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SummitTIMES

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

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Assembly passes Third Supplementary Demands for Grants

GANGTOK, 20 DEC (IPR):

The concluding day of the two-day Assembly Session saw the passing of the Third Supplementary Demands for Grants 2018-19. The Demands for Grants had been presented in the House by Chief Minister, Pawan Chamling, also the Minister-in-Charge of Finance Revenue & Expenditure Department, Government of Sikkim, on the first day of the Session.

The House also passed the Sikkim Appropriation Bill, Bill No. 26 of 2018 for the Third Supplementary Demands for Grants for the financial year 2018-19. The Bill was introduced in the House by Mr. Chamling.

Mr. Chamling, presented the Annual Technical Inspection CAG Report on Panchayati Raj Institutions and Urban Local Bodies for the year ended 31 March, 2017.

Speaker, Sikkim Legislative Assembly, K.N. Rai, presented the Annual Report of the Govern-



ment Departments and Compendium of Regulations of Sikkim State Electricity Regulatory Commission.

During the Legislative Business, the Sikkim Lokayukta (Amendment) Bill, Bill No. 27 of 2018 was passed by the House. The Bill had been presented in the House by R.B. Subba, Minister-in-Charge of Law, Legal, Legislative and Parliamentary Affairs De-

partment, Government of Sikkim, on 19 Dec.

Mr. Chamling, also the Leader of the House, in his valedictory remarks, said that the Supplementary Demands for Grants passed by the House would fulfill the demands and aspirations of the people of Sikkim. He said that the Assembly session was convened in public interest and expressed his gratitude to the Members



of the House for passing the Supplementary Demands for Grants.

The Leader of the House informed that

turn to pg02

OBC Chairperson Mohan Dungmali resigns from SDF

SAGAR CHHETRI

GANGTOK, 20 DEC:

A founding member and vice-president of Sikkim Democratic Front, Mohan Dungmali, resigned from the party today. He submitted his resignation letter addressed to the SDF party president here at the SDF Bhawan today.

Mr Dungmali, who is also the chairperson of Labour Department and a member of the OBC Board, while addressing a press conference after submitting his resignation letter here this afternoon, mentioned that the decision to leave the party was forced by differences on principles with the party and its leader.

He contended that SDF was formed in 1993 with the promise of working on a Local Protection Act, restoration of Nepali seats and other pertinent issues, but these issues have since been lost.

He contended that these issues were included in the first election manifesto of SDF but no action has been taken



on these till date. He also claimed that anyone who tried to raise these issues has been termed as anti-national and anti-party.

Mr Dungmali further alleged SDF party and its government have "desperately failed" in maintaining the social fabric of the State.

His resignation letter further mentions uncontrolled influx, unemployment, ever increasing suicide rate, backdoor employment, commissions/percentage system in the government contractual works, as other issues which have driven him to his present stand.

"Needless to elaborate here on the long list of your socio-economic administrative lapses

and failure, I am more centric here on our constitutional and political rights and its causes me immense sadness to proclaim here that you have utterly failed in these sectors that forbids me to consider you as my political leader and further and hence, I immediately detach myself from all your failed political policies and programme," his resignation letter states.

Responding to queries on his future course of action, he said, "I would like to join that political party which can effectively work on these genuine issues of the State. I will be continuing my active politics for these issues and not for a party ticket."

CBI arrests noted journalist in Kolkata in connection with chit fund scam

NEW DELHI, DEC 20 (PTI):

After repeated questioning by enforcement agencies for four years, the CBI Thursday arrested Suman Chattopadhyay, editor of a leading Bengali daily, in connection with West Bengal's ICore chit fund scam, officials said here.

Chattopadhyay, editor of Ei Samay, was summoned to the CBI office in Kolkata after several rounds of questioning and was placed under arrest by officials, they said.

The scribe, who is also a director in Disha Productions and Media Private Limited (DPMPL), was questioned in an on-going investigation of a case registered against the ICore Group, a ponzi scheme company. Investigation has revealed that funds collected illegally by the ICore Group were allegedly diverted in the accounts of DPMPL as well as the personal account of Chattopadhyay.

The arrested scribe will be produced Friday before the Court of Special CJM in Bhubaneswar.

It is alleged that he had allegedly taken "unsecured loans" from three "chit fund companies", including Saradha Group, and laundered it through two of his publishing companies, a Bengali daily and a Bengali magazine.

After the arrest of Rose Valley chairman Gautam Kundu in 2015, the West Bengal Police had arrested managing director of ICore group Anukul Maiti for allegedly running Ponzi schemes.

Day-3 of SKM's Youth & Women Convention lashes out against SDF and its Govt



**SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 20 DEC:**

The ongoing Youth and Women convention of the Sikkim Krantikari Morcha at Rolu in South Sikkim entered into its third day on Thursday with SKM president PS Tamang [Golay] as the chief guest accompanied by senior leaders and workers of the party.

An SKM press release informs that senior vice-president, TN Dhakal, delivered a talk on the political history of Sikkim and also spoke about the pertinent issues of the State and alleged failure of the government on several counts.

SKM general secretary [organisation], South District, Pavitra

Manav, in turn, stressed on the importance of strengthening party organisation while vice-president [press & publicity], Birendra Tamling, and general secretary [social media], Navraj Gurung, spoke on matters under their respective jurisdictions.

Likewise, former Registrar of ICAFI University Sonam Tshering Bhutia,

who was present as a resource person, spoke on the topic, 'Democracy of Sikkim is in danger.'

Former MP, Nakul Das Rai, lashed out against the Sikkim Democratic Front and its government on various issues.

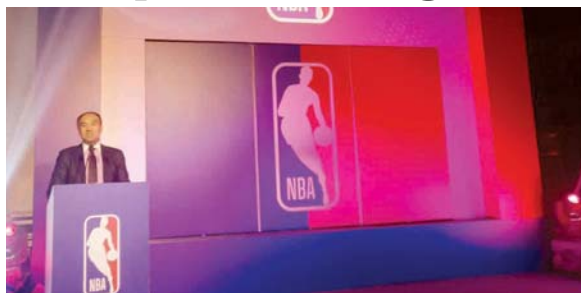
The third day of the programme ended with the distribution of prizes and cultural presentations.

NBA to stage two pre-season games in Mumbai next October

MUMBAI, DEC 20 (PTI): The world's most popular professional basketball league, the NBA, Thursday announced it will bring two pre-season games to India next year, making it the first North American sports league to foray into the country.

The National Basketball Association (NBA) announced that the Indiana Pacers and the Sacramento Kings will play in two pre-season games in Mumbai on October 4 and 5 next year. The games will take place at the NSCI Dome in Worli, announced NBA Deputy Commissioner Mark Tatum and NBA India Managing Director Yannick Colaco here.

"Our inaugural NBA India Games will help further untap the enormous basketball potential in a country with a thriving sports culture and



a growing, young and engaged population," NBA Commissioner Adam Silver said in a media release.

"We thank the Kings and Pacers organisations for participating in this historic event," he added.

In addition to the games, the

league and its partners would conduct interactive fan activities, junior NBA youth basketball programming and NBA Cares community outreach events. The Kings, under the leadership of the NBA's first Indian-born majority owner and Mumbai native

Vivek Ranadive, currently features 2018 No. 2 overall draft pick Marvin Bagley III, 2017 No. 5 overall draft pick De'Aaron Fox and 2016 No. 6 overall draft pick Buddy Hield (Babamas). Draft picks are players who are eligible to compete in the NBA, selected by the competing teams.

The Pacers roster currently features 2018 NBA All-Star Victor Oladipo, 2016 NBA All-Rookie second team member Myles Turner and 2016 No. 11 overall draft pick Domantas Sabonis (Lithuania).

"We are proud to be the first global sports league to bring games of this scale to India. The NBA and basketball have never been more popular in India, and fans will get to enjoy world-class showcases for our sport between two exciting teams in the Sacramento

Kings and the Indiana Pacers," said Colaco. Ranadive said his team is looking forward to playing in the first NBA games in India.

"The Sacramento Kings are proud to be playing in the first NBA games ever held in India. As an Indian-American, it is an honour to help bring this historic moment to the country where I was raised," said Ranadive. "We are thrilled to be one of the first two teams to play the first-ever game in India and proud to be part of the expanding NBA worldwide footprint of our game of basketball," said Simon.

The NBA matches are telecast live in India. The 2018-19 season includes five consecutive Sunday games from March 10 to April 7 that will air in primetime in the country.

Gangtok on Friday, 21 Dec

Temp: 11°C/06°C
Forecast: Sunny to partly cloudy with a little rain in the evening, then a shower in spots

Sunrise: 06:30 AM
Sunset: 03:42 PM

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Assembly passes Third...

budget has been allocated for the implementation of public welfare programmes such as the 'One Family One Job' Scheme which would provide employment to about twenty thousand educated unemployed youth of the State. He further informed that all formalities would be completed by the end of December 2018 and the scheme would roll out immediately.

He also mentioned the allocation of budget for the establishment of Press Club of Sikkim Bhawan, and other programmes to fulfill the requirements of the people of Sikkim.

He thanked the Speaker and Deputy Speaker for the smooth conduct of the Assembly Session, and also thanked the Members of the House and everybody involved in making the Session successful.

The Leader of the House concluded his address by extending New Year and Festival greetings to the people of Sikkim.

Mr. Rai, in his valedictory address, thanked the Leader of the House for his guidance in making the Session successful. He also thanked and congratulated the Members of the House for the passing of the Supplementary Demands for Grants for 2018-19.

He stated that the Demands for Grants passed by the House would help fulfill the economic demands of the State and propel the State towards further development. He recorded his gratitude for the contribution made by everyone involved towards the conduct of the two-day Assembly session. After extending New Year Greetings, the Speaker adjourned the House sine-die.

SAATHI conducts workshop for SMCs of West District



SUMMIT REPORT, GANGTOK, 19 DEC:

Workshop for School Management Committee of various schools in West Sikkim was organized by Sikkim Against Addiction Towards Healthy India (SAATHI) on 19 Dec.

The program, held at Panchsheel Bhawan, Jorethang, South Sikkim, was attended by 55 SMC members from 16 Schools of West district.

Vice Chairperson, Nayabazaar Jorethang Municipal Corporation

(NJMC), Pema Tamang was the chief guest. Other special guests were Councillor of NJMC, Ganesh Adhikari, Social Worker, Bena Sherpa, Vice President, SMC of Zoom Sr. Sec. School, Dikendra and HM of Nayabazaar Junior High School, M Pradhan.

The programme started with a welcome address by Program Manager, D Bhutia (SAATHI), followed by SAATHI's impact and its achievement at school level by HM, Nayabazaar

Junior High School. He shared his experience in working with SAATHI and their effort to combat substance abuse at school level. He also mentioned about the various activities organized by the school including "World No Tobacco Day" which was a grand event conducted in coordination with local NGOs and feeder schools.

The program was then taken forward by Vice President, Agam Rai (SMC of Zoom Sr. Sec. School) who ex-

plained in detail about the role of SMC members at school level.

After that, SAATHI team of Jorethang Sr. Sec. School presented a poem and a skit based on harmful effects of substance abuse. Then, Udai C. Rai gave a brief talk on importance of SAATHI program, and mentioned how drugs have affected our youth and why it is so important for every member of community to understand the importance of this issue.

Ganesh Adhikari said that SMC members can be a strong support to schools and help our upcoming youth and children.

The chief guest Ms. Tamang gave short speech on the importance of SAATHI program. She mentioned that SAATHI program is the need of the hour and everyone should support and help the schools to combat substance abuse and make Sikkim drug free.



