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SummitTIMES

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ON TOP OF THE NEWS

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Kanchanjunga shopping complex shops regularized, 105 allotment orders handed over



NITESH R PRADHAN GANGTOK, 03 MAR: As many as 105 allotment orders were handed over to shop owners under the Regularisation of Kanchanjunga shopping complex initiative here at Lal Bazar today.

The shopping complex has 125 shops and officials inform that the allotment orders for the remaining twenty shops will be handed over after the concerned shop owners submitted the required documents.

Area MLA, Shyam

Pradhan, along with GMC Chairperson Ashish Rai, former Mayor KN Topgay, SDF party leader Rabin Rai and officials from UD&HD and Gangtok Municipal Corporation were present on the occasion at a program held at the Lal Bazar.

This has been a long-pending issue and appears to have finally been resolved.

One of the beneficiaries, Sushil Narayan Gupta, has thanked the government for granting this long pending demand.

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HSP launches election campaign with 'Naya Sikkim, Hamro Sikkim' slogan

No alliance with any national party. Still awaiting word from SKM for next meeting: Bhaichung

REBYNA RANA GANGTOK, 03 MAR: Hamro Sikkim Party today announced the launch of its election campaign with the slogan, "Naya Sikkim, Hamro Sikkim."

HSP office bearers announced this at a press briefing held here today.

Addressing the press, the party's working president, Bhaichung Bhutia, explained the party slogan as one conveying the frustration of the youth here with the same faces and same politics having been dominant in the State for 25 years.

"The only difference



is that the politicians keep on changing parties. There is the same group which keeps returning to the people and indulging in caste-based politics. We want to bring change with a new kind of politics," he said.

Mr Bhutia also announced that the party will be contesting all the 32 Assembly seats as well as the lone Lok Sabha seat.

"We will not have any

alliance with any national party, but we have been holding talks with local parties for alliance and if it is successful, we will hold a joint press meet," he said, while adding that HSP will field fresh and young candidates.

"We are scrutinising our candidates. We will not field those having criminal records or those facing corruption charges," he added.

The party will go to the people with a development agenda, he said.

The press briefing was also addressed by HSP president Dr Bina Basnet, and spokesperson Biraj Adhikari.

Mr Bhutia explained that the party would be leveraging five main issues and that a detailed manifesto will be released in due time.

The five broad themes

will cover Welfare State, Social Justice, Economic Justice, Democratic Liberties and Accountable Governance.

The "Welfare State" stance will seek "universal public provision of good quality social services including education, health, maternal care and early childhood care, good and safe roads, affordable electricity charges, etc." Under

this, a new scheme for farmers comprising assured income, freedom from indebtedness and sustainable farm practices will be included.

Under social justice, amendments will be passed to ensure at least one-third representation of women in the Legislative Assembly, judiciary and police and special programmes launched

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New PHSC inaugurated at Ben

BEN, 03 MA (IPR): Health Minister Arjun Kumar Ghatani today inaugurated a Primary Health Sub Centre (PHSC) in the presence of the concerned area MLA [Temi Namphing], Minister Garjaman Gurung, here at Ben in South Sikkim.

The two storied, eight-room PHSC building has been established at a sanctioned cost of Rs 50 lakhs.

The construction commenced on 22 February 2018 and was completed on 22 February 2019.

Various medical facilities like General OPD, MCH Clinic, ANC/ PNC room, Labour Room, Dressing room, Nurses



Duty Room and a store-room have been accommodated in the ground floor and a two-room residential quarter for medical staff is provided on the first floor.

Addressing the gathering, Minister Gurung expressed gratitude towards the department for providing a genuinely-needed health infrastructure after it was re-

portedly damaged by the devastating earthquake.

He urged the medical staff to make patients and students about healthy lifestyles and

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Congratulations!

I, along with all the people of Soreng-Chakung constituency of West Sikkim, would like to congratulate the people of Sikkim and the Sikkim Democratic Front President, Chief Minister Dr. Pawan Chamling, on the SDF having reached the historic milestone of celebrating its 27th Foundation Day.

On this day, we rededicate ourselves to SDF's founding commitment of always serving the people of Sikkim and keeping the people's interest first and register our belief in the leadership provided by Dr Chamling to the party and all the people of Sikkim.



R.B. Subba
Area MLA, Soreng-Chakung



सिक्किम डेमोक्रेटिक फ्रण्टको २७औं स्थापना दिवसको अवसरमा हार्दिक बधाई एवं शुभकामना एसडीएफ

- सन् १९९३-९४ -मा देशको सबैभन्दा गरीब राज्य सिक्किमलाई सन् २०१८-१९ -मा देशको दोस्रो सबैभन्दा धनी राज्य बनाउने पार्टी र सरकार।
- देशको सबैभन्दा शान्ति, सुरक्षित, आतङ्कवादमुक्त, गरीबीमुक्त, भोकमारीमुक्त, अपराधमुक्त, भेदभावमुक्त, झोपडीमुक्त, भिखारीमुक्त राज्य बनाउने पार्टी र सरकार।
- सिक्किम संसारको पहिलो र एक मात्र जैविक राज्य, निर्मल राज्य, स्वच्छ राज्य, पर्यावरण संरक्षण र अभिवृद्धि गर्ने राज्य, कृषकहरूलाई पेन्सन दिने राज्य, जनता मेला गरेर जनतालाई घरैमा सहूलियत पुऱ्याइदिने राज्य।

एसडीएफ छ र नै त यो सम्भव छ।

सिक्किम डेमोक्रेटिक फ्रण्ट।

Cong campaign in North Sikkim highlights problems with Citizenship Bill

SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 03 MAR:

Sikkim Pradesh Congress Committee today reiterated its stance against the Citizenship Amendment Bill during a mobile public campaign in North Sikkim.

The campaign was led by North District Congress president Gyurmik Youseel Bhutia, accompanied by South District Congress president, Hari Basnett, Pradesh Congress Scheduled Tribes Cell chairperson, Aita Singh Tamang, and party workers and covered the stretch from Kabi to Mangan.

An SPCC press release informs that the team distributed leaflets carrying the party's message regarding many issues concerning Sikkim such as the Congress' belief about dilution of provisions of Article 371F by the present SDF government, amendment of old laws, unchecked influx and the inability of regional political parties to



protect the rights of Sikkimese people.

Interacting with the local people, district Congress presidents also reiterated the Congress party's stand against the Citizenship Amendment Bill which was stalled in the Rajya Sabha due

to strong opposition by Congress MPs.

They also strongly condemned the support extended by Sikkim's Lok Sabha MP PD Rai to the Bill, which, the release argues, works against the interests of Sikkim and expressed dismay

at the SDF government's betrayal of the Sikkimese people.

It is time people realise the inability of regional political parties to safeguard the constitutional rights of the Sikkimese people, the release concludes.

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Sanders attacks 'dangerous' Trump at campaign launch

NEW YORK, MAR 3 (AFP): US Senator Bernie Sanders returned to the place of his birth on Saturday to deliver the first rally speech of his presidential campaign, vowing to defeat "the most dangerous president in modern American history" in Donald Trump.

The Vermont independent voiced confidence at the address in the New York borough of Brooklyn that he would first beat the crowded field of his rivals for the 2020 nomination, with much of his liberal, populist agenda now considered mainstream Democratic policy.

"I want to thank all of you for being part of a campaign which is not only going to win the Democratic nomination, which is not only going to defeat Donald Trump, who is the most dangerous president in modern American history," Sanders told the crowd of several thousand people.

"But, with your help, we are going to transform this country and finally create an economy and a government which works for all of us, not just the one per cent."

He promised that his campaign would say "loudly and clearly that the underlying principles of our government will not be greed, hatred and lies". Sanders returned to Brooklyn College, which



he once attended, for a rally emphasising his personal story, as the working class son of a Jewish immigrant who grew up in poor housing.

"I did not have a father who gave me millions of dollars to build luxury skyscrapers, casinos and country clubs," Sanders said in another dig at Trump.

"I did not come from a family that gave me a USD 200,000 allowance every year beginning at the age of three."

Sanders spelled out his big ticket items for 2020, his second presidential campaign after losing the nomination to Hillary Clinton in 2016 -- "Medicare for All," a USD 15-an-hour minimum wage and climate change.

Many are long-held principles previously dismissed as too radical by more moderate



Training of election officers continues in East Sikkim

GANGTOK, 03 MAR (IPR): Training for the Sector Officers, Sector Police Officers, Officers in-charge of Flying Squad Teams, Flying Squad Police, Static Surveillance Team, Static Surveillance Police, Video Surveillance Team, Video Viewing Team, Assistant Expenditure Observers, Accounting Team of East District was conducted today by District Election Officer, East District.

The training was scheduled in two shifts at the EDZP Conference Hall here.

The resource persons of the training, Bharani Kumaar, ADC/ East, Rohan Agawane, Asst. Collector, Mukesh Nitharwal, DIO/ East, briefed the offi-

cers on the Model Code of Conduct, roles and responsibilities of officers with respect to Election Expenditure Monitoring, use of cVIGIL applications for violation of MCC, etc.

160 officers attended the training.

The District Collector, East, also addressed the officers and emphasized the use of recently introduced application, c-VIGIL, wherein anyone can file a complaint about MCC violation and illegal expenditure through.

He urged all the officers to strive hard to ensure the conduct of the General Elections-2019 in a free, fair and a peaceful manner.

HSP launches...

for vulnerable social groups.

