



**MARGOT ROBBIE TO STAR
OPPOSITE CHRISTIAN BALE
IN DAVID O RUSSELL'S NEXT**

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**CLIMATE CHANGE IMPACTS
IN BANGLADESH SHOW HOW
GEOGRAPHY, WEALTH AND CULTURE
AFFECT VULNERABILITY**

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**ANGAD BEDI UNDERGOES KNEE
SURGERY BUT WIFE NEHA DHUPIA
HAS 'NO CLUE WHICH ONE'**

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SummitTIMES

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ON TOP OF THE NEWS

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Bikers on anti-Cancer rally complete 3,400 KM ride in Gangtok

**SAGAR CHETTRI
GANGTOK, 12 FEB:**

A bike rally from Mumbai to Gangtok to generate wider awareness on cancer roared into its final pitstop here this afternoon.

The rally, held under the banner of a Mumbai-based "Nepali Gorkha Sewa Samiti," had been flagged off from Chembur in Mumbai by the area MLA, Prakash Phaterpekar, on 03 February.

Five members of Hamro Chhahari - Keshav Sapkota, Bipen Dahal, Thakur P Adhikari, Tshering G Sherpa and John Karki - were part of this 3,400 KM long ride from Mumbai to Gangtok.

Hamro Chhahari is a project of Nepali Gorkha Sewa Samiti to provide accommodation and guidance to cancer patients from underprivileged backgrounds and their families coming for treatment to Mumbai from Sikkim and the neighboring areas of Nepal and Bhutan.

The organization is presently running two ashrams at Kurla and



Chembur in Mumbai.

The rally covered major cities in Goa, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Odisha, West Bengal and Sikkim spreading awareness on cancer and its prevention.

Upon reaching Sikkim, Keshav Sapkota, Bipen Dahal and Thakur P Adhikari, received a warm welcome at Rangpo and then again at Titanic Park by different social organisations and biker clubs of the State.

The other two members of the rally, John Karki from Darjeeling accompanied the team till Kolkata and Tshering G Sherpa from Shillong travelled till Baghpul. All five members of the rally are retired Navy officers.

A reception programme was organized by the oldest social organization of Sikkim, Nauthpath in association with Press Club of Sikkim and Journalist Club of Sikkim at Tourist Information Centre, MG Marg.

The programme had Education Minister Kunga Nima Lepcha as chief guest accompanied by Sikkim Commission for Backward Classes [SCBC] Chairperson, Pabitra Bhandari among other dignitaries, who feted the trio with khadas on successfully completing the bike rally on such a noble social cause.

While congratulating the team, the Minister appreciated the initiative of Hamro Chhahari.

"It is not a joy ride

or just an adventure but a ride for a social cause and others should take inspiration from this initiative. The works and initiative taken by Hamro Chhahari is really laudable," he said.

He mentioned that Cancer cases were relatively high in Sikkim and such initiatives aimed at awareness were the need of the hour.

The Minister stated that the Chief Minister has expressed his desire

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LPG price hiked by Rs 144.5 per cylinder

NEW DELHI, FEB 12 (PTI):

Cooking gas LPG price on Wednesday was hiked by a steep Rs 144.5 per cylinder due to spurt in benchmark global rates of the fuel.

But to insulate domestic users, the government almost doubled the subsidy it provides on the fuel to keep per cylinder outgo almost unchanged.

LPG price was increased to Rs 858.50 per 14.2 kg cylinder from Rs 714 previously, according to a price notification of state-owned oil firms.

This is the steepest hike in rates since January 2014 when prices had gone up by Rs 220

per cylinder to Rs 1,241.

Domestic LPG users, who are entitled to buy 12 bottles of 14.2-kg each at subsidised rates in a year, will get more subsidy.

The government subsidy payout to domestic users has been increased from Rs 153.86 per cylinder to Rs 291.48, industry officials said.

For Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana (PMUY) beneficiaries, the subsidy has increased from Rs 174.86 to Rs 312.48 per cylinder.

After accounting for the subsidy that is paid directly into the bank accounts of LPG users, a 14.2-kg cylinder would cost Rs 567.02 for do-

mestic users and Rs 546.02 for PMUY users.

The government gave out 8 crore free LPG connections to poor women under PMUY to increase coverage of environment-friendly fuel in kitchens.

Normally, LPG rates are revised on 1st of every month but this time it took almost two weeks for the revision to take place - a phenomenon which industry officials said was due to approvals needed for such a big jump in subsidy outgo.

Others said the decision to defer the increase could have been because of assembly elections in Delhi. Delhi voted on February 8.

I too have some rights, cries Nirbhaya's mother

NEW DELHI, FEB 12 (PTI):

Nirbhaya's mother Asha Devi broke down in a Delhi court Wednesday requesting a fresh date to execute the four death row convicts for the gang rape and murder of her daughter and later sat on a protest outside the court premises.

"I too have some rights," she said to the judge after the court offered a lawyer to one of the four convicts - Pawan Gupta - from the District Legal Services Authority (DLSA), after his father said he had no lawyer to represent him at the time.

Additional Session Judge Dharmender Rana consoled her saying, "Every lawyer here, this entire proceeding, is for giving you the justice."

Nirbhaya's father,

who was also present in the courtroom, added that giving a lawyer to Pawan at this stage was an injustice to the parents.

"Law has given them (convicts) right and not letting them avail that too will be an injustice," the judge replied.

After the court's hearing, Devi joined a protest being held by women rights activist Yogita Bhayana outside the Patiala House Courts premises over the delay in hanging of the four convicts.

"There is no appeal pending in any court in the country... I appeal to the Supreme Court to issue the death warrant as this court (trial) is in no mood to issue one," Devi said while talking to media, adding that she was

"losing hope".

While raising slogans for hanging of the four convicts -- Mukesh Kumar Singh (32), Pawan Gupta (25), Vinay Kumar Sharma (26) and Akshay Kumar (31) -- Devi said: "We are waiting for justice. I assure rape victims that they will also get justice. But today I myself have lost hope."

Bhayana said, "The people of this country are losing hope with every passing day. When will convicts be hanged?"

The 23-year-old physiotherapy intern, who came to be known as 'Nirbhaya' (fearless), was gang-raped and savagely assaulted on the night of December 16, 2012, in a moving bus in South Delhi. She died of her injuries a fortnight later in a Singapore hospital.

Bhim Army chief calls for Bharat Bandh on Feb 23

NEW DELHI, FEB 12 (PTI):

Bhim Army chief Chandra Shekhar Aazad on Wednesday called for a 'Bharat Bandh' on February 23 against a Supreme Court ruling that states were not bound to provide reservation in promotion and appointments in public employment and also quota is not a fundamental right.

He urged MPs and MLAs belonging to the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes to build pressure on the government to bring an ordinance to nullify the ruling.

Aazad said his outfit will hold a march from Mandi House to Parliament on February 16 to press for its demands.

NEZCC cultural troupes entertain border personnel



GANGTOK, 12 FEB [IPR]: A two-day Border Area Programme of the North East Zone Cultural Centre, Dimapur, of the Ministry of Culture, in collaboration with the Culture Department, began here at Kupup today.

The programme is an initiative by NEZCC and cultural troupes

from five states - Sikkim, Odisha, Nagaland, Punjab and Manipur - performed at the Community Hall at Kupup.

The group will be performing at Gnathang on Thursday.

Garrison Liaison Officer TJ Singh was present as the chief guest accompanied by Lt Col

Ajit, Maj Vikash Kumar Rana, Capt JK Sharma, Capt Munish and Lt Taranjeet Singh as special guests.

Village Administrator, Nima Sherpa, officials from Culture Department and Army personnel and their families also attended the programme.

Reeyaz Sangeetalaya's annual concert to encourage water conservation

GANGTOK 12 FEB: A Gangtok-based music school, Reeyaz Sangeetalaya is all set to present its annual concert on the theme, 'Pani- Save Water Save Life' on 15 February here at Manan Kendra. This is the seventh annual concert of Reeyaz Sangeetalaya after its formation in 2013.

Addressing a press conference here this afternoon, Reeyaz Sangeetalaya founder, Manoj Rai expressed that it was

a social awareness event on the importance of water through music and to encourage people to preserve and properly manage water resources.

"People in different parts of the world are already suffering due to scarcity of water. So it is high time that we became concerned and aware to save water," he said.

Around 40 students of Reeyaz Sangeetalaya will give their performance in this two-



and- a-half hour event.

"The concert will have performances by senior established artists and upcoming artists of Reeyaz Sangeetalaya. This is also an opportunity for young upcoming artists of the school to

show their talent," he said.

Mr Rai mentioned that the earlier sixth annual concert of the school was held at the school-level but this is the first time that the annual concert is being

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INVITATION

Reeyaz Sangeetalaya
AN INSTITUTION FOR LEARNING MUSIC

Presents

"PANI"
(Save Water Save Life)

A Creative Music Evening

7th Annual Concert 2020

We request your gracious presence in the event

15 FEB 2020. MANAN KENDRA. 2PM ONWARDS

Road Safety Awareness Week at Gyalshing

**SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 12 FEB:**

The Road Safety Awareness Week and workshop on theme “Sadak Suraksha Jeevan Raksha” was held at Gyalshing community hall on 10 Feb 2020. The program was conducted by Road Safety Cell, Motor Vehicle Division Gangtok in co-ordination with District Office under the guidance of state nodal officer for Sikkim, K.S Gurung, a press release informs.

The program was attended by Gyalshing Municipal Council Chairman, I.K Neopaney as the chief guest, Secretary State Transport Authority, Karma Namgyal Bhutia, ASP West, Nakhul Pradhan, Dy. RTO West, Sonam W Bhutia, ARTO (HQ), N Sharma, AMVI's (HQ), MO Gyalshing Hospital, Legal Expert Gyalshing, students, press and media, drivers associations and public.

The program was conducted to create awareness on Road Safety, Motor Vehicle Acts and Rules and Good Samaritan as per the latest direction of Ministry of Road Transport and Highways.

In his address, Mr Neopaney asserted on the theme and how there is a need for strengthening and effective implementation of Road Safety. In recent times, the alarming rise of road fatalities is seen and thus, Road Safety is an important concern of the Government, he said.

ASP (West) highlighted the usage of mobile phones while driving which has been a major cause of road accidents and hence should be avoided.

RTO, KS Gurung informed the house about the mandatory fitment of speed governors/speed limiting device in goods carrier vehicle and transport vehicles to overcome the over speeding menace keeping in view of provision and guidelines prescribed by the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways (MoRTH).

The nodal officer briefed about the Good Samaritans guidelines on behalf of the Supreme Court of India wherein Accidental Victims shall be immediately taken to the nearest hospital by any public without any fear of harassment in police stations and courts.

Medical Expert from Gyalshing Hospital briefed about the golden hour and first aid. The programme also covered legal opinion on insurance and its relevance in connection to road traffic accidents and claims.

IPR Minister visits Lower Bermiok school

GYALSHING, 12 FEB (IPR): Minister-cum-MLA of Gyalshing Bermiok constituency, Lok Nath Sharma visited the Government Secondary School Lower Bermiok at Raatomatey and a Stockman Centre of Animal Husbandry & Veterinary Services at Berthang, West Sikkim, this morning.

