



NAMTHANG RATEYPANI RECEIVES NEW MLA

pg 02

LAST AUDITION FOR GLAM MISS SIKKIM AND MISS TEEN SIKKIM

pg 02

LINGDOK SCHOOL BEATS BOJOGHARI TO WIN U-15 TOURNEY

pg 03



SummitTIMES

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ON TOP OF THE NEWS

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Administrative missive reminds officers about work

SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 07 JUN:

In combo of two circulars issued on 04 June, Chief Secretary AK Shrivastava has reminded government servants about the basics of, well, what is expected of them.

One of the circulars begins with "Transfer means Transfer." This is in quotes and underlined, followed by the announcement: "There will be no reconsideration."

The circular goes on to insist that transferred officers and staff "have to" report "imme-

diately" to their new places of postings and warns that stern disciplinary action will be taken if they fail to do so.

"Government has to run by rules," the CS signs off.

In another circular issued the same day, the CS reminds Secretaries that "Five days a week does not mean any relaxation or laxity or negligence on part of the officers and staff during 10.00 am to 4:30 pm."

"This may please be brought to the notice of all," he concludes.

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CM takes stock of traffic situation

Directs Roads Dept to open Shyari-Ranipool road at the earliest

GANGTOK, 07 JUN (IPR):

A close coordination meeting regarding the traffic situation in the state was chaired by the Chief Minister, PS Golay and was attended by Minister, UDHD, Arun Upreti, Minister, RMDD, Sonam Lama, the Chief Secretary, AK Shrivastava, ACS, SC Gupta, Director General of Police, SD Negi, Special DGP, A Sudhakar Rao, DIG Range, DB Giri, Secretary, RMDD, CS Rao, Secretary, UDHD, Ganga Pradhan, SP Traffic, Tshering Namgyal Gyatso, Chief Engineer (RMDD), LD Lamtha and others.

After numerous deliberations the Chief Minister stated that the state government has to come up with alternative measures since land is limited and solution has to be

procured with what we have at hand.

He directed Roads and Bridges Department that the road from Shyari to Ranipool should be opened for light vehicle at the earliest. Another road alternative that the state government should work upon is the Ranipool/Ray Khola/Sichey alternative road which should be considered for decongestion of the National highway, he said.

The Chief Minister said that the problem of traffic congestion is not just a problem of the state government but it is the problem of the whole people of the state. He directed that all road whose work had started or was under progress, should be completed at the earliest.

He also directed that



a meeting with proper Power Point Presentation with GREF, Sikkim Police, NHIDCL should be convened at the earliest so that feasible roadmap should be brought forward for easing the traffic problem in the capital.

Framing of policies like time limit for completion of work, relaxation period and penalty

in case of non-completion should also be put in the Agreement, the Chief Minister added. Plying of more Government run buses for the employees could also be one of the solutions, he said.

Minister, UDHD, Arun Upreti suggested that a Committee should be formed which should check the work of Con-

tractors who have been assigned crucial projects. He also put forth his suggestion for restoring the route from Lal Bazaar area to Nam Nang so that it could ease the highway load.

Chief Secretary, AK Shrivastava stated that the meeting today was for a thoughtful analysis of the traffic situation

which has impacted all the people of state in their daily lives. He said that the population of the state has taken a quantum jump but the land holding had remained the same. This could be because of migration of people from rural to urban areas and also because of surge of educational institutions in the state.

The Chief Secretary stated that diversion of traffic movement from the main highway was necessary and he suggested various alternatives such as ropeway, efficient city buses, walking to office/school once a week, ban on private car during certain hours and ban on site allocation along the highway.

turn to pg02

500 Kailash Manasarovar yatris via Sikkim this year

GANGTOK, 07 JUN (IPR):

A co-ordination meeting regarding Kailash Manasarovar Yatra via Nathula, 2019 was held at the Conference Hall of New Secretariat, Tashiling, today. The meeting was chaired by the Additional Chief Secretary-cum-Principal Secretary, Tourism and Civil Aviation Department, SC Gupta.

The meeting was attended by Secretary, Tourism and Civil Aviation Department, Mr TT Bhutia, Special Secretary, Tourism and Civil Aviation Department, Ms Namrata Thapa, Officers from STDC, heads of the various departments of the State Government and other central organizations including BRO, ITBP, Army, Customs, MHA (Bureau of Immigration) and BSNL.

During the meeting, the Additional Chief Secretary, Mr SC Gupta discussed in detail the preparedness of all the concerned government



departments and other agencies for smooth conduct of the yatra. He directed the departments and the agencies involved to work in co-ordination for the success of the yatra. He also enquired about the basic facilities and services in details like accommodations, uninterrupted power and water supply, transport, health and communications etc.

Secretary, Tourism and Civil Aviation De-

partment, TT Bhutia in his welcome address highlighted the details of the yatra. He informed that this year 10 batches of 50 pilgrims each are scheduled for the yatra via Nathula.

He stated that from Gangtok the Kailash Manasarovar routes passes through scenic places like Tsomgu Lake and through the vast landscape of Tibetan Plateau. The duration of the yatra

would be 21 days including 3 days in New Delhi for preparatory work.

The route which passes through Nathula in Sikkim is motorable and suitable for senior citizens who are unable to undertake arduous trekking, said Secretary, Mr TT Bhutia.

The HoDs present in the meeting assured to extend all possible support for the success of the Yatra.

PNGS students impress with their drone piloting skills

SAGAR CHHETRI

GANGTOK, 07 JUN:

In an innovative initiative, Atal Tinkering Lab of Paljor Namgyal Girls School organised the first Inter-House Drone Race 2019 here in the Platinum Jubilee Hall of EPCS Church on Friday.

The event, organised under the aegis of Atal Innovation Mission, is Sikkim's first ever technology-driven Inter-House competition at the school level.

Rayong House emerged champion of the Inter-House Drone Race 2019 while a class XII student, Prerna Chhetri, of Rayong House was adjudged the Best Pilot.

After displaying their piloting skills over four rounds, Rayong House scored 235 points to finish on the first position, while Borang House came second with 180 points, followed by Rabong House on third position with 80 points and Ralong House on fourth position with 45 points.



Prof Tejanta Chingtham, CEO of Atal Incubation Centre, Sikkim Manipal University TBI, was present as the chief guest. He is a well known professor with strong professional education with a doctorate on intelligent robots, computational intelligence, artificial intelligence from Birla Institute of Technology and IIT Guwahati.

He was accompanied by Principal Jem Pandi Targain and teachers of the

school along with excited students of the School.

In his address, the chief guest appreciated the innovative initiative of PNG School in the field of technology.

Prof Chingtham, while mentioning that robotic and artificial intelligence were a new trend in the world, appreciated that students have been learning these fields from the school level itself.

He remarked that the world has been working on drone technology to

use in day to day life and PNG School has already started to prepare drone pilots. Prof Chingtham assured to provide all possible support and guidance from his side.

While speaking to media persons, project in-charge, Ivan D Lepcha, informed that the initiative started with a Quadcopter workshop organised by Atal Tinkering Lab, PNGS, in April under the Atal Innovation Mission.

turn to pg02

Sikkim Legislative Assembly 2019: A Tale of Two Parties

SUNIL PRADHAN

The electoral milieu of the just over and done with Sikkim Legislative Assembly Elections, 2019, in a broad brush-stroke, was a battle between two regional parties — political and 'personal'—veiled and overt - the Sikkim Democratic Front, led by India's longest serving Chief Minister, Pawan Chamling, and Sikkim Krantikari Morcha led by PS Tamang (Golay). Despite starting his winning streak in Sikkim's politics in 1994 as Chamling's legislator cum minister—Sikkim's political discourse in the opinion of opposing political supporters' was nothing but excerpts of two leaders in the fray. Now—as leaders of two opposing parties—Chamling and Golay—seems to have very different views of what Sikkim should become.

In the heated run up to the elections Golay stood disqualified from becoming a legislator and therefore his 'becoming' CM sets a constitutional precedence.

The exhibits of the end result —

15 against 17 - in favour of SKM in the 32-member Sikkim Legislative Assembly. The simple majority of 17 was all it took the SKM to achieve a milestone to stake claim to form a government even as there is a 15-member opposition party led by a 5-time Chief Minister in the SLA. This is a win-win situation for the Sikkimese people. The ruling SKM government is still behind the magic figure in the SLA of acquiring 2/3rd majority for passage of resolutions and bills as law from the floor of the assembly.

In this quagmire, for the first time in Sikkim's electoral history, the fundamental political principle of check-and-balance is set to warrant precedence for effective regulation of ordering the spectrum of political power. SLA has not always been bereft of opposition but has often lacked the mechanism of balancing power while not to speak of internal cohesion and democracy within the party structure. Therefore, the lack of a mechanism of balancing power from the opposition camps had its consolation

prize—put simply—dub the ruling government 'autocrat' and 'dictatorial'—antithesis of democratic participation. This ebb and flow of opposition presence, or rather the absence, in SLA, has been the cause of 'horse trading' or comprehensive white wash and electoral drubbing of opposition parties leaving a vacuum for no further sign and trace of credible opposition until the commencement of the subsequent general elections.

These basics are set to dictate the proceedings of SLA, but this election is making headlines for different political reasons. The SKM leader's claim to the CM's post, despite his disqualification from contesting elections and SDF leadership citing constitutional precedence and rules which tag Golay's elevation as unconstitutional, I am suggesting to re-think concluded elections in two perspectives.

The first—Chamling's reign of twenty five years did come to a grounding halt; he managed to sustain and retain superior vote percentage to suggest that he still has about 50% support base among

the Sikkimese electors. Here, it is important to remember that his defeat does not tantamount to a fall from power, for he commands a higher vote-share and domineering presence in SLA as well as in local elected bodies. His charisma, flowing from his being the longest serving CM in India, is a reminder of his political acumen. His vociferous approach of portraying SKM as 'Goonda' party is a reminder of his political sharpness — i.e. intimidating his opponents to the point that they fall into the 'trap' and respond with 'angry' responses and actions confirming the tag. Therefore, for the ruling party, 'anger management' is crucial for deciding the fate of SLA currently poised at 15 for SDF against 17 for SKM in the upcoming by-polls in the three assembly seats—two seats vacated by SDF and one by SKM.

The road map for Chamling's 'come-back' and SKM's stay in power depends on the blueprint of political engagement between SKM and SDF both, in the floor of the Assembly and outside the Assem-

bly in the run up to the crucial by-poll.

The second perspective—requires serious thinking since SKM leader's elevation as CM despite being disqualified from seeking election for another five to six years as a legislator is all but a different and yet similar context and scenario to Tamil Nadu leader Jayalalitha becoming the CM despite being disqualified as a legislator. Here, the Supreme Court ruling makes it mandatory for a non-elected member holding the office of CM/ PM/ minister to seek re-election within six months of assuming the said office. The same person cannot continue in office without getting elected within six months of swearing in as the leader of the Assembly. This political predicament facing Sikkim today echoes the SC bench comprising Justice S. S. Anand, Justice R.C Lahoti and Justice K.G Balakrishnan judgement on the legality of non-elected members assuming and continuing thereafter the lapse of six months in office without getting elected directly or indirectly.

turn to pg02

Yangang Himalayan Free Church celebrates World Env Day



SUMMIT REPORT

Gangtok, 06 Jun:

Yangang Himalayan Free Church celebrated World Environment Day on 05 June. Church members participated in a plantation drive and road cleaning activities.

BO Yangang Range, Sri Lal Sharma, was special guest for the event along with the panchayats of Yangang-Rangang

GPU.

Branch Churches of Yangang Himalayan Free Church also participated in the cleanliness drive.

Panchayat President of Yangang-Rangang GPU, DK Rai, and the children of Sunday School (SSTF) also participated in the event.

More than 200 saplings were planted during the event.

Labour Minister visits deptt, calls for diligence

GANGTOK, 07 JUN (IPR): Minister for Labour Department, Mingma Norbu Sherpa, visited Labour Department at Sokeythang today.

The Minister was warmly welcomed by the Labour Department Secretary, LP Chettri, and other officials and staff.

Addressing the staff at the department, the Minister shared that this was just the beginning of the new government and assured that they were committed to work for the betterment of the state.

As for the Department, he said that the main focus should be to uplift the working class of the state since this department was directly linked with



labourers who formed the backbone of the state.