SSB celebrates 55th anniversary

SUMMIT REPORT, GANGTOK, 20 DEC:

The 36th Bn SSB stationed at Gyalshing in West Sikkim celebrated the 55th anniversary of SSB at its camp with a colourful event involving all the Officers, Jawans and their family members.

Comdt. Raj Narayan Mishra conveyed his warm wishes to all members of the force, their families and veterans and highlighted how since its establishment in 1963, SSB has been performing a phe-

nomenal job of motivating, sensitizing and training locals, especially the youth from border areas through numerous developmental programmes and activities while also establishing a sense of security among the people living in the border area.

Various events for children and family members were organized on the day.

Commdt Mishra also conveyed the message of DG, FHQ SSB, New Delhi, IG FTR Hqr, Siliguri & DIG SHQ, Gangtok on the occasion.

SNPP criticizes Govt's manner of delivering on one family, one job initiative

SUMMIT REPORT, GANGTOK, 20 DEC:

Sikkim National People's Party (SNPP) president, Delay Kazi Barfungpa, has strongly criticized the manner in which the State Government proposes to deliver in the "one, family, one job" scheme against which 16,317 posts in various government departments have been created and funds to provide salaries for which were sought in the supplementary demands for grants tabled by Chief Minister Pawan Chamling yesterday in the Sikkim Legislative Assembly and passed unanimously today.

An SNPP press release states, "We welcome the move to provide jobs to unemployed youth but at a same time this is great disparity as the highest salary is twelve thousand and lowest is nine thousand and in today's time this amount of salary is nothing to run the family".

It is added that it was actually a humiliation for qualified unemployed youth to be employed on such low wages.

Mr Barfungpa added that this was just a political gimmick ahead of the 2019 general election and if the CM had really wanted to solve unemployment, then he should have done this many years back in his 24 years of government.

He alleged that the CM was now providing jobs to the unemployed by passing a supplementary budget instead of developing state's own revenue.

SFA to conduct Referee Clinic from 27-30 Dec

SUMMIT REPORT, GANGTOK, 20 DEC:

Sikkim Football Association (SFA) will be conducting Referee Clinic at Paljor Stadium, Gangtok from 27 to 30 Dec.

An SFA release informs that 50 candidates from across Sikkim are taking part in the Clinic. Out of 50 candidates, 24 are female.

Only those candidates whose bio-data has been forwarded to AIFF, Delhi will be allowed to attend the clinic. TA / DA / accommodation will not be provided for the clinic.

AIFF, Delhi is deputing two instructors, S. Suresh (AIFF, Delhi) and Maria Rebello (Goa), to conduct the clinic. For further details SFA coordinator, Phurba Sherpa can be contacted at (M) 94758-88839 or Bikash Pradhan, HOR, Sikkim Referee at (M) 90831-99422.

All the candidates are advised to report to Paljor Stadium, Gangtok by 8 a.m. on 27 Dec, the release adds.

3-month program on manufacturing farm tools begins

SUMMIT REPORT, GANGTOK, 20 DEC:

Three-month programme on "manufacturing of farm tools and equipment" started today here at College of Agricultural Engineering and Post-harvest Technology (CAEPHT) at Ranipool, East Sikkim. The programme is organized by CAEPHT Ranipool and sponsored by Power Finance Corporation Ltd, informs a press release.

On the inaugural day, Dean of CAEPHT, Professor R.P. Mishra was present as chief guest and Executive Engineer, Government of Sikkim, Sola-

mi Lepcha and Professor SN Yadav were the guests of honour.

Addressing the gathering, chief guest Prof Mishra informed that after completing the training farmers can open their own workshop for which the government will provide loan, subsidy and grants.

He further mentioned that they have trained above 650 farmers till now and among them some are generating high income.

Around 35 farmers from North East including Sikkim are participating in the programme.

SKF India's 5th YES Skill Development Centre launched at Kaziranga University



SUMMIT REPORT, GANGTOK, 20 DEC:

In line with Kaziranga University's commitment to imparting professional education and training courses in various fields of education for the well-being of society, a YES Skill Development Centre was launched at the KU campus, established in collaboration with SKF India.

This Centre was inaugurated by MD SKF India, Manish Bhatnagar and Chancellor, Kaziranga University, Dr. M.D. Khetan on 18 Dec in the presence of several esteemed dignitaries including Shrikant Savangikar [Director, SKF], Ram Kolavenu [COO, Sambhav Foundation], S.B. Singh [National Sales Head (East) TVS Motors], Nilanjana Mukherjee [Key Accounts Manager, Sambhav Founda-

tion], Basant Khetan, [Pro-Chancellor, Kaziranga University], Dr. P.K. Mishra [Vice Chancellor, Kaziranga University], Rainy Khetan [Director, Kaziranga University] and Prof. Tarun Kumar [Registrar, Kaziranga University].

The Skill Development Centre will conduct various programmes providing necessary auto-technical skills and training to high-school drop-outs and other underprivileged youth groups from around the region, and enable them to venture out into skilled professions and technical jobs.

Established at Kaziranga University, under SKF India Ltd.'s flagship Program YES (Youth Empowerment at SKF), this Skill Development Centre not only aims to provide job-oriented training to

the youth, but also boost entrepreneurship in the region by providing seed money of Rs 2 Lakh to budding entrepreneurs, and helping them contribute towards the infrastructure development of the North East.

As a part of the collaboration, Kaziranga University has also provided necessary infrastructure for the Skill Development Centre, such as training rooms and laboratories, along with the setting up of arrangements for a Business Incubation centre, set up along SKF guidelines.

Dr. M.D. Khetan, at the launch, commented on the opportune time that this collaboration has been set up, opening up avenues not just for students from around the region, but also for those of underprivileged backgrounds.

Counsellors & Volunteers Training organised by SAATHI



SUMMIT REPORT, GANGTOK, 20 DEC:

Three-day Counsellors and Volunteers training began at SICUN, Assamlingzey, on 20 Dec 2018. The program was organised by Sikkim Against Addiction Towards Healthy India (SAATHI), a project initiative under Chief Minister's Youth Empowerment and Self Reliant Mission, 2013, and Health Care, Human Services & Family Welfare Department.

The training program was organised for Health Educators, Teachers and NGO members so that they can help schools in dealing with substance abuse cases.

Director, Dr. Uttam Pradhan, Health Care, Human Services & Family Welfare Department was present on the occasion as chief guest and School Coordinators, Hari Prakash and Sushma Bhattarai, Human Resource Development Department were the

special guests.

During the inaugural function, Dr. Pradhan appreciated the effort of Schools and NGOs to curb drug addiction. He mentioned that every child must be physically and mentally healthy, so that they can focus on their studies and their career properly.

He also highlighted the importance of training on "Basic skills of Counseling" as it would help them to handle the cases effectively. He urged the participants to take this opportunity seriously and try to learn the art of counselling.

Sushma Bhattarai gave a brief talk on importance of guidance and counselling at School level. She mentioned that teachers are the second parents of students. They must take care of students and to be vigilant regarding students' activities.

After that session, Dr. C. S. Sharma's session on "Epidemiology and prob-

lems of substance use disorder" started with some pre-assessment.

The training program will have session on Epidemiology and problem of substance use disorders, Etiology of substance use disorders, Assessment and diagnosis of substance use disorders, Motivation and treatment in substance use disorders, Identifying & managing dual diagnosis in substance abuse, Discuss about reaction of substance abuse with other mental illness like anxiety, depression stress and adjustment problems how to identify dual diagnosis parents, when and how to refer, how to counsel such patients, Referral for treatment of substance and early signs of a student at risk use disorders, Adolescent and treatment of substance use disorders.

The training has 122 participants from Schools, NGOs and Health Department.

Kalimpong Municipality under Ravi Pradhan celebrates first anniv

SUMMIT REPORT, KALIMPONG, 20 DEC:

Kalimpong Municipality under Chairman, Ravi Pradhan celebrat-

ed its first anniversary today. The Municipality lent its support to the new regime under Gorkha Janmukti Mor-

cha headed by Binay Tamang and Anit Thapa after which the swearing in ceremony had taken place last year on 20 Dec.

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Round Table India establishes computer lab at Lumsey JHS

SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 20 DEC:

Round Table India, through its Gangtok Chapter, "Gangtok Round Table, 301," inaugurated a Computer Lab at Government Junior High School, Lumsey, Gangtok, East Sikkim on 18 Dec. Round Table India has renovated the room, provided furniture for the computer lab along with seven HP computers systems with UPS to the school.

The inauguration was done in presence of national president, Round Table India LMF, Dhruv Dalmia, area chairman, Area XIV LMF, Dhiraaj Golyan, chairman, Gangtok Round Table 301, Pravin Agarwal, other executive members of Gangtok Round Table and School Headmaster, Staff and its Students.

The headmaster informed that the school was in need of a Computer Lab



and thanked members of Round Table India for the gesture and support.

Mr. Dalmia introduced Round Table India as an association of young and dynamic members below the age of 40.

Mr Golyan, in turn, informed about activities

undertaken by Round Table India, especially through its programme "Freedom Through Education" under which it has built over 6,800 classrooms in India over a period of 20 years.

Gangtok Table chairperson, Mr. Agarwal de-

tailed the activities undertaken by the Gangtok Round Table so far in the State which includes construction of an auditorium/ multipurpose hall at Mamring JHS in association with V -Guard Ltd, and organising various awareness camps on Girl

Child Abuse Prevention Day at PNGS, World No Tobacco Day at West Point School, Blood Donation and Go Green Project at ICFAI University Sikkim. In addition, they have also been visiting old age homes and orphanages in and around Gangtok.

Wok XI vs ICYM for Inter-Church Football finals



SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 20 DEC:

Defending champion, Wok XI, will take on ICYM, Gangtok, in the finals of the 7th Sikkim Inter-Church Football Tournament 2018 here at Paljor Stadium on Friday. The final match is scheduled for a 2 PM kick-off.

In the second semi-final match played today,

Wok XI edged past Christian Revival Church of Sichey by a lone goal to secure a berth in the finals of the tournament for a second consecutive time. Sukbir Gurung was adjudged the man of the match.

ICYM is already in the finals after having defeated HFC United in the first semi-final match played on 19 December.

The match today had Sikkim Democratic Front organising secretary [East], Karma Wangdi, as the chief guest who congratulated the Sikkim Christian Sports Committee for organising the tournament and providing a platform to the youth to show their talent and urged them to continue with their efforts.

GPU Level Farmers Training at Soreng

SUMMIT REPORT,

WEST SIKKIM, 20 DEC:

A GPU level training was organized by Mevedir at Soreng GPU, West Sikkim, under Krishi Kalyan Abhiyan on 19 Dec.

In the opening session, Mevedir Master Trainer, Lal Man Tamang delivered the welcome address and outlined the agenda of the training program. He highlighted about the diseases in cabbage and spinach and controlling measures for these diseases.

Thereafter, HDO Horticulture Department, DP

Sharma talked about the sustainable features of organic farming and Krishi Kalyan Abhiyan initiated by the government.

In the next session, Panchayat President, Chandra Kumari Tamang said that the government is taking all initiatives to enhance the income of farmers through innovative welfare schemes.

In the concluding session of the program, the farmers were provided with vegetable seedlings for rabi season. The training program concluded with the vote of thanks by Mr Tamang.

LOST

I Sonam Palzor Lepcha, DOB: 15.03.1983, S/o. Mr Aching Lepcha, R/o. Mangan North Sikkim have lost my hand bag in which my class X passed Certificate of CBSE Board bearing Roll No: 3120242 passed out in the year 1999 and Serial No: 00305268. So if found kindly contact on: 9609861871.

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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.

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LAND FOR SALE

BL Plot, 60x60, both side road, Lower Syari, Near Ranipool, Land is almost flat. Contact 7384620040, 7477406169.

