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# SummitTIMES

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ON TOP OF THE NEWS

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## CM LAUNCHES STATE PORTAL AND ONLINE TAX PAYMENT SYSTEM

# Arrears for government employees in one go: CM

**HC wants CS to explain how State Govt plans to save North Sikkim yaks**

### SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 9 JULY:

The division bench of the Sikkim High Court has taken suo-moto action on reports of over 300 yaks dying of starvation following heavy snowfall in Muguthang and Yumthang valleys of North Sikkim in December 2018.

The High Court had issued a notice to the State Government last month after local media reported about the yak deaths.

Chief Justice Vijai Kumar Bist and Justice Meenakshi Madam Rai directed the Chief Secretary to file an affidavit on the issue and also explain how the state plans to save yaks from extinction.

The bench observed: "...In fact, affidavit should have been filed by the Chief Secretary, Government of Sikkim. Therefore, we direct the Chief Secretary to file a detailed affidavit in this regard."

Meanwhile, the High Court has taken the affidavit filed by the Principal Director, Animal Husbandry and Veterinary Services Department, into record.

It has observed that while some points have been made about how the challenge can be addressed, the present affidavit was silent on which agency was supposed to implement the suggestions.

The court has directed the Chief Secretary to file a comprehensive affidavit within the next five weeks. The court has fixed the next hearing on the matter for 20 August, 2019.

**Arunachal has 596 schools**

**with no student**

ITANAGAR, JUL 9 (PTI):

A total of 596 primary and secondary schools have become non-functional in Arunachal Pradesh as there is not a single student in them, the assembly was informed on Tuesday.

Education Minister Taba Tedir Tuesday said the department has received a list of such schools from deputy commissioners and deputy directors of school education from various districts.

An earlier report, prepared in August last year, had put the number of non-functional primary schools at 254 and such secondary schools at 19.

Replying to a question by Jambey Tashi of the BJP, the minister said, "The department is going to close such non-functional schools with zero enrollment and will focus on strengthening the functional schools."

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**GANGTOK, 09 JUL (IPR):** Chief Minister Prem Singh Tamang (Golay) inaugurated the Sikkim State Portal (www.sikkim.gov.in) and its mobile application and the launch of Online Tax Payment System, Motor Vehicles Division, Transport Department Government of Sikkim at Samman Bhawan today.

During the launch of the state portals, the Chief Minister congratulated the Departments for this historic occasion which will provide service to the public at their doorsteps through online payments and from the comforts of their own homes.

He also stated that the state government has decided to give arrears under the 5th Pay Commission to government employees in one go instead of installments



since it is the right of the people which should not be taken away.

The Chief Minister said that keeping the ob-

jective of the Prime Minister's Digital India in mind, the state government with this step is working to ensure that the govern-

ment's services are made available to citizens electronically by making the state digitally empowered in the field of technology.

He also mentioned that awareness programmes have to be done so that common people are informed of such services and

they avail of these opportunities which have been provided by the government.

He highlighted the difficulties being faced

by the public of far-flung areas for official works and documentations and thus appealed to all departments to make all possible services of the government into e-services and mobile services. He also requested that all departmental services to be made online for the convenience of the general public.

The Chief Minister also paid tribute to Late Dr. A K Singh, Former Addl. Director, AHVS, Government of Sikkim who died during the Mansarovar Yatra on 07 July. He thanked the Home Ministry, the Chief Secretary, Chinese officials, Tourism Department and everyone else for their help in this unfortunate tragedy. He also extended his deepest condolence to the bereaved family.

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## Restoration of road at Mantam begins



**WANGCHUK BHUTIA**

**DZONGU, 09 JUL:**

Restoration of road at Mantam in Upper Dzongu in North Sikkim has been initiated and is expected to be completed in 15-16 days.

Foot suspension bridge main cable over Mantam lake connecting Upper Dzongu was in-

stalled today. This could not be done earlier because of heavy flow in the river.

However, Roads & Bridges department engineers are planning to launch bamboo decking once cable work is over, informed JE, R&B department, Netuk Lepcha, today afternoon.

## 1,474 of 2,999 houses sanctioned under CMRHM completed

**SUMMIT REPORT**

**GANGTOK, 09 JUL:**

Against the 2,999 houses sanctioned under Phase-1 of the Chief Minister's Rural Housing Scheme, 1,474 have been completed thus far.

This, as per a status report on CMRHM Phase-1 released by the Rural Management & Development Department and circulated among the media today by the Information & Public Relations Department.

Meanwhile, 958 houses have been completed up to slab level and another 219 houses completed up to plinth level.

224 houses are in site levelling and protective works stage and work is still to begin on 124 sanctioned houses.

RM&DD further informs that one beneficiary is yet to be identified and case was decided to be kept in abeyance during the State High Powered Committee Meeting held in May 2019.

The main aim of the CMRHM scheme is to convert all kutcha houses into pucca homes.

The timeline to complete all CMHRM Phase-I houses was also discussed at the State High Powered Committee Meeting and the executing agency has agreed to ensure completion of all CMHRM Phase-1 houses by November 2019.

Regarding the usage of construction materials avoiding wastage, the meeting decided that this would be the complete

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## OMAS petitions Govt for Sikkim Artists Protection and Guarantee Bill

**SUMMIT REPORT**

**GANGTOK, 09 JUL:**

Organisation of Musicians and Artistes of Sikkim [OMAS] has decided to petition the State Government to pass Sikkim Artists Protection and Guarantee Bill for the welfare of artistes in the State.

OMAS will be organizing a signature campaign on 13 July at MG Marg from 10 am to 5 pm for the introduction and passing of the Sikkim Artists Protection & Guarantee bill in the State Assembly.

In a press release issued today, OMAS has mentioned some key features of the bill like fixed income for artists and artisans of Sikkim, market economy for artists of Sikkim where they can showcase their talent on national and global level, etc.

With an aim to provide a permanent solution to all stakeholders in creative fields across the



spectrum, it was decided by the general body and executive committee of OMAS that Sikkim urgently needs a law to empower, protect and hone our Sikkimese artistes engaged in creative field

spanning different sectors, the release states.

"The need was felt particularly for those who earn a living through creative arts. In view of a near absent ecosystem for

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### SIKKIM ARTISTS PROTECTION AND GUARANTEE BILL

- 1) Fixed income for Artists and Artisans of Sikkim.
- 2) To provide employment based on passion towards a progressive creative society.
- 3) To protect traditional art and culture of Sikkim.
- 4) Assure benefits and platform to entrepreneurs who are passionate about event management.
- 5) Artists of Sikkim will be given exposure trips on a national and international level.
- 6) Assure market economy for the artists of Sikkim where they can showcase their talent on national and global level.
- 7) Ensuring a basic system of payment to Sikkimese artists working in productions shot in Sikkim.
- 8) Allocation of a certain budget for artistes.
- 9) Providing space or galleries for display of art and handicrafts of Sikkimese artists.
- 10) Providing amphitheatres for artists particularly in the field of Music, Fashion and Dance.
- 11) Relaxation of taxes in the entertainment field.
- 12) Setting up of a semi-autonomous body for artist of Sikkim.
- 13) Encouraging and equipping film makers with the required technology.
- 14) Special discount for Manan Kendra for Sikkimese artists.

## 'Unauthorised' water supply line disconnected in Namchi

**SKM functionaries accuse former CM's family of poaching water meant for water-stressed villages**

**BIKASH CHETTRI**

**NAMCHI, 09 JUL:**

A team of Sikkim Krantikari Morcha party workers led by Ganesh Rai and accompanied by officials from Public Health Engineering Department today disconnected the water supply line to "Rose Garden," a private establishment reportedly belonging to former CM, Pawan Chamling's wife.

The team contended that the water supply from the reservoir



at Char Dham was being drawn by the private establishment without authorization and was diverting supply meant for neighbouring villages of Assangthang, Sorok and Pura-

no Namchi.

Mr Rai, who had contested against Mr Chamling from the Namchi-Singithang constituency in the recently-held elections, while speaking to media per-

sons and the general public, alleged that there were several instances of bureaucrats and families close to Mr Chamling having indulged in such unauthorized diversion and announced that all such "illegal" connections would be disconnected.

Everyone should receive water supply as per established rules and norms, he said.

Namchi, it may be recalled, has been facing water supply problems for a while now.



## CMs of all NE states to protest if citizenship bill is brought again: Khandu

**ITANAGAR, JUL 9 (PTI):** If the Centre brings the Citizenship Amendment Bill once again, Arunachal Pradesh Chief Minister Pema Khandu Tuesday said he, along with his counterparts in the northeastern states, will protest jointly.

Khandu, who heads a BJP government, informed the assembly that earlier also he had urged the Centre to exempt the tribal state from the purview of the Bill.

The contentious Bill provided for according Indian citizenship to Hindus, Jains, Christians, Sikhs, Buddhists and Parsis from Bangladesh, Pakistan and Afghanistan after seven years of residence in India instead of 12 years, which is the norm currently, even if they do not possess any document.

Replying to a question by Congress MLA Ninong Ering on the steps taken to protect the interest of the indigenous people if the Bill is imposed, Khandu said the state would appeal to the Centre not to impose the bill as it would have a strong ramification.

"The Lok Sabha passed the bill on January 8 but it was not tabled in the Rajya Sabha. I along with the Manipur chief minister had gone to Delhi and apprised the then home minister Rajnath Singh of the probable impact of the bill. (We told him that) it might dilute the rights of the indigenous people of the North East," Khandu said.

A citizenship bill would be brought to give Indian citizenship to Hindus coming from neighbouring nations, Union Home Minister Amit Shah informed the Rajya Sabha on July 1.

"If the Centre wants to bring the Bill again, we will oppose it jointly by taking into confidence all the chief ministers of the region," he said.

A largescale protest had broken out in the Northeastern states earlier this year as the indigenous people of the region were apprehending that if the bill was enacted, it would endanger their identity and livelihood. Khandu said the state government had made its stand clear to the Centre on the citizenship bill citing the violence in the state capital during February over the Permanent Residence Certificate (PRC) issue.

The state government had proposed grant of PRC to six communities that are not natives of Arunachal Pradesh but are living there for decades. It led to violent protests and two persons were killed in Itanagar in February and Khandu had declared: "Never again will we take up the issue of PRC. The issue is closed." Responding to another question of NPP member Mutchu Mithi, Khandu made it clear that there would be no dilution in the inner line permit system in the state.

"Arunachal is protected by the Bengal Eastern Frontier Regulation Act of 1873 and Chin Hill Regulations Act, 1896.

# Ministry urged to expedite funds for SU camps and NIT land

**NEW DELHI, 09 JUL [IPR]:** HRDD Minister KN Lepcha, accompanied by Lok Sabha MP Indra Hang Subba and Additional Chief Secretary HRDD, GP Upadhyaya, called on the Union HRD Minister, Dr Ramesh Pokhriyal Nishank, on 08 July. The meeting lasted for almost 40 minutes.

