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SummitTIMES

Vol 05 | Issue 03 | Gangtok | Sunday | 05 January 2020

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RNI No. SIKENG/2016/69420

Pages 8 | ₹ 5

RAINBOW TROUT FESTIVAL AT SRIBADAM

Will transform Rinchenpong, survey already underway: CM

SRIBADAM, 04 JAN (IPR): Chief Minister of Sikkim, PS Tamang attended the valedictory ceremony of the weeklong Rainbow Trout Festival held at Upper Sribadam, West Sikkim, as the chief guest, today. The festival was organised by Sribadam Rainbow Trout Festival Organizing Committee in collaboration with Trout Rearing Cooperative Society Ltd.

Chief Minister, PS Tamang, in his address, marked the event as a significant occasion that closely inclined with the livelihood of the people and future of the locality.

He also congratulated Trout Rearing Cooperative Society for taking initiative of Trout culture in cluster form and expressed happiness on the attractive income generated by the farmers through trout culture and further encouraged people to adopt this lucrative business, comprehensively.

Chief Minister expressed his vision to transform Rinchenpong constituency through Tourism Development and informed that a survey has been completed to take up various developmental activities in the constituency. Chief Minister also assured to open Rambang Check-post with an objective to explore and promote tourism in the West district.

He also informed that the state government has allocated fund of Rs 450 crores under Sikkim Garib Awas Yojana (SGAY) and 100 deserving families will be awarded SGAY house in every constituency. He also as-



sured to provide financial grant for house upgradation after the budget session. He elucidated on Health Insurance Policy un-

der Su-Swastha Yojana for Government employees, pensioners and dependents and added that the state government will intro-

duce health insurance policy for underprivileged family as well.

Chief Minister reiterated his commitment to fulfil all promises made in the election manifesto of ruling party and said that the required fund will be allocated in upcoming budget session to address the major part of the vision document.

Chief Minister also highlighted pro-farmer policies of the state government and shed light on the programme to launch financial incentives for Milk Producers and progressive farmers from upcoming financial year.

He also assured to increase Old Age Pension and to ensure release of pension on monthly basis. Chief Minister, Mr Tamang also announced to provide financial grant of Rs. 5 lakh to the Rainbow Trout Cooperative Society Ltd. Further, he assured to address demands of developmental works submitted by the Chief Patron of the organizing committee, Phurba Tshering Bhutia.

Minister Animal Husbandry and Veterinary Services, Lok Nath Sharma, in his address, said that the region of Sribadam is climatically favourable for trout culture and the farmers are getting attracted with impressive income earned by few of the farmers in the locality.

The trout growers of the Sribadam area will be the richest farmers in the state if they could realise rising demands of trout variety. The Government has

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Satpalji Maharaj meets CM



Golay assures completion of MUSS Centre at Pakyong in 3 yrs

NAMCHI, 04 JAN (IPR): Minister for Tourism, Irrigation, Minor Irrigation, Culture, Watershed Management and Indo-Nepal Uttarakhand River Projects, Government of Uttarakhand, Satpalji Maharaj called on the Chief Minister of Sikkim, Prem Singh Tamang (Golay) at Power Guest House, Jorethang, today.

Present amongst others were Minister for Energy and Power Department, MN Sherpa, MLA Salghari Zoom constituency, Sunita Gazmer, Secretary to CM, SD Dhakal, SDM Namchi, Vishu Lama, SDM Jorethang, RB Bhandari and other state government officials.

During the interaction, a brief meeting was also held wherein the Minister congratulated

the Chief Minister on forming government in the State. He praised the Sikkim Government and spoke highly about the various pilgrimage tourism sites located in the state.

The Chief Minister expressed his gratitude to Satpalji Maharaj for visiting Sikkim and said that having him amongst the Sikkimese people is a wonderful opportunity as he is an exceptional spiritual leader. He also lauded Satpalji Maharaj for his immense knowledge in being an exponent of Manav Dharma.

During the course of the meeting, the Chief Minister assured for the completion of Manav Uthan Sewa Samiti Centre at Pakyong which was started in 2016 and the foundation stone was laid by the then Government.

As there was a dearth of financial assistance provided to the construction Committee, the CM assured that the Centre would be completed within three years and

the financial assistance will be provided to the Committee.

The Chief Minister further directed the Committee to start the construction work of the Centre at the earliest so that the progress would be seen within this financial year. He added that after completion of construction a huge number of pilgrims from various parts of the country would be visiting the Centre in the near future.

While on the other hand, Satpalji Maharaj thanked the CM for his far sighted vision to develop Pakyong as a major pilgrimage destination.

In view of the airport and other infrastructures coming up in Pakyong, the CM asserted that the livelihood of the local people would get enhanced to a large extent.

It may also be recalled that already a five star category resort is being constructed within this financial year by the Taj Group of Hotels in Pakyong.

Demonstration against CAA in Pune

PUNE, JAN 4 (PTI): A protest was staged against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA) and the National Register of Citizens (NRC) in Kothrud area here on Saturday.

Holding placards denouncing the CAA, NRC and the National Population Register (NPR), members of the Yuvak Kranti Dal, Professional Congress, National Students Union of India, Aam Admi Party and others took part in the protest.

They demanded that the CAA, which offers citizenship to non-Muslim refugees from Pakistan, Bangladesh and Afghanistan, be scrapped.

Sandip Barve, a member of the Yuvak Kranti Dal, said the demonstration had been organised under the umbrella of 'We The People Of India', an anti-CAA grouping.

Namprikdang Namsoong Festival concludes

WANGCHUK BHUTIA MANGAN, 04 JAN:

The final day of the three-day Namprikdang Namsoong Festival at Namprikdang ground, Dzongu in North Sikkim was attended by Speaker SLA, LB Das as chief guest. Also present were Minister Roads & Bridges Department, Samdup Lepcha who is also the chief patron of NNCC, Chungkipo Lepcha, Patron NNCC, DC North, TT Kaleon, officials from various departments and the general public.

During the function, Lepcha book "Suing Faat-lyestsas" written by Tempa Lepcha was released by Roads & Bridges Minister, Samdup Lepcha.



Colourful cultural programmes were presented by different dance troupes.

In his speech, the chief guest said that Lepchas are rich in culture and traditions and further extended his best

wishes on the occasion of Namsoong.

The function wound up with the vote of thanks delivered by Jay Jay Lepcha.

The chief guest also attended prayers conducted by a bongthing

and also visited the Lepcha traditional museum.

The last day of the festival also had cultural show, release of music video, raffle declaration, final match of football tournament and musical night.

Mosque in Kerala chosen as venue for Hindu marriage

ALAPPUZHA, JAN 4 (PTI): A mosque near here is set to witness a rare camaraderie when it will soon open its gates for a traditional Hindu marriage.

The wedding of Anju (22), daughter of Bindhu and late Ashokan, would take place on January 19 on the premises of the Cheruvally Muslim Jamaat mosque as per Hindu rituals.

The family of the bride, who is from a financially poor background, had sought the help of the mosque committee to conduct the wedding.

"The mosque com-

mittee will gift 10 sovereigns of gold and Rs two lakh to Anju as a wedding gift. The marriage will take place according to the Hindu rituals. We have also arranged food for around 1,000 people," secretary of Cheruvally Jamaat committee Nujumudeen Alummoottil told PTI.

The family, which stays near the mosque, has been facing a lot of hardships after the death of Ashokan in 2018, he said. "I've personally helped their younger child study.

This time, the request was given to the

mosque committee as the expenses for a marriage are quite high. So, the committee decided to assist the family," Nujumudeen said.

The bridegroom Sarath Sasi would marry Anju during the auspicious time between 11.30 am and 12.30 pm on January 19 on the mosque premises.

In the wedding card which went viral in social media, the Jamaat committee has said it will be conducting the wedding as per the family's request and invited everyone to take part in the function.

Protests marked 2019 in many of Delhi's universities

SALONI BHATIA

NEW DELHI, DEC 30 (PTI): The year 2019 saw several protests in universities in the national capital as students and teachers took this route to voice their dissent on a gamut of issues.

While the Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) students opposed the hostel fee hike terming it as "arbitrary", Delhi University faculty resorted to 'satyagraha' to demand absorption of ad-hoc teachers.

Jamia Millia Islamia, which does not have a students' union, saw the students uniting with members of the civil society and taking to streets to raise their voice against the amended citizenship law. The demonstrations also

saw bitter confrontations between the police and the agitators.

From painting graffiti on walls of the vice-chancellor's office to boycotting exams, from taking out marches to Parliament and Rashtrapati Bhawan that were stopped midway to protesting outside the convocation venue leading to HRD Minister Ramesh Pokriyal 'Nishank' being stranded for over six hours, JNU students left no stone unturned to ensure that the fee hike was rolled back.

The JNU Students' Union went on a strike in November, boycotting all academic activities, against the fee hike which meant that students would have to pay service and utility charges.

Despite two partial rollbacks offered by the varsity, the situation continues to remain the same with students sleeping outside the schools to ensure that no academic activity can happen.

The protests against fee hike also reached the neighbouring campus of the Indian Institute of Mass Communication where students opposed the "exorbitant" fees.

Jamia Millia Islamia also erupted in protests albeit for a cause that had triggered a nationwide stir -- the new citizenship law.

So much so, that the varsity even postponed its exams and declared winter break for students after the first protest saw stone pelting by the agitators and use of tear gas by the

police in response.

A day after the varsity postponed the exams and declared the winter break, the protests outside the varsity, apparently organised by some outsiders, assumed serious proportions. Following violence and arson, police uses tear gas and force to quell them.

In order to look for 'outsiders', police barged into the campus, apparently in the library and baton charged even students, who were studying there, the videos of which went viral.

The police action received criticism from the varsity authorities, rights groups, student bodies and teachers' groups.

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check out an experiment with some podcasting from Sikkim.

Visit our website www.summittimes.com or find us on SoundCloud at <https://soundcloud.com/tshering-eden-506860426/stray-thoughts-01>

Second Jorethang Premier Badminton League auction

**SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 04 JAN:**

The auction for the 2nd Jorethang Premier Badminton League [JPBL 2] will be held at Jorethang in South Sikkim on 05 January. Six teams are placing their bids once again for top shuttlers of Sikkim during the auction.

The event is being organized by Badminton Association of Jorethang [BAJ] in association with Sikkim Krantikari Morcha party's Sports wing & Labour front under the aegis of Badminton Association of Sikkim [BAS]. Minister for Sports & Youth Affairs, Kunga Nima Lepcha

has consented to be the chief guest of the event.

A press release from BAJ president, Jigmey Namgyal mentions that after the huge success of the first edition of JPBL, there are six teams once again bidding for top badminton players from all over Sikkim.

The franchise owners of this year are Dal-lam Express by Minister to Power & Labour Department, MN Sherpa, Poklok Warriors owned by RB Tamang alias Captain Jojo, Salghari Zoom Blockers owned by Zoom-Salghari MLA, Sunita Gajmer, David Warriors

owned by Political Secretary to the Chief Minister, Jacob Khaling and Soreng-Chakung MLA, Aditya Golay, Red Panda GMTS owned by former Minister, GM Gurung and Tsering Sherpa, and United Sikkim Shuttlers owned by Olympian Tarundeep Rai and former Indian

football team skipper, Bhaichung Bhutia.

"The total auction kitty this year is Rs 65,000 and each team will have one woman, four men and six veteran men players. The tournament will be held in the first week of February," it is informed.

Priyanka visits Meerut

MEERUT (UP), JAN 4 (PTI): Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi Vadra on Saturday visited Meerut to meet the families of those killed in violence during protests against the Citizenship Amendment Act. Earlier, the Uttar Pradesh police had stopped Priyanka and her brother Rahul Gandhi from entering the town on December 24, citing prohibitory orders under section 144 CrPC.