For economic justice, HSP will be promising a corruption-free environment for businesses and promoting start-ups with innovative ideas and making Sikkim the first choice for all green industries.

The "Democratic Justice" segment seeks to do away with "antiquated and draconian laws misused to curtail personal liberties and intimidate political activists."

The party will also be promising "Accountable Governance" by removing the bar on CBI investigations and giving a free hand for independent anti-corruption investigation and prosecution of all past, present and future government officials and public servants.

The HSP president, Dr Basnet, commented that while substantial funds have been invested into public health and education sectors, the results do not match the scale of investments. Hamro Sikkim Party will focus deeply on education and healthcare sectors and bring a huge change, she said.

About the recent departure of HSP leaders, Mr Bhutia said that the "vacancies" left behind will be filled by even better "players."

"We will have better people with clean image coming up to fill these places. I do not want to comment much on those who have left our party. I thank them for their contributions to the HSP," he said.

Regarding the discussions held with SKM in January to explore chances of an alliance, Mr Bhutia said, "I had a talk with SKM president and he had told in media presence that the next meeting would be held on January 31 after talking to his party executive committee. However, they later informed that the next meeting would be held after the SKM foundation day on 04 February. But they have not communicated to us so far regarding the next round of meeting. Since there has been no communication, we have started our election campaign and for the moment, are going solo. We are having talks with other local parties and if any coalition decision is taken, we will hold a joint press meet."

New PHSC...

need for proper counselling to make them psychologically healthy and strong.

Mr Gurung also congratulated the residents for developmental works seen in their area, which include upgradation of Ben School, the recently sanctioned road connectivity to Lakhim Gaon etc.

He also urged them to deliver on their responsibilities along with taking privilege of their rights.

Further, he also elaborated on the transformation of the state in various spheres, including social and economic status, educational development and women's empowerment.

The Health Minister, in his address, congratulated the people of Ben and the surrounding area for the newly established health infrastructure to ensure basic medical facilities for the people.

He also highlighted the various medical facilities being provided in the upgraded healthcare scenario of the state and in this regard mentioned the 1000-bed Multi Speciality Hospital in Gangtok, upgradation of District Hospital at Namchi and Community Health Centre at Jorethang in South Sikkim as a mark of notable recent developments in the health sector.

He also urged the people to take ownership of these facilities to preserve and protect government assets to ensure long term benefits.

He also underlined the launch of HPV vaccination, CATCH, TB elimination Campaign as remarkable health initiatives and urged the concerned Medical Officer to submit requisition for the new PHSC and assured to provide required facilities at the earliest.

At the outset, Superintendent Engineer, Health Department, Basant Tamang, presented the technical report while the Additional Chief Engineer, CM Khatiwara, coordinated the programme.

TMC forms 12-member panel for poll campaign in West Bengal

Kolkata, Mar 3 (PTI): The Trinamool Congress (TMC) has formed a 12-member committee Sunday to chart modalities on election campaign in West Bengal for the upcoming Lok Sabha elections, the party's secretary general Partha Chatterjee said.

The committee would look into the applications by aspiring candidates to fight the elections and forward those to the party's supremo Mamata Banerjee, Chatterjee told newsmen here.

The 12-member committee comprises Mamata Banerjee's nephew and MP Abhishek Banerjee, Subrata Bakshi, Firhad Hakim, Arup Biswas, Suvendu Adhikari, Chandrima Bhattacharya, Sashi Panja, Moloy Ghatak, Jyotipriyo Mallick, Subrata Mukherjee, Derek O'Brien and Partha Chatterjee.

"The committee will look into election-related publicity and screening of applications of aspiring candidates in consultation with party supremo Mamata Banerjee," Chatterjee said.

While Abhishek Banerjee and O'Brien are Lok Sabha MPs, the other 10 members of the com-

mittee are ministers in the state cabinet.

Out of 42 Lok Sabha constituencies in West Bengal, TMC won 34 seats, the Congress got four and the BJP and CPI(M) won two each in the 2014 general elections.

Taking on the BJP, which has emerged as the principal opposition party in the state in terms of vote share in the 2018 panchayat elections, Chatterjee said the saffron party indulges in creating divisions among people.

"In the name of Sankalp rally, they tried to go on a rampage in different parts of the state," he said, referring to clashes between the BJP workers and the police at a few places in the state on Sunday.

The 'Vijay Sankalp' bike rally is a part of the BJP's countrywide pre-poll exercise to establish contact with people. BJP workers clashed with the police in several places of West Bengal on Sunday as the saffron party was prevented from holding its 'Vijay Sankalp' rally.

"These attempts will be dealt with strongly by the administration," Chatterjee said.

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Kanchanjunga shopping...

He, along with many other beneficiaries, have appreciated the gesture of the State government which has enabled them to have a stronger sense of ownership.

The GMC Chairperson thanked Chief Minister Pawan Chamling for resolving this issue and also informed that the matter took long due to the time taken for the documentation.

He announced that those who have missed out this time can contact UD&HD.

The area MLA also appreciated the state government's move and thanked the Chief Minister for this latest development.

He also criticised the opposition for raising questions on such grants to the people including their criticism of the "One Job, One Family" scheme.

Further called on the opposition not to misguide the people.

SpaceX's new crew capsule aces space station docking

CAPE CANAVERAL (US), MAR 3 (AP): SpaceX's new crew capsule has arrived at the International Space Station, aching its second milestone in just over a day.

No one was aboard the Dragon capsule launched Saturday on its first test flight, only an instrumented dummy. But the three station astronauts had front-row seats as the Dragon neatly

docked Sunday morning and became the first American-made, designed-for-crew spacecraft to pull up in eight years.

If the six-day demo goes well, SpaceX could launch two astronauts this summer under NASA's commercial crew program. Both astronauts were at SpaceX Mission Control in California, observing all the action.



Prabhat Basnet
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SummitTIMES

ON TOP OF THE NEWS

Westerly Disturbances Pour a Reminder

Water on the streets expose drained initiatives and opportunities

The persistent downpours of the past week and more are serving as timely reminders of everything that remains ignored in the capital. No sooner do the clouds open up that traffic grinds to a halt, roads having become ferocious rapids making one wonder what the capital has learned from the numerous slips and spillovers that descend on Gangtok every monsoon. The storm water drains cannot channel these short bursts of rain caused by westerly disturbances and that makes one wonder what the monsoon, which will be heavy this year if the present prequel is any indication, have in store for the capital.

What use are storm drains if they don't carry away thunderstorm waters? The only reassuring signs after every shower are the UD&HD workers struggling to unclog the drains, again and again and again. At least someone is responding quickly enough. But what continues to fail the capital is the science behind its jhoras and drains. Either the engineering deployed in their training is all wrong or the training itself is suspect because there is no way that one can be led to believe that the storm drains have consumed crores in construction and repairs and corrective works just to look pretty in fresh coats of cement. They are supposed to drain surface run off, not unleash torrents on the roads. When they do the latter, they not only expose the shortsighted planning that went into their training, but also damage and weaken roads ahead of the monsoons. One could also blame the carelessly "dropped" construction material and the occasional pile of overnight garbage for the clogging, but that can be easily remedied.

That said, what the failure of the jhoras and drains also expose is the quick exit civic enlightenment made the moment donor funding was no longer at hand to publicize citizen-initiatives to manage garbage disposal. Every jhora that spills over to the streets and every drain that finds itself blocked whenever water needs to channel through it, disgorge not just rain waters, but also everything that one calls garbage. The jhoras, unfortunately, continue to double as convenient waste bins and the water pipelines continue using these channels as convenient pathways from source to home. Then, of course, there are some sewage lines that still continue to open directly into jhoras greeting many mornings with a stench for everyone unlucky enough to be living near them.

The recent wave of evening downpours is welcome. They washed the dry hills and beat down the dust. Unfortunately, they might have come a little late for the farmers and the hail did not help either; but, if it reminds the Gangtokians [private and public] of all the responsibilities they continue to ignore, it can still be considered timely enough.

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.

Mail us at: news@summittimes.com



The power of language: we translate our thoughts into words, but words also affect the way we think

GUILLAUME THIERRY
theconversation.com

Have you ever worried in your student years or later in life that time may be starting to run out to achieve your goals? If so, would it be easier conveying this feeling to others if there was a word meaning just that? In German, there is. That feeling of panic associated with one's opportunities appearing to run out is called Torschlusspanik.

German has a rich collection of such terms, made up of often two, three or more words connected to form a superword or compound word. Compound words are particularly powerful because they are (much) more than the sum of their parts. Torschlusspanik, for instance, is literally made of "gate"- "closing"- "panic".

If you get to the train station a little late and see your train's doors still open, you may have experienced a concrete form of Torschlusspanik, prompted by the characteristic beeps as the train doors are about to close. But this compound word of German is associated with more than the literal meaning. It evokes something more abstract, referring to the feeling that life is progressively shutting the door of opportunities as time goes by.

English too has many compound words. Some combine rather concrete words like "seahorse", "butterfly", or "turtleneck". Others are more abstract, such as "backwards" or "whatsoever". And of course in English too, compounds are superwords, as in German or French, since their meaning is often distinct from the meaning of its parts. A seahorse is not a horse, a butterfly is not a fly, turtles don't wear turtlenecks, etc.

One remarkable feature of compound words is that they don't translate well at all from one language to another, at least when it comes to translating their constituent parts literally. Who would have thought that a "carry-sheets" is a wallet – porte-feuille –, or that a "support-throat" is a bra – soutien-gorge – in French?

