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SummitTIMES

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O N T O P O F T H E N E W S

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Army chief backs govt decision to call off Pak dialogue

NEW DELHI, SEP 23 (PTI): Army Chief Gen. Bipin Rawat Sunday backed the government's decision to call off dialogue with Pakistan, asserting that talks and terror cannot go together.

The government had on Friday called off a meeting between the foreign ministers of India and Pakistan in New York, citing the brutal killings of three policemen in Jammu and Kashmir and Islamabad releasing postage stamps "glorifying" Kashmiri militant Burhan Wani.

Infiltration from across the border persists despite the call for a ceasefire by Pakistan, said Rawat stressing that this cannot be allowed to continue and appropriate action has to be taken to deter terrorists from disrupting the peace in the Valley.

He backed the government's decision to call off the talks between External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj and her Pakistani counterpart on sidelines of the United Nations General Assembly in New York.

"The government's policy is very clear cut... You (Pakistan) show us some initiatives so that we feel that you are not encouraging terrorism. But we see that terror activities are continuing and terrorists come from the other side of the border."

"In such an atmosphere, whether talks can be initiated that the government can only decide. I agree to the government's decision that peace talks and terrorism cannot go together," he said.



PM Modi arrives in Gangtok for another historic occasion

**ARPAN PRADHAN
GANGTOK, 23 SEPT:**

Prime Minister Narendra Modi landed here at the Libing Helipad at around 4:30 PM today, alighting in Sikkim on the eve of the inauguration of the State's first airport – the

Rs 605 crore greenfield airport developed at Pakyong. The PM is scheduled to inaugurate the airport on Monday, setting Sikkim up for air connectivity with commercial flights here slated to begin 04 October.

The Prime Minister was re-

ceived at the helipad by Governor Ganga Prasad, Chief Minister Pawan Chamling, Minister of State (Independent Charge) PMO and Ministry of Development of North Eastern Region, Dr Jitendra Singh, Union Minister for Civil Aviation and Commerce and

Industries Suresh Prabhu, MoS SS Ahluwalia, Speaker KN Rai, Deputy Speaker Sonam Gyatso Lepcha, MP Lok Sabha, MP Rajya Sabha, Cabinet Ministers, GOC of 17 Mountain Division, Chief Secretary AK Shrivastava, ACS

turn to pg02

Ayushman Bharat PM-JAY launched in Sikkim; Will cover 40,000 families

**CM ANNOUNCES
ROSTER RELAXATION
FOR SIKKIM DOCS
WORKING OUTSIDE
TO JOIN MULTI-
SPECIALITY HOSPITAL**

GANGTOK, 23 SEPT (IPR): The Ayushman Bharat- Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (PM-JAY) was launched by Prime Minister Narendra Modi from Prabhat Tara Maidan, Ranchi, Jharkhand, today. The launch was held simultaneously in some states of India through live



telecast.

In Sikkim, the scheme was launched in alliance with

Mukhya Mantri Jeevan Raksha Kosh at Chintan Bhawan.

The programme was attend-

ed by Governor Ganga Prasad as chief guest, while Chief Minister Pawan Chamling was present as the guest of honour.

The PM-JAY, in alliance with MMJRK Sikkim, will provide protection to the deprived rural families and identified occupational categories of urban workers' families as per the latest Socio-economic Caste Census data. Under this scheme, around 40,000 poor and vulnerable families are entitled as per SECC in Sikkim.

The scheme provides a ben-

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Pakyong airport inauguration a celebratory moment for entire country: DoNER Minister

GANGTOK, 23 SEPT (PIB): Prime Minister Narendra Modi will inaugurate Sikkim's first airport on Monday, 24 September.

Speaking to media persons soon after his arrival in Gangtok today, the Union Minister for Development of Northeastern Region (DoNER), Dr Jitendra Singh, said that it was a historic occasion for the entire Northeast and, in fact, for the entire country to celebrate.

It has been over 40 years since Sikkim became a part of India, but now tomorrow the Prime Minister will inaugurate the airport in this hill State and bring it on the air-map of the world, he said.

Elaborating further, Dr Jitendra Singh informed that the airport, located at Pakyong around 60 kms from the Indo-China border, was also strategically relevant from the security point of view.

The Indian Air Force (IAF) will also find this airport convenient for the landing and taking off of its aircrafts, he said.

From the tourism point of view, Dr Jitendra Singh said, this is a major booster because Sikkim has been one of the favorite destinations for tourists, almost all throughout the year.

With the new airport becoming functional, he said, the travelling time will be get cut down by almost 5 hours because, earlier, the nearest airport to which the tourists could fly down was Bagdogra in West Bengal.

Built at an estimated cost of over Rs. 605 crore, the Pakyong airport is a new distinction for the State of Sikkim which has, in the last three to four years, achieved the distinction of becoming the first "Organic State" of India and also the first "Open Defecation Free" (ODF) State of India.



Rajeswari Chakraborty is Miss Sikkim 2018

**SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 23 SEPT:** Rajeswari Chakraborty from Gangtok is Miss Sikkim 2018. She was crowned at the grand

finale of the beauty pageant held on Saturday evening at Manan Kendra here.

Radha Khatri from

turn to pg02



Indra Jatra winds up with grand celebration

**SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 23 SEPT:**

The three-day long Indra Jatra celebrations concluded here at Manan Kendra this evening with a grand showcasing of Newari traditions after a chariot rally held earlier in the morning offering prayers were offered to Lord Indra and Kumari.

Chujhachen MLA, Bikram Pradhan, who is also the patron of Indra Jatra celebration committee, delved on the challenges facing preservation of Newari

culture and traditions which have been fading in the State. He stressed on the role and responsibilities of community elders in helping retain these aspects of the community and called on more people to shoulder the responsibilities.

He also urged support for the under construction Newari Bhawan which could be completed soon if the community could mobilize funds of Rs. 10 crore.

Sikkim Newar Guthi's Dilu Kumar Maskey presented a detailed report on

turn to pg02

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LTVC lobbies with SKM MLA for protection of LT lands

SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 23 SEPT:

A Limbu-Tamang Voluntary Committee delegation called on SKM MLA, Kunga Nima Lepcha, on Saturday, 22 Sept, seeking his intervention towards ensuring protection of Limbu-Tamang lands and raise the LT land protection Bill in the next Assembly Session.

LTVC is keen that the State Government pass a separate LT Land Protection Act without clubbing any other community in the same Bill. It may be recalled that such protection extended through an amendment to the land protection laws of Sikkim was recently repealed in light of protections also extended to other communities did not go down well with some sections. As of now, the protection of private land holdings of LTs, included in the amendment by virtue of their having become Scheduled Tribes, has also been revoked.

"The Limbu-Tamang communities of Sikkim have totally lost hope in the ruling govt. due to their double stan-

dard policies towards LT communities. It's sad to know although Limbu-Tamang were accorded ST in 2003 itself, even after 16 years these two communities do not have their political seats reservation in Sikkim Legislative Assembly nor are their lands protected in Sikkim," an LTVC press release points out.

The LTVC delegation briefed Mr Lepcha that with withdrawal of the amendment to the Land Protection Bill was a direct violation of the order from the Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment and Ministry of Tribal Affairs which had ordered the Social Justice Empowerment & Welfare Deptt to implement Land Protection Act for protection of the Scheduled Tribes of Limboos and Tamangs in Sikkim after LTVC's numerous requests to the Centre.

The MLA, the release states, assured LTVC that he will raise the issue in the coming SLA session and promised he will make sure that land protection for Limbus and Tamangs is implemented in Sikkim at the earliest by the State govt.

Indra Jatra winds up with grand...

contd from pg01

the initiatives taken by the Guthi and expressed his gratitude towards the government for the overwhelming support received for promotion of culture, tradition, language.

He also urged the members of Newari community here for more contribution in terms of monetary support and active engagement for the promotion of the Sikkimese Newari way of life.

Mr. Maskey also stressed on the need for the establishment of a Regional Cultural Research Institute for research of Sikkimese communities, their traditions and cultures.

Sikkim Newar Guthi also felicitated Chief Minister Pawan Chamling for

his constant endeavours towards preservation of culture and traditions and support for the Newari community its language and culture in Sikkim.

The citation was handed over in the morning session of the Indra Jatra prayers at Bhanu Udayan.

The Guthi has also honoured and felicitated the late KP Pradhan (Posthumously), footballer Sanju Pradhan, martial artist Savitri Pradhan, Ganesh Pradhan and Bhagdev Pradhan.

Pintso Chopel Lepcha, MLA Gangtok, and Shyam Pradhan, MLA Arithang, handed over the trophies and mementoes to winners of the various competitions organised by the Guthi as part of the Indra Jatra celebrations.

PM Modi arrives in Gangtok...

contd from pg01

SC Gupta, DGP DC (East), SP (East) and representatives from the BJP state unit.

Along his drive to raj Bhavan, his halt for the night, the PM waved at people lined up along both sides of the road from Ganju Lama Dwar and Deorali Bazar.

It may be recalled that the Pakyong Airport is the hundredth airport of the country.

Spice Jet is scheduled to begin commercial flights from Pakyong Airport from 04 October. The Bombardier Plane of Spice Jet, having a capacity of 78 passenger, will fly in from Kolkata and return, landing on the 1.7 km x 30 metre runway to put Sikkim on the air-connectivity map.

Initially there will be flights to Kolkata and Guwahati, but there is talk of starting flights to

more cities.

Similarly there is a proposal to start some international flights from Pakyong as well to Kathmandu (Nepal), Paro (Bhutan), Bangladesh and Bangkok. The Chief Minister himself has urged the concerned ministry to start flights to Kathmandu and Bhutan as soon as possible, it is informed.

During his last visit to Sikkim, the Prime Minister had declared the State the First Organic state of the Country, a historic moment, and now, after two years, he is here to join another historic moment for the State.

The Administration Building of the Airport which is spread to an area of 3000 square feet has the capacity to provide services to 100 passengers at a time it is informed. The runway of the Airport is 1.7 Km and width is 30 metres.



Health cleans up Pelling for World Tourism Day

GVALSHING, 23 SEPT (IPR): The Health Department, in association with the World Tourism Day Celebration Committee, District Administration Center, RMDD and West Sikkim Tourism Society, today carried out a cleanliness drive along with Archery competition and short marathon venues at Pelling ahead of the World Tourism Day which is being celebrated

at Pelling on 26 and 27 September.

The program was chaired by Karma Lodey Lepcha, ADC, Gyalshing, Municipal Vice Chairperson Zangmoo Bhutia, CMO West, Panchayat Presidents, members of Singyang Chumbong GPU and ASHA workers.

