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# SummitTIMES

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## SKM poised to form govt, will sweep East and North Sikkim: Golay

**SUMMIT REPORT  
GANGTOK, 31 MAR:**

Sikkim Krantikari Morcha party president, PS Tamang, arrived on his home-turf with the party's election campaign meeting today when he addressed a public meeting at Soreng bazaar. In his address he claimed that SKM was poised to sweep all constituencies of East and North Sikkim and also the Sangha which will be complemented by seats it secures in South and West districts.

The meeting saw a strong turn-out of people from Soreng-Chakung, Daramdin, Rinchenpong and Zoom-Salghari constituencies of West Sikkim. Apart from Mr Ta-



SKM president, PS Tamang, with his son, Aditya Golay, whom the party has fielded from Mr Tamang's home constituency, Soreng-Chakung. It may be recalled that Mr Tamang is himself not contesting the elections but has been named chief ministerial candidate by his party.

mang, the public meeting was also attended and addressed by SKM's Lok Sabha candidate, Indra

Hang Subba, and assembly election candidates Aditya Golay, MN Sherpa, Phurba Tshering Bhutia

and Sunita Gazmer.

In his address, the SKM president continued  
**turn to pg02**



*Chamling enumerates achievements to remind voters what is at stake*

**ARPAN PRADHAN  
GANGTOK, 31 MAR:**

Sikkim Democratic Front party president, Chief Minister Pawan Chamling, today enumerated the various achievements of the 25-year-old SDF Government in Sikkim to underline the rapid developmental strides made by the State and to remind the electorate of what was at stake for this momentum was disrupted.

Addressing the third public meeting of the SDF's election campaign, Vijay Sankalp Yatra, here in Gangtok today, Mr Chamling stressed, "Change cannot be brought with a change of the Government. Positive change requires change in the thoughts of the people."

The SDF president shared that although SDF was now the party with currently the longest running government in the country, the record that he was more proud of was the number of people the SDF Government has pulled above the poverty line in Sikkim.

He highlighted that a World Bank study has

attested that Sikkim recorded the fastest pace of lifting BPL families above the poverty line in recent history.

Achievements such as this and a consistent commitment to development as displayed by the SDF need to be sustained, he said, while adding that forces driven by personal ambitions and motivated by revenge were now seeking to thwart progress.

In this regard, he stressed that his government has always prioritized the people and has hence worked hard to maintain peace and ensure stability and harmony here. In such an environment, government programmes have progressed well and people become more content, he said.

The public meeting was held at Guards Ground here for six constituencies from East District.

Mr Chamling stressed that for the development graph to continue rising, it was important for the electorate to vote his party back into office.

He reminded the  
**turn to pg02**

### Govt extends deadline for linking PAN with Aadhaar till Sep 30

**NEW DELHI, MAR 31 (PTI):** The government Sunday extended the deadline for linking PAN with biometric ID Aadhaar by 6 months till September 30, an official statement said.

This is the sixth time the government has extended the deadline for individuals to link their Permanent Account Number (PAN) to Aadhaar.

In June last year, the government had said that PAN has to be linked with the biometric ID by 31 March.

"...now the cut-off date for intimating the Aadhaar number and linking PAN with Aadhaar is September 30, 2019, unless specifically exempted," the Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) said in a statement.

However, quoting of Aadhaar will be mandatory while filing income tax returns (ITRs) with effect from April 1, 2019.

## After gold in Assam, Prabha gets more serious about boxing

**RANGPO, 31 MAR:** Prabha Gajmer, a student at Sirwani Secondary School, has made her school, area and State proud by winning Gold in the B-10 weight category at the 1st BFI East Zone Sub Junior Boys and Girls Boxing Championship organised by the Golaghat District Amateur Boxing Association in association with Assam Amateur Boxing Association at Golaghat, Assam, recently.

Daughter of Bhim Maya Darnal and Mohar Kumar Gajmer, Prabha is enrolled with the Singtam Boxing Club and represented Sikkim at the championship held from 24 to 27 March.

In the finals, Prabha out-boxed Deepanjali Daibhari of Assam.

When asked about her future plans, Prabha shares that she plans to train hard and play international matches.



Her coach, Pritam Silal, has specially thanked the Shantinagar Gaon Sudhar Samiti for providing a playground to for the young pugilists to train. He shared that Samiti members and

president Krishna Chhetri have consistently been very encouraging when it comes to supporting the young boxers.  
[SANJAY AGARWAL]

## South police prepped to keep campaign and polling safe

**NAMCHI, 31 MAR [IPR]:** South District Superintendent of Police, Manish Verma, today presented an update on security arrangements put in place for the upcoming General Elections.

The police has given ample importance to maintenance of law and order, he informed, while adding that the district has a total of 160 Polling Stations out of which 30 have been identified as critical.

With regards to this, highly structured security measures have been arranged to ensure the security of men and materials engaged in election duty alongside



creating a harmonious atmosphere wherein everyone can smoothly exercise their right, he assured.

The SP added that adequate number of Central Paramilitary Forces and state police force have been deployed at all the polling stations, including the identified critical polling stations.

Till date, no com-

plaints regarding violation of Model Code of Conduct have been registered, he further informed.

Additionally, ample security measures have already been activated at several check-posts and 24X7 vehicle checking, regular night patrolling, monitoring the naka bandi is being done by police officials.  
**turn to pg03**

The SP, along with ASP (South), SD Sangderpa, also took out a flag march at Police Stations, Sub-Division and District level with the aim to infuse a sense of security and as a confidence-building measure.

Thus far, two flag marches have been conducted. The previous march was from Namchi  
**turn to pg03**

**THE HIMALAYAN CLEANUP, 2020**

WE HAVE BEEN SHORTLISTED BY EOCA

**AND WE NEED YOUR VOTE!**

**March 28 - April 11, 2019**

STAY TUNED FOR MORE UPDATES



## ~ SummitTIMES ~ CLASSIFIEDS

### Required for Summit Times

Two field reporters for Gangtok (East) and one for West District. Should be fluent in english. Have basic knowledge in journalism. Walk in interview:

**Summit Times office**  
**Church Road, Gangtok**  
**03592-208698**

### PLOT FOR SALE:

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

### FLAT AVAILABLE FOR RENT

Fully furnished, 3 Bedroom flat available for rent at Church Road, Near Diesel Power House. Conveniently located by the roadside and a 5-minute walk from M.G. Marg. Suitable for Corporate Office and Guest House.

For further details please  
Contact: 9434117687 / 9083826462

### KUTSHE SHEGU

Our sincere gratitude and deep appreciation to all our dear friends and well wishers who have been so supportive and forthcoming during our time of bereavement, the sad demise of our beloved daughter Late **Kes-sang Tongden Lepcha** who left for her heavenly abode on 19/02/2019. Once again in all humility we request your benign presence in offering prayer for the departed soul, the 49th day of Kutshe Shegu which falls on **07/04/2019** (Sunday) at our residence at Tongden Lee, Dikchu Bazar, East Sikkim.

We would also like to take this opportunity to thank all those who stood by us in our hard time and regret our inability to thank them individually.

**Wangchuk Bhutia (Husband)**  
**& all family members.**



### ANTHYESTHI KRIYA

The Anthyesthi Kriya of our beloved mother, Late **SITA MAYA TRIKHATRI** (80 yrs) who left for her heavenly abode on the 23rd of March, 2019 falls on **4th April 2019**.

All relatives, family, friends and well-wishers are requested to join us in offering prayers for the departed soul at Hotel Chowtaro, Deorali Bazaar, Gangtok, East Sikkim.

We also express our gratitude to all those who stood by us during our time of bereavement.

**Daughters: Champa Bardewa-9434203706, Manju Trikhtri -7407181907**  
**Sons: Pratap Trikhatri -9064836436; Lalit Trikhatri (Son)-9775956554**  
**Daughters-in-Law: Man Maya Trikhatri -9775405439; Ashu Trikhatri -9647686222; Mamta Trikhatri -9609115039**



### MISSING



Ref. Paikyong PS Case FIR No. 02/2019, dated: 28.01.2019, u/s 363 IPC, 1860 one 17 yrs old girl child is missing since 22.01.2019 from Lossing, Machong, East Sikkim. The details of Missing girl are as follows:

Name:	Divya Sharma
Age:	17 yrs
d/o:	Chandra Prasad Sharma
Height:	4' 5" (approx)
Complexion:	Fair
Wearing apparel:	Blue colour jeans paint & shirt and black & pink colour Nike shoe

All are requested to share any information about the missing child in the below given Contact No.

03592-257834, 73843-49283, 97330-23817

**Informant will be suitably rewarded**

# Second randomisation of EVMS and VVPATs today

**GANGTOK, 31 MAR [IPR]:** The second randomization of EVMS and VVPATs for 13 Assembly constituencies, including Sangha, and Sikkim Parliamentary constituency will be conducted at the Office of District Election Officer (East)/ Returning Officer

on 01 April at 10 A.M.

District Election Officer (East), Kapil Meena, informs that the randomization will be carried through EMS software in the presence of General Observers for Assembly Constituencies and Parliamentary Con-

stituencies, District NIC Officials, contesting candidates and representatives of political parties.

Mr Meena has requested all contesting candidates or their representatives to witness the randomization process and also to partici-

pate in the EVM/ VVPATs commissioning process.

The purpose of second randomization of EVMS and VVPATs is to allocate EVMS and VVPATs randomly to Polling Stations for Assembly and Parliamentary constituencies.

The DEO further informs that once the commissioning commences, only authorised people will be allowed to enter the strong room premises.

The commissioning will commence on 02 April at 9 A.M. A team of qualified BEL engineers

have arrived in the district to supervise and assist the EMV/ VVPAT commissioning process.