This begs the question of what happens when words don't readily translate from one language to another. For instance, what happens when a

native speaker of German tries to convey in English that they just had a spurt of Torschlusspanik? Naturally, they will resort to paraphrasing, that is, they will make up a narrative with examples to make their interlocutor understand what they are trying to say.

But then, this begs another, bigger question: Do people who have words that simply do not translate in another language have access to different concepts? Take the case of hiraeth for instance, a beautiful word of Welsh famous for being essentially untranslatable. Hiraeth is meant to convey the feeling associated with the bittersweet memory of missing something or someone, while being grateful of their existence.

Hiraeth is not nostalgia, it is not anguish, or frustration, or melancholy, or regret. And no, it is not homesickness, as Google translate may lead you to believe, since hiraeth also conveys the feeling one experiences when they ask someone to marry them and they are turned down, hardly a case of homesickness.

DIFFERENT WORDS, DIFFERENT MINDS?

The existence of a word in Welsh to convey this particular feeling poses a fundamental question on language-thought relationships. Asked in ancient Greece by philosophers such as Herodotus (450 BC), this question has resurfaced in the middle of the last century, under the impetus of Edward Sapir and his student Benjamin Lee Whorf, and has become known as the linguistic relativity hypothesis.

Linguistic relativity is the idea that language, which most people agree originates in and expresses human thought, can feedback to thinking, influencing thought in return. So, could different words or different grammatical constructs "shape" thinking differently in speakers of different languages? Being quite intuitive, this idea has enjoyed quite a bit of success in popular culture, lately appearing in a rather provocative form in the science fiction movie Arrival.

Although the idea is intuitive for some, exaggerated claims have been made about the extent of vocabulary diversity in some languages. Exaggerations have enticed illustrious linguists to write sa-

tirical essays such as "the great Eskimo vocabulary hoax", where Geoff Pullum denounces the fantasy about the number of words used by Eskimos to refer to snow. However, whatever the actual number of words for snow in Eskimo, Pullum's pamphlet fails to address an important question: what do we actually know about Eskimos' perception of snow?

No matter how vitriolic critics of the linguistic relativity hypothesis may be, experimental research seeking scientific evidence for the existence of differences between speakers of different languages has started accumulating at a steady pace. For instance, Panos Athanasopoulos at Lancaster University, has made striking observations that having particular words to distinguish colour categories goes hand-in-hand with appreciating colour contrasts. So, he points out, native speakers of Greek, who have distinct basic colour terms for light and dark blue (ghalazio and ble respectively) tend to consider corresponding shades of blue as more dissimilar than native speaker of English, who use the same basic term "blue" to describe them.

But scholars including Steven Pinker at Harvard are unimpressed, arguing that such effects are trivial and uninteresting, because individuals engaged in experiments are likely to use language in their head when making judgements about colours – so their behaviour is superficially influenced by language, while everyone sees the world in the same way.

To progress in this debate, I believe we need to get closer to the human brain, by measuring perception more directly, preferably within the small fraction of time preceding mental access to language. This is now possible, thanks to neuroscientific methods and – incredibly – early results lean in favour of Sapir and Whorf's intuition.

So, yes, like it or not, it may well be that having different words means having differently structured minds. But then, given that every mind on earth is unique and distinct, this is not really a game changer.

[the writer is Professor of Cognitive Neuroscience, Bangor University]

Why banning controversial voices from universities is bad practice

NURAAN DAVIDS & YUSEF WAGHID
theconversation.com

Two years ago the University of Cape Town (UCT) "disinvited" Flemming Rose from giving its annual T.B. Davie Academic Freedom Lecture. Rose is the cultural editor of the Danish publication, Jyllands-Posten that depicted the Prophet Muhammad in cartoons.

The term disinvited was coined by the American-based Foundation for Individual Rights in Education. It refers to speakers who have been disinvited after being invited to speak at universities. Between 2000 and 2017, the foundation had found 192 incidents in which students or members of university staff had pushed for speakers to be disinvited.

In rescinding the invitation, UCT's former vice-chancellor, Dr Max Price, invoked the language of "safe spaces" and asserted that bringing Rose to campus: "might retard rather than advance academic freedom on campus."

Last year the Stellenbosch University found itself in a similar situation when a group of Israeli scholars withdrew from a planned conference. They cited feelings of inhospitality and exclusion. In this instance, after meeting with the South African Jewish Board of Deputies, the university's vice-chancellor, stated that: "As a research-intensive university of global significance, we continue to welcome academics from all over the world at Stellenbosch University -- including scholars from Israel -- and

co-create excellent research with significant social and academic impact."

This conundrum is being faced by universities across the world. In 2017 a survey of 115 UK universities showed that 54% actively censored speech, 40% stifled speech through excessive regulation. Only 6% were deemed truly free, open places.

In Australia, the Institute of Public Affairs' Free Speech on Campus Audit 2017 showed that the majority of Australian universities limit the diversity of ideas on campus. For example, 34 out of the country's 42 universities (81%) have policies and actions that are hostile to free speech on campus and seven (17%) have policies and actions that threaten free speech on campus. Only eight of Australia's 42 universities (19%) have an explicit policy that protects intellectual freedom.

In principle, academic freedom infers that both staff and students at universities have the right to participate in intellectual engagement and debate, without fear of censorship. This right extends into speech, writing (textual or digital), without fear of reprisal.

In this sense, academic freedom is akin to the preservation of intellectual autonomy. Yet, as the two South African examples show, speakers being disinvited is not uncommon in South African universities.

We argue strongly against the practice in our latest book on free speech at universities. We do so on the grounds that disinvitation compromises the very idea of human

engagement and deliberation. This is because the act of disinviting an individual, for whatever reason, is in itself an abandonment of freedom and speech.

It not only stifles any opportunity for engagement with difference or controversy, but it implies that academic freedom is the preserve of those who are in agreement. If we are all in agreement, then where is the debate, and new ways of thinking?

ACADEMIC FREEDOM IS NECESSARY FOR DEMOCRACY

Firstly, regulating hurtful speech without re-signifying it, that is creating opportunities where harmful speech is challenged and re-directed, can aggravate the volatility between groups that favour controversy – and those who oppose it.

If controversial speakers are denied opportunities to speak at universities, it can be claimed that their right to freedom of speech has been hampered. Universities need to guard against what the Times Higher Education refers to as becoming "hotbeds of left wing bias", or "political monocultures".

Universities can't be considered "safe places" where controversial ideas of people are considered at odds with liberal and or radical voices and deserve to be stunted.

Secondly, when controversy is opened up, people have an opportunity to scrutinise the controversial statements and find ways to rebut dissenting and provocative claims. Regulating speech doesn't imply that speakers of harmful speech merely

abandon their views. It simply means that their views are left unchallenged, and undisrupted. We argue that this deepens the already inhumane and undignified actions of some people even further.

CONTESTATION IS IMPORTANT FOR DEMOCRACY

Universities shouldn't cultivate intolerance towards dissent. Rather they ought to instil in students and lecturers capacities to appreciate divergent views. Universities need to create the conditions and safe spaces for people to cross-over into the unfamiliar and the controversial. The implications at play here are not only in relation to the academic well-being of a university, they also affect our understanding of a democratic society.

The real question is: what kinds of students, and hence society, do universities want to produce? Students need to learn that the relationship between knowledge and power can be emancipatory. Intolerance and exclusion, for example, can only be allayed if people have access to knowledge.

Academic freedom, therefore, is not only about unconstrained speech. It is also about questioning peoples' worldviews, so that they can consider other ways of thinking, and bring into contestation what's familiar, known and readily accepted.

[Nuraan Davids is Associate Professor of Philosophy of Education, Stellenbosch University; Yusef Waghid is Distinguished Professor of Philosophy of Education, Stellenbosch University]

Bengal's potato farmers apprehend losses following rains

KOLKATA, MAR 3 (PTI): The recent rains in West Bengal have put potato growers in a quandary as their crop is expected to suffer extensive damage despite bumper projections made earlier.

The state government had offered a support price of Rs 550 crore for buying 10 lakh tonne potato to avert distress sale.

"Farmers are worried because widespread potato damage have been projected as a result of heavy rainfall across the state earlier this week," a state government official said.

The MeT office predicted more rain in Gangetic Bengal from Monday and this has made the potato farmers across the state more anxious, the official said.

"The state government is taking all steps to sensitise the farmers about promptly informing the insurance companies about the projected crop loss, in order to get



their claims," the agricultural advisor to the chief minister, Pradip Kr Mazumdar, told PTI.

According to norms, the farmers need to intimate the insurance companies individually, Mazumdar said.

"We have already apprised the insurance companies about the situation. A farmer has to inform the insurance company within 72

hours of any possible threat of damage to the crop," he said.

About 5 lakh potato farmers are covered under the crop insurance programme, he said.

The state government had offered free crop insurance to farmers after subsidising the farmers' share of the premium.

The government will try to maximise the insurance claim for

the farmers.

In case the state does not have to buy potatoes, in case the crop is damaged due to the rains, the state will not have to shell out the Rs 550 crore earmarked for procuring the crop, sources said.

The actual burden on the state exchequer was supposed to be Rs 650 crore since an additional cost of Rs 100 crore was estimated for collection,

storage and marketing the potatoes that were supposed to be procured by the state, sources said.

