Objection Certificate from the Appointing Authority/Head of Department in case of employed candidate(s).		
(3) Age	In terms of Notification No. M(3)/ (55)/GEN/ DOP/PT-III dated: 03/07/2017.		
(4) Reservation	Category	Rooster Point(s)	No of post.
	Scheduled Tribe(Women) (Limboo/Tamang)	21	01

I) PART- A = 80 Marks.

- Daily routine and check up the vehicle before starting Engine.
- Should have the knowledge of the various components and important Assemblies of Engine/Gearbox etc.
- Daily writing of Vehicle log book.
- Should have the knowledge to differentiate between petrol and diesel engine.
- Knowledge of Traffic signal and rules.

PART-B = 10 Marks

1) Letter writing (two types) = 10 Marks

2) General Knowledge (National Importance) = 10 Marks

TOTAL MARKS = 100 (One hundred)

a) Persons interested to apply for the post should submit their applications in the prescribed form, which is obtainable from the office of Under Secretary of Printing and Stationery Department on all working days between 11 am to 3 pm w.e.f 19/08/19 to 30/08/19 on production of Bank Receipt of Rs.100/- (Rupees one hundred) only which should be credited to the Head' 0058-200 other receipt'. The amount so deposited shall not be refunded or adjusted against any other purpose.

b) Applications complete in all respects should reach the Office of the Under Secretary (Adm.), Printing and Stationery Department on or before 30/08/19 by 3 p.m. No application thereafter shall be accepted. Incomplete application shall summarily be rejected.

c) Date and Venue of written examination will be intimated in due course through local news papers and will also be displayed on the notice board of the department.

d) No TA/DA is admissible for attending the exams/interview.

Sd/-
Secretary
Printing & Stationery Department.

RO. No. 80/IPR/Pub/Classi./19-20**Date: 04.7.19**

Still Not Cast Away

Much to Sikkim's shame, caste discrimination remains illegally in practice

Article 15, the movie, has brought an uncomfortable reality check on Article 15 of the Constitution and that provides an apt enough time to get talking about caste, the more offensive side of it, afresh. The Constitution of India rejected the concept of an untouchable caste in 1950. Caste discrimination was outlawed the day the Constitution, the supreme law of India, was adopted, and yet, even though no longer officially sanctioned, the idea of untouchability remains alive in our country. What remains a continuing challenge is that caste consciousness is not just a privately held prejudice, but continues to manifest in dastardly acts of violence running the entire spectrum from physical to emotional and societal. One would have hoped that more than six decades of having been seen as a criminal offence would have dulled the propensity of caste discrimination from expressing itself publicly, but that remains wishful thinking in a society that continues to shame itself by refusing to accept all people as same. Thousands of attacks on Dalits because of the caste they belong to occur every year, and hundreds of people are killed because of it. Newspapers continue to report reprehensible acts of violence from across the country directed against people only because they belong to the scheduled castes. And of late, these attacks have grown even bolder and more brazen because it ties in well with the more reprehensible traits of the dispensation with too much power in the country. And it is not as if Sikkim is untouched by this vileness. Even here is a society which allows such depravity as targeted cruelty against some castes despite it being not only illegal, but also offensively immoral.

Some years ago, a 68-year-old was arrested on charges of murder in West Sikkim after he allegedly bludgeoned a 24 year old to death with a wooden beam. This was a hate crime – the youth was attacked because he belonged to a caste which the suspected murderer did not want crossing his hearth! This was no mob lynching, but that should make it any less disturbing even four years since the incident occurred. Disturbing not only for the worry that it occurred, but also because it did not result in any soul-searching.

Murder, after all, is rarely the first crime of a demented mind and in most cases builds up to such inevitability after the perpetrator gets away with smaller acts of violence and his hate remains ignored by the society at large and the law & order agencies. It will not come as a surprise if one were told that this was not the accused person's first hate crime or learn that he has a history of caste discrimination. Every time his hate was not admonished by the society he lives in and every time the law compromised the cases, he was emboldened. And then a youth died in his hands, as much because of the madness of caste, as due to the society's continuing condoning of those who discriminate on the grounds of caste.

And before anyone jumps up claiming that caste discrimination is essentially an upper-caste Hindu turpitude, one needs to point out that the practice is as disturbingly observed by other communities as was codified by those who promulgated it. Notwithstanding anything that the Constitution of India or the laws of the land might say, caste, as institutionalised inequality, oppression and discrimination characterises Indian society itself, practiced as much by those who benefit from it as even by those whose religions have no place for it. Social get-togethers in most parts of rural Sikkim continue to observe caste segregation and although no one gets beaten up for not observing the code, the fact that people continue to peddle caste divisions in the name of culture or tradition makes a mockery of all the tenets of equality that the Constitution strives to deliver.

It is important to realize that it is from a series of soft peddling on such issues that shockers like the fore-mentioned murder manifest. A hate crime might not result in a death every time, but it remains a possibility so long as casteism is allowed to express itself in public, even if in physically non-violent gestures like segregation [for everyone at social events] or in private interactions of individuals. More importantly, it is when people see nothing wrong in mediating on behalf of the perpetrator of hate when he/ she is officially charged with such crimes that chances of real equality and ending discrimination get compromised. The society's elders, instead of trying to convince victims into "settling" their differences, should be encouraging the young [and others] to report instances of discrimination the moment they notice it. Laws can only go so far, the move towards reform will have to come from the society itself...



You could be putting your child off reading – here's how to change that

ISANG AWAH
theconversation.com

Not every child is a bookworm, but research shows that developing a love of reading early in life can provide many benefits. From a positive impact on academic achievement, increased general knowledge, vocabulary growth, improved writing ability, and helping children to develop empathy, it's clear reading can play an important role in a child's development.

It has also been argued that on top of providing pleasure, reading literature helps children to cultivate an imagination. And an overview of several studies on reading for pleasure suggests that it may also be a way to combat social exclusion and raise educational standards.

But despite the huge benefits that reading offers, evidence suggests that young people are reading less and that many children fall behind in reading from about the age of 10.

Some teachers believe that parents should be more active in supporting their child's reading. This is understandable as studies on successful literacy achievement often feature either support from a parent or a teacher – indicating how both can help children to develop a love for reading.

But while it's important that parents and teachers become actively involved in helping children to read more, my research reveals there are some things parents and teachers may do that actually put children off reading.

LET THEM CHOOSE THEIR OWN BOOKS

In my research with children between the ages of nine and 12, I explored the extent to which they

read for pleasure and the different factors that affected their reading engagement.

Things such as parents or teachers selecting the books the children read in their leisure time, or parents not allowing the children to read their preferred books were shown to have a negative impact on children's reading engagement. As were parents or teachers forcing children to read and parents insisting that children read books to the end.

Some of the children in my study complained that their parents always selected the books they read in their leisure time and that the parents' selections were not always books that the children liked. A little boy described the books his father selected for him to read at home as "hard books" and could only recall one occasion when he had enjoyed reading the book his father selected.

There were also complaints by other children that their teachers selected the books they read during the reading period at school, and that usually, they did not like the books and often did not read them.

DON'T FORCE IT

Some children also complained that their parents did not allow them to read the books they had an interest in. For instance, one boy said that he liked Enid Blyton books, but his father did not allow him to read these. A girl complained that her father stopped her from reading Diary of a Wimpy Kid books because "they don't teach anything".

A few children complained of either being forced to read when they would rather not read, or being forced to complete a book they had lost interest in.

So, as important as reading is for a child's development, my research shows why children must be allowed to exercise their right to not read or stop reading at anytime – as to do otherwise is likely to put them off reading altogether.

MAKE IT FUN

From my interviews with the children, I also discovered that it was common practice for teachers and parents to ask children questions about the books they read and that reading aloud done by teachers at school was usually accompanied by questions. While this might seem like a useful learning technique, it's not one that goes down well with the kids.