Officials and staff involved in the commissioning process were also briefed in the presence of BEL engineers at the DAC Conference Hall today.

## South GO takes stock of preparedness



**NAMCHI, 31 MAR [IPR]:** General Observer for parliamentary constituency (South/West), Pan-kaj Agarwal, Transport Commissioner, Haryana, convened a meeting of all the sector magistrates and nodal officers at the chamber of DC (South), Ragul K, today. The aim of the meeting was to discuss various issues regarding the smooth conduct of the General Elections 2019 in the district.

The general observer took detailed stock of preparedness and em-

phasized the importance of the transport required for people with disabilities on polling day and

also discussed the route map with the concerned officials regarding the transportation of Elec-

tronic Voting Machines.

Regarding the IT Cell, Mr Agarwal directed the NIC to impart am-

ple awareness on cVIG-IL, Suvridha application along with generating sufficient awareness on the voter helpline of the district.

He also asked the concerned officials to submit reports assigned to them and enquired after violation of Model Code of Conduct complaints, Media Certification and Monitoring Committee submission of Postal ballots, randomization of EVMS and other election-related matters.

Additionally, the ob-

server also directed the officials to carry out the tasks with due diligence.

The Returning Officer provided a brief update on election preparedness in the district, including the 10 women and 30 critical polling stations, apart from various other election-related plans and procedures. He also updated the observer about security measures undertaken to guard these places.

## West BLOs and volunteers sensitised on rights of PwDs

**GYALSHING, 31 MAR [IPR]:** A meeting of all the Booth-Level Officers and NSS volunteers for sensitization on the rights of Persons with Disabilities (PwD) and the various facilities that are to be provided at polling stations was held today here at the

conference hall of West District Zilla Panchayat, Kyongsha.

The meeting was presided over by Returning Officer-cum-District Election Officer, Karma R. Bonpo, accompanied by Karma Loday Lepcha, ADC (W); Tashi Choden

Bhutia, Jt. Sec., (CEO); Tushar G. Nikhare, SDM (HQ) and Bhumika Pradhan, Nodal Officer (Model Polling Stations).

Addressing the gathering, Returning officer Mr Bonpo explained the key responsibilities and tasks of BLOs and direct-

ed them to submit timely reports to the control room and closely follow instructions of the Election Commission of India.

He added that all the BLOs must inform the sector magistrate immediately about any unusual activity in the premis-

es of polling booth.

The RO also informed that the polling parties must compulsory stay in their respective polling stations.

At the onset, Mr Nikhare emphasised upon 100% distribution of photo voter slips be-

fore 05 April 2019.

A total of 19 polling stations at the eight Assembly Constituencies in the district have been provided with wheel-chairs and vehicles for the convenience of PwD voters.

## Real Kashmir look to upset ATK in Super Cup

**BHUBANESWAR, MAR 31 (PTI):** An I-League title contender at one stage before eventually finishing third, Real Kashmir FC would look to cause an upset win against Indian Super League side ATK when the two teams clash in a Super Cup round of 16 match here on Monday.

Real Kashmir had an impressive I-League debut season, causing quite a few upsets and given the quality at hand, they will be a tough customer for the Kolkata-based ATK side

who have finished sixth in the IPL.

Reak Kashmir head coach David Robertson said ATK have experienced players but made it clear that his side can beat any opponent on their day.

"It is going to be a very difficult game. They have got highly experienced players. Their budget is multiple times than ours. This season only two teams have beaten (I-League champions) Chennai City. We beat them twice. On our day, we can beat anyone," he said.

"I think for us it is a

good test for our players and the team to see how far we have come," said the Scottish coach.

He also talked about the difference between the two clubs in terms of budget and facilities.

"ISL is a step up. They have got a budget lot more than ours. Maybe their top foreign players are more than our overall budget. So, we know it is going to be a tough game. But like every game this season, we have been underdogs and we have just gone and enjoyed the first season in I-League,"

he said.

"Tomorrow is another little bit of history for the club as well. First time in the Super Cup. So, it has been a fantastic couple of years."

ATK head coach Steve Coppell had words of appreciation for Real Kashmir, given their meteoric rise over the past year.

"I have seen quite a few of their games on TV and they are a team that deserve and demand respect. They have some really good players and they have a particular style which has produced a lot of

goals. Hopefully it will be a really good game," Coppell said.

He also praised his counterpart David Robertson for the work he has put in as head coach.

"You judge people on what they do and not what they have done. Finishing third in I-League in their debut season is a great achievement. They play very attractive football and he has done a great job. We know we are in for a tough game tomorrow and may the best team win.

### Police Observer in West Sikkim

**GYALSHING, 31 MAR [IPR]:** The Police Observer for Sikkim, Naveen Arora, arrived at the Gyalshing today.

Accompanied by SP West, Tenzing Loden Lepcha, and ADC (W), Karma L. Lepcha, the Police Observer visited the Control Room and held a detailed discussion with the Nodal Officers about election preparedness of the District.

He also interacted with SSB Officials about their security measures at the Kyongsa Strong Room.

He then interacted with the officials of District MCMC and the Expenditure Team.

Later, he visited the two 'Pink' Polling Booths inside Kyongsa Girls Senior Secondary School which are to be manned by Women Polling Officials and specifically designated for Women voters.

## Chamling enumerates achievements to remind voters what is at stake

**Contd from pg01**

gathering that services of more than 30,000 temporary employees have in regularized by the SDF Government.

He further detailed some salient features of the SDF election manifesto with special

focus on announcements included for constituencies covered in today's meeting.

About disaffected party leaders who quit the party when denied a ticket, Mr Chamling said that such reactions proved that these leaders

were in the party in pursuit of personal ambitions and not public service.

Addressing members of the business community, Mr Chamling announced that a

Business and Trade Welfare Board will be formed to

look into issues and problems of the community.

He also announced today that a Janta Raj Diwas will be observed in the Sikkim Legislative Assembly and on that day, only issues and demands of the general public will be dis-

cussed and necessary action taken immediately. On this day, the people will be invited to place their demands and grievances directly in the Assembly for discussion, he informed.

## SKM poised to form govt, will sweep East and North Sikkim: Golay

**Contd from pg01**

his allegations against the SDF government and contended that no real development had taken place in the State in the past 25 years, arguing that development here was limited to claims and documentation only and nothing having percolated to people at the grassroots.

He also accused SDF of distributing "black money" and liquor to "buy" votes and while warning people against getting swayed by such offers, argued that if the government had worked on ground it would not have been so insecure as to try such tactics to win elections.

Mr Tamang further claimed that the Chief Minister was repeating announcements and promises he had already made

in the 2014 elections and remarked that this was further evidence of his government not having done any real work.

He also called on the sentiments of the people when it comes to former CM, the Late Nar Bahadur Bhandari, who had represented the area as a legislator, and said that change in the system was a big dream of the former CM. The people of Soreng-Chakung have to fulfil his dream, he appealed.

He went on to claim that only SKM can save the Sikkim Subjects and the rights and interests of the Sikkimese people and appealed to the people to vote SKM into government.

Mr Tamang also claimed today that SKM would win all 12 seats in East district, the

three in North Sikkim and the Sangha seat as well. The party, he further contended, will also win many seats from West and South Sikkim which will security majority for the party.

"SKM has already formed the government and is just waiting for 11 April when people will formalise it," he said.

Apart from clean governance, he also assured that SKM, should be elected into office, will "give respect to elders and opportunities to the youth" and secure justice for the Limboos and Tamangs of Sikkim.

He also assured to fulfil all promises made in the election manifesto and announced to upgrade Soreng sub-division to district status.

Meanwhile, in his address, the SKM Lok Sabha candidate, Mr Subba, shared that his decision to enter politics was born from the realisation that development of the society was not possible without politics. He added that 2019 presented a significant opportunity to save democracy in Sikkim and that the youth need to be empowered to save the democratic system.

He alleged that the SDF government has done half-hearted development, pointing out how the Chakung College was opened without a proper campus, laboratories and other required facilities and infrastructure.

He argued that a similar failure has marred the open-

ing of other colleges in the State and remarked that this exposed the tokenism that has underlined issues of the youth in Sikkim. An SKM government, he assured, would be different and would provide better facilities and infrastructure for all in the State.

Mr Subba also promised to speak up in Parliament on issues that mattered to Sikkim and pursue them sincerely with the Centre, something he alleged that the SDF dispensation has not done effectively.

An SKM press release further informs that the meeting was also addressed by senior leaders of the party and that 487 families aligned to the SDF from different constituencies officially joined SKM today.



## Vietnam Ambassador visits Sikkim University

**GANGTOK, 31 MAR [PIB]:** Ambassador of Vietnam to India, Pham Sanh Chau, delivered a special talk on "Vietnam-India Relations in the Context of India's Act East Policy" here at Sikkim University today.

Mr Chau stated that Vietnam has a consistent policy for peace, friendship, co-operation and development and acts as a friend, a reliable partner and a responsible member of the international community.

He also underlined that the history and foundation of Vietnam-India relationship was based on three principles - long standing traditional friendship, high level of political trust and convergence of strategic interests.

SU Vice-Chancellor, Prof Avinash Khare, also spoke on the evolution of India-Vietnam relations and stated that the two countries have built a synergy for deep co-operation as is evident from the strategic partnership struck in 2007 which grew to a comprehensive partnership in 2016.

Prof NK Paswan, Dean, School of Social Sciences, in his inaugural address, highlighted that a strong India-Vietnam partnership would lead to prosperity, development, sustainable peace and stability as Vietnam was also a strong pillar of India's Act East Policy.

