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ON TOP OF THE NEWS

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Winter to be warmer than normal: IMD

NEW DELHI, NOV 29 (PTI): The winter is likely to be warmer than normal this season, the India Meteorological Department said on Friday. In its winter forecast released on Friday, the IMD said, "The upcoming winter season (December to February) is likely to experience warmer than average minimum temperatures over most parts of the country except over northern most parts of India, thus indicating a warmer winter season over the country."

SMTWA initiates awareness against substance abuse in Singtam



YOGEN THATAL SINGTAM, 29 Nov: Recognising the ever-present challenge of substance abuse, Singtam Motor Transport Workers Association (SMTWA) kicked off a drug awareness week here at Singtam today. SHO Singtam Police Station, SB Gurung, Addiction Specialist from District Hospital Singtam, Dr Satish Rasaily, SMTWA president, Tinku Adhikari, MEO and

all Councillors from Singtam Nagar Panchayat along with Singtam residents and recovering addicts attended the program. Dr Rasaily thanked the association for conducting such a program and highlighted why it was important for the society to register engagement in addressing the problem of substance abuse. "I would like to thank

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Earthquake Mega Mock Drill at Chungthang



MANGAN, 29 Nov (IPR): The National Disaster Management Authority, in collaboration with the Land Revenue & Disaster Management Department and the District Disaster Management Authority, North Sikkim, organized an Earthquake Mega Mock exercise here at Chungthang today. The scenario created for the mock drill was on an 8.7 Richter Scale earthquake occurring in Shillong. The objective of the drill was to understand the level of preparedness of stakeholders to effectively and efficiently manage natural disasters. Three locations were identified for simulation and to gauge earthquake response - Chungthang Public Ground, a building at Chungthang bazaar and Tasa Tengey Secondary School.

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26 of SDF's 30 East dist Zilla Panchayats join SKM

SUMMIT REPORT GANGTOK, 29 Nov: In a major political development, out of the 30 Zilla Panchayats of Sikkim Democratic Front of East District, 26 joined Sikkim Krantikari Morcha here today. This number includes the Zilla Adhyaksha and Upadhyaksha of the District.

The crossovers were welcomed into the party by SKM president, Chief Minister PS Tamang [Golay], with khadas, informs an SKM press release issued by the party's publicity secretary, Ranjana Pradhan. The release states that in their addresses, the Zilla Adhyaksha and Upadhyaksha announced that they were joining SKM unconditionally and that SKM was a trustworthy party and that they would work for the State in good coordination with the state government. The release adds that the SKM president said that politics should be in the interest of the people and be inclusive and development-centric. He stated Zilla panchayats have a big role to play in the development of the State and need to be strengthened.

SUPPLEMENTARY DEMANDS FOR GRANTS FOR THE YEAR 2019-20 PASSED

CM blames fiscal indiscipline of previous govt for stressed exchequer

SUMMIT REPORT GANGTOK, 29 Nov: The first Supplementary Demands for Grants for the year 2019-20 was passed by the Legislative Assembly on the last day of the first session [Part-IV] of the Tenth Assembly of Sikkim Legislative Assembly on Friday.

The Supplementary Demands for Grants includes 38 grants, with a gross expenditure of Rs 45,879.98 lakh comprising of Rs 17,209.16 lakh on Revenue Account and Rs 28,670.82 lakh on Capital Account. Of this, the proposals involving net cash outgo aggregates to Rs 34,217.20 lakh. Also today, the Sikkim Appropriation Bill, Bill



No. 8 of 2019 for the first supplementary demands for grants for the financial year 2019-20, was also passed by the House. Participating in the discussions, MLA DT

Lepcha raised various queries related to supplementary demands for grants and other issues and also placed some suggestions. He welcomed the sup-

plementary demands of grants placed by the CM and urged that payments be released equally to big and small contractors. He stated that Sikkim now has a population of more than 6 lakh. On the

by way of from the Centre on the basis of the 1971 census when the State just had a population of just 2.12 lakhs. Sikkim now has a population of more than 6 lakh. On the

same, he urged the CM to ask the Centre to work out the at least on the basis of the 1991 census in the interest of the people of Sikkim. While thanking the government for taking out a White Paper on the financial health of the State exchequer, Mr Lepcha asked the State government about the source for the document. He also suggested that the government work to increase the GSDP of the State and seriously check leakage in all departments. In his reply to the comments, the CM stated that the earlier government had floated many tenders and awarded work

turn to pg 02

Darj MP seeks inclusion of Gorkhas left out of NRC

NEW DELHI, NOV 29 (PTI): A BJP MP told Lok Sabha on Friday that many members of the Gorkha community have been excluded from the National Register of Citizens (NRC) in Assam and asked the government to give them recognition as the state's inhabitants. Raising the issue during Zero Hour, Darjeeling MP, Raju Bista, said that the exclusion of names of many Gorkhas from the NRC is a question mark on the sacrifices made by those freedom fighters who were from this community. He said the

Gorkha community has made numerous contribution in nation building. Congress leader in the House Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury demanded that the Kurmi tribe be given the status of Scheduled Tribes. Jagdambika Pal of the BJP was of the view that the corridor of Sharada Peeth should be opened. Sharada Peeth is an ancient shrine located across the Line of Control (LoC) in Pakistan Occupied Kashmir (PoK). He also lauded the government for opening the Kartarpur Corridor.

CM invites comments and suggestions from Oppn MLAs for Assembly to serve people better

SUMMIT REPORT GANGTOK, 29 Nov: Chief Minister PS Tamang [Golay] pointed out today that the Legislative Assembly was the house for people's representatives irrespective of their party affiliation and for them to work for the people. He asserted that the people's representatives need to work in the interest of Sikkim and its people and assured that their engagement would be sought and supported by the SKM Government.




In his vote of thanks on the last day of the assembly session, the CM rued that the previous government did not allow opposition MLAs to speak freely in the

Assembly and that they were even removed from the Assembly for speaking in the interest of the State and its people. "In contrast, the mantra of the SKM gov-

ernment is not only to change the government but to change the system itself. Every member of the House can speak freely on behalf of the people in the assembly in the present government," he said. In this vein, he welcomed the queries and suggestions placed by BJP MLA DT Lepcha today. The CM further stated that the SKM government has been working to take everyone together to work for the State and


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THE ASSAM VALLEY SCHOOL

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PARENTAL OUTREACH PROGRAMME




S I K K I M

The AVS Parental Outreach Programme will be conducted on 30th November 2019 at Hotel Tara Palace, Nam Nang, Gangtok, by the Senior Leadership Team of AVS.

Time : 4:00 to 6:00 PM

This is an excellent opportunity for prospective parents to know more about the School, its activities and its state-of-the-art infrastructure.

Please join us for light refreshments and further interactions after the programme.


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DC leads field visit to Amba GPU, inspects and sanctions

GANGTOK, 29 NOV [IPR]: Following directions of the Chief Minister, a team headed by the District Collector, East, and comprising of Panchayat members of the GPU, ADC (Dev) Pakyong, SDM Pakyong, BDO/ Pakyong, CDPO Pakyong (Rural Project) and officials of line departments visited Amba Gram Panchayat Unit today.

During the field visit, the team took the following decisions:

- The team conducted a meeting with LUPIN Pharma representatives regarding the 212 unemployed youth in Amba GPU and discussed to different opportunities at the pharma unit so that unemployed youth can be accommodated accordingly. The SDM and Panchayat President will conduct a meeting soon with the company and the youth to follow this up.

- The team visited the resource recovery center site at Mamring started by a private citizen to segregate garbage. Some financial assistance was provided as support for the initiative with the area MLA contributing Rs 5,000, the District Collector Rs 10,000, ADC(Dev) Rs 5,000 and the SDM Rs 5,000. Here, the Panchayat President has been requested to convene a Gram Sabha to make people aware about garbage collection and collect Rs 10 per month from each household to sustain this initiative.

- The approach road from the main road to the resource recovery center at



Mamring will be pitched by the PWD.

- The Panchayat President of Taaza GPU informed the DC about the community hall following which the ADC was directed to expedite approval from Rural Development Department under the Rajiv Gandhi Seva Kendra Scheme.

- The team visited the Gaushala at Mamring and found that construction there as slow and the Engineering Cell, RDD, is to be informed to expedite it.

- The footpath at Daregaon was found to be dangerous for commuters and a railing along the footpath was sanctioned on the spot.

- The District Administrative Cen-

tre will provide 10 coils of polypipes to Panchayat President for water supply to the wards since scarcity of water was the main concern in the area.

- Two footpaths were sanctioned on the spot from Birddaara & Lepcha Dara to the main road in convergence of MGNREGA and NC.

- The SDM Pakyong has been directed to setup a model Disaster Control Room at the GPU.

- The ICDS/Daregaon was inspected and repairs and painting sanctioned.

- Regarding the beautification of the Smriti Van and construction of Bandhe Prokkel statue, the Panchayat Presi-

dent has been requested to take up the matter with the MLA.

- The team also learnt that the Taksang Primary School will be closed from the next academic session onwards due to low enrolment and still there was a Rs 82 lakh construction underway at the campus. The Panchayat President and Education Department Deputy Director will now request the Department to keep the school open at least for the next session so that efforts can be made to increase enrolment.

- A new footpath was sanctioned from Taksang Primary School to the PMGSY road in convergence with MGNREGA and NC.

- The team also learned that the GPU wants the Three Sisters Vashundhara waterfall to be developed as a tourist spot at Lower Taksang. The Tourism department will be informed accordingly and a DPR made for the project.

- The ICDS centre at Taksang was inspected and repairs and painting sanctioned.

- A visit to Kaizaley ICDS also ended with repairs sanctioned along with a footpath to the main road. The team also sanctioned a railing at the ICDS compound in convergence with MGNREGA and NC.

The Each Friday Field Visit concluded with inspection of the offices of the ADC and the SDM. Team also visited the ongoing structure at Pakyong under CSR provided by AAI.

Awareness prog from farmers in West Sikkim



SUMMIT REPORT

RANGPO, 29 NOV:

Krishna Vigyan Kendra, West Sikkim, in collaboration with ICAR-IVRI Kolkata, organised a “Kisan goshti cum awareness programme and input distribution”

programme at its office today. “Rani” breed piglets, medicine kits and 10kg commercial feed were distributed to the participants.

MEO Bhumika Pradhan was present as the chief guest.

Workshop for Sanskrit teachers



SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 29 NOV:

A daylong workshop for Sanskrit teachers working under the Education Department was held here at Ranipool today.

More than 60 Sanskrit teachers from government schools and 11 government Sanskrit Pathshalas from across the state attended the workshop.

While addressing the workshop, Additional Director, Sanskrit and planning, HP Dhakal highlighted the importance of learning and teaching various methods of Sanskrit and pointed out that Sanskrit will help fluency in other language as well.