KUTSE SHEGU

The Kutse Shegu of Late Namgyal Dolma who left for her heavenly abode on 03 Nov falls on 21 Dec. All well-wishers, friends and family are invited to attend the prayers at our residence, Tumin Kothi, Tumin, East Sikkim. We also take this opportunity to thank all those who stood by us in our time of bereavement and regret our inability to do so individually.

Karma Tenzing Namgyal [son] and family
9933441234

West Pendam Dancing Star finale on 06 Jan

YOGEN THATAL, SINGTAM, 20 DEC:

The finale of the West Pendam Dancing Star competition is to be held at the community hall of Singleybong, West Pendam on 06 Jan 2019. Chief Minister, Pawan Chamling, is scheduled to attend the finale as chief guest according to the organizers of the competition, Shanti Yuva Samitee of Singleybong Youth, West Pendam.

Selections were held on 28 Oct 2018 and 31 Oct 2018 at the community hall of Singleybong, West Pendam. The audition for the quarter and semi-finals were held on 11 Nov and 09 Dec, at the same venue, out of which only 7 could make to the grand finale but unfortunately only 6 will be



competing because one of the participants got injured, informed general secretary of Shanti Yuva Samitee, Ashok Tamang while speaking to SummitTimes. He thanked everyone who has supported the event.

Mingma D Lepcha, Dinesh Sunar and Chandrima Chatterjee are the judges for the finale.

Cash prize and trophy will be granted to

the winner along with certificates to all the participants. The winner will get to perform in Sikkim Dance Icon, another event which is to be held in Gangtok, organised by CID, a dance institute in Ranipool, it is informed.

More than 60 participants enrolled for the competition which is in open category irrespective of age or gender, informed Mr Tamang.

New health app to send alerts for unhealthy lifestyle choices

KOLKATA, Dec 20 (PTI): A research team at IIT-Kharagpur is developing a mobile application which can monitor day-to-day activities and smoking habits of an individual and make suitable recommendations.

The sensor-based health app will send alerts to the user, warning him

about his unhealthy lifestyle choices, an IIT-KGP statement said Thursday. The new tracking kit, being developed by Rajendra Mishra School of Engineering Entrepreneurship at IIT-Kharagpur, can also go a long way in gauging addictive and depressive behaviour, it said.

"The technology, once integrated with a smartphone or a fitness band, will prepare a daily activity chart based on body movements and predict functions such as eating and drinking. The application can also monitor call and message logs and smartphone usage," the statement said.



GOVERNMENT OF SIKKIM
HEALTH CARE, HUMAN SERVICES & FW DEPARTMENT
SIR THUTOB NAMGYAL MEMORIAL HOSPITAL,
GANGTOK, SIKKIM

Memo No. 77/GTK/18

Dated: 19.12.18

RE-NOTICE INVITING QUOTATION

The sealed quotation are invited from the reputed and registered medical shops/Medical Store/dealer located at Gangtok for the supply of emergency medicines and allied items for the New 1000 bedded Multispecialty Hospital situated at Sochaygang.

Date of issue of quotation: 2.1.2019 to 4.1.2019

Date of submission of quotation: 10.1.19 (Till 12.00 Noon)

Date & Time for opening of quotation: 10.1.19 at 2.00PM

Terms & Condition:

- The Tender form and Terms & Conditions can be obtained from the office of Senior Accounts Officer cum D&DO, STNM Hospital on production of State Bank of Sikkim Challan of Rs.2000/- duly signed by Senior AO cum D&DO, STNM Hospital credited under head 0210-01-800 other receipt (Sale of Tender Form) from 11 AM to 3PM.
- The interested firms should produce COI/Sikkim Subject, Residential Certificate, valid drug license, GST Registration, one year experience certificate and full address of Shop/Store at the time of submission of quotation form.
- The quotation should accompany TDR of Rs.50,000/- against the supply of medicines from the State Bank of Sikkim in favour of Senior AO cum D&DO, STNM Hospital. The department will not liable to pay the interest on the said amount.
- The tender in which any of the prescribed condition are not fulfilled or incomplete will be rejected.
- The Tender Committee reserves the right to accept or reject any or all quotation without assigning any reasons thereof and reserves the right to award the work to any bidder found competent.
- For further information visit the office of the undersigned.

Sd/-

Dr. K.B. Gurung
PCC cum Medical Superintendent
STNM Hospital

R.O. NO. 549/IPR/Pub/Classi./18-19

Date: 20.12.18

Susakurtot Organic Festival to be held at Gor Sec School ground

WANGCHUK BHUTIA

DZONGU, 20 DEC:

The first coordination meeting regarding the celebration of Susakurtot Organic Festival was held today at Gor, Lower Dzongu, North Sikkim. The meeting was chaired by Panchayat President Lum/Gor/Sangtok GPU, Phurmit Lepcha.

The meeting discussed and formed the new executive body with Bhujong Lepcha as president, Rabden Lepcha as vice-president, Pema Kenzang Lepcha as general sec-



retary and Chuning Lepcha as treasurer.

Former president, Naksuk Lepcha and former treasurer, Penchung Lepcha offered khadas to the new executives.

During the meeting it was decided that the ven-

ue for the organic festival will be Gor Secondary School ground in Lower Dzongu. However, the date for the festival will be finalised during the second round of meeting scheduled on 24 Dec at GPK Hall.



ADMISSION OPEN

STUDY ZONE
Mr. Dawchung Lepcha (Chairperson)

OUR COURSE OUTLINES:

- Winter Crash Courses running successfully for classes X, XII (CBSE, ICSE, ISC)
- Study Materials provided according to the standards of the board.
- Mock Test and Pre Board examinations for the students
- Revision notes for the students to make them much more effective
- Doubt clearing Sessions held by respective teachers
- Separate hostel facilities for boys and girls.

OUR COURSE OBJECTIVES:

- To give clear concept of the chapters
- To give the students proper guidance to excel in their examinations
- To Prepare and deliver answers effectively and efficiently
- Greater emphasis would be to excel.
- Last minute suggestion tips as per board requirements

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SummitTIMES

ON TOP OF THE NEWS

Say No to DUI

Tearing hurry and powerful vehicles already make a bad enough cocktail

Name change has done nothing to make the highway any safer, not that it was ever intended to have such an effect. Driving along NH-10 continues to be as scary as it was negotiating the stretch when it was NH-31A. The experience gets all that more unnerving early in the morning or towards dusk, especially if one is driving into Gangtok. Even as the engine tries to warm up sufficiently to run smoothly on hill roads, mainline jeeps thunder down the highway in collective tearing hurry. Trucks are still on the roads rushing to make it to Gangtok before their entry time ends and the vehicles that race down from the capital, headed for Siliguri and South and West Sikkim destinations appear to running on aviation fuel. Frozen expressions on the faces of the passengers and the grim determination on the faces of extremely young drivers leaves one cold, wondering whether the easy availability of vehicle loans for such powerful vehicles is really such a good idea for Sikkim. Thankfully, the number of accidents on Sikkim roads has seen a noticeable drop in recent months, but that is still no indication that the roads are any safer. They can't happen until the drivers are better trained and have packed in at least some experience.

Thankfully, the problems of fog and haze have still not set in, but what is still reason for worry is the picnic season that will now set in with the New Year. Picnic revelers for passengers and the boisterousness that a daylong outing can infuse are not the most conducive elements for safe driving. If the driver has been a part of the picnic celebrations, then the worries multiply. In this regard, it is time that the practice of including a sober driver in every car-pool becomes a necessity. Any drive around the hills after dark carries a very high probability to getting brushed, or at least nearly run off the road, by vehicles powered by a disdain for safety that only alcohol and/ or drugs can induce. No, let's not have the cops start ambushing drivers with their breath-analyser toys because that is too much of nuisance and invariably ineffective because of the selective nature of policing. Instead, a campaign by the young and supported by the establishments that they frequent should be attempted. Let the process begin from there, and once the model works, it will begin making sense to a wider network of drivers and passengers. Once that happens, at least one aspect of irresponsible driving habits would have been taken care of and then the focus can shift to other challenges.

Remember, hill roads can be cruel, a slight mistake and momentary lapse of concentration and one is not even left with a lifetime to repent. Such loss is pointless and easily avoidable.

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Mail us at: news@summittimes.com

Genocide: 70 years on, three reasons why the UN Convention is still failing

RACHAEL BURNS
theconversation.com

Seventy years after the UN Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide came into force, its effectiveness is disputed.

Jewish lawyer and Polish refugee, Raphael Lemkin, coined the word "genocide" in 1943 to describe the killing and destruction of peoples, deriving the word from the Greek "genos" (people, tribe or race) and the Latin "cide" (killing). Against the backdrop of the Holocaust, this had been, in the words of Winston Churchill, a "crime without a name" – at least officially. But on December 9, 1948, the international community formally adopted a definition of genocide within the 1948 convention – essentially enshrining the message of "never again" in international law.

But questions over whether the convention has achieved what it set out to do focus on three key failings. First, the very application of the term "genocide" is applied too slowly and cautiously when atrocities happen. Second, the international community fails to act effectively against genocides. Third, too few perpetrators are actually convicted of their crimes.

FAILURE TO DEFINE

Consider how many genocides have occurred since the 1948 convention and its ratification in 1951. Now consider that only three have been legally recognised – and led to trials – under the convention: Rwanda in 1994, Bosnia (and the 1995 Srebrenica massacre), and Cambodia under the 1975-9 Pol Pot regime.

The widespread killing and displacement of Yazidi by IS and Rohingya in Myanmar are ongoing and recognised by the UN as a whole, but have yet to be officially recognised as genocides by some individual states. Similarly, 13 years after atrocities took place in the Sudanese region of Darfur, criminal investigations continue but no official charges of genocide have been made under the convention.

Perhaps more broadly applied than the legal definition is the academic one – something which changes subtly depending on who is defining it. Criminologist Nicole Rafter, for example, also specifically named the Indonesian genocide of 1965-66 and the Guatemalan genocide of 1981-83.

Political scientist Adam Jones, meanwhile, also names the genocides committed under Saddam Hussein against the Kurds in 1988-91 in Iraq, and by West Pakistan forces against Bangladeshis in 1971. He also highlights crimes committed during Stalin's "Great Terror" and by China in Tibet.

And the list of "genocides" that might fall under the UN definition is frighteningly long. The International Criminal Court is investigating several

states in which human rights violations and war crimes "may" have occurred.

Myanmar already is under criminal investigation over its treatment of its Muslim Rohingya minority, and the genocide against the Yazidi has been defined by the UN as such. Other "genocides", such as that involving Australia's "stolen generations", are academically debated but have never formally or legally been recognised as such. Indeed, many states may not acknowledge a genocide when others do. The US, for example, famously never officially recognised the 1915 Armenian genocide as one.