## South police prepped to keep campaign and polling safe

**Contd from pg01**

to Majhitar via Nandugogan, Jorethang Bazaar and the latest district level march was carried out on 30 March from Bhanjyang to Mamring.

The SP further informs that apart from the bazaars, the march also covered vulnerable hamlets. The district is also keeping a watch against anti-social activities.

## SU hosts workshop on Astronomy and Astrophysics

**GANGTOK, 31 MAR [PIB]:** The Department of Physics, Sikkim University, organised a 3-day IUCAA Workshop on Astronomy and Astrophysics from 29 to 31 March.

The workshop saw deliberations and discussions covering key areas such as gravitation and cosmology, galaxies and large scale structures, stars and stellar evolution.

Resource persons for the workshop were Prof DJ Saikia from IUCAA, Prof Debasis Borah from IIT Guwahati, Prof Sukanta Deb from Cotton University, Guwahati, Prof Bikash Paul from the University of North Bengal and Prof Kanak Saha from IUCAA.

Participants from Nar Bahadur Bhandari Degree College, Gangtok; Sikkim Manipal Institute of Technology, Majitar; and Sikkim University participated in the workshop.

# HDFC Bank to open 100 more branches in NER, double presence in Sikkim

**SAGAR CHHETRI  
GANGTOK, 31 MAR:**

**H**DFC Bank's Managing Director, Aditya Puri, today announced that 100 more branches of the bank will be opened in the North East Region over the next three years taking the branch network close to 230. He stated that as a part of this plan, the bank will also double the number of its branches in Sikkim to 18.

Mr Puri made this announcement at a press conference here on Sunday.

He is presently in Gangtok on his first visit to Sikkim. He had taken charge as Managing Director at HDFC Bank in 1994 and now stands as the longest-serving head of any private bank in the country. India Today ranked him #24th in In-



dia's 50 Most Powerful People of 2017 list.

Mr Puri shared that the bank has "great plans" for the NER and was taking its products to every corner of Sikkim and other states of the north east. He added

that the focus of the expansion plans will be on semi-urban and rural areas of the region.

"As we enter our 25th year, we reiterate our commitment to making a difference to the lives of the people in Sikkim and the

entire Northeast. We believe in making an impact on lakhs of people here not just by offering our full-suite of products and services, but also by creating a positive change in the communities in which we operate," he said.

Speaking on HDFC Bank's umbrella brand for all social initiatives, Parivartan, he shared that through this social initiative, the bank has impacted the lives of close to 10 lakh people in the Northeast.

"Going forward, we hope to continue to partner with the people of Northeast in their overall development and progress," he said.

He mentioned that under #Parivartan's Teaching the Teacher [3T] programme, the bank will cover close to 1 lakh teachers in the Northeast, with close to 7,000 in Sikkim alone. These teachers receive training in effective teaching methods and are then invited to be a part of the process by submitting their own zero-cost, high-impact ideas to improve educa-

tion in schools.

Likewise through #Parivartan's Sustainable Livelihood Initiative [SLI], it is informed, over 9 lakh women in the North East have been made financially independent and women under the programme are given occupational skills training, financial literacy, credit counseling, livelihood finance and market linkage.

Through #Parivartan's Holistic Rural Development Programme [HRDP] the bank has made a difference to the lives 11,478 households in 97 villages in the region. This includes construction of close to 1,000 sanitation units in schools and households. HRDP is a flagship initiative of #Parivartan, which seeks to better village life by focusing on improvements in key areas of Educa-

tion, Skills Training and Livelihood Enhancement, Natural Resources Management, Water and Sanitation, Financial Literacy and Inclusion.

HDFC Bank started its journey in the Northeast in 2004 and has 126 branches and 203 ATMs in the region as of 31 December 2018.

"Over half of these are in the semi-urban and rural areas and the focus of the new branch expansion will also be in these locations. The bank's network will get a further boost from the 650 Common Service Centres [CSCs] to be set up in the region by the Government of India," it is informed.

The press conference was also attended by HDFC Regional Head-Retail Branch Banking, Sandeep S Kumar and other senior officials of the bank.

# Workshops on recycling and photography held at Rhenock College

**SUMMIT REPORT  
GANGTOK, 31 MAR:**

**G**overnment College, Rhenock, organised a two-day skill development workshop on "Re-use use of plastic waste for environmental conservation," on 26 and 27

March. The workshop, which covered various aspects of recycling by resource persons drawn from several agencies, was sponsored by RUSA, Human Resource Development Department.

The objective of the workshop was to en-

hance the skills of students regarding recycle and reuse of plastic and waste materials.

Day-one had Tshering Uden Bhutia, CEO, Kanchendzonga Conservation Committee, Yuskam, and Dr Ghanashyam Sharma, Programme

Manager at Mountain Institute India, as resource persons.

On day-two Prayrit Rai and Shubham Agrawal from On vert startup, Gangtok and Kanchendzonga Women Self Help Group, Sudunglakha, made presentations on

alternative uses of plastics reusing waste materials.

This workshop was followed by a two-day workshop on Basics of Photography on 28 and

29 March.

Jagjit Singh, a renowned photographer who specialises in Architectural Photography, was the resource person as was Kunga Tashi Lep-

cha from Photography Club of Sikkim.

A field-trip to Zuluk was also organised for students.

## Rotary organizes interactive session with Neil Tara students



**SUMMIT REPORT  
GANGTOK, 30 MAR:**

**A**n Interactive Session on "Little ways to make parents happy" was held between members of the Rotary Club of Gangtok South and students of Neil Tara Academy here today.

Addressing the gathering, president of the Club, Sunila Verma, urged students to concentrate on their studies and try to become good citizens in future.

Students have to set their goals of life and try to achieve them with hard work, determination, dedication and dis-

cipline, she stressed.

The speakers addressed topics like time management and the importance of balanced nutritious food.

They also spoke about the aims and objectives as well as activities of the Rotary Club of Gangtok South.

The speakers included Rotarians Geeta Chettri, Geeta Sapkota and James Vungjangam Haokip. Three other Rotarians, Udai P Sharma, Mala Rana Patro and Anita Niraula also participated in the session.

The programme was conducted by NTA students.

## Presiding officers complete third round of training in North

**MANGAN, 30 MAR (IPR):** The third round of training to the Presiding officers was held here at the conference hall of Zilla Bhawan, North. The programme had the presence of General Observer (GO), North, Dr Pratibha Singh, along with District Election Officer (DEO) cum Returning Officer (RO), Raj Yadav, SDM Kabi Cum National Level

Master Trainer, Mahesh Sharma, Under Secretary (US), Election Department, Santosh Pradhan. Altogether 68 numbers of Presiding Officers underwent the said training.

DEO/RO, Mr Yadav explained about the roles and responsibilities of the Presiding Officers and Polling Officers through power point presentation. He

stated that the Presiding Officer must ensure that the polling team should work in tandem with the guidelines of Election Commission of India (ECI) as to orient an error free election process.

Talking on the mock poll certification during poll day he asked to the Polling team to conduct mock poll at 6am, so that the mock poll would be

done at stipulated time. He also informed that the casting of vote will start at 7 a.m and stop at 5 p.m.

Further, RO explained in detail about filing of different forms related to poll day and sealing of Electronic Voting Machine (EVM). The last training of Polling and Presiding Officers will be held on 04 April.

## Election micro-observers trained in North Sikkim

**MANGAN, 31 [IPR]:** Under the guidance of the General Observer, North District, Dr Pratibha Singh, and District Election officer-cum-Returning Officer, North, Raj Yadav, 10 micro-observers of the district were trained here at the District Administrative Centre conference hall today.

Master Trainer-cum-SDM, Chungthang, Subash Ghimirey, explained the key responsibilities and tasks of the micro observers and made aware



of EVM, ballot unit, control unit, presiding officer and polling officers of the polling team, voter's slip, mock poll and other process.

Dr Singh instructed the micro observers to discharge responsibilities

vested on them seriously and submit timely reports while strictly following the instructions of the Election Commission of India.

The General Observer said that the micro-observers have an import-

ant responsibility in the smooth conduct of the polls and should hence be conversant with the laws and rules related to the conduct of elections.

The District Election Officer-cum-Returning Officer reminded the micro observers that they have been deputed to critical/ sensitive polling stations to observe the process on polling day from beginning to end and pass on any unusual events to the general observer.

FAQ

EVM with VVPAT Unit

**Q12.** Is it possible to vote more than once by pressing the button again and again?

**Ans.** No. As soon as a particular button on the Balloting Unit is pressed the vote is recorded for that particular candidate and the machine gets locked. Even if one presses that button further or any other button, no further vote will be recorded. This way the EVMs ensure the principle of "one man, one vote". The next vote is enabled only when the Presiding Officer/Polling Officer in-charge of the Control Unit releases the Ballot by pressing the Ballot Button. This is a distinct advantage over the ballot paper system.

**Q13.** How can a voter be sure that the EVM is working and his vote has been recorded?

CALL 1950 FOR ANY ELECTION RELATED QUERIES  
 Contact Hours : 9:00 AM to 9:00 PM

MCC IS IN EFFECT

WHAT IS  
MODEL CODE OF  
CONDUCT?

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## Save the Young from Obscurity

*Demand better from education*

A little over a decade ago, an obscure man, then in his mid-30s, hailing from a nondescript Andhra village, blazed a trail with his apparently crazy move. This “obscure man” was one called Narasing Lal Butt, and his “crazy move” was to claim “damages” through the human rights commission from his village school for its failure to provide him quality education. Education of even reasonable quality could have established him in life, but in his 30’s he found himself ill-equipped and under-prepared for anything worthwhile, hence the claim for damages.