Seeking the love and support of the officials and staff, the Minister urged all to work sincerely with full of dedication and without any fear.

The Minister stated that without the support and co-operation

of employees and public, the government would not be able to deliver good governance.

Minister affirmed that new government is fully committed to deliver good governance and inclusive development in the state.

The Minister further announced that rewards will be given to employ-

ees who work with dedication and requested all to follow the new office hour time table with full honesty.

Earlier the Secretary presented a detailed report on the department.

During his visit, Minister visited all sections of the office and interacted with officials and staffs.

WED at Mamring School

SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 07 JUN:

Mamring Senior Secondary School, East Sikkim, celebrated World Environment Day on the theme, "Beat Air Pollution," with a special programme hosted on cam-

pus. Students planted saplings of ornamental and flowering plants, carried out a cleanliness drive and organised awareness sessions against pollution, deforestation, global warming and climate change on 04 and

05 Jun, 2019. WED is observed on 05 June every year.

The program was attended by all teachers and students from classes 6 and above. The programme was jointly conducted by the school's

NSS unit, SAATHI club and Eco Club under the guidance of Vice Principal, IP Khatiwara, Green Teacher BS Bastola, NSS PO cum SAATHI teacher, Bikash Bhattarai and other SAATHI teacher coordinators.

Last audition for Glam Miss Sikkim and Miss Teen Sikkim

SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 07 JUN:

Mega announcement for all the beauty queens of Sikkim! Last round of auditions for Glam Miss Sikkim and Miss Teen Sikkim, 2019, will be held at

Community Hall, Singtam on 09 Jun, 2019 from 10:00am onwards. This audition round is being held for those who have not been able to attend previous auditions held at Gangtok, Namchi and Jorethang.



KUTSE SHEGU

The 49th day Kutse Shedu of Late Doma Bhutia w/o Lakpa Thendup Bhutia who left for her heavenly abode on 01.05.2019 falls on 18.6.2019 (Tuesday). All relatives, friends & well wishers are requested to join us in offering prayers for the departed soul at our residence at Below Law College, Helipad, Lower Burtuk, Gangtok, East Sikkim.

Lakpa Thendup Bhutia(Husband), Kesseng Norbu Bhutia(son) & all family members.
Mob: 9800655921/ 6294186876.

BEFORE THE LD.OATH COMMISSIONER, EAST SIKKIM AT GANGTOK AFFIDAVIT

I, Shanti Pakhrin(Tamang) d/o Shri Bhagi Shamsher Pakhrin(Tamang) , R/o Sang, East Sikkim at present residing at Nam Nang Road, Gangtok East Sikkim, do hereby solemnly affirm and declare on oath as under:-

1. That the actual and correct spelling of my name is Shanti Pakhrin (Tamang) instead of Santi Parkhin (Tamang).
2. That inadvertently the spelling of my name has been wrongly recorded as Santi Pakhrin(Tamang) instead of Shanti Pakhrin (Tamang) in my Certificate of Identification, as well as Scheduled Tribe/ Caste Certificate, issued by the Government of Sikkim.
3. That the purpose of this affidavit is to declare that the correct spelling of my name is Shanti Pakhrin(Tamang) and not Santi Pakhrin.
4. That this affidavit is made bonafide.

Shanti Pakhrin

DEPONENT.

Minister in-charge visits Land Revenue Deptt, receives briefing

GANGTOK, 07 JUN (IPR): Minister, Land Revenue and Disaster Management Department, HRDD, Law and Sports & Youth Affairs, Kunga Nima Lepcha, visited the Land Revenue and Disaster Management Department at Tashiling Secretariat today to interact with officers and staff there.

He was accorded a warm welcome by the Chief Secretary who is In charge of the department and other officers led by the Special Secretary.

The Special Secretary made a brief power-point presentation on the responsibilities and activities of the Department. The Additional Director, SSDMA also made a short presentation on the various disaster mitigation works being undertaken by the department at South Lhonak Lake and Mangan town.

The Chief Secretary also briefed the Minister

on various aspects of the department and laid particular stress on disaster management.

He urged the officers to conduct mock drills at schools and the new STNM Hospital and informed that he will lead the mock drill at the hospital. He also shared his experience of serving in the districts.

The Minister took a review of the department's work with particular reference to land acquisition, collection of land rent (khazana) and disaster mitigation works.

While appreciating the work being undertaken by the department he urged all the officials to be punctual and productive and work for the public good. He stressed that everyone needs to work in a transparent manner without fear or favour to serve the public and achieve the objectives set by the Government.

Namthang Rateypani receives new MLA



SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 07 JUNE:

The people of Namthang-Rateypani constituency accorded a warm welcome to area MLA, Minister Sanjit Kharel, at Rateypani in South Sikkim on Wednesday.

The reception programme started with a plantation drive led by the Minister on the occasion of World Environ-

ment Day.

The programme, which was chaired by SKM leader, Ganesh Rai, was also attended by officials of Forest and Police Departments along with BDO Namthang and supporters of SKM party from Namthang-Rateypani constituency.

The programme has also featured a cultural presentation by children of the constituency.

PNGS students impress...

He added that after a lot of hard work and preparation, this competition has been organised to develop scientific skills of students. He mentioned that the motive of the competition was to prepare children for the future.

"Children need to prepare for the emerging future technologies in robotics and artificial intelligence. In this line we have been doing lots of activities in robotics, artificial intelligence, electronics and some minor projects at Atal Tinkering Lab of the school," Mr Lepcha said.

He informed that Prof Chingtham has been inducted as a mentor of ATL at PNGS and added that the school will take these initiatives under his guidance to reach new heights and to prepare children of Sikkim for future technologies.

Sikkim Legislative Assembly...

The SC had observed such a malpractice as "would be clearly derogatory to the constitutional scheme, improper, undemocratic and invalid" without seeking re-election within six months. The constitutional predicament of Sikkim's political situation—six months window period begins now but re-election for SKM leader seems untenable.

The upcoming by-polls in the three assembly seats are decisive for the health of the SLA for it is unevenly poised at 15 against 17. The first session of the SLA held on 04 June, 2019 in fact did not start with the principle agenda of envisioning 'parivartan' in Sikkim. The ghost of the disqualification debate regarding the Supreme Court judgement came to haunt the proceedings of the SLA when 15 MLAs under Chamling adopted a strategy to stage a walk out from SLA in what appears to be in rejection of Golay's elevation as CM. The strategy to walk out from the floor of the Assembly has a healthy precedence in India's democratic deliberation and norms though not held high as an order of democratic principle. The repercussion of the walkout from SLA—heckling and jeering of Chamling and his MLA allegedly by party functionaries seated in the visitor's gallery is a testimonial of 'undemocratic' order in the house. 'Goonda'—a rhetorical jibe, Chamling continues to employ to ridicule the opposition in attesting their credentials is not far from reality as it is gradually taking precedence as part of Sikkim's political culture and this must stop.

The political parties, whether SKM or SDF, must rein in their cadres and strive for democratic and vigorous functioning of SLA. The party functionaries other than elected representatives are not entitled to record their observations let alone their angst on the floor of the Assembly. Here, political correctness is not a debate I would like to establish or highlight but as potential leaders, all must, on a war footing position people's mandate on the pedestal and be guided by the will of the people. Subordinating the will of the people to the political pragmatism of boycotting or not boycotting SLA by opposition or debating whether having a non-legislator CM is sustainable in the absence of popular mandate are antithetical to the very democratic processes constituting deliberation on democratic principles is divergence. The benefit of doubt has it that leaders are quoting constitutional provisions but upholding constitutional morality is an individual as well as collective responsibility.

The convergence of a shout out call for 'parivartan' in Sikkim under SKM as the will of the people is noteworthy and self explanatory, but actions of heckling and jeering divides this will of the people and as always "People" in people's mandate ends with every political hustings.

[the writer is Assistant Professor at Jamia Milla Islamia, New Delhi]

CM takes stock of traffic situation...

ACS, SC Gupta said that good public transport system for students should be created which would aim at mass transport alternative. Battery operated mode of transport in the long run would also help, with car pooling as the best short term alternative for the government employees.

Director General of Police, SD Negi also gave his valuable inputs about the various components like land use and the engineering aspect of road which contribute to traffic congestion. He suggested a tie-up with all the required Departments so that result oriented implications could be ascertained.

Special DGP, Sudhakar Rao suggested the state government to tackle the problem on short term, midterm and long term basis. For short term result, he suggested car pool for officers, flyovers at various points, pedestrian walking and bus stoppages at correct places.

Secretary Transport, SD Dhakal also gave his valuable suggestions. He suggested that LPG gas distribution should be done only during the weekends so that truck congestion could be restricted. He also proposed that the road from Arithang to DPH be reconstructed along with mid-term solution like private parking in available areas.

Secretary UDHD, Ganga Pradhan elucidated that there are in total 54 roads in and around Gangtok. Immediate solution she pointed out to ease the traffic situation in the capital was Pedestrianisation and improvement of walkways for the general people and link roads such as from Paljor Stadium Road to Bye Pass area/Daragaoon to Jor Dhara/NH31 to Gairi Gaon etc.

She also suggested for introduction of travel pass in Gangtok Ropeway for employees from Deorali to Secretariat with fixed timing and increase in cable frequency to accommodate all during the peak hours.

Ms Pradhan also suggested for cable car as mass transport alternative from Ranipool to Burtuk with numerous stations which would be beneficial to the commuters. She also informed that numerous car parks with multi level car parking facility proposals are already in the pipeline.

SP, Traffic, Tshering Namgyal Gyatso gave an in depth account of the traffic situation in the capital and placed few points where immediate action needs to be taken. He suggested that the Tourist permit office be shifted back to the old venue in MG Marg since it has added to more traffic woes at Zero Point.

He also said that few approach areas like the bend at Old Sadar Thana, entry point of Syari from the highway and entry point of Convoy ground road to ICAR all need to be expanded so that there is smooth vehicular flow without obstructing the traffic.

Mr Gyatso also suggested for upgradation of Bye-pass road leading to the new STNM hospital since there is heavy flow of traffic now. Similarly, he placed his suggestions for alternative road from Tadong College to Manipal and a review of the drainage system of the state.

The Chief Minister gave a patient hearing to all the suggestions of the august gathering and said that the meeting was a step forward at the right time in the right direction. He called for collective co-operation in handling the traffic situation and hoped for result oriented solutions at the earliest from all the concerned Departments.

~ SummitTIMES ~ CLASSIFIEDS

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PLOT FOR SALE:

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

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Interested candidates may contact

: Deepa Yoga Centre at

Mob: +91 7432043719/ +91 8170953919.

LAND FOR SALE

A vacant plot measuring 0.38 Ha. (16552.80 sq – ft) is for sale at Amdo Golai (above the main road), Gangtok. For more information please contact – 9717191985/9474651223.

WANTED

HOUSEKEEPER/BABYSITTER .

Contact: 9933443442/9800500696.

Taxi shortage season is here again



REBYNA RANA
GANGTOK, 07 JUN:

Tourist season is here again and so is the problem of taxi shortage. The same problem surfaces every year and yet the state authorities or civil society has not been able to address the issue.

What is more, this

year the shortage of taxis has made life difficult for those visiting and working in the STNM hospital, which is now no longer located in the heart of town. At the same time, the inconvenience of going to the new STNM has meant that people are now opting for CRH

Tadong since it is located on a busier road.

However, there is no escaping the problem anywhere in Gangtok these days.

Taxis are now charging Rs 300 from CRH Tadong to Gangtok instead of the usual Rs 150/200, said one woman who had come



to the Central Referral Hospital for a checkup.

"I argued with the driver but he said I have to pay extra charges because there are no other taxis. I didn't have any option so I paid up," she added.

A local resident of Metro Point, Tadong,

Jyotika Rai who is a government employee at RM&DD complains that she has to waste hours in the morning and evening just waiting for taxis. For the past month, she has not been able to reach office on time, she adds.

SNT has deployed additional city buses

during this tourist season, informed a senior official. He further informed that there are 18 buses and the Transport department has proposed augmentation of new fleets.

For the new STNM hospital, there are 4 non AC buses and 2 AC buses, he added.

Airtel boosts 4G network coverage in Assam and North East



SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 07 JUN:

Bharti Airtel today claimed that it has upgraded its 4G network in Assam and North East with the deployment of LTE 900 technology which promises to enhance the network experience for its smartphone customers.