The program was held to create more awareness about the HPV vaccine amongst the public.

The event was attended by youth of West and South districts participating in the archery event being conducted by the WSTS and supported by District Hospital Gyalshing.

RMDD, West also sponsored a marathon race to create awareness on Swachhata Hi Sewa program of the Government.

Closely monitoring financial markets, ready to take actions, say RBI and Sebi

MUMBAI, SEP 23 (PTI): In a rare move, the RBI and Sebi Sunday said they are "closely monitoring" activities in the financial markets and ready to take appropriate actions, if required, following a sharp meltdown on Friday in equity and debt markets.

The regulators came out with separate but identical

statements amid apprehensions about steep volatility in markets on Monday.

Against the backdrop of debt defaults by diversified IL&FS group, there are also worries about non-banking financial companies even though the country's largest lender SBI assured lending support to the NBFC sector.

Adventure Integration Camp at Teen Kharkey Parakha

GANGTOK, 23 SEPT (IPR): Tourism & Civil Aviation Department organized a two-day "Adventure Integration Camp" in association with Gnathang Machong Eco-Tourism Development Cooperative Society at Teen Kharkey-Parakha under Gnathang Machong constituency in East Sikkim on 21 and 22 September 2018. This was part of the commemoration of The Year of Indian Adventure 2018 declared by the Ministry of Tourism.

The first day of the event saw the registration of more than 50 students of tourism from different government schools of the constituency which was followed by sensitization programme on adventure tourism delivered by key resource persons from the Tourism Department and IH-CAE, Chemchey.

The main event had Chairperson, Commerce & Industries Department, Choppel Dzangpo Bhutia, as chief guest accompanied by Madan Kumar Pradhan, Joint Director (Adventure Cell), Tourism & Civil Aviation Department, Deputy Director (Adventure Cell), Tashi Geley, and Tourist Officer (Adventure) Manoj Chettri.

The students were given hands-on training in adventure



activities such as rock climbing, rappelling, traversing, Zoomer climbing, Burma bridge etc by the expert trainers from Sikkim Mountaineering Association headed by Kunzang Namgyal Bhutia (Everester), President of Sikkim Mountaineering Association (SMA) cum Assistant Director, Sports & Youth Affairs Department.

The students were provided basic knowledge on adventure

tools and equipment and given a demonstration on putting up tents and provided tips on adventure survival strategies.

The youth of Teen Kharkey and neighboring villages also participated in the adventure camp. The Machong Primary Health Centre also made a mobile medical van along with doctors available at the spot in case of any medical emergencies. The Mayfair SPA & Resort sponsored

packed meals for the students.

The chief guest thanked the Tourism Department and the organizing committee for organizing and executing such an event in the State.

The vice-president (Org), Gnathang Machong Eco-Tourism Society, Narayan Pradhan, applauded the efforts of Chief Minister Pawan Chamling in taking Sikkim Tourism to greater heights of prosperity. He

Ayushman Bharat a PR exercise, will prove to be another jumla: Kejriwal

NEW DELHI, SEP 23 (PTI): Delhi Chief Minister and AAP National Convener Arvind Kejriwal claimed that Ayushman Bharat, the healthcare scheme launched by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday, is a public relation exercise which will prove to be another "jumla" (rehtoric).

The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) termed the scheme "another white elephant in the making" and alleged that it covers only six lakh out of 50 lakh families in Delhi.

"Pl read - why Ayushman Bharat is another PR exercise and will prove another jumla," Kejriwal said in tweet while referring to the AAP statement.

The prime minister rolled out the Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (PMJAY)-Ayushman Bharat from Ranchi Sunday, and termed it a "game-changer initiative to serve the poor". The health scheme would come into effect from today (Sunday), he said.

"PMJAY-Ayushman Bharat is the biggest government-sponsored

healthcare scheme in the world. The number of beneficiaries is almost equal to the population of Canada, Mexico and the US taken together," Modi said.

The AAP, in its statement, said it was of the view a universal healthcare scheme is a must for the country and Ayushman Bharat is "not at all a universal scheme and is designed in manner which is bound to fail".

"The Ayushman Bharat Scheme, designed by the Modi government caters only to secondary and tertiary requirements. It gives a miss to the most important, the primary healthcare. The Modi government plans to climb the ladder of healthcare without laying a foundation; which is one of the reasons why the AAP terms the scheme as flawed. Without a strong foundation, it is destined to fall," it said.

The ruling party in Delhi claimed that there were flaws in the newly launched scheme, including that it skips primary healthcare.

Ayushman Bharat PM-JAY launched in Sikkim; Will cover 40,000 families

contd from pg01

efit cover of Rs. 5,00,000 per family per year for secondary and most of the tertiary care procedures.

This scheme will provide cashless and paperless access to healthcare services in public and private empanelled hospitals. The benefit will be portable across the country.

In Sikkim, the scheme will be implemented by the Health Care, Human Services and Family Welfare Department on a trust mode with implementation support agency.

Further, a State Health Agency and Core Operational Team has also been constituted.

The four District Hospitals and STNM Hospital have been empanelled under this scheme. Help Desk Coordinators and District Nodal Officers have been identified and trained for the pub-

lic hospitals.

The Governor, in his address, expressed happiness on the launch of PM-JAY and MMJRK. He said that the joint alliance of both the schemes would be a new milestone in the health sector.

He added that the scheme will work for the benefit of the underprivileged and marginalised sections of the society and urged the doctors and officers present to implement the scheme with full accountability and dedication.

The Chief Minister, in his speech, called for intelligent inputs and constructive concepts from the health professionals for the further development of the health sector in the state. He asked the doctors to conduct more awareness programmes on communicable diseases like TB, STDs, MDR etc in the PHCs and PHSC levels. He also asked them to spread awareness

regarding the carcinogenic elements present in pesticides, chemical fertilizers etc and urged the people to opt for an Organic lifestyle.

The Chief Minister informed that Sikkim was the first state to implement the HPV Vaccination, HepatitisB Vaccination, and CATCH Programme in the country. In his speech, the Chief Minister announced that once the 1,000-bedded Multi Speciality Hospital at Sochyangang was functional, six buses will ply from Gangtok to Sochyangang every thirty minutes.

He also said that, all Sikkimese doctors who are working outside the State will be provided job at the Hospital. The roster system will be relaxed for these doctors in the process of their appointment, he added.

He requested all the doctors to live up to the expectations of the people

and ensure that the scheme reaches the rightful people.

The Chief Minister ended his address by saying that the health sector should focus more on Preventive rather than Curative measures.

Principal Director Rinzing Dorjee presented an overview of the scheme.

Earlier, Commissioner-Cum-Secretary, Vishal Chauhan, delivered the welcome address.

On the occasion, Golden records (e-cards) were handed over by the Governor and Chief Minister to the following beneficiaries: Damber Bdr. Biswakarma, Santosh Rai, Devi Mukhia, Nima Tenzang Bhutia, Lal Bdr. Subba, Jai Kmr. Gurung, Kyachkung Lepcha, Jog Maya Darjee, Sanjay Sapkota, Dilip Subba, Kamal Sunar, Kamal Tamang, Amber Bdr. Tamang, Manoj Rawat, M.D. Kalim and Tula Ram Neopaney.

**Gangtok on
Monday,
24 Sept**

Temp: 28°C/15°C
Forecast: A morn-
ing thundershower
in parts of area;
otherwise, time of
clouds and sun.
Sunrise: 05:24 AM
Sunset: 5:33 PM

Rajeswari Chakraborty is Miss Sikkim 2018

contd from pg01

Rumtek and Bharati Sharma from Gangtok were adjudged first runner-up and second runner-up respectively.

Chief guest, Forest Minister TW Lepcha, and guest of honour, MLA Bikram Pradhan, were in attendance which also had the presence of dignitaries, sponsors and guests from various fields and a packed audience.

Judges for the beauty pageant were entertainment entrepreneur Medha Saikia, independent filmmaker Tribeny Rai, Sikkim Express editor Amit Patro, Dr. Deepali Bharadwaj and Miss Sikkim 2017 Peden Ongmu Namgyal.

The winners were crowned by Miss Sikkim 2017 Peden Ongmu Namgyal, Miss Sikkim 2017 first runner up Sushmita Gurung and Femina Miss India Sikkim 2017 Parmila Chettri.

The evening included a traditional dress round, pastel dress round, two gown rounds, Q&A round for the top-10 contestants and a common question round for the top-5 contestants. The wardrobe for the top-16 contestants was a fall collection by Kyido House of Fashion.

A special pret-a-porter collection by Aaliaster Hyams was also a part of the grand finale which featured the top-10 contestants walking the ramp.

10 subtitles were presented to various contestants based on their performance and competitions held during their grooming session.

The subtitle holders are Bharati Sharma [Miss Popular & Miss Beauty with Brain], Sang Doma Tamang [Miss Photogenic], Pallavi Basnet [Miss Best Rampwalk], Passang Lhamu Bhutia [Miss Talented & Miss Beauty With a Purpose], Miss Radiant Skin [Rabina Pradhan], Radha Khatri [Miss Congeniality], Khusboo Tamang [Miss Timeless Beauty] and Rajeswari Chakraborty [Miss Best Personality].

The event also included performances by artists from various genres from Sikkim and Siliguri.

The vote of thanks was delivered by Post-tude CEO Gyurmila Bhutia whose organization put together the event.

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SAATHI peer educators on a drive against sale of alcohol

SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 23 SEPT:

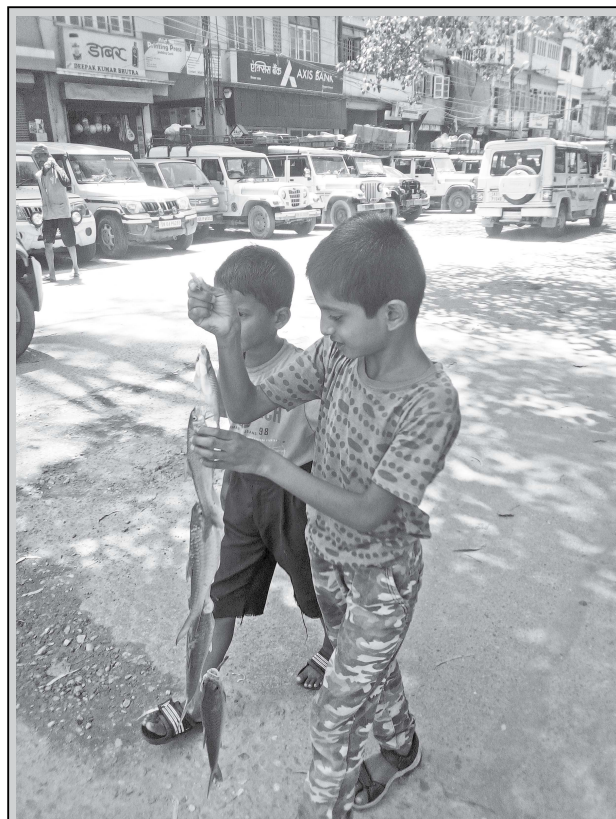
SAATHI peer educators of Sir Tashi Namgyal Senior Secondary School initiated a drive on 22 Sept, Saturday to request stall owners selling liquor during Indrajatra festival at MG Marg to consider not doing so. The students requested each vendor not to sell any kind of liquor and made them aware about the medical, social and economic effects of alcohol consumption on our society, a press release informs.