He added that the department was trying its best to resolve all issues related to impart-

ing Sanskrit education, especially at Sanskrit Pathshalas and at all monastic schools.

He also assured to address all the issues raised by the Sanskrit teachers, a press release informs.

Teachers from Sanskrit Pathshalas sought proper drinking water and toilet facilities, school uniforms and other facilities at par with government schools. Sanskrit school teachers in turn pointed out that proper instructions need to be given to school heads to teach Sanskrit language.

Narad Neopaney, a Sanskrit school teacher, stated that children from across the State were interested in learning Sanskrit and nowadays the eagerness to learn was growing day by day.

CM invites...

stressed that ruling and opposition parties need to work together in the interest of the State.

He also thanked the Speaker, Deputy Speaker and every individual for the successful conduct of two-day long assembly session.

Likewise, in his vote of thanks, Speaker LB Das expressed gratitude towards the Leader of the House and every MLA for the successful completion of the assembly session. He also expressed hope that the Supplementary Demands for Grants passed by the House would fulfill the aspirations of the people.

MLAs DT Lepcha and YT Lepcha also placed their comments today.

North holds coordination meeting for Population Census 2021

MANGAN, 29 NOV (IPR):

A district-level coordination meeting on Population Census 2021 was held in the District Magistrate [North], Tenzing T Kaleon's office today.

The meeting was chaired by the Director, Directorate of Census Operation, Sikkim, Yashoda Bhandari.

After a brief introduction, Ms Bhandari spoke on the importance of census to the country and the state for development projects. She explained the logistics involved in carrying out the census duty.

She also informed that the census will be conducted in two phases.

The first phase will include house listing and housing census (HLO) and updating of National Population Register (NPR) from 07 April to 22 May 2020.

The second phase



will cover population enumeration from 09 to 28 February 2021 and a revision round to update the data in case of any new births or death etc.

She also informed that the administrative unit in the North district was updated and jurisdiction changes have also been incorporated.

She informed that the appointment of census officers for 2021 census

had already been made by the State Government and that enumerators and supervisors for the field work will be appointed by charge officers.

She further informed that necessary training will be imparted to the supervisors and enumerators of census 2021. The census this time will be featuring a mobile phone application.

Presentation on time

line of population census 2021, administrative units as on 31 August, 2019 in Sikkim, appointment of census functionaries and training, methodology of population were communicated to the house.

The DM-North has asked all appointed as census officers to take serious note of the meeting and discharge their duties to their best.

1984 anti-Sikh riots: Centre seeks SC permission to disband SIT



NEW DELHI, NOV 29 (PTI):

The Centre on Friday sought the Supreme Court's permission to disband a special investigation team (SIT), headed by former Delhi High Court judge Justice S N Dhinra, saying it has completed its probe into 186 cases of the 1984 anti-Sikh riots.

The SIT, also comprising retired IPS officer Rajdeep Singh and serving 2006 batch IPS officer Abhishek Dular, was set up by the apex court on January 11 last year to supervise further investigation into 186 riots cases, in

which closure reports were filed earlier.

The SIT presently has only two members as Singh had declined to be a part of the team on “personal grounds”.

During the hearing on Friday, the Centre placed the SIT's final report in a sealed cover before a bench comprising Chief Justice S A Bobde and justices B R Gavai and Surya Kant.

Additional Solicitor General Pinky Anand told the bench that since the SIT has done its work and submitted its final report, the team should be discharged now.

Anand said the SIT's report has been filed in a sealed cover and it should not be shared with the petitioner at this stage.

Senior advocate H S Phoolka, representing the riot victims, told the bench that the court should first examine the SIT's final report and see if anything more was required to be done by the team before taking a decision on whether to disband it.

The bench, after taking on record the SIT's report, said it would hear the matter after two weeks.

Earlier in March, the top court had granted two more months to the SIT to complete its probe into 186 riot cases after the SIT informed it that more than 50 per cent of work was done and it wanted two more months to complete the investigation.

Large-scale riots had broken out in the national capital in the aftermath of the assassination of the then prime minister Indira Gandhi by her two Sikh security guards on the morning of October 31, 1984. The violence had claimed 2,733 lives in Delhi alone.

SMTWA initiates...

SMTWA for its initiative. When such large associations can come forward with such positive interventions, why cannot the lay people? Substance abuse is a disease and if left unaddressed, can infect more people,” he said.

He claimed that a brown sugar addict requires anything between Rs 2,000 to 4,000 per day that this requirement comes at a cost on those around an addict. He added that instances of brown sugar dependence were surfacing more often nowadays.

Speakers at the function also contended that peddlers stayed in rented accommodation in town and that verification and closer watch by house owners was now required.

“The number of people requiring counselling to get rid of addiction has increased significantly in the past 2-3 years,” Dr Rasaily added.

The program was also attended by the representatives from Jagriti Rehab Centre, Gangtok.

The SHO, while addressing the session, sought wider collaborations to address the problem. He also informed that there have been instances when peddlers have been tipped off about an impending police raid and of how this was compromising the battle against the supply of contraband substances in the area.

Earthquake...

The drill included rescue operation of civilians, extinguishing fires, medical attention for victims during earthquake etc. The drill also included emergency briefing during such a scenario. This was conducted at the SDM office.

Present for the drill were Superintendent of Police, North, Sonam Gyatso Bhutia, Adjutant 7 Assam, Major Abhimanyu Dan, Assistant Commander, 11 Indo Tibetan Border Police, Abhinav Vikash Vandhan, JEC Civil, 86RCC (Gref), Hemendra Kumar, Police Inspector, Fire Department, Chungthang, Harkaman Gurung, Sub Divisional Magistrate, Chungthang, Subash Ghimire, District Planning Officer, Mangan, Karma Dorjee representatives from Teesta Urja Ltd, army personnel, police personnel, Government employees and the public.

CM blames...

orders near the elections without any financial provisions. This had complicated the accounts.

He shared that the present government was facing a financial crunch due to the mistakes of the previous government. That said, the SKM Government was trying its best to give continuity to developmental works in the State.

The CM informed that the government has cleared 37% of the dues before Dasain and will definitely make good on its payments for all genuine works.

He mentioned that the government will also conduct an enquiry into all illegal works awarded without due process. He said that the previous government had not given adequate preference to the health sector and informed that the SKM government has made health the priority sector.

While welcoming the suggestions of MLA to increase the revenue of the State, he stated that the SKM government has been working hard to increase the revenue of the State and trying to check all leakages in different department created in the earlier government.

On the query on the White Paper, the CM mentioned that the White Paper has been taken out on the basis of reports submitted by every department.

Minister for Social Justice and Welfare Department, Dr MK Sharma, also placed a copy of the Sikkim Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Rules, 2019 today while the Speaker presented the Annual Report of the Sikkim State Human Rights Commission under Section 28(1) of the Protection of Human Rights Act, 1993 (Central Act No. 10 of 1994) for the year 2018-19. The speaker also informed the House on presentation of Annual Report of the Government Departments.

The last day of the two-day long assembly session began with Obituary Reference for former MLA Tulshi Prashad Pradhan who passed away on 27 November 2019. The Speaker, CM, Minister LN Sharma and MLA NK Subba participated in the Obituary References.

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LAND FOR SALE

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Pragya Thakur apologises again for remarks on Godse

NEW DELHI, Nov 29 (PTI):

Amid opposition ruckus, BJP member Pragya Thakur on Friday made a fresh statement in Lok Sabha, apologising for her remarks on Nathuram Godse, even as she asserted that she never described Mahatma Gandhi's assassin as a patriot.

"I want to say only what I do for the country. On November 27, during discussion on SPG (Amendment) Bill, I did not call Nathuram Godse a patriot (desh bhakt), I did not even take his name. Still if someone is hurt, I express my regret and apologise," she said in Lok Sabha around 3.00 pm.

Before she entered the House, Speaker Om Birla had said that Thakur would read out the statement agreed upon at the meeting of party leaders.

Thakur started her remarks referring to her



enemies, but she was interrupted by the Speaker. She then read out the fresh statement.

The House then resumed normal business with members speaking on their Zero Hour references.

Earlier in the day in her first statement, Thakur tendered an apology in Lok Sabha but asserted her remarks have been twisted.

The Bhopal MP said

she had made the comments in a different context. Thakur created a controversy on Wednesday with her remarks in the Lower House of Parliament during DMK member A Raja's narration of a statement by Nathuram Godse before a court on why he killed Mahatma Gandhi.

"If my comments have hurt in anyway, I regret and seek apology. But, my comments in the

House have been twisted and misrepresented," she said, without taking Godse's name.

Thakur also said that she respects and pays tribute to Mahatma Gandhi for his contribution to the country.

Thakur also said that she was dubbed as a terrorist by a sitting MP despite being acquitted by the court.

"One member has publicly termed me as a

terrorist, though I have not been convicted by the court ... it is an insult to a woman and a sadhvi," she said and added that making such remarks too was against the law.

Thakur remains an accused in the Malegaon blast case.

Six people were killed and over 100 injured when an explosive device strapped to a motorcycle went off near a mosque in Malegaon, a power-loom town in north Maharashtra, on September 29, 2008.

Unsatisfied with Thakur's apology, the Congress strongly protested in the House and shouted slogans and demanded suspension of the BJP MP from the House.

Amid interruptions by opposition members, Speaker Birla had convened a meeting of party floor leaders to resolve the stalemate.

MYM members visit Lee Aal Old Age Home



SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 29 Nov:

Members of Marwari Yuwa Manch, Gangtok, visited Lee Aal Old Age Home here in Upper

Tintek today. MYM president, Ajay Beriwal, informs that he along with MYM members presented warm clothes to the senior citizens living at the home.

Flash mob against substance abuse at Namchi

SUMMIT REPORT

NAMCHI, 29 Nov:

A flash mob was organised by the Sikkim Against Addiction Towards Helathy India (SAATHI) team of Namchi Senior Secondary

School along with peer educators and teachers, co-ordinator, Gauri Singh on the theme "Against substance abuse". The programme was organised to spread awareness against drugs.

Dikchu school NSS unit organizes health camp



SUMMIT REPORT

DIKCHU, 29 Nov:

The National Service Scheme (NSS) unit of Government Senior Secondary School, Dikchu, organized a health camp in collaboration with the Primary Health Centre here as part of its regular activities. Teams from the PHC attended

to more than 70 students and villagers who were also provided tetanus vaccination. Free medicines were also provided. The NSS unit has been organising such camps in collaboration with the Health Department, informs a press release issue by Program Officer, Arjun Pradhan.

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RSS acting like extra-constitutional authority: Gehlot

Jaipur, Nov 29 (PTI): The Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh is acting like an extra-constitutional authority, alleged Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot in a special assembly session here on Friday.