According to the estimates, vast areas where potato cultivation took place, are yet to be harvested in districts such as West Midnapur, East Burdwan, Hooghly, Coochbehar Bankura and Jalpaiguri.

At a recent public rally in Tarakeswar in Hooghly district, Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee had announced that the state government would spend Rs 550 crore to procure potato to save 20 lakh potato farmers from distress selling. The state government will offer Rs 5.5 a kg during the procurement at the time when loading price at farm level had slipped below Rs 4 a kg.

This year, the projected bumper crop will at least be of 120 lakh tonne which is 20 per cent higher than previous year's production of 100 lakh tonne.

WB committed to protect wildlife and conserve forests: Mamata



KOLKATA, MAR 3 (PTI): The West Bengal government is committed to protect wildlife and conserve forests, and has been doing so for the last seven years, Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee said Sunday on the occasion of World Wildlife Day.

Describing forests and wildlife as the assets of the state, Banerjee said

it is everyone's responsibility to conserve the spectacular bio-diversity.

"Forests and wildlife are our assets. Conservation of this spectacular bio-diversity is our responsibility. Our Government in #Bangla has been committed to protection of wildlife and conservation of forests over the last seven years.

#WorldWildlifeDay," Banerjee tweeted.

The United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) on December 20, 2013, had decided to proclaim March 3, the day of the adoption of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), as World Wildlife Day.

Really impressed with Finch's captaincy: Coulter-Nile

HYDERABAD, MAR 3 (PTI): Australia fast bowler Nathan Coulter-Nile is very impressed with Aaron Finch's captaincy and says the lack of runs has not affected his leadership.

Finch has not been in good form even during the Australian summer and it has been continuing against India so far.

"I've been really impressed with Finch. He actually hasn't been grumpy or angry or let anything overflow into the captaincy or around the boys. He's not been scoring the runs he wants to but he's been an absolute legend around the boys, Coulter-Nile said of Finch.

Finch was put on the hot seat after Steve Smith and David Warner were suspended on charges of ball tampering in South Africa.

Speaking about the first ODI, that Australia

lost by six wickets, Coulter-Nile feels that they scored 20-30 runs short.

"It was a close game. May be, we were 20-30 runs short. Again, a couple of half-chances we didn't take. I thought we bowled pretty well. It was a tough wicket. It would've been nice having a set batsman going into the last 10 overs, but all in all just down a little bit in all areas."

Asked why batting was tough on this track, Coulter-Nile explained: "I found it really hard, actually. I only batted for 10 overs. Kuldeep was spinning it quite big and the quicks weren't really coming on to the bat.

"Obviously I wasn't set, but I thought it might have been a little bit slower and turned a bit more for us at the back end there."

"There was a bit of

up and down there. All in all, it was probably a 250 wicket."

He also praised India pacer Mohammed Shami, who created the initial pressure.

"Excellent bowler. He is a fantastic bowler. He is quality everywhere. At the back-end, he was really hard to get away, changed up well, nailed all his yorkers, didn't give me anything to hit."

However, he disagreed that the momentum that they had after winning the T20 series has shifted after one match.

"Obviously, they are 1-0 up in this series so they've got the upper hand. But I think it was a closely-fought game. We played well, they played better in the end but the two teams were close and the next four games will be even tighter I think," added Coulter-Nile.

Man carrying smuggled gold held at Guwahati railway station



GUWAHATI, MAR 3 (PTI): A man has been arrested by the Government Railway Police (GRP) personnel from Guwahati railway station for possessing smuggled gold.

The GRP personnel recovered six gold bars, weighing 499 gm, from the man on Saturday night, the Superintendent of Railway Police (SRP) of Guwahati, Hemanta Kumar Das, said. The man had come

here from West Bengal, the SRP said.

"The value of the gold bars would be around Rs 16.5 lakh," Das said.

It is suspected that the gold was smuggled into the country, he added.

The customs department has been informed and as per procedures, the man along with the seized gold, would be handed over to them, Das added.

Six fishery officials suspended in Assam



GUWAHATI, MAR 3 (PTI): Assam government has suspended six officials of the Fisheries Department with immediate effect for alleged negligence and malpractices in their duties.

The action was taken against the officials in accordance with Chief Minister Sarbananda Sonowal's zero tolerance towards corruption, an official communique said Saturday.

The Fisheries Department has taken the

decision to suspend the officials under rule 6 (1) of the Assam Service (Discipline and Appeal) Rule 1964 on the charge of negligence of government duty and for their involvement in malpractices in distribution of inputs among beneficiaries of different government schemes, it said.

The officials include five Fishery Demonstrators and one Assistant Fishery Officer from Sonitpur, Kamrup, Goalpara and Nagaon districts.

Acknowledgement note for Bengal's health scheme beneficiaries

KOLKATA, MAR 3 (PTI): West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee would be sending a letter of acknowledgement to all beneficiaries of a state-run health scheme, wishing them well, a top bureaucrat at the state secretariat said Sunday.

The chief minister's office has sought the database of 'Swasthya Sathi' scheme from all government hospitals, as part of the public outreach programme, he said.

"The families of the beneficiaries would be getting a letter signed by the chief minister as an acknowledgement for taking free treatment under the scheme," the official said.

According to the bureaucrat, the director of health services would be sending Banerjee's letter to all government

hospital superintendents, chief medical officers, sub-division and block-level health centres for its distribution among patients, who received free treatment between March 1, 2018 and February 28, 2019.

The draft letter written by the CM said, "The state government was happy to include the beneficiary in the 'Free of Cost Medicine' and 'Free of Cost Treatment' scheme undertaken by the state health and family welfare department."

It also stated that "the chief minister hopes to help every individual in his/her daily life so that they can contribute more to the development of the state."

"The letters will have the names of beneficiaries and will be delivered by post," the official

told PTI. The CM also has plans to write to the beneficiaries of other state-run schemes, such as Kanyashree, Yuvasree and Rupashree Prakalpa, he said.

Earlier, too, the CM has sent personalised congratulatory messages, New Year's greetings to state government employees.

She also writes to the parents and students of primary and higher secondary schools during exam, wishing them luck.

"This is her (Banerjee's) unique way to establish a personal relationship with the people of the state. It shows that she cares for each and everyone in our state. We have so much to learn from her," state Urban Development Minister and Kolkata Mayor Firhad Hakim said.

Police prevents BJP bike rally in West Bengal; clashes ensue



KOLKATA, MAR 3 (PTI): BJP workers clashed with the police in several places of West Bengal Sunday as the saffron party were prevented from holding its 'Vijay Sankalp' rally at different places of the state.

The law enforcers said they prevented the motorbike rally as permission had not been granted for the rallies owing to a ban on public rallies during the ongoing school board examinations.

The 'Vijay Sankalp'

bike rally is a part of the BJP's countrywide pre-poll exercise to establish contact with people.

Clashes between BJP workers and policemen took place at Durgapur and Asansol in West Burdwan district, Midnapore town and Goaltore in West Midnapore, and Balurghat in South Dinajpur when they took out the motorcycle rallies.

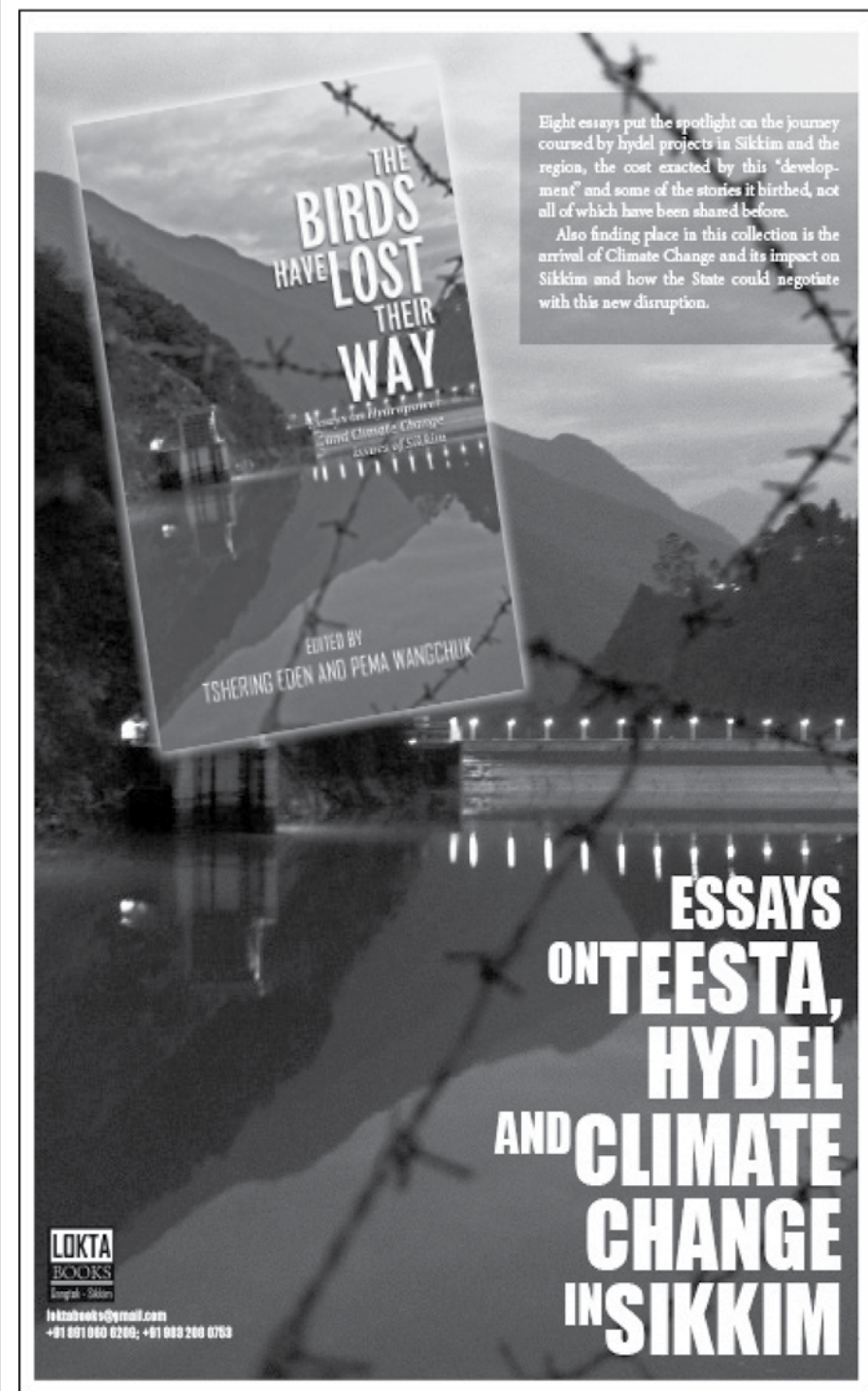
Police resorted to lathicharge to disperse the saffron party workers at Asansol and Goaltore leaving some people