The peer educators mentioned that it was very important that people, young and old, recognized the dangers of consuming any kind of alcohol and how it affects the body and mind.

The campaign sought to raise awareness on dangers and significant negative mental and physical health effects that can be caused by alcohol use.



The team was led by SAATHI teacher coordinator and they also urged everyone to become part of SAATHI movement, so that "we all can make our state a better and safer place".



Good morning Sikkim....

**YOGEN THATAL
SINGTAM, 23 SEPT:**

It's Sunday morning, 10 AM, and the temperature is already soaring at this business hub of a town. At Singtam, the Sun shows now mercy, but that does not seem to tire out these two little gentlemen who hold up fresh fish caught moments earlier from Rongi Chu (Singtam Khola) at the market here.

You can pick up such catches on the highway as well, but the haul has been falling. The Rongi Chu which joins the Teesta at Singtam has been a source of earning (along with the mightier Teesta) for many locals who use it for fishing and quarrying sand and stones. The catch has dwindled to barely 3 kgs on a good day nowadays from the easy 5 kilos and more that they would catch even five years ago. They blame it on the dams upstream, and who knows, they may be right.

It does not help them that while they can sell their catch along the highway, the market is off-limits because they do not have stalls. But such rules don't seem to apply to some others who bring in fish from Siliguri and sell them from buckets in the bazaar, they point out.

Swachhata drive at Mazitar



SUMMIT REPORT

MAZITAR, 23 SEPT:

A mass cleanliness drive was carried out on Saturday at Mazitar in South Sikkim under Poklok-Kamrang constituency to round up the "Swachhata Pakhwara" [17-22 Sept] observed on the theme of "Swachhata Hi Sewa".

This drive was organised by IPCA Lab-

oratories Pvt. Ltd and started from Mazitar JHS towards Bazzar Haat-shed and ended at the Mazitar Bridge. The drive was joined by JHS teachers, students, IRBn and Police personnel, youth of Mazitar, members of CWC, IBDC, IPCA and residents of the area, informs IPCA general secretary, Bikash Tamang.

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TO SHARE?**
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VIJAY HAZARE TROPHY PLATE GROUP

Sikkim loses to Nagaland

VADODARA, SEP 23 (PTI): KB Pawan smashed an unbeaten 83 off 91 balls to guide Nagaland to an easy seven-wicket victory over Sikkim in a Vijay Hazare Trophy Plate Group encounter here Sunday.

Put in to bat, Sikkim managed a paltry 121 in 49 overs with seven of their batsmen failing to reach double figures. Ashish Thapa was the top scorer with 46 off 115 balls with five boundaries.

Thapa and Plazor Tamang (22) added 53 runs for the third wicket, which was the only significant partnership for Sikkim, who are not availing the services of any outstation players in their debut first-class

season. Ravi Maurya, Imliwati Lemtur and Tamheed Rahman got two wicket apiece.

In reply, Nagaland scored the runs in 26.2 overs with former Karnataka Ranji player Pawan hitting eight fours and two sixes. The second highest scorer was Abrar Kazi with 18.

This was Nagaland's second win in three games while Sikkim have lost all their matches till now.

Brief Scores: Sikkim 121 in 49 overs (Ashish Thapa 46 off 115 balls, Imliwati Lemtur 2/20, Ravi Maurya 2/20)

Nagaland 122/3 in 26.2 overs (KB Pawan 83 no off 91 balls).

Kerala priest, nun face action for supporting nuns' protest

WAYNAD/KOCHI, SEPT 23 (PTI): A Jacobite Priest has been warned of disciplinary action and a Catholic nun restrained from church duties in a fallout of their participation in protests in Kochi demanding the arrest of rape accused Bishop Franco Mulakkal.

Sister Lucy Kalapura, who returned to her parish in Wayand Sunday morning from Kochi, claimed she was informed orally by the Mother Superior that she should keep away from holding catechism classes, conducting prayers and other activities related to the Syro Malabar catholic church.

"No written orders were given to me. I was only informed orally by the Mother Superior not to participate in any church-related activities," the sister told PTL.

However, in a statement Father Stephen Kottakkal, vicar of the St Mary's church Karakkamala in Wayanad, said Sister Lucy had been asked to keep away from duties in view of certain concerns expressed by the parishioners.

He denied the church had initiated any retaliatory measure against Sister Lucy for participating in the nuns protest in

Kochi. "The believers had informed us that they had some difficulties in sister Lucy participating in the church activities relating to Holy mass and taking classes for their children," he said.

The vicar said he had only 'conveyed' the general feeling of the parishioners with regard to certain posts of sister Lucy in the social media which they felt were not in consonance with the church beliefs. Many of them had informed him the same, he said.

The Franciscan Clarist Congregation St Mary's province Mananthavady, to which sister Lucy belongs, said she faced disciplinary action for various other reasons.

However, no explanation had been sought or action taken so far against her in connection with the nun's issue.

Sister Lucy, however, maintained the restraint order against her was only for participating in the protests at Kochi.

The priest, Bar Yuhanon Ramban, belonging to a dayara in Ernakulam district, said Sunday he had received a 'warning' letter from his church headquarters in Damascus in Syria for supporting thenuns' protest.

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5815 5840 5960 6268 6451 6483 6586 6655 6703 6785

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Darj vs Darj for Veterans trophy

SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 23 SEPT:

Darjeeling United will take on Darjeeling Towns Club in the finals of the Sikkim Veterans Football Tournament 2018 here at Pal-

lor Stadium on Tuesday.

In the second semi-final match played on Sunday, Darjeeling Towns Club defeated Royal Veterans, Siliguri, 3-0 to secure its berth in the finals of the tournament.

Earlier, Darjeeling United had made it to the finals edging past Snow Lions, Gangtok, 3-2 in the first semi-final played on Saturday.

The final match will kick off at 1:30 PM on 25 September.

SummitTIMES

ON TOP OF THE NEWS

From Representative to Participatory Since politics is in the air

Sikkim has been enjoying representative democracy for a little over four decades now, and it is time that this structure was reinforced further with a more participatory form of democracy. It is time not only because democracy has matured in the eight Assembly elections the people have participated in, but also because there are too many conflicting ideas being thrown up which can be addressed only if the people invest involvement in democracy beyond the casting of votes. And the timing is also apt because with elections barely eight months away, the air is already thick with politics.

But what is participatory democracy all about?

Essentially, it involves informing, discussing and listening. These are actually prerequisites of a democracy, but most tend to end their participation with the ballot. Voting is admittedly a good habit, and Sikkim continues to set new records in as far as electoral participation is concerned, but democracy requires more. While elected leaders are fine for governance, when tricky issues need to be resolved, the people have to increase their involvement. It is however not easy for the people to set up such engagements on their own. And this is where the role of the elected representatives becomes more important - they have to initiate the process of participatory democracy. And this has to be more nuanced and refined than the mad scramble of mohallah sabhas that AAP briefly experimented with in Delhi. Even Sikkim used to have janta darbars at one time, but it quickly became clear that these were becoming more about individual complaints and grievances than community or wider issues. But if people were to find platforms and organizations through which they could express more meaningfully and coherently and with wider consensus on issues which babus or politicians would rather not take a call on their own, there would be fewer instances of inspired conspiracy theories to confuse and confound every one. It serves the purpose of elected representatives to know where the people stand on different issues and also because then they can truly understand the aspirations of the people and act accordingly. By doing so, they not only serve the people better but also secure their own political futures more resolutely.

The task is not easy though; the public does not and will not speak in one voice, but with many voices, raising different demands. And while a multitude of demands is not a problem, conflicting demands and conflicting interests pose a problem. Within any area there are many communities and with every issue, there are many lines of conflict. What the mediator has to look for is the other common factor - the lines of cooperation and begin the process from there. The development of participatory democracy, if successful, would extend the range of voices beyond those normally heard.

The importance of discussion in participatory democracy is to establish awareness about different positions, to test them against each other and against wider concerns and to see whether, through discussion, new positions can be reached which, even if they cannot reconcile differences, at least explore how far they can be accommodated. It is the responsibility of elected representatives to aid this process and in the end, if required, balance, mediate and judge the differing views. Of course, the people can side-step even such supervision by ensuring that they behave even when they disagree, disapprove or dislike. Ideally, such engagements are moderated by civil society organizations, but since Sikkim still awaits such groups, it will have to be the elected leaders who step up and initiate. Politicians are taking initiative, but at present, it is only to serve their own ambitions. We still don't have leaders supporting deliberations of the more unbiased kind. And Sikkim is the poorer for it. But if more leaders found the courage to support discussions without any preconditions, they will be participating in a healthy engagement and a welcome change from their usual responses which is to please and placate the people, but never, at least not so far, to engage them.

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Monday's medical myth: you need eight hours of continuous sleep each night

LEON LACK

theconversation.com

We're often told by the popular press and well-meaning family and friends that, for good health, we should fall asleep quickly and sleep solidly for about eight hours - otherwise we're at risk of physical and psychological ill health.

There is some evidence to suggest that those who consistently restrict their sleep to less than six hours may have increased risk of cardiovascular disease, obesity and diabetes. The biggest health risk of sleep deprivation comes from accidents, especially falling asleep while driving.

Sleep need varies depending on the individual and can be anywhere from 12 hours in long-sleeping children, to six hours in short-sleeping healthy older adults. But despite the prevailing belief, normal sleep is not a long, deep valley of unconsciousness.

The sleep period is made up of 90-minute cycles. Waking up between these sleep cycles is a normal part of the sleep pattern and becomes more common as we get older.

It's time to set the record straight about the myth of continuous sleep - and hopefully alleviate some of the anxiety that comes from laying in bed awake at night. So what are the alternatives to continuous sleep?