He dared the RSS to convert itself into a political party and come out in the open.

"The RSS is acting like an extra-constitutional authority in the country. It should convert itself into a political party and come out in the open," he said, claiming that no minister or chief minister could be appointed without its consent.

"During the emergency, it was alleged that Sanjay Gandhi was acting as an extra-constitutional authority but all know whether he acted like that or not but the RSS is acting like an extra-constitutional authority in the country," he said during the assembly session convened to discuss the Constitution.

The chief minister added that an RSS leader had once said that former prime minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee was just a face.

"You have no faith in the Constitution. You have to follow it because you have to win the elec-

tions in the democracy," he said.

The chief minister also said a Congress-free India could never be reality, "at least for next 100 years".

He also asked whether Prime Minister Narendra Modi ever took the name of former prime minister Indira Gandhi in six years.

Modi did not feel proud on India's achievements like the creation of Bangladesh and her sacrifice for the nation, he said.

The chief minister said India and Pakistan got independence at the same time but what was the condition of the neighbouring country was known to all.

"What is Pakistan in comparison to India? But an atmosphere was created in the country in the name of nationalism. Was it on the lines of the Constitution," he asked.

He targeted the prime minister for his working style and decisions like demonetisation and GST.

Gehlot said at least 150 people died in the aftermath of demonetisation and economy suffered badly.

Revenue to the states from the Centre had reduced, which would ad-

versely impact development works, he claimed.

Gehlot also took a dig at political developments in Maharashtra, resorting to sarcasm on the slogan, "Modi hai to mumkin hai".

He said it was not known how long the "democracy in the country would survive".

The governor forwarded the recommendation to revoke the president's rule, the prime minister recommended and the president revoked it at 5.47 am, he said.

"The chief minister and deputy chief minister took oath at 8 am and the prime minister congratulated Devendra Fadnavis, who too said 'Modi hai to mumkin hai'," he added.

He also termed electoral bonds the biggest scam of the country.

Gehlot said an atmosphere of mob lynching and violence was created in the country, which was never there.

HAVE A STORY TO SHARE?

email us: news@summittimes.com

Fiscal deficit hits 102 pc of Budget Estimate till Oct

NEW DELHI, Nov 29 (PTI):

The country's fiscal deficit hit 102.4 per cent of 2019-20 Budget Estimate at Rs 7.2 lakh crore at the end of October, government data showed on Friday.

The fiscal deficit or the gap between expenditure and revenue was at Rs 7,20,445 crore as on October 31, 2019, according to the data released by the Controller General of Accounts (CGA).

The deficit was at 103.9 per cent of 2018-19 Budget Estimate (BE) in the corresponding month a year ago.

The government has estimated the fiscal deficit for the current financial year at Rs 7.03 lakh crore, aiming to restrict the deficit at 3.3 per cent of the gross domestic product (GDP).

In September, the government decided to lower tax rate for corporates and has pegged that

it will have an impact of Rs 1.45 lakh crore on its revenue mobilisation.

Tax sops were intended to boost investment cycle in the face of slowing GDP growth, which had dipped to six-year low of 5 per cent in the first quarter ended June of this fiscal.

However, GDP slipped further to over six-year low of 4.5 per cent in the second quarter ended September, as per the government data released on Friday. Further, the CGA data showed that government's revenue receipts during the April-October period of 2019-20 period rose to 46.2 per cent of the BE as compared to 45.7 per cent in the corresponding period last year.

In absolute terms, revenue receipts stood at Rs 9.07 lakh crore at the end of October. For the entire 2019-20, the revenue receipts have been pegged at Rs 19.62

lakh crore. Capital expenditure stood at 59.5 per cent of the BE during April-October period as compared to 59 per cent in the year-ago period, the CGA data showed.

Total expenditure during April-October stood at Rs 16.54 lakh crore, or 59.4 per cent of the BE.

The government has pegged its total expenditure for 2019-20 at Rs 27.86 lakh crore.

The fiscal deficit figure in monthly accounts during a financial year is not necessarily an indicator of fiscal deficit for the year, as per the CGA.

Its data gets impacted by temporal mismatch between flow of non-debt receipts and expenditure up to that month on account of various transitional factors both on receipt and expenditure side, which may get substantially offset by the end of the financial year.

Siddaramaiah, Kumaraswamy booked for sedition over protest against IT raids against I-T raids



BENGALURU, Nov 29 (PTI):

Police have booked former chief ministers Siddaramaiah and H D Kumaraswamy along with the then Bengaluru police commissioner T Sunil Kumar, his subordinates and some Congress and JD(S) leaders on sedition charges for protesting the income tax raids during Lok Sabha polls.

Based on a complaint by activist Mallikarjuna A, a city court recently directed the commercial street police to register a case under various sections of the IPC including

criminal conspiracy and attempting or abetting waging war against the Government of India.

The case relates to protests near the I-T office here by the leaders including the then Chief Minister H D Kumaraswamy against the Income Tax raids at the residence of Congress and JD(S) leaders. The charges are that Kumaraswamy had informed public about the possible raids after getting inputs about the action.

Kumaraswamy had told the media on March 27 that there was every likelihood of raids as a

large number of central security forces had arrived at Kempegowda International Airport (KIA). His apprehensions came true the next day as the forces fanned out to different parts of the state. Later, a massive demonstration was conducted at the Income Tax office.

Other prominent people, who have been booked, include then deputy chief minister G Parameshwara, D K Shivakumar, Congress state chief Dinesh Gundu Rao, the then deputy commissioners of police Rahul Kumar, D Devaraju and all election officers.

Reacting to the sedition charges, D K Shivakumar said all the cases were politically motivated and he will fight it politically.

"We did not enter the income tax office. We stood 150 metres away and raised slogans," he added.

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Make Tourism Even More Hassle-Free

Hospitality should extend from facilities to policy for the sector to boom louder

Just about every new construction in Gangtok is a hotel in the making. In fact, the hotel construction boom is not a uniquely Gangtok undertaking anymore and the entire region appears to be investing heavily in this sector. From homestays to 5-star resorts to spas and the entire spectrum in between, tourism is attracting enterprise at a hitherto unheard of scale. The pace has been dizzying and it is perhaps time that Sikkim took a step back to evaluate and plan in earnest.

Tourism has marched strong in Sikkim, its infra-structural and locational disadvantages notwithstanding. Living in Sikkim, one tends to overlook just how handsomely this sector has grown in the State in the very recent past and it is on occasions like the recent string of bumper tourist seasons and the expected slow-down this winter, that a stock-taking becomes necessary. Sikkim, of late, has been receiving more visitors annually than it has people residing here! The Lonely Planet endorsement of Sikkim as the No. 1 destination to visit in 2014 is a further reiteration of the State's still growing appeal. This needs to be leveraged more aggressively. To start with, Sikkim should work even more concertedly to ensure that visitors enjoy themselves here, impressed as much by the State's hospitality as by its obvious natural beauty. And when one speaks of hospitality, it is about more than just the smiles of taxi drivers and the hotel staff, it is also about the facility with which the guests can arrive and travel here – the rules and paperwork they need to negotiate. Needless to add, this sector needs some ironing, but that falls in the policy-framing domain and one hopes wider consensus is developed to make Sikkim more tourist-friendly in how easily it can be accessed. Before one proceeds, one needs to add that this process has improved manifold in the recent past as well.

Not so long ago, tourism in Sikkim was essentially about catering to the spillover from Darjeeling; hosting tourists who were left with a day or two on their Darjeeling itinerary. Some of the older hoteliers will attest to this. That is clearly no longer the case anymore. Sikkim enjoys all the standard attractions of hill-escapes and has also managed to add some more value to it. Apart from two Casinos which are trying to develop a whole new clientele for tourism in Sikkim, the State's traditional strong points have been in focus for some years as well. Sikkim's potential for alpine style climbing escapes continues to be explored and developed and is being promoted by intrepid climbers. The appeal of its landscape, the significance of its religious history and the diversity of its indigenous cultures are well recognized and continue to mesmerize guests, making repeat visits an easy sell. It routinely figures among the recipients of tourism industry-related awards and Lonely Planet crown was perhaps the grandest in what is now a long list of awards. Tourism-specific infrastructure, from hotels to foot trails to village homestays, is being developed across the State and village tourism has been announced as a mission pursuit by the State Government. Impressive additions have been made to the places to visit list, starting from Guru Rinpoche's statue at Samdruptse a decade and a half back to Char Dhaam at Solophok and Tathagatha Tsal at Rabongla and the skywalk at Sangacholing since. All these investments and achievements are impressive and welcome, but are let down by the fact that policies and rules governing travel to and within Sikkim are regressive and tourist unfriendly. The fact that foreign tourists require a special permit to be able to even enter Sikkim delivers the first stumbling block. Admittedly, from a time when this permit had to once be applied for at embassies in their respective countries to now arriving at the border check-posts here and getting their travel documents stamped, is a substantial improvement. Acquiring the permit is a token formality now, but the fact that it still needs to be acquired stretches out the infamous Indian red-tape that every foreign tourist is instinctively wary of. Extra paperwork discourages tourists, and since information is never very clear, not everyone knows that this is a mere formality and that it takes only minutes to get stamped into Sikkim. And after that is the dampener that awaits every foreign tourist on a Sikkim visit – news that the more exciting and appealing destinations in the State remain out of bounds for foreigners. And then there is the frustration of realising that even travel within Sikkim has its unique complications which make impromptu changes in plans and itineraries nearly impossible.

One could go on and on, but the point has been made. For a State investing so much as Sikkim is on tourism and harbouring aspirations as high as the State does from this sector, the policy interventions required to make it more accessible and tourist friendly need to be more forcefully voiced. No amount of promotion and publicity will deliver the tourist traffic Sikkim has potential for unless guests can holiday without worries of documents and logistics weighing them down. Commission agents can afford to live in the moment and not bother about long-term ramifications, policy makers and the stakeholders, however, cannot afford such slackness and need to constantly work at refining policy and rules to make holidays in Sikkim as hassle-free as possible.



Climate refugees: why we can't yet predict where millions of displaced people will go

DEREK GROEN & DIANA SULEIMENOVA
theconversation.com

In the near future, global warming is expected to create millions of climate refugees, and individuals and organisations are already searching for ways to help them. Some ideas are obvious, such as improving conditions in refugee camps.

But there are also more high-tech projects such as using algorithms to forecast where displaced people will travel to. Such forecasts are crucial. They can help support organisations prepare in the right places, they can evaluate current policy (by assessing a counterfactual “what if” scenario) and they can also help predict refugee populations in remote or dangerous areas where there is little empirical data.

So we can predict where climate refugees will go, right?