With the rollout of 4G in the 900 Mhz spectrum

band, Airtel will get additional high speed data capacity to serve its customers, an official communiqué informs.

Recently, the company announced that it will expand its network in Assam and NE by rolling out 2,720 new base stations and 3,100 Km of optic fiber under its network transformation program.

Lingdok School beats Bojoghari to win U-15 tourney



GANGTOK, 07 JUN (IPR): Lingdok Senior Secondary School today won the Inter-School U-15 Boys Football Tournament at Pangthang.

Lingdok defeated Bojoghari Senior Secondary School 2-3 goals in the tie-breaker after the highly-spirited final match played to a goalless draw after ninety minutes.

The tournament was organised by Sikkim Armed Police and had kicked off on 13 May with 12 teams.

Lingdok School was presented the winner's trophy and cash award of Rs 25,000 while the runners-up team took home Rs 20,000 and a trophy.

Jersey no. 10 from the winning team, Karma Wangyal Lepcha, was adjudged the Man of the Match while Manoj Luitel from Namrang JHS came through

as the highest scorer of the tournament.

Agriculture Minister Lok Nath Sharma and Forest Minister Karma Loday Bhutia also attended the final match.

The Agriculture Minister assured to deliver on responsibilities entrusted upon him and said that the new government will work instead of just making claims.

He expressed gratitude towards Chief Minister Prem Singh Tamang [Golay] for giving him the opportunity to serve Sikkim as a Cabinet Minister.

He also spoke fondly about the SAP Centre at Pangthang where he had served for 21 years before joining politics. He underlined the remarkable support and cooperation received from SAP officials and staff during his career.

The Forest Minister, who also happens to be the area MLA, thanked

the people of Kabi Lungchuk constituency for giving him a huge mandate in the recently held assembly elections.

In his brief address, he urged police personnel to take part in sporting activities, particularly in football, boxing, taekwondo.

The SAP Commandant, Prawin Gurung, informed that the tournament had become an annual yearly tradition for SAP Pangthang in co-ordination with nearby schools.

The programme also featured colourful traditional cultural performances and a Girls Football Exhibition Match that was also won by Lingdok Sr Sec School 1-0 goals against Bojoghari Sr Sec School.

After the programme the Forest Minister planted a Rhododendron sapling at the SAP Pangthang premises.

Goals galore at C-Division League

SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 07 JUN:

Queen Valley, Penlong, outplayed Manik Football Club, Dzongu, 3-2 on Friday at the ongoing Sikkim Football Association C-Division Sikkim League here at Paljor Stadium today.

Tenzing Norbu Bhutia scored a brace for Queen Valley and one more goal was added by his teammate, Ram Pradhan. For Manik FC, Rappag Lepcha and Sonam Lepcha scored a goal each.

In another close match played today, Ranipool Football Club and Mustang Football Club, Sang, played out a 6-6 draw to share one point each.

Dom Hang Subba scored a hattrick for Ranipool FC, while his teammates, Rudra Chettri scored a brace and Chetan Rai contributed a goal for the team.

Likewise, Ayush Chettri and Ongden Lepcha scored a brace each for Mustang FC and one goal each was scored by Elijah Bhutia and Cheeten Tshering Lepcha.

On Thursday, five goals by Kunjaman Thapa helped Red Panda Football Club, Namchi thrash Namthang Football Club 8 goals to nil.

Noel Darjee and Pintsho Lepcha



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Likewise, Ayush Chettri and Ongden Lepcha scored a brace each for Mustang FC and one goal each was scored by Elijah Bhutia and Cheeten Tshering Lepcha.

On Thursday, five goals by Kunjaman Thapa helped Red Panda Football Club, Namchi thrash Namthang Football Club 8 goals to nil.

Noel Darjee and Pintsho Lepcha

contributed one goal each towards the team's victory, while Gayden of Namthang scored an own goal in the match.

In another match yesterday, Sikkim Boys defeated JVC Football Club, Singtam, 3-0 to bag three points from another victory in the league. Paljor Lepcha, Robin Sharma and Ritik Rai scored a goal each for Sikkim Boys.

Nepali debate on Environment Day at Rolep School

SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 07 JUN:

Students of Rolep Senior Secondary School observed World Environment Day with a Nepali debate competition. The topic of the debate was "Have scientific breakthroughs caused harm to the environment?"

Also, Generous Students Club, a student forum towards



better society was established by the

students of class IX and X.

WED at Soreng

SUMMIT REPORT
SORENG, 05 JUN:

World Environment Day and Himalayan Clean-Up collaborated yesterday to organize World Environment Day celebrations at Soreng, West Sikkim.

The programme was organized by Soreng BAC on the theme, "Beat Air Pollution" and was participated in by Soreng Badminton Association along with all representatives from Soreng & Singling Gram Panchayats, civil society, Soreng

Girls' Football Academy, Himalayan School Academy etc.

The programme was organized under the supervision of Soreng BDO, Deepak Rai.

He targeted two places - Soreng Zeel and Soreng Bazar Jhora.

At the former, the area surrounding the drinking water source was cleaned and at the latter, the jhora was cleaned.

Plantation and sanitation drives were held at the SDM and BAC colony.

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As per the government records, Bhagora, a state police service officer, was promoted to the IPS cadre in 2006.

The dismissal means Bhagora will not get benefits entitled to retired government employees.

In March this year, the Supreme Court had asked

the Gujarat government to take disciplinary action against the erring police officials, including Bhagora, convicted by the Bombay High Court for dereliction of duty in the sensational Bilkis Bano gang-rape case during the 2002 riots in the state.

STNM constitutes Internal Complaints Committee

NITESH R PRADHAN
GANGTOK, 07 JUN:

An Internal Complaints Committee (ICC) has been constituted for the new STNM Multi Specialty Hospital, Sohyagang with an aim to provide protection against sexual harassment in workplace to women, for proper redressal of complaints and prevention.

An office order issued by The Health Department and STNM hospital states that the main objective of forming the ICC is to sensitize and prevent sexual harassment at workplace in the new STNM Multi Specialty

Hospital.

The six-member committee is headed by PCC cum HOD, Dr Ruth Yonzon, Paediatrics along with Additional Medicinal Superintendent, Dr Yudok Bhutia, Chief Consultant, Dr T Peggy, HOD, Dermatology, Consultant, Dr OT Lepcha, HOD, Forensic medicine, Consultant, Dr Tara Sharma, Microbiology and Sunita Sirohia of Marwari Yuva Mancha as its members.

It was informed that any staff or plaintiff can forward the complaint to the committee in a writ-

ten form.

Further, it was stated that on receiving the complaint, the committee will hear the grievance within twenty four hours and the names of the plaintiff or accused will not be made public.

After the hearing, the Committee will forward the report to PCC cum Medical Superintendent's office who will be taking the necessary step which may amount to suspension or criminal proceedings against the accused.

The notification of the ICC is numbered 285/STNM/Adm-19.

Bilkis Bano case: IPS officer sacked a day before retirement

AHMEDABAD, JUN 7 (PTI): Gujarat cadre IPS officer R S Bhagora, convicted (rpt convicted) in the 2002 Bilkis Bano case, was dismissed from service by the Union Home Ministry on May 30, a day before his retirement, a senior state government official said

Friday. The 60-year-old officer, who was to retire on May 31, was serving as Deputy Commissioner of Police (Traffic) with the Ahmedabad police when his dismissal order came, said M R Soni, Deputy Secretary (Inquiry), Gujarat Home Department. "The

state Home Department had received a communication from the Union Home Ministry ordering dismissal of Bhagora from service on May 29. "We had served the order on May 30, which effectively means he was sacked a day before his retirement," said Soni.

As per the government records, Bhagora, a state police service officer, was promoted to the IPS cadre in 2006.

The dismissal means Bhagora will not get benefits entitled to retired government employees.

In March this year, the Supreme Court had asked



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SKILL DEVELOPMENT AND
ENTREPRENEURSHIP DEPARTMENT
GOVERNMENT INDUSTRIAL TRAINING INSTITUTE
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Sd/-
Principal
Govt ITI, Rangpo.

For further details candidates may contact to:

1. 9832089975- Skill Development and Entrepreneurship Department, Gangtok.
2. 6382439487- Principal, Govt. ITI, Rangpo.
3. 9434409045- Principal, Govt. ITI, Namchi.
4. 9832322465- Principal, Govt ITI, Gyalshing.

R.O. No. 36/IPR/Pub/Classi./19-20 Date: 3.6.19



SIKKIM UNIVERSITY
(A Central University estb. By an Act of Parliament of India in 2007 & accredited by NAAC in 2015)
SU/2013/REG-03/RA-2013/2421/ Date: 04.06.2019

Expression of Interest

Sikkim University invites applications from interested house owners from Development area to Ranipool, Gangtok along NH 10 or suitable distance from NH10 for renting out the premises for Academic, Hostel and Guest House purposes.

Interested owners may download and submit the application form from the University website www.cus.ac.in on or before 30th June 2019. **Sd/- Registrar**

davp 21318/11/0003/1920



GOVERNMENT OF SIKKIM
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& WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT
FOREST SECRETARIAT, DEORALI, GANGTOK
SIKKIM - 737102

No: 01/ADM/FEWMD Dated: 04/06/2019

NOTICE

Application are invited from eligible candidates for appointment to the post of Chairperson of State Pollution Control Board of Sikkim with headquarter at Gangtok, the last date for receiving applications in the Office of the Principal Secretary-cum-PCCE, Gangtok, is 30.06.2019.

For detail please visit www.sikenvis.nic.in and www.sikkimforest.gov.in.

Sd/-
Special Secretary
Forest Environment & Wildlife Management Department.

R.O No. 38/IPR/Pub/Classi./19-20 Date: 6.6.19

Collaborating Towards a Better Town

Gangtok might be clean by national standards, but it could be so much better

When they experimented with MG Marg, the policy-makers had hoped that the litter & spit free zone would eventually encompass all of Gangtok, and if that happened, dream even bigger and extend it to all of Sikkim. The mission has succeeded to the extent that Sikkim went on to become the first Nirmal Rajya (open defecation free state) and has also bagged a Safaigiri award for its obviously better garbage management credentials than the other states of the country. But that is hardly a comparison to boast about or be satisfied with since Sikkim has the benefit of its small size and abundant finances to devote to waste management, a luxury, which say a Bihar does not enjoy. So, while the State, its government and its people deserve credit for being better, they should now aim to become really good as well.

What better place to begin than the capital itself. Gangtok remains a town of contradictions where the residents continue to live comfortably in the company of stinking jhoras which they themselves have clogged with all types of household refuse and even the occasional sewage release. Instinctive cleanliness around public spaces is thus perhaps too much to expect. Gangtokians might live in pine-wood paneled houses that they themselves rub with mansion polish every day, but are oblivious to their civic duties as they prove with clockwork regularity as the corners and roadsides continue to mimic public dustbins and the jhoras have become a study of consumption patterns. This, despite a functional garbage collection service being in place. This is unfortunate because with even a few collaborative efforts, this town could be much better. A keener sense of responsibility towards public spaces would help and the right awareness at the school level could easily address the problem of irresponsible littering. It is after all not enough to reach a garbage bag to the UDHD trucks in the morning and then spend the rest of the day littering the town with wrappers and other refuse or surreptitiously empty septic tanks into neighbourhood jhoras.

What is required is an attitudinal shift which displays more collective consideration. Gangtok is not really a city yet, but it is already overflowing with brash disregards; house-owners are lavish with their own accommodations but cramp the floors below with pigeonholes and common toilets and bathrooms; Gangtok drivers are among the most impatient and insensitive, as are their VIP vehicles. Such mindsets, which disregard common intent or pursuits, continue to rear up in all engagements and personal aggrandisement thus becomes a driving force. An immediate fall out of this has been the noticeable rollback in aesthetic nuances. Aesthetic appeal is after all for public consumption and extravagance for personal indulgence. No prizes here for guessing which option Gangtok takes on a daily basis. Bigger cars, higher buildings and increased consumption have left Gangtok an ugly town. Take any back-lane and one will be confronted with innumerable case-studies of how private greed has encroached upon public space and convenience. The capital is exploding with private decisions thumbing their collective noses at public courtesies.