THE SIESTA

The siesta sleep quota is made up of a one- to two-hour sleep in the early afternoon and a longer period of five to six hours late in the night. Like mammals and birds, humans tend to be most active around dawn and dusk and less active in the middle of the day.

It's thought the siesta was the dominant sleep pattern before the industrial revolution required people to be continuously awake across the day to serve the sleepless industrial machine. It's still

common in rural communities around the world, not just in Mediterranean or Latin American cultures.

Our siesta tendency or post-lunch decline of alertness still occurs in those who never take afternoon naps. And this has less to do with overindulging at lunchtime and more to do with our circadian rhythms, which control our body clock, hormone production, temperature and digestive function over a 24-hour period.

BI-PHASIC SLEEP

Historical records also suggest that a segmented or bi-phasic sleep pattern was the norm before the industrial revolution. This pattern consists of an initial sleep of about four and a half hours (three sleep cycles of 90 minutes each) followed by one to two hours of wake and then a second sleep period of another three hours (another two sleep cycles).

During the winter months, northern Europeans would spend nine or ten hours in bed, with two to three hours of it spent awake, either in one long mid-night period or several shorter wake periods across the night.

The bed was the cheapest place to keep warm and was considered a place of rest as well as sleep.



A few hours of wakefulness certainly wouldn't have been considered abnormal or labelled as insomnia.

CAN'T SLEEP? DON'T WORRY

These days we expect to have close to 100% of our time in bed asleep, dozing off within minutes and not waking at all until the alarm sounds. Unfortunately this myth sets us up for worry if we find ourselves awake in the middle of the night. And this worry can lead gradually to the development of insomnia.

Humans can sleep on very different schedules, with little difference in wakeful competence. International sleep researchers have trialled a number of different sleep

schedules: sleep for 20 minutes every hour; one hour sleep every three hours; ten hours sleep every 28 hours. Participants survive easily on all these schedules despite their impracticality in our 24-hour world.

The best quality sleep is obtained during our circadian low phase - when body temperature and metabolic rate are at their lowest. For most people, this occurs late at night. But just like other species, humans can be opportunistic sleepers and satisfy our need for sleep when we get the opportunity.

There's no doubt that the eight-hour solid sleep myth is a relatively recent cultural imposition. And although it satisfies our modern lifestyle, it does have its disadvantages.

Some have lamented the loss of wakefulness between sleep cycles as a valuable time of contemplation or creativity.

But probably the greatest negative impact of the eight-hour sleep myth is its power to create insomniacs out of good sleepers who experience normal awakenings across the night.

[the writer is Professor of Psychology, Flinders University]

Sexual assault among adolescents: 6 facts

DAVID FINKELHOR & ATERET GEWIRTZ-MEYDAN
theconversation.com

Christine Blasey Ford's account of allegedly being sexually assaulted by Supreme Court nominee Brett Kavanaugh when they were teenagers is provoking both informed and uninformed comment from politicians. Still more private conversations about the subject are happening in homes and offices around the country.

There is a large body of social science research about what are called "peer sexual assaults" that is relevant to these discussions. We are experts on violence, including sex offenses against children and youth, and our research focuses on surveys to document those realities and track the trends.

Here are six basic facts about sexual assault among adolescents.

What does research say?

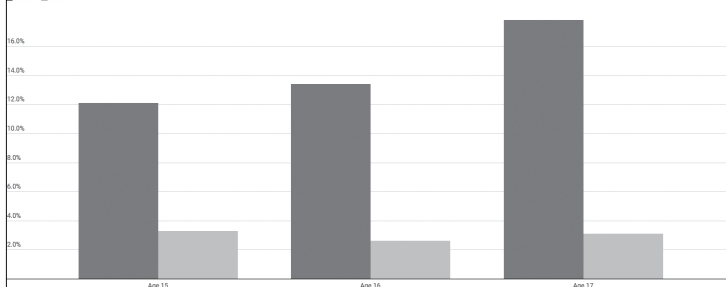
1. Assaults among people under the age of 18 are common: 18 percent of girls and 3 percent of boys say that by age 17 they have been victims of a sexual assault or abuse at the hands of another adolescent.

This estimate, and those in the next three points, come from a national survey on violence of over 6,000 youth ages 10 to 17, conducted be-

Juvenile victims of assault by peers

Data from a national survey on violence of over 6,000 youth ages 10 to 17 conducted between 2008 and 2014 show that a sizeable number of girls and boys report being sexually assaulted by a peer at some point in their life.

■ Female ■ Male



Source: The Conversation, 02.09.16; Source: Journal of Adolescent Health (2014) - Get the data



tween 2008 and 2014.

2. Most assaults between adolescents do not involve sexual intercourse. Penetration occurs only in 15 percent of cases.

3. Failure to disclose or report the assault is common. Most - 66 percent - of adolescent victims did not tell a parent or any other adult about the assault. Only 19 percent reported the assault to the police.

4. Victims have a variety of reactions to the assault. For example, the level of fear at the time of the assault runs

the gamut: 32 percent reported being very afraid, but 26 percent said they had not been afraid. The rest reported being a little afraid.

5. Impacts of assault can be serious and long-lasting. Both sexual and non-sexual assaults in adolescence are associated with higher-than-normal levels of depression, anxiety, post-traumatic symptoms and risks for being assaulted again. This is one of the most reliable findings in the growing science of how negative childhood experiences lead to poorer physical and mental health later in life.

6. Some youth who commit sexual assault are serial offenders, but most are not. The re-offense rate for such youth is 5 percent, lower than for adults who commit a first assault, and has been declining over time, possibly due to more awareness

and better intervention.

EDUCATION WORKS

Experts on sexual assault agree that education for young people is one of the most important ways to diminish the incidence of sexual assault: Among the tools educators use are lessons about consent, good decision-making, refusal skills and the empowerment of bystanders to intervene.

A number of educational programs with such components have been formally evaluated and shown to be effective, including programs such as Safe Dates, Shifting Boundaries, Green Dot and the Fourth R.

Surveys suggest that sexual assaults of adolescents and adults have been declining or flat over the last 25 years, not increasing. Still, far too many young people suffer from these offenses and their effects. Expanding educational programs is an obvious and crucial priority for bringing down this toll.

[David Finkelhor is Professor of Sociology, University of New Hampshire; Ateret Gewirtz-Meydan is Postdoctoral researcher, University of New Hampshire]

Children from Northeast and Delhi connect through letters

DURBA GHOSH
GUWAHATI, SEP 23 (PTI): Children from remote villages of the North-east and the national capital are engaged in understanding each other's culture and diversity in a unique way - by exchanging letters. The initiative is aimed at addressing multicultural diversity and, end racial and ethnic discrimination among children through the almost forgotten art of letter writing. Discrimination against people of Northeast in Delhi is not new and through this exchange of letters among children we are attempting to create a human connect among children who are at a geographical distance from each other, Vibha Lakhera, managing trustee of NGO Reachout Founda-



tion, which has launched the initiative, told PTI. A pilot project on Say No To Discrimination' was initiated in Alok Bharti Public School of Delhi to create awareness and sensitise students and teachers regarding multicultural diversity, its accep-

tance, how it manifests in the schools in the form of favouritism, silent treatment, bullying, teasing, exclusion and discrimination, she said. At the same time, an exchange of letters and cards was carried out among students in Delhi, Assam, Manipur and Arunachal Pradesh to learn about the diverse cultures of these states, Lakhera said. The whole process captures the exchange of energy and emotion that goes into writing a letter, posting it, eagerly awaiting a reply and finally receiving one, she added. The Foundation in collaboration with India International Centre (IIC), New Delhi is currently holding an exhibition titled Post-cards of Change: Letters to and from Northeast', displaying the let-

ters written by children from Delhi to the Northeast and vice versa. It will display handmade cards, hand imprints with messages about local festivals and letters exchanged among students from Delhi and five schools of Assam, Manipur and Arunachal Pradesh which gave them a chance to interact with complete strangers but also to learn about different cultures. The idea behind this activity is to introduce students to the slowness and deliberate way of communicating with their counterparts who they had never met and who belonged to far off places which were not familiar to them, the foundation's executive director Kishalaya Bhattacharjee said. The project saw a lot of insightful and touching stories being

shared through letters and cards by the children. Sanjib, a class 8 student of U N Academy School of Kachugao in Assam's Kokrajhar district wrote to a student in Delhi that one should take care of their younger siblings and love them as they are so precious which he realised after the death of his brother during floods. His pain and suffering of losing a sibling was evident in the letter and students in Delhi also came to know about Assam, its places, people and also floods, Bhattacharjee said. Aman Chakma, a class 6 student of Sneha School at Diyun in Arunachal Pradesh writes about his school, village, neighbours and how they help each other, family parties, going to markets and his hobby of playing football.



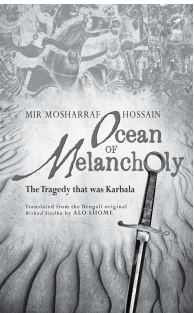
Aprilia & Vespa launches five new products

GANGTOK, 23 SEPT: Piaggio India has launched the new Aprilia SR150 Race, Aprilia SR150 Facelift, Limited edition Carbon SR150, Vespa facelift and innovative mobile connectivity for Vespa and Aprilia range, a press release informs. The new Aprilia SR150 Race scooter sports a white base with red and green body graphics. It has a 150cc-3 valve engine. New Aprilia SR150 Race facelift is available at a price of Rs 80,211. The iconic Vespa has added three new attractive colours in its facelift -Matt Rosso Dragon, Matt Yellow and Azzuro Provenza. It will be available at a price of Rs 91,140 for VXL 150cc and Rs 97,276 for SXL 150cc. The Aprilia SR150 Facelift gets four new colours - matt black, blue, glossy red and white. The new limited-edition Aprilia Carbon SR150 comes in all black theme. Aprilia SR150 Carbon and SR150 Facelift are available at a price of Rs 73,500 and Rs 70,031 respectively. Additionally, the sophisticated all black limited-edition Vespa Nott with its powerful 125CC engine is available for Rs 68,829. Piaggio India has introduced a mobile connectivity that empowers customers to connect with their Vespa & Aprilia scooters and control its features, the release adds.