No. Despite bold and excitable claims that refugee forecasting is largely resolved, we are not convinced. As computer scientists who work on this exact problem, such claims seem like a painful example of running before we can walk.

Almost four years ago, we started to research how people fled from armed conflicts. Many people were displaced due to the Arab Spring and the Syrian War, but little work had been done to predict where they could end up.

With our colleague David Bell, we created a tool that could help, and published our work in Nature Scientific Reports. Our tool represents every person as an independent agent, and then uses simple rules-of-thumb derived from scientific insights – for instance “people tend to avoid travelling through mountains when it is raining” – to determine when they will move next, and to where.

This is different from “machine learning” approaches, which use historical data to “train” the algorithm to generate rules and thus predictions. So, for example, machine learning might be given this sort of data: “the number of people that arrived in a refugee camp close to a mountainous area in a conflict that occurred perhaps many years ago, or more recently but in a different country.” The main

issue is that historical data used for machine learning is always quantitative, and never is about the conflict that the simulation is directly developed for.

To see how our method worked in practice, we tested our tool against UNHCR data from three recent conflicts in Burundi, the Central African Republic and Mali. Our tool correctly predicted where more than 75% of the refugees would go.

We have since applied our analysis to refugees fleeing conflict in South Sudan, as part of the HiDALGO project. In this study, forthcoming in the Journal of Artificial Societies and Social Simulation, we also looked at how policy decisions like border closures affected the movement of refugees into neighbouring countries, such as Ethiopia or Uganda.

We found there was indeed a link – closing the Uganda border in our model causes 40% fewer “agents” to arrive in camps after 300 days, and that effect lingers even after we reopened the border on day 301. Our tool correctly predicted where 75% of the refugees would actually go in real life.

But doing a correct “retrodition” in these historical cases does not mean that you can do a forecast. Forecasting where people will go is much harder than predicting a historical situation, for three reasons.

1. Every model makes assumptions. For instance, a model that forecasts where refugees go might make assumptions about their mode of transport, or the likelihood that they stay overnight in a place where violence has previously occurred. When forecasting, we need to know what happens when we give these assumptions a little shake (we examine this in the VECMA project). The less evidence we have for an assumption, the more we need to shake it and analyse how our model responds. Machine learning models generate implicit (and ill-justified) assumptions automatically when they are trained – for example, chosen destinations correlate with the

stock value of company X. In agent-based models, these assumptions come from physical factors like the presence of mountains or armed groups, and are explicitly testable.

2. Forecasting one thing requires you to forecast many other things as well. When we forecast how people escape conflict, we must forecast how the conflict will evolve. And that could depend on future market prices, weather/climate effects, or political changes, all of which would need forecasting too. To be clear: we did not require any of these models when we validated our predictions against a historical situation, so we are building new models just to make forecasts possible.
3. Forcibly displaced people are usually fleeing from unexpected and disruptive events. Here the data upon which the machine learning algorithms are “trained” is incomplete, biased or often non-existent. We argue that agent-based models are more effective because they do not need training data, and benefit from understanding the processes that drive forced displacement.

So we have not cracked it.

Yes, forecasting is hard. We do not yet know where climate refugees and other forcibly displaced people are going. We still need huge supercomputers just to forecast next week's weather.

So it pays to be suspicious of the idea that refugee forecasting is already solved, especially if linked to claims that the “next frontier” for computer scientists is in (controversially) extracting data from vulnerable refugees who are often unaware of the privacy and security risks. Given how hard it remains to predict where the millions of climate refugees will go, the “next frontier” is still the last frontier.

[Derek Groen is Lecturer in Simulation and Modelling, Brunel University London; Diana Suleimenova is PhD Researcher, Computer Science, Brunel University London]

Running: Not so much a liberating hobby as a cult

CARYS EGAN-WYER
theconversation.com

Endurance running is in. Fitness enthusiasts and elite runners alike spend their weekends pounding the pavements and bounding through the countryside. They are training for and competing in ultra marathons, triathlons and obstacle races.

Runners often claim that they run to escape from the demands of everyday life, to experience freedom, and say that they find running a good way to meditate. But in my recently published PhD thesis, I investigate what really motivates people to torture themselves by running hundreds of painful kilometres in their spare time, no matter the weather. And it paints a rather different picture.

My research shows that running has become a way to gain social status by creating an image or personal brand. Even though most runners claim only to compete with themselves, they often use their personal brands to compete with others. This doesn't just apply to running, but also to the competition for jobs, education and even dates in our competitive and individualised neoliberal society. Social media and apps such as Strava, which connects millions of runners, are increasingly being used for this purpose.

Personal brands are built in other areas of life too. Take cooking, for example. We might once have enjoyed cooking and eating a simple meal with friends. Now, on-trend ingredients, complicated dishes and sophisticated kitchen equipment are used to demonstrate one's connoisseurship – often on social media. Similarly, running and exercise

used to be simple – something we devoted a few short moments a week to. But much like cooking, running is supported by a big industry. You don't really need any special equipment to run – you could in theory run barefoot. Despite that, an entire industry has grown around the sport – selling shoes, special training clothes, running experiences, dietary advice and even training holidays.

So it is no wonder that running is so romanticised in both advertising and public health campaigns, often telling the same stories as the runners themselves. They suggest running is about freedom from the demands of contemporary society to be competitive, productive and disciplined. It is about the tranquility of nature, and a community of like-minded others.

STUDY DESIGN

My research is based on interviews and diary analysis from 33 runners. It is what scientists call “qualitative research”, based on in-depth information rather than large amounts of data. The runners come from the US, Australia, New Zealand, Sweden, Denmark, Finland and the UK. I also visited triathlon competitions, obstacle course races and even took part in an ultra marathon as part of my research.

Endurance runners are typically fixated on how fast and how far they have run. They constantly measure and quantify their running. One runner told me how difficult she found it to run for fun without looking at her sports watch. She confessed that if her watch ran out of batteries during a run, she would probably just give up and go home. All the runners in my study quantified their runs in a

similar way and all but one competed in timed races.

I also discovered that, when describing their hobby, runners use concepts that are associated with neoliberal thinking: productivity, efficiency and competition. They talk about “investing” time and money in equipment and training in order to get the to get the best returns – economic language more typically associated with work.

But why is that? In a neoliberal society, we experience near-constant pressure to be productive, efficient and competitive. This pressure proves impossible for many runners to resist and it transforms how they understand and enjoy their running. Running therefore becomes a way for people to show how productive they are and runners use their achievements to build personal brands and to compete with others for status.

I also investigated how runners do this. It is not unusual to see running achievements listed on CVs or dating profiles. Management consultancies also boast on their websites about the kinds of endurance races their employees have participated in. That's despite the fact that there is no obvious link between being a good runner and being a good a consultant. Rather, it is appearances that count.

No one forces us to take part in endurance running. On the other hand, none of us is completely free in our choices. In a society or group, there are always ideals or norms that encourage us to make one choice over another. In a neoliberal society, economic ideals such as productivity are paramount.

So while endurance runners

choose to run for a multitude of reasons, one of them being a feeling of freedom, many also do it because running is something for which they will be rewarded socially.

STRESS AND ANXIETY

We know that more and more people suffer from stress, anxiety and burn-out, even in societies with apparently good work-life balance. So with countless studies showing that running and other exercise is good for our mental health – often prescribed as an antidote to stress, anxiety and depression – shouldn't we be doing more of it?

Not necessarily. Some speculate that the reason we are so stressed is because common ways to relax and unwind – running, eating with friends and so on – have become competitive and a bit like work. They are tipping the work-life balance towards work even though we feel we are getting more balance.

So keep in mind that the next time you post your awesome running achievements and delicious meals on social media, you could contribute to leisure activities becoming ever more exhausting and anxiety-provoking.

We are often quick to dismiss practices such as mindfulness, self-help seminars and meditation as neoliberal activities – making some people millions while creating productive, conformist citizens. Running is arguably no different. That said, if we can manage to run for the pleasure of running, without timing and measuring ourselves, running can of course still be hugely enjoyable – and good for our health.

[the writer is Researcher, Lund University]

Aizawl face Mohun Bagan in I-League opening match

AIZAWL, Nov 29 (PTI): Two former champions, Aizawl Football Club and Mohun Bagan will square off in the opening match of the 13th edition of the I-League, which has been reduced to a second tier domestic competition this season.

The All India Football Federation (AIFF) and some of the clubs were locked in a bitter face-off on which out of Indian Super League (ISL) and I-League will the top-tier competition in the country.

After a lot of acrimony, the issue was finally settled with the help of the Asian Football Confederation, with the ISL being made the top-tier league with a slot in the AFC Champions League play-off, while I-League champions would compete in the second tier AFC Cup.

As a concession to the clubs, starting with the 2022-23 season, the winner of I-League will stand a chance to be promoted to ISL. From the 2024-25 season onwards, performance-based promotion and relegation to and from ISL will be implemented.

A total of 110 games are scheduled to be played in over five-month long league in home-and-away basis among the 11 participating clubs. The AIFF has said that all the 110 matches will be telecast live on DSPORT.

Aizawl FC, champi-



ons of the 10th edition, will see their Kolkata visitors playing under a new coach and a new-look squad from the one which finished fifth last time around.

The green and maroons have roped in Spaniard Kibu Vicuna this season along with a fleet of his countrymen. The side under Vicuna has been together for about five months now and has played at least three competitive tournaments going into Saturday's opener.

Speaking at the pre-match press conference, Vicuna said, "We are working together for almost five months and we are 100 per cent ready to play the first game. We respect Aizawl because they are a good team. It is going to be a tough match but we want to start well

in the competition and go back to Kolkata with three points."

The home side, on the other hand, had finished a disappointing seventh in the previous edition. They have appointed a new coach towards the end of last season and will be continuing with Stanley Rosario at the helm of affairs.

The Aizawl gaffer was wary of their fancied opponents. "This match against Mohun Bagan means a lot to my young Mizoram players and it is going to be a tough task at hand," he said.

"Mohun Bagan have full strength with six foreign players and we have only two foreigners with a lot of young players promoted from our academy. It is going to be a big challenge to play against strong Mohun Bagan."

On the importance of starting with a win, he said, "I want my players to believe in themselves and go with a positive mindset and try to get something out of it because everything is possible in football. A good and positive start will give us confidence going ahead."

As far as teams go, Aizawl have managed to retain the nucleus of the side which played in the 12th edition and have also made some new and potentially young exciting signings.

The likes of Liberian defensive wall Alfred Jaryan and his partner Richard Kasagga of Uganda are still around and so are midfielders like David, Isac, Lalremanga, Rocharzela and they even have William Lalnunfella back after a brief flirta-

tion with Bagan.

Ayush Dev Chetri and Techit Tatra are two young forwards who would be looking to make a mark.