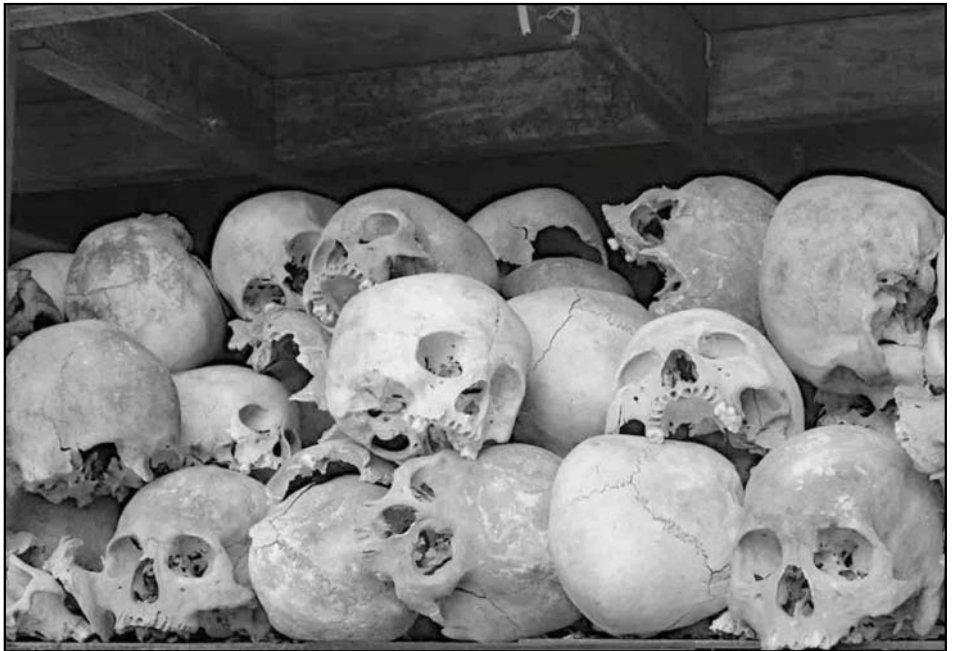
In her 2018 Nobel lecture, Nobel Peace Prize winner Nadia Murad, a survivor of the most recent (Yazidi) genocide, referred to several other instances when the Yazidi people have been victims of the same crime, but these atrocities have never

the Rohingya in Myanmar as a genocide but still there is inaction to support those displaced in Bangladesh and help them to rebuild their lives. Meanwhile, Myanmar remains unsafe for them. The status of Yazidi refugees is also still in a state of flux and many are fearful of returning to their homes.

Some criminal investigations are underway while the genocides continue. And when the physical evidence of killings is uncovered, evidence of the criminal intent for genocide must also be gathered, and the ringleaders identified and caught.

FAILURE TO PROSECUTE

The true number of perpetrators in Rwanda, the former Yugoslavia and Cambodia is unknown, but still only a handful have been convicted. So far, 93 Rwandans and 161 former Yugoslavian perpetrators have been indicted. But there have been



officially been recognised.

There is, it seems, an ongoing distinction between "genocide" and genocide.

FAILURE TO ACT

Prevention is a critical part of the convention and parties can call upon the UN to intervene when they have evidence of a genocide. The actual application of this, however, has been woeful.

Former UN secretary general, Ban Ki-moon, acknowledged, for example, that UN troops were pulled out of Rwanda "when they were most needed" and further acknowledged that the innocent at Srebrenica were "abandoned to slaughter" in 1995.

Atrocities committed by government troops against Tamils in Sri Lanka between 1983 and 2009 were never officially recognised as a genocide, but UN troops stationed there also stood by impotently as thousands were massacred, and the world watched in apparent indifference.

On December 15, 2018, The US House of Representatives formally labelled the crimes against

only two UN-backed prosecutions of Cambodian perpetrators of genocide. Indeed, Nuon Chea and Khieu Samphan were already serving life sentences for their crimes against humanity in Cambodia when they were convicted, while countless others live freely in the country, untouched by international law. Surely more must be done.

In thanking the Nobel committee for her peace prize, Murad stated that "the only prize in the world that may restore our dignity, is justice and the prosecution of criminals". With so few convictions to date, the international community has much catching up to do if Murad's wish for a more peaceful future is to be realised.

Seventy years after the UN Convention, genocide remains ever present in our global society. For Nobel laureate and Holocaust survivor, Elie Wiesel, "never again" was "a prayer, a promise, a vow". Unfortunately, this vow is all too often broken.

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Rewilding war zones can help heal the wounds of conflict

ANTONIO UZAL
theconversation.com

Where the Iron Curtain once divided Europe with barbed wire, a network of wilderness with bears, wolves and lynx now thrives. Commemorating 100 years since the end of World War I, people wear poppies to evoke the vast fields of red flowers which grew over the carnage of Europe's battlefields. Once human conflict has ended, the return of nature to barren landscapes becomes a potent symbol of peace.

These tragedies, which force people away from a place, can help ecosystems replenish in their absence. Though rewilding is typically considered an active decision, like the reintroduction of wolves to Yellowstone National Park, abandoned rural land often returns to wilderness of its own accord. Today, as people vacate rural settlements for life in cities, accidental rewilding has meant large predators returning to areas of Europe, long after they were almost made extinct.

Sudden changes, such as the Chernobyl nuclear power plant disaster in 1986, result in wildlife recolonising exclusion zones in previously developed areas.

Warfare can also result in human exclusion, which might benefit wildlife under specific conditions. Isolation and abandonment can generate wild population increases and recoveries, which has been observed in both terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems.

THE STRANGE LINK BETWEEN

WAR AND WILDLIFE

Fish populations in the North Atlantic benefited from World War II as fishing fleets were drastically reduced. Fishing vessels were requisitioned by the navy, seamen were drafted and the risks of fishing due to enemy strikes or subsurface mining deterred fishermen from venturing out to sea.

As a result, the war essentially created vast "marine protected areas" for several years in the Atlantic Ocean. After the war, armed with faster and bigger trawlers with new technology, fishermen reported bonanza catches.

A more gruesome result of World War II allowed opportunistic species such as the oceanic whitetip shark to flourish, as human casualties at sea proved a rich and plentiful food source.

Warship wrecks also became artificial reefs on the seabed which still contribute to the abundance of marine life today. The 52 captured German warships that were sunk during World War I between the Orkney mainland and the South Isles, off the north coast of Scotland, are now thriving marine habitats.

Exclusion areas, or "no mans lands", which remain after fighting has ended may also help terrestrial ecosystems recuperate by creating de facto wildlife reserves. Formerly endangered species, such as the Persian leopard, have re-established their populations in the rugged northern Iran-Iraq frontier.

An uneasy post-war settlement can create hard borders with vast

areas forbidden to human entry. The Korean Demilitarised Zone is a 4km by 250km strip of land that has separated the two Koreas since 1953. For humans it is one of the most dangerous places on Earth, with hundreds of thousands of soldiers patrolling its edges. For wildlife however, it's one of the safest areas in the region.

Today, the zone is home to thousands of species that are extinct or endangered elsewhere on the Korean peninsula, such as the long-tailed goral.

Miraculously, even habitats scarred by the most horrific weaponry can thrive as places where human access is excluded or heavily regulated. Areas previously used for nuclear testing, such as the Marshall Islands in the Pacific Ocean have been recolonised by coral and fish, which seem to be thriving in the crater of Bikini Atoll, declared a nuclear wasteland after nuclear bomb tests in the 1940s and 50s.

WAR - STILL GOOD FOR NOTHING

For all the quirks caused by abandonment, warfare overwhelmingly harms human communities and ecosystems with equal fervour. A review of the impact of human conflict on ecosystems in Africa showed an overall decrease in wildlife between 1946 and 2010. In war's aftermath, natural populations were slow to recover or stopped altogether as economic hardship meant conservation fell by the wayside.

Humans often continue to avoid a "no mans land" because of the presence of land mines. But these don't dif-

ferentiate between soldiers and wildlife, particularly large mammals. It's believed that residual explosives in conflict zones have helped push some endangered species closer to extinction.

However, where possible, accidental rewilding caused by war can help reconcile people after the fighting ends by installing nature where war had brought isolation. There is hope that should Korea reunify, a permanently protected area could be established within the current demilitarised zone boundaries, allowing ecotourism and education to replace enmity.

Such an initiative has already succeeded elsewhere in the world. The European Green Belt is the name for the corridor of wilderness which runs along the former Iron Curtain, which once divided the continent. Started in the 1970s, this project has sprawled along the border of 24 states and today is the longest and largest ecological network of its kind in the world. Here, ponds have replaced exploded land mine craters and forests and insect populations have grown in the absence of farming and pesticide use.

Where war isolates and restricts human movement, nature does seem to thrive. If, as a human species, we aim for a peaceful world without war, we must strive to limit our own intrusions on the natural paradises that ironically human warfare creates and nurture a positive legacy from a tragic history.

[the writer is Senior Lecturer in Wildlife Conservation, Nottingham Trent University]

Baby-selling scandal, activists' gangrape shame Jharkhand

PV RAMANUJAM

RANCHI, DEC 20 (PTI): Jharkhand was rocked by a baby-selling scandal and gangrape of five activists involved in raising awareness against human trafficking in 2018, which also witnessed lynchings and related incidents.

Union minister Jayant Sinha stoked a controversy in July after he garlanded eight convicts in the Ramgarh lynching case when they came out of prison on bail and offered them sweets.

His act invited severe criticism from the Opposition which said it was "truly despicable". Sinha, who was elected to the Lok Sabha from the Hazaribagh constituency in the state, also came under attack from his father and former Union minister Yashwant Sinha.

Before this episode, two Muslim men were allegedly lynched by a group of enraged villagers on suspicion of cattle theft in Godda district in June. A couple of days later, BJP MP from Godda, Nishikant Dubey, said he will foot the legal expenses of those arrested in connection with the lynching.

On the positive side, Jharkhand made rapid strides to finish second on different yardsticks of economic growth at the national level.

The state was also ranked fourth in ease of doing business.



Chief Minister Raghubar Das and other BJP leaders have been claiming that the state has progressed due to the "double engine" - saf-ron party governments at the Centre as well in Jharkhand. Celebrating the state's 19th Foundation Day on November 15, Das announced that free mobile phones would be distributed among 28 lakh farmers from next year to help them know market rates and keep away middlemen. A total 1,760 tablets were distributed for animal census.

Das and Governor Droupadi Murmu also declared the entire state as open defecation free, though the target was October 2, 2019.

Lohardaga, Hazaribagh, Deoghar Ranchi, Dhanbad, Ramgarh and Bokaro districts became totally electrified dis-

tricts with Das pledging to electrify the entire state by the year end.

There was a ground-breaking ceremony of 50 food processing units coming to the state during the two-day Global Agriculture & Food Summit on November 29 and 30 with an investment of Rs 271 crore that would fetch direct and indirect jobs of nearly 6,000.

The chief minister gave credit to farmers and also promised that the government would purchase for three rupees per unit through grid if the farmers embark upon solar farming on barren land.

The state government will also pay the premium of interest generated on loans taken by farmers if the latter returned the loan within one year of taking the money.

The state govern-

ment had introduced a policy under which women can register for one rupee in the event of purchase of land or house up to Rs 50 lakh.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi rolled out the health care scheme Ayushman Bharat from Ranchi on September 23. For tribal welfare, the government introduced the anti-conversion act, which attracts four years jail term and fine of Rs 1 lakh for the guilty.

On November 10, Das and Tata Trusts Chairman Ratan N Tata laid the foundation stone for Ranchi Cancer Hospital and Research Centre, which will come up between 12 and 18 months.

However, the unpleasant events that took place during the year drew widespread criticism. On June 19, five women, who had gone to Kochang village in Khunti

district to raise awareness on migration and human trafficking in Pothalgari areas, were allegedly abducted from R C Mission School and later gang-raped at gunpoint. Pathalgari is a practice in which villagers inscribe various tenets on huge stone slabs and ban outsiders in the area.

The baby selling racket was busted when sister Konsalia and an employee of the Ranchi-based charity-run shelter home Nirmal Hriday were arrested in July for allegedly selling a child born to a minor inmate of the home to a couple from Uttar Pradesh.

According to the police, sister Konsalia, who worked as a nun with the charity, confessed to the crime and said she had sold three kids to three persons while giving a fourth child away for free.