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Epic Bengali novel on Karbala war now in English

NEW DELHI, SEP 23 (PTI): An epic historical novel by Bangladeshi literary great Mir Mosharraf Hossain centred on events that led to the battle of Karbala has been translated into English. The plot in Hossain's "Bishad Sindhu" is dramatic, has a mythical undertone to it, and deeds of heroism and supernatural occurrences render an epic flavour to its narrative. The storyline explores the sufferings and agonies of human life and the covetousness and hatred of men, and, at the same time, imparts a historical background to the bloodbath and killings that took place in Karbala, Iraq in AD 680. Readers of "Ocean of Melancholy", translated by Alo Shome, can get an insight into the events that led to the battle of Karbala and its aftermath. The book, brought



out by Niyogi Books under its Thornbird imprint, revolves around the tragic story of Hassan and Hussein, grandsons of Prophet Muhammad, who were exterminated by their bitter enemy Yazid, the son of the king of Damascus. "I am not a religious person myself, but am only objectively curious about religion as it is a part of human culture. Thankfully, 'Bishad Sindhu' gave me an opportunity to gain much knowledge about Islam. Through its translation I

could express my respect and love for another faith other than the one I inherited," says Alo Shome. The book was released this Thursday. Publisher Trisha de Niyogi says "Ocean of Melancholy" is a work of historical fiction in which there is no distortion of facts, yet multiple imaginary characters and hypothetical situations have been brought in to not only to enhance the interests of the reader, but also to give a geopolitical picture of the time. Hossain, a pioneer among 19th century Bengali Muslim writers, was born in 1847 to the zamindar of Padamdi. He was deeply interested in Arabic, Persian, and Bengali literature. He contributed his writings to various journals, mainly in "Sangbad Hitokar" and "Gram Barta Prakashik". Mir authored 35 books of which "Bishad Sindhu" is considered his best.

BJP's WB bandh call on Sep 26 over Islampur clash will be thwarted: TMC

MALDA/KOLKATA, SEP 23 (PTI): The Trinamool Congress on Sunday said the bandh called by the BJP in West Bengal on September 26 will be thwarted and accused the saffron party of trying to create political unrest in the state over the death of two students during a clash in North Dinajpur district. Residents of Daribhit village in Islampur held a protest before local MLA Kanhaiyalal Agarwal and Goalkpokhar legislator Gulam Rabbani, demanding a CBI probe into the firing that claimed the lives of the two students, when they visited the victims' homes on Sunday. BJP leaders Mukul Roy, Locket Chatterjee and Pratap Banerjee also met the victims' family. Furious villagers did not allow the police to enter the village on Sunday. The BJP and locals

have alleged that the two, who were former students of Daribhit High School, were killed in police firing, but the superintendent of police of North Dinajpur, Sumit Kumar, had said the police did not open fire. The SP had, however, admitted that the students had received bullet injuries and had said the police were investigating who had opened fire. State BJP president Dilip Ghosh said his party had no other option but to call the bandh. "We have demanded a CBI probe into the Islampur incident. The chief minister is claiming the police did not resort to firing. Then who killed the two students? The firing happened right in front of the police," he said. The BJP has called a 12-hour Bengal bandh on Wednesday to protest the deaths of ITI student Rajesh Sarkar and third-

year college student Tapas Barman. TMC secretary general and state Education Minister Partha Chatterjee alleged that the BJP was trying to create disruption in the state by turning the incident into a political issue and said that their attempt will be dealt by his party politically. "The BJP's attempt to create a political unrest will be thwarted politically," Chatterjee said. He said that the TMC will hold protest meetings and rallies throughout the state against the BJP's bandh call. Asserting that BJP's attempt to "disrupt" normal life in the state on Wednesday will not succeed, the minister said, "Transport services will be maintained and offices, schools and colleges will remain open on Wednesday." Trouble had brewed in the school over the recruitment of Urdu teach-

ers as the protesting students said they needed science and english teachers instead. The students and the locals stopped two newly recruited teachers, including one for Urdu, from entering the school on Thursday, demanding that all vacant teaching posts be filled. This led to the clash. Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, who is currently in Italy on an official tour, had said on Saturday that the RSS and the BJP were to be blamed for the death of the two students and accused them of trying to whip up communal disturbance. Banerjee also came out in support of appointing Urdu teachers in the school. Warning the saffron organisations "not to play with fire by doing politics over the issue", she appealed to the people of the state to foil the shutdown.

Govt trying to create a 'smokescreen' and 'cloud' the issue: Cong leader on Rafale deal

CHANDIGARH, SEP 23 (PTI): Senior Congress leader Manish Tewari Sunday accused the Union government of creating a "smokescreen" around the Rs 58,000 crore Rafale fighter jet deal with French firm Dassault Aviation. Tewari hurled the allegation hours after Union Finance Minister Arun Jaitley ruled out scrapping of the Rafale deal, saying the jet fighters are needed by the defence forces and that even French Francois Hollande has subsequently contradicted his purported initial statement on the deal. Reacting to Jaitley's statements on television, Tewari said If at all, anybody needs to answer on Rafale transactions, it is Prime Minister (Narendra) Modi or former Defence Minister Manohar Parikkar or current Defence Minister (Nirmala Sitharaman) who is seized of the issue. "But they are trying to create a smokescreen and cloud the issue," said Tewari, also a former Union minister. He also said the government needs to explain how the price of aircraft went up from Rs 590-odd crore to Rs 1,690 crore. "Then there is the issue of offset (partner), where Hollande has clearly and unequivocally come out and said they did not have a choice so far as offset partner is concerned and that this was a diktat from the Government of India. So, on these issues there has to be a clarification," Tewari said. Speaking in the wake of the controversy arising out of former French President Francois Hollande's purported statement that the Indian government proposed Anil Ambani-led Reliance Defence as the offset partner for Dassault Aviation and France did not have a choice in it, Jaitley said Hollande has subsequently contradicted his initial statement on the deal.



Both the French government and Dassault, besides the Anil Ambani-led Reliance Defence, too have denied the Hollande's initial statement. Hollande was the French president when deal for buying 36 Rafale jets was signed in 2016. Tewari alleged the contract from Indian side was in violation of all established norms, procedures and conventions which have been laid down for big ticket defence acquisition. Attacking Jaitley, Tewari said, "The minister by the standards of his usually very stretched logic has ended up saying something on Sunday morning, which is nothing less than bizarre." "He has stated that there is collusion between the two opposition leaders in France and in India, Hollande and Rahul Gandhi. Nothing will be farther from the truth and the statement is absolutely laughable, he said. Alleging a "cover up" in the case, Tewari said "it is high time Prime Minister and his various ministers come clean and tell the nation as to what exactly are the facts of this particular transaction." He reiterated that a joint parliamentary committee must be set up to probe into the Rafale affair "so that the truth can come out in its entirety."

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102 Not Out! ‘Miracle’ centenarian woman eyes more athletics medals

ASIM KAMAL
NEW DELHI, SEP 23 (PTI): All of 102, ‘miracle’ woman Man Kaur ran her way to a track and field gold medal at a world masters meet in Spain earlier this month, and in true never-give-up sportsperson spirit is already in training for her next competition.

The centenarian, who also throws a mean javelin, said she is not done yet and is hungry for more competitions and also more medals.

“I want to win more. I feel very happy after winning. The government has not given me anything, but it doesn’t matter as I just want to run, because running gives me happiness,” Kaur told PTI over phone from Patiala, where she has moved from Chandigarh for her athletics training.

Kaur won the gold medal in the 200-metre race in the 100-to-104 age group at the World Masters Athletics Championships in Malaga, Spain, earlier this month. She also picked up a gold medal in the javelin competition there.

She was the only competitor in that age bracket, but that was mere quibbling for her fan base which raised a toast to the woman who participated in an international



meet, running 200 metres and throwing the javelin at 102.

Not one to rest on her laurels, Kaur has already started training for the World Masters Athletics Indoor Championships in Poland next March where she aims to participate in the 60-metre and 200-metre races.

Kaur, who took up running at the ripe age of 93 and was dubbed the ‘Miracle from Chandigarh’, shot to fame last year after winning the 100-metre sprint at the World Masters Games in Auckland, New Zealand.

Her mantra for fitness, longevity and positivity is simple.

“One should eat well and exercise. Don’t eat junk food and respect your elders,” the great grandmother said when asked about her advice to the younger generation.

Her own diet includes six ‘rotis’, prepared with sprouted wheat, sprouted ‘kala chana’ and barley.

Apart from the rotis, she also

has soya milk, seasonal fruits, juices and ‘kefir’ (fermented milk), which they get from Canada.

Kaur does rue the fact that cricketers get so much attention while sportspersons from other games don’t get their due, but said her love for running and participating in competitions keeps her going.

Last year, Kaur was made the mascot and ambassador of Pinkathon -- a women’s marathon started by model-actor-fitness enthusiast Milind Soman. Pinkathon also funded Kaur’s Spain visit.

“Man Kaur is one of the most inspiring people I have ever met. As Pinkathon mascot and ambassador she has travelled with us across the country, telling thousands of women the secret to a mentally and physically healthy life, and has become a symbol of aspiration and hope for all who hear of her stupendous achievements,” Soman told PTI.

Love for athletics runs in the family.

Kaur’s 80-year-old son Gurdev Singh also takes part in international races and athletic events.

His mother gets excited when she gets to know an event is coming up and keeps asking how many

days are left for it, he said.

“We have already started preparing (for the next competition in Poland). She has already started her training after coming back. We will try to create a new record,” Singh said.

He said they have already drawn up plans for the next three years -- in Torun, Poland, next year, in Toronto, Canada, 2020, and, Kansai region of western Japan in 2021.

“In 2021, she will be 105 plus. We are eyeing that (event) as well,” Singh said.

Discussing his mother’s training schedule, Singh said she does a warm up everyday, then two sprints of 100 metres each, followed by four sprints of 30 metres.

In the end, she does slow running for 200 metres, he said.

On how he got his mother interested in athletics, Singh said, “When I went abroad (for competitions), I saw 100 plus ladies participating. I saw that my mother had no ailments. I made her race and then made her participate at nationals in 100 and 200 metre events in Chandigarh and she got world record timing...that is how her journey began.”

And she sprints on.

Frustrated Ibrahimovic coy on Galaxy future

LOS ANGELES, SEP 23 (AFP): Zlatan Ibrahimovic plans to discuss his future with Los Angeles Galaxy chiefs after a frustrating first season in Major League Soccer.

Swedish star Ibrahimovic has made a prolific start to his MLS career, scoring 17 goals in 22 games since joining the Galaxy from Manchester United in March.

However the 36-year-old striker’s efforts have not been enough to transform the Galaxy’s fortunes, with the club languishing in the bottom half of the Western Conference and struggling to make the playoffs.

Ibrahimovic, who has a contract through the 2019 season, was reluctant to confirm his plans for next year, according to comments in the Los



Angeles Times.

“I don’t know. This I have to discuss,” Ibrahimovic said when asked about 2019.