from both sides injured.

Rallies would be held even if the police arrest his party cadres, BJP state president Dilip Ghosh said in Durgapur.

"Hundreds of Sankalp yatras are being held in the country and in Bengal also. It will be held even if police arrest us," Ghosh said.

Saffron party leaders engaged in arguments with police in the city as they were prevented from taking out rallies owing the lack of permission.



I want to test my game against Momota: Sameer

AMIT KUMAR DAS

NEW DELHI, MAR 3 (PTI): A season of highs saw him knocking on the door of world's top 10 and India's Sameer Verma believes a positive mindset and improved strategies will hold him in good stead at the All England Championship starting March 10.

Sameer came out of the shadows of his illustrious colleagues last year when he reached the knockout stage of the World Tour Finals as a qualifier, riding on his title run at Swiss Open, Hyderabad Open and Syed Modi International at Lucknow.

Two of these titles -- Swiss Open and Syed Modi -- were Super 300 events and Sameer, who had reached the finals of Hong Kong Super Series in 2016, hopes to achieve his dream of winning a higher level tournament when he steps out at the Arena Birmingham for the All England Championship.

"I want to win a big tournament and I want it to be All England," Sameer told PTI in an interview.

The 24-year-old will open his campaign against former world champion Viktor Axelsen.

"I have lost twice to him (Viktor Axelsen) but



I am not too worried. I played him around 7-8 months back. At that time, I was not at this level. I think I am much better prepared to take him on," said Sameer.

"My mindset and strategy have improved a lot now. I can't tell about the results, I am not thinking about them but I feel I'm best prepared for the All England this time."

Sameer, who had finished a pre-quarter-finalist in the 2016 All England, has played Axelsen only twice in the past -- the 2018 Indonesia Open and 2011 World Junior Championship.

He reached a ca-

reer-high ranking of world no 11 this January after a stellar run in 2018 and Sameer says he has the self-belief to break into the top 10.

"If I would have won the World Tour Final or reached the finals, I would have broken into top 10. The loss against Shi Yuqi is still in my mind, I guess it will only go once I win something big. But I have the idea now, I know I can be in that top 10," Sameer said.

The youngster from Madhya Pradesh had lost 12-21, 22-20, 21-17 to World no 2 Shi Yuqi of China in the semifinals after holding the match point in the second game.

Asked to name one player he would want to face, Sameer said: "I want to play Kento Momota. I had beaten him at Swiss Open but I lost to him at the World Tour Finals and I want to test my game against him, compete against him."

With both the players placed in separate halves of the draw, the only way they can face at the All England is if they reach the finals.

It took multiple injuries spread over seven years for Sameer to realise that he needs to take care of his body instead of chasing results and ranking.

With a hectic sched-

ule ahead, Sameer said focusing on mind and body will remain his aim this season.

"I think I have cared a lot for my body last year. The physios were with me in tournaments also, so it helped. You also have to take care of the diet. Nutrition is something I need to think of as it also helps in recovery," he said.

"Results in tournaments don't matter, because you might not perform in 2-3 events, but they will come eventually. Last year, I won the Swiss Open and the Hyderabad Open but I didn't do well in all events, so I know I can

do better."

The Olympic qualification period starts from April 29 and the BWF rankings list, which would be published on April 30 next year, will decide the spots for the 2020 Tokyo Games.

Sameer said he would look to avoid thinking about the Olympics as it can create unnecessary pressure during the qualification period.

"...you can think of it as a normal tournament and not take any pressure, and stay stress free. That would be the way I would want to think because otherwise, it will affect my performance," Sameer said.

Severing cricketing ties with nations not our domain: ICC tells BCCI



DUBAI, MAR 3 (PTI): The International Cricket Council has turned down the BCCI's request to sever ties with countries from which "terrorism emanates", saying the ICC has no role to play in matters like these.

In the wake of the Pulwama terror attack, in which more than 40 CRPF personnel were killed, the BCCI, in a letter to the ICC, urged the world body and its member nations to sever ties with countries which harbour terror.

"There was no chance that anything like that would have happened. The ICC chairman made it clear that the decision to ostracize a nation is taken at the government level and ICC had no rule. The BCCI knew it all along but still took a chance," a BCCI official told PTI on conditions of anonymity.

The BCCI letter did not make a specific reference to Pakistan, which has been accused of harbouring terrorists by India.

The issue came up during Saturday's ICC board meeting chaired

by chairman Shashank Manohar but not much time was spent on it.

The BCCI was represented at the board by acting secretary Amitabh Choudhary.

"So many players from member nations play the Pakistan Super League and they would have never entertained such a request. Yes, security was a concern and it had been duly addressed," the Board official added.

The Indian cricket team is scheduled to play Pakistan in the World Cup on June 16. There have been calls to boycott the clash in the wake of the heightened diplomatic tensions between the two countries following the Pulwama attack.

The demand has been made by some of the biggest names in Indian cricket such as Harbhajan Singh and Sourav Ganguly.

However, the Committee of Administrators (CoA) running Indian cricket has so far not taken any decision on the matter, saying that it will seek the government's view.

Oxford University spin-off set for India launch with tech solution to sight loss

Aditi Khanna

London, Mar 3 (PTI): A UK-based Indian-origin entrepreneur is in the process of setting up a base in India for the launch of a range of smart glasses for people with sight loss, devised by an Oxford University research spin-off start-up.

Rakesh Roshan is the CEO of OXSIGHT, a company founded in 2016 to create wearable technology devices based on research into how the brain manages visual information.

The company began conducting trials in India two years ago in partnership with leading eye hospitals and clinics and is now in the process of setting up a 100 per cent subsidiary in India to make the devices, which are aimed at innovative solutions for sight degeneration, more widely available.

"In the first phase, we have appointed a distributor in India, who will import the devices and sell it directly to our customers who have already gone through the product trials," Roshan said at a global launch event for OXSIGHT in London earlier this week.

"In the second phase, we will sign a few more distributors as India is a large country. Our India office will continue to work with distributors, manufacture in India, run the R&D centre, and operate our customer care centre in various languages," he said.

The company has eight product testing centres in India, including in Kolkata and Hyderabad, with Sushant OXSIGHT Low Vision Centre of Excellence at Ansal University in Delhi as its central clinic.



A small team also runs mobile clinics at other hospitals and clinics, with plans for its wider adoption across the country over the years.

"Like any other technologies and continued R&D focus, we expect the prices to come down and also with increased volume the economy of scale kicks in," said Roshan.

Globally, it is estimated that around 1.3 billion people live with some form of visual impairment. According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), 188.5 million have mild visual impairment, 217 million have moderate to severe visual impairment and 36 million people are blind.

"There is very little awareness in India about low vision and a lot more government support is required in the area," said Professor Monica Chaudhary, Director of the School of Health Sciences at Ansal University, who is one of the Indian experts working with OXSIGHT.

Experts believe that the new technology will help address the lack of distinction between low vision and complete blindness. Peripheral

vision loss is commonly caused by degenerative sight loss conditions such as glaucoma, diabetic retinopathy, and retinitis pigmentosa.

The founding members of OXSIGHT began their research at the University of Oxford in 2010, working closely with the low vision community in the UK. The aim was to develop this knowledge into innovative solutions for sight degeneration that have a balance of style, functionality and intuitive technology.

The first device, OXSIGHT Prism smart glasses, was launched last year, and the company is in the process of developing clinical partnerships with a number of opticians across the UK and Europe.

At present, the company is providing trials, fitting and clinical support at their clinics in London, Oxford and Greater Manchester Area through several clinical partners.

OXSIGHT partnered with Epson to develop their smart glasses to help people with peripheral vision loss, also known as "tunnel vision".

The smart glasses use augmented reality and image interpretation

technology to enhance users' remaining vision.

They are controlled via a hand-held console and fitted with a camera which streams a live-feed into two high-resolution video displays.