All the children I spoke with said they did not like being asked questions after reading – and that it took away the fun from reading. One boy said that knowing he would be asked questions about the reading "kind of makes me feel like they're going to give us an exam or a test afterwards".

As the findings from my study show, when it comes to books, it's important to respect your child's preferences – even if they do not meet your expectations. Indeed, there is evidence to show that children best enjoy reading books they self-select – and doing otherwise may reduce the potential for pleasurable engagement in reading.

So given this, both parents and teachers would do well to remember that sometimes children just want to curl up with a good book, of their choice, and simply enjoy the process of reading for what it is.

[the writer is PhD Candidate in Education, University of Cambridge]

Amazon is turning 25 – here's a look back at how it changed the world

VENKATESH SHANKAR
theconversation.com

A quarter of a century ago, on July 5, 1994, a company, which shared a name with the world's largest river, was incorporated. It sold books to customers who got to its website through a dial-up modem.

It wasn't the first bookstore to sell online. (Books.com launched in 1992.) But it behaved like a local store, whose shopkeeper knew customers by name – a bell even rang in the company's Seattle headquarters every time an order was placed.

Amazon's founder, Jeff Bezos, set his sights on making it an "everything store." The company would go on to become not just an everything store, but an "everything company."

Today, 25 years later, Amazon has reshaped retailing permanently. It is one of the top three most valuable companies in the world, with a market capitalization hovering around US\$1 trillion, greater than the GDP of nearly 200 countries.

If you had bought \$100 worth of its IPO shares in 1997, it would be worth about \$120,000 today.

REDEFINING RETAIL

Amazon continually took shopping convenience to newer levels.

Before 1994, shoppers had to travel to stores to discover and buy things. Shopping used to be hard work – wandering down multiple aisles in search of a desired item, dealing with crying and nagging kids, and waiting in long checkout lines. Today, stores try to reach out to shoppers anywhere, anytime and through

multiple channels and devices.

After first experiencing two-day free shipping from Amazon's Prime membership program, shoppers started expecting no less from every online retailer. About 100 million shoppers worldwide have Amazon Prime.

The company made shopping more convenient through features like one-click ordering; personalized recommendations; package pickup at Amazon hubs and lockers; ordering products with the single touch of a Dash button; and in-home delivery with Amazon Key.

Shoppers can also search for and order items through a simple voice command to an Echo or by clicking an Instagram or a Pinterest image. Amazon now even has a cashierless "Go" store in Seattle.

Amazon has been a factor in the rising closures of brick-and-mortar stores that can't keep pace with the changes in retail. In the first 15 weeks of 2019 alone, there were about 6,000 store closures in the U.S. overall, higher than the number of closures in all of 2018. Analysts fear a coming "retail apocalypse."

A MAJOR EMPLOYER

Amazon's impact extends to other industries, including smart consumer devices (Alexa), cloud service (Amazon Web Services), and technology products and services (drones).

Such is Amazon's impact that industry players and observers use the term "Amazonized" to describe their business model and operations being disrupted by Amazon.

Today, Amazon is the largest tech employer by far. It employs more people than the next five tech companies combined. No wonder Amazon created such a buzz last year before selecting a location for its second headquarters.

Amazon's work culture is intense. It has a reputation as a cutthroat environment with a high employee burnout rate. It is automating as many jobs as possible, mostly in warehousing.

At the same time, after criticism from policymakers, Amazon stepped up in October 2018 by raising minimum wage for all U.S. employees to \$15 per hour.

Faced with growing criticisms about the mounting impact of Amazon's boxes and other packaging material on the environment, Amazon has pledged to disclose more information about its environmental impact at the end of 2019.

THE NEXT GENERATION

What's in store for Amazon's future?

Bezos has said that Amazon's efforts focus on preventing it from dying. As he noted at a 2018 all-hands meeting, "Amazon is not too big to fail."

As a professor of marketing, having conducted research on online retailing and analyzed hundreds of cases, I believe that Amazon's future, like shoppers' and the society's future, is inextricably linked to the rise of artificial intelligence. Starting with Alexa, the company's virtual assistant, Amazon is betting on AI.

In fact, Amazon is testing anti-

patory shipping, a practice in which it anticipates what shoppers need and mails them the items without shoppers ordering them. Shoppers could keep the items they like and return those they don't want at no charge.

More immediate questions relate to Amazon's entry in two stodgy yet critical industries: health care and financial services.

Although Amazon has disrupted many industries, these two are heavily regulated industries in which the company hasn't had much experience.

Amazon is considering becoming a major player in the pharmaceutical and the health insurance markets. In May, it acquired online drugstore Pill-Pack for \$1 billion to crack the \$500 billion market for prescription drugs and has formed a joint health venture with Berkshire Hathaway and JP Morgan Chase.

Meanwhile, with 310 million customer accounts, Amazon is building a suite of high-tech financial services, such as Amazon Cash, a way to add cash to your online balance, and Amazon Pay, an online payment service. These programs are aimed at developing markets such as India, which has a huge population that does not use banks.

Amazon has reshaped retailing permanently in the last 25 years. In the next 25, it might totally redefine how the world shops.

[the writer is Professor of Marketing; Director of Research, Center for Retailing Studies, Texas A&M University]

Book explores censorship in pre and post-colonial India

New Delhi, Jul 7 (PTI): A new book looks at state censorship in India in the transition period from colonial to national rule, when historical actors behaved in unpredictable ways .

War over Words: Censorship in India, 1930-1960 by Devika Sethi, who teaches modern Indian history at IIT-Mandi, explores the diverse mechanisms and motivations for censorship and its role in the shaping of the modern Indian republic.

The author says that a study of censorship in any historical context that restricts itself to the rarefied level of law, policy making and implementation alone tells only half the story. So it is important to examine the issue from the viewpoint of not the state alone but of that abstract yet vitally important constituency, the public.

Using a varied palette of official and non-official sources, the book seeks to provide a three-dimensional model of how censorship of publications was envisaged, implemented and received in India over three crucial decades in her history.

The book, published by Cambridge University Press, examines state censorship beyond the conventional boundaries that circumscribe it in the existing literature.



This has been attempted in two directions.

First, the boundary of race is complicated in a colonial context by focusing on works by non-Indian authors. Second, Indian independence is treated not as a dead-end but as an open door that permits comparison of both policies and people's reactions to them.

ple's reactions to them.

The book draws upon a range of sources as diverse as the banned material itself, legal judgments, legislative debates, memoirs and biographies, contemporary newspaper reports and letters to editors, government papers and reports, first-person accounts,

and empirical and theoretical works by scholars of censorship across the world. The book is divided into four parts - Guarding the State, Protecting the Public: Censorship Policies and Practices in the 1930s; Protests and Publicity: Banning Non-Indian Authors; Political or Mili-

tary? Censorship in India during the Second World War; and The Censored Turn Censors: Freedom and Free Speech.

According to Sethi, the overwhelming concern of the colonial state with public opinion meant that censorship was carried out not only to proscribe or ban publications but also as a means of exercising surveillance over what was being written and debated in the public sphere. She says, the drive to censor, or to bring about censorship is a powerful one.

In contemporary newspaper articles in the Indian press lamenting or railing against bans from the colonial period that were not lifted by the post-colonial state, the names of certain books appear with regularity, she says.

Ironically, most of these books were banned by the colonial state not because there were critical of colonial rule, but because they were critical of Indian society, and the demand for the original ban was in fact made vociferously by Indian nationalists themselves, she writes.

Censorship in colonial India, Sethi says, was not entirely colonial.

In other words, there was nothing peculiarly colonial about the desire to censor publications. The censored of one generation are often the censors of the next.