During the visit, Minister Sharma took stock of the progress in the ongoing construction of additional infrastructure of the Lower Bermiok school. He also interacted with all concerned and asked to maintain quality works with respect to the establishment of new school building. He also interacted with



the school staff and discussed various initiatives of the state government and also assured to resolve pending issues.

While addressing the students, the Minister ar-

ticulated the importance of acquiring education to achieve a targeted goal in life and encouraged them to be more determined and competitive.

Thereafter, Minister

Sharma visited the Stockman Centre of AH&VS at Berthang wherein he interacted with the staff and urged them to extend best level of services. He also enquired

about availability of medicines and motivated them to deliver required services on time to save animal lives on which the income of the farmer depends.

Sensitization meeting on KCC loan held in North

MANGAN, 12 FEB (IPR): A sensitization meeting for dissemination of Kisan Credit Card (KCC) Loan to all PM-KISAN beneficiaries was held under the chairmanship of District Magistrate, North, Tenzing T. Kaleon here at the DC's conference hall, today.

The meeting was attended by the Lead District Manager, State Bank of India, Gopal Lama, Additional Director, Agriculture Department, B. D. Rai, Additional Director, Animal Husbandry, Karma Tenzing Zongtenpa, Deputy Director, Horticulture Department, Rinzing Wangyal, Manager, NABARD, Avijeet Murmu and Staff Officer, SISCO, Bikash Gurung.

During the meeting, Gopal Lama informed that a special drive has been initiated by the Government to facilitate universal access to concessional institutional credit for all PM-KISAN beneficiaries. All PM-KI-



SAN beneficiaries will be facilitated for issue of KCC to the benefit of Concessional Institutional Credit.

Mr Lama informed that all charges including the processing, documentation, inspection and ledger folio charges as well as other service charges for KCC loans upto Rs 3 lakh have been waived. All PM-KISAN beneficiaries have been auto approved for KCC and require to simply visit the nearest bank branch with a copy of land document and detail of crop sown along with the filled up one page form for avail-

ing the benefit.

The benefit has now been extended to eligible Animal Husbandry and Fisheries farmers, those farmers who are KCC holders. Further, the scheme includes SMS service to all PM-KISAN beneficiaries from PM-KISAN portal to visit the concerned bank branch for getting the KCC benefit.

DM, Mr Kaleon has directed the Agriculture and line departments to disseminate the same to all eligible farmers of the district so that the farmers may avail the opportunity and take advantage of KCC loan.

SICUN board meeting on strengthening cooperative movement

ASSAM LINGZEY, 12 FEB [IPR]: The 48th board meeting of Sikkim State Cooperative Union (SICUN) was held on 11 Feb at the Conference Hall of Union Building, Assam Lingzey with the objective to stimulate cooperative movement in the state.

The meeting was chaired by Chairman SICUN, L.P. Kafley and was also attended by the Board of Directors, CEO, Karma G.Bhutia, Executive Officer, Phadung Bhutia, representatives from concerned Departments and Members of SICUN.

The main agenda of the meeting was to



strengthen cooperative movement by discussing core issues. The meeting discussed the agenda of creating a congenial environment to encourage cooperative movement in the State.

Chairman, L.P. Kafley briefed about the funding position of SICUN. He announced that SI-

CUN will soon be coming up with awareness program in all the four districts so that people will be aware about fundamentals of cooperative and business development. Further, he emphasized on taking the cooperative movement very seriously and working diligently.

Mend your ways or quit: Puducherry CM to Lt guv Bedi

PUDUCHERRY, FEB 12 (PTI): Stepping up his attack on Lt Governor Kiran Bedi, Puducherry Chief Minister V Narayanasamy on Wednesday said she should either mend her ways or quit, as the union territory assembly saw two ministers slamming her for “causing hindrances” in implementing government decisions.

The government was in an unenviable situation due to ‘lack’ of allocation of sufficient funds by the Centre and “continued hindrances by the Lt Governor in the implementation of welfare schemes,” he told the Union Territory assembly.

He was making an intervention after Agriculture Minister R Kamalakannan alleged Bedi was obstructing procurement of paddy from farmers and Welfare Minister M Kandasamy listed ‘difficulties’ faced by departments under his ministry due to her

“constant intervention”.

The chief minister said the government was forced to move the court frequently because of the Lt Governor's intervention whether it was posting a State Election Commissioner or deciding the modalities of operating the free rice scheme.

“Basically we are accountable and answerable to the people whenever welfare schemes come across road blocks and hiccups... the Lt Governor should either mend her ways or quit,” Narayanasamy, whose government has been at loggerheads with Bedi in the past over three years, added.

Bedi, a former IPS officer, had in the past rejected the charges against her, maintaining she and her office would remain constant and steadfast in principles of administration and zealously guard the way public money is spent.

Bikers on...

to establish a bhawan in every major city of the country for the convenience of the people of Sikkim.

Responding to the request of Hamro Chhahari for a Sikkim Bhawan in Mumbai, he said that it was a very noble suggestion and the CM was very positive towards the request.

Sharing the experience of the bike rally, team leader, Keshav Sapkota, mentioned that cancer patients and their families, especially those from Sikkim and the neighbouring hills, coming to Mumbai find themselves helpless and suffering in different situations.

“In such situations, Hamro Chhahari members have been guiding and supporting them and providing shelter in our two rented buildings. So, another motive of this bike ride is also to inform the people of our region about Hamro Chhahari so that they take full advantage of it,” he said.

He informed that this anti-Cancer rally had covered major cities in eight States with mass awareness on cancer.

“We are just the public faces of this anti-cancer rally, and there are many people behind the success of this rally so we would like to thank everyone of them for their support and guidance,” Mr Sapkota said.

Earlier, in his welcome address, Naupath coordinator, Kazeeman Chettri, thanked Swastika Chettri and Shakun Singh Rai of Nepali Gorkha Sewa Samiti and their entire team for working selflessly for the people of the region in Mumbai.

Reeyaz...

held in a grand manner for a social cause. He added that the concert will also have documentary screening and a special song on water. The concert will have presentations in Indian classical music, Bollywood choir and others on live music by students of Reeyaz Sangeetalya.

The event will be starting from 2:30 PM on Saturday and entry is free for all. The organizers have invited music lovers to be a part of the concert to encourage young upcoming singers and musicians of the State.

Mr Rai mentioned that the institute has around 150 students at present and mainly in Indian classical music.

“This concert is also an occasion to spread awareness on Indian classical music,” he added.

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KUTSE SHEGU



East Sikkim. We also express our gratitude to all the well wishers who stood by us during our time of bereavement.

The 49th days Kutse Shegu of our late father Ren Rey Mondal or Tenzing Lepcha, who left for heavenly abode on 29th December 2019 falls on 15th and 16th February, 2020.

All relatives, family, friends and well wishers are requested to join us in offering prayers for the departed soul at our residence at Rey Busty, Rumtek

**9832015083 Nima Lepcha
2. 8167734336 Mingur Bhutia
3. 7550819886 NT Lepcha
4. 9434407296 Rinchen Lepcha
5. 7908711074 PW Lepcha**

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Fully furnished 3BHK flat available for rent/ lease at Church Road near DPH. Roadside and five minutes walking distance from MG Marg.
For more details: 9083826462 /9832556698

GENERAL LAND FOR SALE

General land 30X40 (3 Plots) available for sale at Tadong 6th Mile next to Harka Maya College. Flat Land no cutting required. Price 27 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

LAND FOR SALE

An area measuring 1 acre at Sadam South Sikkim near Loretto Convent School at Gupti road. Price negotiable any one interested can contact: 78640-04501,62970-03235, 98320-48410

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Com**

State level orientation held on Pariksha Parv



GANGTOK, 12 FEB [IPR]: The state level orientation and sensitization programme on "Pariksha Parv" 2020 for school heads, District Institute of Education and Training (DIET) Principals was held at the conference hall of Social Justice and Welfare Department, Lumsey today organised by Sikkim Commission for Protection of Child Rights (SCPCR) under Social Justice and Welfare Department.

"Pariksha Parv" is a month-long campaign during the exam period from February to March 2020. The aim of the programme is to create sensitisation on the issue of stress among students due to exams and also an initiative to help in removing the stigma attached to counselling and promote positive perception.

The programme had the presence of Chairperson, SCPCR, Dikila

Bhutia, Secretary, Social Justice and Welfare Department, H.K. Chettri, Member Secretary (SCPCR), N.T. Bhutia, Joint Commissioner,

M.B. Chettri, Clinical Psychologist, Dr. Sonam Ongmu Lassopa, Senior Technical Expert, Paresh Shah.

At the onset of the programme, Chairperson, SCPCR, Dikila Bhutia highlighted the decreasing trend of enrolment of students in schools. She urged the gathering to

encourage enrolment and also to be accountable of the children especially falling in the age category of 6-14 years. She further mentioned that the children living with their relatives should be given special care and attention to curb the threat of suicides due to exam anxiety.

Secretary, H.K. Chettri stated that the campaign is initiated by the Prime Minister of India towards changing the outlook of children towards exams

and making it a joyful activity. He also highlighted that the campaign will entail Live Streaming of Q & A Session with renowned experts, psychologists; Counsellors through Facebook/Twitter/YouTube to enable students interact with experts to reduce their exam stress.

Paresh Shah, Senior Technical Expert highlighted the objective of Pariksha Parv. He presented a background on the activities undertaken under Pariksha Parv and briefly spoke on the functions of National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) and SCPCR at length.

Dr. Sonam Ongmu Lassopa (Clinical Psychologist) spoke on understanding and helping students deal with exam stress. Dr. M. Chettri, Joint Commissioner (Technical-Disability) briefed on understanding of Child Psychology and Support.

The programme concluded with the vote of thanks proposed by Social Welfare Officer, Dr. P.N. Pradhan.

Em Prasad takes charge as Excise Advisor



GANGTOK, 12 FEB [IPR]: MLA Namcheybong, Em Prasad Sharma who was recently appointed Advisor, Excise Department, took charge as Advisor at the State Guest House below TNA.

Secretary, Excise along with the officials welcomed Mr. Sharma to

his new office which was later followed by general meeting with the officials chaired by the Advisor.

The Secretary praised the Advisor regarding various issues pertaining to the department.

The Advisor also shared his experiences

regarding good governance and best practices which can be adopted for efficient and smooth functioning of the department. Further, Mr. Sharma expressed hope for cooperation from the officials and assured his full support for future endeavours.

Orientation prog for Monastic and Sanskrit Pathshala teachers concludes



GANGTOK, 12 FEB [IPR]: The valedictory function of the three-day Monastic and Sanskrit Pathshala Teachers Training and Orientation Programme was held here today at Janta Bhawan with Ecclesiastical Affairs Minister Sonam Lama as chief guest.

The Minister shared that he was delighted to be present among Monastic and Sanskrit teachers and remarked that the Dharmic and Sanskrit traditions have lived together in peace and mutual respect sharing a common culture and common aspirations to the highest truth.