“This is not the moment to talk about that. It’s something I’ll discuss with the club. What they want, what I want. So let’s see.”

Ibrahimovic said while he was pleased with his fitness, he was less happy with the Galaxy’s results.

CHENNAI, SEP 23 (PTI): Indian tennis legend Vijay Amritraj on Sunday said that the country needs to develop quality singles players if it wants to be in the elite group in the world.

India recently lost to Serbia in the Davis World Group Play-off tie 0-4 and Amritraj felt the country was lacking in the number of quality singles players.

“The focus has to be on singles for India. We need four good singles players. There is no point just having good doubles players. Since we do not have enough number of good singles players, we are not being able to qualify for the elite group,” Amritraj told PTI.

India will now compete in a 24-team qualifying event (home and away format) in February next year to qualify for the 18-team Davis Cup Finals.

About the performance of players like Ramkumar Ramanathan and Yuki Bhambri, he said they have done well but need to work on their fitness.

“Yuki has done well well. The problem is that he is not able to play a full year yet. He is not fit enough to play a full season, which is a worry. He needs to work on his fitness. Similarly, Ramkumar did well in some tournaments,



reached the final at Newport, but needs to be a lot fitter,” he said.

“The players should to be fit enough to be hitting the ball hard in the 8th-10th or 15th ball as in the first shot of the rally,” said Amritraj who was recently elected as president of Tamil Nadu Tennis Association.

On the new Davis Cup format which is to come into force from next year, Amritraj said it would not affect India much as of now.

Amritraj said the Davis Cup needed dramatic changes and that was why the authorities decided change the format. He said it remained to be seen how the changes pan out.

Amritraj, who has guided the coun-

try to two Davis Cup finals besides himself reaching the quarterfinals of the prestigious Wimbledon Championships, said he will give it his best shot as president of TNTA.

“I know that the expectations will be high. Tennis in the country needs a fillip for a better standard. Our team will do its best in that direction. Concrete plans will be firmed up shortly,” he said.

He said his priority was to produce good players and also have top events in the state.

“There is growing interest for tennis not just in Chennai but in the districts too. We have to take the sport forward and unearth more talent. I wish to have more tournaments and importantly produce more singles players,” he said.

About the decision to take up the top job in the TNTA, Amritraj said it was not a sudden one and a lot of thought had gone into it.

“Not at all.. I gave a lot of thought about it. Talked to a lot of people concerned and when everyone said OK, I said OK. It is a three-year term and I have to see what best I can do,” he added.

There was a lot of disappointment

among the fans in the city when the popular ATP tournament was moved out to Pune. Asked if there was a possibility of the event returning to Chennai, Amritraj said he would look to bring the tournament back.

“I mean we have to look at the options. Pune is hosting the ATP tournament now. We have to consider many things. Economics, logistics and calendar. Probably a WTA event, as India isn’t hosting one right now,” he added.

On the state organising more ATP events, the lower rung ones, the former India Davis Cupper said it was a possibility, adding his team was looking at not just Chennai but other cities like Coimbatore and Tiruchirappalli, among others.

Asked if there was any plan to open an academy for young players, he said presently TNTA had one where 17-18 were training, adding the focus would be on nurturing talent across Tamil Nadu.

“Currently there are 17-18 kids at the TNTA academy. There is a need to have a centre of excellence. We need to look at certain priorities and plan certain programmes.

Dolls from soiled sarees revive dreams of flood-hit weavers

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, SEPT 23 (PTI): A tiny hand-made doll made out of soiled and damaged fabric has become a symbol of survival and hope for a group of weavers, whose dreams and livelihood were washed away by the floods last month in Kerala.

A month after the deluge had ravaged Chendamangalam, a traditional handloom village in Ernakulam district, the weavers are pinning hope on ‘Chekutty’, dolls fashioned with handloom material spoiled in the floods, to rebuild their life.

Demands are now pouring in from across the globe for these dolls, conceptualised and designed by two social entrepreneurs to help the weavers raise funds out of the damaged fabric stock through crowd-sourcing.

With the support of hundreds of volunteers, they are now collecting sarees that had been left soiled and destroyed beyond reuse in the looms of Chendamangalam, post floods.

They chlorinate the textile, boil it to disinfect and convert them to Chekutty, the handmade dolls, Lakshmi Menon, a co-founder of the initiative, said.

She said the weavers had no option but to burn the severely damaged textile. But the same soiled stock is now expected to fetch them much more through the cloth dolls.

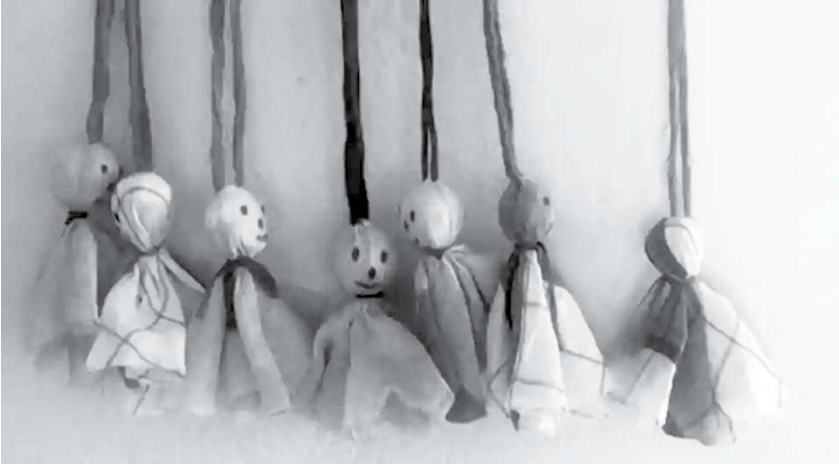
Cutting across geographical barriers, people are placing bulk orders through website, Facebook and WhatsApp for these dolls after coming to know about it through the media.

A mobile app was launched in Silicon Valley on September 21 to take the desi dolls to a larger global audience. It would become functional soon, she said.

One of the seven Chendamangalam weavers co-operative societies, with which the doll-makers are associated, has already received Rs five lakh through online booking.

‘Cheru’ means mud and ‘kutty’ means child in Malayalam.

So Chekutty can be read as the child who survives the mud and dirt of floods. It can also be read as the kid of Chennamangalam,” Lakshmi told PTI.



“Chekutty has scars...Chekutty has stains. But she represents each one of us who survived the floods. I am so happy to see that our doll has now emerged as the mascot of Kerala, which braved the devastating floods,” she said.

The entire amount raised through sales of Chekutty would go to livelihood programmes envisaged by the handloom weavers cooperative society of Chendamangalam, said Lakshmi, who runs ‘Pure Living’, a social enterprise focusing on up-cycled and recycled products.

“A normal handloom saree may fetch Rs 1300-1500 in the market. At least 360 odd dolls can be made out of a six metre saree. We plan to put it up for sale at Rs 25 each,” she said.

“That means, dolls fashioned out of a single saree can fetch them up to Rs 9,000. That is much higher than they receive through the sale of saree,” she said.

An active participant in the flood relief work, 42-year-old Lakshmi came to know about the plight of

the weavers from her friend Gopinath Parayil, a tourism entrepreneur.

Ravaged looms and bundles of destroyed fabric, which were all ready for Onam sales and tears of hundreds of weavers who had toiled hard for months to make them ready persuaded the entrepreneurs to find out a sustainable solution for them.

“The scenes at the village shook both of us. We had no option but to think of something to bring back the smiles on their faces. Finally we came up with the idea of doll making,” Lakshmi said.

The weavers were also happy about the idea as at least their months long labour would not go in vain.

Both Lakshmi and Gopinath shared the idea through social media platforms and invited interested persons to volunteer their services in doll making and the response was immense.

They also created a website, detailing the objective of ‘Chekutty’ dolls.

Lakshmi herself collected soiled sarees from the

weavers and trained volunteers. She took many sarees home, chlorinated and boiled them to disinfect them.

“Even after chlorination and boiling, the clothes had that stink left by the murky flood waters. So we had to wash the fabric repeatedly to make them safe for re-use,” she said.

The entrepreneur said the beauty of Chekutty dolls is the crowd sourcing.

“It’s not made by one person or one organisation. No Chekutty would look alike. Other than the basic steps on making, the painting, touch ups and decoration is all up to the individual doll maker, she said.

Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan recently came forward supporting the unique initiative.

The Kochi-based IT hub Infopark had adopted the Chekutty dolls movement to support its sales.

The founders of Chekutty are now getting ready to trademark their unique doll before launching the product officially in the market on October 2 in Kochi.

“The original Chekutty dolls, made of Chendamangalam handloom, will have a trademark and a small write up attached to it. We plan to do the trademarking exercise with support of over 500 volunteers at the Maharaja’s College campus in Kochi on September 30,” Lakshmi added.

The soft handmade dolls can be used as a key chain, wall decor or tied to a handbag and would always serve as a reminder of the sacrifices and resurrection of a state which was ravaged by a murderous flood, the entrepreneur added.

Ajith Kumar, Secretary, Handloom Weavers Co-operative Society, Karimpadam in Chendamangalam said they had already received Rs five lakh in their account through the online booking for the ‘chekutty dolls’.

We have only helped them clean the soiled fabric. The other things including doll making and sales are being done by the entrepreneurs. The money is directly credited to the Society’s account,” he told PTI.

Chendamangalam is a traditional handloom weaving cluster located over 35 km away from Kochi.

Maldives strongman eyes new term in controversial poll

COLOMBO, SEP 23 (AFP): Voting began in a controversial presidential election in the Maldives Sunday, amid fears that the process has been rigged in China-friendly strongman Abdulla Yameen's favour. Yameen has imprisoned or forced into exile all his main rivals, and is expected to retain his hold on power in the Indian Ocean island nation. Foreign monitors and the opposition have slammed his government for its crackdown on opponents and the media, and urged the international community not to recognise the results of the election. Before polls opened, police raided the campaign headquarters of the opposition Maldivian Democratic Party (MDP), searched the building for several hours in a bid to stop what they called "illegal activities". There were no arrests. Despite the crack-down, hundreds of Maldivians headed to polling booths before voting began in the capital Male. "There is a lot of enthusiasm. Voters lined up to vote despite overcast weather," MDP party worker Shauna Aminath said. Yameen has borrowed hundreds of millions of dollars from China to build up infrastructure, alarming the nation's longtime backer India. The European Union has said it is ready to impose travel bans and asset freezes on individuals "if the situation does not improve", while the United States has warned it would "consider appropriate measures" against those undermining democracy in the country of 1,200 islands. Some 262,000 people in the archipelago -- famed for its white beaches and blue lagoons -- can vote in an election from which independent international monitors have been barred.