Bidhannagar mayor stripped of his powers, councillors want him removed

KOLKATA, JUL 7 (PTI): The Trinamool Congress leadership Sunday clipped the wings of Bidhannagar Municipal Corporation (BMC) Mayor Sabyasachi Dutta on the charge of making anti-party statements and handed over his powers to his deputy.

The decision was made at an emergency meeting of BMC councillors who urged party supremo Mamata Banerjee to take a call on Dutta's fate in the party. Senior TMC leader and minister Firhad Hakim was present at the meeting.

Dutta was not invited at the meeting, in which several councillors expressed their opinion that he should be removed from the mayor's post, TMC sources said.

"Several councillors even threatened to resign if Dutta continues as mayor. However, it was decided that party supremo Mamata Banerjee will take the final call," said a councillor who attended the meeting.

Interestingly, BJP leader Mukul Roy said

Dutta is a "popular leader" who plays a role to help the saffron party.

TMC sources said it was decided at the meeting that henceforth the BMC's Deputy Mayor Tapas Chatterjee would handle additional responsibilities and call meetings of councillors, if needed.

Several councillors also proposed Chatterjee's name as the next mayor, but Hakim said such a decision will be taken by Banerjee, the sources said.

Chatterjee, a veteran CPI(M) leader of Rajarhat- Newtown area, had switched over to the TMC in 2015.

"I would inform our party supremo about the views of the councillors. I won't say anything else," Hakim told reporters after the meeting.

The BMC has 41 councillors and 39 of them belong to the TMC. A total of 37 TMC councillors attended the meeting.

The BMC covers Salt Lake and its adjacent areas. The party leadership was annoyed with Dut-

ta after he participated in an agitation against the state's power department and slammed the government for not fulfilling the employees' demands for increasing their salaries.

"Being a member of the party, you cannot violate its rules and regulations. It is for Sabyasachi Dutta to decide what he wants," Hakim had said on Saturday.

Dutta, however, dared the party leadership to act against him.

"I am following the footsteps of our party supremo Mamata Banerjee. Our party always stands by farmers and workers. Being a trade union leader, I did the same thing," he told PTI Saturday.

Coming out in Dutta's support, BJP leader Mukul Roy said, "He is a very popular leader and mayor. Just like several other TMC MLAs, he has played a role, which had been helpful towards the BJP," Roy said.

This is not the first time that Dutta rubbed his party up the wrong way.

Nepal aims at two million tourists, mostly Indians, by 2020

BHUBANESWAR, JUL 7 (PTI): Nepal Tourism Board (NTB) has chalked out an ambitious plan seeking to increase the number of Indian tourists visiting the Himalayan country by up to 30 per cent within a year.

As part of it, the NTB has launched "Visit Nepal Year 2020" campaign to achieve two million arrivals from across the world, especially India, by 2020, a senior NTB official said here on Saturday.

"The tourist flow from India by air mounted to 2,00,438 in 2018,

registering a 25 per cent growth over the number of visitors recorded in 2017," said Rohini Prasad Khanal, Manager, Corporate Services Department of NTB. Khanal, who was here with the NTB delegation for presentation and interaction with various stakeholders, said, that Indians remain one of the top contributors of international tourists to Nepal.

"Nepal received 1,173,072 international tourists excluding overland travellers in 2018, of which the top arrivals were from India, China,

Sri Lanka, the US and the UK," he said. The official said that by 2020, Nepal plans to operate two new international airports -- Pokhara and Lumbini -- besides taking steps to introduce around 100 unexplored destinations to the tourists.

The private hotel sector has planned to add 4000 rooms in the four and five-star categories in Kathmandu, Chitwan and Pokhara. A number of international hotel chains are expected to operate properties in Nepal in near future, he said.

Pak arrests regional head of international NGO for funding Al-Qaeda



PESHAWAR, JUL 7 (PTI): Pakistan's counter-terrorism forces have arrested the regional head of an international non-governmental organisation who is accused of receiving huge sums in the name of charity and diverting them to Al-Qaeda terrorists.

The Counter-Terrorism Department (CTD) arrested Ali Nawaz, the regional head of Human Concern International, on the terror financing charge under the Anti-Terrorism Act, Dawn reported, quoting a senior CTD official.

He has been accused of diverting the funds collected in the name of charity to Al Qaeda, the official added.

On Saturday, Nawaz was presented before an anti-terrorism court, which handed him over to the CTD for three days for further interrogation.

According to the FIR, there were intelligence reports that Nawaz, Mohammad Farooq Awan, Shah Rum and Mohammad Naeem were providing funds to terrorists.

It said that the CTD received a communique from the Federal Investigation Agency against them, alleging that they

were receiving huge sums in the name of charity, which were being diverted to Al Qaeda to be used for terrorism.

It said that millions of rupees had been transacted from 11 bank accounts of the charity and Nawaz was unable to provide satisfactory answers regarding these funds. The suspect was then booked under Section 11-N of the ATA, 1997, the paper reported. Representatives of the international non-governmental organisation were unavailable for comments when approached, the paper said.

The move comes as the US, the UK, France and some other prominent countries voiced concern over Pakistan's failure to do enough to contain terror funding on its soil.

The Financial Action Task Force (FATF), which placed Pakistan on the grey list in June last year of countries whose domestic laws are considered weak to tackle the challenges of money laundering and terrorism financing, asked Islamabad to complete its action plan against terror funding by October or face action.

West Bengal lynching: Main accused arrested

MALDA (WB), JUL 6 (PTI): Another person, the main accused, in connection with the alleged lynching of a 20-year-old man in West Bengal's Malda district, has been arrested, police said on Saturday.

With the arrest of the prime accused, the number of persons arrested in the case went up to four, the police said.

The victim, Sanaul Sheikh, was assaulted allegedly by some locals at Baishnabnagar Bazar on June 26 after he was found stealing a bike.

Police had started a case following a complaint lodged by his mother.

"Bappa Ghosh, the main accused of Baishnabnagar lynching case has been arrested at Pa-

kur in Jharkhand," the Superintendent of Police (SP) of Malda district, Alok Rajoria, said. A purported video of the attack had gone viral and some of the culprits were identified on the basis of it. Two accused were arrested on June 30 and another one was arrested on July 3.

Sheikh was initially taken to Bedrabad primary health centre, from where he was referred to Malda Medical College and Hospital.

He was later shifted to SSKM Hospital in Kolkata, where he died on June 29.

A joint delegation of the Left Front and the Congress led by CPI(M) leader Sujan Chakraborty and Leader

of opposition in the state Assembly, Abdul Mannan visited Baishnabnagar on Saturday and spoke to victim's family. "Since Lok Sabha elections results, BJP in various parts of the state and country have been involved in lynching of people over Jai Sri Ram slogans. Our constitution allows everybody to practice his or her religion. BJP is trying to snatch away that right. But we would never allow it to happen.

We would fight till end," Mannan said.

He also accused ruling TMC in Bengal of making space for the saffron party in the state by pursuing communal policies and poaching on elected representatives of Congress and CPI(M).

BJP targets 50 lakh membership in Odisha

BHUBANESWAR, JUL 6 (PTI): Union Minister Dharmendra Pradhan Saturday launched a campaign in Odisha with an aim at increasing BJP members from 36 lakh to 50 lakh.

The campaign will also lay an emphasis on strengthening the party at grassroots level.

"We are aiming at increasing the party's membership from 36 lakh to 50 lakh. The mega drive to induct new members will be carried out in all the 36,000 booths across the state, Pradhan said while launching the campaign here.

It will enable the state to be an active partner in building a new India and a new Odisha," he added.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi formally

kicked off the party's membership drive from Varanasi on Saturday.

The campaign's launch in Odisha, which is a part of the party's countrywide mega membership drive, coincided with the 118th birth anniversary of Jana Sangh founder Syama Prasad Mookerjee. Noting that the campaign will solidify the party's organisational strength at the grassroots level, the Union petroleum and steel minister said the membership drive in the state would be undertaken with added vigour among women, youth, students, poor, and Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes.