He underlined that teachers were part of a team. Since teaching is not an isolated work, teachers need to collaborate, co-create, plan & monitor and work together.

He said that dharmic education was essential for peace and understanding for all humanity and that teaching was not only an academic pursuit but a part of daily Sadhana and spiritual practice.

Secretary, Ecclesiastical Department, ST Tamang

Additional Secretary Kunchok Doma, Joint Director Tenzing Gelek, Deputy Secretary Chunki

Lhamu, OSD Kita Sherpa, resource persons, participating teachers and officials and staff of Ecclesiastical Department were also present for the function.

The Minister stated that teachers were the ones who remove ignorance which is why Teachers' Day is celebrated on the auspicious day of Guru Poornima to offer gratitude at the feet of teachers.

The Minister also reminisced about his professional and personal life. He also appreciated and cited examples of IAS officers of Sikkim and urged everyone present to appreciate people who bring laurels to the State.

The Minister also mentioned certain points that were discussed during the interaction session earlier. He said that teachers should work hard so that they can be recognised either as State Awardees and even National awardee.

He went on to mention that extension will be given under certain criteria and that Monastic and Sanskrit Pathshalas will be treated at par with other academic schools. He also informed that retired teachers will be treated with Golden Handshakes.

In conclusion, he

mentioned that the Sikkim Guest House/ Sikkim Temple at Bodhi Gaya should be taken care of and assured that it will be utilised properly for local public purpose within his tenure.

Resource persons for the training were Khem Lal Sharma [Assistant Prof, Government Sanskrit College, Samdong]; Padam Bahadur Poudel [Assistant Prof, Satiya Government Sanskrit College, Samdong East Sikkim]; Karma Tashi Bhutia [PGT Bhutia, Legship SSS West Sikkim]; Neydup Bhutia [Assistant Prof, SIHNS (Sheda), Pangthang Taktse]; Geeta Sharma [Senior Lecturer, DIET, Gangtok]; Tenzing Choden Bhutia [PGT English]; and Tenzing Uden Bhutia [PGT Bhutia].

The training programme included skill development, Buddhism Philosophy, Tibetan Grammar, Group Activities for class 1 and 2, Monastic Rules and Regulations, Sikkim Monastic History, Question set up and evaluation, Naya-karna, Sanskrit Philosophy, Practice of Sanskrit Sudha, Sikkim Service Rules and about Child Abuse and it's awareness by Amrit Sharma, a Social Worker from Social Welfare Department.

TNA teacher awarded PhD by SMU

SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 12 FEB:

Polash Banerjee, a research scholar in the Department of Computer Science & Engineering, Sikkim Manipal Institute of Technology SMIT has been awarded a doctoral degree on 25 Jan 2020, for his research work titled "A Geospatial Analysis of the Environmental Impacts Due to Broadening of Highway in Sikkim Himalaya", from Sikkim Manipal University, a press release informs.

He was pursuing his Ph.D. research from 2014 to 2019 under the Department of Computer Science and Engineering, Sikkim Manipal Institute of Technology, Majhitar.

Mr. Banerjee has done his B.Sc. (Honours) in Physiology and M.Sc. in Environmental Science from Calcutta University, B.Ed. and Post-Graduate Diploma in Rural



Development from Indira Gandhi National Open University.

Under the supervision of Prof. Ratika Pradhan, HOD of Computer Applications and Associate Director (Student Affairs), SMIT and Prof. Mrinal Kanti Ghose, Retired Dean (Academics), SMIT he has published several international peer-reviewed research papers and has independently co-authored a chapter in an international book. Currently, he is working as a teacher (TGT) in Tashi Namgyal Academy, Gangtok, Sikkim, since 2003.

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GOVERNMENT OF SIKKIM
DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE & INDUSTRIES
UDYOG BHAWAN, TADONG, 737102
GANGTOK, SIKKIM

NOTICE


THE Department of Commerce and Industries invites Request for Proposals (RFPs) from reputed firms for seating up, operating and management of Hazardous Waste Treatment, Storage and Disposal Facility (HWSTDF)-cum-Biomedical Waste Treatment Facility (BWTF).

The interested firms may download Request for Proposal (RFP) document from the official website of C&I Department www.industries.sikkim.gov.in where it will be displayed from 08.02.2020 and submit their Expression of Interest (EoI) as per details in the website.

Sd/-

Director
Commerce & Industries Department
Govt. of Sikkim.

R.O. No. 351/IPR/Pub/Classi./19-20 Date: 31.1.20



OFFICE OF THE DISTRICT AND SESSIONS JUDGE
EAST SIKKIM AT GANGTOK.

NOTICE


It is hereby informed that the Date and Venue for the written examination for the posts of System Administrator, Junior Accountant, LDA-cum-Computer Operator and Accounts Clerk under the Establishment of the District & Sessions Court, East Sikkim, Gangtok has been rescheduled as follows due to unavoidable circumstances:

Dates: 15.02.2020 & 16.02.2020 instead of 14.02.2020 & 15.02.2020.

Venue: Sir Tashi Namgyal Senior Secondary School, Development Area Gangtok, East Sikkim instead of Palzor Namgyal Senior Secondary School.

-Sd-
H. G. Kazi,
Administrative Officer
District & Sessions Court, East at Gangtok



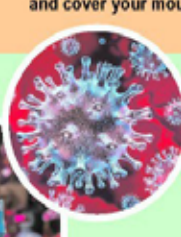
R.O. No. 363/IPR/Pub/Classi./19-20 Date: 11.02.2020.



What is Novel Coronavirus - nCoV?

The Novel Coronavirus (nCoV) is new strain of Coronavirus that originated in Wuhan, China. Notorious for mutating quickly and acquiring new qualities, it is a rising epidemic that was previously not identified in humans.

Symptoms of nCoV	Precautions to Prevent nCoV
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Fever ● Difficulty in breathing ● Dry Cough ● Severe acute respiratory syndrome ● Pneumonia - like symptoms 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Wash your hands often with soap. ● Use an alcohol based hand sanitizer ● Observe good personal hygiene. ● Avoid touching your face with unwashed hands. ● Avoid contact with people with possible symptoms. ● Avoid contact with animals and consumption of undercooked meats. ● Avoid travel to nCoV affected places. ● Wear a mask if you have respiratory syndrome and cover your mouth while coughing or sneezing.
Treatment	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Treatment is symptomatic and supportive, based on the patient's clinical condition. ● No vaccinations available as of now. ● Visit Doctor in case symptoms detected. 	

If you seek help, you may call :
-Toll free no. 104
District surveillance Officer
EAST : 7029372100
WEST : 9593297809
NORTH : 9641957468
SOUTH : 7407691463
New STNM
AMS : 9434711402

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & FAMILY WELFARE
GOVERNMENT OF SIKKIM

CONTRIBUTIONS INVITED FOR AMBA SCHOOL LIBRARY UPGADATION

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We have successfully upgraded 3 school libraries so far with the support and contributions of our generous patrons and are looking forward to receive more such contributions.

We request all to kindly contribute books either old or new or cash for the upgradation of school library at Amba.

Our Library Initiative is aimed at upgrading School libraries specially in rural areas of the state and for laying a foundation for better future of our young minds studying in these schools.

To Contribute Contact WSOS at 7384639193.

Rally Faith for Suicide Prevention

Leverage Faith to save those who have lost hope

This space has spoken often about the problem of suicides and of how it remains largely unaddressed by agencies and organizations which should get more involved. Today, we return with some more on the same problem. The fact that suicides are a problem for Sikkim is universally recognized; no one denies it, and even politicians, despite their shallow analysis of the suicide situation, have also dropped comments on the disturbing signals conveyed by the number of suicides that take place in Sikkim. Newspapers have also realized the unhealthy trend and report on suicide cases not to fill news-space, but to inform readers of a continuing affliction of the social fabric here. While social situations and psychological health can conspire to lead to suicides, the decision to end one's own life is a very private one.

Awareness camps and suicide prevention workshops contribute to the battle against suicides, but an ally which could reinforce suicide prevention initiatives has unfortunately still not stepped up to its responsibility towards Sikkim. Religion, because it is, like suicides a private affair and can touch individuals with a healing touch that impersonal workshops and generic awareness camps cannot, should play a more proactive role in saving lives that are otherwise being avoidably expended. A person with suicidal tendencies is almost always one who has shut the world away, but because Faith is also a private affair becomes impossible to ignore. Religion, since it also carries, in most cases, a deeper and more intimate influence, becomes the only medium with access to a troubled soul when all other interventions have failed. Shouldn't it then be more involved in combating suicides?

Shouldn't the religious practitioners and leaders take some time out from their obsessive pursuit of rituals and displays to address some real issues of living and the still alive? People turn to religion for answers and turn to religious masters to guide them along the way. This casts the perfect foil for religious leaders to become counselors who wean the troubled minds away from suicidal tendencies and towards medical aid and religious succour. Sikkim is a State of very religious people who are also very skeptical of government and NGO-driven programmes. Because lives need to be saved, it would be advisable if the policy makers worked out a way by which religion could be invited to join the initiatives to contain suicides in Sikkim.

Climate change impacts in Bangladesh show how geography, wealth and culture affect vulnerability

SALEH AHMED
theconversation.com

Unpredictable weather and climate patterns recently prompted New York Times columnist Paul Krugman to proclaim in January 2020 that "Apocalypse will become the new normal."

Extreme storms, tides and other awful surprises the world has experienced in recent years suggest that Krugman could be right. July 2019 registered the hottest average global temperature on record. Wildfires, like the dangerous blazes of January 2020 in Australia, endanger health and safety. In Venice in November 2019, the highest tides in 50 years washed more than three feet of water over the landmark Piazza San Marco.

About 4,500 miles farther east, in my home country of Bangladesh, people have been living with dangerous flooding for decades. I have devoted my career to understanding how patterns of living combine with climate and weather patterns, making Bangladesh the poster child for global climate change impacts.

During floods in 1998 I waded chest-deep through floodwaters in Darsana, in southwestern Bangladesh, watching out for dangerous snakes, just to buy rice and kerosene for my family. In 2019, months before the tides that inundated Venice, flooding in Bangladesh killed more than 60 people and displaced hundreds of thousands.

However, everyone is not equally vulnerable to these threats. In coastal Bangladesh, I have documented the disproportionate nature of climate impacts. To support people living in distressed situations caused by natural hazards, I believe it is essential to understand the complex social landscape of local vulnerability.

GEOGRAPHICALLY AND SOCIALLY VULNERABLE
Most countries face adverse consequences from climate change, but low-income developing countries are particularly at risk – first, because they have limited capacities to cope; and second, because they rely heavily on farming and fishing. Of all countries in this plight, I believe Bangladesh suffers the most.

While the entire country is exposed to climate stresses, Bangladesh's densely populated coastal region along the Bay of Bengal is a vulnerability front line where people are constantly exposed to sea level rise, flooding, erosion, tropical cyclones, storm surge, saltwater intrusion and varying rainfall patterns.