At least five people were killed during the protests in Meerut.

NC condemns mob attack on Gurdwara Nankana Sahib

JAMMU, JAN 4 (PTI): The National Conference on Saturday condemned the mob attack on Gurdwara Nankana Sahib in Pakistan, describing it as "most reprehensible".

"Pakistan government should take cognizance of such incidents and occurrences and ensure the safety, security and dignity of minorities across the country in terms of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru-Liaquat Ali Khan agreement," NC Provincial President Devender Singh Rana said in a statement here.

Rana said the National Conference has always stood for Hindu, Muslim, Sikh, Christian and Buddhist unity and would always nurture the high values of secularism.

Gandhi's statue vandalised in Amreli district of Gujarat

AMRELI, JAN 4 (PTI): A statue of Mahatma Gandhi on the banks of Hari Krishna Lake in Gujarat's Amreli district was vandalised by unidentified persons late Friday night, the police said.

The statue was installed in a garden near the lake in 2018.

The lake was built by the Dholakiya Foundation of Surat-based diamond baron Savjibhai Dholakiya. It was inaugurated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in 2017, an official said.

"The incident (vandalising) happened last night.

Efforts are on to identify and nab the culprits. This may be the work of people unhappy with construction of the lake, or some anti-social elements," said sub-inspector Y P Gohil of Lathi police station.

USA Soccer cancels plans for men's team to train in Doha



LOS ANGELES, JAN 4 (AFP): The US Soccer Federation said Friday it had cancelled plans for the men's national team to train in Doha, Qatar, this month "due to the developing situation in the region."

The decision was announced after the United States assassinated top Iranian general Qasem Soleimani, who was killed in an air attack in Iraq's capital Baghdad.

The federation said it was seeking a new site for the training camp, scheduled for January 5-25, in the United States.

The Americans are scheduled to play a friendly match against Costa Rica on February

1 in Carson, California, near Los Angeles.

"We are working with the Qatar Football Association to find an opportunity in the near future for our team to experience Qatar's world-class facilities and hospitality," USA Soccer said in its statement.

US Soccer had hoped the camp in Qatar would give players a chance to check out the country that will host the 2022 World Cup.

US coach Gregg Berhalter had already called 25 players to participate in the training camp, most of them Major League Soccer players.

133 Hindu pilgrims from Pakistan visit Jagannath temple



PURI, JAN 4 (PTI): A group of 133 Hindu pilgrims from Pakistan on Saturday visited the Shree Jagannath Temple here.

The pilgrims included 70 men, 50 women, and 13 children, who reached here on Friday night. They visited the Shree Jagannath Temple and took the blessings of the Trinity Lords.

The delegation will leave for Varanasi on Sunday, one of the members said, adding that they had left Pakistan on December 27. They had

been to Mathura before reaching here.

"It was a long-cherished desire to have darshan of Lord Jagannath. We got the visa with much difficulty. We thank the Indian government for facilitating our visit," said a devotee from Pakistan.

Another woman visitor said, "I prayed before the Lord that the relation between India and Pakistan gets normalised so that we get visa easily to visit Puri and offer prayers to the deities.



M Town Mangan lifts Namprikdang Namsoong football tourney

**SUMMIT REPORT
DZONGU, 04 JAN:**

M Town Mangan defeated Dzongu Football Federation by 2-0 goals in the final match of Namprikdang Namsoong football tournament in Dzongu, North Sikkim. The final match was held today on the last day of the festival.

M Town Mangan lifted the trophy and the cash prize of Rs. 1,20,000. The runner up team has been provided with cash prize of Rs. 60,000 along with trophy.

A total of 24 teams from across the state had participated in the tournament.

IMD forecast return of cold wave in Odisha



BHUBANESWAR, JAN 4 (PTI): The India Meteorological Department (IMD) on Saturday forecast return of cold wave in Odisha within the next two days as many places across the state experienced rainfall and thundershower since Friday.

The minimum temperature is likely to fall gradually by 4 degrees Celsius to 6 degrees Celsius across various districts in Odisha and the maximum temperature likely to be below normal till Monday, the IMD said in its mid-day bulletin on Saturday.

The bulletin also warned of dense fog in the state on Sunday. This

apart, the IMD said that many places in interior and coastal Odisha where rainfall has occurred since Friday will also witness dense fog due to the presence of enough moisture in the atmosphere, the IMD said.

The condition will prevail till January 6, it said.

"There will be rainfall at isolated places in the entire coastal belt and one or two places in the districts of Nabarangpur, Malkangiri, Rayagada, Balangir, Keonjhar, Sonapur, Angul, Dhenkanal and Bargarh on Saturday" the IMD said.

Since Friday, the highest rainfall was recorded

in Talcher at 58 mm followed by Balasore (22.4), Keonjhar (14.8), Angul (12.6), Bhubaneswar (12.3), Phulbani (9.4) and Bhawanipatna (9.2).

Meanwhile, the state government has asked the district collectors to take measures to save people from the cold wave and paddy from the rain.

Paddy cultivation has been severely hit in many coastal districts.

"The district collectors have been asked to submit reports on the crop loss due to unseasonal rains," said revenue and disaster management minister Sudam Marndi.

We could have been more sensitive: Pilot on response to infant deaths in Kota

KOTA (RAJASTHAN), JAN 4 (PTI): Criticising his government over the deaths of 107 children in Kota's state-run JK Lon Hospital, Rajasthan Deputy Chief Minister Sachin Pilot on Saturday said their response to the infant deaths could have been more sensitive.

Pilot said it was not a small incident and also stressed that accountability for the entire episode should be fixed. As many as 107 chil-

dren have died in the hospital. This is very painful. Our response to the entire matter was not satisfactory to some extent. The response could have been more sensitive and we should have been more compassionate, he told reporters.

Pilot, who is also Congress' state party chief, had earlier visited some of the families who lost their children and also went to the hospital.

Will transform...

been distributing supportive facilities and required accessories to enhance production and urged farmers to generate output in the field with the proper utilisation of various facilities being availed by the state government. The state government committed to extend all possible support for marketing in National and International level, he added.

Director, Directorate of Fisheries, Sunil Pradhan presented overview of the trout culture. He mentioned that the trout culture could be a lucrative business for interested farmers. There are 40 units have been constructed within the Sribadam cluster and farmers have been uplifted their economic standard with passion and interest.

The department is determined to enhance production from 12 KG to 20 KG per cubic metre in near future.

Chief Patron of the organizing committee, Phurba Tshering Bhutia proposed welcome address and also placed demands on behalf of Rinchenpong constituency.

Earlier, the Chief Minister visited the Community Hatchery at Upper Sribadam, West Sikkim. He also released "fry" (Seed Production) into the raceway tank. He enquired about the technical aspects of Trout culture and discussed with the officials regarding supportive requirements to increase the trout production in large scale. He was accompanied by the Minister for Animal Husbandry and Veterinary Services, Lok Nath Sharma, Minister PHE, Bhim Hang Limboo, Political Secretary to CM, Jacob Khaling and others.

On the occasion, final match of Trout Festival Volleyball Tournament was also played between Rinchenpong Bazaar and Random Boys from Buksom.

Protests marked...

Following the police action, the gate number 7 of the varsity became a protest site, where students and civil society members continued to voice their dissent in a peaceful way.

From street plays to public gatherings to forming human chain, the protesters have continued their agitation, even in the biting cold.

The police action on the varsity students triggered several other protests with some students even adopting a 'Gandhigiri' way, offer roses to security personnel.

Delhi University also saw protests, but from teachers, who wanted a one-time regulation for absorption of ad-hoc teachers.

The teachers occupied the vice-chancellor's office, painted graffiti on its walls, and stayed put for a few days but were later pushed back by the varsity administration from the building.

They continued their protests outside the vice-chancellors' office in the cold by erecting sheds.

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General land 30X40 (3 Plots) available for sale at Tadong 6th Mile next to Harka Maya College.

Flat Land no cutting required. Price 30 Lakhs (negotiable).

Contact: 9800201335

LAND FOR SALE

A land measuring an area for 50x32 1/2 at Roadside just below housing colony is for sale. It is just a one minute walking distance from Namchi bazaar taxi stand. Interested party may contact 9593373387 and 9434406761

AN APPEAL FOR A SCHOOL BUILDING FOR TAREYTHANG SECONDARY SCHOOL

Respected Sir,

Through the Column of your esteemed daily, we the general public as well as the Bering Tareythang Gram Panchayat Unit would like to inform you that we are in urgent need of a school building for Tareythang Secondary School [under Chujachen constituency] which was damaged by Earthquake of 2011.

The old GCI-roofed school building constructed for a Junior High School level has developed major cracks on the walls and the corroded roof has developed several leakag-

in 2015-16, no new school building has been constructed. The school is currently running its classes from temporary sheds. Both, the heat and frequent rain, limits student access to schooling. Due to the lack of school building facilities and equipment, the learning conditions

are suboptimal. We request a three storied school building consisting of twelve rooms. With this it could be sufficient to run regular classes as



well as accommodate a laboratory and library. We seek a new school building with proper facilities not only to shelter students but also motivate parents to enrol their children in the school.

- On behalf of

the general public of Bering Tareythang Gram Panchayat Unit, East Sikkim

es (Photographs enclosed for your ready reference). Although the School was upgraded

are suboptimal. We request a three storied school build-

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Thousands in shelters as Indonesia flood death toll hits 53

Indonesian rescue teams flew helicopters stuffed with food to remote flood-hit communities on Saturday as the death toll from the disaster jumped to 53 and fears grew about the possibility of more torrential rain.

Tens of thousands in Jakarta were still unable to return to their waterlogged homes after some of the deadliest flooding in years hit the enormous capital region, home to about 30 million.

In neighbouring Lebak, where half a dozen people died, police and military personnel dropped boxes of instant noodles and other supplies into remote communities inaccessible by road after bridges were destroyed.

“It’s tough to get supplies in there... and there are about a dozen places hit by landslides,” Banten police chief Tomsu Tohir told AFP.

“That is why we’re using helicopters although there aren’t any landing spots.”

Local health centre chief Suropto, who goes by one name, said injured residents were flowing into his clinic.

“Some of them were wounded after they were swept away by floods and hit with wood and rocks,” he said.

Around Jakarta, more than 170,000 people took refuge in shelters across the massive urban conglomeration after whole neighbourhoods were submerged.

Torrential rains that started on New Year’s



Eve unleashed flash floods and landslides in the region and Lebak at the south end of Java island.

On Saturday, Indonesia’s disaster agency said the death toll had climbed to 53 with one person still missing.

“We’ve discovered more dead bodies,” said National Disaster Mitigation Agency spokesman Agus Wibowo.

- “Trauma healing” - Jakarta shelters filled up with refugees, including infants, resting on thin mats as food and drinking water ran low.

Some had been reduced to using floodwater for cleaning.

“We’re cleaning ourselves in a nearby church but the timing has been limited since it uses an electric generator for power,” said Trima Kanti, 39, from one refuge in Jakarta’s western edges.

In hard-hit Bekasi, on the eastern outskirts of Jakarta, swampy streets were littered with debris and crushed cars lying on top of each other -- with waterline marks reaching as high as the second floors of buildings.

On Friday, the government said would start cloud seeding to the west of the capital -- inducing rain using chemicals sprayed from planes -- to prevent approaching rainfall from pounding the region.

Waters had receded in many areas and power was being restored in hundreds of districts.

The health ministry has said it had deployed some 11,000 health workers and soldiers to distribute medicine, disinfectant hygiene kits and food in a bid to stave off outbreaks of Hepatitis A, mosquito-borne Dengue fever and other

illnesses, including infections linked to contact with dead animals.