Mamata Banerjee is the Skoch Chief Minister of the Year

KOLKATA, DEC 20 (PTI): West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee has been conferred the Skoch Chief Minister of the Year Award for her contribution in the overall development of the state and emerging as the best chief minister in the country.

The Skoch group congratulating Banerjee, tweeted "Mamata Banerjee tops in Governance. West Bengal emerges top performing State in Governance #SkochGovernanceReport 2018.

Congratulations @MamataOfficial".

The state has this year bagged 31 Skoch Awards for its performance across different fields besides implementing unique projects. Banerjee has been conferred with the prestigious award on the basis of the state's performance in the field of governance, culture, finance, urban and rural development, the organisation had tweeted recently.

The state's Kanyashree scheme for the girl child has earned Banerjee much acclaim and the highest public service honour from the United Nations.



Kanyashree scheme seeks to improve the status and well being of girls, specifically those from socio-economically disadvantaged families through conditional cash transfers. As per Skoch, West Bengal has also won the top position in terms of the number of man-days created and the amount spent in paying people for their work in the 100 days' work scheme.

In the field of agriculture, West Bengal has won five consecutive Kishi Karman awards and

bagged the IPPAI Award for rural electrification in the state, it said.

Besides Banerjee the Skoch Group, a think tank dealing with socio-economic issues with a focus on inclusive growth since 1997, has also awarded Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu and Commerce and Industry and civil aviation minister Suresh Prabhu. While Naidu was awarded with the 'SKOCH Sprinter of the Year' and Suresh Prabhu as the 'Steady Reformer'.

Mamata ministry expanded, four new faces inducted

KOLKATA, DEC 20 (PTI): The 31-month-old ministry of Mamata Banerjee-led Trinamool Congress government was expanded on Thursday with the induction of four new faces.

The new faces Tapas Roy, Sujit Bose, Ratna Ghosh(Kar) and Nirmal Majhi were sworn in as ministers of state by Governor K N Tripathi at the Raj Bhavan in the presence of Banerjee and her cabinet colleagues.

Roy will be the minister of state with independent charge for planning and parliamentary affairs and Bose will be minister of state with independent charge for fire services.

Ratna Ghosh (Kar) will look af-

ter the minister of state for MSME, while Nirmal Majhi will be the minister of state for labour, as per the announcement by Banerjee after the swearing-in.

In a minor reshuffle, the Minister of State for Health Chandrima Bhattacharya has been given additional charge of housing department, she said.

This is Trinamool Congress' second term in office after winning the 2016 assembly election in the state.

Its first term began after the historic win of the party by throwing out of power the 34-year-long Left regime in 2011.

Carry out audit of works I have done as MP:

Rijiju to voters ZIRO (ARUNACHAL), DEC 20 (PTI): Union Minister Kiren Rijiju Thursday asked the voters of his parliamentary constituency to carry out audit of the works he had done in the last four and half years after being elected as MP from Arunachal West Parliamentary seat.

"I have been elected by the people of my constituency at the time when I did not have any support. It is my utmost duty to work for my people who supported me with full faith. I am your representative and if I cannot bring any development in the state, it is useless for me to stay in New Delhi," the Minister of State for Home said while addressing a meeting here.

He said, being a representative from the state, it is his moral responsibility to take up all vital issues of the state with the Centre.

Lashing out at the opposition Congress, Rijiju said that what the NDA government under Prime Minister Narendra Modi did for the North East region in the past four and half year, the previous regime could not do even in several decades.

Terming road as the panacea for development, the Union minister while referring to the Potin-Pangung stretch of Trans Arunachal Highway (TAH) said that the road could not took off even after several years of sanction in 2008, due to fault of the state government.

Metoo movement, sexual abuse of minors at shelter homes kept WCD on its toes in 2018

UZMI ATHAR

NEW DELHI, DEC 20 (PTI): Sexual harassment of women at workplace that opened #MeToo floodgates in the country and abuse of children at shelter homes kept the Women and Child Development Ministry on its toes for most of the year.

India's #MeToo movement, which started with Bollywood actor Tanushree Dutta accusing co-star Nana Patekar of harassing her during the shooting of a film in 2008, escalated with many women coming forward with their complaints against well-known faces.

Women and Child Development Minister Maneka Gandhi welcomed the movement and urged all political parties and government offices to have an internal sexual harassment committees to look into such complaints.

The government formed a Group of Ministers headed by Home Minister Rajnath Singh to look into the lacunae in the existing law on sexual harassment. The other members of the group, which held its first meeting on December 12, are Road Transport Minister Nitin Gadkari, Defence Minister Nirmala Sitharaman and Gandhi.

The year also saw horrific cases of alleged sexual abuse of minor children living at shelter homes coming to light.

Minor girls were rescued after alleged sexual abuse at two shelter homes in Muzaffarpur in Bihar and Deoria in Uttar Pradesh. The two cases raised a big question mark on the safety and security of girls, women and children at such homes.

In the Muzaffarpur case, the owner of the NGO running the shelter home for destitute girls was arrested besides nine other persons.

On July 26, Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar recommended a CBI probe. He said that the government was "ashamed" by the incident.

Thirty four of the 42 minor girls at the shelter home were sexually abused, their medical examination confirmed.

The Deoria case came to light

after a 10-year-old girl managed to flee from her shelter home and informed authorities about the plight of the inmates, who were reportedly sexually abused by the couple running the home. Following that, police raided the facility and rescued 24 girls.

Gandhi ordered auditing of all shelter homes in the country and according to the apex child rights body National Commission for Protection of Child Rights over 3000 shelter homes have been inspected till now.

The year also saw a topsy-turvy relationship between the ministry and child-care homes of Missionaries of Charity.

Gandhi in July ordered all the states to get child-care homes run by the Mother Teresa-founded Missionaries of Charity inspected immediately, after cases of alleged illegal adoptions carried out by the homes came to light.

But in October, she asked the Missionaries of Charity to "come back into" the government's system of adoption services after the latter left the system in 2015 over an ideological row on some issues.

India's first comprehensive anti-trafficking bill seeking to deal with the crime from the point of prevention, protection and rehabilitation was approved in the Lok Sabha.

The bill provides for confidentiality of victims, witnesses and complainants and time-bound trials and repatriation of the victims. It proposes to create institutional mechanisms at district, state and central levels. It calls for punishment ranging from 10 years of rigorous imprisonment and a fine not less than Rs one lakh.

However, various groups pointed out that the bill does not mention terms like "sexual exploitation" or "prostitution" and is unfavourable towards the transgender community, because they are not conclusively covered under the bill.

The government also tightened the noose on absconding NRI husbands by cancelling 33 pass-

ports of such people. The other measures proposed by the WCD Ministry included compulsory registration of all NRI marriages within seven days, failing which passports and visas would not be issued to the people involved.

Another proposal was holding the properties of NRI offenders in escrow, in case they abscond abandoning their spouse. The WCD ministry also directed the National Commission for Women to set up a dedicated cell to look into such cases.

The year saw a number of initiatives under the Poshan Abhiyan, a programme launched with the aim to reduce the level of stunting, undernutrition, anaemia and low birth weight in children.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced increase of monthly honorarium for anganwadi workers and helpers. Anganwadi workers will be given Rs 4,500 per month instead of Rs 3,000, mini anganwadi workers will get Rs 3,500 from Rs 2,250 and anganwadi helpers will be given Rs 2,250 instead of Rs 1,500.

The ministry directed all state governments to verify the number of children in the anganwadis of the country after Assam government found 14 lakh fake beneficiaries in the state.

Since then, the verification of beneficiaries has been done in Uttar Pradesh and Maharashtra.

There are around 14 lakh anganwadis across the country and 10 crore beneficiaries, which include children under the age of six and pregnant women and lactating mothers. In September, Gandhi had said about one crore fake beneficiaries registered in various anganwadis have been identified and eliminated.

Physical torture of inmates in West Bengal, no medical aid for HIV patient in Odisha and no treatment for mentally challenged women in Uttar Pradesh were some of the key findings by the women's commission during inspections of shelter homes in these states.



Sindhu, Saina remain Indian badminton's biggest stars in low on titles 2018

AMIT KUMAR DAS

NEW DELHI, DEC 20 (PTI): PV Sindhu struck gold just in time to shake off the choker's tag, Saina Nehwal's second coming kept getting better and Lakshya Sen was the proverbial one for the future in Indian badminton's continuous onward march globally even though the title count took a hit.

In a year when the world body (BWF) introduced a new tournament structure, under which events were graded on stature based on prize money, Sindhu dominated the headlines with silver medals in all major events before a World Tour Finals crown.

Five silver medals would count for success in most books but not in the case of Sindhu, who faced criticism and pressure for finishing runners-up way too often after putting in the hard yards to make the finals.

She finally redeemed herself with the World Tour Finals gold.

On the other hand, Saina, whose recovery from a career-threatening knee injury began with a World Championship bronze last year, also produced some impressive performances this year.

The highlights were without doubt the gold and bronze at the Commonwealth Games and Asian Games respectively. The CWG gold that came after an epic clash with Sindhu in the finals was a in fact



tribute to her determination.

She also reached the finals at the Indonesia Masters, Denmark Open and Syed Modi International, besides winning bronze medals at Asia championship and Asian Games.

The trailblazer also embarked on a brand new personal journey after tying the knot with fellow shuttler Parupalli Kashyap, a 2014 CWG gold-medallist.

In the men's circuit, Sameer Verma raised the bar with three titles -- Swiss Open Super 300, Syed Modi International Super 300 and Hyderabad Open Super

100 event. A semifinal finish at his maiden World Tour Finals propelled him to a career-best ranking of world no 14.

The prodigal talent of 17-year-old Lakshya gave the belief that Indian badminton is in safe hands. He clinched the Asian Junior Championships title and silver and bronze medals at the Youth Olympic Games and World Junior Championships respectively.

The year ended for him with a title at the Tata Open India International.

However, the unprecedented number of titles that Indian shut-

tlers won last year couldn't be matched this season as star shuttler Kidambi Srikanth looked a pale shadow of his past self, failing to lay claim to a single title even though he made the quarters and semifinals regularly.

For Srikanth, who clinched as many as four titles in 2017, the highlight of 2018 was the individual silver at Commonwealth Games. He also helped India win a historic team gold at the Gold Coast event. He reached the world no.1 ranking for a brief period but as the year progressed, his standing dipped to 8th. Sindhu, on the other hand, was

consistent throughout the year. The 23-year-old, who won two titles and three silvers last season, scooped silvers at the Commonwealth Games, Asian Games and World Championship besides runners-up finishes at the India Open and Thailand Open.

But her failure to cross the final hurdle fuelled criticism which she answered in style by becoming the first Indian to win the season-ending World Tour Finals, snapping her run of seven consecutive finals losses starting last year.

In the process, she also tamed the indomitable world no.1 Tai Tzu Ying, who tormented the Indian and her colleague Saina for most part this season.

"The year has ended on a beautiful note. Next year will be an Olympic qualification year and we have to keep ourselves fit and strategise on which tournaments to play," Sindhu said.

In doubles, Chirag Shetty and Satwiksairaj Rankireddy reached greater heights, becoming the first Indian men's doubles pair to win a silver at CWG, besides winning the Hyderabad Open Super 100 and finishing runners-up at the Syed Modi Super 300 tournament to stay inside the top 20.

Ashwini Ponnappa too continued her love affair with the Commonwealth Games, adding a bronze medal to the gold (2010

edition) and silver (2014 edition) medals with her women's doubles partner N Sikki Reddy. The duo also finished runners-up for the second successive time at Syed Modi.

Sourabh Verma too returned from injury to claim a place in the Asian Games team after winning a domestic tournament. He later won the Dutch Open Super 100 event in October.