Studies show that any change in expected weather and climate patterns will seriously reduce Bangladesh's food security. This will hinder the nation's efforts to reduce poverty and reach the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

Most people in this disaster-prone region also live in challenging socioeconomic conditions. Evidence shows that race, ethnicity, religion, gender, age and other socioeconomic differences can amplify disaster outcomes and shape local vulnerability. For example, women, children and elderly populations are more vulnerable than others because they have limited social and economic resources

and access to public and private support before and after disasters.

Connections between land, people, societies and cultures should guide policymakers and leaders to help Bangladesh's distinct ethnic groups adapt.

THE ROLE OF WEALTH, RELIGION AND GENDER

In 2017 and 2018 I interviewed 250 local farmers and several others in the Kalapara area of coastal Bangladesh. Many of them were directly impacted by sea level rise, tropical cyclones, coastal flooding, rainfall variability and saltwater intrusion. Kalapara is one of the most climate-vulnerable locations in Bangladesh.

Here residents' vulnerability depends on re-



ligion, ethnicity, gender and the size of their farm operations. Large farmers usually have more money, social power and local influence. They also have better access to various public and private resources that can be critical for coping with environmental stresses. The poor and those with limited resources are least equipped to confront those crises.

Religion can play a delicate role. In Kalapara, Muslims are the religious majority and Hindus are the minority. My own findings indicated that in most cases Muslim farmers earn more money from both farming and nonfarm activities than the Hindu farmers.

Muslim farmers also get better access to early warnings and other public and private resources, such as financial support and food aid in times of disaster. Since Muslims are the religious majority in Bangladesh, they have more social capital and stronger networks than other religious groups. In Kalapara, Hindu farmers are often marginalized and receive limited access to resources in times of crisis.

I have found that gender is a factor too. Most women who go into farming are excluded from local power structures. Men's farms tend to be larger and earn more money than those owned by women. But female farmers usually earn more money off the farm, by selling poultry or handicrafts, than men do.

Men receive more of the critical early weather

and climate warnings than women because they have stronger connections with agricultural extension agents. Men also enjoy easier access to local markets and mobile phones. All of these resources offer them information on weather and climate, whereas women often face barriers because of religious and cultural restrictions.

RAKHINES REMAIN SOMEWHAT ISOLATED

In the complex landscape of local vulnerability in Kalapara, the majority of the people are ethnic Bengalis who are largely divided between Muslims and Hindus. Others are members of the Rakhine ethnic minority. These farmers, who settled in the region in the late 18th century, came from mod-

ern-day Myanmar. At that time most of coastal Bangladesh was covered by forests, which Rakhines cleared to establish their settlements.

As time passed, more and more Bengalis started to settle around the Rakhines in the region. Rakhine farmers' culture and religion differ substantially from those of mainstream Bengali farmers. Many Rakhines still speak their native language, also called Rakhine, although they can speak some Bangla.

The language barrier limits their ability to participate in local government or other social and political activities. They live in remote villages, and tend not to understand official early warnings of major storms or other natural hazards.

LOCAL ACTION GUIDES THE WORLD

Bangladesh's climate is changing quickly. Adapting to this crisis requires understanding how complex and vulnerable the landscape is.

Policymakers sometimes overlook local social dynamics when providing early warnings, food or other social services. Reacting without careful planning or understanding local societies could leave some people vulnerable and risks overlooking groups who are already under stress because of climate change. As Bangladesh seeks ways to adapt to climate change, it could set an example of inclusive planning for other nations to follow.

[the writer is Assistant Professor, School of Public Service, Boise State University]

Why people post 'couple photos' as their social media profile pictures

AMANDA L. FOREST & KORI KRUEGER
theconversation.com

As you scroll through your Facebook news feed, you see it: Your friend has posted a new profile picture. But instead of a picture of just your friend, it's a couple photo – a picture of your friend and their romantic partner.

"Why would someone choose that as their profile picture?" you wonder.

We are social psychology researchers interested in understanding people's behavior in close relationships and on social media. Our research and that of other scholars provides insight into why people use these types of "I'm part of a couple!" displays on social media. Choosing profile photos that include their romantic partner, posting their relationship status and mentioning their partner in their updates can all be signs of how people feel in their relationship – and may send an important message to potential rivals.

WHO DOES THIS?

What we social psychologists call "dyadic displays" are relatively common.

In a recent study that we conducted, 29% of romantically involved Facebook users had a "couple" photo as their current profile picture. Seventy percent had a dyadic relationship status posted – such as "In a relationship" or "Married." And participants mentioned their romantic partner in 15% of their recent Facebook updates.

Certain people are more likely to use these dyadic displays than others. People who are very satisfied with or committed to their romantic relationship are more likely to post couple profile photos or represent their relationships on social media in other ways. The more in love a coupled-up person is, and the more jealousy they report, the more likely they are

to post their relationship status publicly on Facebook.

People who have an anxious attachment style – who worry about their partner rejecting or abandoning them – are also more likely to use a dyadic profile photo and post a dyadic relationship status on Facebook. In contrast, people who have an avoidant attachment style – who are uncomfortable depending on others and who prioritize maintaining their independence – are unlikely to showcase their couplehood in these ways.

Whether someone underscores their romantic status online can also change according to how a person is feeling at a given time. People are more likely to post relationship-relevant information on Facebook on days when they feel more insecure about their partner's feelings for them than they typically do and on days when they feel more satisfied with their relationship.

WHY DISPLAY COUPLEHOOD THIS WAY?

One possible reason, proposed by other scholars, is that these displays accurately represent how many romantically involved people see themselves. People in close relationships often include their partner in their self-concept – they see their partner as part of themselves. People may display their couplehood on social media, then, because doing so accurately represents how they see themselves: as intertwined with their partner.

Our recent survey of 236 romantically

involved adult Facebook users supported this idea. We found that people – especially those who are very satisfied with their relationships – use dyadic displays partly because they see their partner as part of who they are.

We also found another, more strategic reason that people perform these displays: They're motivated to protect their relationships from threats that exist on



social media. Using Facebook, Twitter and all the rest exposes people to a variety of things that could potentially harm their relationship, including ex-partners, alternative partners they could start a relationship with and romantic rivals who could attempt to steal their current sweethearts.

Outside of social media, research has shown that committed people engage in a host of behaviors to defend their relation-

ships against threats posed by alternative partners and romantic rivals. Mentioning their partner or relationship is one way people may try to ward off these potential troublemakers.

We found that people who were more motivated to protect their relationships from these kinds of threats were more likely to use dyadic displays. Wanting to keep the good thing they had going was one reason

why highly satisfied and committed people were particularly likely to feature their partner on their social media profiles.

Other researchers have found that some people feature their partner and relationship in their social media profiles because having other people know that they are in a relationship gives them a self-esteem boost. This motive to feel good about themselves is one reason why anx-

iously attached people want their Facebook friends to be able to tell that they are in a relationship – and why avoidantly attached people don't.

HOW DO OTHERS INTERPRET THESE DISPLAYS?

Interestingly, viewers tend to form fairly accurate impressions of others based on their social media profiles and posts.

In experiments, researchers have manipulated social media profiles to investigate the consequences of advertising your coupledom in these ways.

Posting couple photos and using other dyadic displays leads other people to perceive the profile owner as more likable and as more likely to be in a satisfying and committed relationship.

These dyadic displays not only communicate commitment, but also suggest that the profile owner is unlikely to be receptive to romantic advances from other people. This may discourage others from trying to get closer to the profile owner, perhaps protecting the relationship.

If you've never done it, it may seem surprising that people would choose a "couple photo" as their profile picture. But doing so has the potential to produce positive outcomes for that person and their relationship.

[Amanda L. Forest is Assistant Professor of Psychology, University of Pittsburgh; Kori Krueger is Ph.D. Student in Psychology, University of Pittsburgh]

Nepal shuts resort where 8 Indian tourists died

KATHMANDU, FEB 12 (PTI): Nepal has suspended the licence of a mountainous resort for three months due to poor security management and managerial weakness at the hotel where eight Indian tourists, including four minors, died of possible asphyxiation, according to media reports.

Tragedy struck a group of 15 tourists from Kerala when eight of them died on January 21 due to possible asphyxiation after they fell unconscious probably due to a gas leak from a heater in their room at a mountainous resort in Makwanpur district.

The tourists were airlifted to HAMS hospital here where they were pronounced dead on arrival. Makwanpur police said the victims might have fallen unconscious due to asphyxiation.

The Department of Tourism on Sunday imposed a ban on the operation of Daman-based Everest Panorama Resort for three months based on the report submitted by a probe committee formed to investigate the death of the Indian tourists from Kerala, the Kathmandu Post reported on Tuesday. The



department decided to shut down the resort as the report submitted by a probe committee pointed out poor security management and managerial weakness at the resort for the incident, it said.

The Ministry of Culture, Tourism and Civil Aviation had formed the probe committee under Surendra Thapa, the director of the Department of Tourism. After a field inspection, the committee had submitted its report a few days ago, pointing to the shortcomings of the resort.

During the investigation, the committee found the resort had not been following the recommended safety measures and was providing substandard services to

its guests, The Himalayan Times reported. Moreover, the committee discovered that the resort had not fulfilled the criteria set by DoT to be categorised a 'resort', it said.

Mira Acharya, director of DoT was quoted as saying by the report that the resort's operations have been halted as per Section 15 of Tourism Act-1979.

"If the resort owner wishes to resume services after three months of suspension, the resort should be upgraded as per the Hotel, Lodge, Restaurant, Bar and Tourist Guide Rules-1981 and also meet the criteria mentioned in a notice published in the Nepal Gazette under the title 'Hotel Classification and

Criteria," Acharya said. She added that the resort would also have to undergo the Environment Impact Assessment to get the permission from DoT to resume operation.

Meanwhile, the resort management has said that they will work towards meeting the standards fixed by the department and run the resort efficiently.

"We will work towards meeting the standards fixed by the department and run the resort efficiently. We are saddened by the tragic incident. We will ensure that such incidents don't occur in the future, said Sudesh Gautam, the operator of the resort was quoted as saying by the Kathmandu Post. The

group, after travelling to Pokhara -- a popular mountainous tourist destination -- was on their way back home and stayed at Everest Panorama Resort in Daman.

Those who were killed were Praveen Krishnan Nair, his wife Saranya Sasi and their three children and Ranjith Kumar Adatholath Punathil, his wife Indu Lakshmi Peethambaran Ragalatha and their son.

Everest Panorama Resort was established 28 years ago in Daman Simbhajyang area, a tourist destination in Bagmati Province. The tourist numbers, according to Thaha Hotel Association, have plunged after the tragic accident of January 27.

Assam NRC data safe: Home Ministry

NEW DELHI, FEB 12 (PTI): The Centre on Wednesday said the NRC data in Assam is safe even though some technical issues were visible and that will be resolved soon.

The Union Home Ministry clarification came in view of reports that data of the final list of the National Register of Citizens has been made offline from its official website.

"The NRC data is safe. Some technical issues are in visibility on cloud. These are being resolved soon," a home ministry spokesperson said.

The data was not available for a couple of days and it created panic in the public, mostly among the people excluded from the list as the rejection certificates were yet to be issued.

NRC State Coordinator Hitesh Dev Sarma accepted that the data has been made offline, but refuted the allegation of any "malafide" intent in it.