With too much ugliness already permanent in the form of concrete, the least that can be done is to leave the open spaces [which are mostly the roads and shortcuts now in Gangtok] free of litter. Maybe starting with this conscious effort, Gangtok could begin the process of becoming and town more becoming of its hill station status and more true to its cleanliness credentials.

WRITE US:

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

Mail us at: news@summittimes.com

Death on Everest: The Boom in Climbing Tourism is Dangerous and Unsustainable

YANA WENGEL
THECONVERSATION.COM

The last days of Mt Everest's spring window for 2019 witnessed the deaths of 11 climbers. Images of hundreds of mountaineers queuing to reach the summit and reports of climbers stepping over dead bodies dismayed people around the world, many wondering how human beings had got it so wrong.

After the conquest of Annapurna and Everest in the 1950s, mountaineering became popular among the more privileged. But in the past two decades, mountaineering has taken on a increasingly commercial angle with disastrous results.

Experts report that aside from a very short weather window to climb Everest this season, a new generation of guides offering cheap expedition rates attracted a rash of novice mountaineers, which contributed to the high number of deaths. Those inexperienced climbers, some of whom had only climbed Mont Blanc (4,810m) and Aconcagua (6,962m), should not have been there.

MODERN CLIMBING

Until the beginning of the 21st century, mountaineering was an exclusive activity accessible only to a few. Twenty years later, despite being a high-risk activity that requires a high level of specialised skill, its popularity among recreational climbers has drastically increased. Climbing legend Reinhold Messner once said that for a fee, "almost anyone could brave a top-class peak" – meaning regardless of skill, ability or experience.

Many modern mountaineers are attracted by the Seven Summits Challenge, introduced by Messner in the 1980s, with the aim of climbing the highest peak on every continent. Cashed-up adventure tourists lured by the challenge face expensive mountain expedition packages – from £3,000 for Aconcagua and £30,000 for Everest.

Aconcagua in the Argentinian Andes is the second highest of the Seven Summits after Everest, and one of the cheapest to climb. The number of climbers attempting Aconcagua has increased by 400% since 1990 – 4,000 people a year now push for the summit.

Our current research project focusing on mountaineering tourism shows that this recent trend can be explained by the transformation of mountaineering from personal exploring to a commercial guided-tour industry which is capitalising on better accessibility to big mountains, affordable transportation and more advanced equipment. This boom in commercial adventure sports means "real" mountaineers are often outnumbered by tourists whose ambitions exceed their climbing skills.

Although technically Aconcagua is not considered a difficult climb, it reaches a high altitude, where climbers struggle with low humidity, low oxygen and severe winds, so the summit success rate is 30-40%.

In February 2019, we spent three weeks at Aconcagua's base camp, where rangers told us that the popularity of the mountain has trig-



gered an increase in accidents and fatalities. But reinforcement of safety measures implemented over the past five years have minimised casualties, averaging two to five deaths a season – with no deaths in 2019 so far.

Such measures include climber check-in and medical checks at ranger stations, and the availability of doctors and rescue teams up to 5,500m. Our interviews with rangers, guides and porters reveal that accidents are associated with an high number of inexperienced climbers who often carry insufficient equipment and underestimate the difficulty and risks of a high-altitude mountain environment. The question is, should everyone be allowed to climb any mountain they decide to?

Many recreational mountaineers opt for package expeditions, relying solely on the experience of service companies and the help of porters and guides. Without this professional support, they would fail. The paradox of modern mountaineering is that the provision of necessary expedition support and all-inclusive packages also encourages inexperienced climbers who wish to reach the desired summit at any cost, putting others at risk.

Of course even the most skilled mountaineers need logistics and local support on the world's highest peaks. But experienced climbers possess the knowledge, skill and strength to reach the summit – and often rely on themselves as far as possible. But their achievements, together with the "all-inclusive" adventure tourism industry, lull inexperienced climbers into a false sense of security about what they are capable of.

EXPERIENCE AND PERMITS

Each country manages climbing permits in different ways – and only a handful of authorities check mountaineering experience seriously. To climb Alaska's Mt Denali (6,190m), the highest peak in North America, climbers are required to have advanced mountaineering skills along with backcountry winter

camping experience.

Only seven mountain guide companies are authorised to lead expeditions on Denali and solo climbers need to prove their mountaineering experience to obtain a climbing permit. This strict control minimises the risks to climbers and the impact on the environment, allowing sustainable management of expeditions without casualties – which was achieved in 2018.

Other countries have much looser requirements. The New York Times reported that to get a climbing permit for Everest all a climber has to do is submit a copy of their passport, limited biographical data and a certificate of good health.

Climbing a mountain is mentally and physically demanding. Climbers need to have good ethics – such as taking responsibility for their actions, respecting local climbing traditions, taking care with the environment and so on – proper equipment and real mountaineering experience. In our view high-altitude climbers should be required to demonstrate a standard of experience to obtain a permit. But mountaineering is a lucrative industry and brings huge amounts of money to often impoverished local economies. Over the years, overcrowding and safety issues have become a serious problem.

Mountain tourists lack the experience and the requisite attributes to summit difficult peaks. This foolhardy arrogance can lead to tragedy, as we saw on Everest this year. The global mountaineering community needs to call for specific conditions of ability and experience be met when issuing permits for high-altitude mountain expeditions. It has to be about more than simply being able to afford to take on the world's most difficult peaks.

But how do we achieve that? Who is responsible for managing modern mountaineering in a safe, responsible and sustainable way? If we don't address these issues, avoidable tragedies caused by commercialised mountaineering will continue to appal the world.

[the writer is Lecturer Work, Employment and Organisation, University of Strathclyde]

Intermittent Fasting: What's the Best Method?

DAVID CLAYTON
theconversation.com

Intermittent fasting is a method of dieting that restricts the amount of time you are allowed to eat. The appeal of these diets is that you don't need to count calories or eat certain foods. But there are so many versions, it's hard to know which one is best. Here's what the research says.

THE 5:2 DIET

This is a popular version of intermittent fasting where you eat a very low calorie diet (about 500kcal) for two days each week (any two days). On the other five days, you eat as normal.

Research has shown that it's possible to lose weight with this diet; it also improves several markers of health, such as reducing levels of glucose and cholesterol in the blood. But the 5:2 diet is unlikely to be more effective for weight loss than traditional methods of dieting. This is because 5:2 reduces calorie intake to a similar extent as traditional dieting.

There is some evidence that conducting the two days of very low calorie intake on consecutive days can improve insulin sensitivity – a risk marker for type 2 diabetes – to a greater extent than traditional dieting. This approach also leads to decreases in blood lipids (fatty substances found in the blood) compared with traditional dieting.

An important extra benefit of 5:2 is that you can consume some food during the "fasting" period, providing an opportunity to

take in vital nutrients. Dieting often leads to losses in muscle and bone mass, alongside fat mass because consuming a balanced diet while reducing calorie intake is difficult. This can compromise long-term weight loss efforts as muscle is more metabolically active (burns more calories) than fat. Eating enough protein can help to reduce the loss of muscle mass while dieting, with a bonus of reducing appetite.

ALTERNATE-DAY FASTING

While 5:2 could be considered a "lifestyle intervention", alternate-day fasting (ADF) is more likely to be used to lose weight quickly. ADF is often referred to as the "every other day diet" and requires you to alternate daily between unrestricted eating and consuming a very low calorie diet.

Most research on ADF uses a similar approach to 5:2, allowing a small meal (usually about 500kcal) to be consumed on "fasting" days. Research has shown that ADF can lead to considerable weight loss in 8-12 weeks, but a big problem with ADF is that adherence tends to wane. Longer-term studies have shown that calorie intake on "fasting" days creeps up over time, which reduces the calorie deficit achieved and slows the rate of weight loss.

Randomised controlled trials (the gold standard of clinical research) show that ADF doesn't lead to more weight loss or improvements in health compared with traditional dieting when calorie intake is the same in both

groups. Despite this, it is likely that ADF will result in a greater reduction in calorie intake compared with traditional methods of dieting, which should lead to greater weight loss, initially. But it's doubtful that many people will adhere to ADF in the long term.

TIME-RESTRICTED EATING

Time-restricted eating (TRE) involves complete fasting for long periods (16-20 hours) and consuming all calories within restricted hours, often referred to as "feeding windows".

The most common version of TRE uses a ratio between fasting and eating of 16:8 (16 hours of fasting and eight hours during which it is permissible to eat). Many people achieve this ratio by skipping breakfast thereby delaying their first meal until midday and consuming all food between midday and 8pm.

Research has shown that calorie intake over a 24-hour period is reduced when people skip breakfast. But the number of calories expended through physical activity is also reduced, which will partially or completely negate the calorie deficit achieved by skipping breakfast. So skipping breakfast is unlikely to lead to meaningful weight loss. Skipping breakfast also reduces the effectiveness of insulin to regulate blood glucose levels after lunch, indicating a negative effect on insulin sensitivity.

But an alternative approach to TRE has shown promise. A recent study found that fast-

ing from 2pm improved insulin sensitivity in a group of pre-diabetic males. This could be due to an enhanced natural ability to regulate blood glucose levels effectively in the morning, due to daily variations in metabolism. So, restricting food intake to a morning feeding window and fasting in the evening may be a healthier version of TRE.

AND THE WINNER IS...

As with any diet, success will be dictated mostly by adherence. When it comes to weight loss, ADF is likely to lead to the most rapid success, but sustaining weight loss in the long term may be aided by the less intense 5:2 approach.

There is some evidence that adherence could be greater in TRE, as completely restricting food intake may be easier for some people than severely restricting it. In this sense, research suggests that skipping dinner may be better for health than skipping breakfast.

It's important to note that most research suggests that intermittent fasting is no better than traditional methods of dieting. But intermittent fasting regimens that have prolonged periods of fasting, such as TRE with shorter feeding windows and 5:2 with two consecutive very low calorie days, may provide additional health benefits.

[the writer is Lecturer in Nutrition and Exercise Physiology, Nottingham Trent University]

Nepal's Pashupatinath temple reveals assets for first time

KATHMANDU, JUN 6 (PTI): Nepal's iconic Pashupatinath temple owns 9.276 kg gold, 316 kg silver and Rs 120 crore cash, according to a report made public for the first time by a committee formed to study the assets of the country's most revered and the richest Hindu shrine.

According to a probe panel formed by Pashupati Area Development Trust to inquire the income of the temple, the revenue in gold and silver cover the period of 56 years from 1962 to 2018.

This is the first time we are making public the report on the assets of Pashupati Area Development Trust, the trust's Executive Director Ramesh Upreti was quoted as saying by the Kathmandu Post.

The sacred Hindu temple dedicated to



Pashupatinath (Lord Shiva), has Rs 1.2 billion cash (Rs 120 crore) in different banks, 9.276 kg gold, 316.58 kg silver and 3,667 ropanis (186 hectares) of land, the report said.

The actual value of the treasures stored in the main temple of Pashupatinath, however, is not included in the report as the Supreme Court had on December 24, 2009, asked author-

ities not to open its coffers.

The 5th century Pashupatinath Temple is the oldest Hindu temple in Kathmandu dating back to 400 AD. Prime Minister Narendra Modi and several of his Cabinet colleagues visited the temple during their visit to Nepal.

The 11-member committee was formed by the government on October 23, 2017 under

Milan Kumar Thapa.

"The trust has land in many places. But due to inadequate evidence, we have not been able to bring them under the trust, said Thapa, expressing concern that land plots belonging to the trust in various places have been encroached upon.

Of the total registered land, the trust has leased 1,161 ropanis

(59 hectares) to Tribhuvan International Airport and a golf course for 99 years at an annual rent of Rs 5 million a year. Similarly, the trust has leased 17 ropanis of land to five-star hotel Hyatt Regency in Bouddha.

In Gothathar, the trust has 534 ropanis (27 hectares) of land which the government had registered under its name in 1998.

It had acquired 1,505 ropanis (76.5 hectares) of land near the temple between 2002 and 2013.

Padip Dhakal, member secretary at the trust, said Wednesday announcement is the first step towards making public the temple's assets.

Since Pashupatinath is a public property, many people are obviously curious to learn about the way the trust has been managing its wealth, said Dhakal.