Subhankar Dey had a breakthrough year as he claimed his maiden international title with the SaarLorLux Open Super 100 event.

Kashyap also continued his bid to regain form and fitness and won the Austrian International.

"For us the target this year was the Asian Games, the Commonwealth Games and the World championships and I am happy that we have done well in all of them. Next is a fresh year and the All England will be the target," national coach Pullela Gopichand said.

There were also controversies and court battles over the selection of the Indian team for the Asian Games when the national federation picked two additional women's singles players.

One of them happened to be the daughter of Gopichand and was picked over a third doubles pair, prompting doubles specialist Aparna Balan to move the Kerala High Court challenging her omission from the squad.

Civil services exam: Niti for reducing upper age limit to 27 years

NEW DELHI, DEC 20 (PTI): The Niti Aayog has suggested that the upper age limit for entry into the civil services be brought down to 27 years from the present 30 years for general category candidates in a phased manner by 2022-23.

In the 'Strategy for New India @75' document released on Wednesday, the government think-tank also pitched for an integrated exam for all civil services.

"The upper age limit for the civil services should be brought down to 27 years for the general category in a phased manner by 2022-23," the document said.

It also said the existing 60-plus separate civil services at the central and state level need to be reduced through rationalisation and harmonisation of services.

"Recruits should be placed in a central talent pool, which would then allocate candidates by matching their competencies and the job description of the post," it said. "Concomitantly, the number of exams for civil services should ideally be brought down to one with all-India ranking. States may also be encouraged to use this pool for recruitments," the document added.

The document also said the service conditions for employees of autonomous bodies need to be regulated and harmonised.

It noted that reforms in civil services are a continuous process and several initiatives have been taken in recent years by the present government.

Cricket needs passionate characters like Virat Kohli: Allan Border

PERTH, DEC 20 (PTI): Former Australia captain Allan Border defended Virat Kohli's aggression, saying cricket needs characters like the Indian skipper who exude passion on the field.

"There's not many characters in our game at the moment. The professional era has sort of beaten that out to a certain degree," Border said on Fox Cricket's podcast -- The Follow-on.

Kohli has received

severe criticism from the likes of Mike Hussey, Mitchell Johnson and Sanjay Manjrekar for his aggressive celebrations in the ongoing Test series in Australia.

The Indian skipper was also involved in a series of heated exchanges with his Australian counterpart Tim Paine, which prompted umpire Chris Gafaney to intervene during the second Test here.

"I haven't seen any one sort of carry on so

much as a captain when his side takes a wicket. It's really over the top but it's good in a way. You can see some passion about what he's trying to do," Border said.

Border added that perhaps Kohli's aggression stems from the desire to cement his legacy with an away series victory. "He's so keen to win away from home and really deserve that number one ranking that's your KPIs (key performance

indicators) as a captain I suppose," he said.

Under Kohli, India suffered two back-to-back away series defeats against South Africa and England this year.

"To drive the team to be number one, which he has achieved, but to win away from home is one of those important things you notice as a captain."

Border also opined that as the leader, Kohli feels the need to manifest the passion and drive.

"I think he's feeling that pinch. If you look at this Indian side he's probably the only one that has the character to get really animated," he said. "The rest of the Indian boys are very good cricketers but seem to me a quiet bunch and maybe Kohli feels as skipper he needs to lead from the front and really show some passion and drive. I think it just comes naturally to him," he added.

Closure of tanneries during Kumbh worries workers, exporters

KANPUR (UP) DEC 20 (PTI): The Maha Kumbh in Allahabad starting next month could spell trouble for lakhs of workers, tanners, and meat and leather exporters in view of the Uttar Pradesh government's order to close tanneries and meat factories in Kanpur and Unnao for three months during the congregation.

The state government has ordered the closure of tanneries between December 15 and March 15 in the cities of Kanpur and Unnao to provide clean water to devotees participating in the upcoming Ardh Kumbh festival.

The Kumbh Mela is to be held in Allahabad between January 15 and March 4, 2019. According to the Uttar Pradesh State Industrial Development Corporation (UPSIDC), 264 small and big tanneries operate in Kanpur and Unnao.

Those in the business say these tanneries are the primary source of income and livelihood for over one lakh families. "Small-scale tanneries are likely to be the worst affected by the government's order," says the owner of one of the smaller units.

Taj Alam, the president of the UP Leather Industries Association (LIA), told PTI the state government's move has come as a shock for the leather industry and meat processing units which are already in the red.

Alam said the complete closure of tanneries could spell trouble for over three lakh workers who hail from socially and economically backward community and are engaged in the industry.

The leather and leather goods export business and domestic sales from Kanpur and Unnao is around Rs. 2,000 crore a month each and the complete closure would hit business worth over Rs. 12,000 crore, Alam feared. "There will be large-scale job loss if the ban is not revoked."

He said he has apprised top officials of the Union Commerce Ministry about the past practice of closing tanneries just for three to four days at a time before the days assigned for the 'shahi snan' (holy bath).

The meat processing industries which are mostly in the Unnao district would also be affected as it would not be able to dispose

of hide and other byproducts if the tanneries remained closed, he said.

Unnao district has seven meat processing units with a combined annual turnover of Rs 10,000 crore. The winter days are its peak season and the ban on tanneries will seriously hit the meat export business.

Alam said the effluent released from tanneries into the Ganga may not be even half as polluting as the untreated water released from various towns along the river.

The tanners treat the water thrice before releasing it into the river, Alam said, adding the water from the plants is diverted to Rai Bareli and 80 per cent of the waste water does not reach the Ganga and this has been shown in the inquiry report made jointly by top administrative and irrigation department officials of Unnao district just a fortnight back.

Alam claimed that the Union commerce ministry has written to the UP chief secretary advising against the three-month ban on tanneries and meat units, which it feels is illogical as the holy bath takes place only on certain days.

Regional Officer pollution control board (PCB), Kuldeep Mishra, however, denied claims of complete closure of tanneries in Kanpur.

To be precise, 249 tanneries have been asked to operate at 50 per cent of average capacity, he said.

Mishra said that last month Jal Nigam officials expressed their inability to treat the waste released from tanneries by the central effluent treatment plant.

After this, the PCB decided not to allow tanneries to operate during Kumbh, Mishra said.

A couple of weeks later, Jal Nigam apprised the board it can treat wastes released by tanneries if they operate at 50 per cent of their capacity. So, the tanneries have been ordered to work at 50 per cent of their average capacity.

He said that even though Kanpur tanneries will keep on working at reduced capacity, a hundred per cent closure of tanneries will occur in Unnao. This is because CPT is unable to process the effluent produced by the

tanneries there.

Chairman of the Council of Leather Exports Mukhtarul Amin too said the government's decision will have an adverse impact on the leather industry.

"If this happens, it will be impossible for us to get back into the leather business," he said.

Amin said the government should act swiftly to avoid consequences.

"Pakistan and Bangladesh will earn the larger share in global leather exports," he said.

Taj Alam added, "The leather and allied industries are already in a loss and global exporters have started terming India as an unreliable market. In conditions like these, the industries will either shut down or move to different states and this will affect us very badly."

As per data provided by the Council for Leather Exports, the export of leather and leather products for the financial year of 2017-18 touched Rs 9,153.321 crore, as compared Rs 9,624.193 crore in 2016-17, which recorded a negative growth of 4.89 per cent.

India's leather industry accounts for nine per cent of the world's footwear production, and 12.93 per cent of the international production of hides/skins.

These tanneries were once the biggest exporters of finished and unfinished leather in the international market, however, 154 tanneries have been shut down since 2016 due to excessive water pollution or illegal functionality.

To maintain the treatment plant, the government recently provided Rs 17 crore to the Uttar Pradesh Jal Nigam (UPJN), according to the UP Minister for Export Encouragement, Satyadev Pachauri.

According to the PCB, waste water coming out from tanneries is first treated at the chemical plant in Jajmou, after which the treated water is sent into the Ganga.

The water is considered not fit for consumption, but the treatment makes it fit to be sent into the river. There are nine points in the treatment plant from where the water is released into the river.

Book recalls India's contribution to First World War



NEW DELHI, DEC 20 (PTI): A new book looks into the experience of combatants, non-combatants and civilians from undivided India in the First World War and their sociocultural, visual and literary worlds.

Around 1.5 million Indians were recruited of whom over a million served abroad.

In India, Empire, and First World War Culture: Writings, Images, and Songs , Santanu Das draws on a variety of fresh, unusual sources - objects, images, rumours, street pamphlets, letters, diaries, sound-recordings, folksongs, testimonies, poetry, essays and fiction - to produce a cultural and literary history, moving from recruitment tactics in villages through sepoy traces and feelings in battlefields, hospitals and POW camps to post-war reflections on Europe and empire.

Combining archival excavation in different countries across several continents with investigative readings of Mahatma Gandhi, Rudyard Kipling, Muhammad Iqbal, Kazi Nazrul Islam, Rabindranath Tagore and others in this imaginative study opens up the worlds of sepoys and labourers, men and women, nationalists, artists and intellectuals, trying to make sense of home and the world in times of war. Among the several people who Das refers to in the book, published by Cambridge University Press, are Jogen Sen, Mall Singh, Mir Mast and Kishan Devi.

Sen was part of the

West Yorkshire Regiment and died in action on the night of May 22-23, 1916 in France. Singh was a Punjabi prisoner of war in the Halfmoon Camp at Wiinsdorf outside Berlin.

Devi from Punjab was the daughter of Havildar Sewa Singh of the 23rd Sikh Pioneers serving in Egypt. Mast served in the 58th Vaughan's Rifles (Bareilly Brigade) at Neuve Chapelle. His brother Mir Dast obtained a Victoria Cross for his performance in the Second Battle of Ypres in 1915.

Why do these people matter so much?

Jogen Sen's glasses, Mall Singh's voice, Kishan Devi's letter (to her father) and Mir Mast's diary are not just fresh and tantalising sources but open up new ways of reading' - and writing - life, and particularly colonial lives, in times of war, Das writes.

At an intermediate level, they confront us with the role of the sensuous, the material and the contingent: they force us to weave together a narrative of fugitive fragments, the flotsam, jetsam and lagan of life wrecked by war; they point to the importance of relicts as zones of contact between warm life and historical violence, he adds.

Das, a professor of English Literature at King's College London, is the author of the monograph Touch and Intimacy in First World War Literature (2006) and the pictorial history Indian Troops in Europe, 1914-1918 (2014).

Trump signs bill on Tibet into law despite China protest

LALIT K JHA
WASHINGTON, DEC 20 (PTI): US President Donald Trump has signed a bipartisan bill on Tibet into law that could enrage China, paving the way to impose a visa ban on Chinese officials who deny American citizens, government officials and journalists access to the sensitive Himalayan region, homeland of the exiled Dalai Lama.

US citizens including government officials, reporters and tourists who seek to enter Tibetan areas are routinely rejected, and the few who do get in are forced to stay on strictly controlled official tours, where the true situation of the Tibetan people is hidden from them, officials said. The situation is worst of all for Tibetan-Americans, who are almost and always denied the right to make a pilgrimage to their ancestral land and to meet their family members there, community members said.

The Wednesday's move by President Trump came days after China lodged a "stern" diplomatic protest with the US over the Senate passing the legislation with Beijing asking Washington not to make it a law.

China insists Tibet has been part of its territory for centuries. The Dalai Lama fled to India in 1959 amid an abortive uprising against the Chinese rule in his Himalayan homeland.

The White House said that Trump signed into law the 'Reciprocal Access to Tibet Act of 2018' which promotes access for diplomats, officials, journalists and others from the United States to China's Tibetan areas.