For Mohun Bagan, they have a familiar Debjit back in goal, while Kim Kima and Arijit Bagui are a couple of familiar names which are likely to be seen in their defence line again.

However, they also have new foreign faces at the back in Trinidadian Daniel Cyrus and Spaniard Francisco Munoz. Fran Morante and Joseba Beitia are another couple of Spanish footballers who will be seen leading the Mohun Bagan attacks this season. Aizawl lost their home game against Bagan last season while drawing their away game.

The match starts at 2pm.

IIT researchers to create 'Gandhipedia'

KOLKATA, Nov 29 (PTI): Two IITs and the National Council of Science Museums (NCSM) have joined hands to develop 'Gandhipedia', an online repository of books, letters and speeches written by Mahatma Gandhi, to commemorate his 150th birth anniversary.

The entire project will be done with the help of Artificial Intelligence (AI), an IIT Kharagpur statement said on Friday.

In the first phase, over 40 books written by Mahatma Gandhi will

be digitised and indexed and their portions tweeted, it said.

"The books will be used to reconstruct the social network of the Mahatma, including those who had influenced him and people whom he had inspired," the statement said. The first phase is expected to be completed by March next year followed by four more phases till March, 2024, it said.

IIT Gandhinagar is also a part of the project along with IIT Kharagpur and NCSM, an auton-

mous organisation under the Ministry of Culture.

Prof Animesh Mukherjee of IIT Kharagpur's Department of Computer Science and Engineering said Mahatma Gandhi's book 'My Experiments with Truth' will be first used for reconstructing his social network.

Mukherjee, who is leading the project, said a total of 100 works of Mahatma Gandhi, including his letters and speeches, would be uploaded in the portal.

'Prisoners of Revolution': Revisiting the Naxal movement



NEW DELHI, Nov 29 (PTI): A new novel set against the backdrop of the Naxalite movement that had its genesis in an obscure village of West Bengal provides a direct window to the real life experiences of the people who willingly or unwillingly became a part of the campaign.

Amar Mudi's Prisoners of Revolution: A Political Novel recounts the tempestuous movement that unravelled through six momentous years from 1967 to 1973 in a place called Babulpur, a microcosmic representation of thousands of other villages in Bengal.

The Adivasis of Babulpur had fought a long and hard battle to earn their place in the mainland after migrating from the forest and hills of Badam Pahar, after many lives were sacrificed to hunger and disease.

On May 25, 1967, in

the Naxalbari district of Bengal, nine men, women, and children died in police firing, while trying to take possession of the surplus land of a big landlord.

Soon, thousands of peasants, workers, and common men rallied in support of the uprising. Teachers and students from colleges and universities responded to the call of the newly-formed CPI (ML). They left the comfort of their homes and spread out to small villages and towns throughout the state to mobilise people for direct action against oppression and exploitation.

The state responded to the call for armed rebellion with force. This resulted in killings and counter killings.

Fifty years hence, Adivasis have become the mainstay of this armed resistance - in Chhattis-

garh, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Bihar, Jharkhand, West Bengal, and Andhra Pradesh.

Published by Nyogi Books under its Olive Turtle imprint, the novel takes the readers through the individual journeys of each of the characters as the author comments on the futility of a structured government in resolving the problems and sufferings of the marginalised and the oppressed in society.

The novel ends with a mixed mood of both hope and despair. On the one hand, the reader looks forward in the hope of a better future, away from the place of oppression and political disturbance. On the other hand, there is a lingering feeling of loss: of peace, of a chance for a healthy environment where the old can witness their future generations grow.

CAG pulls up Odisha govt for non-submission of utilisation certificates

BHUBANESWAR, Nov 29 (PTI): The Comptroller and Auditor General of India has pulled up the Odisha Government for non-submission of 28,529 utilisation certificates for grants given to various bodies involving an outstanding amount of Rs 38,427 crore as on March 31, 2018.

High pendency of utilisation certificates (UC) is fraught with the risk of misappropriation or diversion of funds and fraud, the CAG said in its latest report on the state's finances for the 2017-2018 fiscal, which was tabled in the Assembly on Thursday.

UCs in respect of grants-in-aid provided for specific purposes should be obtained by the departmental officers from the grantees and forwarded to the Principal Accountant General by June 30 of the succeeding year, it said.

"Non-submission or delay in submission of UCs weaken the control on utilization and provides scope for misutilisation or diversion of funds," the CAG report said.

During 2017-18, the government released Rs 21,780 crore as grants-in-aid for which UCs were not received in respect of Rs 16,391 crore (75.26 per cent), it said.

There was also no assurance that the ex-

penditure of Rs 16,391 crore had actually been incurred for the purposes for which it was authorised, it said.

The CAG said that 28,529 UCs for an amount aggregating Rs 38,427.91 crore remained outstanding against 35 departments of the state as of March 2018.

While 22,250 UCs involving an outstanding amount of Rs 13,486.31 crore were awaited up to 2015-16, as many as 3,361 UCs for Rs 8,550.44 crore remained pending for 2016-17, it said.

Eight major defaulting departments, including Panchayati Raj and Housing and Urban Development, accounted for 89.71 per cent of the total amount for which UCs were outstanding as of March 2018, the CAG report said.

In comparison to 2016-17, the total amount for which the UCs were pending increased by Rs 7,894 crore (25.85 per cent) in 2017-18, it said adding UCs amounting to Rs 1,044.89 crore were pending for over ten years in 22 departments as of March 2018.

Noting that the government had mentioned that submission of UCs was a continuous process, the CAG said the position with regard to submission of UCs had not improved so far.

Book gives tips on how to succeed in everyday life, work



NEW DELHI, Nov 29 (PTI): An array of experts, leading thinkers and achievers, ranging from a monk to a quantum physicist to a billionaire, offer tips, strategies and ideas in a new book on how to succeed in everyday life and work.

Joseph Rodarick Law's book Authentic Power and Greatness seeks to help people achieve and fulfil life's destiny and purpose and also guide readers seek solutions to many problems they have in life.

In today's world, we are bombarded by information, and we have higher levels of stress than ever, having to deal with everyday demands such as work, finance, relationship, and health issues, etc., he says.

The idea of the book was conceived some time ago as Law wanted to break down timeless wisdom and principles of success in an easily absorbable way and format, so that readers can take effective action towards living a fulfilling life.

The book is a collection of views of some of the most renowned thinkers.

I think diversity of views is important to

give the big picture and encourage a holistic approach to life. Ultimately, the merit of any given philosophy is what works or does not work for someone after its application, Law told PTI.

The contributors include Jack Canfield, the creator and co-author of Chicken Soup for the Soul.

Law says his book aims to convey the messages of living and fulfilling one's purpose, attaining self-mastery and the conquering of self, and balancing spiritual and material aspects of life for success and prosperity.

In the book, brought out by Orient Publishing, Law teaches the principles of happiness from a holistic perspective, one that includes fulfilling relationships, a rewarding career, spiritual growth and finding one's purpose in life.

It is written in a question-and-answer format through a series of interviews with the experts.

The author, who is the chairman and CEO of Rodarick Corporation and also a speaker, says the three most common pieces of advice people seek from you are:

how to find purpose and meaning in life, how to find happiness and fulfilment, and how to identify and live one's passion.

He feels one of the most important things that helps people live life with contentment is knowing thyself.

There are three elements to achieving this, he says.

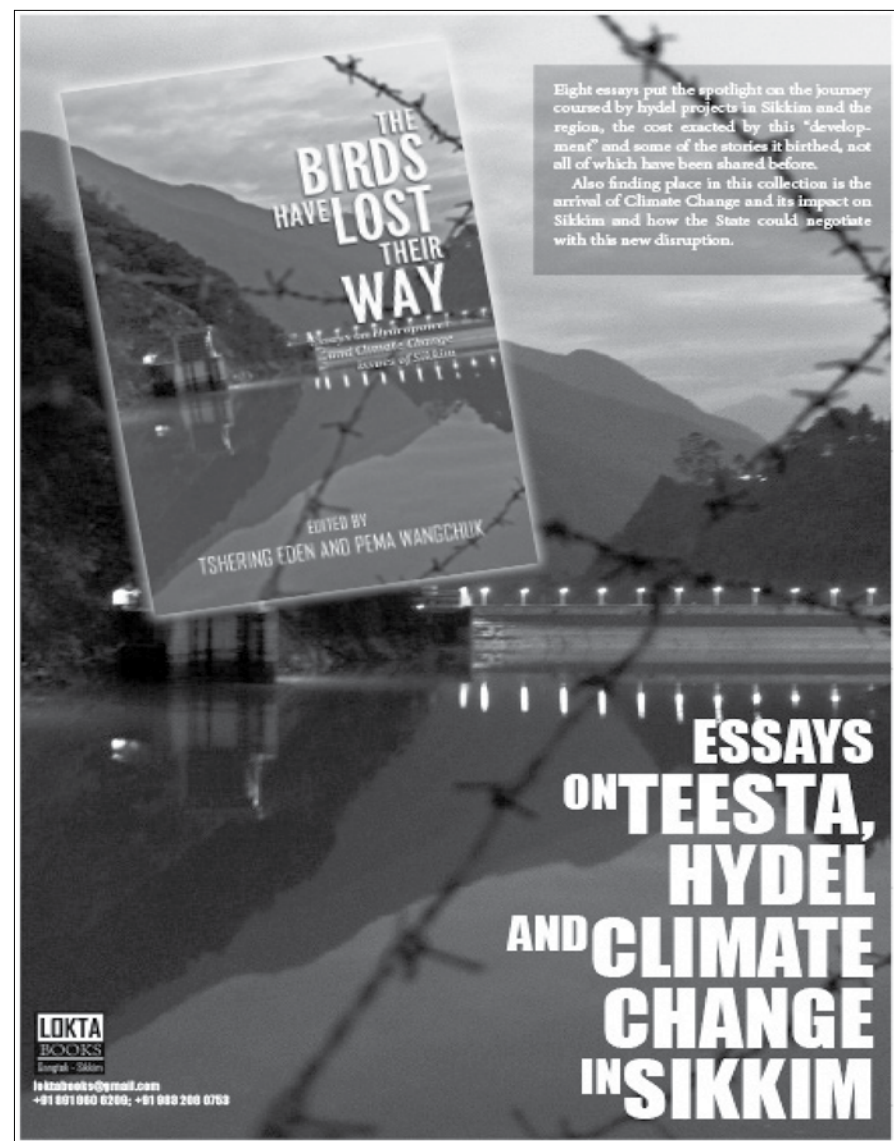
First of all, it is important to have self-understanding and awareness of how our minds affect us, as well as our inner motivation, outwardly expressed through our speech and action.