Visiting hard-hit Lebak, Coordinating Human Development and Culture Minister Muhadjir Effendy said the government would help rebuild destroyed schools and construct temporary bridges, while offering assistance to victims.

“We’re also asking for NGOs (non-governmental organisations) to help with trauma healing,” Muhadjir told reporters on Saturday.

- Electrocution, drowning -

Around Jakarta, a family -- including a four- and nine-year-old -- died of suspected gas poisoning from a portable power generator, while an eight-year-old boy was killed in a landslide.

Others died from drowning or hypothermia, while one 16-year-

old boy was electrocuted by a power line. Jakarta is regularly hit by floods during the rainy season, which started in late November. But this week marked Jakarta’s deadliest flooding since 2013 when dozens were killed after the city was inundated by monsoon rains.

Urban planning experts said the disaster was partly due to record rainfall.

But Jakarta’s myriad infrastructure problems, including poor drainage and rampant overdevelopment, worsened the situation, they said.

Indonesian President Joko Widodo has announced a plan to move the country’s capital to Borneo island to take pressure off Jakarta, which suffers from some of the world’s worst traffic jams and is fast sinking due to excessive groundwater extraction.

Newa language winter course begins in Singtam



SUMMIT REPORT SINGTAM, 04 JAN: Special winter classes for Newa language began at Singtam today. The month-long course is being organised by Newa Bhay Bowneykuthi of Singtam.

The organisation had also conducted winter and summer classes on Newa language, culture and cuisine last year. More than 60 participants had enrolled for

the courses then.

“Language is the most important factor for the survival of a community and it is our responsibility to come forward and work towards its preservation. It was in the interest and request of many that we decided to continue the courses this winter too,” informs Binod Pradhan of NBB in a press release.

Newa Bhay Bowneykuthi is an organisation

of the Newar community of Singtam.

Mahendra Pradhan, Motor Vehicle Inspector, Rangpo, was present as chief guest today accompanied by actor Uttam Pradhan as guest of honour.

More than forty participants have registered for the course which is being conducted by Nisha Pradhan, a Newa language teacher from Sadam.

Sommer Ray Tells Her Fitness Story While Working Out In A Skimpy Two-Piece Outfit

Sommer Ray regularly shows her 23.5 million Instagram followers how she stays in such fine shape. On the first day of the new year, the fitness model took to the social media platform to illustrate how strong she is by pushing a man more than twice her size across a gym floor using only her brute force.

However, that was just one of the ways in which Sommer works out. In her most recent

post, the 23-year-old go-getter uploaded a video that quickly and succinctly told her fitness story while introducing her new mobile app. She did this as she worked out on various gym apparatuses such as a treadmill and various types of barbells. While she spoke and exercised, the hard worker put her enviable booty on display as she rocked a two-piece ensemble that also featured a crop top that left her taut and toned

stomach bare. When discussing her background, Sommer started at the beginning of that journey. She said she got hooked on working out when she was really little because she was “a daddy’s girl” who wanted to be with her father as much as possible. That meant joining him in their gym, located in the basement of their house, to accompany the veteran bodybuilder as he went through his ritualistic paces.

Krypton Arts Society distributes warm clothes to needy

YOGEN THATAL SINGTAM, 04 JAN: Krypton Arts Society of Sikkim, Singtam, distributed warm clothes to people in need on 03

Jan. The distribution program was led by the Society’s president, Kripesh Singh accompanied by Sudarsan Subba and Abinash Singh.

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NOTICE

This is to inform all that the nine days theater workshop cum acting course is going to be held at Gram Prashasan Kendra for age between 08-18 years old under CHILD FRIENDLY GPU from 4th to 12th January 2020.

Interested participants may apply for registration.

Indian Hotels Company signs its second hotel in Gangtok

SUMMIT REPORT GANGTOK, 04 JAN: Indian Hotels Company (IHCL), South Asia’s largest hospitality company, announced the signing of a 50-room Vivanta Hotel in Gangtok, Sikkim, a press release informs. This hotel is a management contract with Skipping Stones Private Limited. IHCL has eleven hotels in the North East region, West Bengal and Bhutan.

The hotel is located at Pakyong, Gangtok’s neighbouring town and is a short drive from the new Pakyong Airport. Spread over 3.5 acres, it is situated amidst thick forests on a hill top with stunning valley views. The spacious rooms are built around a large open air courtyard. The swimming pool is set amidst lush greenery. The other features include a multi-cuisine

restaurant, recreation facilities and modern meeting spaces. Gangtok, the capital of Sikkim, is a gateway for all tourism in the region. Sikkim is famous for fascinating views of the Himalayas including Mount Kanchenjunga, numerous streams, meadows, lakes, hot springs and high altitude passes. It also boasts of around 5000 varieties of flowers and rare wild life.

Delhi govt run schools hold ‘mega PTM’



NEW DELHI, JAN 4 (PTI): Delhi government-run schools held a “mega PTM” on Saturday to brief parents about their children’s progress and also to take their feedback.

Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal interacted with the parents and guardians during the PTM at Sarvodaya Bal Vidyalaya, Rouse Avenue.

“The PTM procedures in Delhi government schools were only on paper. We have started holding regular PTMs in schools. Parents and teachers are satisfied because they get to dis-

cuss the progress and growth of students. This way, parents take a keen interest in the studies of their wards. I am happy to interact with parents, and this PTM is also an eye-opener for students,” Kejriwal said.

On opposition leaders’ allegations on the ‘Mega PTM’ being a political gimmick, Kejriwal said, “How can imparting good education to our children be a political gimmick? We have been holding regular PTMs since the last two-three years. They tried to end these PTMs but I don’t think politics on school-

ing and education is justified.” He said that earlier people had an inferiority complex about their children studying in government schools because of lack of financial resources.

“Earlier parents wanted to admit their wards in private schools through recommendation, now they want to admit their wards in government schools through recommendation,” he said. Launched in 2016, the mega PTM is aimed at opening up communication platform for the teachers and parents of children.

Annual discretionary fund of MP ministers increased

BHOPAL, JAN 4 (PTI): The Madhya Pradesh government on Saturday doubled the annual discretionary fund of cabinet ministers from Rs 50 lakh to Rs one crore, and that of ministers of state from Rs 35 lakh to Rs 60 lakh.

The decision was taken at a cabinet meeting chaired by Chief Minister Kamal Nath, said an

official. “The cabinet has approved a proposal to increase the annual discretionary fund for cabinet ministers to Rs one crore from current Rs 50 lakh. The discretionary fund of ministers of state has been increased to Rs 60 lakh from Rs 35 lakh,” the Public Relations Department official said.

He said the Mukhyamantri Karmachari

Swasthya Bima Yojana, a health insurance scheme for the state government employees, was also approved at the meeting.

“This will benefit 12.55 state government employees, including those on contract. Under this scheme, employees and their families can avail medical treatment of up to Rs 10 lakh,” he added.

DATE: 03-01-2020

FIRST ROUND OF THE TOURNAMENT (SOUTH- WEST)

VENUES: NAMCHI SINGITHANG PLAYGROUND AND DENTAM PUBLIC PLAYGROUND

FIXTURE- II

Venue: Namchi Singithang Playground (South District Constituencies)

Tumin Lingee	6/1/2020; 1:30 PM	E	Burfung	6/1/2020; 11:30 AM	F
Melli	8/1/2020; 11:30 AM		Temi Namping	8/1/2020; 1:30 PM	
Namchi Singithang	7/1/2020; 11:30 AM		Namthang Rateypani	7/1/2020; 1:30 PM	
Rangang Yangang			Poklok Kamrang		

Venue: Dentam Public Playground (West District Constituencies)

Rinchenpong	6/1/2020; 11:30 AM	G	Gyalshing Bernyak	6/1/2020; 1:30 PM	H
Salghari Zoom	8/1/2020; 1:30 PM		Daramdin	8/1/2020 11:30 AM	
Yoksam Tashiding	7/1/2020; 1:30 PM		Maneybong Dentam	7/1/2020; 11:30 AM	
Yangthang			Soreng Chakung		

Note:

- The first round matches will be played at Namchi Singithang and Dentam Public Playground for South & West constituencies respectively.
- The duration of the matches will be 35-10-35 minutes
- Matches will be played as per FIFA Rules
- Organizing committee reserve the right to reschedule the fixture (if required)
- Every player should show their Voter ID Card at the time of Technical check up (if player is under 18 years than Aadhar Card)
- Each Team should submit one constituency flag (6x4 feet) during registration.

Address Mental Health Issues, Now

...because it is only for so long that issues can be ignored

We are now two decades into a new millennium and yet, the more prevailing concepts of mental health remain rooted in millennias past. Look around, the term mental illness most often triggers association with terms such as Down's Syndrome, autism or cerebral palsy, instead of schizophrenia or bipolar disorder. Not many are aware that the former constitute developmental or mental or intellectual disability, while the latter are two of the most commonly occurring mental illnesses. Yes, there are many more terms and conditions we now know of, but there is still no real understanding of mental health despite all the improved access to information and "knowledge".

The lack of knowledge of what mental 'illness' connotes and the difference between it and mental 'disability' is one of the reasons why most people with ailments such as schizophrenia or bipolar disorder or even depression do not get the assistance and support they require. It is not just ignorance that proves a hindrance, it is almost always stigma associated with admission that a member of the family is mentally ill and needs medical intervention, that acts as a deterrent. It is still common to have people bracket a mentally-ill person as insane if one visits a psychiatrist.

Even if the patient meets a psychiatrist once or on a regular basis, this fact is usually kept a secret from friends and neighbours and often even the rest of the family. The reason for this is that the survivor could well be ostracized from the community, workplace or educational institution once knowledge of the illness becomes public. Even if these don't happen, the stigma proves reason enough. The family might mean well in cushioning them, but even their refusal to recognize mental illness as a medical condition requiring care and cure and not stigma and shame pushes the ill in need of hope and medical attention further away and doubting their own sanity.

It is still common to find families hide not only the illness but even the mentally ill relative, conveying thereby that they are considered an embarrassment or burden incapable of social interactions or displaying 'appropriate' behaviour. Such social discrimination, experts believe, could lead to contemplation or attempt of suicide among many.

Instead, if patients received sustained emotional support from the family, something which not all survivors of mental illness are blessed enough to have, they could lead healthy productive lives. Yes, there are instances when a mentally ill person refuses to take medication and displays clear symptoms such as mood swings, hallucinations, nightmares or paranoia, all of which make it tough for the family to deal with the situation. And this is why, as much as medication is required, what is also important is counseling, and not just for the patient, but equally for the caregivers and members of the immediate family. It is also crucial to remember that a mentally ill person is aware of her situation and is often fighting a lonely battle, especially with her mind and body owing to the ailment. Empathy is always advised.

And yes, it would be good if effective policy interventions were taken but governments have traditionally dragged their feet. Sample this, the District Mental Health Program, the idea for which was mooted in 1982 but which was launched only in 1996. And then there is the Mental Health Bill which followed in 2013 which was more progressive and inclusive in comparison with the existing Mental Health Act 1987. But even this one is still a Bill, lacking the political urgency in content or context which pushed Citizenship Amendment Bill so quickly into an Act.

Any step forward is welcome because as things stand, only a fraction of the mentally ill receive medical attention. Since most people cannot afford private practitioners, it is necessary to provide affordable and accessible healthcare to all, irrespective of the nature of the ailment and the socio-economic status, and given the divisive tendencies at the Central level, the identity/ status of the patient.