Google searches lead nowhere when it comes to ferreting out what happened of his petition. Most probably nothing. In all probability, Narasing has withdrawn into his obscurity only to be occasionally invoked in publications in distant Sikkim. But his petition was obviously never really about receiving damages, and was always about holding up the mirror. A decade since, the mirror still reflects the same image of a broken education system which is still as listless and continues to mass-produce mediocrity. The litigant had sued his school for making him so, well, ‘obscure’. And although his complaint most probably secured him no reprieve, he “blazed a trail” in that he went to the human rights commission and not the consumer redressal courts. Even his incomplete education informed him well enough to recognise that education was not a commodity, but a Right, a human right.

Education, whether free, subsidized or exorbitantly paid for, should be better regulated and any lapses on this front should be seen as a violation of a whole generation’s human rights. Fact remains that too few people are paying enough attention to education. Yes, there are huge budgets, there are many schools and literacy is on the rise, but what are the schools really churning out? The success stories of Indian academics [which are only a minuscule proportion of the studying population] are fuelled by individual drive and not institutional support or grooming. To blame the teachers would be too easy, they are only part players in a system which is failing, policy interventions have remained ineffectual and uninspiring. It is worrying that education and schools continue to be seen as readying people for employment when the first priority should always have been learning. In the more worrying trends, new policies have also been destructive, trying to dismantle institutions to suit new moulds.

What the nation now needs are more Narasing Lal Butts; more people from the masses to take the policy framers and deliverers to task; to demand better. May be then things will start improving.

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# Last of the giants: What killed off Madagascar’s megafauna a thousand years ago?

NICK SCROXTON; LAURIE GODFREY & STEPHEN BURNS  
*theconversation.com*

Giant 10-foot-tall elephant birds, with eggs eight times larger than an ostrich’s. Sloth lemurs bigger than a panda, weighing in at 350 pounds. A puma-like predator called the giant fosa.

They sound like characters in a child’s fantasy book, but along with dozens of other species, they once really roamed the landscape of Madagascar. Then, after millions of years of evolution in the middle of the Indian Ocean, the populations crashed in just a couple of centuries.

Scientists know that over the past 40,000 years, most of Earth’s megafauna – that is, animals human-size or larger – have gone extinct. Woolly mammoths, sabre tooth tigers and countless others no longer roam the planet.

What’s remarkable about the megafaunal crash in Madagascar is that it occurred not tens of thousands of years ago but just over 1,000 years ago, between A.D. 700 and 1000. And while some small populations survived a while longer, the damage was done in a relatively short amount of time. Why?

Over the last three years, new investigations into climate and land use patterns, human genetic diversity on the island and the dating of hundreds of fossils have fundamentally changed scientists’ understanding of the human and natural history of Madagascar. As two paleoclimatologists and a paleontologist, we brought together this research with new evidence of megafaunal butchery. In doing so we’ve created a new theory of how, why and when these Malagasy megafauna went extinct.

### CLIMATE AT THE TIME OF THE CRASH

The first job is to understand exactly when the megafauna died out.

Radiocarbon dating of over 400 recent fossils demonstrates that animals under 22 pounds lived on Madagascar throughout the last 10,000 years. For animals over 22 pounds, there are abundant fossils up to 1,000 years ago, but relatively few since. The biggest decline in number of large animals occurred rapidly between A.D. 700 and 1000 – practically instantaneous given the long history of their existence on the island.

What was the climate doing at that time? One popular theory for the megafaunal extinction has blamed island-wide drying. To test this idea, our team has been exploring the caves of Madagascar, collecting and analyzing stalagmites. As stalagmites grow upwards from the cave floor, layer by layer, differences in the chemistry of each layer document changes in the climate outside the cave.

By analyzing chemical composition and comparing ratios of various isotopes in these stalagmites, we created new high-resolution records of changes in the Malagasy ecosystems and climate. We found minor fluctuations in the strength of the summer rains

throughout the last 2,000 years, but no significant drying over that period. In fact, A.D. 780-960 was one of the wettest periods of the last 2,000 years. Chemical analyses of fossils back up this claim.

So it looks like there was no significant drying around the time the megafauna disappeared.

Instead, the stalagmite records indicated a rapid and dramatic change in the landscape. Changing ratios of the isotopes carbon-12 to carbon-13 reveal a switch from forests to grassland right around A.D. 900, the same time as the megafaunal population crash. Clearly something big happened around this time.

### CUT MARKS AND EVIDENCE OF BUTCHERY

With no significant change in the climate, some point to the arrival of humans on the island as a possible cause of the megafauna population crash. It seems logical that once people arrived on Madagascar, they might have hunted the big animals into extinction. New data suggest that this timing doesn’t add up, though.

According to new dates on fossil bones with cut marks on them, humans arrived on Madagascar 10,500 years ago, much earlier than previous-



ly believed. But whoever these early people were, there’s no genetic evidence of them left on the island. New analysis of the human genetic diversity in modern Madagascar suggests the current population derives primarily from two waves of migration: first from Indonesia 3,000 to 2,000 years ago, and later from mainland Africa 1,500 years ago.

So it seems that people lived alongside the megafauna for thousands of years. How did the humans interact with the large animals?

Our new study found dozens of fossils with butchery marks. Cut and chop marks provide compelling evidence as to which species people were hunting and eating. Evidence of butchery of animals that are now extinct continues right up to the time of the megafaunal crash. Some people on Madagascar hunted and ate the megafauna for millennia without a population crash.

### EVIDENCE FOR A CHANGE IN LAND USE

If there was no obvious climate shift and humans lived alongside and sustainably hunted the megafauna for up to 9,000 years, what could have triggered the population crash?

The abrupt land use change might hold some

clues. The transition from a forest-dominated ecosystem to a grassland-dominated ecosystem appears to be widespread. Scientists have identified this switch not only in the chemical signature of stalagmites but also in pollen grains buried in layers of mud at the bottom of lakes. Ancient lake sediments reveal two other changes occurred at the same time as the shift to grass species: an increase in charcoal from fires and an increase in the fungus *Sporormiella*, which is associated with the dung of large herbivores such as cows.

Evidence for simultaneous increases in grassland, fires, and cows and other domesticated animals points to a sudden change in Malagasy lifestyle: the introduction of cattle husbandry and slash-and-burn agriculture known locally as Tavy. Here, forests are cut down to make space for rice paddies, and grassland burned to promote the growth of nutritious seedlings for cow fodder.

This move away from foraging and hunting toward farming meant the land could support more people. The result was a rapid rise in the size of the human population – and that’s what we conclude spelled disaster for the megafauna.

Here lies the contradiction of the situation: Hunting megafauna for survival became less important as people could rely on their agriculture and livestock. But cut marks on fossil bones indicate that hunting didn’t altogether stop just because people had other food sources. It turns out that the impact on the megafauna of larger human populations hunting just to supplement their diet was greater than the impact of smaller human populations relying more heavily on the native animals as a vital food source.

Bringing together new data on land use changes, climatic

histories, genetics, fossil ages and butchery of the megafauna, we call this change “the subsistence shift hypothesis.” Both the habitat loss and increase in human population arose out of a fundamental change in the way humans lived on Madagascar, from a more nomadic hunter-gatherer lifestyle to an agrarian society. We argue that it was this reorganization on Madagascar around A.D. 700-1000 that led to the crash in the megafaunal population.

Small populations of megafauna lived on in isolated pockets for another few centuries, but their fate was likely already sealed. The majority of the giant birds and animals that were once common across our planet have gone extinct. Many of the remaining giants, such as elephants and rhinos, are threatened or endangered. Will they go the same way as the Malagasy megafauna, casualties of humans’ changing lifestyles?

[Nick Scroxtion is Postdoctoral Research Scholar in Paleoclimatology, University of Massachusetts Amherst; Laurie Godfrey is Emeritus Professor of Anthropology, University of Massachusetts Amherst; Stephen Burns is Professor of Geosciences, University of Massachusetts Amherst]

# Ghana has a serious political vigilante problem. Here’s why

JUSTICE TANKEBE  
*theconversation.com*

*What’s meant by political vigilantism and how long has it been an issue in Ghana?*

Vigilantism is when people “take the law into their own hands” in order to protect or advance their interests. In this way, all vigilantism is political because it always involves the use of (illegal) power against others who are perceived to be a threat to those interests. However, when we speak of “political vigilantism” we mean specifically the use of vigilantes in the name of partisan politics.

In Ghana, political parties – whether in government or the opposition – are known to form and use vigilante groups who then act on their behalf. This has been highlighted in various reports, such as one put together by the Institute for Security Studies as well as academic research papers. These vigilante groups are often violent, target opposition groups and public officials, and seize property or assets.

But vigilantes aren’t just thugs who operate at the street level. Based on my research of over ten years into vigilantism in Ghana, I have started to focus on what I call “vigilantes-in-suits”. I use the term to refer to people in positions of authority – for example, policy makers, lawmakers and various political appointees –

who will pursue their party’s interests by any means.

Political vigilantism isn’t a new feature of Ghanaian politics. Some researchers say that it has its roots in the country’s independence movement from British colonial rule. The Convention People’s Party, led by Kwame Nkrumah – Ghana’s independence leader and first president – and the National Liberation Movement were engaged in fierce political struggles over whether Ghana should be a federal or unitary state. The struggle involved violent vigilante activity by elements on both sides.

Today, Ghana’s two main political parties – the National Democratic Congress and the New Patriotic Party – have vigilante groups who wear T-shirts branded with their group’s logo. These include the “Azorka Boys” and the “Hawks” for the National Democratic Congress and the “Invincible Forces” and “Delta Forces” for the New Patriotic Party.

### How does it manifest itself?

Political vigilantism often involves violence, both physical and psychological. Vigilantes engage in riots, violent protests and property destruction. They’re also known to target elections, intimidating voters or mounting roadblocks to prevent “outsiders” from observing polls.