Second, it is vital to understand the desiring nature of the mind, which clings to the pursuit of material objects and pleasures, stimulated by the external world and our five senses. It is easy to mistake pleasure for happiness, peace, and inner fulfilment, he says.

The third element, he says, is there is distinct difference between needs and wants. Our needs stem from our necessities, whereas our wants can be limitless. Be content with what you have. Train your mind and cultivate gratitude in your life every day.

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Conor McGregor to make UFC return in January against Donald Cerrone

LOS ANGELES, 29 Nov [AP]: Former two-weight UFC champion Conor McGregor is set to return to the octagon on 18 January where he will take on veteran American Donald “Cowboy” Cerrone in a welterweight bout at UFC 246.

“Conor has signed and ‘Cowboy’ is ready to go,” Dana White, the UFC president said, giving the green light for the return of one of MMA’s most bankable stars.

Irishman McGregor, who has 21 professional wins and four losses in MMA and a single defeat to Floyd Mayweather on his professional boxing record, has not fought since losing his light-weight title to Khabib Nurmagomedov via submission in October 2018.

The 31-year-old has previously fought twice at 170 pounds against Nate Diaz, losing the first fight to a second-round submission but winning an epic rematch on points.

Since losing to Nurmagomedov, McGregor has had several brushes with the law, and, in a court hearing on 1 November, pleaded guilty to assaulting a man in a pub in Dublin earlier in the year.

Latham ton puts New Zealand in solid position against England

HAMILTON (NEW ZEALAND), Nov 29 (AFP): Tom Latham’s unbeaten hundred and his century stand with Ross Taylor laid a solid foundation for New Zealand before rain brought an early end to day one of the second Test against England in Hamilton on Friday. Latham was on 101 when the rain swept in just three deliveries after the resumption of play from the tea break.

It was the left-handed opener’s 11th century and lifted him to equal sixth on the New Zealand century-makers list headed by Kane Williamson with 20. Williamson, however, was off his best this innings when he was dismissed for four in a rocky start for New Zealand after Jeet Raval was removed for five.

But from two for 39, Latham and Taylor put on 116 for the third wicket when Taylor went for 53 to have New Zealand three for 155. All three wickets were to catches by England captain Joe Root at first slip. Ben Stokes, at second slip, did not have such safe hands and dropped Latham on 66.

Adding to Stokes’ worries, he felt pain in his left knee after bowling two overs and will be assessed overnight to see whether he can bowl again during the innings.

Taylor also received a let-off which proved costly for England when he was hit on the pads by Stuart Broad and given out. After conferring with Latham, Taylor appeared to believe there was a ball direction issue and sought a review. TV umpire Bruce Oxenford overturned the decision when slow-motion video replays detected a faint sound after the ball passed the bat but had not reached the pads.

An MMA fighter stood up for a bullied Oklahoma boy. Then the stars aligned

LORETTA HUNT
theGuardian

Rayden Overbay winced and arched his back as the boy unloaded punches on him. He stumbled backward against the bathroom stalls looking for some escape, but there were attackers on every side. And behind them onlookers, half a dozen at least, some of them holding up cell phones fixed on an autistic, partially deaf 12-year-old getting the beating of his life. Rayden went home that day with a black eye, a busted lip, a bloody nose and a concussion.

Less than 24 hours later, professional mixed martial artist Justin Wren sat at his kitchen table watching the video, which had been posted to social media by one of the kids who shot it. It was like finding a long-lost home movie in the attic.

“I know how that feels,” he said to himself. “That was me.”

At Rayden’s age, Wren had been attacked in the locker room by a bully who had terrorized him for years. He’d been blindsided with the violent crack of a football helmet to the back of his head. It left an egg the size of a baseball and planted a seedling of doubt that his life might not be worth living anymore.

“I remember people laughing at me,” Wren told the Guardian. “No one spoke up or stepped in. I remember the bully walking away. Nothing happened to him. Just like Rayden.”

There was a reason an acquaintance sent the video to Wren – and not because they wanted the former UFC fighter to show Rayden some moves to defend himself. Wren is actually in the business of fighting for people. He started the



Fight for the Forgotten foundation in 2011 at the age of 24 to combat the plight of the Mbuti Pygmies in the Democratic Republic of Congo, who were enslaved and even cannibalized by rival tribes. Today, Fight for the Forgotten has raised over a million dollars, funding 62 clean water wells and the purchase of 3,015 acres of land for dozens of displaced Pygmy tribes in multiple countries.

In 2014, Wren began fighting for Bellator MMA, using his platform for the Pygmies and donating his purses to the cause. But his humanitarian work has put a strain on his health. He’s survived black water fever, dengue fever and malaria three times, but has had physical complications ever since. Three years ago, he was diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder. He still has nightmares of sickly infants dying in his

arms. Still, Wren’s sense of justice remains. As he watched Rayden’s video in astonishment, he realized he could be that person he wished he’d had as a kid for Rayden.

Two days after Rayden’s attack, he and his family were eating dinner with Wren at his office 20 minutes away from the boy’s Oklahoma school. They had Chick-fil-A, a treat for the family, who live in a trailer park. Rayden’s father, Danny, works as a manager at a fast food restaurant, and money has been so tight that the boys have lived with their grandparents in another trailer down the row for the last year.

Rayden has been bullied by his classmates since the age of nine, but the last year had been especially trying for the seventh grader when he gained 110lbs from his diabetes medication and began wearing a hearing aid. When

school officials found Rayden after the bathroom incident, he’d scribbled “I WANT TO KILL MYSELF” down the length of his forearm with a marker. Wren had contemplated suicide in his teens before he transferred schools, took up wrestling and became a national champion.

“Rayden, it’s OK to not be OK, but it doesn’t have to stay this way,” Wren told Rayden as they ate together that first time. “If you’ll allow me, I want to be your friend.”

The hashtag #StandWithRayden quickly gained traction on social media and Wren encouraged followers to send Rayden video messages so he knew he was not alone. The MMA community came out in force, as did pro wrestlers such as WWE legend Mick Foley. Other celebrities, including Terry Crews and Sarah Silverman, would follow. The next week, Rayden watched from

the sidelines as the University of Oklahoma football team inched out Iowa State 42-41. Oklahoma quarterback Jalen Hurts gave Rayden a stern message as he signed the game ball for him afterward.

“If there’s anyone bothering you, talking to you, just let me know,” Hurts said, glancing up into Rayden’s eyes. Hurts waved his arm across the locker room. “There’s a whole squad behind you now.”

That Monday, the bullying video had over 10m views. #StandWithRayden had rippled outside the sports community into Hollywood. AJ Buckley, star of the TV show Seal Team, helmed a trip for Rayden, his parents, and his nine-year-old brother Brock to the set of the show in Los Angeles. There, Rayden was presented with the Navy Seal Trident insignia gifted from former Seal member Jack Carr’s own uniform. The next

morning in Malibu, Rayden felt the crunch of sand between his toes and heard the roar of the Pacific Ocean for the very first time. He loved the ocean immediately, but was too afraid to get in the water for a private lesson that had been organized for him by surfing legends Kelly Slater and Laird Hamilton.

“We are your friends,” his patient instructors told him. “We want to share with you how healing the ocean can be.” An hour later, Rayden couldn’t be pulled from the water.

On their last day in Los Angeles, the Teddy Atlas Foundation paid for the clan to go to Disneyland. Rayden and Brock ogled the robots, spaceships, smoke and lasers during their personal Star Wars tour.

“Hey, I found your twin brother,” Rayden blurted out while he took a picture with Chewbacca, pointing directly at Wren. It was a rare moment where Rayden could fully express himself – a moment two months in the making.

In addition to a GoFundMe campaign for Rayden’s medical costs and future counseling, businesses have donated clothing, sneakers, food and mattresses to the Overbay family. Video messages continue to fly into Rayden’s inbox every day from places as far away as India. He’s even gotten fan mail.

“Rayden is not the same kid he was two months ago,” said Wren. “To see him come out of his shell with the athletes and then the actors in Los Angeles – it was like a butterfly spreading his wings. To all the people who contributed to this, you’ve helped change the way a beaten-down boy looked at the world. That is truly special.”

‘The world will see a new Bajrang in Olympics’

AMANPREET SINGH
NEW DELHI, Nov 28 (PTI): Sounding out a warning to his rivals, a fit-again Bajrang Punia on Thursday said the wrestling world will see a new avatar of him at the Tokyo Olympics, where he will be one of India’s strongest medal contenders.

His weak leg defence is no secret and, of late, his rivals have successfully managed to use it to their advantage. For the same reason, most of his rivals, their coaches and even the fans believe that Bajrang starts 4-5 points behind even before stepping on to the mat.

Some experts still believe the handicap could cost India’s biggest medal contender dearly in next year’s Games, the last two World Championships being a testimony.

However, despite this apparent weakness, Bajrang climbed to the number one ranking in the world in the competitive 65kg category in 2018, thanks to his superior stamina and ability to strike in the second period.

“My coach says I should be able to surprise my opponents when I compete again. Obviously, I can’t reveal what I am doing but you will see a new Bajrang on the mat when I will compete during the Olympics,” Bajrang told PTI in an interaction.

“People will say that Bajrang’s wrestling style is now very dif-



ferent. Whether it is technique, stamina, style, everything is being worked upon.”

Bajrang spoke after receiving his ‘Khel Ratna’, the award ceremony of which he missed due to preparations for the World Championship.

The 25-year-old said the tear in his right elbow has completely healed, allowing him to resume full-fledged training.

“It’s been just 10 days now that I have re-started mat training after recovering from my elbow injury which I had suffered before the Worlds (in Nur Sultan). Now I am completely fit and doing everything I should be doing. Thankfully I have qualified for the Olympics in the very first qualifying event.

“I was away from mat training for some time. The pain was not subsiding and the doctors had warned that it could develop into something serious if I don’t let it heal. I had the time (for rest) now because I could not have taken the risk so close to the Olympics. So, the focus

was on physical training and not on mat training.”

Bajrang, now ranked two in the world behind Russia’s Ghadzimurad Rashidov and ahead of Bahrain’s Hazi Mohammed Ali, will begin the new season at an UWW ranking series event in Rome.

“My first tournament in the new season will be in January. After Italy, there is Asian Championship and one more ranking series event, but we are yet to fix a definitive schedule.”

If the heart-breaking defeat at the World Championship against the home wrestler Daut Niyazbekov was not enough, Bajrang was embroiled in a controversy when reports of him sacking his long-time coach Shako Bentinidis emerged.

“I have forgotten that. Everything is in past. It was media which played it up. I don’t know who spread that. It was disturbing but the Federation assured me that my needs will be taken care of and Shako is with me only,” he signed off.