WRITE US:

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

Mail us at: news@summittimes.com

Why There's a Separate World Chess Championship for Women

ALEXEY W. ROOT
theconversation.com

The Women's World Chess Championship match is from January 3-26, 2020. The first six games will be played in Shanghai, China and the remaining six games, plus any tiebreak games, will be played in Vladivostok, Russia. The match features Women's World Champion Ju Wenjun of China against challenger Aleksandra Goryachkina, of Russia. Here, Alexey Root, a lecturer teaching courses about chess in education at The University of Texas at Dallas, answers questions about the Women's World Chess Championship.

1. When did the Women's World Chess Championship begin?

The Fédération Internationale des Échecs (FIDE) was established in 1924 and, in 1927, held the first Women's World Championship and the Men's Olympiad. According to Mark Weeks, who served as the Chess Guide for About.com, FIDE organized just these two events for its first two decades. Eventually, FIDE gained control of other prestigious chess events, most notably the World Chess Championship.

The present Women's World Chess Championship cycle parallels the World Chess Championship cycle. The World Chess Championship cycle is open to both men and women, though only men have reached its final stage, a two-person match for the champion's title. Preliminary stages include the Candidates Tournament, an eight-player double round robin where the winner becomes the challenger for a title match.

2. In most sports, such as tennis, golf, basketball and the like, there are separate categories or leagues for women because men tend to have some sort of inherent physical advantage. Why is there a

separate championship for women in chess when chess is about decisions as opposed to muscle mass and physical speed?

Most chess tournaments are open, to all ages, all genders, and all nationalities. In the United States, the annual "U.S. Open" is one example. However, segregated championships exist, by age (junior championships), geography (state chess championships), by gender, and even by profession (U.S. Armed Forces Open Chess Championship). These segregated tournaments allow those playing to get media attention, benefit financially, and make friends with people with whom they share some similar characteristics. Separate tournaments don't speak to whether there are advantages or disadvantages.

Likewise, separate tournaments for girls and women don't mean that girls and women are more or less capable than boys and men at chess. However, there may be less interest in chess among girls and women compared to boys and men. Based on 2019 statistics, 14.6% of US Chess members are female, and that is a new, record-high percentage. Thus logically, and in reality, a smaller base of females means fewer women than men at the top of the chess rating list, as one study found. Offering occasional female-only tournaments may make chess more attractive to girls and women, for the financial, social, and publicity reasons mentioned above.

3. What would happen if there was no separate world chess championship for women?

The Women's World Chess Championship match is the culmination of a two-year cycle of events. Those events financially help the current top women players to concentrate on chess exclusively, as there is prize money for each event in the cycle. If the cycle were abolished, then it would be much harder for those women players to make

money from playing in chess tournaments. Women would also become relatively invisible in media stories about chess.

A four-time Women's World Chess Champion, Hou Yifan, is ranked at #75 among men and women combined. Though she is the highest-rated woman on the list of active chess players, as #75 she likely would not qualify for the Candidates Tournament in the World Chess Championship cycle and the prize money and media attention associated with it. Sponsorship money might also be lost to the chess world, as some sponsors specifically target chess for girls and women.

However, segregated tournaments for girls and women are not universally supported. For example, Judit Polgár, the highest-rated woman of all time who at her peak in 2005 was ranked #8 in the world, wrote that she makes it a point to never separate girls and boys – nor award special prizes for girls – in the children's tournaments that she organizes. "Meanwhile, national federations use their resources, and public subsidies are creating more female-only competitions," Polgár wrote. "It is high time to consider the consequences of this segregation – because in the end, our goal must be that women and men compete with one another on an equal footing."

To get to equal footing, however, separate championships may provide a leg up. The prize fund for the Women's World Chess Championship match is 500,000 Euros, and you can follow the championship's games at this same link. Perhaps that prize money will enable the two competitors to invest in more chess training for themselves so that maybe, someday, they can compete also in the World Chess Championship.

[the writer is Lecturer in Education, University of Texas at Dallas]



Hate exercise? Small increases in physical activity can make a big difference

LIBBY RICHARDS
theconversation.com

A new year typically brings new resolutions. While making resolutions is easy, sticking with them is not. Exercise-related resolutions consistently make the top 10 list, but up to 80% of resolutions to be healthier, including promises to exercise more, are tossed aside by February.

You know physical activity is good for you. But, that isn't always enough to get or keep you moving. You're not alone. Fewer than half of American adults are as active as they should be.

How active should you be? The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommend that adults get at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity physical activity every week.

So, let's think about physical activity in a different way. As a nurse who researches exercise, I can tell you that it is likely the closest thing to a fountain of youth or a magic pill that you will have in your lifetime.

BENEFITS TO ALL PARTS OF YOUR BODY

Research shows that every single system in the body benefits when you are more active. You sleep better. You have more energy. You find yourself in a better mood. You think more clearly and remember better. Your bones become stronger. Your body also responds better to insulin, which lowers your risk of diabetes. And you significantly reduce your risk for many cancers. All of that is in addition to the better known weight and heart benefits of physical activity.

Bottom line: If you want to live a long and healthy life, you need to be active.

But "that's easier said than done," you might be saying to yourself. In fact, increasing your physical activity

is probably easier than you think. You don't need to buy expensive equipment or join a gym. And you will begin to reap the rewards of physical activity almost as soon as you start. Adding small amounts of movement to your daily routine goes a long way.

Brisk walking, at a pace of at least a 20-minute mile, provides health benefits similar to running, and probably more social benefits. Plus, your risk of injury is much lower. And you can walk – for free with nothing more than comfortable shoes – from almost anywhere: your neighborhood, your office, or in lieu of waiting behind the wheel of your car in the pickup line at your kid's school. A 22-minute walk every day, or two 11-minute ones, would put you just over 150 minutes every week.

It isn't cheating to break your 150 minutes a week into small increments. In fact, even for people who are physically fit and exercise every day, breaking up periods of sitting is critically important. Even if you are getting enough exercise, sitting for the rest of the day can undo the health benefits of your workout. If you aren't yet ready to aim for 2.5 hours of brisk walking each week, reducing the time you spend sitting would be a great starting goal.

SETTING OTHER GOALS

Many experts who work with clients or patients to set goals use the acronym SMART (specific, measurable, attainable, realistic and time-based) to guide goal-setting. This simple method could help you achieve a goal to sit less and move more in the new year:

- Be specific. Rather than just "sit less, move more," include when you will start and how will you do it. Specify what actions you will take to

meet your goal. For example, make a list of how you can get more steps in each day by doing specific things, like taking the stairs instead of the elevator.

- Make it measurable. Again, "less" and "more" are hard to measure. Instead, try "Walk for 5 minutes after every hour of sitting." Without a way to measure your goal, it becomes hard to know when you have achieved it.
- Make it attainable. If you currently don't exercise at all, 150 minutes a week may not be realistic. How about three 20-minute walks per week? You can slowly increase after you achieve that first goal. And choose an activity you might enjoy. If you already know you hate running, a goal to do it every day would be less attainable.
- Set realistic goals. Your new activity goal should work for you and fit within your lifestyle. It's great to challenge yourself, but break up challenging goals into smaller, more realistic, goals to help keep on track.
- Set a time by which you will meet your goal. For example, will you take a certain number of steps by noon each day? Or, will you build up to 150 minutes a week by mid-April? You're more likely to achieve short-term goals that lead into a long-term one.

One of the best ways to keep up with your efforts is to track your progress. You can do it with pen and paper, in a journal, or in one of many

smartphone apps. As you see yourself making progress, it can be easier to keep up the routine.

EXPAND YOUR VIEW OF EXERCISE

Another thing to keep in mind is that you don't have to go a gym to get moving. There are ways to make exercise part of your lifestyle, without too much inconvenience.

- Get the family involved. Play tag, go on a scavenger hunt at a local park, or walk to your favorite hangout.
- Park farther away from your workplace, the store, the library, etc.
- Walk during your breaks at work and over your lunch period.
- Instead of having coffee with friends, take a walk with them.
- Whenever you are on the phone, stand up and walk around.
- If you are at your kid's or grandkid's sporting event, walk the sidelines instead of sitting on the bleachers.
- Try to find ways to make walking more meaningful. For example, try walking your own dog or a shelter dog. Dogs make great exercise companions that will never turn down an opportunity to walk.

As you undertake the big change from being inactive to becoming active, understand that setbacks happen. Don't let one slip-up derail your whole goal. When possible, have a backup plan to deal with barriers like weather or time constraints. And celebrate the small victories you make toward reaching longer-term goals.

[the writer is Associate Professor of Nursing, Purdue University]

Civil society groups, officials, Opposition decry AFSPA extension in Nagaland

KOHIMA, JAN 4 (PTI): Various Naga civil society groups, state government officials and opposition parties have expressed displeasure over the extension of the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act, 1958 in Nagaland by another six months.

The Centre issued a notification on December 30 last year extending the law in Nagaland till July-end which empowers security forces to conduct operations anywhere and arrest anyone without any prior notice.

The Union Home Ministry had said in the notification that the central government is of the opinion that the area comprising the whole state of Nagaland is in such a “disturbed and dangerous” condition that the use of armed forces in aid of civil power is necessary.

However, state government officials, Opposition and organisations like Naga Hoho, Naga Mothers’ Association (NMA), Naga Students’ Federation (NSF) and Nagaland Tribes Council (NTC) have expressed resentment over the move.

The state government always objects to the extension of AFSPA in Nagaland as and when the Union government seeks the state’s opinion before declaring Nagaland a ‘disturbed area’, but the law is extended every year and now it has become a routine exercise, a top government official told PTI on condition of anonymity.

“As the state govern-



ment, we have been objecting to the extension of AFSPA and even this time we did so when the Union Home Ministry sought our views.

“The state government doesn’t want AFSPA but we are not aware if the Centre is looking at wider issues unknown to the state,” the official said.

Opposition leader and former chief minister, TR Zeliang sarcastically said Nagas got the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2019 as a “Christmas gift” instead of peace accord between Naga groups and the Centre and now extension of AFSPA has come as a “New Year’s package”.

Naga Hoho general secretary K Elu Ndong said AFSPA is not relevant anymore in a civilised society and its applicability has no place in the modern world.

“AFSPA is only a means to terrorise and create fear among innocent people,” he said.

India being the largest democracy must live on the values of democracy and in the true spirit of secularism, Ndong said.

NMA president Abei-u Meru told PTI, “I don’t see any reason or situation why AFSPA was extended in Nagaland. Is it to please the security forces?”

The NSF media cell condemned the move in a statement.

“A peaceful state like Nagaland is painted in a picture of chaos and lawlessness by the Centre’s notification, as the world is witness to the fact that Nagaland is not what it is made to look by the ill-intended notification of the central government.

“The extension of AFSPA is not for the main-

tenance of law and order in Nagaland but only a diabolic attempt of the Centre to further the suppression of the Naga people through militarisation and to encourage the numerous abuses and serious human rights violations by the armed forces which has been ongoing for many years,” it said.

The NSF also questioned “the overarching approach of the central government in extending the inhumane Act as law and order is the subject matter of the state government.”

The federation also reiterated its long-standing view that the AFSPA violates the Constitution as infringes upon the fundamental rights of the citizens and that the law must be repealed.

NTC general secretary Nribemo Ngullie, when contacted, said, “What NTC is confused

is that Nagas are passing through the political negotiations with the Government of India (GoI) and according to the commitment given by the GoI, settlement should have already been made but it is getting delayed because of one or the other technical reasons.” He said that extension of AFSPA while giving hope for a settlement of the Naga political issue is “like handing over an olive branch or a piece of bread on one hand with a stick on the other.”

“When we want peace...there should be total peace but the Nagas have been continuously threatened by AFSPA for the past 70 years, and the fear psychosis continues.

“There is no peace in our minds under the draconian law and it is time that the GoI thinks how to soften AFSPA,” Ngullie added.