Vigilantes have also been known to harass, threaten, assault, and assassinate opponents.

### Who perpetuates it?

Ghana’s two main political parties recruit, train and fund vigilantes.

These are young people who feel that the state doesn’t represent their interests. They also feel powerless because they don’t have many opportunities to improve their situation or are poor. These frustrations make them vulnerable to indoctrination by older generations – largely politicians – who give the young recruits ideological direction and justification for their actions.

Vigilantism has also flourished because of a lack of deterrence. Criminal justice agencies – particularly the police – are highly ineffective against vigilantes. Based on the insights I’ve gained from my research, I believe this is because of significant partisan interference in police work which has left them powerless. They either don’t make arrests or, if arrests are made, suspects are released because a politician intervened through the back door.

### What can be done to put a stop to it?

Tackling political vigilantism won’t be easy because young people may feel that being a member of a vigilante group defines and gives meaning to their life. It might give them power, esteem, prestige and a sense of belonging.

It, therefore, won’t be enough to just disband the groups and give them moral lessons on the perils of vigilantism. They must be given

enough support to find alternative livelihoods. Ghana could draw lessons from Sierra Leone who successfully demobilised and re-settled ex-combatants after conflict.

Longer-term strategies must address the issues of unemployment and Ghana’s deeply unequal society. Unless government policies create a more equal society, for example, through better employment opportunities for young people, vigilantism will remain a stable feature of Ghanaian politics.

Tackling inequality also means more decisive action against corruption, which is widespread and vicious. Corruption allows the rich to get richer and prevents people from being held accountable for their actions. This creates conditions for vigilante activity.

Lastly, the police service must be independent, well-resourced and insulated from partisan politics. To do this, there must be an overhaul. The police service must be decentralised to improve community-police relations and the current political appointment of police chiefs should be replaced by a competitive recruitment process. A new governance structure made up of people with expertise in police work, like academics and practitioners, should be created to oversee police work.

[the writer is Lecturer in Criminology, University of Cambridge]



# Court martial of Major Gogoi completed; may face reduction of seniority

SUMIR KAUL

**NEW DELHI/SRINAGAR, MAR 31 (PTI):** The court martial proceedings against Major Leetul Gogoi, who was at the centre of the 2017 'human shield' controversy, have been completed and he may face reduction in seniority as a punishment for "fraternising" with a local woman in Srinagar last year, officials said.

The court martial process against his driver, Sameer Malla, who was facing charges of unauthorised absence from the unit, was also completed recently in the Kashmir valley and he is likely to be given a "severe reprimand".



Malla was recruited in the Territorial Army in 2017 and he was posted with 53 sector of Rashtriya Rifles, a counter-insurgency force fighting militancy in Jammu and Kashmir.

After completion of Summary of Evidence against Major Gogoi and his driver in early February followed by the initiation of court martial proceedings, the two men have been held

guilty on two counts -- "fraternising" with a local in spite of instructions to the contrary and "being away from the place of duty while in operational area", the officials said.

Statements of the accused as well as other witnesses were recorded by the Army court and the punishment, which will be vetted by the Army headquarters, has been given, they added.

The Army Court of Inquiry (CoI) had recommended disciplinary action against Major Gogoi after it indicted him as well as his driver for the Srinagar hotel incident on May 23 last year.

Major Gogoi was de-

tained by police following an altercation with the hotel staff when he was allegedly trying to enter inside with an 18-year-old woman.

The woman had expressed her unwillingness to depose during the court martial proceedings and informed the Army authorities that she had given a statement before a magistrate and the same should be treated as her final stand.

The woman had also stated that she had gone out with Major Gogoi of her own will, besides disclosing that she had become a friend of the Army officer through his fake Facebook profile,

where he had named himself Ubaid Arman.

Immediately after the incident came to light last year, Army chief Bipin Rawat had said that exemplary punishment would be given to Major Gogoi if he was found guilty of "any offence".

"If any officer of the Indian Army is found guilty of any offence, we will take strictest possible action," General Rawat had said.

Major Gogoi hit the headlines after he tied a man to a jeep purportedly as a shield against stone pelters during polling in the Srinagar Lok Sabha by-election on April 9, 2017.

## NPF to back Cong LS candidate in Nagaland

**KOHIMA, MAR 31 (PTI):** In a major boost to the Congress, the Naga People's Front (NPF), which is the main opposition party in the 60-member Assembly, has decided to support K L Chishi, the grand old party's candidate for the lone Lok Sabha seat in the state.

The NPF, which is not fielding any candidate for the general election, announced its decision to back the Congress candidate during a consultative meeting of central office bearers and MLAs here on Saturday.

"The NPF has decided to lend issue-based support to Congress candidate KL Chishi in the upcoming Lok Sabha election," its president Shrhozelie Liezietsu said.

"That, however, does not change the party's stand on regionalism. Also, the NPF is not an ally of the Congress," Liezietsu clarified.

The NPF, which has 26 MLAs in the Assembly, wants to bring all secular forces together for the upcoming Lok Sabha election, he said, adding that the NDA, if it comes to power, will push for the Citizenship (Amend-

ment) Bill, putting the interests of indigenous people under threat.

TR Zeliang, NPF legislature party leader, said the objective was to defeat Tokheho Yephthomi, the consensus candidate of the ruling PDA, of which the BJP is a part.

"The people here are confronted with issues of secularism, citizenship bill and Naga political issue. The NPF has decided to support the Congress candidate in the interest of the Nagas," he said.

Asked about the seven NPF MLAs, who openly pledged their support to the PDA government and its consensus candidates for the Lok Sabha polls and the Aongleng Assembly bypoll, Zeliang said, "It is evident that they have bargained the trust of people and that of the party for their personal benefits."

"A showcase notice has been issued to the MLAs on March 26. The party will be compelled to take action against them if they fail to respond within seven days," he added.

Elections to the lone Lok Sabha seat in Nagaland will be held on April 11.

## BNP leader among 2 arrested in connection with fire in high-rise building

**DHAKA, MAR 31 (PTI):** A senior leader of opposition BNP was among two persons arrested in connection with a devastating fire in a high-rise building that killed 26 people in Dhaka last week, police said on Sunday.

At least 26 people were killed and 50 others were injured when the blaze broke out in the 23-floor office bloc, F R Tower in Dhaka's Banani area, on Thursday.

A case was registered in Benani police station on Saturday, Dhaka Police Commissioner Asaduzzaman Mia was quoted as saying by the bdnews24.com.

SMHI Faruk, an engineer and the land owner of the building, was arrested from Bashundhara residential area around 1:45 am on Sunday, Deputy Commissioner of the Detective Branch of Dha-



ka Metropolitan Police, Moshir Rahman, said. BNP leader Tasvir Ul Islam, who is one of the owners of the building

and the president of the commercial complex's management committee, was arrested from his Baridhara residence

on Saturday, Additional Deputy Commissioner of the Detective Branch of Dhaka Metropolitan Police, Shahjahan Saju, said.

Authorities said that the building lacked adequate fire safety measures and had no fire-protected staircases.

## Upset with the makers of Netflix series Delhi Crime, says then SHO of Vasant Vihar police station

SALONI BHATIA

**NEW DELHI, MAR 31 (PTI):** While Netflix series 'Delhi Crime' has got rave reviews for its sensitive portrayal of the Nirbhaya gangrape case, Inspector Anil Sharma is upset with the makers and is planning to take the legal route against them for the depiction of a character based on him.

Sharma was the SHO of the Vasant Vihar police station where the case was registered in 2012 which had led to an outrage across the nation.

The police officer said he regularly met the victim when she was admitted in a hospital in the national capital and spent time with her.

He said had not missed a single hearing in the case and is still in touch with the victim's family whom he describes an extended family.

Sharma, who hasn't watched the series yet, claimed its director Richie Mehta has apologised to him, but he felt that the character's portrayal has hurt him.

In an interview to PTI earlier, Mehta had said the show dramatises the incident and includes back stories of the police personnel, the condition of the force, their power struggle with the bureaucracy and managing the scoop-hungry media.

The series depicts the Vasant Vihar SHO's character as an officer who is not trusted by his seniors and tries to shirk work, even when the team is racing against time to nab the culprits.

Later in the series, the character, christened Vinod, becomes more responsible and even makes a suggestion to his DCP to go in for orthodontics

technique, which was used for the first time in any case and helped nail the accused.

The technique matched the bite marks on the victim's body with the teeth marks of the accused using dental casts.

The police officer said he is planning to initiate legal proceedings against the makers of the series.

Sharma, currently posted as the SHO of the Lodhi Colony police station, told PTI that he had faced three inquiry commissions in the case and none of them found any laxity on the part of the police station.

"They, in fact, praised us. Even the courts praised the police's efforts. The series has mangled my reputation and I am considering whether I can go to court against them," he said.

Sharma said he is up-

set and even though the director, Richie Mehta, has apologised to him, he is not pacified.

"He has apologised to me and sent several messages. My seniors are also upset. During one of our crime review meetings, my senior discussed the portrayal of my character and encouraged me to not be affected by it," he said.

In an episode, Sharma's character tells his DCP, portrayed by Shefali Shah, that he wants to go to the gym to unwind, even as the police teams are looking for the accused.

"I am a national-level athlete and I have never gone to the gym. If I would have thought so, my juniors would have not put in efforts thinking that when the seniors are like this, why should we be bothered," he said.

He said when the case

was under investigation, they had done what could be called the "mother of all arrangements".

"Students used to be sitting right outside the police station and we used to escort the accused to court through the rear of the police station, crossing a drain, slum cluster, through PVR Priya, all while ensuring that they are not lynched by the angry public. Apart from this, I also had the job of collecting evidence in the case, handling her friend who was also with her in the bus," he said.