The cloud service for the huge set of data was provided by IT firm Wipro and their contract was till October 19 last year. However, this was not renewed by the previous coordinator.

So, the data got offline from December 15 after it was suspended by Wipro, Sarma said.

He said the state coordination committee had decided to do necessary formalities in its meeting on January 30 and wrote to the Wipro during the first week of February.

"Once Wipro makes the data live, it will be

available for public. We hope people will be able to access it in the next 2-3 days," Sarma said.

The complete detail of exclusion and inclusion of bonafide Indian citizens in the NRC was uploaded on its official website <http://www.nrcassam.nic.in> after the final list was published on August 31, 2019.

The final NRC was published by excluding 19,06,657 persons. A total of 3,11,21,004 names were included out of 3,30,27,661 applicants.

After the earlier NRC State Coordinator Praateek Hajela relinquished the charge on November 11 following his transfer to home state Madhya Pradesh on a direction from the Supreme Court, Sarma was appointed in his place on November 9.

HC seeks post-mortem report of man who died in Kolkata Police custody

KOLKATA, FEB 11 (PTI): The Calcutta High Court on Tuesday directed the West Bengal government to present before it the post-mortem report of a man who allegedly died in police custody here.

Rajkumar Shaw died after falling ill allegedly during questioning at Sinthee police station on Monday, following which a resident of the area

moved the court seeking its intervention and a CBI probe into the incident.

The division bench comprising Chief Justice TBN Radhakrishnan and Justice Arijit Banerjee directed the government to submit an action taken report and the post-mortem report on February 25, the next date of hearing of the petition.

Additional advocate

general Abhratosh Majumder submitted before the court that the post-mortem was to be conducted as per the NHRC guidelines and would be videographed.

The petitioner's lawyer, Dhiraj Trivedi, claimed that there are specific allegations against the local police and prayed for a CBI investigation into the death of Shaw.

Mayawati slams Centre over LPG price hike

LUCKNOW, FEB 12 (PTI): BSP supremo Mayawati on Wednesday attacked the Centre over a steep hike in the price of LPG or cooking gas cylinder, terming it as a "cruel decision" against the poor.

Reacting to the hike of Rs 144.5 per LPG cylinder due to spurt in benchmark global rates of the fuel, she said the move will hit crores of poor and hard-working people who are already facing "severe inflation".

"It would have been better had the Centre worked as a welfare state as embodied in the Constitution," she tweeted after the price notification of state-owned oil firms.

LPG price was increased to Rs 858.50 per 14.2 kg cylinder from Rs 714 previously, making it the steepest hike in rates since January 2014 when prices had gone up by Rs 220 per cylinder to Rs 1,241.

Amit Mitra writes to RBI over 'discriminatory' hiring

KOLKATA, FEB 12 (PTI): West Bengal Finance Minister Amit Mitra has written to the Reserve Bank of India, expressing concern over "discriminatory" hiring by the apex bank, officials of an employees' union said on Wednesday.

The All India Reserve Bank Employees' Association claimed that the Kolkata zone has just 11 vacancies out of 926 openings for the post of "assistants" in the country.

"The Kolkata office is second largest of RBI with its jurisdiction spread over West Bengal, Sikkim and Andaman



and Nicobar Islands, yet vacancies have reduced sharply to 11...

Gives a sense of discrimination from a pan-India institution," Mitra said in the letter, shared by the association. The central bank

has notified 419 vacancies in Mumbai, 67 in Chennai and 34 in New Delhi among the metros, the union officials said.

The number of vacancies for the Kolkata zone has been constantly reducing since 2012, when

it was 145, they said.

A two-member delegation of the association had on February 4 met Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee over the "discriminatory" recruitment sanction for the state.

The cheating wife, her rich lover and a court case for 'immoral' Pakistan TV hit

ATIKA REHMAN LAHORE, 12 FEB [THEGUARDIAN]: A court in Pakistan has summoned the creators of a wildly popular television series after a petition was filed demanding they apologise for portraying Pakistani women as "greedy, selfish and non-professional".

In the petition filed at the Sindh high court last month, lawyer Sana Saleem said the television series Meray Paas Tum Ho (I Have You) was "ridiculing a woman who makes the same decision as every other man in society".

The series followed the story of a married couple whose relationship falls apart when the woman has an affair with a wealthy man. Pakistani television dramas routinely show women forgiving cheating husbands, but this series presented a fresh question: should a man forgive his unfaithful wife?

The show polarised the country. Women turned to Facebook and Twitter to call out the show and the writer, Khalilur ur Rehman Qamar, for his misogynistic storytelling. As the show gained popularity, Qamar courted controversy when he appeared on talk shows to justify the script and made statements such as "women should gang rape men if they want equality", and "women are able to resist temptation, but men cannot".

The 23 episodes ran from August 2019 to January this year on channel ARY Digital, becoming the

most watched TV show in Pakistan. The finale was watched by 80 million viewers and was screened in cinemas across the country, raking in a record-breaking 38 million rupees (£414,231) on the first day in ticket sales.

Television critic and journalist Mahwash Ajaz said: "These characters are unrealistic: overtly beautiful and modern, but also astoundingly stupid. Only a man could write such a script."

However, many viewers sided with the character of the male lead, the victim of the infidelity, and praised him for one particularly controversial scene in which he tells his wife's lover that she's "barely worth spare change" and not the 50 million rupees the businessman had offered him for a divorce.

The court has summoned the producer, Humayun Saeed, who also plays the lead role, to appear on Thursday along with the lawyers of the Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority.

Justice Muhammad Ali Mazhar has said if the bench finds that the show features immoral discourse, action will be taken against the producers.

The case is significant. Although it is not uncommon in Pakistan for people to ask the courts to mediate in this way, it is unusual for the petitioner to demand justice for women. A separate petition to stop the airing of the final episode of the show was thrown

out last month. Sana Saleem said: "The show had a huge impact and hurt women. The courts have a duty to correct something which is negatively affecting society."

In her petition, she also objects to the storylines of an unmarried couple living together and a six-year-old child playing Cupid to set up his father and schoolteacher.

However, lawyer Reema Omer said prohibiting content, regardless of its "offensive" nature, is an anathema to the freedom of expression. "It is not the business of the state to decide what people should and should not watch on television unless the content violates certain clearly defined limitations set by law, such as incitement to violence, for example."

Omer added that critiquing the show in the media was a "far more potent way" to respond to sexism than censorship and court directions to make the actors apologise.

Salman Iqbal, the founder and CEO of ARY Digital, defended the show. "Pakistani dramas for years have shown men abusing and cheating on women, yet no petitions were filed by men against such content. So why now?"

"If Tom kills Jerry in the cartoon, should we feel compelled to launch a campaign for animal rights? No, we should just enjoy it. [We need to] forget about the nitty-gritty for a while and experiment to see what the audience responds to. It's fiction and it's fun."

Meghalaya CM removes brother as state home minister

SHILLONG, FEB 12 (PTI): In a major Cabinet reshuffle, Meghalaya Chief Minister Conrad K Sangma has removed his brother James K Sangma as the home minister of the state in view of alleged discontentment expressed by other ministers against him.

The coalition partners of the Meghalaya Democratic Alliance (MDA) government have been demanding the removal of James K Sangma as home minister over his alleged involvement in illegal transportation of coal.

James K Sangma was also shifted from the district council affairs department.

The chief minister's elder brother was given the charge of taxation besides information and public relations departments, according to a



notification issued by chief secretary MS Rao on Tuesday.

He will retain others portfolios - power, food, civil supplies and consumers' affairs and law.

Lahkmen Rymbui of the United Democratic Party (UDP) will be the new home (police) minister of the state while urban affairs minister Hamletson Dohling will now take charge of the district council affairs department, the notification said.

"The governor on the advice of the chief minister is pleased to order

the reallocation of portfolios of the (four) ministers...", it read.

Rymbui will also continue to hold charge of education, forest and environment and border area development departments. Dohling of the People's Democratic Front (PDF) will retain municipal administration and information technology portfolios.

Besides health and family welfare, AL Hek of the BJP will hold additional charge of home (jail) and home (passport) departments.

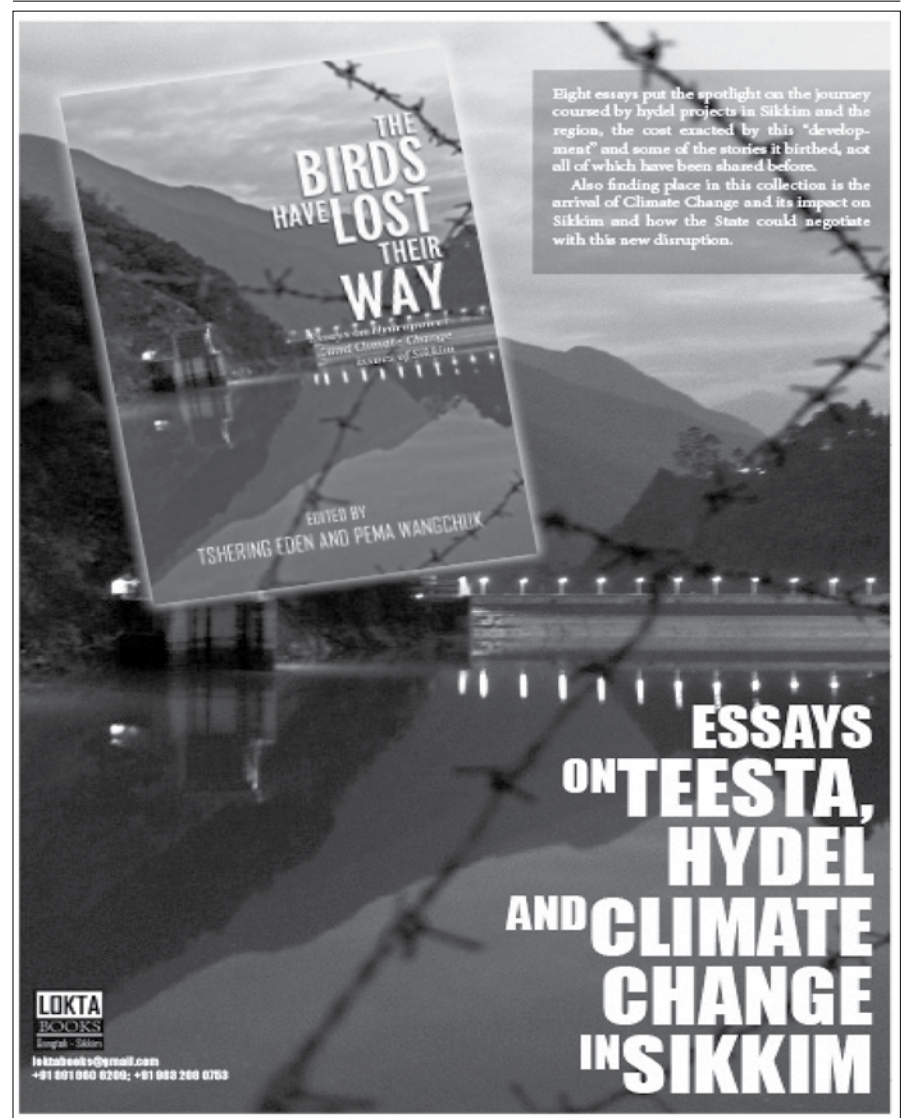
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Bopanna-Shapovalov in quarterfinals of Rotterdam Open

ROTTERDAM, FEB 12 (PTI): India's Rohan Bopanna teamed up with Canada's Denis Shapovalov to enter the quarter-finals of the Rotterdam Open with a hard-fought victory over Australia's John Peers and Michael Venus here.