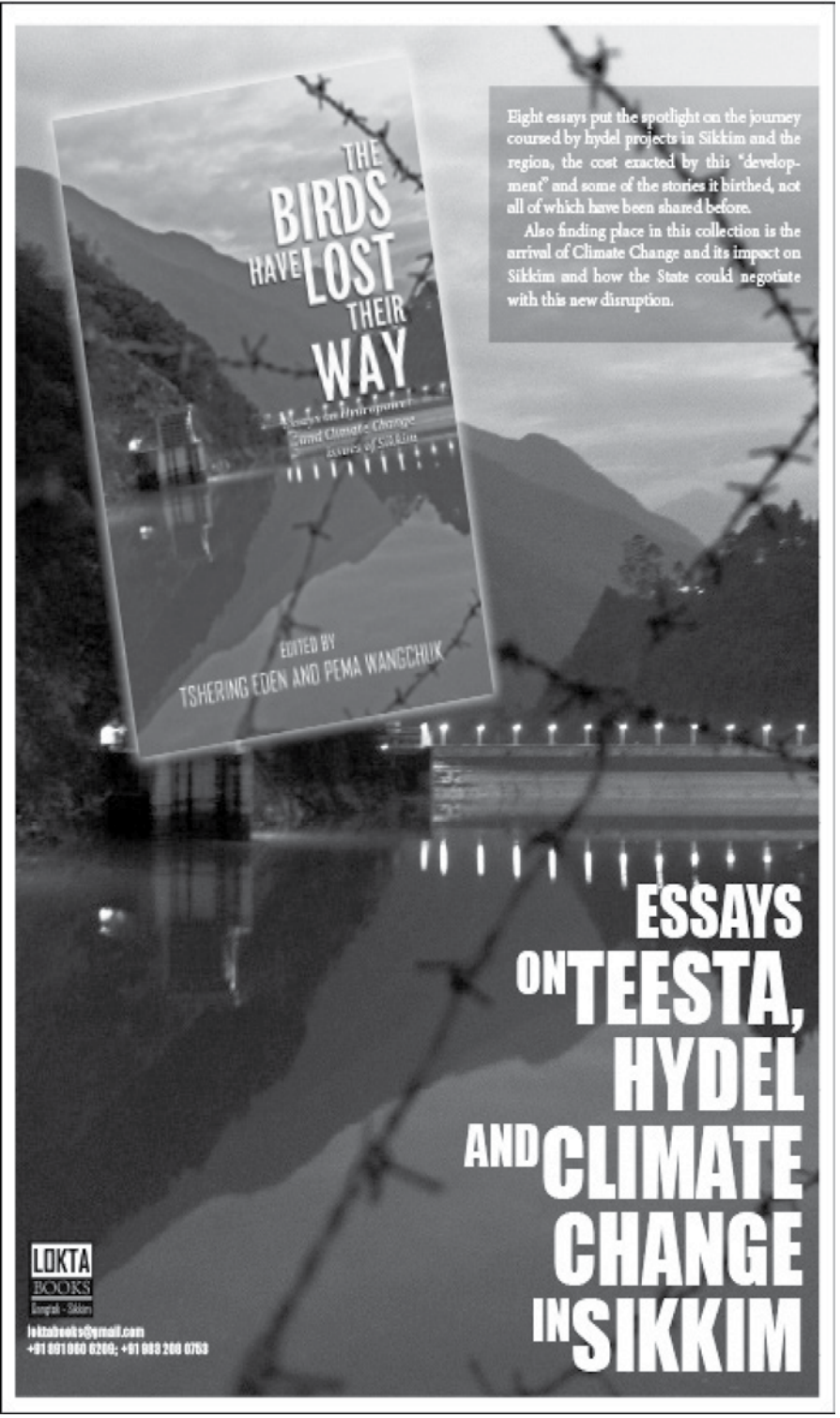
"Special efforts will be made to attract youngsters, including those

who have become first time voters, towards the party and induct them as members," Pradhan said, adding, the people of Odisha will "play a significant role" in strengthening the party.

Special attention will be given for stepping up the campaign in slums, colleges, hostels, malls, markets, railway stations and bus stands.

BJP MP from Bhubaneswar, Aparajita Sarangi, said steps would be taken to connect people belonging to all sections of the society.

Prominent among those present at the programme were Rajya Sabha MP Ashwini Vaishnav and BJP national spokesperson Sambit Patra.



Budget on books: Publishers not delighted; GST, rising paper costs bigger concern for industry

NEW DELHI, JUL 7 (PTI): The government's decision to levy 5 per cent customs duty on imported books has not found much favour with the publishing industry, which feels ease in claiming GST-related benefits and availability of cheaper paper would have rather helped Indian publishers.

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman had on Friday announced the duty hike on foreign-made books from nil to 5 per cent during her Budget speech, saying the move was aimed to encourage domestic publishing and printing industry.

"GST on uncoated and light weight paper was 12 per cent, now it is 10 per cent. This could have been a welcome move, but the other increments on the same segment will nullify this," said Aditi Maheshwari Goyal, executive director of Vani Prakashan Group.

She said the GST on printed books was nil earlier but now it is 5 per cent, fearing impact on sales of books.

"There is no mechanism to claim ITC (Input Tax Credit) - taxes paid by suppliers - the erst-



while VAT (Value Added Taxes). It was only electronic reproduction of intellectual property that was taxable earlier. Now, making printed books taxable at 5 per cent will highly impact that production and sales of the books," Goyal told PTI.

Satyanand Nirupam, editorial director of the Rajkamal Prakashan Group, stressed on the need for a collective action on a large scale that

should be taken to promote a culture of reading, even as he voiced concern over rising cost of paper and its scarcity.

"I don't think levying 5 per cent custom duty on imported books is going to benefit our local publishers. If one really wants to help publishers here, the rising costs of paper should be brought down. The scarcity of paper should be addressed and removed," he said.

While some publishers felt it was too early to gauge the impact of the decision on the industry, others felt a vibrant marketplace that includes books from across the world would be good for readers.

"While the decision to levy custom duty on the import of books is going to affect the books industry, it is too soon to comment on the impact. We are evaluating the

weight of this decision and how best to price our books going ahead," said Nandan Jha, senior vice president (product and sales) at Penguin Random House India.

Juggernaut publisher Chiki Sarkar said, "Indians should have access to all kinds of information and ideas and stories - not just Indian books. As a local publisher who makes homegrown books, I value being part of a vibrant marketplace where my reader can grow through all kinds of reading."

In her budget speech, the finance minister had also announced withdrawing custom duty exemption from various kinds of papers but did not mention their existing rates or other details.

According to the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI), the publishing sector in India is the third largest in the world in English language publishing.

"Current statistics reveal that the sector is truly a colossus - a giant in slumber, which needs to be awakened and given its due status and identity," FICCI states on its website.

It's India against New Zealand in first semifinal, hosts England face Australia in other

MANCHESTER, JULY 7 (PTI): It's going to be India versus New Zealand in the first semifinal of the ICC World Cup on Tuesday, with hosts England taking on five-time defending champions Australia in the other on Thursday.

The 45-game group stage ended with the match between Australia and South Africa. Australia, India, England and New Zealand knew prior to Saturday's final group matches that they would be in the top four and that all that was to be decided was the end of group standings. India's seven-wicket win over Sri Lanka at Headingley ensured that they ended on a winning note and leapfrogged Australia after their 10-run defeat by South Africa. India's win and Australia's defeat meant that the 2011 winners topped the group and face fourth place New Zealand at Old Trafford.

It will be an intriguing match-up as these two sides have not played each other at this World Cup. Their game at Trent Bridge on June 13 was abandoned without a ball bowled. India finished the group stage with just one defeat to England to finish on 15 points from their nine matches. While after a good start to this World Cup, New Zealand lost three games to Pakistan, Australia and England and ended on 11 points from their nine games.