Sharma, who was also managing other cases at the time, said he used to visit the victim and forged a bond with her.

"I used to regularly spend time with her. I had even told her O Henry's popular story 'The Last Leaf' as her story was similar to it," he said.

## New central police observer arrives

**KOLKATA, MAR 31 (PTI):** Vivek Dubey, who replaced former BSF director general R K Sharma as the central police observer for the upcoming Lok Sabha elections in West Bengal arrived in the city Sunday.

According to Election Commission sources, Dubey, a 1981 batch IPS officer, would meet representatives of different political parties separately on Monday morning.

He would also hold

video conferences with district magistrates and superintendents of police of eight districts which are slated to have Lok Sabha polls in the first three phases, the sources said.

Ruling Trinamool

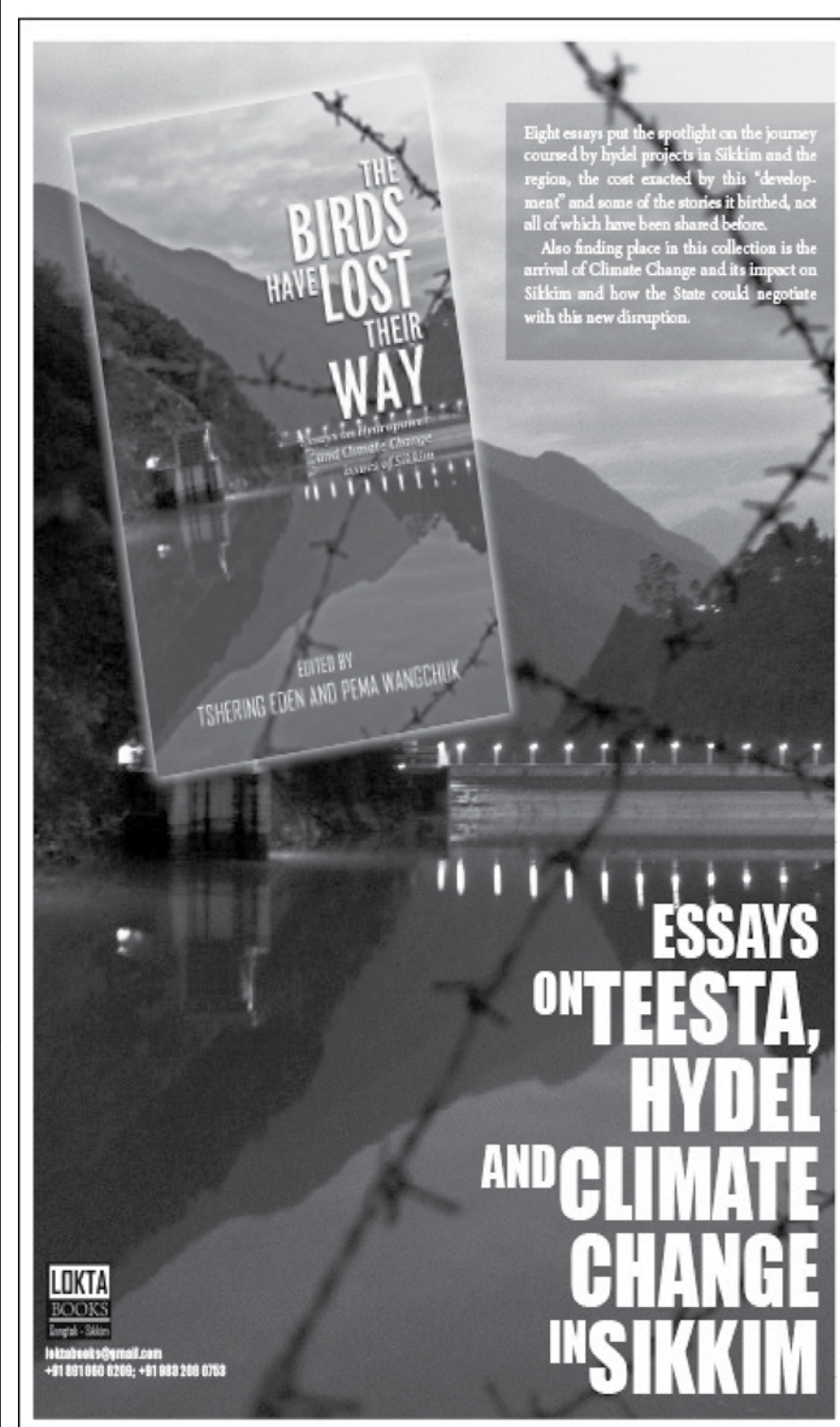
Congress and the CPI(M) had objected to the appointment of Sharma on grounds of neutrality.

Dubey would also be looking into the deployment of central and state forces during the elec-

tions, the source said.

Lok Sabha polls in West Bengal will be held in seven phases. The first, second and third phases of the polls are scheduled on April 11, April 18 and April 23.

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# Cheeky Messi magic keeps Barcelona 10 points clear in Spain

**MADRID, MAR 31 (AFP):** Lionel Messi continued his remarkable run of form as his second-half double, including an impudent free-kick, helped Barcelona continue their march towards the La Liga title with a 2-0 win over Espanyol.

The visitors gave their city rivals a tough game at the Camp Nou, but Messi's chipped free-kick over the wall from 19 yards and a late second kept the reigning champions 10 points clear of second-placed Atletico Madrid, who thrashed Alaves 4-0.

Messi has now netted eight times in his last four games for Barca, and leads the way in the La Liga scoring charts with 31 goals, 13 ahead of teammate Luis Suarez.

"I had no idea he would hit (the free-kick) like that," said Barcelona coach Ernesto Valverde.

"I would love to say that we had planned it, but it's not true, it's up to him. He didn't need my opinion and he scored."

It was a fitting way for the Argentinian to mark his 675th Barcelona appearance, which moved him ahead of Andres Iniesta into second on the



club's all-time list -- 102 adrift of Xavi Hernandez.

He made a low-key return to international action in midweek as Argentina lost a friendly to Venezuela, but Valverde was delighted it did not affect Messi on Saturday.

"Messi is the same player no matter what team he is playing in," he said. "He would be the same if he played in Australia... We are delighted to have him, it's a luxury for me to coach him."

Barca struggled to

break down Espanyol early on, with Messi, Suarez and Ivan Rakitic all wasting half-chances in the first period.

Barcelona saw a penalty appeal waved away by both the referee and VAR on the stroke of half-time, and Malcom was denied just after the hour mark by away goalkeeper Diego Lopez as the Catalan giants grew frustrated.

But Messi has been consistently unplayable this season, and he dinked in a wonderful effort from

a set-piece despite Victor Sanchez's best efforts to clear off the line.

The three points were sealed in the 89th minute as Malcom ran clear on the breakaway, before cutting the ball across for Messi to sweep a trademark finish low into the bottom corner.

Barcelona next visit Villarreal on Tuesday with a second successive title looking even more like a mere formality after a sixth straight victory extended their unbeaten

league run to 17 matches.

Atletico at least did not give up further ground to Barcelona as Diego Costa scored for the first time since November in an impressive win at fifth-placed Alaves.

The Spanish international has struggled for form and fitness this season, but grabbed his second league goal of the campaign with a magnificent 11th-minute strike from the edge of the area, six minutes after Saul Niguez had put At-

letico in front.

Costa was replaced by Thomas Lemar at half-time, but the Frenchman sent Alvaro Morata through on goal to put the game to bed just before the hour mark.

The on-loan Chelsea striker has now scored four goals since joining Diego Simeone's men in January.

Thomas Partey added extra gloss to the score-line late on with a fine 20-yard strike into the top corner.

Earlier on Saturday, fourth-placed Getafe missed the chance to solidify their spot in the Champions League places as they slumped to a 2-0 home defeat by Leganes.

Uruguayan Michael Santos and Spaniard Juanfran scored in the second half for Leganes to leave Getafe just two points ahead of Alaves, with Valencia and Sevilla both also within six points with a game in hand.

Celta Vigo gave their survival hopes a massive boost as Iago Aspas scored twice in a dramatic comeback from two goals down to beat fellow strugglers Villarreal 3-2 and move within a point of their 17th-placed opponents and safety.

## We were not thinking of match going to Super Over: Iyer

**NEW DELHI, MAR 30 (PTI):** Delhi Capitals captain Shreyas Iyer Saturday said that his side did not expect their IPL match against Kolkata Knight Riders to go to the Super Over via which they eventually won.

"Definitely a long day at the office. We didn't expect it to go that deep, expected us to finish it with an over to spare," Iyer said after his side won the match in Super Over.

Chasing 186 for a win, the Delhi capitals could only score 185 for 6 to tie the match and take it to the Super Over.

"Credit must go to Kuldeep Yadav for that over (last over)."

Talking about his pacer Kagiso Rabada who bowled the Super Over brilliantly, Iyer said, "Kagiso and I had a chat before the super over and he told me that he would go for yorkers all through, first, second, third, every ball. It takes some special skill to execute that."

On KKR's swashbuckling batsman Andre Russell who scored 62 off 28 balls, Iyer said, "You can't control Andre Russell when he gets going. Even his mistimes go for sixes and even the bowlers find it tough to plan against him when things just don't go to plan."

"All our batters decided that whoever gets going should take the side home, and Prithvi Shaw did that for us. Hopefully he can continue doing it for us."

He said all the players were taking the responsibility.

"I am really happy with myself as well because I refused to let the pressure come onto me after a few dots."

Rabada, on his part,

said, "We weren't sure who was going to bowl and then Hopesy came up to me and said I was going to bowl that over."