The Additional Director General, MHRD, Madan Mohan, was also present for the meeting and wide ranging discussions were held with the Union Minister on giving grants for Sikkim University to expedite the campus construction and also allotment of land for NIT Sikkim.

An amount of Rs 303 crore was immediately requested for the campus of Sikkim University.

The Union Minister was extremely positive towards these two de-



mands of the State and assured to take positive action immediately.

He directed the Addl DG to include these two matters in the 100-day agenda of the Ministry and hoped to travel to

Sikkim to lay the foundation stone of NIT soon.

He further appreciated the various initiatives of the State Government in the field of education and promised full support of his Ministry.

HRD Minister Mr Lep-

cha apprised the Union Minister about education and health being the two top priorities of the new Government in Sikkim.

After meeting the Union Minister, another meeting was held with

the Secretary, School and Higher Education, in the Ministry and various issues were discussed.

Mr Lepcha also thanked MHRD during his meetings for their consistent support.

## Sikkim seeks stronger Central support for farming sector



**NEW DELHI, 09 JUL [IPR]:** Agriculture Minister Lok Nath Sharma, along with Secretary FD&ADD, Khorlo Bhutia, Secretary H&CCDD, DK Bhandari, and CEO, Sikkim Organic Mission, Dr S Anbalagan, attended the State Agricultural Ministers' Conference held in New Delhi on 08 July.

The conference was chaired by Union Minister of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare, Narendra Singh Tomar, and was convened to discuss and obtain feedback from the States on policy matters on various schemes such as PM-KISAN, PM Kisan Maan Dhan Yojna, KCC, PMFBY, APLM Act, Contract Act.

Minister Sharma presented the issues being faced by Sikkim in the agriculture sector and sought the intervention of the Union Government in the following areas: support for creation of water harvesting infrastructure for every farmer; assistance to FPOs for equity grant, creation of cold chain facilities in the

State and strengthening research works in the organic sector by various Central Government institutions.

Mr Sharma also called on the Union Minister of State (Agri), Purushottam Rupala, later and received assurances of all support from the Government of India to Sikkim.

The MoS also mentioned that Sikkim has set an example in the field of organic farming and it was time farmers reaped the benefits.

Mr Sharma also visited the IFFCO office and took stock of the progress of Sikkim IFFCO Organics Ltd (SIOL), a Joint Venture between Government of Sikkim and IFFCO for creating processing facility in Sikkim for organic commodities and other allied activities.

During the meeting with SIOL, he said that the JV project offers hope to farmers in accessing markets and it should start production as soon as possible.

The Minister will also meet Union Ministers of

the following Ministries during his stay- Minister of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare, Animal Husbandry, Food Processing, Information and Broadcasting as well as Minister of DONER.

The conference also deliberated on other activities such as organic farming and export strategies of agricultural commodities.

The Union Minister highlighted the importance of providing technological intervention to all farmers especially marginal and small farmers to ensure doubling of farmer's incomes. He also highlighted the importance of conservation of water.

On organic farming, he stressed that only the North Eastern Region of the country has taken the lead and other States should follow suit. He also mentioned that all States should replicate the Sikkim model of organic farming and should send officers and farmers to Sikkim to learn about organic farming.

## SDM Yangang inspects landslide affected area



**NAMCHI, 08 JUL [IPR]:** As per information received from SDM Yangang, Sangey Gyatso Bhutia, an inspection was made by the officials of Yangang subdivision to upper Neya today wherein a landslide had occurred recently.

The visit was made after the Sub Divisional Office received a complaint made by ward Panchayat

and public of the area regarding the said landslide.

SDM Yangang along with Revenue Inspector HS, ward Panchayat and villagers under Yangang subdivision inspected the landslide which had occurred above the village and is posing hazardous to the village.

During the inspection, SDM instructed the

concerned ward Panchayat to inform the villagers to not go near landslide area which can cause serious damage to life and property. He also assured to provide alkathene pipes from the subdivisional office to the villagers since their drinking water pipes were washed away by the landslide.

## South checks preparations for Bhanu Jayanti and Rankey Mela



**NAMCHI, 09 JUL [IPR]:** A review meeting for the upcoming 205th Bhanu Jayanti and Rankey Mela celebrations was chaired by District Collector [South], Ragul K, here at the DAC today.

The meeting was attended by ADC [South], Satyen K Pradhan, HoDs from various departments, stakeholders and representatives from the business community.

The meeting was mainly convened to

assess the ongoing preparations for the two events.

The DC detailed the various roles and responsibilities given to line departments and requested the stakeholders to take necessary steps to organise the celebrations in a befitting manner.

An open discussion was also held during which various suggestions were put forth for the smooth conduct of these celebrations.

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### OMAS petitions...

artists in Sikkim this bill can not only create platform but also give every artist a blanket protection of dignity and security," it is further stated.

OMAS has urged the government to look into this bill positively and thanked all artists, creative individuals and citizens for supporting the petition. It has also appealed to all artists and citizens to support the campaign by signing the petition on 13 July.

### 1,474 of...

responsibility of the contractor while quality control will have been ensured by local engineers of the Department.

All beneficiaries of un-finished houses have been requested have to wait till November 2019 for completing their houses and extend necessary co-operation to the contractor by providing their land free from all encumbrances.

### Arunachal has...

Later, responding to a query on whether efforts have been initiated to make these schools functional, Tedir said, the government has asked officials to check if those schools could be made functional.

To a supplementary question raised by Tashi, he assured the house to examine if such institutes could be allowed to run by NGOs.

Tedir said the department has constituted a committee on how to utilise the assets and infrastructure that have been created for such schools.

### Arrears for...

Minister, Transport Department, Sanjit Khar-el thanked the Chief Minister for empowering the people by removing the hassles faced in obtaining any kind of services and for making the system secure, transparent and user-friendly. He said that the main thrust of the Department is public service with introduction of the online system and to bring comfort to the people which should be optimum.

The Minister also stated that various efforts and facilities are being made and the Department will provide training to driver association/vehicle owner for online payment system. Mass media campaign will also be used for wide publication for awareness to citizens on online tax payment, he stated.

Chief Secretary, A K Shrivastava said that this was a huge day for the entire state and it ensures that the state government's services are made available to the citizens with much convenience and transparency. He said that these Departments are public oriented departments and as such accountability, user friendly and regular updates are necessary so that public can benefit from these services provided.

He also stressed on the need for awareness and training so that people are more informed whereby these kind of public oriented initiatives are used at the optimum. He applauded the traffic system of the state and added that with these new systems of registrations, renewals at an instant, the state would head towards more digital advantages.

Earlier the welcome address was given by Secretary, Transport Department, S B Subba who mentioned that the state was transitioning towards digital mode whereby the digitized documents will make data and information more secure. Dy RTO, Karma Zimba Bhutia gave a brief presentation on the technical report and the vote of thanks was given by Director, Department of IT, Rajendra Chettri.

The programme also had the attendance of ACS, VB Pathak, DGP, SD Negi, Secretary CMO, SD Dhakal, MD (SBS), DC (East), SP (East), distinguished guests and officers of various departments.

### GHEWA

The Ghewa (Antayasti Kriya) of my beloved husband late Ashok Lama (Ex-Panchyat) Son of late Pema Tamang who left for heavenly abode on 23rd June, 2019 falls on 14th July, 2019.

All relatives, family, friends and well wishers are requested to join us in offering prayers for the departed soul at our residence at Upper Syari, Kopibari, below Deorali Khadi, Gangtok, East Sikkim. We also express our gratitude to all those who stood by us during our time of bereavement.

**Mrs. Phigu Tamang (Wife) : 9832469895.**

**Mr Tshring Chopel Tamang: 7908416933**

**Mr. Dilip Tamang (Brother): 9002624755**

**Mr B M Tamang (Brother): 9002775011**

**Mr M B Rai (Bother in law) : 9851926384**

**Mr BB Tamang (Brother)**



## ~ SummitTIMES ~ CLASSIFIEDS

### URGENTLY REQUIRED:

**Urgent Recruitment for a waiter with atleast 3 years experience and one kitchen helper. Contact: Hotel Paramount, Dentam, West Sikkim- 9735909625 / 8348285444**

### PLOT FOR SALE:

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

### WANTED

**HOUSEKEEPER/BABYSITTER. Contact: 9933443442/9800500696.**

### GENERAL INFORMATION

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

**Mr. Subash Lama**

**Proprietor**

**Hotel Parasol Residency, Panihouse, Deorali, East Sikkim**

### BUILDING FOR SALE

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

*Four & half Storied building on SALE, behind Hotel Agarwal at Pani House, Gangtok, East Sikkim. Interested parties may also buy flats - 2 flats - 1650 sq.ft, 1 Flat - 1186 sq.ft & 1 Flat on top (1 & half)- 3000 sq.ft. Contact: -9434751150*





## Dzongu FC and Chujachen FA register victories in U-17 League

**SUMMIT REPORT**

**GANGTOK, 09 JUL:**

Dzongu Football Club registered its first victory at the ongoing Sikkim Football Association U-17 Football League here at Paljor Stadium today.

Playing its second match of the league, Dzongu FC downed Melli Football Club by a lone goal to bag the full three points. Lha

Tshering Lepcha scored the only goal of the match.

In the second match of the day, Chujachen Football Academy defeated Howlers' Football Club, Singtam 4-1.

Pravesh Chettri scored a brace, while his teammates Pawan Gurung and Manish Gautam contributed a goal each towards Chujachen FA's victory. The solitary goal of Howlers' FC was scored by Praney Sewa.

## World Cup in Singtam



**YOGEN THATAL**

**SINGTAM, 09 JUL:**

Jubilee Club-cum-Academy of Singtam bazaar has organised big-screen public display of the Cricket World Cup

matches here. Club members inform that they have always supported sports and encourage community participation during such big occasions as the World Cup.

## Review Meeting for Aspirational District held in West

**GYALSHING, 09 JUL (IPR):**

The Review Meeting for NITI AAYOG initiative of transforming Aspirational District was held today here at the West District Zilla Panchayat, Conference Hall, Kyongsa, West Sikkim.

The program was chaired by District Collector (W), Karma R. Bonpo along with SDM (HQ), Tushar G. Nikhare, HODs of all Line Departments of the District and local NGOs.

DC West addressing the officers urged that the Departments involved to pick up the pace and start to progress towards the improvement of the indicators of Aspirational District in West Sikkim. He stated that the ranking of the Districts changes everyday and to meet the target set up he requested officers concerned to review

progress on regular basis at departmental level and ensure submission of data to be entered into the portal should be timely checked and reviewed with utmost responsibility by the designated officers of the department.

He suggested the Health Department, Education Department and ICDS to put some works collectively and in convergence to make an overall development and good results.

He advised the officers to keep proper records and work with full enthuse. He urged the officers present to understand the gravity of the situation and work hand in hand with each other for making West Sikkim the number one district of India. He stated that the West District has an opportunity

to work for the future of the District and to showcase their talents and efficiency.