Rohit Sharma is India's dangerman with the bat with 647 runs in the group stage while Black Caps captain Kane Williamson has 481 runs.

Australia's defeat in their final game means they slipped down to second at the end of the group stages and set up a meeting with England.

Atwal finishes with hat-trick of birdies, placed 3 behind leader at tied 9th



BLAINE (US), JUL 7 (PTI): India's Arjun Atwal maintained the momentum despite a double bogey on the back nine, as he closed with a brilliant hat-trick of birdies that kept him in contention at the inaugural 3M Open golf tournament here.

Atwal shot his second straight 68 and is now 12-under and tied-ninth, three shots off the lead as the crowded leaderboard promises an exciting finish. Atwal, who was fourth after the first round and sixth after the second, is now ninth after the third.

But as against a six-shot deficit against the 36-hole leader, he is now only three behind the new leaders, a young pair of Matthew Wolff (62) and Collin Morikawa (64), who played golf against each other in high school, and Bryson DeChambeau (70).

Wolff and Morikawa grew up within 30 minutes

of each other in California and are in their first month as professionals. Wolff shot 62 and moved into contention. They are all at 15-under. Meanwhile India's other golfer, Anirban Lahiri (75) missed the 54-hole cut as he was tied 83rd.

With more than 80 players making the second round cut, a third round cut was applied and Lahiri missed it.

Atwal, 46, and playing only his fourth event in the current season and made only one cut, hit 16 of 18 greens in regulation during his third round.

Atwal had a clean two-under on his front nine and had four pars on second nine before hitting his tee shot into water on Par-4 14th and came out with a double.

But he fought back superbly at the finish. He birdied from nine feet on 16th and then holed a 31-footer for birdie on 17th. On the 18th, he had

a brilliant first putt from 90 feet for a one-foot tap-in birdie to finish at 68.

"That was a satisfying finish and I am not thinking about scores or finishes. I am just focusing on each shot," said Atwal, whose last top 10 on PGA came in 2012 and his last international win was in Dubai in 2014 on the Asian Tour.

Lahiri had a very colourful scoreboard with four birdies, three bogeys, one double and one triple for a 75 that saw him exit after three rounds.

Adam Hadwin and Wyndham Clark are tied for fourth at 14-under and Hideki Matsuyama, Charles Howell III, and Troy Merritt are tied for 6th at 13-under.

Seeking his first tour win in 31 TOUR starts, Clark shot a 64 and was tied with Hadwin (69) one shot back. Clark played with Atwal in first two rounds.

MSD turns a year older, team a bit wiser



KUSHAN SARKAR LEEDS, JULY 7 (PTI): In the grey sideburns lies his cricketing wisdom that Virat Kohli so banks upon and Mahendra Singh Dhoni, who turned 38 on Sunday, is all pumped to empty his tank and buy himself the best birthday gift possible -- another World Cup triumph.

One of the freeze-frame moments of Indian cricket is Sunil Gavaskar raising Kapil Dev's hands at the Lord's balcony on June 25, 1983.

The best birthday present for Dhoni would certainly be Kohli and Rohit Sharma carrying their 'skipper' on a lap of honour at the Mecca of Cricket.

That is if India make it to the final and then go the distance. Also, that is only if Dhoni sheds off his reluctance to let the emotions flow on what could be the most poignant day of his fascinating career.

"We might celebrate his birthday on the bus on our way to Manchester," Rohit Sharma said when a vernacular journalist kept on funnily 'probing' the Indian vice-captain to say something on the

legend's birthday.

Skipper Kohli has time and again reiterated that Dhoni remains "his captain", and it is no different in this whole Indian team set-up where the he enjoys unstinted support.

The team is insulated from all the talk surrounding his waning abilities as a batsman and the players trust their 'mentor'.

He remains the good old banyan tree under which the players find their shade and, at times, a bit of warmth, when professional sport becomes ruthless and lonely.

Whether its Kuldeep Yadav or Yuzvendra Chahal being tonked by Jonny Bairstow or Angelo Mathews launching into Bhuvneshwar Kumar, they know that someone would sprint those 30 yards from behind the stumps, put an arm around their shoulder, and may be whisper a couple of words.

It works like magic on occasions. On occasions, it's just an assurance with unspoken words, 'Don't worry, you belong

here'. Mohammed Shami disclosed after his hat-trick against Afghanistan that Dhoni's suggestion to bowl yorker was spot on. Kohli's conditioned reflex is to look behind the stumps for approval while taking a decision review. He does it for the team and no wonder they are all ready to cast a protective shield around their captain at the slightest hint of criticism about his recent batting approach.

Any reaction sought about Dhoni's form is met with various counter-reactions nonchalance by Ravi Shastri, shock by Sanjay Bangar, or, at worst, irritation by Kohli, depending on who's answering that question.

It's not a planned strategy. Perhaps, it's more to do with the kind of respect he commands in that Indian change room.

India are within sniffing distance of winning another World Cup. And more than anything else now, the team would not mind a return gift for the next one week -- Dhoni's wisdom.

Federer posts new Slam record as favourites cruise into Wimbledon last 16



LONDON, JUL 7 (AFP): Eight-time Wimbledon singles champion Roger Federer posted yet more landmarks as all the main contenders encountered few problems in reaching the last 16.

Federer registered a record 350th win in Grand Slam matches in his 7-5 6-2 7-6 (7/4) victory over Lucas Pouille of France on Saturday and in the process reached the fourth round for an unprecedented 17th time.

"It's a nice number to achieve. I've enjoyed my time at the Slams," said Federer, who next plays Matteo Berrettini of Italy, of his Grand Slam record.

"It's been nice winning that much."

Earlier, his great rival and two-time Wimbledon champion Rafael Nadal had a much more enjoyable experience than his previous match as he eased into the last 16 with a 6-2 6-3 6-2 romp over French veteran Jo-Wilfried Tsonga.

The ease with which Nadal made the fourth round for the ninth time was replicated on the women's side by Ashleigh Barty, who will be breaking new ground in appearing in the last 16 for the first time.

Seven-time women's champion Serena Williams is also into the second week for the 16th time.

Nadal, who embraced Tsonga fondly at the end in stark contrast to the chilly handshake he had with fiery Australian Nick Kyrgios in the previous round, said he was delighted with the manner of his victory.

"I was very happy. I played a great match from the beginning to the end," said Nadal.

He next plays Portugal's Joao Sousa who ended British hopes with a five-set win over Dan Evans.

Andy Murray's hopes of men's doubles glory ended early as he and French partner Pierre-Hugues Herbert went out in the second round.

However, he was to end the day on a celebratory note as his star partnership with Williams eased into the second round of the mixed doubles beating Germany's Andreas Mies and Alexa Guarachi of Chile 6-4 6-1.

Neither would claim who was running the show.

Serena said there was no "I in team" while Murray said they were

both used to being told what to do.

"I said to Serena before the match we are the younger siblings so we are used to being bossed by our older brother and sister," said Murray. On the women's side Barty and Williams could meet in a blockbuster quarter-final if they win their last 16 matches on 'Manic Monday'.

Two of the top 10 seeds did bow out, Dutch fourth seed Kiki Bertens and American ninth seed Sloane Stephens losing to Czech Republic's Barbora Strycova and Britain's French Open semi-finalist Johanna Konta respectively.

While Barty will be in new territory playing singles at Wimbledon in the second week for the first time, for Williams it is the 16th.

- 'SUCH A BUZZ GOING AROUND' -

Barty overwhelmed British wild card Harriet Dart 6-1 6-1 while 37-year-old, seven-time champion Williams produced her most convincing display in dispensing with German Julia Goerges 6-3 6-4.