Bengal governor seeks probe into firework unit explosion

KOLKATA, JAN 4 (PTI): West Bengal Governor Jagdeep Dhankhar on Saturday demanded a probe into an explosion at a firework unit in the state that caused four deaths, saying the administration should be held accountable as there are allegations that crude bombs were being manufactured in

the factory.

Four persons, including two women, were killed on the spot and one was seriously injured in an explosion at a firework manufacturing unit in Naihati in North 24 Parganas district on Friday, police said.

“Several deaths in blasts at factory at Masjidpara, Naihati has

pained and shocked me. Allegations that crude bombs were being made in illegal factory warrants intense expert probe. Accountability of all in the administration needs to be fixed promptly,” the governor said in a statement.

Police has already launched an investigation into the case.

Childrens film in Konkani gets recognition

Mangaluru, Jan 4 (PTI): A childrens film in Konkani Apsara Dhara, produced and directed by Ramesh Kamath from Bengaluru, has received recognition from various international film festivals.

On January 2, the film won the outstanding achievement award and best director award for Kamath at the Singapore world film festival.

Apsara Dhara has also been selected to the international childrens film festival in Bangladesh to be held in Dhaka in March.

Apsara Dhara was the first Konkani film to be shot partly in Egypt in front of pyramids and



sphinx in Cairo and a few scenes were shot in 3D.

Most parts of the film were shot in 4K in Uttara Kannada districts dense forest of Sirsi.

Theatre release in Dakshina Kannada is being planned for March, a release from the producer here said.

The film was selected and screened at the Kol-

kata International Film Festival on November 14, 2019 on Childrens Day.

In December 2019, it was screened at DMOFF International Film Festival in Florida, US.

The film also won an award as Best Children Experimental Film at LAge dOr International Arthouse Film Festival (LI-AFF) in December 2019.

Freedom fighter Bhim Chandra Jana dies at 107

HOWRAH (WB), JAN 4 (PTI): Centenarian freedom fighter Bhim Chandra Jana has died of old age-related ailments in West Bengal’s Howrah district, family sources said. He died at his residence in Marotala under Shyampur police station limits on Friday, they said.

Jana was 107 and is survived by six sons and six daughters and their children.

His wife Latika Jana died earlier.

The freedom fighter’s youngest son Ashok Jana said his father was arrested for the first time in 1930 at the age of 17 while opposing the use of foreign goods.

“Father was brought to Jagacha police station in Howrah district where he met Deshbandhu



Chittaranjan Das and his wife Basanti Devi who inspired him to take a plunge into Swadeshi Movement. He was later lodged at Hijli and Alipore prisons,” Ashok Jana said.

He said Bhim Chandra Jana was known as ‘Nanu’ to other freedom fighters of Bengal.

Jana was awarded by

the Government of India after Independence and was an avowed Gandhian all his life, the freedom fighter’s grandson Krishnendu Jana said.

Local MLA Kalipada Mandal visited the residence of the freedom fighter to pay respects.

The freedom fighter’s body was cremated on Friday night, his son said.

Anti-CAA protest in Hyd; hundreds take out march

HYDERABAD, JAN 4 (PTI): Hundreds of people on Saturday marched towards the Dharna Chowk in the central part of the city to protest against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, National Register of Citizens (NRC) and the National Population Register (NPR).

On the busy road from Masab Tank to the Dharna Chowk, the protesters travelled in cars, two-wheelers and by walk, raising slogans, including against the CAA.

Some of them held

national flags in their hands and also placards that read ‘No CAA, No NRC and ‘Boycott CAA, NPR & NRC’.

A protester said the event is being organised by 40 organisations and that common people participated in it.

Some protesters distributed pamphlets which said the CAA discriminated against Muslims.

Police gave permission for a public meeting to be organised at the Dharna Chowk against the CAA, NRC and NPR.

Plaza takes Churchill to top of I-League table

MARGAO, JAN 4 (PTI): Prolific Trinidadian Willis Deon Plaza headed home a 90th-minute winner to script Churhill Brothers’ 1-0 win over East Bengal (QEB) that took them to the top of the I-League points table, here on Saturday. Churchill now have three wins from four games while the Kolkata-based side dropped to third with eight points from five.

The game looked like meandering towards a draw but Plaza struck his fourth of the season after coming close on at least three occasions earlier in the game. Churchill’s Portuguese coach Fernando Tavares rang in wholesale changes as did his Spanish counterpart Alejandro Menendez Garcia.

East Bengal were playing after a long three-week break but Churchill’s previous outing was a heart-breaking last-minute loss

to the Indian Arrows. The visitors earned five corners compared to Churchill’s one in the first half-hour. The referee also had a busy half having to flash his card as many as three times. It ended with a Plaza flash strike but the scoreline remained goalless.

Plaza tried to break the deadlock in the 62nd minute but missed from close, two minutes later, he hit the cross-bar.

It was Bengal’s turn to hit back with Crespi’s crisp right-footer thudding the Churchill bar in the 85th minute and Espada, a minute later, missed the target from a lay-off from Colado. Finally, a measured cross from super-sub Israil Gurung, who came in late in the second half, found a lurking Plaza who banged it home past a diving Lalthuammawia Ralte to dent the Red & Gold’s unbeaten run.

Have never been afraid of getting trolled: Nusrat Jahan



KOLKATA, JAN 4 (PTI): Actress-politician Nusrat Jahan has said that she has never been afraid of being trolled and raising her voice for any social cause.

Jahan, a Trinamool Congress MP, had been heavily trolled in the social media for wearing vermilion and sporting ‘mangalsutra’, emblems of Hindu matrimony, at her oath-taking ceremony in Parliament as MP in June last year.

She was also criticised for taking part in the Rathayatra ceremony of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON).

“I have never been deterred by trolls or afraid of getting trolled ... because I do not give trolling any importance,” Jahan told PTI.

“I have always stood up for voicing my opinions for any cause... I believe in voicing my opinions on incidents occurring in our society,” she said on Saturday.

Jahan was accused of not doing anything for Basirhat, which she represents in Parliament, after she greeted people on the Christmas eve.

Slamming the critics, she had tweeted “Re-check your facts.. in the next 3 months my work will show... change doesn’t come in a day.. politicians or actors are not magicians... anyway.. I celebrate positivity.. obviously you (her critics in social media) don’t..!! God bless.. and get some life. Merry Christmas.”

On December 29, Jahan had shared a tweet saying, “#ambedkar

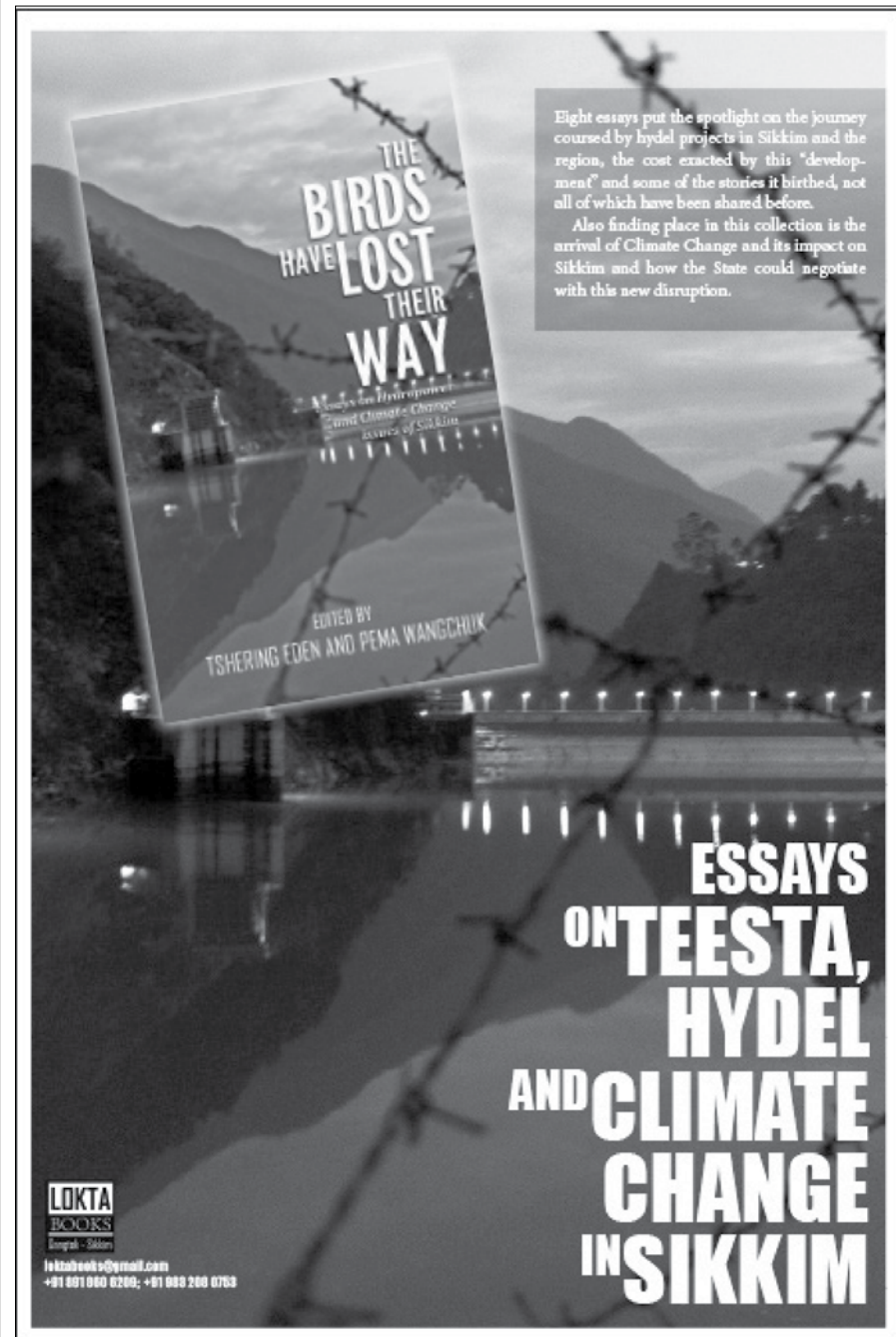
wrote the constitution. #modi wants to unwrite it”, which triggered both praise and criticism by the twitterati.

Asked about her post on Twitter in June 2019 in which she took potshots at those trolling her for sporting ‘sindoor’ (vermilion) and wearing a saree in Parliament, Nusrat said, “I will always speak for an inclusive India which is beyond the barriers of caste, creed and religion. My stand will never change.”

The 29-year-old actress, who had made her debut in Bengali film in 2010, was speaking on the sidelines of special screening of ‘Asur’, where she is essaying the female lead role.

‘Asur’ is the first film of Nusrat after she became an MP.

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Pune to host national billiards and snooker championship

PUNE, JAN 4 (PTI): Pune will host the ‘Mani-sha-Vascon’ National Billiards and Snooker Championship from January 11 to February 9.

Top Indian elite cueists, including former world champion Pan-kaj Advani and former Asian billiards champion Sourav Kothari will be seen in action at PYC Gymkhana in a month-long event, a media release issued here said.

The tournament, being organised by Billiards and Snooker Association of Maharashtra (BSAM) and PYC Hindu Gymkhana, will be held in 12 categories, including sub-junior boys and girls, junior boys and girls, senior men and women.

Rajan Khinvasara, president of BSAM said, “Over 1,000 players will be seen in action in 14 events in billiards and snooker and it’s a positive sign to see such a huge response for the tournament.

Kerber backs Barty to handle world No.1 pressures

BRISBANE, JAN 4 (AFP): Former world number one Angelique Kerber knows the pressure of starting a new season as the player everyone wants to beat, but she is confident Ashleigh Barty can meet the challenge.