"Obviously, lots of nerves. I just saw it as a simulation and glad it paid off. You have to keep your wits about you and be really clear on what you have to bowl. I just went with yorkers and it worked in the end. I was clear and backed my plan."

Shaw, who was adjudged the man of the match for his 55-ball 99, said, "I thought I missed the opportunity to finish the game. Rather than scoring one run, I was looking to hit it big because I didn't want the game to get this close. But the boys finished it off really well in the super over."

"I spoke to my support-staff, Ricky, Sourav, Praveen Amre and I figured out that I was going a little too hard early."

He said the pitch changed a bit as the bowlers' marks opened up.

"Kuldeep and Piyush were getting good turn. Batting became difficult, but we were looking to pick the singles and doubles. I have ten more matches to come and I am hoping to continue with the same intensity in the rest of them as well."

KKR captain Dinesh Karthik said, "I think it was a great game, both teams fought pretty well. It went to the Super over and they came out on top."

"I think Prasidh (who bowled the Super Over) has been bowling consistently for us at the death, it was a straight forward decision to make. And I think he bowled really well. He has been bowling the tough overs, so we need to back him. It was a topsy-turvy kinda game."

## Gomes sees Olympic qualifiers as first challenge for Reid

**MUMBAI, MAR 31 (PTI):** Former hockey Olympian Marcellus Gomes saw the qualifiers for the 2020 Tokyo Games as the first major challenge for new national men's coach Graham Reid.

Reid, an Australian, is set to take over as the coach of the senior men's team following the unceremonious exit of Harendra Singh from the post after the last World Cup in Bhubaneswar.

"The most important thing for him is to ensure that the team qualifies (for the 2020 Tokyo Olympics) and the qualifying round is important," said the former inside right after the inauguration of a synthetic hockey turf at the Don Bosco school in Matunga here.

His former Mahindra team colleague and ex-India skipper M M Somaya felt that with Reid set to take charge, the Australian style of play could come into effect which would help the national team.

"Graham Reid is an experienced coach and he will probably get some

of the Australian style of play and that (could be) beneficial," said Somaya, who was member of the gold medal winning team at the 1980 Olympics in Moscow.

According to Somaya, the areas where work is needed by the players were in improving the "conversion rate" of penalty corners and becoming more precise "on the last pass".

Gomes also was of the opinion that Reid would need to adapt to the Asian style of play.

"He (Reid) will have to get used to the (style of play) as he has never coached an Indian team or a team from Asia," said Gomes, a fine ball distributor in his prime.

An exhibition match between former international stars and Don Bosco team was also played after the turf's inauguration.

The young players got a chance to rub their shoulders with the likes of Dronacharya award winning coach Clarence Lobo and four-time Olympian Dhanraj Pillai, among others.

# Tiger loses to Bjerregaard in WGC Match Play quarter-final

**WASHINGTON, MAR 31 (AFP):** Tiger Woods won a dramatic morning showdown with Rory McIlroy only to be upset by Denmark's Lucas Bjerregaard in quarter-finals of the WGC Match Play Championship.

Woods, a 14-time major champion seeking a fourth WGC Match Play title, defeated McIlroy 2&1 in a morning knock-out match only to fall 1-up to the 50th-seeded Dane, dropping the 18th hole when he missed a four-foot par putt.

"We read it inside left center and it went left," Woods said. "It was just one of those weird spots. It's match play. They are going to put the pins in difficult spots and we just have to make the shots."

Bjerregaard, who will face US 23rd seed Matt Kuchar in a semi-final Sunday, marveled at his achievement and the crowds

Woods drew to Austin (Texas) Country Club.

"We had a great match. It's a shame it had to end like this," Bjerregaard said. "I enjoyed playing with him. It was a cool experience. To say I've beaten Tiger, it's right up there."

"It's so different to what I've ever experienced before. I've never heard so many yells, his name all the way around. It was really enjoyable but it must be hard to do that every day."

Italy's Francesco Molinari, the highest remaining seed at seventh, will meet US 48th seed Kevin Kisner, last year's runner-up to Bubba Watson, in Sunday's other morning semi-final to set up an 18-hole afternoon championship final.

Bjerregaard, who also ousted Sweden's Henrik Stenson 3&2, opened with a 5-foot birdie then rallied after Woods an-

swered with three consecutive birdies.

A bogey was enough for Woods to win the par-3 11th for a 1-up lead. Both birdied 12 and 13, then Bjerregaard missed long birdie putts to halve 14 and 15.

Bjerregaard sank a 29-foot eagle putt at the par-5 16th to level the match, then drained a 13-footer for birdie at the par-3 17th, forcing Woods to sink a tense six-footer for birdie to stay level as they reached the 18th.

"His ball flight was low and in these conditions that was advantageous," Woods said.

Woods chipped into a bunker but blasted out and, after Bjerregaard missed a birdie put to win, the 43-year-old American lipped out his last putt.

Woods, the 13th seed, never trailed in taking full advantage of McIlroy's struggles with the putter

and a double-bogey disaster at the 16th hole as spectators roared.

"It was big for us inside the ropes too," Woods said. "It was fun for us. We battled hard against each other. I was fortunate to come out on top."

McIlroy, who had dropped only three holes in three matches, was 3-down after 10 against Woods but birdied to win 12 and 13 and looked to win 16 after Woods buried his tee shot under a bunker lip.

Instead, McIlroy followed a mammoth tee shot by finding a right rough slope, chipping over the green against a boundary mark, chipping again into a bunker and blasting out to two feet before surrendering the hole.

Woods holed a 13-footer to halve 17 and complete the victory.

"I played pretty consistently the entire day," Woods said. "I didn't give him

any holes and Rory didn't make any putts. It was a tough day all around."

McIlroy, a four-time major champion, can complete a Career Grand Slam in two weeks by winning the Masters.

After his first match-play battle with his boyhood idol, McIlroy apologized on Instagram for exiting without talking to reporters and praised Woods for clutch putts late.

"Although I was disappointed with how the match ended, I showed real patience and persistence to claw a couple of holes back on the back nine, then squandered a great opportunity to get back to all square on 16," McIlroy wrote.

"Definitely one I let get away but I'll learn and move on."

Reigning British Open champion Molinari, Europe's Ryder Cup hero in last year's triumph over

# Badminton in Tokyo Olympics going to be tougher than last three Games: Saina

**PHILEM DIPAK SINGH NEW DELHI, MAR 31 (PTI):** India's ace shuttler Saina Nehwal says the badminton competition at next year's Olympics will be tougher than the last three Games and she is working on fitness and improving her game in the run-up to the showpiece event in Tokyo.

Saina has been troubled by injuries of late. After her knee surgery in 2016, she has been striving hard to return to her peak form. She was World No. 1 for a few weeks in 2015.

"Yes, it (competition in 2020 Olympics) will be much tougher (than earlier three editions). The Chinese shuttlers are playing really well. More than them, a lot of other girls

are playing really well. It is going to be very tough," Saina told PTI in an exclusive interview.

"But as of now, I'm not thinking about Olympics or about how I will qualify for it. I am thinking more about doing well in tournaments, improving my game and keeping myself injury free and fit," Saina said at the sidelines of Pramerica Spirit of Community Awards event in Gurgaon, for which she is the Programme Ambassador.

For India to send two shuttlers in Tokyo Olympics women's singles, both of them will have to be inside top 16 in the world rankings which will be released after the end of qualification period, on

April 30, 2020.

Tokyo Games will be her fourth Olympics, having represented the country in 2008, 2012 and 2016. She reached the quarter-finals in 2008, won a bronze in 2012 and crashed out in group stages in 2016 when she played with a knee inflammation.

Saina skipped the India Open in New Delhi after she developed pancreas infection during the All England Championships earlier this month.

"I am coming out of a pancreas infection and I am planning to play Malaysia Open next week. Let's see how it happens," she said.

Asked if she is happy with what has panned out after the surgery in 2016,

she said, "I am fighting, trying to improve my game and win as many matches as possible. That is what I can do and the rest I don't know, because I cannot predict results."

"I'm happy I am being able to win a few tournaments. I did well in CWG (won gold), Asian Games (bronze), Denmark Open finalist and won in Indonesia (Indonesia Masters this year). There were few good results that keep me inspiring and motivating to continue to doing well. The rest I want to take care of my health, improve my game and think of winning my next tournament."

The cramped badminton calendar following the Badminton World Feder-

ation's decision, which requires top players to feature in at least 12 out of 15 tournaments a year, has been criticised by many shuttlers.

Saina said she had also taken up the issue with the global governing body but to no avail.

"Our body cannot take so many tournaments in a year. Finally, it a body and not a machine, so it is tough but you have to find ways to be fit for most of tournaments. We (some players) told last year that the calendar can be smaller and money can be bigger in these tournaments. Make it like tennis, like how they have four grand slams," she said.

"I don't know why BWF is busy doing these things,







# Don't think anything could have saved Kurt Cobain: Nirvana manager Danny Goldberg

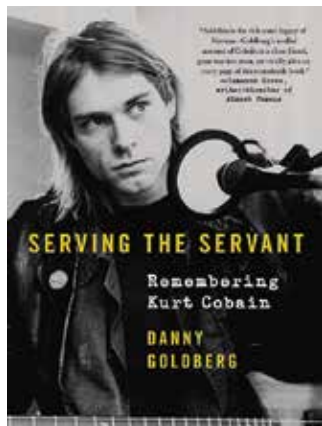
**LOS ANGELES, MAR 31 (PTI):** Legendary rock band Nirvana's manager Danny Goldberg believes it would not have been possible to save frontman Kurt Cobain.

The iconic singer committed suicide on April 5, 1994 at his home in Seattle, Washington.