These screens are placed directly in front of the wearer's eyes and the images produced are manipulated to fit into the user's area of useable vision.

"The OXSIGHT Prism is worth it for me because it allows me to make the most of my remaining sight. One of the best things was that when I first tried the Prism device on, I found that I could see my wife's eyes, which I haven't been able to see for at least 10 years," said David Quigley, one of the first people in the UK to get an OXSIGHT Prism device.

The OXSIGHT glasses have seven modes, with features including: increased image contrast, super colour mode, textmode, edge enhancement, inverted colour and a digital zoom to allow users to magnify objects and obstacles.

These features have been shown to enhance the remaining vision of people with peripheral vision loss.

Cricket set for Asian Games return in 2022: Reports

BANGKOK, MAR 3 (PTI): Cricket is set for a return at the Asian Games after it was included in the sports programme for the 2022 edition in Hangzhou, media reports said here Sunday.

The decision was taken at the Olympic Council of Asia's General Assembly, sports website "insidethegames.biz" reported.

Cricket was dropped from the 2018 Asian Games in Indonesia after featuring in 2010 and 2014, albeit without the presence of game's powerhouse India.

India opted out of the quadrennial event owing to the team's congested scheduling.

In all probability, the T20 format will be played at the Asian Games, like it happened during the 2010 and 2014 edition in Guangzhou and Incheon respectively.

Since the mega event is still some years away, the BCCI has plenty of time to deliberate on the Indian team's participation.

"There is a lot of time to go for 2022 Asian Games. In due time, we will discuss and decide," a BCCI official told PTI.

The decision to include cricket in the 2022 programme was on expected lines after OCA honorary vice-president Randhir Singh visited Hangzhou last month to zero in on a

suitable venue.

Sri Lanka and Pakistan won the men's and women's gold in 2014 while Bangladesh and Pakistan claimed the top honours in 2010.

Cricket has also been played once at the Commonwealth Games, in 1998, when India and Pakistan sent teams to Kuala Lumpur. However, the Shaun Pollock led South Africa won the gold and Australia, captained by Steve Waugh, the silver.

In the 2014 Asian Games, OCA president Sheikh Ahmad Al Fahad Al Sabah had criticised the BCCI for not sending its teams for the second edition in a row.

"I'm sorry that India, for the second Games, did not send a team. I respect their decision but I believe the people in charge are not interested in promotion of the game but only in making it a business, in making money out of it. They want to control the market and control the game," he had said. In another major decision taken at the OCA General Assembly on Sunday, it was announced Oceania countries including Australia will be invited to compete at the 2022 Asian Games.

It was reported that the number of Oceania athletes who will be allowed to compete in Hangzhou will be decided at a later date.

Discovery Channel to air documentary series on India's environment-friendly startups



NEW DELHI, MAR 3 (PTI): Discovery Channel is set to air a documentary series called 'Planet Healers' featuring eight of India's environment-friendly startups, who are working towards sustainable development, a statement released by the broadcaster said.

The documentary series, which will be in four parts, will be hosted by Bollywood actor Jim Sarbh and is likely to be premiered on March 8 on the channel at 7 pm.

The series will show the journey of how these startups are working out innovative technology-led solutions to environmental hazards faced by the country, the statement said.

One of the startups, called Farm2Energy, claims to have found a solution to use stubble burning which creates air pollution in northern India every winter.

Another startup Absolute Water claims that it converts 17 lakh litres of sewage water into drinking water everyday, while Saahas Zero Waste specialises in treating and recycling waste without disturbing the ecosystem.

The other startups include NaMo E Waste, Rudra, Chakr Innovation and Urban Kisaan.

While Namo E Waste claims to be working towards recycling and ensuring safe disposal of e-waste, Rudra converts plastic into poly fuel and Chakr Innovation has created world's first retro-fit emission control device for diesel generators which can capture over 90 per cent of particulate matter emissions, the statement said.

Urban Kisan empowers people to grow their own safe, fresh and high quality food with the help of Hydroponic farming technique, the statement said.

"Planet Healers is not just a TV show; it is an attempt by Discovery to create mass awareness about environmental hazards faced by our country which will have significant long-term impact," said Zulfia Waris, Vice President, Premium and Digital networks, Discovery Communications India in a statement. "We have focused this series on individuals who have dedicated themselves to create innovative technology-led solutions for the conservation and preservation of our planet."

"They are common people with uncommon ambitions and incredible self-belief who are making a difference," Waris said.

JeM’s ‘Ghazwa-e-Hind’ brought India-Pak on brink of war twice in 20 yrs

NEW DELHI, MAR 3 (PTI): Pakistan-based Jaish-e-Mohammad’s audacious terrorist strikes, part of its ‘Ghazwa-e-Hind’ (Holy War Against India), have turned it into one of the most deadly terror groups and brought India and Pakistan on the brink of war twice in two decades, officials said.

The most deadly terror strikes of the JeM in the past 20 years include attacks on the Pathankot airbase, the Army brigade headquarters in Uri, the Badamibagh cantonment in Srinagar and the bombing of the Jammu and Kashmir Assembly.

India and Pakistan were almost on the brink of war in 2001 when the JeM attacked the Indian Parliament, and again now after the February 14 suicide attack on a CRPF bus in Pulwama, which killed 40 jawans, a security official said Sunday.

The terrorist group, with close links with al-Qaida, had resolved at a conference held in Okara district in Pakistan on November 27, 2017, that it would continue its “Ghazwa-e-Hind” irrespective of the Indo-Pak ties, the official said citing an intelligence report.

The JeM, which had close links slain al-Qaida leader Osama bin Laden, was formed after the release of terror mastermind Masood Azhar from an Indian jail on December 31, 1999 after



the Indian Airlines flight IC814 was hijacked on December 24, 1999.

Azhar was released along with rouge British secret service MI6 agent Omar Shaikh, who was responsible for the killing The Wall Street Journal journalist Daniel Pearl in January 2002 and the funding of 9/11 terror attacks in the United States with USD 100,000, the official said.

The group carried out a series of terrorist attacks in Jammu and Kashmir.

It killed 30 soldiers in the Valley through a vehicle-borne improvised explosive device (VBIED) in April 2000, killed three policemen at a bus stand at Batmaloo in Srinagar in June 2000, bombed the J&K Assembly on October 1, 2001 in which 31 people died, and attacked

Parliament on December 13, 2001 in which nine security personnel and officials were killed.

The attack on the assembly took place just three weeks after the 9/11 attacks and the Parliament attack happened a week after bin Laden was cornered in Tora Bora caves in Afghanistan.

When bin Laden was cornered in Tora Bora and the Pakistani army was forced to hold one side of the cordon of these vast caves, the JeM became the conduit to bring fighters and their families from Afghanistan into safe havens in Pakistan, run by JeM and another deadly terrorist group Lashkar-e-Taiba, the official said.

Khalid Sheikh Mohammed, one of the key conspirators of 9/11, housed fleeing al-Qaida

cadres in Karachi, he said. It is widely believed that to help bin Laden flee Tora Bora, JeM carried out attack on Parliament in New Delhi, leading to a war-like situation between India and Pakistan after Indian armed forces were mobilised along the country’s western border, another official said.

This provided a pretext to the Pakistani army to withdraw much of its forces from its western border, which were in cordon of the Tora Bora caves, thus helping the escape of bin Laden to Pakistan.

“It took 10 more deadly years to get Osama bin Laden. This is the nature and capability of JeM. Its activities just do not impact India, but feed on terrorism and has been a major threat to global peace and security,” the official said.

On November 2, 2005, a few hours before the swearing in of Ghulam Nabi Azad as Chief Minister of Jammu and Kashmir, a JeM suicide squad detonated a powerful car bomb in the Nowgam area of Srinagar, killing 10 people and injuring 18 others.

On January 2, 2016, a heavily armed group of JeM attacked the Pathankot airbase in which seven security personnel and a security personnel were killed.

The JeM attacked the Uri brigade headquarters on September 18, 2016, killing 17 soldiers and injuring 30 others.

After the Pulwama attack, the Indian Air Force carried out an aerial attack on the biggest camp of JeM in Balakot in Pakistan, leading to another war-like situation between the two countries.

India a high-tariff nation, says Trump

WASHINGTON, MAR 3 (PTI): India is a very high-tariff nation, US President Donald Trump alleged on Saturday, stating that he wants a reciprocal tax or at least some kind of tax.

“India is a very high-tariff nation. They charge us a lot,” Trump said in his address to the Conservative Political Action Conference (CPAC) in the Maryland suburb of Washington DC.

In his speech that lasted for more than two hours, Trump touched a wide range of issues including domestic, global and bilateral relationship with countries like India.

Referring to his often-cited example of the iconic Harley-Davidson motorcycles, he said, “When we send a motorcycle to India, it’s a hundred per cent tariff. They charge 100 per cent when India sends a motorcycle to us, we brilliantly charge them nothing.”

“So, I want a reciprocal tax or at least, I want to charge a tax. It’s called the mirror tax, but it’s reciprocal,” Trump asserted. Early this year, at a White House event to announce his support

for reciprocal tax, Trump had said he was satisfied with the Indian decision to reduce the import tariff on Harley-Davidson motorcycles from 100 per cent to 50 per cent. “Even this is not enough, this is okay,” he had said.

“Look at motorcycles as an example. (In) India, it was 100 per cent. I got them down to 50 per cent, just by talking for about two minutes. It’s still 50 per cent vs 2.4 per cent (on imported motorcycles to the US). Again, other than that, it’s a very fair deal,” the president had told reporters at the White House on January 24.