Liverpool fret over Fabinho injury as fixture pile-up looms

Liverpool, Nov 29 (AFP): Jurgen Klopp is preparing to embark on a frantic run of fixtures with fears over the fitness of Fabinho after the midfielder limped out of Liverpool’s Champions League draw against Napoli.

The 26-year-old Brazilian has emerged as one of the unsung heroes of Klopp’s team, who have a comfortable eight-point lead at the top of the Premier League.

Fabinho suffered an ankle injury during Wednesday’s 1-1 Champions League draw with Napoli, a result that leaves the reigning champions needing a point from their final group game at Salzburg to guarantee progress.

Klopp had been looking for a victory against the Italians, to ensure that at least one of his fixtures during this chaotic run could be treated as a dead rubber.

But the Liverpool manager was left with graver concerns when Fabinho limped off early.

Fellow midfielder Georginio Wijnaldum said an injury to Fabinho, signed from Monaco in July 2018, would be a “big blow”, with Liverpool involved in four competitions in December.

But he added: “We just have to show that it doesn’t affect us. During the years we have had some difficult injuries



and difficult positions (like) last season when we didn’t have a right defender, we just have to deal with it so we will see.”

Fabinho has emerged as a crucial player at Anfield, filling a sitting midfield role that had previously been the preserve of Jordan Henderson.

He took his time to settle, with critics questioning the wisdom of Klopp’s decision to bring him to Anfield.

But, once accustomed to the demands of the English game, Fabinho quickly became an integral part of a Liverpool side that would lose just one league match, to champions Manchester City in January, over the entire campaign.

Significantly, perhaps, Fabinho did not start that game, coming on as a second-half substitute. Liverpool have not lost a league game in which their midfield lynchpin has started since he arrived at the club nearly 18 months ago.

Klopp was still not offering any diagnosis of the injury on Thursday, with reports suggesting medics were waiting for the swelling in Fabinho’s ankle to die down before conducting thorough tests on Friday.

In any case, Fabinho was always due to miss Saturday’s Brighton game at Anfield through suspension, having picked up five bookings to earn a one-match ban, but with the prospect of a longer lay-off, Klopp

will have to make contingency plans. Fabinho’s absence will be felt as much psychologically as in pure football terms, with the player bringing graft and endeavour to the side.

His covering role in front of the back four has freed other midfielders, notably Henderson, to play more offensive roles and while teammate and central defender Virgil van Dijk has rightly earned plaudits for his impressive form, Fabinho’s performances have clearly helped.

Klopp must decide whether he returns Henderson to the Fabinho role or switches Dutch international Wijnaldum from a wide position to the central spot.

Afghan peace talks with Taliban has resumed: Trump



BY LALIT K JHA

WASHINGTON, Nov 29 (PTI):

US President Donald Trump has confirmed that his administration had resumed talks with the Taliban with the purpose of bringing peace in Afghanistan, but refused to give a timeline for drawdown of his troops.

"Yes," Trump told a small group of reporters at the Bagram Air Field on Thursday when asked to confirm whether the US had restarted discussions with the Taliban af-

ter calling the peace talks "dead" in September. During his first and surprise trip to Afghanistan on Thanksgiving, Trump said the terms of the deal would have to include a Taliban ceasefire, adding that he thought the Taliban would agree to it.

"The Taliban wants to make a deal and we're meeting with them and we're saying it has to be a ceasefire and they didn't want to do a ceasefire and now they do want to do a ceasefire. I believe

it'll probably work out that way," he said.

The president said the US had made tremendous progress over the past six months and had been drawing down its troops at the same time.

"We're going to stay until such time as we have a deal or we have total victory and they (Taliban) want to make a deal very badly," he told reporters during a hastily-arranged bilateral meeting with Afghan President Ashraf Ghani

at the air field, the largest US base in Afghanistan.

Trump confirmed that he hoped to reduce the number of American troops in Afghanistan to 8,600. The US currently has less than 14,000 troops in Afghanistan, but military officials would not confirm the exact number.

Earlier, in his address to the American troops, Trump said the war in Afghanistan would not be decided on the battlefield and, ultimately,

there needs to be a political solution that he said would be decided by the people of the region.

"We will see if the Taliban wants to make a deal," he said. "If they do, they do. If they don't they don't." The president referred to his September announcement to abruptly withdraw from peace talks after the Taliban killed a US soldier.

"They (Taliban) thought that was good negotiating power," Trump said. "That's bad negotiating power and since then we've hit them so hard." Addressing a few hundred cheering troops from inside a massive hangar on the air field, he said: "We will continue to work tirelessly until the day when we can bring each and every one of you home and safe to your family and that day is coming."

In his brief remarks, Ghani thanked the American troops who have made the "ultimate sacrifice" in Afghanistan and noted that the US casualties in Afghanistan were way down under Trump's presidency.

"Afghan security forces are taking the lead now," Ghani said.

Iraqi protesters regroup after bloody crackdown



Thousands of defiant Iraqi protesters regrouped on Friday across the country's south, the morning after nearly 45 protesters were killed in one of the bloodiest days of anti-government rallies yet.

Thursday's violence marked a dangerous new turn for the anti-government movement rocking the country for nearly two months, as men dressed in civilian clothes shot at demonstrators and tribal fighters deployed in the streets in their defence.

Nearly 400 people have died and some 15,000 have been wounded since the protests erupted in Iraq's capital and Shiite-majority south on October 1 against a government accused of corruption and inefficiency. The demonstrations have been the bloodiest grassroots protests in strife-torn Iraq in decade and the single bloodiest days was Thursday, when 44 were killed and nearly 1,000 wounded, most of them across the south, according to medics and rights groups.

The bulk of the dead, 26, fell in the southern protest hotspot of Nasiriyah, and thousands hit the streets to mourn them on Friday.

Large crowds also gathered in the city's main squares to demand the government step down, and others used burning tyres to block highways leading north.

Three protesters were wounded in confrontations outside Nasiriyah's main police headquarters, according to medics.

- Carrying coffins - In Baghdad, where two demonstrators died on Thursday, protesters

dug into their main camp at Tahrir (Liberation) Square despite skirmishes with security forces.

And in the shrine city of Najaf, a massive funeral procession wound its way through the streets carrying coffins of some of the 16 people who were killed there the previous day.

Many expected Iraq's highest Shiite authority, Grand Ayatollah Ali Sistani who lives in Najaf, to address the violence in his weekly sermon on Friday.

The 89-year-old cleric, never seen in public, has backed the protests and repeatedly called for restraint in dealing with them.

The new unrest in Iraq's south was unleashed after protesters stormed the Iranian consulate in Najaf late on Wednesday, accusing the neighbouring country of propping up Iraq's government.

Tehran demanded Iraq take decisive action against the protesters, saying it was "disgusted" with developments.

In response, Prime Minister Adel Abdel Mahdi ordered military chiefs to deploy in several provinces to "impose security and restore order" -- but chaos reigned instead.

As the death toll climbed late into the evening, the premier sacked the commander he had dispatched to Nasiriyah and the governor based in the city resigned.

Police officers speaking on condition of anonymity told AFP they had received orders on Thursday to "finish off" the rallies but the disastrous developments in Nasiriyah put a halt to those plans. - 'A war zone' - The violence was con-

demned worldwide, with Amnesty International denouncing a "blood-bath" in Nasiriyah.

"The scenes from Nasiriyah this morning (Thursday) more closely resemble a war zone than city streets and bridges," said Lynn Maalouf of the London-based rights group. Baghdad and the south have been rocked by the most widespread street unrest since the 2003 US-led invasion that toppled Saddam Hussein.

Protesters are seeking an overhaul of the ruling elite, accused of corruption and embezzling state funds in a country scarred by decades of conflict and where infrastructure is failing.

Iraq is OPEC's second-largest crude producer but one in five Iraqis lives in poverty and youth unemployment stands at 25 percent, according to the World Bank. Demonstrators have also called out Iraq's large eastern neighbour Iran, accusing it of political, economic and military overreach.

The two countries have close but complex ties and Tehran holds significant sway among Iraqi political and military leaders.

Top Iranian commander Qasem Soleimani has held several meetings in Baghdad and Najaf to convince political factions to close ranks around Abdel Mahdi.

Those meetings, sources told AFP, brought firebrand cleric Moqtada Sadr back into the fold after he called on the embattled premier to resign.

Thursday Sadr said it would "be the beginning of the end for Iraq" if the government did not step down.

Hong Kong set for fresh weekend protests as police end university siege



Hong Kong police on Friday ended their two-week siege of a university campus that became a battleground with pro-democracy protesters, as activists vowed to hold fresh rallies and strikes in the coming days. Renewed calls to hit the streets came after Beijing and city leader Carrie Lam refused further political concessions despite a landslide victory for pro-democracy parties in local elections last weekend.

Sunday's district council polls delivered a stinging rebuke to the financial hub's pro-Beijing establishment and undermined their argument that a silent majority were tired of the nearly six months of increasingly violent protests. They also ushered in a rare period of calm following weeks of spiralling unrest, with no clashes or tear gas battles between protesters and police for more than a week.

But the calm spell looks set to end as public anger grows once more over the lack of response to the election results by Beijing and Hong Kong's leaders.

Online forums used to organise the mass movement have filled with calls for a major rally on Sunday and a strike on Monday targeting the morning commute.

"If the communist Hong Kong government ignores public opinion, we will blossom everywhere for five or six days straight... We have to set a deadline," read one post on the Reddit-like LIHK forum, which got heavy approval from users. The Sunday rally has received permission from authorities, but the fresh calls raise the spectre of a re-

turn to the kind of weekly political chaos that has battered Hong Kong for nearly six months and helped tip the city into recession.

Hundreds of office workers held flashmob rallies during their Friday lunch break in multiple locations across the city. Riot police were deployed but the protesters dispersed peacefully.

- University siege ends -

Earlier in the day police said they were closing the book on one of the most violent chapters of the protest movement -- the siege of the Hong Kong Polytechnic University. The sprawling red-brick campus became a battleground on November 17 between police and protesters armed with bows and arrows as well as Molotov cocktails. The standoff settled into a tense stalemate during which hundreds fled the campus -- some making daring escapes, others caught and beaten by officers during failed breakouts -- leaving a dwindling core of holdouts surrounded by police cordons.

After university leaders said almost all protesters had left, police teams moved in on Thursday to gather nearly 4,000 Molotov cocktails and other weapons left behind after the occupation.

On Friday afternoon police removed the cordons surrounding the campus and departed, ending the 13-day siege. They said they had arrested a total of 1,377 people, including more than 800 who left the campus during the siege.

"Only 46 of the people arrested are students from Polytechnic University," its president Jin-Guang

Teng told reporters. "Polytechnic University is the biggest victim in the occupation of the campus."