Pak’s opposition holds Imran Khan govt responsible for “diplomatic debacle” with India

ISLAMABAD, SEP 23 (PTI): Pakistan's two major opposition parties have questioned the "haste" shown by Prime Minister Imran Khan in making efforts to mend ties with India and held him responsible for the "diplomatic debacle", saying he should have done his "homework" before approaching for a meeting. Khan had written a letter to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, seeking to re-start bilateral talks on key issues "challenging the relationship" including on terrorism and Kashmir. India initially agreed to a meeting between Foreign Minister Sushma Swaraj and her Pakistani counterpart Shah Mahmood Qureshi on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly in New York this month. However, New Delhi on Friday called off the meeting, citing the "brutal" killing of three policemen in Jammu and Kashmir as well as the release of the postal stamps "glorifying" Kashmiri militant Burhan Wani. Dawn news reported that two major opposition parties -- the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz



(PML-N) and the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) -- have held the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf government responsible for the latest "diplomatic debacle" following New Delhi's refusal to hold the meeting. Former foreign minister and PML-N lawmaker Khawaja Moham-mad Asif criticised Khan for stating in the letter that "Pakistan remains ready to discuss terrorism" and said it seemed the government was "not prepared" from the day one. "Too much keenness being shown

by the prime minister showed weakness on our part. Giving them (India) too much reflects haste on our part to mend fences with India," Asif was quoted as saying by Dawn news. Asif said he was not against normalisation of relations between India and Pakistan but "dignity must be maintained". He regretted that Khan wrote a letter in which he "talked about terrorism" without realising that the US and India had recently issued a joint statement after the visit of Secretary of State Mike Pompeo to New Delhi and Islamabad which was "dead against" Pakistan. "They (the US and India) raised all kinds of allegations against Pakistan and you are talking about terrorism (in the letter). This is a sign of weakness (on our part)," Asif said. He also criticised Prime Minister Modi, alleging that "he is playing to the gallery" as part of poll campaign. PPP Vice-President and former envoy to the US Sherry Rehman said that the Imran Khan government should have done its homework before approaching India for a meeting, especially after the initial response. "Right now, however the Indian Govt and Army chief response is both immature and irresponsible. What are they threatening Pakistan about?" "They have crossed all diplomatic norms and protocols to emerge as a belligerent nuclear power that is only looking to externalise its own extremisms," Rehman said on her official social media page on Twitter. Ties between India and Pakistan nose-dived following a spate of terror attacks on Indian military bases by Pakistan based terror groups since January 2016. Following the strikes, India announced it will not engage in talks with Pakistan, saying terror and talks cannot go hand-in-hand. Amid heightened tension with Pakistan over Uri terror attack in which 18 soldiers were killed, India had pulled out of the SAARC Summit to be held in Islamabad in November, 2016. The summit was called off after Bangladesh, Bhutan and Afghanistan also declined to participate in the meet.



Japanese supply ship heads to space station after delays

TOKYO, SEP 23 (AP): An unmanned Japanese space capsule is headed to the International Space Station filled with cargo including food, experiments and new batteries. The craft was launched Sunday at 2:52 am local time from the Tanegashima Space Center in southern Japan. It will take four-and-a-half days to reach the space station. The launch was delayed for about two weeks because of bad weather and a mechanical problem. The delay has led NASA to postpone two space walks to install the six

lithium-ion batteries until new crew members arrive next month. They will replace the aging nickel-hydrogen batteries for the station's electric power, enabling an extension of its operations. The supply ship is a 9-metre (30-foot) long cylinder that will be retrieved by the space station's robotic arm. It is named Kounotori, which means white stork. The 5,500 kilograms of cargo includes racks and equipment for experiments and an experimental re-entry capsule to try to demonstrate a novel technology to bring back samples from the space station.

Pak man sings Indian national anthem at Indo-Pak match

DUBAI, SEP 23 (PTI): In a small gesture of peace, a video of a Pakistani cricket fan singing the Indian national anthem during a match between India and Pakistan in the ongoing Asia Cup has gone viral, according to a media report. Adil Taj, 29, was among the thousands of cricket enthusiasts who attended the match on September 19 at the Dubai International Cricket Stadium in which Pakistan lost to India by eight wickets. Taj said that he had got goosebumps when he first listened to the Indian national anthem in a Bollywood movie and the move was a small gesture of peace from his side, Gulf News

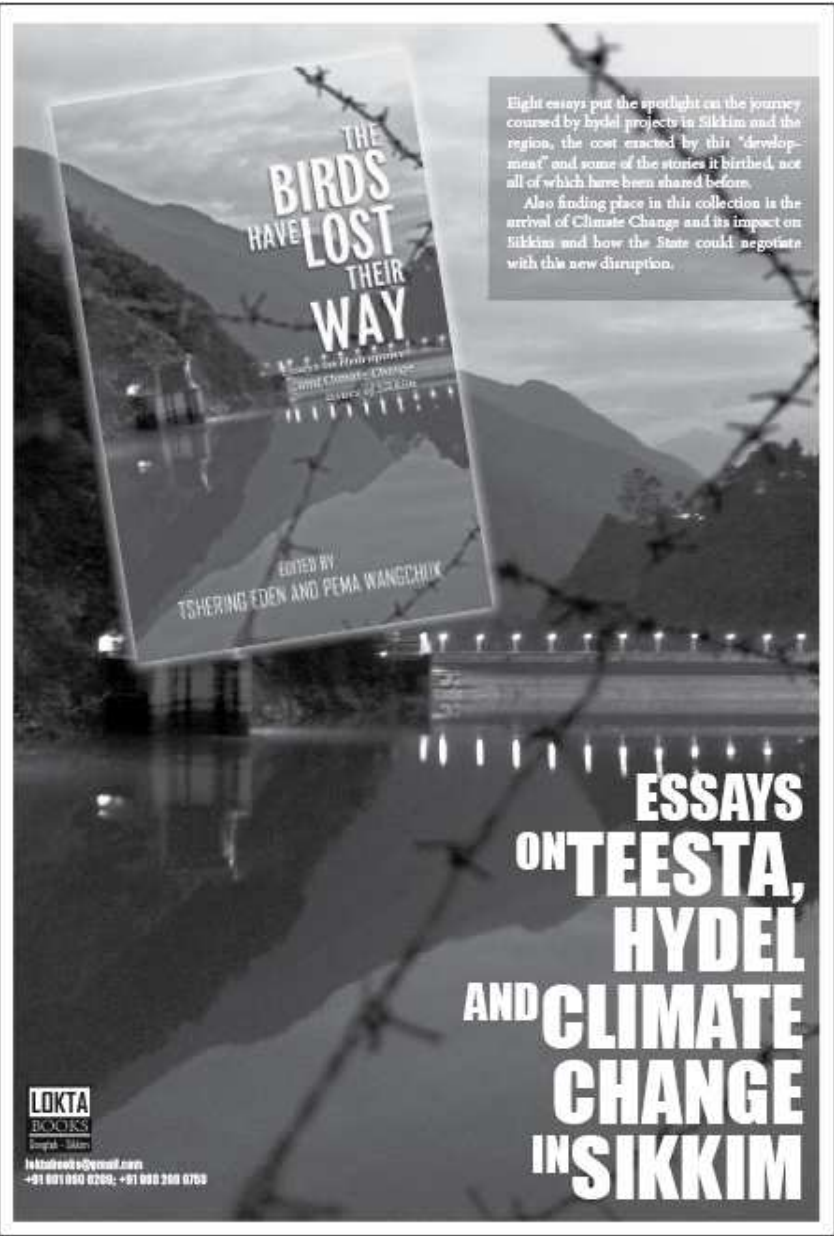
reported. "I am a big Bollywood fan. I heard the Indian national anthem in the Hindi movie, Kabhi Khushi Kabhi Gham. One of the scenes about the anthem was so emotional, it gave me goosebumps. From then onwards, I tried to learn the anthem when it was sung before any cricket match that India was playing," Taj was quoted as saying by the report. "During the match, the Pakistan national anthem was sung first, all Indians who were in the stadium stood up and paid due respect. This touched me and I thought I should join them in singing their anthem," Taj, who lives in Dubai, said.

Artists claim bias against WW I Indian soldiers by British Army

LONDON, SEP 23 (PTI): A group of Indian artists in the UK to mark the centenary of the World War I has claimed they have uncovered documents that reveal bias against the Indian subcontinent soldiers fighting alongside the British Army in the 20th century war. The Delhi-based artists from the Raqs Media Collective told the 'Observer' that papers from the British Library revealed that the British armed forces systematically neglected to treat psychological problems among Indian soldiers and adopted unequal measures in the care of soldiers traumatised by their experiences from the battleground. "The condition of shell shock was first diagnosed in 1915 by the English doctor Charles Meyers. But documents we found in the British Library show Meyers quickly dropped the term because it was feared ordinary soldiers would find it easy to understand and so would ask to be seen by medics," said Shuddhabrata Sengupta of Raqs.

"Instead Meyers suggested a more opaque diagnosis of NYD, or Not Yet Diagnosed Nervous, which ordinary soldiers would find harder to use," he said. Senguptas team is working on a new art project at Colchester in Essex, commissioned to commemorate the end of the World War I being marked in the UK since 2014 and set to end in November this year. The term "trench back", which features in their new installation 'Not Yet At Ease', was often adopted to describe symptoms that were actually psychological. "The idea of trench back' derived from the earlier condition of 'railway back', which was used for people who were thought to have been upset, or jolted, by the speed of rail travel," said Sengupta. "It was a way of talking about wounds or damage to the spine, instead of mental health. Trench back was supposedly caused by being knocked by falling debris in the trenches," he said. The artist believes the Raqs

Media Collective's art installation will be the first public admission of these dubious wartime diagnoses outside scholarly circles. As part of the project, they have created a twisting complex of padded cells to represent the treatment cells in the World War I hospitals. "But they also follow the form of the trenches themselves, which were labyrinthine. We are also creating a palimpsest [manuscript] of sounds, including readings from these official reports and fragments of a novel, with film footage and photos," he said. According to the historic records, more than 1.3 million soldiers from undivided India served in the WW I as part of the British Indian Army during the Raj era 100 years ago. World War I was a global war originating in Europe that lasted from 1914 to 1918. More than 70 million military personnel, including 60 million Europeans, were mobilised in one of the largest wars in history.





SMILING SELENA! Singer Selena Gomez looks carefree as she steps out for a coffee with friends in Studio City, Calif.