On Saturday, he used the Indian example of how other countries were imposing high taxes on American products and now it was time for the US to impose a reciprocal tax. To prove his point, Trump said, he was using India as an example.

“But India is a very high-tariff nation. And they charge tremendously. So they charge a hundred. So I say, I’m not going to charge you a hundred, but I’m going to charge 25 per cent, and I hear this turmoil in the Senate because we are

charging 25 per cent,” he said. Trump told his supporters that there was resistance to his move from the Senate.

“I say, fellows, listen, they are charging us a hundred per cent. For the exact same product, I want to charge them 25 per cent. I feel so foolish charging 25, because it should be a hundred. But I’m doing 25 only because of you. I want to get your support,” he said.

Thereafter, Trump mimicked the response from the lawmakers. “Sir, that’s not free trade. Where did these people come from? Where do they come from? I need your help, I need your help, the voters’ help. Where do they come from?,” he said.

Trump said the US could not allow a country to charge it 100 per cent while it got nothing for the exact same product.

“For one thing, they don’t respect us. They don’t respect us. They don’t respect us. But let me tell you something, the world respects our country again,” he said.

“America is now booming like never before. Other countries are doing very poorly,” Trump said.

Qaeda-linked Syria group kills 21 regime forces: monitor

BEIRUT, MAR 3 (AFP): A Syrian jihadist group linked to Al-Qaeda killed 21 regime and allied forces Sunday near Idlib province, in one of the deadliest breaches of a six-month-old truce deal, a monitor said.

“At dawn, 21 fighters from the regime forces or allied militia were killed in an attack by Ansar al-Tawhid jihadists,” the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said.

“Five jihadists were also killed,” Rami Abdel Rahman, the director of the Britain-based monitoring group, said.

Ansar al-Tawhid has ties to the larger Hurras al-Deen group, which is also active in the area. Both are considered semi-officials franchises of Al-Qaeda in Syria.

The area of Idlib and small parts of the adjacent provinces of Hama and Aleppo are mostly controlled by the rival

Hayat Tahrir al-Sham organisation. HTS is led by fighters who formerly belonged to Al-Qaeda’s ex-affiliate in Syria.

Sunday’s deadly attack was carried out against regime positions in the village of Masasna, in the north of Hama province, the Observatory said. “It was one of the highest casualty figures among regime ranks since the Putin-Erdogan deal,” Abdel Rahman said.

He was referring to an agreement reached in the Russian resort of Sochi between Russian President Vladimir Putin and his Turkish counterpart Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

Under the September 17 deal, Turkey was supposed to exert its influence over anti-regime groups in the Idlib region to get them to pull back their fighters and heavy weapons from a

demilitarised zone. The agreement was meant to stave off a planned offensive by the regime and its Russian backers that aid groups feared could spark the eight-year-old Syrian conflict’s worst humanitarian crisis yet.

The government assault on the last major bastion of forces opposed to President Bashar al-Assad’s rule has indeed been held off but the deal’s provisions have not been implemented and the de facto truce looks shakier than ever. Since the Sochi agreement, HTS has consolidated its grip on the Idlib province and Turkey appears to be in no position to deliver on its commitment.

Breaches of the demilitarised zone have spiked in recent days. Another 20 regime and allied forces were killed in three days of clashes about a week ago.

Flight operations resume at Pak’s Lahore airport

LAHORE, MAR 3 (PTI): Flight operations resumed at Lahore airport on Sunday after being suspended for over 72 hours as Pakistan’s airspace was closed in the wake of escalating tensions with India.

Pakistan on Wednesday closed its airspace for commercial flights and suspended flight operations across major airports, including in Islamabad, Lahore and Karachi, for an indefinite period.

According to Civil Aviation Authority (CAA), domestic and international flight operations resumed at the Allama Iqbal International Airport in Lahore at 6 am on Sunday, Geo TV reported.

It said that all airlines have been notified about the resumption of flight operations. However, the Multan airport is yet to open for commercial flights. A day earlier, flight operations resumed at Karachi, Islamabad, Peshawar and Quetta airports.

On Friday, Pakistan’s aviation authority partially resumed operations for some international and domestic flights as thousands of passengers were left stranded worldwide after Islamabad shut down air travel following escalating tensions with India.

The CAA on Friday announced that flight operations at the eastern side airports - Lahore, Multan, Sialkot, Faisalabad and Bahawalpur - will remain closed till March 4.

If anyone won the Oscars this year it was Netflix – the prize for its industry disruption

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No single film dominated the 2019 Academy Awards as in some years, but arguably Netflix emerges as the winner. It entered the awards as an outsider and won in some of the most important categories. With 15 Oscar nominations, Netflix achieved as many nominations in 2019 as in the previous five years added together.

The Netflix film Roma was nominated for 10 awards including best picture, best director, best foreign language film and best cinematography, and went on to win the latter three. For the first time, a film distributed by an online streaming provider has won the industry’s highest accolade.

Behind the polite plaudits and acceptance speeches there are bitter feelings within the mainstream film industry on whether Netflix merits this level of recognition. John Fithian, president of the National Association of Theater Owners, articulated this reticence when he said: “for filmmakers who want to go to Netflix, they are kind of selling their soul – the pot of money versus how they know a movie should be seen.”

Roma’s success is the latest beachhead in the ongoing march of Netflix as a serial disruptor in the entertainment industry. In the late 1990s the company famously disrupted the video and DVD rental business through an online subscription model with rented titles distributed by post. Its tenacity in sticking to this model saw Netflix dispatch rental industry leader Blockbuster, which closed in 2010.

Next in line were television broadcasters, which Netflix took on through its online streaming service once broadband internet speeds allowed it. This has fuelled the unprecedented speed of the company’s international expansion, transforming Netflix from a content aggregator to a producer of high-quality content,

now posing a major challenge to mainstream broadcasters and encouraging many “cord-cutters” to cancel the cable TV subscriptions once seen as essential. It has also driven fundamental changes in viewing habits, ushering in the generation of “binge-watchers”.

But the success of Roma at the Oscars was not a happy accident. It was the result of the same single-minded determination that has driven Netflix’s previous industry disruption. The film was the ideal weapon to seek an Academy Award. It had a director and producer with strong track records and previous awards and its black-and-white arthouse style offered only limited appeal to mainstream cinema audiences anyway. Netflix even compromised on its long-held day-and-date strategy, which requires its programming to be available in all regions at the same time in order to meet the qualifying criteria of the Academy (which requires that a film has some degree of cinema release). It also commissioned the Oscar campaign veteran Lisa Taback to promote the case for this movie with Academy members.

KEEPING UP THE MOMENTUM
But Netflix now faces stark commercial realities. The company’s share price has risen over 20-fold and its revenue has grown from US\$3.5 billion to US\$16 billion since 2012, but by 2018 the company had long-term debt of over US\$10 billion. And this excludes the additional US\$19.3 billion needed to secure the rights to content Netflix intends to stream in the future.

The sheer volume of content that Netflix subscribers now expect is expensive to sustain, with production budgets estimated to be in the region of US\$13 billion this year. This puts pressure on free cash-flow which will inevitably remain negative for the foreseeable future.

If Netflix is to service its mounting

debt burden and remain sustainable, it needs to accelerate new subscriber growth and increase the revenue subscribers yield. This will be necessary in the face of aggressive competition from other established streaming players, such as Amazon, Hulu or HBO, and to stay one step ahead of new entrants such as Disney and Apple, which come equipped with very deep pockets.

This will not be possible if Netflix continues to be seen as merely an alternative delivery channel for viewing content that would otherwise be available via broadcast television. Instead, Netflix wants to be recognised as the premium channel through which high-quality content may be viewed. The hope is that it will therefore be perceived by the market as being at least equivalent – if not superior – to cinemas as somewhere to watch the latest movies. Achieving such a shift in consumer and producer preferences would disrupt the established industry business model of giving cinemas precedence for latest releases.

Even were Netflix to achieve this, past precedent suggests that we should not expect the company to be satisfied. The company makes no secret of its view that it sees itself in competition with all other users of leisure time and leisure dollars. Its focus on enticing subscribers to further increase their viewing hours at the expense of other activities is unlikely to diminish.

However, the question remains whether whether Netflix can navigate its financial challenges and battle the competition that seeks to thwart its extraordinary march of disruption. Media mogul Barry Diller has already concluded that Netflix has won and that “Hollywood is now irrelevant”. Perhaps, but we can expect many more episodes of Netflix as serial disruptor to play out before we know for sure.

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MARVEL-OUS! Oscar-winning actress Brie Larson stuns in a custom royal blue Valentino gown for the London premiere of Captain Marvel.

Stupidity goes a long way in Bollywood: Emraan

Mumbai, Mar 3 (PTI): Emraan Hashmi says there are not many producers who are ready to take risks in Bollywood, an industry where stupidity dominates, making it harder for actors to be smart.

The actor says today there are at least a handful people trying to push the envelope, which was not the case earlier.

"It is difficult being a smart actor in Bollywood. Stupidity goes a long way here. The audience is smart but not too many producers and directors take that (risk) and understand that. Now at least we have the new blood coming up with new stuff," Emraan told PTI.