Barty, bidding to become the first Australian Wimbledon women's champion since Evonne

Goolagong Cawley won her second title in 1980, will play unseeded American Alison Riske for a place in the last eight.

She is also the first Australian woman to make the second week since 2010.

"Incredible it is a first for me (to be in the last 16), new territory for me." Williams goes on to face Spain's Carla Suarez Navarro for a place in the quarter-finals.

Eleventh seed Williams, who defeated Goerges in last year's semi-finals, is bidding to equal Margaret Court's all-time record of 24 Grand Slam titles.

"It's been an arduous year for me, so every match I'm hoping to improve tons," said Williams, who had a knee problem which affected her season.

There was no fairy-tale win in the mixed doubles, though, for the star of the championships Coco Gauff.

The 15-year-old American -- who has wowed the crowds in reaching the last 16 of the women's singles -- and her British partner Jay Clarke lost 6-1 6-4 in the first round to Robert Lindstedt and Jelena Ostapenko.

Hong Kong protesters march on station to 'educate' Chinese mainlanders



HONG KONG, JUL 7 (AFP): Tens of thousands of anti-government protesters rallied outside a controversial train station linking the territory to the Chinese mainland on Sunday, the latest mass show of anger as activists try to keep pressure on the city's pro-Beijing leaders.

The rally was the first major large-scale protest since last Monday's unprecedented storming of parliament by largely young, masked protesters -- which plunged the international financial hub further into crisis.

Hong Kong has been rocked by a month of huge marches as well as a series of separate violent confrontations with police, sparked by a law that would have allowed extraditions to mainland China.

The bill has since been postponed in response to the intense backlash but that has done little to quell public anger, which has evolved into a wider movement calling for democratic reforms and a halt to sliding freedoms in the semi-autonomous city.

Organisers said some 230,000 people snaked

their way through streets in the harbour-front district of Tsim Sha Tsui, an area popular with Chinese tourists. Police said 56,000 turned out at the protest's peak.

The march was billed as an opportunity to explain to mainlanders in the city what their protest movement is about.

Inside China, where news and information are heavily censored, the Hong Kong protests have been portrayed as a primarily violent, foreign-funded plot to destabilise the motherland, not a mass popular movement over Beijing's increased shadow over the semi-autonomous hub.

"We want to show tourists, including mainland China tourists what is happening in Hong Kong and we hope they can take this concept back to China," Eddison Ng, an 18-year-old demonstrator, told AFP.

Hong Kongers speak Cantonese but protesters were using Bluetooth to send leaflets in Mandarin -- the predominant language on the mainland -- to nearby phones, hoping to spread the word to mainlanders by digi-

tal word of mouth. "Why are there still so many people coming out to protest now?" one man said in Mandarin through a loudspeaker. "Because the Hong Kong government didn't listen to our demands."

Many protest banners were written with the Simplified Chinese characters used on the mainland, not the Traditional Chinese system used in Hong Kong and Taiwan.

And a lawmaker had to coach crowds how to chant "Students are not rioters" using the correct Mandarin pronunciation.

Protesters are demanding the postponed extradition bill be scrapped entirely, an independent inquiry into police use of tear gas and rubber bullets, amnesty for those arrested, and for the city's unelected leader Carrie Lam to step down.

Beijing has thrown its full support behind Lam, calling on Hong Kong police to pursue anyone involved in the parliament storming and other clashes.

In an interview with the BBC on Sunday, China's ambassador to Brit-

ain said the extradition bill was needed to "plug loopholes" and that Beijing has "full confidence in the Hong Kong government".

Sunday's protest began on the waterfront -- the first time a rally has taken place off the main island -- and made its way to West Kowloon, a recently opened multi-billion-dollar station that links to China's high-speed rail network.

Police placed the glass and steel structure in virtual lockdown. Long lines of water-filled security barriers surrounded the station while only those with previously purchased tickets were being allowed in.

Ticket sales for Sunday afternoon were halted and only two entrances were open.

Protesters, some of them masked, faced off with police and chanted "Add Oil!", a Cantonese phrase for encouragement long embraced by protesters. But there were no clashes.

The terminus is controversial because Chinese law operates in the parts of the station dealing with immigration and customs, as well as the platforms, even

though West Kowloon is kilometres from the border. Critics say that move gave away part of the city's territory to an increasingly assertive Beijing.

Local politician Ventus Lau Wing-hong, one of those organising the rally, said there was no desire to occupy the station given the catalyst for their movement was opposing people being sent to the mainland.

Under Hong Kong's mini-constitution China's national laws do not apply to the city apart from in limited areas, including defence.

Hong Kong also enjoys rights unseen on the mainland, including freedom of speech, protected by a deal made before the city was handed back to China by Britain in 1997.

But there are growing fears those liberties are being eroded.

Among recent watershed moments critics point to are the disappearance into mainland custody of dissident booksellers, the disqualification of prominent politicians, the de facto expulsion of a foreign journalist and the jailing of democracy protest leaders.

Heatwave adds to the woes of migrants stranded in Bosnia

BIHAC (BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA), JUL 7 (AFP): Stranded in Bosnia, thousands of migrants face yet one more hurdle on their journey towards the European Union: the scorching summer heat in the Balkans.

Under a leaden sky, Saleh Alhasan and his friends hurry to reach the shade of the woods after failing yet again to cross the border to Croatia, the last barrier on the long and tortuous road into the European Union.

"I tried more than 15 times... It has been 10 months that I try to pass. And I do not want to give up. I just want to see my son" born in Sweden, says the 33-year old Syrian architect.

"I only saw him in a photo."

His wife was among hundreds of thousands of migrants and refugees who took the so-called Balkans route in 2015, before the EU borders closed for them.

On a dusty road, Saleh and his companions pass by red signs hanging on trees, warning that the field is mined: a legacy of the country's brutal 1992-1995 war.

They stop at a stream to refresh themselves, exhausted after walking in temperatures exceeding 35 Celsius degrees (95 Fahrenheit).

The men no longer know where to rest.

In Bihac and Velika Kladusa near the Croatian border, reception centres with a capacity for 3,500 run by the

International Organization for Migration (IOM) are full.

Saleh and his friends live in unhealthy squats. He wants to return to Sarajevo where, he says, "there are more options" for a fresh attempt to cross the border.

The flow of newcomers slowed during winter but has now resumed and "a hundred migrants arrive daily in the canton" of Bihac, says regional police spokesman Ale Siljdedic.

"But recently far fewer people succeed in crossing the border.

Croatia has considerably reinforced its police presence," he adds. According to Bosnia's security minister, more than 34,000 migrants from Asia and Africa have illegally entered the country since the beginning of 2018, 11,000 of them this year alone.

Some 8,000 are currently in Bosnia, according to European Commission estimates.

This has caused tensions both among migrants of different nationalities and with locals, who are also poor. Recently, hundreds of migrants occupied public spaces in the town of Bihac, which is home to some 65,000 people.

With the help of the local Red Cross, the authorities in June set up a camp in Vucjak, an uninhabited zone a dozen kilometres from the border, to accommodate migrants who have not found a place in IOM centres.

But according to the United Nations, the zone around this camp is also "very close" to minefields.

The EU finances the IOM centres, but it has refused to provide funds for the Vucjak camp because "it is not a suitable location and presents a clear danger" for those staying there.

Bihac mayor Suhret Fazlic says the problem is the facility is too close to the border.

Nicolas Bizel, head of operations at the EU delegation in Bosnia told AFP that this was not the main issue.

His concern was that it was too close to unexploded wartime mines and that there was also a risk of a methane explosion because the zone used to be a landfill site.

This camp became known as "The Jungle" by its occupants -- like the one that sprang up in the northern French port city of Calais, before being torn down in 2016.

Several hundred young men live there in deplorable sanitary conditions, sleeping in tents without beds, without medical assistance, showers or toilets. Several barrels equipped with faucets provide minimal hygiene facilities.