DC West told the audience about upcoming important meeting with Chief Secretary and asked the District Departments to put requests for manpower shortages and innovative projects which they want to execute. He said that top performing districts win handsome rewards and there's no reason why West Sikkim cannot win it. He applauded the efforts put in by health department and has asked other dept to follow up on the lead of health department.

SDM (HQ) also briefed the gathering under similar lines and urged the departments to focus more on the programs of the Aspirational District and act promptly.

## NHIDCL holds blood donation drive to mark anniv



**SAGAR CHHETRI**

**GANGTOK, 09 JUL:**

The National Highways and Infrastructure Development Corporation Ltd organized a daylong blood donation camp to mark its fifth inception day of NHIDCL here at Titanic Park today.

The camp received more than 100 prospective donors and a total of 60 units of blood were

collected today.

Speaking to Summit Times, NHIDCL Gangtok branch office Manager, Jayashree Sahoo, informed that plantation drives at the site office and branches and other activities will also be carried out to mark the occasion.

She informed that the company also plans to provide haemoglobin

strips and other equipment to STNM hospital.

"The event is a healthy initiative in an effort to save lives," said Jayashree Sahu.

It is informed that NHIDCL Gangtok branch office had conducted a blood donation camp last year as well to mark its anniversary and has collected 74 units of blood at the time.

## Off-farm inputs training at Takuthang



**SUMMIT REPORT**

**GANGTOK, 09 JUL:**

Training on off-farm inputs was held at Takuthang, West Sikkim, under Mission Organic Value Chain Development Program today.

The training was organized by the Mangalbaria FPO in collabo-

ration with Agriculture and Horticulture departments and Mevedir, a service provider. The training focused on the farmers from Lhuentse ward of Takuthang area.

Farmers and members of the Farmers Interest Groups affiliated with the FPO were invit-

ed to the training.

The farmers were also informed that for any other queries or difficulty in application of these inputs, Mevedir staff would be available to explain and assist them.

More than 35 farmers attended the training program.

## Rahul Gandhi raises slogans in LS over Karnataka issue

**NEW DELHI, JUL 9 (PTI):**

Congress President Rahul Gandhi on Tuesday raised slogans in Lok Sabha over the developments in Karnataka.

This is for the first time that Gandhi was seen raising slogans in the 17th Lok Sabha.

Gandhi arrived in the House at noon. At that time Congress leader

Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury was raising the Karnataka issue and accused the ruling party of "poaching" its MLAs in the state.

He was, however, disallowed by Speaker Om Birla saying, the matter was discussed in the House on Monday and Deputy Leader of Lok Sabha Rajnath Singh had responded to the

charges. "It is your duty to save democracy," a Congress member said.

Unsatisfied with the Speaker's response, Chowdhury again tried to raise the issue. He scribbled a few slogans on a piece of paper and gave it to his fellow MPs sitting behind him, who promptly raised them.

The members raised slogans like "Down with dictatorship" (Tanashahi Band Karo), "Stop the politics of poaching" (Shikar ki rajneeti Band Karo Band karo).

As members raised slogans, Gandhi also joined them but his pitch was not as high as others. He merely repeated the last words of the slogans.

As members entered

the Well, they continued with the sloganeering.

The Speaker also warned members against bringing posters. "This is our right," said one of the members. To which the Speaker said, "No it is not your right".

"The country is watching you. This is your House. Don't make it the house of a civic body," Birla said. The Congress has been raising issues pertaining to Karnataka in the Lok Sabha and accused the ruling BJP of "indulging in politics of poaching".

The year-old Congress-Janata Dal (S) coalition government in Karnataka is on the brink of collapse after a spate of resignations by MLAs.

## Overall homicide rate declines in India, increases 'noticeably' in some northern states: UN report

**YOSHITA SINGH**

**UNITED NATIONS, JUL 9**

(PTI): The overall homicide rate in India has decreased by 10 per cent over a period of six years till 2015 but the trend increased "noticeably" in some northern states, according to a UN report.

The Global Study on Homicide 2019 published Monday by the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) said that about 464,000 people across the world were killed in homicides in 2017, an increase from 395,542 in 1992.

In India, the number of homicide victims fell from 48,167 in 2000 to 46,460 in 2010, 44,373 in 2015 and 42,678 in 2016. Males constitute less than 20 per cent of the total homicide victims in 2016 in India, it said.

"In India, the overall homicide rate decreased by 10 per cent over the period 2009 2015, from 3.8 to 3.4 per 100,000 population. At the same time, the spatial vari-

ation in the homicide rate shifted noticeably, with some states in the north registering an increase in the homicide rate, while some large states in the south (e.g. Andhra Pradesh) experienced a decrease," the report said.

It noted that while some smaller cities can have very high homicide rates, larger cities tend to have homicide rates that are more closely in line with national homicide rates.

There are several large metropolises, particularly in Asia, with populations above 10 million that have homicide rates below 1 per 100,000 population - rates that are even lower than the national average (e.g. Tokyo: 0.3; Jakarta: 0.3; Seoul: 0.67; Mumbai (India): 0.9).

Asia, which contains 60 per cent of the global population, recorded the lowest rate of homicide in the world in 2017 while the Americas region had the highest homicide rate, ac-

cording to the report.

However, because the global population has risen faster than the increase in recorded homicide victims, the overall risk of being killed in homicides has declined steadily. The global homicide rate, measured as the victims of homicide per 100,000 people, declined from 7.2 in 1992, to 6.1 in 2017, the report said.

In 2016, the female homicide rate in India stood at 2.8 per cent. Percentage of women and girls in India aged 15 49 who experienced physical violence (irrespective of perpetrator) in the past 12 months was 18.9 while 33.5 per cent women experienced physical violence at least once in their lifetime, it said.

The report noted that dowry-related killings of women which occur when brides are killed or are driven to commit suicide after being subjected to con-

tinuous harassment and abuse by the groom's family in an effort to extort dowry payment or increased dowry involving cash or goods are widely reported in South Asian countries.

"Dowry deaths constitute a unique category of deaths in the Indian Penal Code, which has been amended in recent decades to deal specifically with dowry-related violence," the report said.

It added that available data on dowry-related killings from the National Crime Records Bureau indicate that female dowry deaths account for 40 to 50 per cent of all female homicides recorded annually in India, representing a stable trend over the period from 1999 to 2016.

"Despite legislation adopted by the Indian Government in 1961 that prohibits the payment of dowry, the practice continues throughout the country and dowry deaths continue

to account for a substantial share of all female homicides," it said.

Sorcery accusations is also one of the driver behind gender-related killings in the country.

Data from India on homicide resulting from sorcery accusations show that, albeit in small proportions, this phenomenon still exists, the report noted.

"Although the data are not disaggregated by sex, it is likely that women account for a large share of the victims," it said.

The report also found that son preference, which "continues to be deeply embedded in Indian society, can make parents more likely to neglect their female infants and children, "and even to commit infanticide".

Further in South Asia, at least one in five ever-married girls experienced partner violence, with particularly high rates in Bangladesh (47 per cent) and India (34 per cent).



### OFFICE OF THE CHIEF SECRETARY GOVERNMENT OF SIKKIM GANGTOK

No. 257/CS/SK/2019

Dated: 08.07.2019

### CIRCULAR

This is for the general information of the public that preparations are going on for the ensuing Budget Session of the Sikkim Legislative Assembly. Consequently, the Hon'ble Chief Minister will be engaged w.e.f. 8th July, 2019 to 12th July, 2019. Hence, it is to inform, with regret, that the Hon'ble Chief Minister will not be available to meet the public during the aforementioned period.

Sd/-  
(Alok.K.Shrivastave, IAS)  
Chief Secretary, Sikkim.



## Migrating People

**Understand why rural Sikkim wants to move to urban settings. And plan for it**

There has been frequent talk of rural-urban migration in Sikkim and efforts, on the lips and on paper, have been underway for a while now to contain it. It would be wonderful if disruptions or cessations of traditional ways of life could be stopped and people allowed environments in to pursue their ambitions and dreams in surroundings they are familiar with; but that, anyone will attest, is an impossible task. Things change, and even when the change is for the “better”, it requires adjustments and sacrifices, with migration being one of the options that many have to take.

Any effort to contain rural-to-urban migration would obviously require a clearer understanding of the causes. It is common to find poverty held up as the main reason prompting people to migrate to cities, a notion transmitted through the caricature renditions of the plight of the poor in mass-entertainment products. It is a believable explanation, but latest data available on migration in India does not hold up this belief. The poor are invariably temporary migrants, shipping out for temporary jobs and as seasonal labour; the more permanent migration in pursuit of opportunities is a luxury which only the better heeled and the more educated enjoy. In most cases, this is human resource which “leaves home” to study and train does so because it can afford to, and, on many occasions, never returns. And then there is the eye-opening data contained in the report released by the National Sample Survey Office suggesting that a third of all Indians are migrants in their present place of residence! Though one in every three Indians is a migrant, they are not all products of rural-urban migration. Most are not escaping the “drudgery” of rural India, but are, in almost all cases, pursuing gainful employment. There is a difference. Within these are of course those who migrate for marriage [found to be the case in most ‘non-local’ women], or because they have been forced out either by natural disasters or “developmental” projects.

If Sikkim is serious about working on rural-urban migration, it should first understand the exact, and not generalised, reasons for it. Urban amenities might be desired, but cannot by themselves be taken as reasons why people abandon villages. Chasing employment could be a reason, but migration is relatively permanent and that requires complementing opportunities and not just desires to keep rural folk in urban addresses. A data that the country prefers not to unravel, but Sikkim could do well to study and understand, is migration triggered by changes in rural settings. In many instances, land - a people’s mooring to the place - is lost, and with this anchor lifted, moving away becomes an easier decision to contemplate. The loss of land could as much be due to acquisition for projects as it could be because of change in landuse patterns. If farms are no longer of a size which make them sustainable, or when the traditional crops no longer harvest on a scale that makes economic sense, a shift is necessitated. Of course, there is also the general desire of every parent to provide better education and opportunities for children if they can afford it, and these opportunities continue to be available almost exclusively in urban setting even in Sikkim. It would be desirable if these facilities could reach the villages too, but that does appear to be happening any time soon, so the pull of the urban areas will remain strong.

Urban planning will hence have to factor these realities into its projections for future years and this will require cross-disciplinary and inter-departmental coordination and planning on a scale that the State has not displayed an aptitude for thus far. Very soon, Sikkim, as the rest of the world, will also be looking at migrations forced by climate change as well and it will be advisable for the State to try and begin the processes to project possible scenarios and start adequate preparations for it. It is important to bear in mind that not all rural-urban migration can be stopped, but what can definitely be achieved is for the urban spaces to be planned better to not only accommodate ‘influx’, but also provide them with better basic facilities and more respectable opportunities.