The Australian had a breakout year in 2019, winning the French Open along with the prestigious WTA Finals, where she cemented her place atop the year-end rankings.

Both Kerber and Barty, along with former world number one Naomi Osaka, begin their 2020 campaigns at the Brisbane International from Monday.

“She’s always a tough opponent. She’s such a great player, a great person as well and I’m really happy for her that she reached the number one spot,” the German told reporters of Barty.

“She put a lot of effort in and she worked hard. It’s always a tougher year to start as the number one player but I think she will deal with that situation.”

Kerber well knows the perils of battling to back up a breakthrough season.

After winning Grand Slams in 2016 and 2018, she struggled to emulate her results in the following years.

“I was really trying to enjoy, but you really have to schedule your day a bit different than if you were number 20 or number 30 in the world,” she said.

“You have to improve every single tournament, every year, because even if you win a Grand Slam, everyone is looking to beat you.”

But she is confident the level-headed Barty has what it takes to handle the expectations of her home fans and the extra off-court workload that comes with being the best player on the planet. “It’s for sure completely different -- she has all the pressure, all the expectation, especially here in Australia,” said Kerber.

Ibrahimovic vows to kick-start Milan as Conte’s Inter seek rare win at Napoli

MILAN, JAN 4 (AFP): Zlatan Ibrahimovic has vowed to kick-start struggling AC Milan’s Serie A season as their local rivals Inter Milan recommence a title battle with Juventus this weekend after the end of the winter break.

Milan play host to Sampdoria on Monday, their first game since the humiliating 5-0 goal defeat to Atalanta last month which sparked Ibrahimovic’s return.

“I’m ready and I really hope I can play,” said the 38-year-old Ibrahimovic as he returned to Milan nine years after his departure for Paris Saint-Germain.

“Things need to be improved on the pitch and that’s why I’m here. I know what I have to do, Zlatan is still here.”

Seven-time European champions Milan are 11th in the table, 14 points off the Champions League places and just seven points clear of the relegation zone.

By contrast Inter are challenging champions Juventus’ hegemony at the top of Serie A, with both sides level on 42 points after 17 games.

Antonio Conte’s Inter travel to Napoli, while Juve are at home against sixth-placed Cagliari, this season’s surprise



package who are well in the hunt for Champions League football. Inter Milan have not won at Napoli’s Stadio San Paolo since October 1997 but last season’s runners-up are eighth this term, with Gennaro Gattuso replacing Carlo Ancelotti last month.

“Inter have been strong in previous years but they have improved even more under Conte,” said Napoli defender Mario Rui.

“They will make us suffer, but we are ready.”

Juventus return to action after their Italian Super Cup defeat to Lazio against a Cagliari side that had been in impressive form before back-to-back losses. Meanwhile

red-hot Lazio, six points behind in third with a game in hand, are looking increasingly dangerous.

Simone Inzaghi’s side, who have not lost since their 1-0 defeat to Inter in late September, can push their league winning streak to nine games against relegation-threatened Brescia. The Roman side have

scored two goals or more in each of their last 11 league games since that Inter defeat, the first team to achieve that feat since the legendary ‘Grande Torino’ side back in 1948.

One point behind Lazio in fourth are capital city rivals Roma, who host Torino amid takeover talks with US billion-

aire Dan Friedkin. Fiorentina and Genoa start the calendar year with new coaches.

Giuseppe Iachini’s first game with 15th-placed Fiorentina will be at Bologna, a team they are unbeaten against in 10 games.

Bottom club Genoa have brought in reinforcements for Davide Nicola’s first game against Sassuolo.

Italy goalkeeper Mattia Perin returns from Juventus along with Swiss midfielder Valon Behrami and Bologna striker Mattia Destro.

ONE TO WATCH: As veteran Ibrahimovic prepares to start for AC Milan, fellow Swede Dejan Kulusevski, 19, returns to Parma on loan after signing a five-year deal with champions Juventus.

The promising teenager has had a breakthrough season since going on loan from Atalanta to Parma in June, scoring four goals and setting up another seven in 17 games.

He will be up against his parent club this weekend.

“I’ve heard great things about Kulusevski,” said Ibrahimovic of the player who has more to Juve in a deal worth nearly 44 million euros (49 million).

Real Kashmir FC eye win against Mohun Bagan

SRINAGAR, JAN 4 (PTI): High on confidence after stunning the defending champions at home, Real Kashmir are gearing up to take on heavyweights Mohun Bagan in their next I-League fixture, here on Sunday.

Real Kashmir beat holders Chennai City FC 2-1 in their first home match of the season to eke out their first win of the season.

“We are all looking forward to welcoming such a historic club to Kashmir and we are all in anticipation of playing against them. It will be a great occasion,” Real Kashmir coach, David Robertson said.

Before playing their first home game, they had earned crucial points on the road against East Bengal and debutants TRAU FC.

Kallum Higginbotham had played a key role in win against Chennai.

“Kallum is an experienced player who has played at a high level. He has the experience and knows how to get into



areas to hurt teams. He has done well and his attitude is great which has allowed him to settle in pretty quickly to the I-League,” said.

On the other hand, the Mariners, who had a mixed start to the season with a draw and a loss, have found their much-needed form to the liking of their huge fan following.

The Kolkata giants, at the moment, have the best attacking record of the league with eight goals. Mohun Bagan are

bank on their Spanish talisman Francisco Gonzalez, who has scored five goals in the four matches, as well as Joseba Beitia who has been a key player in the mid-field.

“It is a big occasion and opportunity for us to play in Kashmir. Last season, the stadium was so full that there was no space to sit in the stands and people were queuing outside. It is overwhelming to see such support here not only for the home team but also for us,” said Kibu Vicuna,

Head Coach Mohun Bagan. The Spanish gaffer also stressed that Real Kashmir cannot be taken lightly.

“I am confident about our performance but we will also have to be wary of the fact that Real Kashmir will play at home.”

“They will have huge support and the weather conditions suit them very well as their team are habituated to playing here. I hope we will be able to present the people of Kashmir some great footballing action,” he added.

Irfan Pathan retires from all forms of cricket

MUMBAI, JAN 4 (PTI): All-rounder Irfan Pathan on Saturday announced his retirement from all forms of cricket, ending an injury-ridden career that prevented him from realising his true potential.

The 35-year-old’s retirement was on expected lines, considering he last played a competitive game in February 2019 during the Syed Mushtaq Ali trophy for Jammu and Kashmir.

He did not even put himself in the IPL auction pool, last month.

The left-arm seamer’s bowling was like a breath of fresh air when he made his India debut against Australia at the Adelaide Oval in 2003.

He never had express pace but his natural ability to swing the ball into the right-handers got him instant success, also drawing comparisons with the great Kapil Dev.

It seemed India had



found the all-rounder they were looking for since Kapil left the scene.

Pathan, who last played for India in October 2012, featured in 29 Tests (1105 runs and 100 wickets), 120 ODIs (1544 runs and 173 wickets) and 24 T20 Internationals (172 runs and 28 wickets).

He was part of the victorious Indian team at the 2007 World Twenty20 and was the man-of-the-match in the final against Pakistan.

One of his best performances came on the

tour of Pakistan in 2006 when he became the second Indian after Harbhajan Singh to take a Test hat-trick, removing Salman Butt, Younis Khan and Mohammad Yusuf during the Karachi game.

He also played a big role in India winning a Test match against Australia on a tough Perth wicket, which offered steep bounce.

Injuries and lack of form troubled him thereafter and his ability to swing the ball deteriorated.

Sonom shocks Olympic medallist Sakshi Malik in trials

LUCKNOW, JAN 4 (PTI): Two-time World Cadet champion Sonam Malik stunned Rio Olympic bronze medallist Sakshi Malik while another promising junior Anshu Malik knocked out World Championship medallist Pooja Dhanda to seal their places in the Indian team for the Asian Championship, here on Saturday.

Pitted against heavyweights in their respective first round, both Sonam and Anshu cared little for reputations, fighting fearlessly.

Sonom was trailing 4-6 in the second period but produced a sensational four-point throw with just three seconds left in the bout to make it 10-10 and win on criteria of scoring the last point.

She then defeated Radhika 4-1 in the final to seal her spot in the Indian team in the 62kg category.

Hailing from a small village Madina in Hary-



ana’s Sonapat, Sonam is coached by Ajmer Malik in Gohana.

Anshu, who trains with Jagdeesh, downed Pooja and then Mansi in the final of the 57kg.

There were no surprises in other categories with Vinesh Phogat (53kg) and Divya Kakran (68kg) easily winning in their respective bouts.

Nirmala Devi (50kg) and Kiran Godara (76kg)

were other wrestlers to win the trials.

The winners will compete at the first ranking series of the event in Rome (January 15-18) followed by Asian Championships in New Delhi (February 18-23) and if they can win medals at these two events, they will represent India at the Asian Olympic qualifiers, to be held in Xian from March 27 to 29.

Serena, Kuznetsova to resume rivalry in Auckland

WELLINGTON, JAN 4 (AFP): Multiple Grand Slam winners Serena Williams and Svetlana Kuznetsova are set to resume their 16-year rivalry after being drawn Saturday to face each other in the first round of next week’s Auckland WTA Classic.

Tournament top seed Williams, 38, and Kuznetsova, 34, are in a competitive half of the draw in which the veterans are competing against the rising stars of tennis, including American teen sensations Amanda Anisimova and Coco Gauff as well as 22-year-old Latvian Jelena Ostapenko.

Williams leads Kuznetsova 10-3 in their head-to-heads dating back to 2004 and has won 23 Grand Slams compared to two for the



Russian. The last time Williams played in Auckland, in 2017, she had problems with the wind and was bundled out in the second round before going on to win the Australian Open a few weeks later.

The 15-year-old Gauff, who hit the headlines with her first round win over Venus Williams

at Wimbledon last year, opens against World number 56 and 2019 Auckland semi-finalist Viktoria Kuzmova, while Anisimova has been drawn against Ukraine’s Kateryna Kozlova.

Ostapenko, the seventh seed, plays Germany’s Laura Siegemund in the first round.

On the other side of

the draw, fifth seed Caroline Wozniacki, who will be playing her penultimate tournament before retiring after the Australian Open, faces unheralded New Zealander Paige Hourigan in the first round.

Wozniacki will also team up with Serena Williams in the doubles for the first time.

Fury, tears as thousands mourn Iran commander killed by US



Thousands of Iraqis chanting "Death to America" on Saturday mourned an Iranian commander and others killed in a US drone attack that sparked fears of a regional proxy war between Washington and Tehran.

The killing of Iran's Major General Qasem Soleimani on Friday was the most dramatic escalation yet in spiralling tensions between Iran and the United States, which pledged to send thousands more troops to the region.

Iraqi political leaders and clerics attended the mass ceremony to honour 62-year-old Soleimani and the other nine victims of the pre-dawn attack on Baghdad international airport, including Iraqi paramilitary chief Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis.

US President Donald Trump said Friday he had decided to "terminate" Iran's military mastermind to prevent an "imminent" attack on US diplomats and troops.

"We took action last night to stop a war. We did not take action to start a war," he insisted.

But the strike -- which killed four more Iranian Guards and five members of Iraq's Hashed al-Shaabi paramilitary network -- infuriated Iran, whose ambassador to the United Nations, Ma-

jid Takht Ravanchi, called it an "act of war" by its arch-enemy.

On Saturday, the Hashed said a new strike had hit a convoy of their forces north of Baghdad, with Iraqi state media blaming the US.

But US-led coalition spokesman Myles Caggins denied involvement, telling AFP: "There was no American or coalition strike."