"It is too hot. We could not rest in the tents," said Suleman Ashraf, a 29-year-old Pakistani trying to get to Spain to join his brother.

The food that arrives twice a day is everything we have here.

At least 12 dead in Taliban blast in Afghan city: officials

GHAZNI (AFGHANISTAN), JUL 7 (AFP): A Taliban car bomb in eastern Afghanistan killed at least 12 people and wounded scores more Sunday, officials said, in a massive blast that came amid ongoing peace talks in Qatar. The Taliban are meeting with US negotiators and Afghan representatives in Doha as the US pushes to end its 18-year involvement in Afghanistan, but violence from the insurgents and the US military has continued apace.

Sunday's suicide car bomb attack hit the eastern city of Ghazni and targeted an intelligence unit, Ghazni provincial governor spokesman Aref Noori told AFP. Wahidullah Mayar, a health ministry spokesman, said 12 people

had been killed. Additionally, "179 people, mostly civilians including children, were wounded", he added. The number of wounded jumped up from an earlier toll of 70 and suggests a massive explosion. The Taliban claimed the attack in a WhatsApp message.

The seventh round of Taliban-US talks is aimed at forging a deal that would see the US military quit Afghanistan in return for various guarantees.

Both sides have reported substantial progress in the talks, which are paused Sunday and Monday while the Taliban meet with Afghan representatives for a so-called intra-Afghan dialogue.

Biden apologizes for comments defending segregationist senators

WASHINGTON, JUL 7 (AFP): Former US Vice President Joe Biden, the front-runner for the Democratic nomination in the 2020 presidential election, apologized on Saturday for comments supporting segregationist lawmakers that had been seized on by his opponents. A former Delaware senator who served under America's first black president Barack Obama, Biden stirred controversy last month when he said he'd "got things done" with the late southern senators James Eastland and Herman Talmadge, both of whom supported racist policies. Eastland "never called me 'boy,' he always called me 'son,'" Biden had said in remarks that sparked condemnation from several of his competitors seeking the Democratic nomination to face Republican President Donald Trump in next year's election.

Biden had remained defiant and refused to apologize, but on Saturday reversed course.

"Was I wrong a few weeks ago to somehow give the impression to people that I was praising those men who I successfully opposed, time

and again? Well, yes, I was, and I regret it. And I'm sorry for any of the pain or misconception they may have caused anybody," Biden said during a speech in South Carolina. "Should that misstep define 50 years of my record for fighting for civil rights, racial justice in this country? I hope not," he said.

Though he still polls at the top of the crowded Democratic field, Biden saw his standing slip following his first debate appearance in which California Senator Kamala Harris confronted him over racial issues. She accused him of opposing the busing of black students to schools in white neighborhoods during the 1970s as part of desegregation efforts, a standout moment during the debates which stretched over two nights. Polls released following the debates showed growing support for Harris, the only black female in the race, while Biden's fell. On Friday, Biden told CNN he was surprised by Harris's attack, but said he wasn't concerned because "the American people think they know me.

Iran set to exceed nuclear deal uranium enrichment cap

Tehran, Jul 7 (AFP): Iran said Sunday it was set to breach the uranium enrichment cap set by an endangered nuclear deal within hours as it seeks to press signatories into keeping their side of the bargain. The move -- involving purifying beyond the 3.67 per cent allowed by the 2015 agreement -- comes despite opposition from the European Union and the United States, which has quit the deal. President Hassan Rouhani's order to exceed the threshold would be implemented "in a few hours" after the last technical details were sorted, Iran's Atomic Energy Organisation spokesman Behrouz Kamalvandi said live on state television.

Rouhani initially flagged the Islamic republic's intentions on May 8, exactly a year from US President Donald Trump unilaterally abandoning the multilateral deal.

He has said the move is in response to a failure by remaining state signatories to keep their promise to help Iran work around biting sanctions reimposed by the US in the second half of

last year. French President Emmanuel Macron told Rouhani of his "strong concern" over the risk of weakening the nuclear agreement and the consequences that would follow during a telephone call Saturday, according to a statement from the Elysee Palace.

However, the two leaders agreed to "explore by July 15 the conditions for a resumption of dialogue between all parties", the statement said, adding that Macron would consult with Iranian authorities and international partners to bring about the "necessary de-escalation" of the situation over the coming days.

It is not yet clear how far the Islamic Republic will boost enrichment.

But a top advisor to Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei hinted on Friday it could reach five per cent.

The 2015 deal was reached between Iran and six world powers -- Britain, China, France, Germany, the US and Russia -- and saw Tehran agree to drastically scale down its nuclear programme in exchange for

sanctions relief. Washington began reimposing sanctions in August 2018 and has targeted crucial sectors including oil exports and the banking system, fuelling a deep recession. The 3.67 per cent enrichment limit set in the agreement is sufficient for power generation but far below the more than 90 per cent level required for a nuclear warhead.

Rouhani has stressed that Iran's action would be reversed if the other parties provided relief from the US sanctions.

The Iranian president has insisted that his country's policies are not meant to "hurt (the deal), but to preserve" it.

France has warned Tehran that it would "gain nothing" by leaving the deal and has said "challenging the agreement would only increase tensions" in the Middle East.

Iran says that it is not violating the deal, citing terms of the agreement allowing one side to temporarily abandon some of commitments if it deems the other side is not respecting its part of the accord.





SO AM I: More and more American artists are working with K-pop artists to feature on songs. NCT 127 is the latest one. The seven-member K-pop boy group under SM Entertainment has collaborated with American singer, Ava Max for her latest single titled "So Am I". NCT 127 is a sub-unit of the Korean idol group NCT.

Akshay Kumar trolled for Canadian passport after BMC tweet



MUMBAI, JUL 7 (PTI): Actor Akshay Kumar's Canadian citizenship became a subject of trolling Sunday after the actor welcomed the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation's debut on Twitter, saying people can now tweet their "suggestions and grievances" to the civic body directly.

Akshay was the subject of intense speculation about his citizenship after he did not vote in Mumbai on April 29 in the fourth round of the seven-phase Lok Sabha polls.

Later, the 51-year-old said he had never hidden or denied the fact that he holds

a Canadian passport. On Sunday, the actor tweeted, "The BMC is now on twitter as @mybmc, you can now tweet your suggestions/ grievances to BMC directly and get them addressed. Try it now to make your voice heard directly." This, however, didn't go down well with several people who called the tweet ironical.

The replies to his tweet ranged from being abusive to ones mentioning his Canadian nationality. "Toothpaste mein desh ki mitti hai, handwash mein desh ki suraksha hai, saabun mein deshbhakti ka jhaag hai....Jekin

passport mein desh ki naagrikta nahi hai. Ye kaisa deshprem hai. Canadian," a user wrote. The actor had earlier said he doesn't understand the "unwarranted interest and negativity" about his citizenship as he works in the country and pays his taxes here.

"While all these years, I have never needed to prove my love for India to anyone, I find it disappointing that my citizenship issue is constantly dragged into needless controversy, a matter that is personal, legal, non-political, and of no consequence to others," he had said.

Anubhav Sinha, Taapsee Pannu to collaborate again

MUMBAI, JUL 7 (PTI): One of 2018's most successful director-actor duo, Anubhav Sinha and Taapsee Pannu, are set to reunite for a big screen project after "Mulk". Taapsee, 31, shared the news with her followers on Twitter on Sunday.

"Cheers to the new beginning with some good food. This one is a subject way too close to my heart. I've been wanting to do this since years. It becomes exciting when it happens with the 'Man of The Moment' @anub-

havsinha," she tweeted.

The actor hinted at the release date of the movie writing, "8th March 2020 will surely be the day to watch out for."

To which Anubhav replied, "But Friday 6 March ko hai... (But Friday is on March 6)."