### WRITE US:

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

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# Everest: I interviewed people risking their lives in the ‘death zone’ during one of the deadliest seasons yet

**JASE WILSON, DORINA-MARIA BUDA & ELISA BURRAI**  
*theconversation.com*

Climbing some of the world’s tallest mountains, you enter the “death zone” when you are 8,000 metres from sea level – where oxygen is 34% the concentration it is on the ground below. Climbing here is one of the most dangerous forms of tourism there is. For mountaineers, the most tantalising goal is to climb the world’s 14 highest peaks, all of which stretch into the death zone.

They’re all in Central Asia and are indeed the deadliest. The biggest, Mount Everest, is 8,848 metres tall and straddles Nepal and China. K2 in Pakistan and China is the second tallest at 8,611 metres, while Kangchenjunga (8,586 metres) and Lhotse (8,516 metres) in Nepal, aren’t far behind. Some seasons on mountains like K2 can see death rates of 32% for those attempting the summit.

We usually think of holidays as a chance to enjoy life, but with the bodies of fallen climbers clearly visible on Mount Everest, death is always present in the tourism industry here. In this way, high-altitude mountaineering can be considered a form of dark tourism – when people pay to travel to sites of death, disaster or atrocity.

I’m a doctoral researcher in tourism studies who was stationed for six weeks between April and May 2019 at the Everest Base Camp. There, I interviewed tourists, high-altitude workers and all the people who kept the death zone economy moving and all those who were poised for the summit.

### ENCOUNTERS IN THE DEATH ZONE

On May 14 2019, the first climbers of the season reached the summit of Mount Everest. Below at 5300 metres, many more were waiting to acclimatise to the thin air in base camp. I arrived there in mid-April, just as climbers were beginning to acclimatise – exposing their bodies to an altitude which causes the body to produce extra red blood cells so they can carry more oxygen.

By mid-May, climbers at the base camp had been anxiously waiting for over five weeks for the weather to abate, allowing Nepali workers to go to the summit in advance to fix ropes to the side of the mountain so that other climbers can follow safely. In 2018, the window period – when 70-80mph jet stream winds suddenly lull – lasted 11 days, allowing climbers to spread out over many days. In 2019, there had been only five days of low winds by May 23. This meant most climbers had to crowd into climbing the summit in fewer days.

I spoke with two climbers hoping to become the first Greek women to complete the “Seven Summits” – climbing the highest mountain on each continent, one of the most popular challeng-

es in mountaineering. I also met the first Lebanese woman aiming to complete the same challenge. I interviewed the first Romanian woman to try Everest in 2017, but she had to turn around due to tragic complications. In 2019, however, she became the first Romanian woman to climb Lhotse – the world’s fourth highest peak.

Many of the climbers had mementos from those they loved – the ashes of a friend, or the mountaineering axe of a fallen comrade. The moments of waiting and anticipating the summit were the most tense. Each contemplated how years spent saving,

passion, a reason to continue going on in the world.

Who and what they desire to be is all bundled up in this “tourist experience”. Some find the word to be an insult – that one of the most important moments of their lives could be boiled down to something so frivolous. Tourism certainly does fall short in describing the complex emotions and ambitions of those who explore the highest mountains in the world.

Maybe it’s the view of the enormous triangular projection of Everest’s shadow drowning the landscape below as the sun rises over the Tibetan Plateau that is so compelling. The sense of being



training and dreaming would soon be put to the test. The people in base camp anxiously chewed their nails and fidgeted while waiting for their “weather window” to open.

Some had their trips cut short before they could realise their dreams. Altitude sickness, a fall into a crevasse, even fatal accidents from some unpredictable error. All of this played out during the 2019 season even before the summit push, which is always the most dangerous period as this is when climbers enter the death zone. Most climb without serious incident, but every year there are those who don’t make it home.

I came here to understand why people travel from all over the world to risk their lives in the death zone. A tourism authority granted them permission to climb and they paid a tourism agency to assist them, but to them, it doesn’t feel like tourism. It feels like something much more – an obsession, a

small on something so enormous, the sensation of being as close to the nothingness of space as one can be on Earth. Maybe it’s to prove to oneself that “I can”, or that “I as a Lebanese woman can”, or that an amputee “can”.

More than 65 years after the feat was first accomplished, climbing Everest remains perhaps the greatest challenge a person can attempt. Since tourism has opened the experience up to more and more people, the promise of personal and public achievement on the roof of the world has proved hard to resist for many. For some, it’s worth risking everything.

*[Jase Wilson is PhD Researcher in Tourism Studies, Leeds Beckett University; Dorina-Maria Buda is Professor of Tourism Management, Leeds Beckett University; Elisa Burrai is Senior Lecturer in Tourism and International Development, Leeds Beckett University]*

# Donor-funded journalism is on the rise in Africa: why it needs closer scrutiny

**HERMAN WASSERMAN, AUDREY GADZEKPO & CHRIS PATERSON**  
*theconversation.com*

An enormous and increasing portion of the foreign development aid coming into Africa annually is for media development. Foreign aid funds diverse projects, ranging from investigative journalism in Nigeria, to stories on Chinese building projects in Kenya, or health reporting in South Africa.

The news media landscape and journalism practices – on the continent as well as globally – have undergone massive change in recent times. This, coupled with the collapse of familiar business models, and the limited potential for genuinely independent “watchdog” journalism, the relationship between external influences on local cultures and practices of journalism needs to be reassessed.

A report last year, by the American Centre for International Media Assistance, concluded that about US\$600 million a year is spent on media development in Africa by state and private funders. This may exceed a billion dollars if the opaque amount China spends on media operations and training globally is included. Much of this is focused on Africa.

But how does this aid influence journalism in Africa?

Our recent international study examined the impact of foreign development aid on media systems in seven African countries. These were Ghana, Ethiopia, Nigeria, Tanzania, Senegal, South Africa and Sudan. A separate report focused on Latin America.

We witnessed parallel and intensifying debates among media workers in developing countries who accept (or depend on) foreign funding. Funders themselves are also increasingly reflecting on their objectives and how they measure success. And, the role of foundations in funding

journalism is coming under increasing scrutiny.

Much of the media aid industry still holds the view that media workers and institutions in the South should emulate their counterparts in the North. But, our study took a different approach. We asked to what extent a flow of foreign money has affected the ability of developing re-



gions to foster a critical and independent media sector.

### CHINESE VERSUS WESTERN PERSPECTIVES

Journalists who took part in our project worried that the foreign assistance or travel they’ve received may limit the stories they can tell, or influence the way they tell them. On the other hand, they often feared that without foreign financial support, critical journalism in their countries would vanish.

The colonial powers of Britain, France, and Portugal still cast a long shadow over Africa’s media. More recently, however, African media has been shaped by the US and China. Many foreign interventions are small like the funding of a single investigative news story, for example. But some are massive.

Since the end of the Second World War in 1945, foreign aid has been

directed at disseminating a model of journalism practice and education that aligns with the interests of wealthy, Northern donor nations. Chinese involvement in Africa has led to questions being asked about the assumptions underpinning Western media funding and training.

Because Chinese media are based on a very different model, their initia-

seen African journalists receive offers for paid travel to Europe, North America, and especially to China.

We know little about how these exchanges – and other forms of foreign investment by corporate or religious institutions – affect African media and the stories they tell.

The fear is that the Chinese model, because of the government’s control over the media, is dangerous to introduce in African countries where press freedom has often come under attack.

But fears about a major shift may be overblown or premature given that research has shown that the influence of Chinese media on journalists and audiences in Africa remains minimal.

For its part, Western aid has resulted in an Anglo-American culture of journalism education which has proved impractical to implement in countries with illiberal political regimes.

### A QUANDARY

Should under-resourced African journalists accept any foreign funding?

This is a difficult question. There are risks that come from shunning aid. This includes missed opportunities to develop African media or report independently on local power brokers.

On the other hand, aid can be used to coerce journalists to change their norms and practices unduly.

Media producers and users in developing countries need to be more vigilant about foreign media support. And they need to evaluate it. For citizens in countries that provide such aid, the challenge is to scrutinise the efforts made in their name.

*[Herman Wasserman is Professor of Media Studies and Director of the Centre for Film and Media Studies, University of Cape Town; Audrey Gadzekpo is Professor in the Department of Communication Studies, University of Ghana; Chris Paterson is Senior Lecturer in International Communication, University of Leeds]*



# 162 children died of AES in Bihar, 63 in seven other states: Govt



**NEW DELHI, JUL 9 (PTI):**

As many as 162 children died due to Acute Encephalitis Syndrome (AES) in Bihar till July 2 this year, while 63 fatalities were reported from Assam, Jharkhand, Maharashtra, Manipur, Odisha, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal till June 30, MoS Health Ashwini Choubey said on Tuesday.

Responding to a question over whether lychees were the cause of deaths, the minister, in his written reply in Rajya Sabha, said consumption of lychee was safe for healthy individuals, but in "malnourished children, it triggers hypoglycaemia and leads to

seizures or AES".

"A research study was conducted by the National Centre for Disease Control (NCDC), along with partner institutions, in the year 2013-14 wherein it has been found that when lychee is consumed by malnourished children, it triggers hypoglycaemia and leads to seizures or AES like picture," Choubey said in his written reply.

On the basis of the study, an intervention strategy for awareness and nutritional supplementation was recommended to the state, the minister said.

A comprehensive study incorporating var-

ious other aspects of aetiology has been initiated by the Ministry of Health under Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR).

"In 2019, a total of 162 deaths of children have been reported from Bihar till July 2 due to AES. As per information received from the National Vector Borne Disease Control Programme (NVBDCP), 63 deaths have been reported due to AES till June 30 from other seven states of the country -- Assam (25), Jharkhand (2), Maharashtra (1), Manipur (1), Odisha (1), Uttar Pradesh (17) and West Bengal (16)," his reply stated.

He also elaborated on

a number of measures that the Centre has initiated to support the Bihar government in the containment of AES, while adding that "as per constitutional provisions, health is a state subject".

Choubey, in his reply, said Union Health Minister Harsh Vardhan had reviewed the situation with his counterpart in Bihar and also with officials from the ministry.

A team of experts, consisting of public health specialists from various central government institutes, was deputed to assist the Bihar government in taking immediate measures to contain AES, he said.

Vardhan had also visited Shri Krishna Medical College and Hospital (SKMCH) at Muzaffarpur in Bihar, Choubey said.

The Health Ministry had sent another high-level multi-disciplinary team, which included senior pediatricians from various central government institutes, to Muzaffarpur.

Epidemiologists from the National Centre for Disease Control (NCDC), senior pediatricians, laboratory technicians are in Muzaffarpur since June 12.

The NCDC's Strategic Health Operations Centre (SHOC) was engaged to monitor the situation in Muzaffarpur and co-ordinate tasks at the field level, Choubey said.

He said the Health Ministry had deputed five teams of doctors, along with technicians from central government hospitals, to SKMCH to support clinical management.