The bill, which was earlier passed by the Senate and the House of Representatives, seeks to impose a visa ban on Chinese officials who deny American citizens, government officials and journalists' access to the remote region of Tibet.

The move also comes amidst Trump administration imposing massive trade import duties on China, the world's second largest after that of America.

However, the bill includes a national security waiver and would require the Secretary of State to submit an assessment to Congress of the level of access to Tibet granted to US officials, journalists and tourists by China.

If the Secretary of State determines that there are restrictions on travel to Tibet, the appropriate Chinese officials will be ineligible to enter the US.

The Tibetan community described it as a historic moment for them.

'Reciprocal Access to Tibet Act becomes

law, marking new era of American support for Tibet', said International Campaign for Tibet (ICT).

"This is truly a turning point for Americans, Tibetans and all who care about equality, justice and human rights," said Matteo Mecacci, ICT president.

"By passing this impactful and innovative law, the US has blazed a path for other countries to follow and let the Chinese government know that it will face real consequences for its discrimination against the Tibetan people," he said.

Congressman Jim McGovern, who introduced the bill in the House of Representatives, said: "I'm glad that the President signed our bill, the Reciprocal Access to Tibet Act, into law.

"For too long, China has covered up their human rights violations in Tibet by restricting travel. But actions have consequences and today we are one step closer to holding the Chinese officials who

implement these restrictions accountable".

McGovern said he looks forward to watching closely as the law is implemented, and continuing to stand with the people of Tibet in their struggle for religious and cultural freedom.

The Reciprocal Access to Tibet Act is based on the diplomatic principle of reciprocity, which calls on countries to give equal rights to one another's citizens.

Sponsors of the bill alleged that when it comes to Tibet, China does not reciprocate. Although Chinese citizens travel freely throughout the US, Chinese authorities severely restrict Americans' ability to access Tibet.

"The Reciprocal Access to Tibet Act specifically highlights the discriminatory attitude of Chinese officials toward Tibetan-Americans who seek to visit Tibet.

"The Chinese embassy and consulates routinely place such Tibetan-Americans under a more stringent and

non-consular application process merely because they are of Tibetan-origin. This includes subjecting them to vigorous interviews by United Front officials, collecting personal and family information and eventually denying them access," ICT vice president Bhuchung K Tsering said.

The ICT said until now, China has been able to use its economic and military power to isolate Tibet without much resistance from the international community. With reciprocal access to Tibet becoming law, China will begin to feel the weight of its unfair policies.

The law requires the Secretary of State to assess Americans' level of access to Tibet within 90 days of its enactment and to send a report to Congress every year afterward identifying the Chinese officials responsible for keeping Americans out of Tibet.

The Secretary will then ban those officials from receiving visas to enter the US.

Lanka Cabinet: Prez Sirisena keeps police under him

COLOMBO, DEC 20 (PTI): Sri Lankan President Maithripala Sirisena on Thursday named a 30-member Cabinet, but retained the control over the island nation's security forces and the police by ignoring Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe's nominees, indicating that two leaders are still at loggerheads after weeks of political crisis.

The Cabinet announcement came after the reinstatement of Wickremesinghe as prime minister.

Sirisena ignored Wickremesinghe's nominees for Cabinet positions from those who had defected from his Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP).

At least 3 seniors had defected from the SLFP to Wickremesinghe's United National Party (UNP). Sirisena's

decision on October 26 to sack prime minister Wickremesinghe and install former strongman Mahinda Rajapaksa in his place triggered an unprecedented constitutional crisis. Later, Sirisena also dissolved the 225-member Parliament and called for a snap election on January 5.

However, Wickremesinghe was re-appointed as prime minister by Sirisena following a Supreme Court order, ending the 51-day political standoff in the country.

The president now holds the Defence and Mahaweli Development and Environment Ministry portfolios. He retained the control over the police which is investigating an alleged plot to kill him that triggered a political crisis in the country.

Wickremesinghe also hold portfolios of Na-

tional Policies, Economic Affairs, Resettlement & Rehabilitation, Northern Province Development, Vocational Training & Skills Development & Youth Affairs.

Thilak Janaka Marapana was sworn-in as the Minister of Foreign Affairs.

Sirisena's holding of the Law and Order Ministry has been disputed by the UNP, claiming that the president was only constitutionally allowed to be the defence minister in addition to the subject of environment.

Analysts said that Cabinet appointments indicate that Sirisena and Wickremesinghe were still at loggerheads.

Sirisena, who had publicly vowed not to reinstate Wickremesinghe, was forced to change his stance after court rulings over the issue.

N Korea says it won't denuclearize unless US removes threat

SEOUL, DEC 20 (AP): North Korea said Thursday it will never unilaterally give up its nuclear weapons unless the United States removes its nuclear threat first, a statement that raises further doubts on whether leader Kim Jong Un will ever relinquish an arsenal he may see as his greatest guarantee of survival.

The statement carried by the official Korean Central News Agency came amid a deadlock in nuclear negotiations between the United States and North Korea over the sequencing of the denuclearization process and removal of international sanctions.

Kim and President Donald Trump met June 12 in Singapore where they issued a vague goal for the "complete denuclearization" of the Korean Peninsula without describing

when and how it would occur. But North Korea for decades has been pushing a concept of denuclearization that bears no resemblance to the American definition, vowing to pursue nuclear development until the United States removes its troops and the nuclear umbrella defending South Korea and Japan.

In Thursday's statement, the North reiterated its traditional stance on denuclearization and accused Washington of misleading what had been agreed on in Singapore.

"The United States must now recognize the accurate meaning of the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula, and especially, must study geography the right way," the statement said. "When we talk about the Korean Peninsula, it includes the territory of our republic and also the entire

region of (South Korea) where the United States has placed its invasive force, including nuclear weapons. When we talk about the complete denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula, it means the removal of all sources of nuclear threat, not only from the South and North but also from areas neighboring the Korean Peninsula," the statement said.

The U.S. removed its tactical nuclear weapons from South Korea in the 1990s. The nuclear negotiations between Washington and Pyongyang stalled since the Trump-Kim meeting. The United States wants North Korea to provide a detailed account of nuclear and missile facilities that would be inspected and dismantled under a potential deal, while the North is insisting that sanctions be lifted first.

UK's post-Brexit visa strategy to benefit Indian students, professionals

LONDON, DEC 20 (PTI): The UK government has released a White Paper on its post-Brexit visas and immigration strategy, which is expected to benefit Indian students and professionals as it focuses on skills rather than country of origin.

The UK's future skills-based immigration system, tabled in the House of Commons on Wednesday by UK Home Secretary Sajid Javid, removes any cap on highly-skilled migrants from anywhere in the world and improves the post-study work offering for international students. The proposals, set to be phased in from December 2021 after the proposed transition period for Britain's exit from the European Union (EU), claim to level the country's immigration playing field with the end of free movement for people from within the 28-member economic bloc.

"As we leave the European Union, free movement will end. This will be a system where it is workers' skills that matter, not which country they come from," British Prime Minister Theresa May said in her foreword to the strategy.

"We are taking a skills-based approach to ensure we can attract the brightest and best migrants to the UK," added Javid, who made a reference to his own Pakistani origins as the "son of immigrant parents". Under the new proposals, an annual cap of 20,700 on the number of skilled work visas issued will be removed, likely to benefit doctors and IT professionals from India, among others. There will also be a new 12-month visa route for workers at any skill level for a

temporary period to allow businesses to hire the staff they need on a time-bound basis.

"People arriving on this route will not be able to bring family members with them, won't accrue rights to settle in the UK and will have a 12-month cooling off period once their visa expires," the UK Home Office said.

The onerous requirement for labour market tests by employers wanting to sponsor an overseas skilled worker are also to be done away with. The plans were broadly welcomed by the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII), which said the White Paper recognises the value offered by skilled workers from countries like India.

"Indian Industry has long called for a fair, transparent and skills-based immigration system, and today's proposals go some way to achieving these goals," said Jim Bligh, of Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) and Chair of CII's UK India Business Forum.

"Tackling the UK's skills gaps, particularly in digital and technology, must remain a key focus for government and it is welcome that this paper recognises the value that skilled workers from overseas can bring to helping improve the UK's skills base," he said.

Under changes proposed to attract international students to the UK, the government said it would "improve the current offer" to those who have completed a degree who want to stay on in the UK to work after they have completed their studies by offering six months' post-study leave to all Master's students

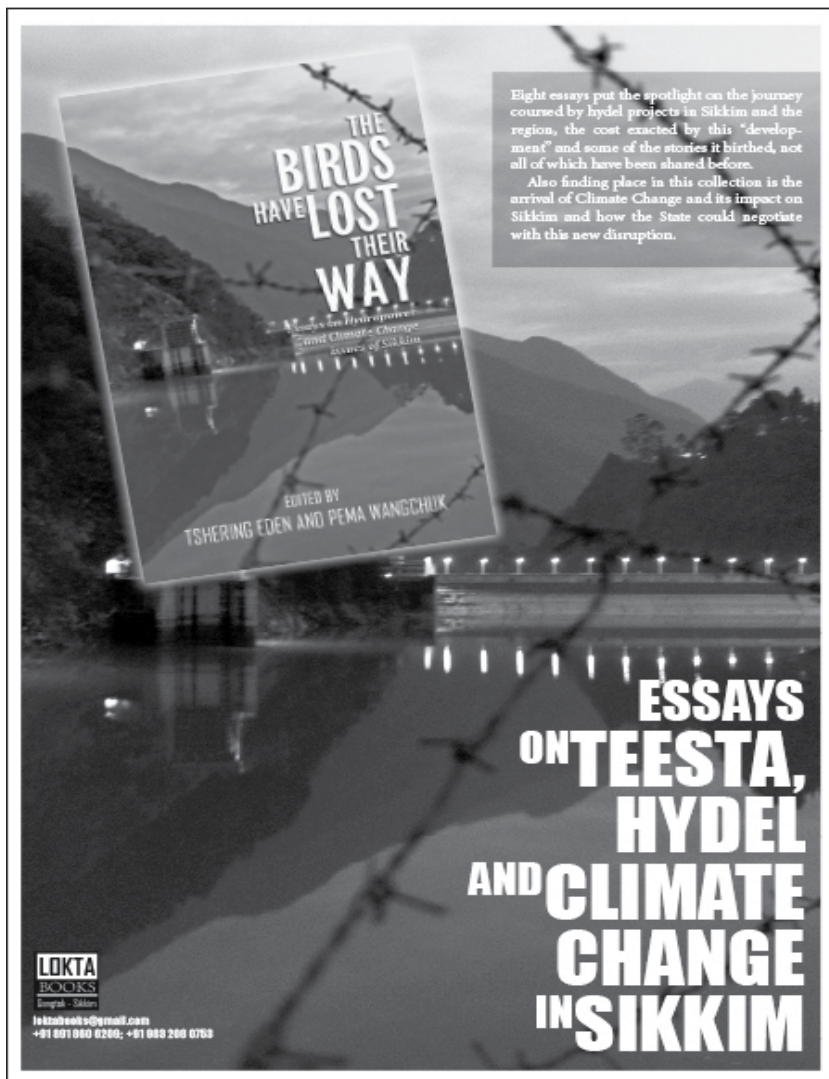
and Bachelor's students studying at an institution with degree-awarding powers. This is aimed at giving them more time to find permanent skilled work and to work temporarily during that period.

"We will also allow for students studying at Bachelor's level or above to be able to apply to switch into the skilled workers route up to three months before the end of their course in the UK, and from outside of the UK for two years after their graduation," the White Paper notes.

Universities UK International, the representative group for the country's higher education institutions which has been campaigning for a better post-study offer, said the proposals recognise the important contributions made by international students to the UK.