"Back then, it was just about making escapist films with a star, do what a star is supposed to do and get bums on seats. Right now, the audience wants to see more than that," he added. Emraan started his career in mid-2000s, gaining fame for featuring in films which were dubbed "bold". The actor eventually shed the "serial kisser" tag with films such as "Shanghai", "Ghanchakkar" and "Ek Thi Daayan" among others. The actor says

before he turned towards edgier content, he was "stuck" in a zone for a long time.

"Initially you can't voice your concerns because scripts choose you rather than you choosing scripts. When one thing works, they just stretch that to make them work again and again.

"Producers see it as safety net, a cash register. Where the audience is expected not to ask questions. Then I met filmmakers and producers who wanted to challenge me as an actor."

Emraan says, if 2018 is any-

thing to go by, where "pure star-driven films" did not work, good concept is the need of the hour. "Because of the influence of the web, the audience knows what they're missing out on here. They want lap up any mediocre content. Right now a handful of actors are doing a variety of things.

"The audience doesn't want to see a star-driven vehicle. They want to see another dimension of you, not you wearing the same urban clothes in a foreign location with 50 background dancers."



Don't want my kids to see me do adult comedy: Arshad

Actor Arshad Warsi says he is clear that he will never be a part of an adult comedy as he is not only uncomfortable in that genre but also does not want his kids to see him do that. Arshad, who has featured in many hit comedies such as the "Golmaal" series and most recently "Total Dhamaal", says he is comfortable watching adult comedies but does not judge anyone who choose it.

"I don't want to do a sex comedy because I'm not comfortable doing it. I've never been and can't even foresee myself doing it. I don't have a problem with other people doing adult comedy, I don't judge them. "Sometimes I can watch it too but I can't do it. Not only the fact that I'm uncomfortable doing it personally but I've also got kids. I don't want them see me doing that," Arshad told PTI.

The actor said since his motivation of choosing a film is not money, he has no qualms of turning down projects which make him uncomfortable.

"I'm not the kind of person who's

greedy about money so it's not even on my nature that I'll do films for money. I was offered a lot of money for certain

by any trend. "Comedy is a genre that'll never go away. You'll have phases of everything, romance, action, but not of com-



films which I wasn't comfortable being a part of and I said no."

Though Arshad started his career with romance and drama in the 90s, he found his groove and fame with comedy, starting with "Munna Bhai MBBS".

The actor says comedy as a genre is so strong that it will never be replaced

edy. There's never going to be a moment or time where people stop seeing comedy.

"No one will say 'we aren't going to watch comedy anymore we will watch only drama.' It might be the other way around but never that people don't turn up for a good comedy. Who doesn't to laugh. Comedy is a loyal friend.

Bollywood is classist, says Kangana Ranaut

Actor Kangana Ranaut Saturday said the system in place in Bollywood helps people with privilege and repels when it is challenged.

At the India Today Conclave 2019, she said her many fallouts in the industry happened because she was always presented do-or-die situations in which she always fought her survival.

"I come from a situation where I really do not have a backup plan. I don't have a plan B. It's not like I wake up in the morning and think about 'Oh wait a minute. How many people can I offend today and how to make my life difficult?' That's not how it is.

"... The kind of story I have I wasn't left with an option. I wish they did. I wish they let me do my thing and I wish there wasn't this do or die situation. I would have preferred it like that. But if one of us has to do die I will make sure that it is not me," Kangana said.

A couple of her past few films have been plagued by controversies. Her 2017 film "Simran" was marred by a spat between her and screenwriter Apurva Asrani, who claimed that she poached his writing credit.

Her latest release "Manikarnika: The Queen of Jhansi" was also embroiled in multiple controversies.

Kangana said the credit for her success is hers only as she is the only actor in the film industry "who has not worked with a big production house or a big hero".

"We all know that Bollywood, the film industry is classist and so is the rest of the society. The system works for certain people the way it is. It is definitely going to resist when you are going to challenge it."

The three-time National Award winner said after her debut film "Gangster", she struggled a lot for work.

"When I came to the industry with a film like 'Gangster', I won the Best Actress award in entire Asia and then I did not have any work at all. They did not know what to do with an actor like that.

"Item numbers were prevalent and so were the patriarchal and chauvinist sort of male depiction in films where actors and actresses are just showing up to get pinched in their butt or get mocked. So I did not had any work. So I like said if it is a do-or-die situation I'm going to ensure that I survive," Kangana said.

She said the power players of Bollywood tried to suppress her voice but she fought every time.

"When you question so many things, they will try to shut your voice because the system has been working for them. It is your prerogative as a person to see what you want to do. Of course they will do what they can to ensure that people like us who question the system do not survive," she said.

On the topic of women empowerment, Kangana lamented that there are women actors in the industry who believe that they do not deserve pay on par with their male counterparts.

"I think you are as empowered as you think you are. It's a very individual choice. I know some women who openly say that 'I don't think I deserve the kind of remuneration my male counterpart does.' It is an individual choice. If you believe that you are not an equal then of course nobody can change that," she said.

Kangana also said that feminism is the most misused word in the current times.

"Feminism is a word which is misused and especially in today's time and age. I know so many people who

know nothing about equality and they wear these badges of feminism, pay parity and fighting cause..." she said.

"I don't go by the book definition of feminism. I have made my own definition. Though the word is derived from feminine but why should there be only equalities which is influenced by or related to sex. There should be equality of life... I think with time we need to evolve the definition," she added.



ARIES: If you choose to ignore every bleeping device and message thread for the next 48 hours, don't apologize, Aries! This is a restful, "me first" kind of weekend. Taking care of yourself and enjoying a few scintillating one-on-ones is all you need to focus on! The moon is in private, internal Scorpio and your eighth house of strong emotions, intimacy and eroticism!

TAURUS: With a Scorpio moon activating your partnership realm all weekend, two heads (and hearts) are better than one! What you don't want, however, is another half who can't hold their own next to you. When you're on, you're a force of nature, Taurus, and anyone who's going to team up with you needs to be an equal.

GEMINI: You might have to assume the mantle of authority today, Gemini, so be ready to step up to the plate. Someone is NOT carrying their weight, and if you don't say something, nothing is going to change. Ack! Rather than pretending it's not the case or tiptoeing around the issue, address it directly.

CANCER: Even if you're just running out for coffee or a quick grab-and-go at the farmer's market, spruce yourself up a little. With the moon in aesthetic Scorpio and your amorous, glamorous fifth house, you could be in for a weekend of surprises. You never know who you might run into at the beekeeper's honey stall—or where a random conversation might lead.

LEO: Home is where your head, heart and hustling hands are all weekend, as the Scorpio moon hovers in your domestic fourth house. Don't rush to do work that can hold till Monday—and don't be too quick to tend to a friend who needs a pep talk. You've got a dozen household projects that have been in the pipeline for too long already, and now is the perfect time to put your desires front and center. Change that light fixture; put the new bedding on and maybe shop for your dream sofa.

VIRGO: Whatever was dragging you down last week, let it go, Virgo! The Scorpio moon is beaming down in your playful third house, beckoning you to get out and

interact with your favorite band of merry-makers. Link up with friends who have the pulse of the cultural scene and mix it up with some let-your-hair-down fun like karaoke or a burlesque show.

LIBRA: Are you waiting for this magic moment to arrive where your schedule just opens up? Reality is, you're the one setting the pace for your life. If you keep go-go-going at breakneck speed, you're going to burn out eventually. Preempt that from happening, asap. This weekend dangles the perfect carrot. The moon will be in introspective Scorpio both days, giving you a chance to hit reset on those wildly tipping scales.

SCORPIO: With la luna floating through your sign all weekend, you have planetary permission to take all the "Scorpio time" you need! Start by looking at your calendar. What do you wish you could magically erase? It's okay that you've come down with a case of reverse-FOMO and want to sit everything out until next week. Anyone who adores you or cares about your wellbeing will understand!

SAGITTARIUS: Clear the excess from your calendar and plan to put your own needs and desires first this weekend, Sagittarius. The moon is hunkered down in introspective Scorpio and your internally focused twelfth house for the next two days, and anything too crowded or cacophonous will fry your circuits. Apologize to anyone you might disappoint—or ask if they're open to shifting plans around!

CAPRICORN: Hole up at home base and unplug for the next two days? Sorry, Capricorn—not with the Scorpio moon lighting up your communal eleventh house. People are your priority this weekend, especially the ones whose sense of adventure is matched only by their amazing taste in food and bands! Take the reins and play social director or let your innermost circle know that the Sea Goat is down for whatever fun is in the offing.

AQUARIUS: With the moon beaming in your career zone on both Saturday and Sunday, you'll find it hard to leave work at the office. Even if you're physically engaged in

other activities, mentally you'll still be mulling something you didn't finish (or complete to your standards) when you logged out on Friday. So here's a thought: Instead of being an apparition at brunch or your friend's gallery opening, duck home and devote a finite amount of time to getting this done.

PISCES: Get up and get OUT! With the Scorpio moon jetting through your nomadic ninth house, the weekend is like a two-day treasure hunt for all the coolest hangouts. And guess what, Pisces? They might not be found in your zip code. Maybe it's time to pack a bag for a quick road trip or perhaps a cheap, last-minute flight to a friend two states away. (Cough, cough: Do we feel a Monday sick day coming on?) Or just stay home and play tourist in your own town. Any change of scenery would be an instant mood booster. Check out a different live-music venue; eat at an authentic restaurant in another part of town. Are there any foreign films showing or outsider-art shows you could patronize? On Sunday, indulge your interest in the mystical side to life.