"A central team, consisting experts from Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR), was also deployed at SKMCH. The team is also scrutinising and reviewing the case records of discharge and deceased patients using a standardised tool to know the reasons for mortality," he added.

## Documentary on good work done by police during cyclone Fani



**BHUBANESWAR, JUL 9**

**(PTI):** Odisha Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik Tuesday released a short documentary film on the good work done by police personnel during cyclone Fani which hit the state on May 3 this year.

Patnaik said the documentary film will be useful in future for disaster mitigation activities.

Sixty four people lost their lives in cyclone Fani which affected more than 1.5 crore people in 14 coastal districts of the state besides causing severe damage to infrastructure

"The short film and report has been prepared to document the good work done by the police for the information of all," he said.

"The good work done

and practices adopted can serve as a reference for the future during any such calamity. These will certainly be very useful and also act as a guide for police officers in the days ahead," the chief minister said.

He lauded the role of police personnel before, during and after the cyclone hit the state.

Patnaik said 24 hours before the cyclone hit the state, police undertook a massive awareness exercise among the public by using loud speakers, mega phones and other means.

They helped in the massive evacuation exercise and around 1.3 million people were evacuated to designated multi-purpose shelter homes, he said. Police

also played a crucial role in the management of law and order, road clearance, distribution of relief, restoration work and others, the chief minister said, adding that police personnel also provided drinking water, first-aid and medical services to the affected people on war footing during the crisis.

An emergency police control room was set-up in Bhubaneswar for vertical and horizontal co-ordination with districts as well as other departments. Police also exhibited its humane face during post cyclone, under the banner of "Karu-na" where cooked food was distributed to more than one lakh people in different areas of worst hit Puri district.

## Bengal Cong chief resigns taking responsibility for LS poll debacle

**KOLKATA, JUL 9 (PTI):** West Bengal Congress president Somen Mitra submitted a letter of resignation from the post taking responsibility for the party's poor show in the Lok Sabha election, sources said Tuesday.

However, Gaurav Gogoi, the All India Congress Committee (AICC) in-charge of party affairs in the state, refused to accept Mitra's resignation and requested him

to continue in the post, they said.

The Congress won two of the 42 Lok Sabha seats in West Bengal, down from four it had won in the 2014 election.

Last week, Rahul Gandhi formally resigned as the Congress president, saying he was responsible for the loss in the Lok Sabha election and that accountability was critical for the party's future growth.

## Ban on pig import from Myanmar to check ASF



**AIZAWL, JUL 09 (PTI):** Mizoram government has taken measures to ban import of pigs and piglets, specially from Myanmar, and local residents have been mobilised to generate awareness among the people to prevent the outbreak of African swine fever (ASF) in the border state, an official said Tuesday.

ASF outbreak was reported in China and Vietnam and it is feared that it could reach Mizoram through Myanmar and affect the piggeries in the state, director of the state animal husbandry and veterinary department, Hmarkunga said.

The disease affects only porcine species of all breeds and pork products are widely consumed in the state.

No cases of ASF have, however, been detected

in the state so far, he said.

Hmarkunga said the district magistrates of districts adjoining Myanmar have issued prohibitory orders against importing pigs and piglets from the neighbouring country.

"The veterinary officials in all the districts, especially those along the 404 km-long international border with Myanmar, were instructed to beef up vigil," he said.

The district authorities have also been instructed to ban import of pork products such as sausages as traces of ASF were reportedly found in the sausages in Japan.

Hmarkunga said that the steps were taken in view of the hardships faced by the people due to the outbreak of porcine reproductive and respiratory syndrome in the state in 2018.

## SC to hear in August pleas on Centre's move to deport illegal Rohingyas



**NEW DELHI, JUL 9 (PTI):** The Supreme Court on Tuesday said that it would accord final hearing in August on a batch of petitions challenging the Centre's decision to deport illegal Rohingya Muslim immigrants to Myanmar.

The top court is also seized of petitions which support the government's stand to deport over 40,000 Rohingyas, who fled to India after violence in the Western Rakine State of Myanmar and are settled in Jammu, Hyderabad, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, Delhi-NCR and Rajasthan.

A bench comprising Chief Justice Ranjan Gogoi and Justices Deepak Gupta and Aniruddha Bose asked the counsel for parties to submit their written submissions in the meantime.

"Pleadings are complete. Parties are required file brief written submissions," the bench said adding that the date of final hearing would be notified shortly by the registry.

Initially, two Rohingya immigrants -- Mo-

hammad Salimullah and Mohammad Shaqir, who are registered refugees under the United Nations High Commission of Refugees (UNHCR), had moved the apex court in 2017 challenging the move to deport to Rohingyas on various grounds including that it violated international human right conventions.

"Proposed deportation is contrary to the constitutional protection of Article 14 (Right to Equality), Article 21 (Right to Life and Personal Liberty) and Article 51(c) of the Constitution of India, which provides equal rights and liberty to every person.

"This act would also be in contradiction with the principle of 'Non-Refoulement', which has been widely recognised as a principle of Customary International Law," the plea said.

The principle of 'Non-Refoulement' prohibits States from transferring or removing individuals from their jurisdiction when there are substantial grounds for believing that the

person would be at risk of irreparable harm upon return, including persecution, torture, ill-treatment or other serious human rights violations. The plea had also sought a direction that Rohingyas be provided "basic amenities to ensure that they can live in humane conditions as required by international law".

Another petition was filed by one Jaffar Ullah alleging unhygienic situation at refugee camps in Haryana, Rajasthan and Jammu and Kashmir.

The Centre had questioned the bonafides and motives of the NGOs and individuals seeking facilities for the Rohingya refugees, and stated that there is no discrimination between Indians and outsiders in providing health and education facilities.

BJP leader and advocate Ashwini Upadhaya, one of the petitioners, has filed the plea supporting the Government's stand and said "few NGO's are posing more threat to the unity of the country than enemy country like Pakistan".

## Panel formed to review contents of WB text books labelling freedom fighters as "extremists"

**KOLKATA, JUL 9 (PTI):** Amid a controversy over history text book in state-run schools describing a section of the freedom fighters as "extremists", the West Bengal government Tuesday announced formation of a committee to review the contents of such books.

Headed by educationist Jiban Mukhopadhyay, the "textbook review committee" comprises headmasters and senior school teachers, Education Minister Partha Chatterjee said in the Assembly.

The panel was asked to submit its report to the education department within three months, the minister said.

Immediately before

the beginning of the Question Hour, CPI(M) MLA Pradip Kumar Saha said a chapter in the class 8 history text book described several freedom fighters such as Khudiram Bose and Prafulla Chaki as belonging to an extremist ("santrashbadi") branch.

In 1908, Bose and Chaki had hurled a bomb to a horse-drawn carriage aiming at assassinating a British judge but ended up killing two European women, as their target was in a different carriage. Chaki committed suicide before being arrested while Bose was hanged when he was only 18 years old.

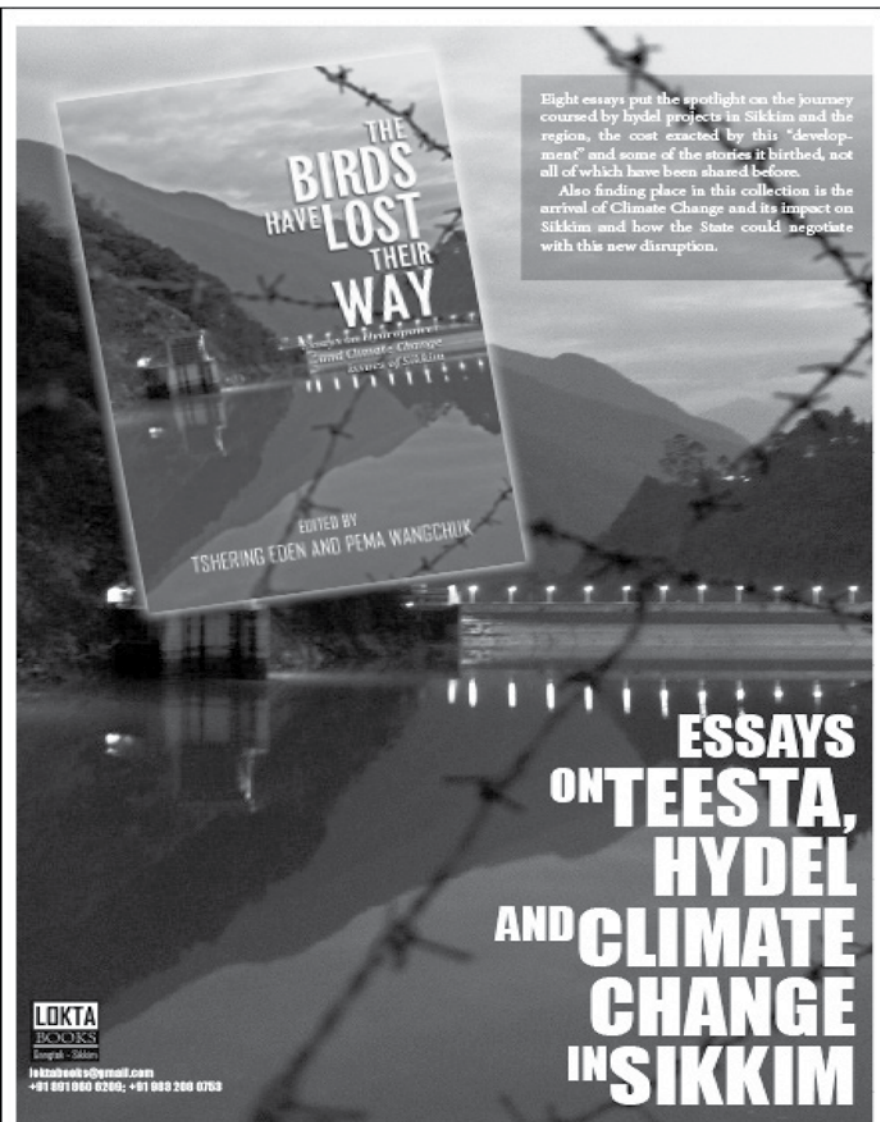
The freedom fighters who had sacrificed their

lives for the country were labelled as "extremists" in the text book in state-run and aided schools, Saha told Speaker Biman Banerjee and produced a copy of it in the House.

The speaker took the book from the Purbasthali North MLA and said he will look into it.

The education minister later announced in the House the formation of the "Textbook Review Committee".

The committee will take opinion of students, parents and teachers on the contents of the books and ease of understanding of the language used in the books, before drawing a conclusion and submitting its report, the minister said.





# No Neymar, no problem as Brazil begin new Copa reign

**RIO DE JANEIRO, JUL 9 (AFP):** As Brazil geared up for the Copa America last month, a Neymar-induced pall of doom and gloom threatened to scupper the host nation's chances before a ball had even been kicked.

The unrelenting circus surrounding the captain and talisman of the Selecao had included lurid rape revelations before an ankle injury in a warm-up game left the Paris Saint-Germain striker on crutches and out of the tournament.