Nepal keen on exploring Gandak river route for trade: Official

KOLKATA, JUN 7 (PTI): Nepal is keen on exploring new waterways for "cleaner and greener" bilateral trade with India, and has proposed Gandak river route for cargo transport, a top official of Inland Waterways Authority of India (IWAI) said here Friday.

Under the current arrangement between the two countries, cargo reaches Varanasi in Uttar Pradesh, Kalughat in Bengal or Sahebgunj in Jharkhand via National Waterways-1 on Ganga-Bhagirathi-Hooghly river system, before being transported to the Nepal border on road, covering over 170km.

"The Nepal government had asked India whether river Gandak can be explored for a waterway, which would naturally connect with Ganga," Inland Waterways Authority of India Chairman Pravir Pandey said, on the sidelines of a summit organised here by the Indian Chamber of Commerce.

The IWAI chairman also said that technical studies were necessary to determine if the Gandak route was feasible for transport of cargo.

"We have responded (to Nepal) that it needs technical studies (to find out) whether ships of larger size can move

through Gandak to Nepal," he said.

If the proposal is approved, cargo from Haldia and Kolkata docks can directly reach Nepal on waterways, offering immense cost advantage and convenience to the stakeholders.

The Gandak river, one of the main tributaries of the mighty Ganga, is known as Narayani in Nepal. The tributary originates from Mustang in Nepal and joins Ganga at Hazipur (near Patna).

Noting that the Ministry of Commerce has decided to amend a clause of India-Nepal trade treaty to include waterway as mode of transport, along with road and rail, Pandey said the modification would be carried out shortly.

The IWAI chairman also said both the countries have agreed on three waterways for trade to the Himalayan country -- Kolkata-Sahebganj waterway and then to Nepal's Biratnagar by road, Kolkata-Kalughat near Patna via NW-1 and then to Birgunj, and Kolkata-Varanasi on NW-1 and then to either Nepal-ganj or Mahendra Nagar.

The IWAI had been installing multi-modal terminals at Haldia, Sahebgunj and Kalughat for cargo handling through waterways on NW-1.

Outbreak of FAW not that serious, expect normal harvest: Official

AIZAWL, JUNE 7 (PTI): A Mizoram Agriculture department official Friday expressed optimism that the state could expect almost normal harvest as the outbreak of Fall Army Worm (FAW) was not that "serious".

Agriculture department Joint director James Lalsiamliana told PTI that the department officials were sent to the maize cultivation areas to gauge the extent of damage by FAW till date and the feedback received from them so far was positive.

"We had earlier feared that the attacks of the swarms of FAW on the maize leaves and stems would be highly destructive having ex-

treme adverse effects on the harvest," he said.

The joint director said the resilient nature of the maize varieties in the state coupled with the coordinated efforts of the department officials and the maize farmers as well as rainfall were likely to mitigate the damage.

He said that majority of the maize plants recovered and grew normally now, resulting in expectation of normal or near normal yield.

The FAW outbreak hit the state since April eight and infested over 68 per cent of maize fields in the state and affecting 8,928 farming families in 332 villages across the state.

Gauhati HC asks CBI to probe land grab charge against fmr DGP

GUWAHATI, JUN 7 (PTI): The Gauhati High Court has directed the CBI to probe an alleged case of land grabbing by former Director General of Police of Assam, Khagen Sarmah.

Justice S K Medhi in an order on Thursday observed that the investigation into the matter was conducted in an "unfair, partial and unethical manner by the police" and as such the CBI is ordered to con-

duct the probe.

The order was given on two writ petitions filed by family members of late Magni Devi Jain.

It was alleged in the petitions that a plot of land owned by Jain was sold in 2009 to Bandana Sarmah, wife of Khagen Sarma by fraudulent means by suspected land mafias.

The petitions also claimed that pressure had been exerted by the police to vacate

the property.

The high court directed the government advocates to transfer all required documents and records to the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) within 15-days.

The court also directed the CBI to ensure proper investigation into the case as a senior police officer was involved and as such the police did not conduct "proper investigations".

Jaishankar discusses key elements of ties with Bhutan's top leadership

THIMPHU, JUN 7 (PTI): External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar on Friday met Bhutan's top leadership, including Prime Minister Lotay Tshering, and discussed important elements of the bilateral ties with emphasis on development partnership and cooperation in the hydropower sector.

Jaishankar is in the Buddhist kingdom on a two-day visit, his first overseas trip after assuming charge of the Ministry of External Affairs.

He also conveyed Prime Minister Narendra Modi's greetings during his talks with Prime Minister Tshering.

"It was a pleasure to call on @PMBhutan Dr. Lotay Tshering. Conveyed PM @narendramodi's greetings and had a cordial conversation on important elements of the bilateral partnership," Jaishankar tweeted.

External Affairs Ministry spokesperson Raveesh Kumar said that Jaishankar had a "constructive conversation with a close partner".

"Constructive conversation with a close partner. EAM @DrSJaishankar called on @PMBhutan Dr. Lotay Tshering and conveyed PM @narendramodi's greetings. High-level exchanges & engagements have further enhanced our bilateral connections," he said in a tweet.

Earlier, Jaishankar held talks with his Bhutanese counterpart Tandi Dorji and discussed issues of mutual interest with emphasis on development partnership and hydropower.

"Excellent conversation with my colleague @FMBhutan Dr. Tandi Dorji. We recommitted ourselves to further enriching our special and unique ties," he said in a tweet.

Kumar said that the

two leaders discussed issues of mutual interest with emphasis on development partnership and hydropower, "giving a new thrust to time-tested friendship".

"EAM @DrSJaishankar held talks with @FMBhutan Dr. Tandi Dorji. The two Ministers discussed issues of mutual interest with emphasis on development partnership and hydropower," he said in a tweet.

The External Affairs Ministry in New Delhi on Thursday said that the visit reflects the importance India attaches to its relationship with Bhutan, a close friend and neighbour.

Bhutan has been a close ally of India and bilateral ties between the two countries are on an upswing in the last few years.

Bhutan was Prime Minister Narendra Modi's first overseas visit after assuming charge in 2014.

Khandu asks APPSC to end combined competitive exam fiasco

ITANAGAR, JUN 7 (PTI): Arunachal Pradesh Chief Minister Pema Khandu on Friday called upon the members of Arunachal Pradesh Public Service Commission (APPSC) to bring the commission's combined competitive exam fiasco to a logical conclusion.

The Combined Competitive Examinations conducted by the APPSC during 2018 ran into rough weather after the candidates knocked the door of the Itanagar permanent bench of the Gauhati High Court alleging discrepancy in the question papers of the preliminary exam.

The matter is sub-judice at the High Court.

Khandu, during a meeting with APSSC chairman Nipo Nabam and his team, who met the chief minister at his office, advocated for an urgent solution on the matter, an official release informed.

During the meeting, the chairman briefed the chief minister on the status of APPSC conducted combined competitive examination of 2018.

Khandu also dwelt on introduction of UPSC pattern of examination for future civil service examinations.

"A decision will be

taken in the cabinet very soon," the release quoted Khandu as saying.

On the other hand, Nabam said that the commission would initiate all possible measures to end the impasse.

The commission also informed the chief minister about the status of other examinations being conducted.

On the matter pertaining to strengthening of the commission, Khandu said that the state government would immediately address the shortage of manpower and its infrastructure requirement.

Mamata says no to Niti Aayog meeting, saying it's 'fruitless'



KOLKATA, JUN 7 (PTI): West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Friday refused to attend a meeting of Niti Aayog to be chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on June 15, saying it is "fruitless" as the body has no financial powers to support state plans.

Her decision to skip the meeting of the top plan panel comes days after she stayed away from the swearing-in ceremony of Prime Minister Narendra Modi on May 30 citing as "untrue" claims by the BJP that 54 of the party workers were murdered in political violence in Bengal.

She conveyed her decision not to attend the Niti Aayog meeting in a letter written to the prime minister.

"Given the fact that the Niti Aayog has no financial powers and the power to support state plans it is fruitless for me to attend the meeting of a body that is bereft of any financial powers," Banerjee wrote.

She also suggested that focus should be shifted to the Inter-State Council (ISC) to deepen cooperative federalism and strengthen federal polity.

"The experience of last four-and-half years we had with Niti Aayog brings me back to my earlier suggestion to you that we focus on Inter-State Council constituted under Article 263 of Constitution, with appropriate modifications to enable ISC to discharge its augmented range of functions as the nodal entity of the country," she said.

"This will deepen

cooperative federalism and strengthen federal polity. May I also reiterate that the National Development Council, which has been given a quiet burial, may also be subsumed within the broadened constitutional body of the Inter-State Council," the chief minister said.

Modi is set to chair the fifth meeting of the Niti Aayog's Governing Council on June 15 to discuss various issues regarding the country's development.

Banerjee, however, didn't clarify whether any other minister of her cabinet would attend the meeting on her behalf or not.

Earlier too, Banerjee had skipped meetings of the policy think-tank, expressing displeasure over the dissolution of the Planning Commission and creation of a new structure.

She had sent West Bengal Finance Minister Amit Mitra to represent the state at the meeting last year.

In her letter, Banerjee said the formation of Niti Aayog was unilaterally announced without any discussion with chief ministers.

She cited examples of statements made by Niti Aayog officials and a former Union minister stressing the need to give the think-tank the power to allocate funds, as part of the efforts to address regional imbalances.

The TMC supremo's decision to give Niti Aayog meeting a miss comes amid heightened political tussle between the TMC and the BJP in

West Bengal.

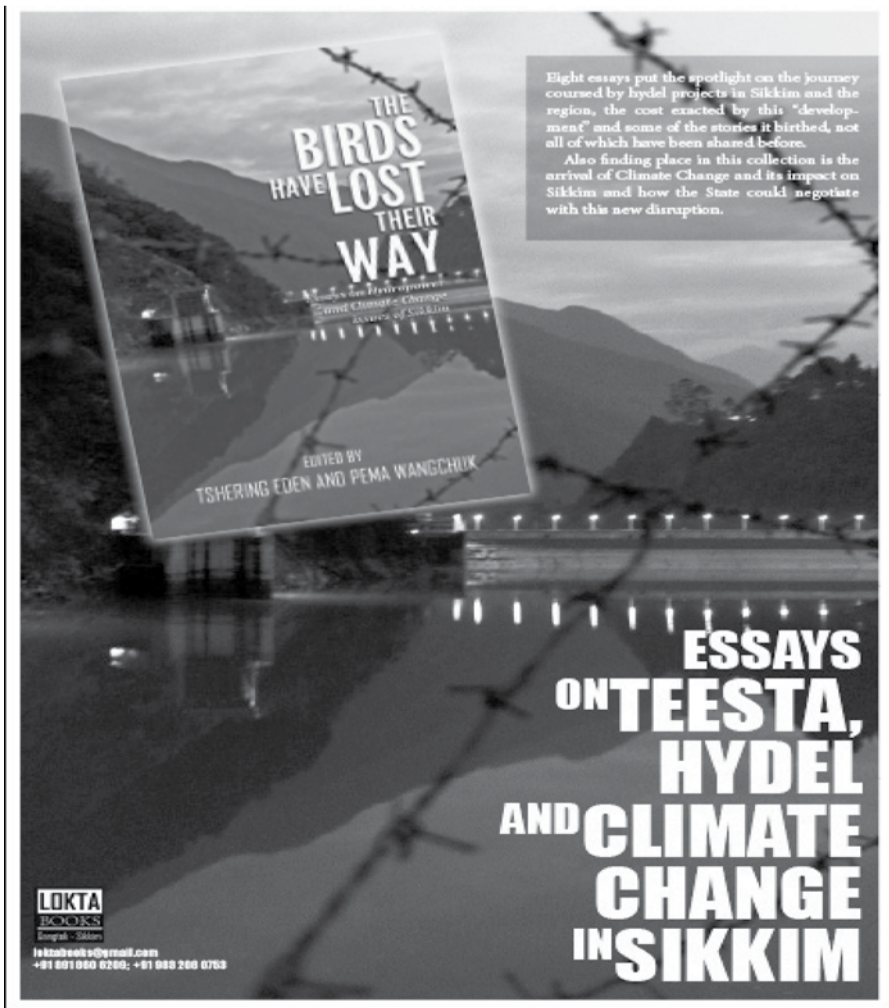
Buoyed by the BJP's victory in 18 of the 42 Lok Sabha seats in Bengal in the recently-concluded elections, only four less than TMC's 22, the saffron party's leaders have been asserting that they would overthrow the Trinamool Congress government in the 2021 assembly polls.