Goldberg, who has penned a memoir titled, "Serving the Servant: Remembering Kurt Cobain", said, "There is a mystery to why some people do it (suicide) and some don't."

The memoir spans the three-and-a-half years Goldberg worked with Cobain.

"I think a lot of people loved him. Nobody will ever know you can't go back and test out hundreds of hypotheticals. I think anybody who knows somebody



who killed themselves would give the same answer. There is a mystery to why some people do it and some don't," he told Rolling Stone magazine.

Goldberg said it is hard to understand why people take their own lives.

"I absolutely believe nobody knows why people kill themselves and there's no glib, easy answer why he or anyone else does so. For all the psychiatrists and priests and rabbis and yogis that exist in the world, 50,000 Americans each year kill themselves."

In the book, he recalls how he began managing the band just before Nirvana made them superstars.

Goldberg describes his relationship with Cobain in detail both professionally and personally and

how he and his former wife, lawyer Rosemary Carroll, went to great lengths to protect Cobain and Courtney Love from the media.

He added that he at times feels what he could have done to protect the rock icon.

"What if I had invited him to stay with us for a few days? Maybe that would have been a good idea. Maybe if I had ... spent X amount more hours trying to find other kinds of therapists that knew something about artistes.

"Of course, if you're unfortunate enough to have been close to someone who did this to themselves, you go over things in your mind. But I do feel that ultimately people who do this do it, it's not the people around them who do it."

Recounting the phone call that delivered the news of Cobain's suicide, Goldberg said, "I will never completely get over the sadness and anguish I felt at that moment.

## 'Fear the Walking Dead' S05 to premiere June 2

**LOS ANGELES, MAR 31 (PTI):** The fifth season of "Fear the Walking Dead" is set to air on June 2, AMC has announced.

According to Deadline, the new chapter will lead into the new supernatural horror drama, "NOS4A2" which is based on Joe Hill's namesake 2013 fantasy novel.

Lennie James, Colman Domingo, Alycia Debnam-Carey, Danay Garcia, Garret Dillahunt, Maggie Grace, Jenna Elfman, Alexa Nisenon, and Austin Amelio are part of the cast.

Sarah Barnett, President of AMC Networks Entertainment Group, said the rejuvenated series, the prequel to "The Walking Dead", is moving in an exciting direction.

"Showrunners Andrew Chambliss and Ian Goldberg brilliantly reinvented Fear in its fourth season to much critical acclaim and we can't wait to share with fans what they have in store for season



five," Barnett said.

The synopsis of the new season reads: "The group's mission is clear: locate sur-

vivors and help make what's left of the world a slightly better place. With dogged determination, Morgan Jones (James) leads the group with a philosophy rooted in benevolence, community and hope. Each character believes that helping others will allow them to make up for the wrongs of their pasts.

"But trust won't be easily earned. Their mission of helping others will be put to the ultimate test when our group finds themselves in uncharted territory, one which will force them to face not just their pasts but also their fears. It is only through facing those fears that the group will discover an entirely new way to live, one that will leave them forever changed."

Produced by AMC Studios, "Fear the Walking Dead" is executive produced by Scott M Gimple, showrunners Andrew Chambliss and Ian Goldberg, as well as Robert Kirkman, David Alpert, Gale Anne Hurd, and Greg Nicotero.

## Black actors don't get cast on potential: Mahershala Ali

**LONDON, MAR 31 (PTI):** Oscar-winning actor Mahershala Ali says he finds it "frustrating" that black artistes do not get cast on the basis of their talent.

The actor, whose career breakout role came as fixer Remy Danton in "House of Cards", believes the role gave casting directors "permission" to put him in their projects.

"I had many years of auditioning, booking gigs, almost booking jobs and making some real allies in the business - people who wanted to cast me in things but I just wasn't a big enough name. What 'House of Cards' did



was give people permission to cast me.

"It can be frustrating. Just to be frank with you, African-Americans don't really get cast on potential. I hope

that now I will have a window where I can finally do a lot of the kind of work I've been wanting to do for a long time. I've spent a long time playing the man next to the

man next to the man. Finally, I'm getting to play the man!" Ali told Heat magazine.

Following the success of "House of Cards", the 45-year-old actor went on to win two Oscars in Best Actor in a Supporting Role category for "Moonlight" (2016) and "Green Book" (2019).

This year he also played the lead role of a troubled police officer in the third season of the HBO anthology crime series "True Detective". Ali previously revealed he had to convince creator Nic Pizzolatto to change the character's ethnicity to black.

## Drew Barrymore wants to make more movies with Adam Sandler

**LOS ANGELES, MAR 31 (PTI):** Hollywood star Drew Barrymore says she wants to reteam for a movie with her frequent collaborator and good friend Adam Sandler.

The duo have already co-starred in three films -- "The Wedding Singer", "50 First Dates", and "Blended".

"Adam Sandler, obviously, just because I want to make movies with him forever. We just talked on the phone the other day. We talk on the phone often, and we were like, it feels like something, I



don't know.

"We always get like a time

and an instinct thing. We've done it three times now, so

we know we have more to go," Barrymore told People magazine when asked if she would like to work with any of her previous co-stars again.

The actor had also credited Sandler for her success in her 2015 book "Wildflower".

"He was hot s\*\*\* and he believed in me. It's a little bit of a love letter to him because I have grown with this person," she had written in the book in a chapter dedicated to Sandler, titled 'Adam'.



**SUPPORTIVE FRIEND! Actress Julia Roberts waves to fans while supporting Rita Wilson, as she gets her star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame.**

**ARIES:** Disrupt the status quo on Saturday, Aries, but aim for mild tremors instead of extreme shockwaves. With the Sun and moon trading friendly fire, it's obvious to everyone that change is necessary. But leadership is sorely needed to reveal the next stage of the game. That's where you come in: Make proactive suggestions or simply lead by example!

**TAURUS:** ETrue success doesn't simply hinge on climbing tirelessly to the top. Saturday's evocative angle between the Sun and moon points you down a more soulful path. Pause from "doing, doing, doing" and think big picture. Beyond putting food on the table, how is your work helping other people and the world at large?

**GEMINI:** Start your weekend on an inspired note! Pull a motivational or spiritual book off the shelf for some morning reading. Try a little "bibliomancy": opening to a random page and letting the words be your divine directive for the day. Avoid complainers like the plague and seek "high-vibrational" groups of people to spend time with,

especially if you could use an infusion of positive energy.

**CANCER:** Trying to get a straight answer over the last three weeks has been nearly impossible, thanks to communicator Mercury's backspin through your truth-telling ninth house. You can now breathe easy as the messenger planet turns direct and forges ahead. No more dancing around an issue—insist on the complete story. Steer clear of even slight exaggerations and aim to be fully authentic. Since the ninth house also rules travel, you've got a cosmic thumbs-up for a winter getaway.

**LEO:** Today's cosmos shine a light on hidden realities as expressive Mercury turns direct in your covert eighth house. Over the past three weeks, while the messenger planet was retrograde, you've held your cards close to your vest, but guarding one secret could be taking a toll on your psyche. Mercury's forward motion could attract a worthy confidante—which is a good start to releasing your burden.

**VIRGO:** Your routine-driven sign isn't

generally considered erratic, but Mercury's retrograde through your relationship house over the past three weeks might have made you flip-flop. Perhaps a BFF hasn't had much time for you since finding "The One" or an ex resurfaced without an offer of commitment. Enough already!

**LIBRA:** Channel-surfing or downward-dogging? If you've been doing more of the former over the past three weeks, you can thank Mercury, which has been retrograde (backward) in your self-care sector. But don't throw in the towel! Today, the quicksilver planet turns direct, helping you find sustainable routines.

**SCORPIO:** You're back! On March 5, expressive Mercury turned retrograde in your passionate fifth house. You may have felt like you were missing the love boat. Or perhaps you couldn't get a clear read on a romantic interest. Get ready to shake off the confusion and insecurity today, as the communication planet powers forward and calls forth your most radiant self!

**SAGITTARIUS:** Baby, it might (still) be

cold outside, but it wouldn't hurt to open a few windows and air out Chateau Sagittarius. With Mercury retrograde in your domestic fourth house since March 5, home and family matters might have felt a bit dazed and confused. Your survival instincts kicked in, causing you to retreat from the insanity. You can breathe a sigh of relief and re-engage today, as Mercury turns direct. Call a truce with your roomies, make up with your S.O., seek out a solution with your mother!

**CAPRICORN:** Banish that either-or thinking, Capricorn. After a confusing three-week Mercury retrograde in your communication house, the messenger planet powers forward today. While you prefer to pour your (prodigious) energy into one thing at a time, this approach may not be serving you. Don't be afraid to dip your toe into multiple ponds, like those librarian-slash-actors or entrepreneur-slash-activists. Commuting or living in two cities is even a possibility for some earthbound Goats.

**AQUARIUS:** Loosen those purse strings, Aquarius. Since Mercury went retrograde

on March 5, you may have had a few budgetary breakdowns. But the messenger planet resumes forward motion today, making it safe to once again enjoy your hard-earned cash. This is a perfect time to revisit (and if necessary, revamp) your plans to strike a healthy balance between saving and spending. Invest in your greatest resource: yourself! A personal growth workshop, meditation retreat or life-coaching sessions can awaken your creativity and usher in a tsunami of entrepreneurial ideas.

**PISCES:** Vote with your dollar on Saturday, Pisces. An auspicious Sun-moon angle sends a reminder of how loudly money talks. Perhaps you'll choose socially responsible companies over those with murky or questionable practices. Supporting a small business owner can keep the unique character of your neighborhood thriving. This cosmic confab could inspire you to do business in different ways yourself or even earmark some of your earnings for a very specific cause you want to support.