It was an eerie echo of Brazil's disastrous 2014 World Cup on home soil, when Neymar was injured in the quarter-finals and missed his team's traumatic 7-1 humiliation against eventual champions Germany in the last four. Yet as this year's Copa campaign unfolded, Brazil demonstrated that it might have finally cast off the long-standing criticisms of "Neymar-dependency."

While Neymar's creative spark was sorely missing in a dour 0-0 draw with Venezuela during the group stage, Brazil gradually grew into the tournament.

And by the time captain Dani Alves hoisted the trophy -- Brazil's first major honor in 12 years -- following the 3-1 victory over Peru in the final at the iconic Maracana stadium on Sunday, Ney-



mar had at last been shoved aside as the Copa's major talking point.

What's more, Brazil had proved in finishing with the tournament's best attack, best defence, top player in Alves, top scorer in Everton and top goalkeeper in Alisson -- a clean sweep of every award going -- that they could thrive without Neymar.

Its importance was not lost on Liverpool's Alisson, no matter how diplomatically he put it.

"It was difficult without Neymar because he's very talented and also

brings a lot to the collective," said Alisson.

"It was important to win to show the strength of the group.

"Sometimes he gets all the attention and we're a bit left out... but he's much loved."

- LED BY EXAMPLE -

Crucially, two of the players thrust into the spotlight by Neymar's absence and indiscretions sparkled in the limelight.

In May, Alves was named captain for the tournament after Neymar hit the headlines -- pre-rape allegations

-- for the wrong reasons with his club, picking up European and domestic bans for petulant behavior. He had an altercation with a fan after PSG lost the French Cup final to Rennes while the month before he insulted a match official after the French side's Champions League elimination by Manchester United.

Alves led by example and was named player of the tournament, while his skill and trickery in starting the move that led to the first goal in Brazil's 2-0 semi-final victory over Argen-

ting on as a substitute in those matches before his performances earned him a starting berth from then on.

Had Neymar been available, Everton may have found himself further down the pecking order and given fewer opportunities to impress.

Instead, the Gremio forward established himself as the undisputed crowd favorite.

He was the only one of three domestic-based players in the 23-man squad to get a game during the tournament and drew the biggest cheer every time his name was announced or he touched the ball.

In Everton -- who at 23 is a rumored target for European giants Manchester City, Manchester United and PSG -- Brazil have perhaps found a long-term replacement to the troubled and flawed Neymar as the country's football icon.

For some fans, like Elaine Vieira Pessoa de Sousa, Brazil don't need Neymar any more. "We're champions! And the best thing is that it was without Neymar," the 43-year-old told AFP from the streets of Sao Paulo as she celebrated Brazil's victory. "This proves that we don't rely on him any more, it's not all down to him.

"This is Brazil, no matter who plays.

## Bangladesh part ways with head coach Rhodes, Joshi's contract not extended



**LONDON, JULY 9 (PTI):** Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) has decided to part ways with head coach Steve Rhodes before the completion of his tenure following the team's eighth-place finish in the World Cup.

Bangladesh finished well out of the top-four but won hearts with their spirited display that saw them pick up memorable wins over South Africa and West Indies. Shakib Al Hasan was on a roll with both bat and ball, scoring 606 runs at 86.57 besides picking up 11 wickets.

"The board had a review following the Pakistan match (Bangladesh's last at the World Cup) in a meeting in London," BCB CEO Nizamuddin Chowdhury was quoted as saying by the ESPNcricinfo.

"There it was decided

that the BCB and Steve Rhodes will not continue on their agreement. The separation was by mutual consent. The BCB has not yet decided on a new coach for the Sri Lanka series, which is their next assignment," he added.

Rhodes was on a two-year contract after taking charge of the team in June last year.

Bangladesh's next assignment is a three-match ODI in Sri Lanka later this month and will be travelling without most of their support staff which helped them in the World Cup.

The contracts of fast-bowling coach Courtney Walsh and spin coach Sunil Joshi have also not been extended. West Indies great Walsh joined the team in August 2016 and former India spinner Joshi in August 2017.

## Mirabai wins gold at Commonwealth Senior Weightlifting Championship



**APIA (SAMOA), JUL 9 (PTI):** Former world champion Mirabai Chanu led the Indian medal rush by notching up a gold on the opening day of the Commonwealth Weightlifting Championship here on Tuesday.

The Indian contingent won 13 medals that included eight gold, three silver and two bronze medals in senior, junior and youth categories.

Mirabai lifted a total of 191kg (84kg + 107 kg) in the senior women's 49 kg event to win the gold medal in the Olympic qualifying event, the points from which will come in handy for the final rankings of the 2020 Tokyo Olympics.

Mirabai last took part at the Asian Championship in Ningbo, China in April where she lifted 199kg (86kg+113kg) to miss out on a medal by a whisker.

The qualification process for the 2020 Olympics is based on the per-

formances of the weightlifters in six events over a period of 18 months out of which the four best results logged by a lifter will be considered.

Jhilli Dalabehra also clinched the first place on the podium with a lift of 154kg (70kg+94kg) in the senior women's 45 kg event which is not an Olympic weight category.

In the senior women's 55kg, Soroikhaibam Bindyarani Devi and Matsa Santoshi won the gold and silver medals respectively.

Bindyarani lifted 78 kg in snatch to bag the silver medal. Her effort of 105 kg fetched her a gold medal in clean and jerk as well as the overall gold.

Santoshi stood first in snatch with a lift of 80kg but could only manage 102kg in clean and jerk taking her total to 182kg.

In the senior men's 55kg category, Rishikanta Singh grabbed the gold with a total lift of 235kg (105kg+130kg).

# Federer eyes 100th Wimbledon win and Nadal showdown



**LONDON, JULY 9 (AFP):** Roger Federer can rack up his 100th win at Wimbledon on Wednesday and set-up a blockbuster semi-final against Rafael Nadal.

In a quarter-final line-up which features five players over 30, there is a growing anticipation of a potential 40th career match-up between the sport's two most successful players.

If it does happen, it will be their first at the All England Club since 2008 when Nadal triumphed in what is widely regarded as the greatest final ever played at the tournament.

However, before they reach that stage, eight-time champion Federer has to get past Kei Nishikori while Nadal, a two-time winner, tackles big-hitting Sam Querrey.

Whoever battles through that side of the draw is likely to find defending champion and four-time winner Novak Djokovic waiting in the final.

At 37, Federer is the oldest quarter-finalist since Jimmy Connors in 1991.

He reached his 17th quarter-final at the All England Club -- and 55th at the majors -- with a 74-minute demolition of Italy's Matteo Berrettini, dropping just five games.

Between them, Federer, Nadal

and Djokovic lost only 19 games in their fourth-round ties and faced just one break point.

"I think the best guys now are fully engaged, they know exactly what to expect from the court and the conditions," said second seed Federer.

- 'NISHIKORI GREAT TALENT' -

"That helps us to play better. I think with experience, that's good. We haven't dropped much energy in any way." Federer will take a 7-3 record over seventh-seeded Nishikori into his quarter-final.

Nishikori defeated the great Swiss in the ATP Finals last year, ending a drought which had stretched to almost five years.

"I'm a big fan of his game," said Federer of the Japanese star, who is into his second successive quarter-final at Wimbledon.

"I think he's got one of the best backhands in the game. He's a great return player. Solid mentally. I always thought he was a great talent," Nadal, playing in his seventh Wimbledon quarter-final, faces Querrey backed up by a 4-1 record over the 65th-ranked American.

Querrey made the semi-finals in 2017, beating then world number one Andy Murray in the last-eight before falling to Marin Cilic.

The American has pounded down 100 aces so far at the tournament, dropped serve just once

and accounted for fifth seed Dominic Thiem in the first round.

"When he plays well, he can be very, very dangerous on all surfaces," said Nadal, whose recent 12th French Open title took him to 18 majors, just two back from Federer's record.

Top seed Djokovic has a 5-1 record over his quarter-final opponent David Goffin who, at 28, is the youngest man left.

Belgian 21st seed Goffin beat Djokovic the last time they met in 2017 but that was on the clay of Monte Carlo.

Goffin is playing in his first All England Club quarter-final but was runner-up to Federer on the grass of Halle on the eve of Wimbledon.

"He's one of the quickest players on the tour. I think his footwork is probably his biggest asset," said Djokovic ahead of his 11th Wimbledon quarter-final and 45th at the Slams.

Wednesday's other quarter-final pits Argentine 26th seed Guido Pella, who had never previously got into the second week of a Slam, against Spanish 23rd seed Roberto Bautista Agut.

Whereas 29-year-old Pella is in uncharted territory, Bautista Agut is in his second Slam quarter-final of the season having also gone to the last eight at the Australian Open.

## Pakistan's economy at 'critical juncture', needs bold reforms: IMF

Washington, Jul 9 (PTI): Pakistan's economy is at a "critical juncture" where it needs an ambitious and bold set of reforms, the IMF has said, days after the global lender agreed to give a USD 6 billion bailout package to the cash-strapped country.

Pakistan, which currently has a currency reserve of less than USD 8 billion -- enough to cover only 1.7 months of imports -- approached the Washington-based International Monetary Fund (IMF) in August 2018 for a bailout package after the Imran Khan government took over.

The IMF last week formally approved the USD 6 billion loan to Pakistan, which is facing "significant" economic challenges on the back of "large" fiscal and financial needs and "weak and unbalanced" growth. "Pakistan is facing significant economic challenges on the back of large fiscal and financial needs and weak and unbalanced growth," David Lipton, First Deputy Managing Director and Acting Chair of the IMF Executive Board said.

Last week, the IMF approved the 13th bailout package for Pakistan since the late 1980s.

The latest bailout package is worth USD 6 billion, of which USD 1 billion is to be disbursed immediately and the rest in the next three years.

A decisive fiscal consolidation is key to reducing the large public debt and building resilience, and the adoption of the fiscal year 2020 budget is an important initial step, Lipton said.

Achieving the fiscal objectives will require

a multi-year revenue mobilisation strategy to broaden the tax base and raise tax revenue in a well-balanced and equitable manner, he said.

It will also require a strong commitment by the provinces to support the consolidation effort and effective public financial management to improve the quality and efficiency of public spending, he said.

Observing that protecting the most vulnerable from the impact of adjustment policies will be an important priority, Lipton said that this will be achieved by a significant increase in resources allocated to key social assistance programmes, supporting measures for the economic empowerment of women and investment in areas where poverty is high.

A flexible market-determined exchange rate and an adequately tight monetary policy will be key to correcting imbalances, rebuilding reserves and keeping inflation low, he said, adding that an ambitious agenda to strengthen institutions and remove impediments to growth will allow Pakistan to reach its full economic potential.

In an accompanying report, the IMF said that Pakistan's economy is at a critical juncture.

The legacy of misaligned economic policies, including large fiscal deficits, loose monetary policy and defence of an overvalued exchange rate, fuelled consumption and short-term growth in recent years, but steadily eroded macroeconomic buffers, increased external and public debt, and depleted international reserves.