Her decision of not attending the NITI Ayog meeting drew sharp reactions from the BJP, which accused Banerjee of not being serious about development of the state.

"Her decision only reflects that she is yet to accept her defeat and want to politicise everything. While doing so, she is affecting the development of the state. She should be ashamed of it. Only she has problem with NITI Aayog, other chief ministers don't have any problem," state BJP president Dilip Ghosh said.

"The entire country is moving forward under the leadership of Prime Minister Modi. Even chief ministers of states ruled by Congress are also attending the NITI Aayog meeting. Only Mamata Banerjee is opposing it. This is against the interest of the nation. She is trying to scuttle the growth of the nation and is behaving like a "anti-national," West Bengal BJP vice president Jay Prakash Majumdar told PTI.

The Trinamool Congress was quick to hit back at the BJP saying neither Banerjee nor the TMC needs lessons on nationalism.



Glossier ball offering more swing this World Cup: Boulton



TAUNTON, JUN 7 (PTI): New Zealand pace spearhead Trent Boult has attributed the low-scoring thrillers at the ongoing World Cup to the “glossier” Kookaburra balls which offers more swing, making the contest between bat and ball even.

“The balls are actually different for this tournament. They’ve got a different gloss on them, they’re painted differently, so there’s definitely been a little bit more swing,” said Boult, who took his 150th ODI wicket against Bangladesh at The Oval on Wednesday.

“Conditions have been good but I believe there should be that little period at the start of the game where it’s an even battle of bat versus ball, so it’s nice to see the ball moving like it is at the moment.”

Boult got his World Cup preparation off to a fine start by picking four wickets in a warm-up game against India.

“The white balls have been quite prominent, you can see the quarter seams and everything with the ball, but it’s fully covered now. It’s nice to hold in the hand and it’s moving a little bit, so I’m very happy.”

The use of two new balls for each innings has robbed pacers the

chance to go for reverse swing due to the lack of sufficient wear and tear.

“I’d love to see (just) one ball in ODI cricket to be honest,” said Boult, who snapped four for 33 against India in the warm-up game.

“I think any reverse swing at the end can really help any death bowler, the margin for error becomes slightly bigger and the hitting zone is a little bit smaller.

“I’m not sure where it’s going to get to but the invention of slower balls and knuckle balls and two bouncers and all that carry on has given a couple of cards up the sleeves.”

New Zealand will face Afghanistan on Saturday and Boult said his team will treat their opponents with respect.

“There’s a lot of respect for the Afghanis who we are coming up against. They’ve got some quality players, some experienced players. I’ve never played at Taunton but I hear it’s quite a small ground so we will have to be on the button,” Boult said.

“We are looking forward to that challenge and then there are some very big games to come in the tournament. To be 2 and 0 with a little bit of momentum behind us is a good position.

Have requested for ICC approval, Dhoni not to remove insignia: CoA chief



KUSHAN SARKAR

LONDON, JUN 7 (PTI): Mahendra Singh Dhoni will continue wearing the dagger insignia on his wicket-keeping gloves as it is not a military symbol, Committee of Administrators (CoA) chief Vinod Rai asserted Friday, saying that the BCCI has sought the ICC’s permission for it.

During India’s opening World Cup game against South Africa in Southampton, Dhoni’s green keeping gloves had a dagger logo embossed, which looked more like an Army insignia.

“The BCCI had already sent a formal request to the ICC for clearance. As per ICC regulations, players can’t sport any commercial, religious or military logo. There was nothing commercial or religious in this regard as we all know,” Rai told PTI over phone.

“And it is not the paramilitary regimental dagger that is embossed in his gloves. So Dhoni is not in breach of ICC regulations,” he added.

His statement comes after the ICC “requested the BCCI” to ask Dhoni to remove the sign from the

gloves, citing rules which forbid display of messages “which relate to political, religious or racial activities or causes.”

Dhoni is an Honorary Lieutenant Colonel in the Parachute Regiment of the Territorial Army and dagger is part of their emblem.

The CoA chief’s defence is based on the fact that the para-regimental dagger logo has word ‘Balidan’ (sacrifice) inscribed on it, which is not the case with the logo sported by Dhoni.

The argument may not cut much ice with the ICC if it strictly goes by rules.

The CoA’s intervention comes after there was social media criticism of the ICC’s objections.

When asked how India would respond in case the ICC insists on the removal of the sign and sanctions Dhoni for defiance, Rai said, “I think there has been a request to get it removed and not an instruction.

“As far as we are concerned, the BCCI CEO (Rahul Johri) will be reaching there before the Australia game and will be speaking to the senior ICC officials.

Nadal hands Federer worst Slam loss in 11 years to reach 12th French Open final

PARIS, JUNE 7 (AFP): Defending champion Rafael Nadal powered past Roger Federer in the French Open semi-finals on Friday, to move within one victory of a record-extending 12th Roland Garros title after handing his oldest rival his worst Grand Slam defeat in 11 years.

The 33-year-old produced a masterful performance to get past Federer 6-3, 6-4, 6-2 in the last four on Court Philippe Chatrier and set up a final clash with either world number one Novak Djokovic or Austrian fourth seed Dominic Thiem on Sunday.

It will be Nadal’s 12th appearance in the championship match, which he has never lost before.

“It’s incredible to play with Roger here,” said Nadal.

“Congratulations to him -- to be at his level at 37, it’s incredible. I say thank you to the Parisian fans, because it’s magnificent for me to be in another final.



other final.

“It’s always a pleasure to play with him. It’s always a difficult match against him.”

The third seed now has an stunning 92-2 win-loss record on the Paris clay, having beaten Federer for the sixth time in as many French Open meetings despite difficult, windy conditions.

Nadal also leads his overall head-to-head against Federer 24-15, and 14-2 on clay after ending a run of five straight losses to the 37-year-old.

A tally of just nine games meant it was Federer’s heaviest defeat in a Grand Slam match since managing only four against Nadal in their fa-

mously one-sided 2008 Roland Garros final.

Nadal made only 19 unforced errors, crushing 33 winners as Federer struck 25, although that amount could easily have been doubled against any opponent other than the 11-time champion.

The defeat leaves Federer still waiting for a first victory over Nadal on clay since 2009 in Madrid.

al on clay since 2009 in Madrid.

A topsy-turvy start saw the Spaniard race through the first three games before Federer broke back as the wind played havoc with the players’ serves from one end.

But Nadal grabbed a 4-2 advantage in a marathon sixth game as Federer, looking to become the oldest Grand Slam finalist since Ken Rosewall at the 1974 US Open, dumped a forehand into the net.

The crowd were roaring on Federer as he saved a set point, but gasped in appreciation of a rasping Nadal backhand winner which clinched the opening set.

The Swiss turned on the style to take the first two games of the second set, only to be broken straight back as Nadal curled a trademark forehand up the line.

Federer was throwing everything he had at

Nadal, but the indomitable left-hander was simply too strong.

The key moments came towards the end of the second set, when second seed Nadal managed to hold under severe pressure to level at 4-4, before putting the pedal down to break despite having trailed 40-0.

The defending champion confidently served out the set to love to move one step closer to the final, where he will look to lift the trophy for a third successive year.

Federer’s chances were slipping away quickly, and he received a warning after angrily hitting the ball into the upper reaches of Philippe Chatrier after a flick off the net chord helped Nadal break in game three of the third set.

Another break in Federer’s next service game effectively signalled the end of the contest, and Nadal wrapped up an impressive victory as his rival fired a return long.

Will stick to government’s viewpoint on Indo-Pak women’s series in India: CoA

MUMBAI, JUNE 7 (PTI): Committee of Administrators chief Vinod Rai Friday said the BCCI will continue to go with the government stance on Indo-Pak cricket after seeking the sports ministry’s permission for hosting a women’s series against the arch-rivals later this year.

Due to the tense relations between the two countries, no bilateral cricket has taken place since January 2013 when a short men’s series was organised in India.

However, India and Pakistan continue to clash in ICC events and the Asia Cup.

The BCCI had written to the sports ministry last month, seeking the government’s permission to host three ODIs against Pakistan between July and November as part of the ICC Women’s ODI Championship, a qualifying event for the 2021 World Cup.

“As regards to playing Pakistan in India, we have always taken the government’s viewpoint, we have asked for the government viewpoint. I

am not saying what the government will say and how we will react. First let the government react,” said Rai after a CoA meeting here.

His CoA colleague Diana Edulji stressed that the women’s series should not be considered as a bilateral one.

“First of all it is not a bilateral series. It is part of the ODI Championship and qualification event for the World Cup so those crucial points are there (for the taking),” said Edulji, a former India captain.

“However, in an ICC meeting in New Zealand, the issue was discussed and it was decided that if there are genuine reasons (if series doesn’t take place) the points will be shared. We have written a letter to the government, asking for its permission and have to wait for its reaction,” she added.

Hosting the series at a neutral venue is also an option, like the BCCI had organised the men’s Asia Cup in the UAE last year after Pakistan refused to travel to India.

US, Russia blame each other in near-collision of warships

TOKYO, JUN 7 (AP): The US and Russian militaries accused each other of unsafe actions on Friday after an American guided-missile cruiser and a Russian destroyer came within 165 feet (50 meters) of each other in the East China Sea.

The U.S. 7th Fleet said the Russian destroyer put the safety of the USS Chancellorsville and its crew at risk, forcing it to reverse all engines at full throttle to avoid a collision.

It said a helicopter that was operating at sea was preparing to land on the Chancellorsville, which was traveling on a steady course, when the Russian destroyer, traveling behind the U.S. ship, speeded up and approached as close as 50-100 feet (15-30 meters).

Clay Doss, spokesman for the Japan-based 7th Fleet, said no one was injured and he was not

aware of any damage to the ship.

“We consider Russia’s actions during this interaction as unsafe and unprofessional and not in accordance with the International Regulations for Preventing Collisions at Sea (COLREGS), ‘Rules of the Road,’ and internationally recognized maritime customs,” the 7th Fleet said in a statement. The Russian military accused the Chancellorsville of making a dangerous maneuver by crossing the path of the Russian destroyer Admiral Vinogradov.

It said in a statement that the U.S. cruiser “suddenly changed direction and crossed the path of Admiral Vinogradov just 50 meters (165 feet) away,” forcing the crew of the Russian ship to make a quick maneuver to avoid collision.

Anand loses to Mamedyarov, falls to last spot in Norway Chess

STAVANGER (NORWAY), JUN 7 (PTI): Former world champion Viswanathan Anand slipped to the bottom of the points table after going down to Shakhriyar Mamedyarov of Azerbaijan in the second round of the Altibox Norway Chess tournament here.

Anand, who lost to world champion Magnus Carlsen of Norway in the Armageddon game in the first round, was out of sorts in the classical game against Mamedyarov wherein he held a decent position for a long time.

Mamedyarov, however, capitalised on a blunder by the Indian ace to get the first maximum of two points in the super tournament that has introduced an Armageddon game in case of a draw.

Fabiano Caruana of the US was the other winner of the day winning



against Maxime Vachier-Lagrave of France in classical time.

The other three games of the day ended in draws and lead to deciding Armageddon games.

Russia’s Alexander Grischuk drew against Wesley So of US. However, the American won the return game with black pieces.

Magnus Carlsen survived many anxious moments and was close to losing in both the games against Levon Aronian of Armenia.

But Aronian was not in his elements and kept missing winning moves several times first in the classical and then subsequently in the Armageddon.

Ding Liren of China better known as the second Asian to cross the 2800 rating barrier and Anand’s successor in the continent was defeated by compatriot Yu Yangyi in the Armageddon game.

With seven rounds still to be played, Mamedyarov leads the field with 3.5 points followed by Carlsen and Yangyi on

3 points apiece. Caruana is at the fourth spot with 2.5 points.

Anand is currently placed at the bottom alongside Lagrave with half a point each.

Results round 2: V Anand (Ind, 0.5) lost to Shakhriyar Mamedyarov (Aze, 3.5); Levon Aronian (Arm, 2) lost to Magnus Carlsen (Nor, 3); Fabiano Caruana (Usa, 2) beat Maxime Vachier-Lagrave (Fra, 0.5); Yu Yangyi (Chn, 3) beat Ding Liren (Chn, 2); Alexander Grischuk (Rus, 1) lost to Wesley So (Usa, 2).