While the director is currently enjoying the critical-acclaim and a good box office performance for "Article 15", Taapsee is fresh from the success of her thriller "Game Over".

Glad I went with my gut instinct: Ayushmann Khurrana on 'Article 15' success

MUMBAI, JUL 6 (PTI): Actor Ayushmann Khurrana says he is happy with his decision to star in Anubhav Sinha's hard-hitting socio-political drama "Article 15" as he believes the film's success has reaffirmed the fact that content is king.

Directed by Sinha of "Mulk" fame, the film is based on Article 15 of the Indian Constitution which prohibits discrimination on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth.

Ayushmann, who has a history of starring in socially relevant films, said "Article 15" was a new experience for him. "Article 15" has been an experience like no other and I am glad that

I went with my gut instinct again and choosing and believing in content being king always.

"I am extremely happy to see how well the nation has received it. I have been flooded with messages from all across and I can only say, your love has been the biggest support. I am delighted by the response," the actor said in a statement.

The movie, which also features Mohammed Zeeshan Ayyub, Sayani Gupta, Kumud Mishra, Manoj Pahwa and Nasser, has so far collected Rs 36.86 crore at the box office.

It released countrywide on July 4.

Grateful for recognition for 'Gully Boy' at BIFAN: Zoya Akhtar

MUMBAI, JUL 7 (PTI): Zoya Akhtar on Sunday said she is grateful to Bucheon International Fantastic Film Festival for recognising her latest directorial "Gully Boy" as the Best Asian Film this year.

The film, starring Ranveer Singh and Alia Bhatt, was honoured with the NETPAC award.

NETPAC Jury Committee, comprised of NETPAC members and film professionals, select the best Asian Film from World Fantastic Blue section, which features newer genres and varied stories of comedy, fantasy and drama.

"When we make films we hope as many people see them. We hope the story travels far and wide because in doing so it only makes the world smaller. We see the differences. We experience cultures unlike ours and understanding these differences bring us closer.

"We see similarities, we see the common ground of humanity and we recognise our own spirit in another which also brings us closer. To have 'Gully Boy' recognised by BIFAN and by NETPAC is such a tremendous honour. One me and my crew will always be grateful for," Akhtar said in a statement.

The film, which had its world premiere at the Berlin Film Festival 2019,



featured Ranveer as an up-and-coming rapper who sets out to achieve his dream by rhyming about his life on the Mumbai streets.

Last week, Akhtar was one of the Indian names to be invited by the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences (AMPAS) as a member of the institution, which conducts Academy Awards.

Took lot of courage not to go on Spice Girls tour: Victoria Beckham

BERLIN, JUL 7 (PTI): Victoria Beckham says turning down Spice Girls reunion was a brave decision on her part as her priorities are different today.

The singer-turned-fashion designer, who dismissed the possibility of touring with her former bandmates in January, said her focus is on her family and brand.

"It took me a lot of courage not to go on tour with the Spice Girls again, but to be the one who says: 'You know, I'm not doing it because things feel different now than they used to'.

"I'd rather concentrate on my family and my company. I'm 45 now and very happy to be the woman I am... I'm not

trying to change, I want to be the best version of myself. Before I turned 40, I wasn't that confident. I learned to listen to my gut feeling," Beckham told Vogue Germany. Earlier this year, the former singer, also known as Posh Spice, said "a part of me will always be a Spice Girl".

The Spice World - 2019 Tour commenced on May 24, 2019 in Dublin, Ireland and ended on June 15, 2019 in London, UK.

Although Beckham did not want to go on tour, she is attached to another Spice Girls project, an animated movie which will see the five singers as superheroes.

ARIES: Brand-new you? Today, the moon is in Aries, approaching its quarter phase. Maybe you've been toying with a career change or considering putting a "rebranded" version of yourself out into the world. The quarter moon helps you refine those ideas and ensure they're truly in line with your essence. It's not just about succeeding or catching that "big fish," Aries.

TAURUS: Time for a transition? Today, the quarter moon in your twelfth house of closure could find you ready to let something go. Maybe you had a few epiphanies over the past week, and you've been able to look at things through a wide-angle lens. Perhaps you've finally embraced the truth of a situation, and you've been letting that settle in.

GEMINI: Bring on the wellness renaissance! Today, a solar (new moon) eclipse in Cancer rocks your sixth house of healing and detoxification. You've been hella busy, Aquarius, but skipping workouts and grabbing junk food on the run hasn't done much to fuel your productivity. Start

setting up new systems that will lead to a more balanced existence.

CANCER: Ask, believe, receive. Today, the soulful moon unites with intuitive Neptune in Pisces and your broad-minded ninth house. This is the day to imagine what you want, because you can magnetize your dreams to you through creative visualization. The ninth house is all about expansion, so don't just aim for the "safe," low-hanging fruit. Go bigger, Cancer! Feeling out of touch with your power to manifest? Try writing up a gratitude list. When you recall all the things you're thankful for, you'll begin to attract more abundance.

LEO: You SAY that you want happiness, love and freedom, but do you actually believe that your desires are possible, Leo? Today's moon-Neptune conjunction in your mystical eighth house encourages you to examine your own limiting beliefs. Since you may need tangible proof to REALLY change your mind, hunt for people who are living the life you want for yourself.

VIRGO: Relationships can be hard work, we know, we know. But they can also be a haven from stress and struggle so stop telling yourself that you don't need people. Today, the moon and compassionate Neptune align in Pisces and your partnership house. The tranquilizing effect can be beneficial to your bonds with the ones who matter most. Soften your stance with your partner, and be gentler in your interactions with close friends.

LIBRA: Arm candy can be fun to play with, but you need more than empty calories to satisfy your romantic appetite. On Saturday, reserve your final rose for someone with style AND substance. It's a lot easier to teach someone the finer points of fashion than it is to imbue them with a great character. With the right raw materials—a caring heart, a sense of integrity, compatible interests—you'll have more than enough to work with.

SCORPIO: Still musing over the weekend's romantic escapades? Don't rush to "back to business" mode. Today, the moon and quixotic Neptune embrace in your

fifth house of passion, adding a sensual spin to your agenda. An attraction could spark, or you could be feeling especially amorous. Nobody to sidle up to (yet)? Get glamorous for yourself, Scorpio.

SAGITTARIUS: Home is where your heart is today, as the moon conjoints with sensual Neptune in your domestic fourth house. If you must trek into the office, bring the cozy vibes with you. Keep an open-door policy so coworkers can plop down and share tales of their weekends. (That expense report can wait).

CAPRICORN: Power to your partnerships, Capricorn! Today's solar (new moon) eclipse in Cancer and your relationship zone could bring an unexpected collaboration to life. Your best duos will become even MORE dynamic while unhealthy alliances could suddenly go poof! Searching for a sidekick? Instead of a clone, consider an attractive and understanding "opposite" who complements your natural gifts. If you've already found your one-and-only, use today to plot out the next big-picture mission you want to achieve as a pair. Just

make sure you leave room for spontaneity and surprises—a gift eclipses bring.

AQUARIUS: Bring more intimacy to your exchanges Saturday and don't be afraid to bare your soul. Thanks to a cozy alignment between the moon and Venus, conversations could quickly accelerate from weather talk to tales from your recent vacation and latest dating escapades. Don't just entertain; investigate! People will be warmed by your interest in what's bubbling below the surface in their lives. Plan for a languid movie night or a dinner date with a favorite plus-one.

PISCES: Is a love story brewing, Pisces... or perhaps reaching a new climax? As a solar (new moon) eclipse in Cancer heats up your fifth house of innovation and love, passion could be percolating in unexpected places. If you're single, throw any preconceived notions about your "type" out the window. This lunar lift could recalibrate your romantic GPS. Coupled up? Bring some fresh moves (and new toys) into the bedroom. Be bold with your pillow talk, whether the topic is blindfolding each other or making babies.