The university now faces a mammoth clean-up with vast swathes of the campus ransacked, filled with broken glass, barricades and rotting food. In a letter to students on Friday, university officials warned the campus was "still unsafe and will continue (to) be closed."

But members of the public still made their way onto campus.

"All the images of the battle came right back to my mind when I saw all the debris," one lady told Apple Daily in a live broadcast, bursting into tears. Hong Kong's protests are fuelled by years of seething anger over China's perceived erosion of liberties in the semi-autonomous city. Millions of Hong Kongers marched in protest rallies throughout the summer after Lam's government introduced a bill allowing extraditions to the authoritarian mainland.

It was belatedly withdrawn under public pressure, but by then violent clashes between police and protesters had become the norm and the movement had snowballed into wider calls for police accountability and fully free elections.

More than 5,800 people have been arrested and nearly 1,000 charged according to government figures while police have fired more than 12,000 tear gas canisters. Beijing denies stamping out Hong Kong's liberties and has portrayed the protests as a foreign-backed "colour revolution" aimed at destabilising mainland China.

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HAND-DRAWN! Singer, Halsey wore a dress covered in eye-catching doodles at the ARIA Awards in Sydney.

Tamannaah Bhatia to make digital debut with Hotstar crime thriller



MUMBAI, NOV 29 (PTI): Actor Tamannaah Bhatia has signed a brand-new web series, "The November Story", which marks her debut in the digital space.

The female-oriented web series, which will be streamed on Hotstar, is directed by debutante Ram Subramanian and produced by Ananda Vikatan Group.

It revolves around a father-daughter relationship and features Tamannaah as a daughter trying to salvage the reputation of her criminal father essayed by

GM Kumar.

"The OTT platform is also the new playground for accomplished actors like myself looking to break grounds with more challenging roles outside the two-hour cinematic time frame. These are exciting and experimental times in the entertainment industry," Tamannaah said in a statement.

"I love to get under the skin of characters I essay, and hence the longer web series format is the perfect medium to showcase my skills as it is almost like

doing five films at one go. There is lots of detailing and one can explore the character in depth... I'm open to exploring more of these opportunities going forward," she added.

Besides shooting for the Tamil remake of Mahi V Raghav's Telugu film "Anando Brahma", Sampath Nandi's yet-to-be titled sports drama and "Sarileru Neekevvaru", Tamannaah will also be seen in the romantic drama "Bole Chudiyen" opposite Nawazuddin Siddiqui early next year.

K-pop singer sentenced to six years in jail for rape, sharing secret sex videos

SEOUL (REUTERS) - A South Korean court sentenced a K-pop musician to six years in prison on Friday for raping a woman and distributing a video capturing the act in a case that drew attention to the darker side of the country's lucrative entertainment industry.

Jung Joon-young, 30, was arrested in March. Choi Jong-hoon, 30, a former member of South Korean boy band FT Island, was also sentenced to five years in prison for the rape of the woman.

Both were members of online chat groups that shared secret sex tapes and made jokes about drugging and raping women, the Seoul Central District Court said.

Jung's conviction also includes the illegal distribution of other videos he took secretly while having sex with women. The identities of the victims were suppressed to protect their privacy.

The court also sentenced each man to 80 hours in "sexual violence treatment" education.

"The defendants are well-known celebrities and friends, but the chat they've had showed that they simply considered women as objects of sexual pleasure, and committed crimes that were extremely serious," Judge Kang Seong-soo said as he handed down the

verdict. "Strict punishment is inevitable as the damage inflicted has not properly been recovered and the victims demand harsh penalties." Jung admitted distributing the video and others he took,

be reached for comment. Their case was one of several scandals involving sex crimes and other illegal activity that revealed a dark side of an industry at the center of the global K-pop craze.



though he argued the sex was in all cases consensual. Choi denied raping the woman, and had argued that he did not remember having sex with her and that if he had, it was likely consensual.

Lawyers for Jung and Choi could not

Lee Seung-hyun, a former member of K-pop group Big Bang better known by the stage name Seungri, is also on trial over accusations he paid for prostitutes for foreign businessmen to drum up investment in his business.

'The Simpsons' is coming to an end, says composer Danny Elfman



LONDON, NOV 29 (PTI): Danny Elfman, the composer behind the "The Simpsons" iconic opening theme, has revealed that he has heard rumours the show could be "in its last year".

Speaking to website JOE, the composer said he is "flabbergasted and amazed" that the show stayed on screens for more than 30 years.

"Well, from what I've heard, it is coming to an end. So, that argument (about whether the show should be cancelled) will also come to an end. I don't know for a fact, but I've heard that it will be in its last year," Elfman

said. "When I scored 'The Simpsons', I wrote this crazy piece of music, and I expected no-one would hear it, because I really did not think the show had a chance in hell. Really, I expected it would run for three episodes and get cancelled, and that would be that, because it was so weird at the time, and I just didn't think it had a chance. So believe me, that is one of the truly big surprises in my life," he added.

"The Simpsons", which premiered in December 1989, is one of the longest running animated sitcoms on American TV.

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Shannon Murphy to direct 'The Strays' TV adaptation

LOS ANGELES, NOV 29 (PTI): Australian director Shannon Murphy has been roped in to helm the television adaptation of Australian author Emily Bitto's 2015 novel "The Strays".

The female-led project will have Sonia Borella for Australia's See Pictures and Jo Monk from the UK's Apogee Pictures attached as producers.

According to The Hollywood Reporter, Beatrix Christian has penned the script for the series. "We're

thrilled to be collaborating in adapting Emily Bitto's brilliant and timely novel. To be working with some of Australia's most formidable and exciting talent is a testament to the strength of the material," Borella and Monk said.

The psychosexual drama is set against the hedonistic art world of 1930s Sydney, and 1970s London during the rise of the feminist movement.

Murphy is currently working on the third season of hit series "Killing Eve".

Feel pressure of returning to Lizzie McGuire: Hilary Duff

LONDON, NOV 29 (PTI): Actor Hilary Duff says she feels pressure about the "Lizzie McGuire" reboot. The 31-year-old actor is returning to the titular role that made her famous in the Disney+ series, which will see her alter ego as a 30-year-old woman living in New York City.

"It's really hard to put words to it because there's a familiarity there, and then there's also the pressure of who she is now and what has changed and what is still the same. 'When I was younger, I don't think I was putting a lot of effort into creating a role that was Lizzie McGuire. I think Lizzie McGuire was who I was at that time. I'm trying to use a little piece of that. Also, I think she has a little more confidence than Lizzie McGuire did when she was 12.

She's made a pretty cool life for herself. It's been fun," Duff told Elle magazine.



The original show ran from 2001 to 2004 and the actor hopes the reboot will feel both fresh and nostalgic.

"Everyone knows the family's coming back. I filmed with them all this week, and it's a trip, it's crazy.

"We want the show to be able to stand alone and not be just a full extension of the one that was almost over 15 years ago. We want it to feel fresh but also serve up some nostalgia.

ARIES: Everything is as it should be, says the mysterious smile on your face. You are in a good place, Aries, surrounded by the kind of people who remind you of what happiness feels like. Your manifestation game is also getting stronger. Be cognisant of the blessings that are showing up and express gratitude to the Universe.

Tip: This is what happiness looks and feels like.

TAURUS: Your current mood: building an empire, creating art, making magic, living consciously, and inspiring others to achieve their highest potential. This is the start of a brand new adventure for you, Taurus. Trust that each day will be better. The secret to creating more wealth and abundance in your life? Following your ikigai aka your reason for being.

Tip: Continue to walk the path.

GEMINI: Sometimes, the perfect romance is in front of you, but you're too busy texting the wrong people. What's keeping you from opening your heart to 'the one'? Are you being held back by

the fear of being rejected? What you need to keep in mind when the fears show up: those who truly love you will never expect you to be a 'version' of yourself.

Tip: Open your heart to 'the one'.

CANCER: As a child of the moon, you are more connected to the cosmic currents than the average person. You are gifted with the ability to look beyond the veil. Then why do you give away your power so easily? Why do you doubt your gifts? Today, you're being asked to dig deeper and find that reservoir of strength within. PS: A male mentor in your life could provide you with just the wisdom you need in these moments.

Tip: Find that reservoir of strength within.

LEO: Leo, you are a powerhouse of creative energy, one that is constantly innovating and inspiring others to live their highest potential. This day brings with itself the reminder that there are certain plans that need to be put into action. Don't shy away from taking the dirty work. A Steve Mar-

aboli quote to inspire you to make a fresh start:

Tip: Well done is better than well said.

VIRGO: An Esther Hicks quote to swear by, Virgo: "the only true measure of success is the amount of joy we are feeling." You have created a lush and abundant life for yourself, one that is providing you with material comforts of all kinds. But is it evoking a feeling of joy within you? Is it inspiring you to follow your ikigai and look at the world in a different light?

Tip: Break out of the rut.

LIBRA: This week brings with itself blow-your-mind news on the work front! It's all coming together, Libra. Everything you've been working towards is now taking a concrete form. Allow yourself to enjoy the power and prestige that comes from being on the top and see how you can use it for the greater good.

Tip: Get ready to write another success story.

SCORPIO: Fortune favours the brave. Continue to take bold steps in the direction of your dreams, and trust that you will be

rewarded. At the same time, acknowledge your journey and go over the lessons. It is our experiences that make us invincible. Friday also brings with itself joyous tidings on the family front.

Tip: Acknowledge the soul lessons.

SAGITTARIUS: There's a big change coming your way, Sagittarius. Projects will be set into motion, and doors that were previously locked will open themselves. Make the most of the opportunities coming your way. Perfect the art of striking when the iron is hot. Short distance travel may be on the cards for some. If it helps takes your business places, the answer is yes.

Tip: Things are taking a turn for the better.

CAPRICORN: Your beliefs may be different from theirs, but that doesn't mean you can't find a middle ground. Let patience and understanding become your power words. Open the channels of communication so both parties can feel seen and heard. Remember, if they use harsh words or try to hurt you in any way, they

are acting from a space of ignorance.

Tip: Open the channels of communication.

AQUARIUS: A magnetic force is bringing the two of you together. Both love and passion promise to be a constant this weekend, as well as the feeling of having found the one. If you've been in the 'may be' and 'let's see' territory, it's time to confess your love. When in doubt, be your most authentic self. Remember when Mark Darcy looked at Bridget Jones and dropped the line, "No, I like you very much. Just as you are"? That's the kind of connection you want to make space for.

Tip: Let your most authentic self shine.

PISCES: Your mood this weekend: making love, making art, making coffee and making magic. An unconventional romance is on the cards, Pisces, and it promises to inspire your inner artist. Spirituality will also take centre stage for some of you. How would you define spirituality? What are the things that move your soul? Tip: Make love. Make magic.