- Mourning procession -

Mass ceremonies started in Baghdad Saturday for Soleimani -- a veteran military figure revered as a hero by many in Iran and the region -- and the other victims of Friday's attack.

Iraq's caretaker premier Adel Abdel Mahdi joined Muhandis associate Hadi al-Ameri, Shiite cleric Ammar al-Hakim, former PM Nuri al-Maliki and other pro-Iran figures in large crowds accompanying the coffins. The coffins were first brought to a revered Shiite shrine in northern Baghdad, where thousands of mourners chanted "Death to America!" Dressed in black, they waved white Hashed flags and massive portraits of Iranian and Iraqi leaders, furiously calling for "revenge".

The crowds headed south to a point near the Green Zone, the high-security district home to

government offices and foreign embassies, including America's.

The remains will later be taken to the Shiite holy city of Najaf to the south, and the remains of the Guards will then be flown to Iran, which has declared three days of mourning.

As head of the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps' foreign operations arm, Soleimani was a powerful figure domestically and oversaw wide-ranging Iranian involvement in regional power struggles.

Soleimani had long been considered a lethal foe by Washington, with Trump saying he should have been killed "many years ago".

Tehran has already named Soleimani's deputy, Esmail Qarani, to replace him. His first order of business was made clear Friday when Iran's supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei promised "severe revenge" for Soleimani's death.

- US scales back ops -

Iraqi paramilitary figures including US-blacklisted Qais al-Khazaali and militia-man-turned-politician Moqtada Sadr have called on their fighters to "be ready".

And, elsewhere in the region, Lebanon's Tehran-backed Shiite movement Hezbollah threat-

ened "punishment for these criminal assassins".

Amid the tensions, the Pentagon said up to 3,500 additional US troops would be dispatched to Iraq's southern neighbour Kuwait, to boost some 14,000 reinforcements already deployed to the region last year.

There are approximately 5,200 US troops stationed across Iraq to train Iraqis to fight jihadists.

They have faced a spate of rocket attacks that the US has blamed on pro-Iran factions and which last month killed an American contractor.

On Saturday, a US official told AFP the US-led forces were scaling back operations and re-focusing surveillance to watch for new rocket attacks. "Our first priority is protecting coalition personnel," the official said, saying there would be only "limited" training and anti-jihadist operations for now.

US citizens were meanwhile urged to leave Iraq immediately and American staff were being evacuated from oil fields in the south.

Abdel Mahdi warned Friday that the US strike would "spark a devastating war in Iraq", while President Barham Saleh pleaded for "voices of reason" to prevail.

Pro-Iran factions in Iraq have seized on Soleimani's death to push parliament to revoke the security agreement allowing for the deployment of US forces on Iraqi soil. Iraqi lawmakers were to convene in emergency session on Sunday and expected to hold a vote.

Analysts said the US strike, which sent world oil prices soaring, would be a game-changer.

Phillip Smyth, a US-based specialist on Shiite armed groups, described the killing as "the most major decapitation strike that the US has ever pulled off".

He expected "bigger" ramifications than either the 2011 operation that killed Al-Qaeda chief Osama bin Laden or the 2019 raid that killed IS leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi.

Turkish intervention risks Syria scenario for Libya: experts



Turkey's decision to approve the deployment of troops to Libya risks plunging the North African nation deeper into a Syrian-style proxy war between regional powers including Russia, experts warn.

Libya has been mired in conflict since a NATO-backed uprising in 2011 toppled dictator Moamer Kadhafi, with rival administrations in the east and the west battling for supremacy.

Turkey and Qatar have taken the side of the UN-recognised government of national accord (GNA) in the capital Tripoli, which has been under sustained attack since April from the forces of eastern-based military strongman General Khalifa Haftar.

Haftar, who has superior air power, is backed by Turkey's regional rivals -- Saudi Arabia, Egypt and the United Arab Emirates.

On Thursday, Turkish MPs passed a bill approving a military deployment in Libya to bolster the beleaguered GNA.

No date was given for the potential troop deployment, which would draw Ankara deeper into a conflict in which Haftar's forces, who oppose Islamist movements close to Ankara, have the upper hand.

Ankara has already sent the GNA drones, according to the United Nations.

Some reports have suggested that Ankara has sent in some of the Syrian rebels that led a Turkish intervention against a Kurdish militia in northeast Syria in October.

Haftar's army, meanwhile, has reportedly received backing from hundreds of Russian mercenaries from private military group Wagner, believed to be controlled by an ally of President Vladimir Putin.

Russia, whose military intervention in Syria

helped turn the tide of that conflict in President Bashar al-Assad's favour in 2015, has denied sending mercenaries to Libya.

But the UN's Libya envoy, Ghassan Salame, has said himself that Russian mercenaries are indeed operating on the ground and has accused several countries of violating a 2011 UN arms embargo on Libya.

- 'Arms from everywhere' -

Salame has slammed the foreign interference in a conflict that has turned Libya into a haven for jihadists and migrant smugglers.

"Arms are coming in from everywhere," he told AFP in an interview in late November, accusing unnamed "external parties" of causing increased civilian casualties through drone strikes.

Like the Syrian conflict, the Libyan war has developed into a "very complex" power play between Ankara and Moscow who are not allies but whose interests sometimes converge, Jalel Harchaoui, a researcher on Libya at Dutch think-tank Clingendael Institute, told AFP.

Russia and Turkey support opposing sides in the Syrian civil war but together launched peace talks with Iran that effectively killed off UN-sponsored talks in Geneva.

Moscow also initially stood back while Ankara intervened against Kurdish rebels in northeast Syria in October, allowing Ankara to carve out a buffer zone along its border before negotiating a ceasefire.

"Could something similar happen in Libya? My answer is yes," Salame told France's Le Monde newspaper in a recent interview.

Harchaoui noted that there had "never been a direct clash between Turks and Russians on Syrian soil" and predicted that they would also

avoid direct confrontation in Libya.

Underpinning the strategies of both countries was "the same anti-European, post-American logic," he said.

- 'West not leading' -

Europe, meanwhile, has been relegated to the role of onlookers, in a war which has facilitated the smuggling of migrants across the Mediterranean from Libya to Europe.

Attempts by French President Emmanuel Macron to broker a peace deal by inviting Haftar to talks in Paris with the GNA in 2017, have come to naught.

As France scales back its mediation attempts following criticism of its perceived pro-Haftar bias, Germany has stepped in to try fill the void.

Berlin has invited regional players to a UN-backed conference in Berlin planned for January.

"The West isn't leading the way in Libya. The Russians and Turks will do their own Yalta on Libya," Harchaoui predicted, in an allusion to the conference at which the US, USSR and Britain decided on the post-war order in Europe in 1945.

Moscow and Ankara are operating on the assumption that the US, which has withdrawn some troops from Syria and Afghanistan, has "disappeared from the scene", Harchaoui added.

For Emadeddin Badi, an expert at the Middle East Institute in Washington, Turkey's aim is "to force a political settlement that guarantees the survival of the GNA" and preserves its economic interests in Libya.

In November, Ankara signed a maritime agreement with Tripoli that angered Greece and Cyprus by dividing much of the energy-rich Eastern Mediterranean between itself and Libya.

Hong Kong steps up response to mystery disease from China

HONG KONG, JAN 4 (AP): Hong Kong authorities activated a newly created serious response" level Saturday as fears spread about a mysterious infectious disease that may have been brought back by visitors to a mainland Chinese city.

Five possible cases have been reported of a viral pneumonia that has also infected at least 44 people in Wuhan, an inland city west of Shanghai and about 900 kilometers (570 miles) north of Hong Kong.

The outbreak has revived memories of the 2002-2003 SARS epidemic, which started in southern China and killed more than 700 people in the mainland, Hong Kong and elsewhere. The serious response level indicates a moderate impact on Hong Kong's population. It is the second highest in a three-tier system that is part of a new government response plan launched Saturday for infectious diseases of unknown cause.

The city's health department added an additional thermal imaging system at Hong Kong's airport on Friday to check the body temperature of arriving passengers.

Shock, fear and sadness grip Australia's 'bushfire refugees'

Thousands of Australians forced from their homes by rampaging bushfires now find themselves stuck in makeshift camps, fearful for the future and turned refugees in their own country.

On golf courses, cricket ovals and showgrounds -- anywhere with a minimal amount of combustible tree cover -- Australians are sheltering from a climate-fuelled disaster. At the Catalina Country Club in Batemans Bay, New South Wales, rows of caravans, 4x4s, pick-up trucks and tents are pitched cheek by jowl.

The golf club's dining room has been converted into an evacuation centre.

Instead of players supping a beer after a summer's day of play, elderly displaced ladies huddle around cups of tea and play cards to pass the time.

Stacks of donations -- food, clothing, water -- are piled high and there is a steady stream of people walking in and out.

Some new arrivals quip that they are refugees.

But even in a country accustomed to bushfires and which prides itself on resilience in extreme conditions, the last few days, weeks and months have been shocking.

Towering blazes have turned the sky black and choking smoke has covered whole cities -- as well as parts of neighbouring New Zealand and New Caledonia -- amid searing images of families forced to wade into the ocean for safety.

For many, the future is riddled with uncertainty: about whether their homes still stand, when they can return and -- with months of summer still to go -- about when



all this will end. Many are facing this uncertainty while dealing with the trauma of what they have lived through. Narelle Coady, 54, took refuge at a Batemans Bay beach on Saturday when her home came under threat for the second time in five days.

"We defended on Tuesday and it was just too scary," she told AFP. "Really bad, couldn't breathe. Oxygen gone. It was horrible."

"That was my first and last time." Batemans Bay motel owner Justine Donald, 40, evacuated her home on New Year's Eve in a scene she described as looking like "the end of the world".

"The town went black," she said. "It was black, orange and so thick that to breathe it in, you thought you were going to suffocate."

"That frightened me so much for my life that now I don't even think about the properties."

"It's devastating," she said, at times becoming tearful. "My main thing is I just want to be alive and for all of us to be safe."

"If that's going to happen again today, I'm going to need a good big

bottle of wine and hopefully be stuck inside with towels under my doors because I'm not going to go outside into that again." Mick Cummins, 57, also recalled New Year's Eve when he left his home as fires tore up the east coast.

"Hellfire came over the hill," he said. "We just sat there and watched explosion after explosion, the bowling club went up, the houses down the street went up."

He remembered the fires from 1994 as particularly bad. But compared with this year, they were "just a barbeque", he said.

"We're here until we can go home," said his wife Ulla. "They're saying we're probably not going to have power until next week. And if we've got no power, we've got no phone service either. We're stuck."

Wes Moreton, a 30-year-old father of five left his home, but then was forced to leave his place of refuge as the fire front moved north.

He took no chances and headed with his family to Sydney. Like so many, he is unsure whether they will have a home when they return.

"Fingers crossed it's still standing," he said.

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Aviron Pictures Chairman William Sadleir Fired

EXCLUSIVE

William Sadleir, the founder and chairman of indie distributor Aviron Pictures, has been ousted by the fledgling company's financier, two insiders familiar with his exit told Variety.

It's unclear what circumstances Sadleir left under, both sources said. He was removed under a contractual provision given to the shop's senior lender, reported to be asset management company Black Rock, one individual noted. No immediate replacement was named, the insiders added.

A spokesperson for Aviron did not immediately comment on the matter. Sadleir and a spokesperson for Black Rock did not immediately return Variety's request for comment.

The company is said to be undergoing an internal assessment of projects and workflow as a new chairman search begins. One of the insiders said Black Rock is also considering a third-party firm to review Aviron's assets and library thus far —

which includes Matthew McConaughey and Anne Hathaway's "Serenity," and Halle Berry's "Kidnap," a film itself rescued from the bankruptcy ashes of Relativity Media.