The Indo-Canadian pair defeated Peers-Venus 7-6 6-7 10-8 in a thrilling match at the ATP 500 event.

After winning the first set tie-break, the duo of Bopanna and Shapovalov lost the second in another close tie-break, as fortunes fluctuated.

However, the 39-year-old Bopanna brought all his experience into play and was helped by Shapovalov's resolve to fight till the end.

Bopanna and Shapovalov will next face the fourth-seeded pair of Jean-Julien Rojer and Horia Tecau on Thursday.

Mauricio Pochettino 'ready and would love' to return to Premier League

LONDON, 12 FEB [AP]: Mauricio Pochettino, who was sacked by Tottenham in November, would relish another opportunity to manage in the Premier League.

Pochettino, who took over at White Hart Lane in May 2014 after leaving Southampton, guided the club to the Champions League final last season.

However, following a run of inconsistent form which saw them drop out of contention for the top four, the Argentinian was sacked and swiftly replaced by José Mourinho. Before leaving Spurs, the 47-year-old had been linked with Manchester United, as well as Real Madrid. Speaking to Sky Sports' In The Pink podcast, Pochettino revealed he would be tempted by another job in the English top flight if the right opportunity presented itself.

"I would love to work in the Premier League," he said. "It's going to be difficult I know and for now it's a moment to wait and we'll see what happens. It's a moment of recovery, to think about yourself a little bit, and to be ready because in football always something can happen and you need to be ready. "I'm ready and waiting for a new challenge. I have the belief and confidence that the next challenge will be fantastic." Pochettino maintained there was nothing more than "rumours" at the moment.

Despite the way his tenure ended, he remains "very proud about everything I achieved" at Spurs having been manager "at a pivotal moment for the club" before their stadium development. "Everything I had to do was very scary in those moments," he said. "To destroy White Hart Lane and to build a new stadium, to play at Wembley and Milton Keynes, only football people know how difficult it was to deal with these situations.

"To apply a new philosophy and new ideas was very tough but I feel very proud with the success we had and to take Tottenham to a different level.

Brescia v Atalanta: the Italian derby built on a 900-year-old feud

MARTINO SIMCIK

ARESE, 12 FEB [THEGUARDIAN]: There is something about Italian football that is difficult to pin down. Of course there is the passion, the singing and the rivalries but there is also a special ingredient that give calcio its special "made in Italy" appeal. It comes down to campanilismo, which literally translates to "belltowerism" – that intensified love of a place that is born out of Italy's complex and divided history. This is a country where religion is deep-rooted, harking back to a time where local communities centred around their churches.

The Lombardia derby sums up that campanilismo and, for the first time in 13 years, the stage appeared to be set for its return. Wars and conflicts dating back to the Middle Ages lay the foundations for this rivalry, which continue to manifest themselves today in the form of food, art, dialect and, above all else, football.

The rivalry between Bergamo – the home city of Atalanta – and Brescia may look esoteric to outsiders, but it dates back to the 12th century. In 1126, some land in Brescia went up for sale and the city of Bergamo bought it to give themselves a territorial advantage, kicking off skirmishes that only abated three decades later when the Roman Emperor, Frederick I, intervened and returned the land to Brescia.

War broke out between



the cities a few years later over another territorial dispute. The Brescians invaded the province of Bergamo and inflicted a resounding military defeat on their rivals, killing 2,500 Bergamaschi. Enrico VI eventually brought relative peace to the region but the simmering animosity eventually boiled over again, this time culminating in the gruesome Battle of Cortenuova, where the Bergamaschi finally defeated the Guelfs of Brescia. Since then, the two provinces have endured similar histories, floating between Venetian, Milanese, French, Napoleonic and Austrian ruling, before eventually becoming integrated into the Kingdom of Italy in 1861.

When Italy's first football clubs were established a few decades later, the sport became the vehicle through which these historic rivalries were played out. People in Bergamo refer to their neighbours as "pigs" (Brescia has more pigs than people), while the Bresciani return the insults by calling Bergamaschi "rabbits". During a derby in the 1930s, Brescia fans released hundreds of rabbits on to the pitch at the Stadio Rigamonti. Atalanta and Brescia have never been as successful as the big clubs in Milan, but they have produced a number of players who become legends in the nearby city, including the Baresi brothers, Andrea Pirlo, Filippo Inzaghi

and Roberto Donadoni.

Friction between Atalanta and Brescia has always existed, but the fixture took on a whole new dynamic during a match in May 1993. Brescia – who had Gheorghe Hagi and Florin Raducioiu in their team at the time – won 2-0 but the game was suspended three times due to animosity in the stands. The brawling continued after the game finished, resulting in five arrests and 20 people in hospital.

Their meeting are rare but they are always littered with memorable moments – most notably Carlo Mazzone's run in down the touchline in September 2001. The legendary Brescia manager had been animated through the game at

the Stadio Mario Rigamonti, receiving plenty of abuse from Atalanta fans. His side were 3-1 down at half-time but Roberto Baggio scored for Brescia in the 75th minute to make it 3-2. At this point, Mazzone shouted to the ultras in the Atalanta end that he was coming over there when his team equalised.

Baggio completed his hat-trick with a free-kick in the last minute and Mazzone set off down the touchline, evading his staff as they tried to hold him back. The 64-year-old ran up to the away end and shook his fist at the fans, ready to take on thousands of them singlehandedly. "I turned into lightning," said Mazzone. "I ran like lightning without thinking what might

happen when I got there. I wanted to settle this once and for all. Man to man, in a rustic fashion, in an old-fashioned duel." The referee, Pierluigi Colina, simply waited for Mazzone to walk back up the field before sending him off. Mazzone accepted his fate gracefully.

When the fixture finally returned this year, football fans across the country were eager to see how a new generation of fans would interpret this incredible legacy. Unfortunately, Italy's authorities doubled down on their attempts to suppress the fans with new policing innovations – such as fan ID cards – which have been widely criticised by fans throughout Serie A. These draconian measures coupled with extortionate ticket prices have led to a drop in attendances across the country, mirroring Serie A's recent decline in quality. So, at this, the first derby in 13 years, Atalanta supporters decided to boycott the game in Brescia. The visitors won 3-0, but Italian football was the real loser.

For a country where football carries such rich historical value – and whose supporters express cultural significance with such fervour – the match promised much more than it ultimately delivered. Still, the derby of Lombardia remains one of the most iconic, under-appreciated and fascinating rivalries football has to offer, with the weight of 900 years of history behind it.

Italian referee banned from football for one year after headbutting goalkeeper

ROME, 12 FEB [AP]: An Italian football referee has been banned from officiating or attending football matches for one year, after headbutting a goalkeeper following a regional league match.

Italy's Ansa news agency reported that on 1 February, Antonio Martiniello sent off Borgo Mogliano keeper Matteo Ciccio during their home game against Montottone, in the eastern Macerata district. The hosts held on to win 3-1.

The goalkeeper headed to the dressing room after the match to seek an explanation, but discovered that Martiniello

had more punishment to dish out. The pair faced off in the corridor and the referee headbutted Ciccio, who was taken to hospital for treatment and later discharged.

Martiniello will be prevented from officiating matches for the next year, and is also banned from entering the facilities of any teams in Italy's professional, minor and amateur leagues, as well as attending matches involving the Italian national team.

The Macerata police chief has said the ban was fully warranted, because Martiniello had failed to set a good example for youngsters.

Maxwell ruled out of SA tour with elbow injury, could miss beginning of IPL

MELBOURNE, FEB 12 (PTI): Australia's dashing all-rounder Glenn Maxwell is set to miss the beginning of the IPL after an elbow injury on Tuesday ruled him out of the upcoming ODIs and T20 Internationals in South Africa. The tour of South Africa starts on February 21.

Maxwell will undergo surgery on his left elbow and will be replaced by D'Arcy Short in both squads. Cricket Australia said he might require at least six to eight weeks to attain full match fitness, which means he is likely to miss the beginning of the IPL too, which is starting on March 29. The 31-year-old is representing Kings XI Punjab in the franchise-based league.

A "shattered" Maxwell said the decision to withdraw from the South African tour was difficult.

"I was not confident that I could perform at international level with my elbow in its current state and have decided to undergo surgery straight

away to fix the issue," Maxwell said in a statement. "I would like to thank Justin Langer, Ben Oliver, Trevor Hohns and the whole Australian squad for their understanding."

The South Africa tour was the first time Maxwell had been picked for national duties since taking a break from cricket in October due to mental health issues. Australia's national selector Trevor Hohns said Maxwell's increased pain could not have been overlooked.

"We are disappointed to lose Glenn this close to the tour as we were looking forward to welcoming him back to the national side in both the 20 and 50-over formats after his break during the summer," Hohns was quoted as saying by Cricket Australia.

"Unfortunately, the pain he has experienced in the elbow in the latter stages of the BBL increased over the weekend and he will have surgery immediately to rectify the situation.

Euro 2020 sponsors less than green

MOSCOW, FEB 12 (AFP): With sponsorship from carmaker Volkswagen and Azerbaijan's state-run oil company SOCAR, Euro 2020 proves UEFA's willingness to do business with companies whose environmental records are often less than exemplary.

While UEFA claims the tournament will be the greenest ever, Volkswagen has been a sponsor of its international competitions since 2017, despite the scandal that broke in 2015 when it admitted to cheating on emissions tests on its diesel cars.

UEFA has already come under fire for holding the tournament in 12 different countries across Europe, creating a massive carbon footprint from fans' travel.

In addition, Russia's state energy giant Gazprom has been the main sponsor of another major UEFA tournament, the Champions League, since 2012.

Critics say the ex-Soviet oil and gas giants are not only extracting hydrocarbons in an unsustainable way and polluting the environment, but are also funding political regimes with questionable records on democracy and human rights.

Azeri sponsor SOCAR is the state-run oil company of the Caspian country ruled with scant regard for human rights by the Aliyev family since independence from the USSR.

Russian gas monopoly Gazprom is one of Moscow's main foreign-policy tools used by President Vladimir Putin to further the country's political and economic interests, Kremlin critics say.

UEFA said that it is "conscious of the dilemma" presented by its closeness to SOCAR and Gazprom in terms of their environmental impact.

"We believe that it is still worthwhile to try to apply sustainable event management criteria, where possible, when organising a major event," UEFA said in written comments to AFP.

The logos of Gazprom and SOCAR will be hard to miss at the tournament, especially as they have strong links to two of the stadiums hosting matches.

The stadium in Russia's



northwestern city of Saint Petersburg is called the Gazprom Arena, although it will change its name during the tournament.