"Allowing graduates to stay on for longer to find work in the UK sends the message that international students are welcome here, and we value the skills they bring. These changes will have a real, positive impact on the students who come here to study and their opportunities after graduating," said Vivienne Stern, Director of Universities UK International.

However, the group added that it will continue to campaign for a longer two-year post-study work visa. As part of some of the more contentious aspects of the new immigration White Paper, the government will hold a consultation on a minimum salary requirement of 30,000 pounds for skilled migrants seeking five-year visas and low-skilled workers may be able to apply for short-term visas of up to a year.





BLONDE BOMBSHELL! Reality tv star Khloe Kardashian looked stunning as she rocked platinum blonde locks while grabbing lunch with her sister Kourtney in Beverly Hills.

Priyanka, Nick host reception in Mumbai for family, friends

MUMBAI, DEC 20 (PTI): Newly wed couple Priyanka Chopra and Nick Jonas hosted their wedding reception for family and friends in Mumbai. It seems celebrations have not ended for Priyanka and Nick as 19 days after their grand wedding, the first reception in the city was held for family, friends and the media at a suburban hotel in Juhu on Wednesday evening. Another reception is scheduled for Thursday evening for Bollywood celebrities at a five-star hotel in suburban Bandra.

The venue was decorated with white lilies, orchids and candles, featuring an entwined N and P in the backdrop. Wearing a strapless traditional Indian lehenga in blue and gold, Priyanka looked gorgeous as she accessorised her outfit with a huge diamond necklace. While Nick was seen in a grey colour suit and black T-shirt. After posing for the shutters, Priyanka thanked everyone for coming.

"I am going to take your attention for two seconds... It means so much to us that all of you came tonight. This has been an extremely special chapter in my life and I wanted my husband to meet all the special people who

have contributed to it. "So thank you very much for being here, friends of my parents, my dad who I know is here. Thank you very much for coming and I hope you have a wonderful time tonight," Priyanka said.

Looking at her hubby, she added, "And this is my husband, Nick Jonas".

While Nick said, "This is my first show in India. And thank you all so very much for coming out." "I wasn't too far from here that I took Madhu (Priyanka's mother) out to lunch and asked her if I could marry her daughter. So to be here tonight with all of you...the people who have helped shape who she has become means the world to me. To be embraced with such open arms, it's just unbelievable. Tonight is about celebrating and spending time, it is my first introduction with you all."

Priyanka and Nick tied the knot at Jodhpur's iconic Umaid Bhawan Palace on December 1. They married as per Christian and Hindu rituals.

The extravagant wedding was followed by a reception in Delhi on December 4, which was attended by PM Narendra Modi.

Referring to me as 'wife', speaks volumes about your conditioning: Sona hits out at Sonu

MUMBAI, DEC 20 (PTI): Sona Mohapatra on Thursday shot back at Sonu Nigam, saying that by addressing her relationship with a man to describe her identity speaks volumes about his "conditioning and world view".

Giving a point-by-point rebuttal to Nigam's comments where he labelled her criticism of his reported defence of #MeToo accused Anu Malik as "vomiting on Twitter", Mohapatra said the remarks were in "bad taste".

"To define me on basis of a relationship with another person & not as an individual, going to the extension of memory loss for my name; a gift of patriarchal conditioning.

"To refer to my opinions and stand in the #MeToo movement as vomiting; bad taste," she wrote.

In a statement on Thursday, Sonu said, "The respectable lady vomiting on Twitter, is the wife of someone who I consider very close to me, so although she's has forgotten the relationship, I'd like to maintain the decorum."

In her response, Sona said she refuse to call Sonu as "someone's papa or someone's husband or someone's son".

"You are yet for me one of the greatest classic film singers of India and someone I have found to be particularly nice to me every time we've met for close to a decade and half. In personal and professional settings.

"That you found no other means of experiencing me as a person despite knowing me for over a decade, but as a wife", speaks volumes, of your conditioning and world view," Sona said. The singer is married to composer Ram Sampath and the duo are partners in their music production house OmGrown Music.

She said she will not "defend or behave with anyone in a particular manner basis a personal 'relationship'".

"We occupy a public space as artists and it is my duty to stand for what is right. Glad you value your relationship with my partner Ram Sampath with whom you have not only sung songs like 'Dil Dooba' in 'Khakhee' but others over the years.

"I do not occupy a position of power in your eyes for you to value my worth. Know one thing though, not all relationships

are basis, give and take. Some are basis a shared value and belief system. We possibly have none, unfortunate," she added.

Sona said it is "unbefitting" of Sonu to "hide under bluster, male ego and pettiness".

She continued, saying that his defence of Malik is "disturbing, horrifying and heartbreaking".



Nigam was quoted as saying at a media summit over the weekend that Malik, his longtime friend, was accused without any proof and had maintained a dignified silence on the #MeToo allegations.

"Sonu jee, is all the above an indication of someone maintaining decorum & grace? A showcase of your peace loving and non-quarrelsome nature?" Sona wrote.

She said not all cases of sexual harassment and misconduct can be proved in court of law but that does not mean that victims stop calling out the accused persons.

"Doesn't mean they should be swept under the carpet & the perpetrator go about life without a care in this world. When numerous/multiple parties speak up of a shared trauma against the same person and you refuse to either hear them or show any empathy, know that you are complicit to this lopsided power structure and system," she wrote.

Malik has repeatedly denied all the allegations. His lawyer told PTI in October that the #MeToo movement was being used for his client's "character assassination".

Following the allegations, the music composer stepped down as a jury member from "Indian Idol", a singing reality show of which he was part since its inception in 2004.

Dia Mirza asks Akshay Kumar: Why no women in Bollywood delegation to meet PM Modi?

MUMBAI, DEC 20 (PTI): Dia Mirza is the latest name to join the growing chorus, asking the reason for women's absence from the Bollywood delegation of producers and actors that recently met Prime Minister Narendra Modi to discuss issues faced by the film industry. On Tuesday, an 18-member panel, including Akshay Kumar, Karan Johar, Ajay Devgn, Siddharth Roy Kapur, Ritesh Sidhwani and CBFC chief Prasoon Joshi, met the prime minister to discuss how to take the entertainment industry to the next stage.

The meeting of the delegation came under fire on Wednesday for its exclusion of female representation with some activists and filmmakers pointing out that it was 2018 and asking, "Where are the women?"

Dia on Thursday took to Twitter to express disappointment over the same and shot a question laced with sarcasm, "This is wonderful! Is there a reason why there were no women in this room?" tagging Akshay in the tweet.

Her post was a retweet of the "Gold" actor's post in which he had thanked the prime minister for taking out time for the panel.

When one of the social media users pointed out that the organisers of the meet need to questioned for selecting an all-male group, Dia said, "True. Wish one of the men had asked this question. How can an entire Industry be represented only by men?"

Another tweep said why there is a need to compare women with men at all places, the actor shot them down saying the debate is "not about competition".

"... It's such a fundamental thing. If we hope to achieve equality we must be included in all conversations! Of course women are doing well. We are doing well despite the fact that we are excluded. And doesn't that need to change?" she wrote.

Actor Sandhya Mridul also retweeted Akshay's post and rued, "Great. We women have no issues to discuss. Obviously."

In a year, where India stumbled upon its #MeToo moment leading to heated debates on skewed gender politics at workplace, including showbiz, filmmakers and directors such as Leena Yadav, Alankrita Shrivastava and Guneet Monga, among many on social media criticised the panel for exclusion of women.



ARIES: Restless much? You're itching for escape, daydreaming of white-sand beaches or exploring Mayan ruins. But what can you do right NOW, Aries? Under today's impulsive Sun-Uranus trine, find an immediate fix that will sate your inner adventurer closer to home. Visit a newly opened venue for drinks this evening and pick up lunch from a food truck. Mix up your exercise routine with an upbeat cardio class. And if the urge to travel just can't be denied, set a fare alert and book when the price is right.

TAURUS: Jealousy alert! The emerald-eyed monster could rear its head among your squad today, thanks to a meeting of shock jock Uranus and the ego-driven Sun in your eighth house of intensity. Avoid getting caught in the comparison trap, Bull—these are your friends, after all! If you find yourself obsessing over who has more money or followers than you, consciously stop yourself. View their accomplishments as inspiration.

GEMINI: Let's hear it for synergy! Today, radical Uranus aligns with the bold Sun in your relationship house, fueling

your interactions with stimulating conversation. If you've been at odds with someone close to you, these skies set the stage for reconciliation. Stop avoiding your friend, Gemini, and have a constructive talk. If things have gotten tense within your squad, movement can help shake things up.

CANCER: All work and no play, Cancer? Today, the Sun is grinding through your sixth house of efficiency, teaming up with innovative Uranus in your ambitious tenth house. You're unstoppable on your mission—but no need to carry the weight alone. Enlist a few helpful people to lighten your load as you ascend. Under this impatient starmap, you could worry that you're not getting the recognition you deserve.

LEO: You've been up in the clouds fantasizing about your lofty goals, but it's time to make some bold moves down here on Earth. Today, the Sun in your courageous fifth house teams up with innovative Uranus to make your grand visions a bona fide reality. But success is not going to

just fall from the sky, Leo. Start putting yourself out there and building a buzz. Spruce up your online profiles and blast meaningful messages out to your channels to let the world know what you're up to. A little self-promotion goes a long way. Cast a wider net than usual as you conduct your outreach—you just never know whose attention you might grab.

VIRGO: As the saying goes, you should be able to count your truest friends on one hand. But have you kept your inner circle so tight that no worthy contenders can get in? Today, the daring Sun high-fives changemaker Uranus in the most personable parts of your chart. If someone new has been vying for your attention, give them a chance, Virgo. Break the ice with some genuine conversation and see if they can meet you in that down-to-earth space.

LIBRA: Today's magnetic alignment between the bold Sun and unpredictable Uranus has a captive audience eating out of the palm of your hand. People are drawn to you like moths to the flame, so use this charis-

ma to your advantage and voice your most outre ideas. Don't hold back—especially in romance. Your wit and allure are heightened, and a little flirting will go a long way.

SCORPIO: Risky business? Today's stars urge you break the mold and take a bold leap in your career. Playing it safe has run its course, Scorpio, and you could be missing out on a lucrative opportunity if you stay in your holding pattern. Don't jump without a net, however, but do start browsing your options.

SAGITTARIUS: Itchy feet AGAIN, Sagittarius? Your wanderlust is roused today, thanks to a freedom-seeking sync-up between the Sun and indie-spirited Uranus. Nobody puts an Archer in the corner—and if there's anything your sign hates, it's being told what to do. Putting your nose to the grindstone and tackling your work could be a Herculean mission today.

CAPRICORN: Try not to overdo it today, Capricorn. The Sun is asleep at the wheel in your twelfth house of rest AND synced up with Uranus in your homey fourth house. It's no wonder you barely

feel like getting out of bed this morning!

AQUARIUS: Filters please! A foot-in-mouth moment is entirely possible today, with the ego-driven Sun linking up with erratic Uranus. As the zodiac's personable and quick-witted mad scientist, your "out-there" notions could be too much for a certain audience. Save the wisecracks for your closer compadres, keeping dialogue professional with coworkers.

PISCES: Raise the bar! Today, the ego-driven Sun and radical Uranus shout marching orders to step up your career game. Just because you clock out at the end of the day doesn't mean the work is done, Pisces. Choose your after-work activities wisely, hitting the industry party circuit to rub elbows with VIPs and exchange business cards. Tired of your job? Then it's time to be strategic and make a move! Today's ambitious starmap sets the stage to take a bold new path, but nothing will fall into your lap either. Spruce up your resume and LinkedIn profiles and get ready to network. Friendly reminder: It's all about who you know!