Results round 1: Magnus Carlsen (Nor) beat V Anand (Ind) 1.5-0.5; Shakhriyar Mamedyarov (Aze) beat Fabiano Caruana (Usa) 1.5-0.5; Levon Aronian (Arm) beat Alexander Grischuk (Rus) 1.5-0.5; Maxime Vachier-Lagrave (Fra) lost to Yu Yangyi (Chn) 0.5-1.5; Ding Liren (Chn) beat Wesley So (Usa) 1.5-0.5.

Exciting to find new ways to win, says Starc win over West Indies

NOTTINGHAM, JUNE 7 (PTI): Lead pacer Mitchell Starc said Australia finding “new ways to win” is exciting after his team staged a spectacular recovery to beat the West Indies in the World Cup here.

The West Indies once again shone with the new ball to reduce Australia to 38/4, yet the reigning champions eventually recovered to post 288 batting first, thanks largely to Nathan Coulter-Nile’s 92, a World Cup record for a number eight.

It seemed that wouldn’t be enough when the West Indies piled on the partnerships, with both Shai Hope and Holder scoring fifties as they entered the last ten overs needing 68 to win and four wickets remaining.

But Australia came roaring back with Starc at the forefront to take 5/46, helping his side to their second win of the competition.

“We haven’t played awesome cricket in that game, we played well in patches but we can get better in all three areas



of the game. It’s exciting to find new ways to win, Coulters played very well to get us to a competitive total,” said Starc here on Thursday.

“You always have to be confident in those situations, it was touch and go for a while. We always had the belief, there is lots of good bowling in our line-up and we were only a couple of wickets away. But then they were only a few sixes away.”

Starc himself earned plenty of plaudits, unsurprising given the five-wicket haul that lit

up Nottingham.

Those scalps included set batsmen Holder and Andre Russell, who had threatened to take the West Indies home with 68 needed from 60 balls, though trapping opener Chris Gayle lbw proved the major early blow.

At 29, the left-armer boasts plenty of ODI cricket and with the memories of the last World Cup still fresh in his mind, the experience of victory four years ago seems to be paying dividends.

“I was confident of

defending that total. I’m pretty clear and calm in my approach, hopefully that’s a sign that even when games are in the balance, I can stay calm,” said Starc, who was named Player of the Tournament in 2015 after taking 22 wickets.

“The experience of four years ago plays a part but for guys who can bowl at the death we have a lot of options. I’ve had some good battles with Chris (Gayle), we know he’s a major weapon for them... He’s a man who looks for boundaries so it was nice to get him out.”

Australia next face India at The Oval in London on Sunday. Australia, who are on a 10-match winning streak, made a remarkable comeback to beat hosts India 3-2 in March after losing the first two games.

“We’ve got India next up and we’ll go away and have a chat as a bowling group and control what we can control. We’ll look to play to our strengths and the conditions and see what we can do,” said Starc.

Taiwan’s request for US tanks and missiles sparks China anger

TAIPEI, JUN 6 (AFP): Taiwan on Thursday confirmed it is hoping to buy state-of-the-art tanks and portable missiles from the United States in a proposed deal that drew an angry rebuke from China.

Taipei’s defence ministry has formally asked for 108 M1A2 Abrams main battle tanks, more than 1,500 Javelin and TOW anti-tank missiles, and 250 shoulder-fired Stinger anti-aircraft missiles, it said in a statement.

The request was proceeding “as normal”, the ministry added.

The US government has given Congress informal notification of its plan to sell the equipment in a deal worth USD 2 billion, Bloomberg News reported.

Beijing said it had “serious concerns” about the sale.

“We have repeatedly emphasised to the US to fully understand the extremely sensitive and damaging nature of their decision to sell arms to Taiwan, and abide by the One China principle,” foreign ministry spokesman Geng Shuang said at a regular press brief-



ing on Thursday.

Taiwan has been ruled separately since the end of a civil war in 1949 but China still views it as its territory and has vowed to take the island, by force if necessary.

Beijing has significantly stepped up diplomatic and military pressure on Taipei since Beijing-septcipient Tsai Ing-wen was elected in 2016.

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

The United States switched diplomatic recognition from Taiwan to China in 1979, but it has

remained its main unofficial ally and is congressionally bound to supply it with arms - a constant niggle in US-China ties.

In recent years Washington has been wary of completing big ticket arms deals with Taiwan, fearful of stoking China’s anger.

But President Donald Trump has sought to strengthen ties with Taipei and appeared more willing to sell major weapon systems.

The US government announced plans last year to sell spare parts worth USD 330 million to Taiwan for its US-made F-16 fighter jets and C-130 military transport planes, sparking anger from Beijing.

Taipei has also submitted a formal request to Washington for new fighter jets to upgrade its ageing air force but there has been no public response yet from the US.

Taiwan would be massively outgunned in terms of troop numbers and firepower in any war with China and it desperately needs to upgrade much of its equipment.

Its current tank force consists of around 1,000 CM 11 Brave Tiger and M60A3 tanks, technology that is increasingly obsolete.

Abrams tanks and powerful anti-tank and anti-aircraft missiles that can be quickly moved by soldiers in the field would significantly increase Taiwan’s ability to

destroy Chinese jets and armour in the event of an invasion.

“They would help prevent an invasion, making it difficult for an invading PLA force to establish a beachhead in northern Taiwan,” Bonnie Glaser, an expert on Taiwan and China at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, told AFP.

“I expect the Trump administration to approve this package, as part of a policy of bolstering Taiwan’s defenses,” she added.

Drew Thompson, a former Defence Department official now at Singapore’s Lee Kuan Yu School of Public Policy, warned China might look to punish any US firms involved in the sale.

The Abrams tank, he noted in a Twitter thread, is made by General Dynamics which also owns Gulfstream Jets. Beijing could seek to retaliate against their private jet business, he warned.

“China implementing unilateral sanctions against companies and practicing economic coercion is increasingly the norm,” he wrote. “Buckle up.”

12 Indians among 17 killed in horrific Dubai bus accident

DUBAI, JUN 7 (PTI): Twelve Indians were among 17 people who were killed in a horrific road accident in Dubai when a bus, coming from neighbouring Oman, rammed into a low-clearance sign after entering a restricted lane, police and the Indian mission here said on Friday.

Nine persons were also seriously injured when the driver of the bus coming from Oman’s capital Muscat to Dubai, wrongly entered a road not designated for buses towards Al Rashidiya metro station here on Thursday evening.

Dubai Police authorities said that there are still some unidentified bodies and the number of Indians who died in the accident could rise further.

“With great sadness we inform that Indian fatalities in Dubai bus accident have gone up to 12,” Vipul, Indian Consul General in Dubai, tweeted.

He said that the embassy officials are at the Rashidiya police station and mortuary to extend all assistance to the families of the victims.

“Our effort now is to get formalities completed soon so that mortal remains can be repatriated soon,” he said.

The bus, belonging to the Omani bus transport company Mwasalat, carrying 31 passengers, crashed into a height barrier that cut the left side of the bus and killed

passengers sitting on that side, the Gulf News reported.

Dubai Police blamed the Omani driver, who was moderately injured, for the accident, saying “at times a small mistake or negligence can lead to adverse consequences”.

Minister of External Affairs S Jaishankar, now in Bhutan, expressed his condolences to the families of the deceased.

“Deeply grieved by the unfortunate bus accident in Dubai that has claimed 12 Indian lives. My sincere condolences to the families,” he tweeted.

The Consul General also released a list of the Indians killed in the accident.

The names of the Indians who passed away are: Vikram Jawahar Thakur, Vimal Kumar Karthikeyan Kesavapilaikar, Kiran Johnny Johnny Vallithottathil Paily, Firoz Khan Aziz Pathan, Reshma Feroz Khan Pathan, Jamaludeen Arakkaveetil, Vasudev Vishandas, Rajan Puthiyapurayil Gopalan, Prabula Madhavan Deepa Kumar, Roshni Moolchandani, Ummer Chonokataavath Mammad Puthen, Nabula Ummer Chonokataavath.

Vipul said that officers from the consulate are taking all necessary steps to ensure repatriation formalities of all victims are completed as soon as possible.

“Once death certificates are issued, the

bodies will be sent for embalming and other procedures,” he said.

An official from the Pakistani Consulate in Dubai has confirmed the death of a Pakistani national, Shafeeq. The official said the deceased had travelled to Oman to renew his UAE visa, the Khaleej Times reported.

The Indian Consulate had earlier tweeted that four Indians were discharged after first aid and three are receiving treatment in Rashid Hospital.

The consulate also issued a helpline number- +971-565463903- for any queries related to those travelling on the fated bus.

The Dubai Police too expressed its condolences to the families involved in the accident.

“The General Directorate of Dubai Police extends its sincere condolences to the families of the deceased who were involved in a bus crash at Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Road, which killed 17 passengers,” it said.

Transport company Mwasalat issued a statement on Twitter announcing the suspension of their daily services between Muscat and Dubai and vice versa, until further notice.

“Mwasalat family expresses its deepest condolences to the families of the deceased and wishes a speedy recovery to the injured,” it tweeted.

Syria uses familiar tactic in rebel Idlib: Bombing civilians

BEIRUT, JUN 7 (AP): The father could hardly bear seeing his 18-month-old daughter’s panic every time the Syrian government warplanes flew over their home. Every day for a month, she ran to him to hide in his arms, tearful and breathless.

Abdurrahim had refused to flee his hometown throughout years of violence, and he was determined to hold out through the new, intensified government offensive launched in April against Idlib province, the last significant territory held by Syria’s rebels.

But now he had his first child, Ruwaida, to think about.

“That look on my daughter’s face ... is really what is going to kill me,” said the 25-year-old Abdurrahim, who asked that his last name not be published for security reasons.

His determination collapsed when an airstrike on May 30 pulverized the house next door, crushing to death three children, one of them a girl Ruwaida’s age. He whisked his daughter and wife to a nearby village, hoping it would be safe.

The Syrian govern-

ment and its Russian backer have turned to a familiar tactic in their assault on Idlib relentlessly and systematically striking residential areas, hospitals, markets and infrastructure to break the will of the population and pressure people to flee, according to observers, rights groups and residents.

It’s a tried-and-true method that worked for President Bashar Assad’s forces in their previous, destructive campaigns that retook the city of Aleppo in 2016 and other strategic territories.

Striking civilians with impunity has been so characteristic of the 8-year civil war that it rarely even raises much international outrage or attention. Monitors say the pattern of strikes clearly show that, far from being collateral damage, civilian homes, businesses and infrastructure are intentional targets of the government.

“Even wars have rules,” said Misty Buswell, the Middle East advocacy director for the International Rescue Committee, adding that two hospitals it supports

were hit by airstrikes. In this war, she said, attacks on civilians “have happened with absolute impunity.” The impact has been brutal in the rebel enclave centered on Idlib in northwest Syria on the border with Turkey.

Some 3 million people are bottled up there, more than half of them displaced from other parts of the country recaptured by the military.

The Syrian military launched its assault in April, backed by government and Russian airstrikes. It has focused on the enclave’s southern edges, taking a few villages and bombarding deeper into Idlib.

Bombing “targets everything: bakeries, hospitals, markets. The aim is to stop all services to civilians. Everything,” said Wasel Aljirk, a surgeon whose hospital was blasted by strikes.

Five weeks of violence has driven nearly 300,000 people from their homes. Many are living under olive trees, in tents or unfinished buildings, cramming in overcrowded shared rooms. Aid groups fear that figure could spiral to 700,000 displaced.

More than 300 civilians have been killed, according to opposition activists and war monitors. At least 61 children are among those killed since April, according to Save the Children, though Idlib health authorities put the figure at 75 children killed in May alone.

Diana Samaan, a Syria researcher with Amnesty International, said homes are targeted as a “tactic to pressure civilians to succumb.” Sara Kayyali, a Syria researcher with Human Rights Watch, said her group and others have “documented enough strikes on residential buildings to at least indicate an appearance of unlawful approach.” Hospitals and clinics have been systematically bombarded, some of them hit more than once even though the U.N. identifies many to the Syrian government as health centers.

At least 32 hospitals and health facilities around the enclave have been put out of service, either because they were struck or suspended their operations for fear of being hit, Mustafa al-Eido from the Idlib health authority said

Thursday.