Miramax, where he oversaw campaigns for films including "Pulp Fiction" and "The Piano," according to his bio. The company was launched out of the 2017 Cannes Film Festival, an arm of



Veteran producer David Dinerstein is Aviron's president, with a deep indie resume at shops like Fox Searchlight and Paramount Vantage. His early days were spent as the head of marketing at

the shell Aviron Capital. Their next theatrical release is "The Informer," a crime drama starring Joel Kinnaman, Rosamund Pike, and Clive Owen, which is set for a limited bow in March.

I have reported on 30 Korean celebrity suicides. The blame game never changes

I dread getting calls in the middle of the night in case it is to tell me about another suicide by a K-drama actor or K-pop celebrity

On a hot August day in 2008, I was invited to appear on a TV entertainment programme hosted by actor Ahn Jae-hwan. I noticed Ahn was behaving oddly, walking nervously around the studio whenever he was off camera. He was running a business on the side, and it wasn't doing well. He was inundated with complaints and had become the target of an online boycott and malicious comments.

I was very worried and mentioned my concern to an actress who was an old friend. "I am worried he might choose to end it all," I told her. My actor friend said she knew his problems and that his friends and colleagues were trying to help him. Later that month Ahn took his own life.

On the day they found him, the actor and I went to the hospital where his body had been taken. She was in such a state of shock that she was unable to walk properly. The waiting photographers caught all of this. The photos ran with the caption: "Actress in shock at not being able to get the money back from dead actor." She and other people in the industry had loaned Ahn money but the media portrayed them as loan sharks. People were looking for someone to blame for Ahn's death, and she was the easiest target.

That actor was Choi Jin-sil, then one of the most in-demand women in the industry. Forty days after Ahn killed himself, Choi took her own life. I and a few other people had been out drinking with her just four hours before she died. I had heard her last words: "As the victim of internet hate I don't think abusive comments should be allowed," she had said. "I want to campaign to stop them, retire from entertainment and do charity work, like Audrey Hepburn. I'm tired of it all."

I found out about her death at 5am the next day from her younger brother

er, Choi Jin-young, an actor and singer. When I arrived at Choi's funeral, her younger brother started hitting me, crying: "You promised to protect my sister! Why couldn't you?" Two years later, in March 2010, he too killed himself. Three years later, in January 2013, Choi Jin-sil's ex-husband and the father of their two children, the former baseball player Cho Seong-min, also took his own life. He had become the target of online abuse in the wake of Choi Jin-sil's death. Six years later, little has changed, and there has been another spike in high-profile suicides. Sulli was found dead in October, Goo Hara in November and Cha In Ha in December. Whatever change there has been has made matters worse. I dread getting calls in the middle of the night in case it is to tell me about another suicide by a South Korean celebrity.

Suicide is not confined to South Korea's entertainment industry, of course. I have reported on the scene for the past 30 years, covering 30 suicides, and I can say with absolute certainty that this is a problem for everyone in South Korean society. The statistics speak for themselves. More South Koreans kill themselves than people in other OECD countries. The figures for 2019 have yet to be published, but everyone predicts South Korea will come top yet again.

I can't explain why so many South Korean entertainers have taken their own lives. We can't pretend to know each motivation, whether it be money problems, relationships, family issues, declining popularity, online abuse, or any number of other factors. Attempting to explain each death would just encourage the trolls.

The Korean Association of Journalists' guidelines advise reporters not to reveal the methods people use to take their own lives, or to mention the location and motive.

When Sulli was being criticised for posting "controversial" photos on social media, I said during a TV appearance that she was seeking the public's understanding and affection, and that

her critics should take the time to try to understand her. I too have become a target. I get hate calls, texts and online comments daily.

South Korean society obsesses over celebrity divorces, with speculation about who is the "guilty party". There is a similar obsession with why celebrities kill themselves. Some of the responsibility has to lie with reporters who think only of how many clicks their articles will attract, even if it means spewing out falsehoods and speculation.

There is no easy solution. Most entertainment reporters have to put up with job instability and low pay. In some ways it's no wonder some take such delight in reporting the demise of highly paid celebrities. Changes need to be made so the media are less dependent on the clicks salacious articles attract.

South Korea's entertainment industry itself has to bear a lot of the responsibility. It treats celebrities as commodities from whom a few powerful agencies can squeeze as much income in as short a time as possible. Many celebrities are spotted as children and are not taught valuable life skills, only how to sing and dance. The situation is worse for female celebrities, with the public more interested in every salacious detail of their lives.

We also have to understand why people feel moved to post vicious comments online. Our freedom of speech and privacy laws that allow commenters to remain anonymous need updating. At the moment in South Korea, someone who urges another social media user to die is fined an average of just \$2,000 for their first offence. A well-known celebrity once approached me, offering to give me her "last interview". She told me she had tried to kill herself several times. We ended up talking for three days. I told her I would conduct her last interview, but that it would not be for a very long time.

She was not the first celebrity to ask me to do this. I have given them the same answer every time: Spring doesn't come to us from afar, but, even now, it is coming from beneath our feet.



LIFE WITH LUCY! The actress, Lucy Hale steps out with a smile on her face and coffee in hand in Studio City, Calif.

Margot Robbie Thinks Her Sexually Fluid Fox News Character in 'Bombshell' Will End Up With a Woman

To prepare for a role, Margot Robbie tells Variety for this week's cover story, she dives deep into research. In the case of her "Bombshell" character, Kayla Pospisil — a fictional composite created by screenwriter Charles Randolph — Robbie worked on Kayla's Florida accent, studied the Fox News programs she would have watched, and created a Twitter account to follow the social media antics of conservative millennial women. She worked with an acting coach to trace Kayla's emotional journey, and a movement coach to create her physicality. It all paid off: Robbie is nominated in the supporting actress category at Sunday's Golden Globes, as well as for outstanding performance by a female actor in a supporting role at the Screen Actors Guild Awards.

Yet Kayla was a puzzle to Robbie. More than anything else about her, Robbie tried to understand the character's fluid sexuality so she could credibly communicate the line "Oh, I'm not a lesbian!" right after she's had sex with a woman. Toward the beginning of "Bombshell," Kayla has a drunken hook-up with Jess (Kate McKinnon), a fellow Bill O'Reilly producer who is a closeted lesbian — and, more damningly at Fox News, a secret Hillary Clinton supporter.

"She's just slept with a woman!" Robbie says of Kayla's sapphic denial, flatly stated

from Jess' bed. "I wanted to deliver that completely genuinely, not being ironic, not being sarcastic." Jess has taken Kayla under her wing at "The O'Reilly Factor" after the junior producer draws O'Reilly's wrath at her first pitch meeting. "You have to adopt the mentality of an Irish street cop," Jess tells Kayla. "The world is a bad place. People are lazy morons. Minorities are criminals. Sex is sick, but interesting."

The O'Reilly mantra, Jess says, is: "Frighten, titillate. Frighten, titillate. Frighten, titillate." They have sex after getting drunk at a bar, which is when Kayla notices Jess' Hillary Clinton poster. "My parents would be horrified if I went home with a Democrat," Kayla says.

Soon after this scene — which wouldn't be out of place in a romantic comedy — Roger Ailes (John Lithgow) begins sexually harassing and abusing Kayla, and the focus of "Bombshell" darkens, turning to Ailes's slow downfall. But for an obsessive investigator like Robbie, the unanswered question of Kayla's sexuality, that "huge aspect of her story and emotional journey that's unresolved — I couldn't just let that be."

She set about mapping the rest of Kayla's life. Since Robbie and McKinnon "clicked immediately," Robbie says, when she thinks about what might happen to Kayla after the events of "Bombshell" conclude.

VIRGO: It is said when the student is ready, the teacher will appear. How this holds true for where you are right now, Virgo! The Universe is holding space for you to be mentored by a wise elder. Be grateful for the guidance that's coming through. A change in perspective could be the answer to navigating the tricky terrain and bringing about a monumental change in your circumstances. Tip: The wise words of your mentor could help you see the situation in a different light. **LIBRA:** Here's to 3am friends who offer both relationship advice and tequila shots to make you forget your woes, friends who throw shade at you for your lifestyle choices and encourage you to wake up at the crack of dawn for a run, and the ones who indulge your wanderlust by joining you for an adventure halfway across the world. Tip: Celebrate your Motley Crew. **SCORPIO:** An idea is merely an idea until you put it into practice. What this day calls for: a greater degree of innovation and initiative. How can you set the stage for positive change? Scorpio, you are being guided by

your higher self at every step. Some of you could be thinking about investing in an idea of your own or taking the entrepreneurial route. Tip: Plant your seeds with intention. **SAGITTARIUS:** The lion does not concern himself with the opinions of the lamb. You are already the leader of the pack, Sagittarius. Don't let the demon of self-doubt salt the game for you. Does that mean you are going to be at war with those around? Not if you don't want to. Instead of imposing your views on others, give them the facts. The manner in which you communicate the truth will make all the difference here. Tip: Let go of the demon of self-doubt. **CAPRICORN:** There are two types of people in this world: those who wait for things to happen and those who make things happen. As you reclaim your power this year, you begin to realise your ability to attract opportunities that will ultimately lead to success. Seize the day, Capricorn! A question you want to ask yourself before you progress to the next stage: 'What are the ways in which I have been limiting myself?'

The time to move beyond the self-imposed prison is now. Tip: Make room for expansion. **AQUARIUS:** The time for enterprise and risk-taking is here, Aquarius. This new year demands a new you—one who strikes gold by seizing opportunities when the right time. Given that the territory you are venturing into is unknown, there are things you do not know. At times like these, it is best to be spontaneous and follow the cosmic cues. Remember, it's okay to trip and fall once in a while. Failure will teach things success never will. Tip: Seize the day. **PISCES:** Pay attention to the pathways that are opening up for you. The answer to 'which way do I go?' can be found by turning inwards. Don't let self-doubt be the reason you miss out on a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. Saying yes to one thing could mean saying no to another. Does that have to be such a bad thing? Recognise the things in your life that have served their purpose. Tip: Let your higher self assist you in making this choice.

THE DAY AHEAD

ARIES: Your head and heart may be in a conflict. The answer to which way to go from here doesn't have to be this complex. Word for the wise: follow your heart. Once you commit to doing what you are best at, what feels in alignment, the abundance you desire will flow into your existence. Some of you may be thinking fondly about the places you visited in the last year. Tip: Have the courage to follow your heart's true desire. **TAURUS:** Let me tell you a little story about Brandon Stanton. He had a successful career in trading bonds but he gave that up because all he wanted to do was photograph about 10,000 people in New York. Who gives up a great job to photograph other people, right? But if he hadn't, the Humans of New York photoblog would not have been born. Tip: Follow your heart's true desires. **GEMINI:** Making your way to the top is only the first step, Gemini. The real challenge is, staying there season after season. Two words: patience and persistence. Remember, you are just getting started. When

you find yourself debating between quality and quantity, choose the former—always. Tip: Work hard and smart. **CANCER:** If you're a freelancer, work-at-home entrepreneur or a small business owner, this is your time to shine. Continue to create from a space of love and leave the rest to the Universe. Trust and surrender are the magic words that will help you reach new heights. Those who are heading bigger organisations should take a cue from the smaller one. Remember, the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. Tip: The whole is greater than the sum of its parts. **LEO:** The circumstances call for you to use your diplomacy and gift of communication wisely. Think of yourself as the messenger, the emissary, not the enemy. As you facilitate negotiations with the people in the organisation, make sure to leave your pride aside. Yes, that means accepting your mistakes wherever necessary and keeping the highest good in mind. Tip: Communicate wisely and clearly.