# Trump targets Paris climate accord, says 'ineffective' global pacts favour worst-polluting countries

LALIT K JHA

**WASHINGTON, JUL 9 (PTI):** President Donald Trump has accused the previous Obama administration of waging a "relentless war" on American energy by reaching "ineffective" global agreements that he alleged allowed the world's worst-polluting countries to continue their practices.

His statement came amidst claims by Environmental Protection Agency's Administrator Andrew Wheeler that the landmark Paris Agreement on climate change is unfair to the US and countries like India and China benefit out of it.

For years, politicians told Americans that a strong economy and a vibrant energy sector were incompatible with a healthy environment. In other words, one thing does not go with the other.

"And that's wrong because we're proving the exact opposite," Trump said in his remarks during a White House event on America's Environmental Leadership.

"A strong economy is vital to maintaining a healthy environment. When we innovate, produce and grow, we're able to unleash technologies and processes that make the environment better while reshoring and, so importantly -- you look at reshoring production all the way -- taking it away from foreign polluters, and back to American soil," asserted the US President.



Trump alleged the previous administration waged a relentless war on American energy.

"We can't do that. They sought to punish our workers, our producers and manufacturers with ineffective global agreements that allowed the world's worst-polluting countries to continue their practices," he said.

These radical plans, he claimed, would not make the world cleaner; they would just make and put Americans out of work, and they put them out of work rapidly.

"They move production to foreign countries with lower standards -- our companies were forced to do that, and they didn't want to do that -- and they drive up the price of gas and electricity at home, and drive it to levels that are literally unaffordable.

"And by the way that's happening to many other countries, but it's not

happening here. Other countries -- their pricing on electricity is so high, not even to be affordable. At our level, we are doing numbers that nobody has seen before. Nobody believes what we're doing and what we're producing electricity and other things for," Trump said.

"Punishing Americans is never the right way to produce a better environment or a better economy. We've rejected this failed approach and we're seeing incredible results," he said.

During a conference call with reporters, Wheeler said: "The Paris Climate Accord is an unfair treaty, in terms of the US with our trading partners -- when you see that China doesn't have to even begin making reductions; they can continue to increase their emissions, and they are, until 2030. And other countries don't have to

make reductions either, such as India and other developing countries. So it was an unfair trade treaty for the United States".

"Another aspect that a lot of people gloss over is that, under the Clean Air Act -- I believe it's Section 115 of the Clean Air Act -- if we enter into an international treaty, such as the Paris Climate Accord -- if we fail to meet our targets, those are enforceable under our domestic laws," he said.

Most other countries which are signatories to the Paris Climate Accord do not have that same constraint, Wheeler said but asserted that one of the few industrialised countries that has already met their targets for the Paris Climate Accord. "So, regardless of whether we're in the Paris Climate Accord or not, we continue to make progress on that front. But the Paris Climate Ac-

cord is unfair to the US consumer, US manufacturer and the US economy," he said.

The US is taking international leadership on issues such as marine plastic debris, Wheeler asserted. In his address, Trump said after coming to power, his administration has created more than six million new jobs and unemployment has reached the lowest rate in a half a century.

"We're unlocking American energy and the United States is now a net exporter of clean, affordable, American natural gas. We're exporting all over the world," he said.

Trump said that the US does not have to sacrifice its own jobs to lead the world on the environment.

China is the world's largest carbon dioxide emitter followed by the US and India respectively, according to the Global Carbon Project.

## China reacts guardedly as Hong Kong leader says extradition bill 'is dead'

Beijing, Jul 9 (PTI): China on Tuesday reacted guardedly to Hong Kong's embattled pro-Beijing leader Carrie Lam's declaration that the highly controversial plan to allow the extradition of Hongkongers to the mainland "is dead", saying it has "nothing more to add" to its endorsement of her June 15 announcement to suspend it. The Chinese government has backed Lam's move on June 15 to suspend the Fugitive Offenders and Mutual Legal Assistance in Criminal Matters Legislation (Amendment) Bill 2019 following violent protests by lakhs of people.

After her plans to suspend the bill was rejected by protestors who continued to stage mass demonstrations, Lam on Tuesday announced that the widely-loathed move to allow extradition to the Chinese mainland "is dead" but again stopped short of protesters' demands to completely withdraw the bill.

"There are still lingering doubts about the government's sincerity or worries (about) whether the government will restart the process with the Legislative Council," she

said in a press conference. "So I reiterate here, there is no such plan. The bill is dead," she said.

Asked how the Chinese central government views Lam's announcement, Foreign Ministry spokesman Geng Shuang told reporters: "On June 15, after the Special Administrative Region of Hong Kong decided to suspend the amendment, the Chinese government expressed its respect and understanding. I have nothing more to add for the time being".

While the suspension of the bill was seen as a major setback for China's increasing hold over the former British colony Hong Kong which was returned to China by the UK in 1997, the continued large scale protests demanding its withdrawal raised concern here over the growing opposition to Beijing among the local people, specially students.

Lam's latest announcement too met with opposition from the protestors who demanded its complete withdrawal as it still remained dormant in the local legislature. "The bill is dead, is a political description and it is not legislative language,"

Civic Party lawmaker of Hong Kong Alvin Yeung told the BBC, adding that the bill is still in the process of second reading technically. "We have no idea why the chief executive refuses to adopt the word withdraw," he said.

One of the leading figures of the protest movement, student activist Joshua Wong, reiterated the demand for the bill to be "formally withdrawn" and accused Lam of using wordplay to "lie to the people of Hong Kong".

Critics of the legislation argue it would undermine the territory's judicial independence and could be used to target those who speak out against the Chinese government, the BBC report said. Hong Kong, a former British colony, became a Special Administrative Region of China in 1997, when Britain's 99-year lease expired. It has its own judiciary and a separate legal system from mainland China.

The city is governed under the principle of "one country, two systems", under which China has agreed to give it some autonomy and preserve its economic and social systems for 50 years from the date of the handover.

## China urges US to 'immediately cancel' arms sale to Taiwan

**BEIJING, JUL 9 (AFP):** China urged Washington Tuesday to "immediately cancel" the potential sale of USD 2.2 billion in weapons to Taiwan, including battle tanks and anti-aircraft missiles.

The US State Department's decision to greenlight the first big-ticket US military sale to the self-ruled democratic island in decades comes amid already strained ties between Washington and Beijing.

"The sale of weapons by the United States to Taiwan... seriously violates the one-China principle... grossly interferes in China's internal affairs and undermines China's sovereignty and security interests," said foreign ministry spokesman Geng Shuang.

Geng said that China has already lodged formal complaints through diplomatic channels expressing "strong dissatisfaction and resolute opposition" to the move.

"China urges the US to... immediately cancel the planned arms sale and stop military relations with Taipei to avoid damaging Sino-US relations and harming peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait," Geng said.

According to the US Defence Securi-

ty Cooperation Agency (DSCA) the deal includes 108 M1A2T Abrams tanks, 250 Stinger portable anti-aircraft missiles and related equipment and support.

Taiwan has been ruled separately from China since the end of a civil war in 1949, but Beijing considers it a part of its territory to be retaken -- by force if necessary.

China has significantly stepped up diplomatic and military pressure on Taipei since the election in 2016 of President Tsai Ing-wen, whose Democratic Progressive Party refuses to acknowledge that the island is part of "One China".

It has also staged military exercises near the island, and steadily reduced the already small number of nations that recognise Taiwan.

The United States switched diplomatic recognition from Taiwan to China in 1979, but has remained an important ally -- and arms supplier -- to Taipei.

Laws passed that year by Congress required Washington to provide the island with means of self-defence. But it has been wary of big-ticket military equipment sales to Taiwan in recent years, fearful of stoking anger in Beijing.

## Indian business tycoon becomes first expat in Sharjah to get UAE's permanent residency

**DUBAI, JUL 9 (PTI):** UAE-based Indian business tycoon Lalo Samuel has become the first expat in Sharjah to get the gold card permanent residency. Unlike the long-term visa of 5-10 years for businessmen and talented individuals, the gold card gives permanent residency of the UAE to the holder.

The Kingston Group chairman was handed over the gold residence card by Brigadier Arif Al Shamsi, Director-General of residency and foreigners affairs in Sharjah, the Gulf News reported Monday. The Kingston Holdings owns one of the largest manufacturing companies in the Middle East that comprises several manufacturing units that process plastic and metal.

Samuel, who was selected as one of the top 100 Most Influential Indian Business Leaders in the Arab World by the Forbes magazine continuously for 2013, 2014 and 2015, became one of the 6,800 investors with total investment exceeding USD 27 billion to receive the gold card under a scheme announced in May by Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, the ruler of Dubai.

## All-Afghan conference brings country closer to peace

**KABUL, JUL 9 (AP):** All-Afghan talks that brought together Afghanistan's warring sides ended Tuesday with a statement that appeared to push the country a step closer to peace, by laying down the outlines of a roadmap for the country's future and ending nearly 18 years of war.

Washington's Peace Envoy Zalmay Khalilzad has said he is hoping for a final agreement by September 1, which would allow the withdrawal of US and NATO troops.

He will begin an eighth round of peace talks with the Taliban later on Tuesday also in Qatar's capital, Doha, where the two-day conference was held.

Tuesday's statement said that a post-war Afghanistan would have an Islamic legal system, protect women's rights "within the Islamic framework of Islamic values," and ensure equality for all ethnic groups.

The much-touted conference was attended by Taliban, Afghan government representatives, women and members of the country's nascent civil society.

It aimed to produce a new level of consensus among Afghanistan's fissiparous society. No date

was given for the tougher negotiations to follow, when the many sides in Afghanistan's protracted conflict will sit down to hammer out the details of what an Islamic system will look like, how constitutional reform will come about, and what will become of the many local militias affiliated with the country's powerful warlords, who are affiliated with Kabul.

They will also have to tackle how women's rights fit into the definition of the "Islamic values," as well as whether to set up an interim administration and when elections should be held.

The conference agreed to keep the momentum going with confidence building measures.

These included the unconditional release of old, disabled and sick prisoners though there was no mention of the affiliation of the prisoners or whether it included those captured in the war.

The warring sides also agreed not to attack institutions such as hospitals and schools, as well as national infrastructure such as hydro-electric dams.

They also agreed to be more diplomatic in

their references to each other. There was no mention of a cease-fire, which Khalilzad has said the negotiations on the final deal would address.

Both sides did agree, however, to do more to protect civilians.

The United Nations has expressed growing concern over civilian deaths in the conflict, and has criticised all sides for rising casualty rates, including from stepped up US airstrikes.

Even as the conference was ending, an airstrike in Afghanistan's northern Baghlan province killed seven people, six of them children.

Early on Tuesday, a strike hit Kotuk Khel village. The residents carried the bodies of the dead to the provincial capital of Pul-e-Kumri, where Afghanistan National Defense Forces had blocked the road.