The south Idlib region most directly under attack does not have a single health facility left, after all 16 there were hit by airstrikes or stopped working, al-Eido said. That has put an extra burden on those in other parts of Idlib and forced long journeys on patients, said Mohammed Katoub of the Syrian-American Medical Society, which supports services in the area.

Bombings are so frequent that many hospitals are built buried into the sides of hills for protection, known as “cave hospitals.” One such cave hospital, a major trauma facility in southern Idlib, called Pulse of Life, was hit by airstrikes three times in the past two years, each time moving to a new location. Every month, it served 5,000 patients and performed 500 operations.

The fourth and final strike came May 5 when at least seven rockets pounded the hospital. Direct hits raised massive clouds of earth, gravel, stone and concrete dust into the sky, seen in video posted online.

Brexit Party fails to win first seat in UK by-election

PETERBOROUGH (UK), JUN 7 (AFP): Anti-EU populist Nigel Farage’s new Brexit Party failed to win its first seat in Britain’s parliament as it lost out to the main opposition Labour Party in a crunch by-election, results on Friday showed.

The poll in the eastern English city of Peterborough was triggered after the sitting MP, Fiona Onasanya, was dumped by voters after being jailed for lying over a speeding offence.

The Brexit Party’s candidate Mike Greene, a local entrepreneur, came in second with nearly 29 percent of the vote, behind Labour’s Lisa Forbes, who won around 31 percent. The ruling Conservatives came third



with 21 percent, while the Liberal Democrats won 12 percent.

Friday’s result is a setback for the Brexit Party -- founded by eurosceptic figurehead Farage only a few months ago -- which came out on top in the European elections in May with 31.6 percent of votes cast.

It had been seeking

to capitalise on that momentum as well as voter disillusionment with the main Conservative and Labour parties, who have historically shared the Peterborough seat.

Prime Minister Theresa May is stepping down after delaying Brexit twice as she tried and failed to get her EU divorce deal through parliament.

Japan plans carbon emission cuts, more nuclear energy

TOKYO, JUN 7 (AP): Japan is calling for further efforts to cut carbon emissions by promoting renewables but also nuclear energy despite the 2011 Fukushima reactors meltdowns.

The energy white paper, adopted by the Cabinet Friday, said Japan faces an “urgent task” of reducing carbon emissions coming from utilities that have relied heavily on fossil fuels to make up for shortages of cleaner nuclear energy. The call comes as the Fukushima nuclear reactors are slowly being restarted amid lingering anti-nuclear sentiments

since the 2011 crisis.

Japan wants further development of renewable energy and set a 22 per cent to 24 per cent target while maintaining nuclear energy at around the same level. It also pledged to reduce carbon emissions by 26 per cent from 2013 levels by 2030.

So far it has achieved a 7 per cent reduction and is making progress but needs more effort, the paper said. It said the cost of renewables also needs to come down.

While the renewables account for 16 per cent of Japan’s energy supply, nuclear energy remained

at just 3 per cent in 2017, compared to the target of 20 per cent to 22 per cent, according to the paper. Coal and natural gas accounted for 74 per cent.

Before the 2011 quake and tsunami that destroyed the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear plant’s cooling systems and sent three of its reactors into meltdowns, nuclear energy made up about one-third of Japan’s energy supply.

Despite the government’s nuclear energy ambitions, reactor restarts are coming slowly as nuclear regulators spend more time on in-

spections under stricter post-Fukushima standards, while utility companies have opted to scrap aged reactors instead of investing in additional safety measures.

The slow reactor resumption has added to Japan’s large plutonium stockpile problem that has become an issue of international concern. Japan, which is stuck with 47 tons of plutonium stockpile from spent fuel, has resorted to burning it in conventional reactors to reduce the amount after the country’s fuel recycling program has stalled.

But the amount is not

decreasing, and experts are now calling for more drastic steps to get rid of it amid criticism that Japan’s plutonium makes Tokyo’s calls for nuclear non-proliferation less credible.

About 37 tons of spent fuel is kept in France and Britain where it has been reprocessed since Japan lacks the capability to do it at home. The total is enough to make 6,000 atomic bombs, though the main reprocessing plant at Rokkasho says the material is under close monitoring by the International Atomic Energy Agency and there is no risk of proliferation.



‘Mental Hai Kya’ director rubbishes reports of Kangana’s interference

MUMBAI, JUN 7 (PTI): Director of “Mental Hai Kya”, Prakash Kovelamudi, has rubbished reports of actor Kangana Ranaut interfering with the project and called all the rumours “baseless.”

There were reports that Kangana has been interfering with the shooting of the film and was unhappy with some of the scenes, which had to be re-shot, thus causing the delay in the release of the movie.

“Both Kangana and Rajkumar Rao are powerhouse performers, whom I enjoyed directing. I am happy to see how their characters have turned out. ‘Mental Hai Kya’ is an intriguing thriller with doses of quirk. The film challenges the norms, and I am thrilled to bring to the audience something original,” he added.

The director denied reports about portions of the film be-



ing re-shot and said, “We finished the first leg in Mumbai, the second in London, and the last one in Mumbai again. The final schedule was wrapped last month. That’s all. All other conjecture is baseless.”

Produced by Shobha Kapoor, Ekta Kapoor and Shaailish R Singh, “Mental Hai Kya” is scheduled to release on July 26.

Aayush Sharma to play army officer in his next ‘Kwatha’

MUMBAI, JUN 5 (PTI): Aayush Sharma, who made his acting debut with “Love Yatri”, will next star in an action-drama film, titled “Kwatha”.

The 33-year-old actor will be portraying an army officer in the film.

“It’s a huge honour to play an army officer. I’m really looking forward to start shooting for the film,” Aayush said in a statement here.

The actor said he has already started preparing for the film.

The film is inspired by true events and will show how few incidents change a man’s opinion and perspective on certain things.

“Kwatha” is produced by Sunil Jain and Aditya



Josh of Cult Entertainment and directed by Karan Lalit Butani.

The film is most likely to go on floors around September this year and is scheduled to release in 2020.

Art suffers at the hands of fear: Dia Mirza



MUMBAI, JUN 7 (PTI): Actor Dia Mirza says art always suffers at the hands of fear but the same factor also ignites it.

The actor will be next seen in the Kashmir-set webseries “Kaaafir”, which chronicles the journey of a mother, a young Pakistani woman, who is being held prisoner after crossing over to India under mysterious circumstances.

When asked how does she view the current times when there is an ‘us versus them’ divide and Pakistani actors are banned, Dia told reporters, “Art always suffers at the hands of fear. But also, art is always ignited and refuelled because of fear.”

The actor said the existing prejudices are extremely detrimental for hope and love.

“I believe that these prejudices that are being imposed on us not just take us away from our neighbours, they take us away from ourselves.

“When we deny ourselves the opportunity to communicate and exchange hope and love, we are only expressing to the world how fearful we are,” she said.

She was speaking at a special event of “Kaaafir”, Thursday night.

Written by Bhavani Iyer, directed by Sonam Nair and produced by Siddharth Malhotra, “Kaaafir” premieres on ZEE5 on June 15.

Avicii’s posthumous album ‘Tim’ released



LONDON, JUN 7 (PTI): Swedish DJ Avicii’s new album titled ‘Tim’ has been released by Universal Music.

The posthumous album is named after the artiste’s real name Tim Bergling.

The DJ passed away on April 28, 2018 in Oman.

Honouring the wishes of Avicii’s family, his close friends and collaborators, including Imagine Dragons, Aloe Blacc and more worked on completing the album.

It took around a year from his demise to complete the 12-track LP.

The album also includes the single “SOS”, which released in April 2019.

Universal Music UK tweeted, “Honouring the wishes of Avicii’s family, @VirginEMI are releasing the music Tim was working on before his passing. The 12- track record ‘TIM’ continues Avicii’s legacy as one of the most beloved and respected figures in music.”

The producers of ‘Tim’ are Avicii, Karl Falk, Vargas and Lagola, Albin Nedler, Bonn, Lucas von Bahder, Arash Pournouri.

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ARIES: Your indie spirit is evident in all that you do, Aries, but today’s stars prod you to open yourself up to the power of two. If you’re struggling to keep your head above water, set aside your pride and ask for assistance. Never mind seeking out the answers online—reach out to someone whose skill set complements your own.

TAURUS: Tackle tasks that can be easily accomplished today, Taurus. Steer clear of those drawn-out conference calls and meetings that never seem to end. With the Libra moon in your sixth house of productivity, the day is about efficiency with a capital E. Make sure you fuel yourself with plenty of protein and keep the caffeine consumption to a minimum—it will keep you grounded and make it easier to deflect distractions. Keep conversations short and sweet, and start checking off those to-dos.

GEMINI: Under today’s stars, you’re more naughty than nice, so unleash your mischievous side. Let your hair down and allow your inner bad girl/guy to come out to play. Get yourself glammed up for a night on the town,

or inject some spice into your day by sending the object of your affections a suggestive message or photo.

CANCER: While you may be up to your ears in work today, Cancer, be sure to carve out quality time with a good friend. Putting your to-dos on hold for this person sends a strong message about how important he or she is to you. Doing so isn’t completely selfless, either. Bonding will reduce your own stress levels and remind you where your priorities lie.

LEO: The world’s your oyster as quicksilver Mercury makes a global entry into your ninth house of travel and adventure until May 6, sparking your wanderlust. Grab your car keys—or passport—and enjoy a spur-of-the-moment getaway. If you can’t get out of Dodge on such short notice, consider this your long-lead nudge to start planning your late-spring or summer vacay NOW.

LIBRA: Body language isn’t just a dialect spoken by a few—it’s the universal language of love! And today, your cosmic ruler, silver-tongued Mercury, flits into your sultry,

seductive erotic eighth house until May 6, inviting you to flirt with abandon. It’s a time to let your desires be known, directly or with more secretive subtlety.

VIRGO: Even someone with superhuman powers couldn’t keep up with everything you’ve got piled on your plate, Virgo. Compromise is mandatory if you hope to maintain some semblance of sanity, so find ways to scale back and streamline. In order to accomplish your most important work mission today, you’ll need to backburner each and every nonessential to-do on your list. Tune out those around you, and you’ll cross the finish line before the end of the day. Pheew.

SCORPIO: Today’s emo moon brings out your empathetic side. Don’t fight those feelings, Scorpio! If you feel a surge of sadness or anger in response to a friend’s plight, express it! Let the tears flow and open your heart to those who mean the most to you. Go out of your way to let them know how important they are in your world. When you need a steady shoulder and a compassionate ear, they’ll be there for you with bells on.

SAGITTARIUS: Pull off that oversized cashmere sweater and slip into something more glamorous—or better yet, sexier. Today, messenger Mercury wings into your amorous, glamorous fifth house until May 6, turning you into an unabashed flirtaholic. Harboring a secret crush? It’s time to act on it, Archer. Plan more playful dates over the next few weeks, whether you’re single or spoken for. Think: private whisky tasting or an adventurous road trip to see Hamilton on tour. You’ll be a magnet for magnates, so don’t be shy about approaching the power players in any room!

CAPRICORN: Trying to make everyone happy, Capricorn? Today’s stars turn that into an exercise in futility. If you’ve piled one too many obligations on your plate, your stress levels are liable to peak. Your best bet is to graciously bow out of a few responsibilities in the name of preserving your peace of mind. Don’t worry—the people who really count will understand. And if anyone tries to send you on a guilt trip, remember that their emotions are not

your responsibility!

AQUARIUS: You’ve been moving at the speed of light lately, and you’re looking forward to life calming down a bit. News-flash, Aquarius: Things will slow down when YOU decide it’s time. All this action is actually generated by your love of excitement, so it’s up to you to give yourself a much-needed breather. Today’s stars encourage you to create a space in your schedule for a bit of solitude. Unroll your yoga mat, turn to your trusty journal or simply take yourself to lunch!

PISCES: Ah, the irony. Today, YOU have your nose to the grindstone, but people are throwing you off your game with their texts, questions and tagged posts. While you might be tempted to shut your door, log off and silence your smartphone, the cosmos call for multitasking. The truth is, you won’t be able to get ‘er done today without getting input from others. You can only do so much, Pisces, so don’t drive yourself crazy. Take a deep breath, and let the juggling commence.