SOCAR poured "at least 850 million" into the stadium in Baku, according to the OCCRP, an NGO that works with investigative reporters in Eastern Europe.

- 'POLITICAL' AIM -

As world governing body FIFA has lost numerous sponsors over corruption scandals that tarnished its reputation under the leadership of Sepp Blatter, UEFA could be seen as risking similar disaffection among potential sponsors.

A number of major FIFA sponsors reviewed or even broke off their cooperation as a result of corruption scandals that tarnished its reputation under the leadership of Sepp Blatter, so UEFA could be seen as risking similar disaffection among potential sponsors.

Sebastian Chiappero, director of Geneva-based sponsorship consulting firm Sponsorize, believes the European football body is in no danger, however.

"UEFA has people queueing up to get back on board," he said.

The total value of such contracts is kept secret but sports media puts them at tens of millions of euros.

Euro 2016 earned 483 million euros (527 million) for UEFA in commercial rights

revenue.

In exchange for UEFA sponsorship, Gazprom and SOCAR have massively boosted their profile.

Sponsorship of international events "helps both raising the brand awareness of SOCAR as an internationally positioned company and (of) Azerbaijan as the country of origin and a new tourism destination," said company spokesman Ibrahim Ahmadov.

Russia and Azerbaijan are both regularly criticised for violating human rights and such sponsorship also has a "political aim," said Kirill Kulakov, director of studies for sports management at Moscow's RMA Business School.

"For Gazprom the aim of sponsoring UEFA is primarily improving its image... and expanding Russia's influence in the world."

- 'NO PUBLIC IMPACT' -

When the Europa League final was played in Baku last year, Amnesty International said Azerbaijan should not be allowed to "sportswash" its appalling human rights record as a result of the football fanfare.

Azerbaijan has been ruled with an iron fist since the Soviet era, first by Heydar Aliyev and, since 2003, by his son Ilham.

UEFA insists that it signed a contract with SOCAR, not Azerbaijan, but in reality there is lit-

tle distinction between them as SOCAR is the state oil company of a country where oil makes up 90 percent of exports and the revenues account for half the national budget.

The heads of international sports organisations have a "unique opportunity" to make things "more transparent and ethical," said Chiappero, but so far he "cannot see any move in that direction."

Ultimately the debate is unlikely to affect football fans' view of Euro 2020, he said.

"We've seen in studies that (scandals) had no impact on consumers. Today, whether SOCAR is dirty or clean, it won't have any effect on the consumers of football.

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British nationals working in Brussels snap up Irish passports

LISA O'CARROLL

LONDON, 12 FEB [THE GUARDIAN]: More than 50 British nationals working for the European commission in Brussels have obtained Irish passports, which can help secure career progression, it has emerged.

Data released by the commission shows 120 officials with British nationality have secured additional passports of an EU state since March 2017, when the official article 50 notice was given that the UK was leaving the bloc.

According to the Irish broadcaster RTÉ, 10% of the 569 Irish passport holders working for the commission were originally British passport holders.

Anyone with an Irish parent, or a grandparent born in Ireland is entitled to an Irish passport. Securing dual nationality with another member state may improve the career prospects of British citizens working in EU institutions but it is not guaranteed.



To be eligible for an EU career, candidates must be a citizen of an EU country and be entitled to full rights as an EU citizen.

However, in a notice issued after article 50 was invoked, the commission said: "The commission has taken note of the fact that a number of UK nationals among its staff have requested or may request a change

towards a different first nationality. These changes are of an exceptional nature and therefore deserve a specific handling.

"As a consequence, staff members from the United Kingdom who declare a change of nationality after 29 March 2017 shall still be considered to have kept the UK nationality as first nationality for the purpose of ensuring a bal-

anced representation of staff within the commission, notably at middle-management and senior management level," said an official notice.

This is to ensure staff nationalities are in proportion to the membership of the union.

UK nationals in the commission were not the only Britons to have sought security in dual EU-UK nationality.

Last month, it emerged that 1,403 British nationals in Belgium had naturalised and have Belgian passports, up from 506 in 2016 and 127 in 2015.

This is part of an EU-wide trend, with more than 350,000 UK citizens living in Britain or a member state opting for dual nationality as a post-Brexit insurance policy.

Trump says looking forward to visiting India

LALIT K JHA

WASHINGTON, FEB 12 (PTI): US President Donald Trump has said that he is looking forward to his first visit to India later this month and indicated that the two countries may sign a trade deal.

At the invitation of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Trump is slated to travel to India on February 24 and 25. In addition to New Delhi, he will stop in Ahmedabad in Gujarat to address a joint public meeting with Modi at a stadium.

"He (Modi) is a great gentleman and I look forward to going to India. So, we'll be going at the end of the month," Trump told reporters in his Oval Office, a day after the White House announced dates of his anticipated India trip.

Responding to a question, the president indicated that he is willing to sign a trade deal with India if it is the right one.

"They (Indians) want to do something and we'll see... if we can make the right deal, (we) will do it," said Trump, a fortnight ahead of his visit to the country as the 45th US president.

India's new Ambassador to the US, Taranjit Singh Sandhu told PTI that Trump's forthcoming visit is a "reflection of the strong personal rapport" between Trump and Modi.

"It also demonstrates their strong desire to take the relationship to new heights," said Sandhu, who had presented his credentials to Trump in Oval Office last week.

Over the last three years, Trump and Modi have developed a personal friendship and in 2019, the duo met four times including their joint address before a

strong 50,000 crowd of Indian-Americans in Houston.

This year, they have spoken over the phone on two occasions, including the one over the weekend.

"Just spoke with Prime Minister Modi," Trump told reporters on Tuesday in response to a question on his India visit.

Excited to travel to India later this month, said Trump referring to his conversation with Modi during which the prime minister apparently told him about the hundreds and thousands of Indians who would be there to welcome him in Ahmedabad.

Trump jokingly told reporters that now he will "not feel good" about the size of the crowd that he addresses in the US which is usually between 40,000 to 50,000.

"He (Modi) said we will have millions and millions of people. My only problem is that last night we probably had 40 or 50,000 people... I'm not going to feel so good... There will be five to seven million people just from the airport to the new stadium (in Ahmedabad)," Trump said.

"And you know (it) is the largest stadium in the world. He's (Modi) building it now. It's almost complete and it's the largest in the world," Trump said.

The two leaders are expected to joint address a massive public rally at the newly build Motera Stadium in Ahmedabad.

Being built at an estimated cost of USD 100 million, the Motera Stadium with a seating capacity of 100,000 spectators will be the world's largest cricket stadium overtaking the Melbourne Cricket Ground in Australia.

Trump wants Pentagon to review impeachment witness' conduct



WASHINGTON, FEB 12 (AP): President Donald Trump suggested Tuesday that the Pentagon should review the conduct of a former White House national security aide who played a central role in the Democrats' impeachment case and potentially consider disciplinary action against him.

Army Lt. Col. Alex Vindman, who until last week was detailed by the Pentagon to the White House, testified before the House impeachment panel that Trump inappropriately pushed Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelenskyy to investigate former Vice President Joe Biden and his son Hunter.

Vindman was ousted from his job on the White House National Security Council on Friday, just two days after the Senate acquitted Trump on abuse of power and obstruction of justice charges.

He is to be reassigned by the Pentagon. His twin brother, Lt. Col. Yevgeny Vindman, who worked as an ethics lawyer at the NSC, also was ousted from his job and was re-assigned to the Army General Counsel's Office.

Trump has already been sharply criticized for pushing out Alexander Vindman and others who crossed him in the impeachment hearings.

Asked whether he

wanted to see Vindman face discipline, Trump said military officials can handle him any way they want but also suggested that he expected commanders to review the decorated, 20-year officer's conduct.

That's going to be up the military, Trump said. We'll have to see. They are certainly, I imagine, going to take a look at that."

Robert O'Brien, Trump's national security adviser, said later Tuesday that Alexander Vindman was not asked to leave his White House job in retaliation for his testimony in the Democrats' impeachment case.

There's absolutely no retaliation with respect to the Vindmans as far as impeachment goes, O'Brien said at an event hosted by the Atlantic Council.

But the president is entitled to a staff that he has confidence in and that he believes will execute his policy. O'Brien said it was his decision and that the president did not ask him to remove them.

They were not retaliated against," O'Brien said.

Their services were no longer needed. ... The hiring and the decisions on personnel are made by the National Security Council.

Ultimately the buck

stops with me, but there is a chief of staff, we have a deputy and we have lawyers who are involved in every one of those decisions, he said. So those were my decisions and I stand by them. Noting that both are lieutenant colonels in the Army, O'Brien suggested that the Vindman twins were not acting to implement the president's policy decisions.

The policy of the United States is formed and decided by the president of the United States, he said.

We're not some banana republic where lieutenant colonels get together and decide what the policy is. Defense Secretary Mark Esper was asked earlier what the Pentagon would do to ensure that the former NSC staffers face no retribution.

"We protect all of our service members from retribution or anything like that," Esper said. "We've already addressed that in policy and other means." Alexander Vindman's attorney, David Pressman, did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Earlier, Pressman said that telling the truth cost his client his "job, his career, and his privacy."

Associated Press writers Kevin Freking and Deb Riechmann contributed to this report.

US, Taliban close to 'reduction in violence' agreement

Washington, Feb 12 (AP): President Donald Trump's national security adviser said Tuesday he is cautiously optimistic that there could be a US agreement with the Taliban over the next days or weeks, but a withdrawal of American forces is not imminent.

Robert O'Brien was asked whether Trump would sign off on an agreement where both the Taliban and US forces would pledge to adhere to a reduction in violence" a move that could lead to all-Afghan negotiations to end the decades-long conflict and outline a political future for the country.

The agreement would call for the Taliban and US forces to refrain from conducting attacks or combat operations for seven days, according to a person familiar with the ongoing discussions who was not authorized to discuss the proposed agreement and spoke only on condition of anonymity.

I think that we're making significant progress, O'Brien said at an event hosted by the Atlantic Council in Washington.

"It's something we're keeping the president apprised of on a very regular basis. You hate to make predictions when it comes to Afghanistan ... but I'll say that we're cautiously optimistic that some good news could be forthcoming on that front.

If a reduction in violence holds, the US and Taliban would be expected to sign an agreement to begin talks within 10 days involving the Taliban and Afghans from across the nation, including some who hold government positions but don't represent the government, the person familiar with the negotiations said.

The president had made it very clear that there will have to be a reduction in violence and there will have to be meaningful intra-Afghan talks for things to move forward, O'Brien said.

"If both those things and a number of other conditions are met and we are able to get agreement on them, I think we could have some good news coming out of Afghanistan so we'll have to wait and see over the next several days and weeks." The other condi-



tions include the Taliban pledging not to associate with al-Qaida, the Islamic State or other malign organizations, he said.

We've been in Afghanistan for 18-19 years. (Trump) would like to get out of Afghanistan, O'Brien said. "We have contributed a tremendous amount of blood and treasure to Afghanistan, but it's time for America to come home.

We want to come home, but we want to come home under conditions that keep in place protections for our colleagues and our partners in Afghanistan and we want to make sure that Afghanistan doesn't become a safe haven for terrorism again, O'Brien added.