Safdar Moheesi, the provincial council chief, said the airstrike was carried out by "foreigners," a reference to the United States.

There was no immediate comment from the US military to a request from The Associated Press.

The Taliban have also been deeply criticised for their many attacks that

have killed or wounded civilians, including a devastating suicide car bombing on Sunday in Ghazni province that killed 12 people and wounded more than 150 others, including many students at a nearby school.

Tuesday's statement also said all sides in the conflict would want international guarantors of any final agreement.

It said that future meetings would be all-inclusive without any mention of direct talks with the Afghan government. The Taliban have steadfastly refused to talk with President Ashraf Ghani's government calling it a puppet.

Participants attending the all-Afghan conference, which Germany and Qatar jointly sponsored, attended as ordinary Afghans "on equal footing" and while there were senior government officials in attendance they were there as ordinary Afghans and not in their official capacity.

Meanwhile Khalilzad's talks with the Taliban will continue on the timeframe for US and NATO troop withdrawal, verifiable anti-terror guarantees, intra-Afghan negotiations, and an eventual cease-fire.





## GOT7's Mark apologises to fans after being the victim of malicious rumours

On 7 July, GOT7's Mark issued a public apology on the K-pop boy group's fan message board. The reason for his apology was due to recent rumours that have spread online regarding the 28-year-old, American-born idol.

Mark's name was dragged into a recent scandal involving South Korean Internet personalities, BJ Chang-bum, BJ Seoyoon and BJ Yeolmae. BJ in South Korea stands for "Broadcast Jockey" and is what locals call professional livestreamers and Internet personalities. The three BJ's were embroiled in very public drama, where Chang-bum was accused of allegedly cheating on his ex-girlfriend, Yeolmae with current girlfriend, Seoyoon.

Mark's name was mentioned in a set of Kakao Talk messages that were shared by BJ Yeolmae in the midst of this Internet drama. Rumours then started spreading that BJ Chang-bum was allegedly a member in one of Jung Joon-young's infamous group chats where illicit hidden camera footage were being disseminated. This led to Mark being suspected of witnessing the illicit footage as he and BJ Chang-bum were reportedly friends.

Although there was no evidence to these accusations, rumours have spread online, enraging GOT7's fandom, Ahgase. This led to Mark posting an apology to GOT7's fandom and prompted JYP Entertainment, GOT7's talent agency, to take legal action against netizens who were actively spreading these rumours.

His apology translates as follows:

"Hello. This is Mark.

First, I sincerely thank the fans who support and love us GOT7. And I want to say I'm sorry.

I'm sincerely sorry for hurting the fans' hearts and disappointing you.

I know all too well what the fans are disappointed about, and I'm going to try my best so that nothing like this happens again. I'll work hard every day so that the fans' hearts won't be

hurt anymore and become a more improved Mark.

I'm sorry once again."

Shortly after Mark's apology was posted, JYP Entertainment released the following statement, "Hello. This is JYPE. We believe that online rumours are currently damaging our artists' image, reputation, and character, so we are seeking ways to take immediate action after collecting evidence. We will be taking all possible legal measures without leniency against actions that violate our artists' personal rights.

Accusations, charges, and criminal punishments based on the cyber defamation law, libel law, and more can immediately



be brought upon the creation and circulation of malicious rumours about artists.

In order to take swift action on this matter, we would like to ask fans to send us information (fan@jype.com). As an agency, we will take all possible measures and try our best to protect our artists' rights and interests so that our artists as well as all of the fans who love GOT7 won't be harmed.

Thank you."

GOT7 is currently in the middle of their Keep Spinning World Tour.



**CITY LIGHTS:** EXO's Baekhyun has given fans a sneak peek of his City Lights mini-album. SM Entertainment has revealed another video teaser that is over three minutes long. The teaser shows Baekhyun listening to an old school record which is essentially his new record. The teaser gave fans a taste of the songs that will be in his City Lights mini-album, revealing a feature by rapper Beenzino in the song, "Stay Up".

## 'Sacred Games 2' to premiere on August 15



**MUMBAI, JUL 9 (PTI):** The second season of critically-acclaimed original series "Sacred Games" is set to premiere on August 15, the streaming service announced on Tuesday.

The official Twitter account of the streaming platform's India chapter shared the news, along with the trailer of the series.

"The game's bigger, the stakes are higher, and the players are ready. 'Sacred Games 2' premieres 15 August, only on Netflix," the description of the 2.10 minute-long video on YouTube read.

Saif Ali Khan and Nawazuddin Siddiqui will reprise their parts as Sartaj Singh and

Ganesh Gaitonde, and the new season will see Pankaj Tripathi in a full-fledged role as the mysterious Guruji. Kalki Koechlin and Ranvir Shorey are the latest additions to the series.

Like season one, Anurag Kashyap is at the helm of the portions featuring Siddiqui, while Neeraj Ghaywan of "Masaan" fame will direct the scenes with Khan.

Vikramaditya Motwane and Varun Grover are returning as the showrunner and the lead writer, respectively.

The first season of the series, based on Vikram Chandra's award-winning book of the same name, premiered last year.

**CHANDIGARH, JUL 9 (PTI):** Pop singer Honey Singh and music producer Bhushan Kumar have been booked by Punjab police on the charge of using vulgar lyrics against women in their latest song.

The rapper has been booked following a complaint lodged by the Punjab State Women Commission which sought action against him for allegedly using vulgar lyrics against women in the song.

The case has been registered at the Mataur police station in Punjab's Mohali district.

Singh has been booked under section 294 (punishment for obscene song and acts) and section 509 (punishment for word, gesture or act intended to insult the modesty of a woman) of the IPC, Mohali Senior Superintendent of Police Harcharan Singh Bhullar told PTI.

He has also been charged under section 67 (punishment for publishing or transmitting obscene material in electronic form) of the Information Technology Act, 2000 and relevant section of the Indecent Representation of Women (Prohibition) Act, 1986, Bhullar said.

Earlier, chairperson of the women panel Manisha Gulati had written to the state home secretary, the Punjab director general of police

and the inspector general of police (crime), demanding appropriate action against the singer.

"We have asked the police to register an FIR against the singer for using vulgar lyrics against women in his song 'Makhna'," Gulati had said. The women panel had also asked the police to submit a status report in the matter by July 12.

Gulati had said the song with the objectionable lyrics against women should be banned in the state.

them a letter expressing how you feel—no filter required. Think of your words as a form of catharsis. Bury the ashes once you've burned the sheets. You have the choice to stop giving your past this much power.



Tip: The secret to increasing your productivity could be a concise to-do list.

**VIRGO:** Weekly reminder, Virgo: up the social media game. If you can't get your head around the digital world, hire an expert or get a friend to strategise. Remember to be watchful of the ideas that are coming through you at this point. Receptivity is the key to finding creative solutions to your problems.

Tip: The world is ready to celebrate your art. **LIBRA:** Who says a banker can't moonlight as a DJ or that a writer can't claim her place on the front stage? Multiple sources of income are opening up for you. Plus, the opportunity to express yourself through a different medium. How you learn to balance the two sides of you will make all the difference.

Tip: Pay attention to the different sources of income that are opening up for you. **SCORPIO:** Forgiveness heals. Forgiveness frees. Forgiveness makes space for good chi. Have you been holding onto a grudge since time immemorial? Here's a powerful exercise, Scorpio: take a piece of paper and write

them a letter expressing how you feel—no filter required. Think of your words as a form of catharsis. Bury the ashes once you've burned the sheets. You have the choice to stop giving your past this much power. Tip: Forgiveness heals.

**SAGITTARIUS:** A Bukowski classic to inspire you: "The way to create art is to burn and destroy ordinary concepts and to substitute them with new truths that run down from the top of the head and out of the heart." Consider this as your wake-up call to challenge the status quo, to push the boundaries, and trigger those around you to look beyond what they perceive to be the truth. Therein lies your growth, Sagittarius. Tip: Creative rebellion.

**CAPRICORN:** Your outer reality is fine, **CAPRICORN.** It's the demons sitting inside your head you want to tackle first. 'Not good enough, not pretty enough, not smart enough'. Do away with the false narratives and exercise a little more faith in yourself. Moving past your fears is the secret to building a successful empire.

## 'Joker' doesn't follow the comic books: director Todd Phillips

**LONDON, JUL 9 (PTI):** Todd Phillips says comic book fans may not be pleased with the way his "Joker" has shaped up as the new film is the director's own version of the DC supervillain's story. Phillips, who also co-wrote the screenplay with Scott Silver, said the plot is more about how Joker becomes the man he came to be known as.

"We didn't follow anything from the comic books, which people are gonna be mad about.

"We just wrote our own version of where a guy like Joker might come from. That's what was interesting to me. We're not even doing Joker, but the story of becoming Joker. It's about this man," he told Empire magazine.

It was earlier speculated that the movie might follow portions of Alan Moore and Brian Bolland's legendary 'The Killing Joke', the comic that provided the origin story for the Clown Prince of Crime.

The book told of an aspiring comedian whose mob dealings eventually land him into a vat of chemicals at the hands of Batman. Hailing Joaquin Phoenix as "the greatest actor", Phillips also talked about collaborating with the film's lead.

"We had a photo of him above our computer while we were writing. We constantly thought, 'God, imagine if Joaquin actually does this,'" the director said.

"Joker", rated 'R', is slated to be released on October 4.

**ARIES:** Don't let your impatient side get the better of you today. You are being tested. The best thing you can do for your inner well-being is surrender to the flow and allow things to unfold naturally. Trust that everything is taking place in divine time. Move beyond your three dimensional perception of things. Connecting with your spiritual side is going to be just as important for you this week. Pay attention to the guidance that's coming through.

Tip: Clichéd as it is, everything is sign. Taurus: Food for thought courtesy Maya Angelou: "I've learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel." Continue to vibrate at the frequency of unconditional love.

Tip: Your good vibes will draw people to you. **GEMINI:** Your weather forecast for the week: 100 per cent chance of chaos and 50 per cent chance of conflict. Exit the war zone before you say or do something regrettable. With eclipse season in full force, you'll find that people are projecting their shadows like

nobody's business.

Tip: Exit the war zone before you say or do something regrettable.

**CANCER:** What if owning less is the secret of living a more fulfilling and purposeful life? Take a look at what you have accumulated and ask yourself how many of these possessions continue to be a source of joy. Decluttering and doing away with all that is redundant could be an important theme for you today. Is there anybody else who could benefit from that old pair of jeans or the books you've read from cover to cover? Tip: Channel your inner Marie Kondo and do away with the clutter.

**LEO:** Productivity hack: create a to-do list consisting of five realistic goals. Yes, five is your operative word, Leo. But before you go into panic mode, let me explain. The simpler you keep things for yourself, the easier it is to achieve your target. Given that you are entering an important phase of your career, you want to be on the top of your game. PS: Just remember to block out distractions while you are at it.