GEMMA CHAN HAPPY WITH SUCCESS OF 'CRAZY RICH ASIANS'

LONDON, SEP 23 (PTI): Actor Gemma Chan has said the enormous success of romantic comedy "Crazy Rich Asians" is beyond she had imagined.

According to Femalefirst, the 35-year-old actor, who played Astrid Leong-Teo, the cousin of lead star Henry Golding, said a film with an all-Asian cast was long time over due.

"It has been beyond what any of us every imagined. It's the first mainstream Hollywood film for 25 years to feature Asians in the lead and an all-Asian cast so it's been a long time," Chan said.

She expressed hope that such projects would become a norm in the industry in the coming times.

"When I first saw the film, I felt emotional but I also felt relief because I thought Thank God this film is good"



because we're hopefully not going to have to wait another 25 years before they let Asians make a movie," Chan said.

The actor will be next

seen in Brie Larson-fronted superhero film "Captain Marvel", where she is playing Minn-Erva, a Kree sniper and member of Starforce.

Nandita Das on creating art during troubled times: There's price to pay

JUSTIN RAO

MUMBAI, SEP 23 (PTI): Quoting Bertolt Brecht's poem "In the dark times, will there also be singing? Yes, there will be singing, about the dark times" Nandita Das says it's important to be the voice of dissent in the country today.

Nandita has been vocal about the clamp down of freedom of expression and says when the times are dark, speaking up becomes important.

"More voices should come out, that's what is going to save the country and society. There are people who are speaking up. Some of them are being jailed, some are paying a heavy price, they are being killed. Gauri Lankesh (journalist), in her in city (was killed). She was a friend of mine," Nandita told PTI.

"For speaking within the constitutional boundaries, for being the voice of dissent, there's a big price to pay undoubtedly. Given a chance, if Gauri was there, she would do that all over again. There are many such people who are being the conscience of the society," she adds.

The actor-filmmaker says her recent project, "Manto" a film on the life of celebrated



writer Saadat Hasan Manto finds relevance in the current scenario.

"When there is a culture of silence, of intolerance, when the atmosphere is tensed and strife with all of this, isn't that when we need strong voices, films, strong journalists and writers to speak for all of us? Manto's relevance has only increased since the time I started working on the project," she says.

Nandita says the desire to make the film came out with the urge to reflect the current times.

"I took up this project more as a response to what is happening around us. It wasn't put of nostalgia or to

put Manto on a pedestal. He wouldn't have liked that earlier... I admire him because he doesn't want to hide anything about anybody including himself.

"That is why to celebrate people like Manto is important and that's what people are relating to. While people are keeping quiet, inside they're troubled by it. When anybody else speaks up we say 'oh wow so gutsy'. You feel empowered when you see others speak up," Nandita adds.

In 2012, the filmmaker says "Manto was just an idea" in her head, which gradually began shaping up into a film.

To get co-producers on board for the project was a task

for Nandita, who says it was difficult to communicate the kind of film she wanted to make as people were quick to label it as a period film, or a biopic.

"When I started working on the film in 2012, 'Manto' was an idea. I was keen to evoke the desire to be more free spirited, honest and courageous. It's difficult to explain all of this. They say oh you're talking like an activist, talk like a filmmaker.

"In the film world I'm seen as an activist and in the activist world they think of me as an actor. So I'm like Manto. I don't belong to one place."

Starring Nawazuddin Siddiqui in the titular role, "Manto" released last Friday.

Bollywood remembers 'fearless' Kalpana Lajmi

MUMBAI, SEP 23 (PTI): Celebrities such as Raveena Tandon, Manoj Bajpayee and director Hansal Mehta, among others mourned the demise of "fearless" filmmaker Kalpana Lajmi Sunday.

The critically acclaimed director passed away at the age of 64. She was suffering from kidney ailment and breathed her last at the city-based Kokilaben Dhirubhai Ambani Hospital early morning.

Social media was flooded with condolences for Lajmi.

Raveena, who worked with Lajmi in "Daman" (2001) and won National Film Award for Best Actress for the film, took to Twitter to recall the "treasured" memories spent on the movie sets.

"You will be missed Kalpanaji. Was not your time to go... But may your heart now be at peace. Those days while shooting 'Daman' will be a treasured memory. #KalpanaLajmi Om Shanti," the actor tweeted alongside a photograph from the shoot.



Manoj wrote on the microblogging site, "Sad a very sad news. May her soul rest in peace.#restinpeacekalpanalajmi"

Director Hansal Mehta, who had worked as editor on Lajmi's "Darmiyaan", remembered her as a fearless woman in a male-dominated film industry.

"Just heard about Kalpana Lajmi passing away. Had worked with her as an editor when she made 'Darmiyaan'.

"Will always remember her with fondness and respect for being a fear-

less woman and a powerhouse of a person in a male dominated industry. Rest In Peace dear Kalpana," Mehta tweeted.

Huma Qureshi, who was one of the first film personalities to react on Lajmi's death, wrote on Twitter, "Deeply saddened... At around 4:30 am today morning #KalpanaLajmi passed away... May she rest in peace."

Filmmaker Onir remembered Lajmi as his mentor, who bears a huge influence on his filmography.

"RIP #KalpanaLajmi. My first exposure to a film shooting was while working as a song director and editor in 'Daman'.

"Remember many evenings of food and music in her residence along with Bhupen Da. Learned a lot while working with her," he said.

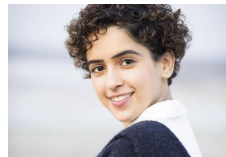
Known for making fiery films with women at the core of her stories, her filmography boasts of movies like "Ek Pal", "Rudaali" and "Chingaari" (2006), her last directorial, which starred Sushmita Sen.

Happy not being very famous: Sanya Malhotra

Mumbai, Sep 23 (PTI): Sanya Malhotra returns to screen with "Pataakha", two years after her debut "Dangal", and the actor says she had her goals set -- wait patiently for the best film and not chase stardom.

Sanya won critical acclaim for her debut, which was produced and headlined by Aamir Khan.

"I have learnt to have patience. You have to wait for the next best after your debut. Post 'Dangal', I knew I didn't want to do any film where I'm just there. I'm happy for not being very famous and not being all over on social media plat-



forms," Sanya told PTI.

Her idea of waiting for the right film is also partly based on one of Aamir's advices to her and her "Dangal" co-star Fatima Sana Shaikh.

"Going slow in my career makes me happy. Aamir used to tell me and Fatima 'don't do more than two films a year'.

(But) I did three films a year! When he got to know I signed all these, he said 'you're doing so many movies!'"

The actor says her life has changed in a "lovely way" post the blockbuster debut and things have become easy.

From going through a phase of not having money or films in her hand, Sanya feels blessed to have a lineup of projects ready for release, including Ritesh Batra's "Photograph" featuring Nawazuddin Siddiqui and Ayushmann Khurrana-starrer "Badhaai Ho." In "Pataakha", Sanya will be playing one of the

two warring sisters.

The film, much like her debut, is set in a village and the 26-year-old actor says she is drawn to such stories as she has "nothing to lose".

"I started out with 'Dangal' where I'm not looking like a conventional heroine, where the emphasis was more on the character. What I learnt from that was even if you're doing a conventional film, you can't go on set unprepared." Sanya says though she is coming from a hugely successful debut, she is not carrying any baggage to prove herself to people.

ARIES: You might host a gathering of friends and neighbors interested in astrology, tarot, numerology, or other forms of psychic focus, Aries. You'll probably enjoy yourself, both because of the information discussed and the camaraderie between you and your guests. This might have been planned as a one-time thing, but everyone will have so much fun that you'll plan another meeting.

TAURUS: This could prove a busy day for you, Taurus. You may attend at least one party, or perhaps just meet with a group of friends for drinks or dinner. On this occasion you're apt to find the banter and camaraderie shared with people you care about not only stimulating but also relaxing. You could also receive a lot of useful information.

GEMINI: Some extra income could come your way through the use of computers or other technology, Gemini. You should have a busy day, but you'll like what you do and be excited by the prospect of the extra money. Though you might not be thinking about it now, what you're doing could develop into a lucrative business, eventually bringing you to the question, what do you really want to do with your life?

CANCER: Are you interested in video or computer games? If not, Cancer, someone close to you may be, because all signs are that you might spend a lot of time now in the company of friends entertaining yourself with technology. This could be more enjoyable than you expect. You like being with these people and

basking in their energy. The conversation will be interesting, too.

LEO: Today you might entertain a houseful of astrologers, with a few psychics and healers thrown in for good measure. Your head may spin as a result of all the concepts discussed, as if your brain can't process the information quickly enough. Don't despair. You're absorbing more than you think you are. After everyone leaves, take a walk or you won't be able to sleep.

VIRGO: A lot of activity could take place in your neighborhood today, Virgo. If you live in a major city, perhaps a movie or news event is being filmed nearby and the crowds are gathering. Don't be too shy to go out and see what's going on. If you don't live in a city, this could be something

more innocuous. Either way, expect some excitement.

LIBRA: Making use of state-of-the-art technology to increase your income could take up your time and energy today, Libra. You might be starting a new business or enhancing the efficiency of a current one, but in order to do it your brain will have to process a lot of information. Don't be intimidated by the technical stuff. Just take it step by step and you'll catch on.

SCORPIO: Adventure is always one of your main priorities, Scorpio. Today you might have your mind on a type of adventure that you've never tried before. You might consider climbing a mountain, exploring Rome, or visiting the South Pacific. Whatever it is you want to do, you'd better start making serious plans

now or you'll be too antsy for words. **SAGITTARIUS:** The study of astrology and psychic disciplines might be your primary focus today, Sagittarius. You might even take a class in whatever subject interests you. You can also expect to meet some intriguing new people who may be a bit weird but nonetheless could become close friends. If it isn't too dangerous, walk home after class.

CAPRICORN: Friends, group activities, and social events could take up a lot of your time today, Capricorn, so expect to spend your day interacting with people. They could range from any kind of social, ethnic, educational, or national background. You'll probably find the day interesting, entertaining, and gratifying. You could also make some new

friends and meet at least one potential love partner.

AQUARIUS: This could shape up to be a busy day, Aquarius. You're concentrating on two things. The first is working with computers and other technology, possibly in a creative capacity. The second is interacting with a lot of new people. Your contact with these people could be very pleasant and quite stimulating, so make the most of the opportunities.

PISCES: Today you should feel excited and enthusiastic about life in general, Pisces. Your mind might jump from possible creative projects to philosophy, travel, distant places, and you may consider all of them to be the focus of potential future activities. Romance could also be on your mind, but not in an obsessive way.