"So we're working very hard ... to put in place the conditions to allow a withdrawal over time, but I don't think there is any imminent withdrawal from Afghanistan."

Still, the Taliban would appear to have gotten everything they asked for in this possible deal. They have refused to step away from the seven- to 10-day timeline for a reduction in violence despite weeks of effort by U.S. special envoy Zalmay Khalilzad and outright demands by Afghan President Ashraf Ghani.

Ghani has also been demanding the Taliban talk directly to his government, which he has insisted be in the lead. The intra-Afghan negotiations being discussed don't officially include the Ghani government, which is in disarray since last September's still undeclared election results.

The Taliban, who ruled Afghanistan with a harsh version of Islamic law from 1996 to 2001 and hosted Osama bin Laden as he masterminded the 9/11 attacks, say they no longer seek a monopoly on power. But the militant group now

controls or holds sway over roughly half of the country.

There are fears that a full withdrawal of some 20,000 NATO troops, including about 12,000 US forces, would leave the Afghan government vulnerable to collapse, or unleash another round of fighting in a war that has killed tens of thousand.

America's longest war, which has claimed the lives of 2,400 US service men and women.

Many questions about the expected agreement remain unanswered and it's unclear if Trump will sign off on the deal.

Trump abruptly broke off the on-again, off-again US talks with the Taliban in September after nearly a year of discussions with the insurgent group.

Trump announced he had canceled a secret meeting with the Taliban leaders and the Afghan president at Camp David after a Taliban car bomb exploded in Kabul and killed 12 people, including a US service member.

News of progress in talks comes after Trump and Vice President Mike Pence traveled Monday evening to Dover Air Force Base in Delaware to pay respects to two U.S. soldiers killed Saturday in Afghanistan when a soldier dressed in an Afghan army uniform opened fire with a machine gun.

The State Department declined to comment on negotiations beyond saying, U.S. talks with the Taliban in Doha continue around the specifics of a reduction in violence. But on Tuesday, Ghani tweeted that he had received a call from Secretary of State Mike Pompeo informing me of the notable progress made in the ongoing peace talks with the Taliban. The Secretary informed me about the Taliban's proposal with regards to bringing a significant and enduring reduction in violence, Ghani said.

VIDEO NEWS SECTION

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Angad Bedi Undergoes Knee Surgery But Wife Neha Dhupia Has 'No Clue Which One'

Actor Angad Bedi got injured last month while shooting for his upcoming web-series *MumBhai* in Mumbai's Mazagon Dock area. Last weekend, he was in Jaisalmer with wife, actress Neha Dhupia, for Arvind Dubash's birthday party. After returning to Mumbai with her recently, he underwent a knee surgery on Wednesday in a Mumbai hospital. Angad Bedi shared a video recorded by Neha in the hospital "minutes before the surgery" as he rested on a hospital gurney. In the video, the actress can be heard asking Angad, "How are you feeling?" Angad replied with an "All set!" and flexes his biceps and triceps. Jokingly, Neha said, "But it's not your triceps, it's the knee."

The 39-year-old actress also lovingly asked "What's your order after you come out? What do you want to eat?" Angad replied: "I've been starving for almost 8 hours." Neha said, "That's the longest you've gone without a meal."

Angad also said he's going to come out "fitter, stronger, faster and more dangerous," after which Neha softly touched his knee and said: "Get well soon."

You know what's funny? It appeared that Neha Dhupia didn't know which knee Angad was being operated for. She tapped the "wrong knee" in the video and burst into laughter as Angad replied in Punjabi saying, "She doesn't even know which knee is being operated."

The 37-year-old actor posted the video on Instagram and wrote, "That's me minutes before going in for a knee surgery. I think my nerves got me talking too much. Captured by my wifey (also please note she has no clue which knee is injured) but I still love her too much. Stay tuned for more. Will keep you post-

ed with more videos if I'm not dying in pain." He also hashtagged the video with: "#AngadsKneedy" and "#Vlog1".

MumBhai is an ALTBalaji web show. Angad Bedi features in it as a cop named Bhaskar Shetty. He report-

edly "miscalculated his steps" while shooting a chase scene, stated an IANS report. A source was quoted as saying by the news agency: "While doing the scene, he miscalculated the step and landed straight on his knee, putting undue pressure. The scene was put to a momentary halt as the production team called for an onset doctor. There was swelling and he was given an ice

pack. As the permission to shoot at the docks is given only for a few days, missing even one day could delay the schedule. He mustered energy and went on with the shoot."

In the interview with IANS, Angad



edly "miscalculated his steps" while shooting a chase scene, stated an IANS report. A source was quoted as saying by the news agency: "While doing the scene, he miscalculated the step and landed straight on his knee, putting undue pressure. The scene was put to a momentary halt as the production team called for an onset doctor. There was swelling and he was given an ice

Bedi said, "I am recuperating well and have sought medical help. Because of my sports background, I know how to overcome wear and tear and how to temporarily fix injuries on the spot. I knew how important the scene was, and we were shooting at the location, so we went ahead with it."

The narrative of *MumBhai* is about friendship between a cop and a gangster.

Margot Robbie to star opposite Christian Bale in David O Russell's next

LOS ANGELES, FEB 12 (PTI): Hollywood star will co-star Oscar winner Christian Bale in a new film from filmmaker David O Russell. According to The Hollywood Reporter, Russell has penned the script for the untitled film, which hails from New Regency, and he might direct it if things go as per the plan.

Plot details are being kept under wraps but it is said to be based on an original idea from the director. Matthew Budman of "American Hustle" fame will produce. Bale, 46, previously collaborated with in Russell on 2010's "The Fighter", which earned the actor his maiden Oscar for best supporting actor, and 2013's "American Hustle".

He most recently starred in James Mangold's "Ford vs Ferrari", where he portrayed professional racer Ken Miles

opposite Matt Damon as Carroll Shelby.

Robbie, 29, was recently nominated at the Academy Awards for her role in "Bombshell". He currently features in



DC-Warner Bros' "Birds of Prey" movie.

Russell's last directorial effort was 2015's "Joy", featuring Jennifer Lawrence and Bradley Cooper.

Kevin Hart's Quibi series adds Nathalie Emmanuel

LOS ANGELES, FEB 12 (PTI): "Game of Thrones" alum Nathalie Emmanuel has boarded the cast of Kevin Hart's upcoming comedy action series "Die Hart".

Set at the short-form content provider Quibi, the show is a clever wordplay on the action blockbuster series "Die Hard". To be directed by Eric Appel, the series will also feature Hollywood veteran John Travolta in a pivotal role. Tripper Clancy and Derek Kolstad have penned the script.

The story follows a fictionalised version of Hart on a quest to land the action movie role of a lifetime, reported Variety. "He gets his wish when a famous di-

rector offers him his dream to be a leading man action star but there's a catch: Hart must first train at the world's greatest action star school, run by a lunatic (Travolta)," read the official plotline.

Emmanuel, who broke out after playing Missandei on HBO's epic fantasy series "Game of Thrones, will portray a "tough-minded rival student" who pushes Hart to his limits as he endures a series of hilariously over-the-top action sequences, reported Entertainment Weekly.

The series is a collaboration between Hart's production banner Laugh Out Loud Network and Quibi.

Sayani Gupta turns producer with 'Where the Winds Blow'

MUMBAI, FEB 12 (PTI): Actor Sayani Gupta is all set to co-produce "Where the Wind Blows", a film with only one protagonist.

Directed by Karma Takapa, the movie follows a young woman who embarks on a trek towards an unknown destination somewhere in the high Himalayan mountains.

As the beautiful terrains turn harsh and nature challenges her, she braves these and her internal hurdles to find her resilience.

"This film is very close to my heart. Shooting for it was not lesser than a roller coaster ride. Though the shoot was difficult, the experience was one of the most memorable ones. I had the best time shooting with Karma and team," Sayani said in a statement.

Sayani, best known for featuring Amazon shows "Inside Edge" and "Four More Shots Please!", is co-producing the film with Human Trial Pictures.

"Where the Wind Blows" was shot in the Himalayas, with a crew of seven people across 26 days.

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EPIC OSCARS SELFIE: At Sunday's 92nd Annual Academy Awards, Charlize Theron snapped a selfie with her mother, Gerda Jacob Aletta Martiz, Tom Hanks, his wife Rita Wilson, Salma Hayek, Regina King and Rami Malek. While Keanu Reeves wasn't necessarily within the camera's view, we can spot him in the distance and that's all we really need.

Universal's 'The Hunt' gets new release date and new trailer

LOS ANGELES, FEB 12 (PTI): Universal Studios has finally decided to release its controversial movie "The Hunt". According to Variety, the studio, which made the film in collaboration with Jason Blum's Blumhouse banner, has given the film a March 13 opening date in the US.

The satirical film, which features Betty Gilpin, Hillary Swank and Emma Roberts, revolves around global liberal elites killing conservative people for sport.

As part of its marketing campaign, the studio also released a new trailer of the film with the tagline, "The most talked about movie of the year is the one nobody has seen yet."

Directed by Craig Zobel, "The Hunt" was earlier scheduled to be released in September last year, but in the wake of a series of mass shootings in the US, the makers had pulled it from the calendar.

US President Donald Trump had also criticised the movie on Twitter without naming it. He said the intention behind the film was "to

inflame and cause chaos" in the society.

"Liberal Hollywood is racist at the highest level, and with great Anger and Hate! They like to call themselves 'Elite' but they are not Elite. In fact, it is often the people that they



so strongly oppose that are actually the Elite.

"The movie coming out is made in order to inflame and cause chaos. They create their own violence, and then try to blame others. They are the true Racists, and are very bad for our Country," Trump had said in a two-part tweet.

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Course correct if you have chosen the latter. What Spirit wants you to know: there is a way to stand up for your beliefs without going to war.

Tip: Choose assertiveness over aggression.

VIRGO: Two's a party, three's a crowd. Now that we have this out of the way, let's talk about you, Virgo. What are you going to do with this precious life of yours? Why do you keep selling yourself short or settling for less-than-perfect love? You've been seeing the signs for a while now.

Tip: It's better to fly solo than to hold onto a relationship causing you harm.

LIBRA: Libra, you're a beautiful amalgam of the mother and the crone, offering a warm cup of cocoa and sage advice to your soul circle. While giving unconditionally is truly a gift, today, you're being asked to turn your energy inwards. While, you're at it, refresh your bucket list and do at least one thing that brings you

joy and awakens that spirit of playfulness.

Tip: Live a little.

SCORPIO: The trouble is, we save our kindness and compassion for the world, while being unkind to ourselves in private. Pay attention to that inner dialogue, Scorpio. The words you are choosing in order to communicate with yourself. Replace judgements with openness.

Tip: Let your self-talk be a source of empowerment.

SAGITTARIUS: Today, you're in the mood to up your style game as you find a sustainable answer to the eternal dilemma of 'I have nothing to wear'. First things first, Marie Kondo your wardrobe. Donate the things that no longer fit right or spark joy. You always have the option to lend it to a friend who resonates with that particular style.

Tip: Reinvent your style.

CAPRICORN: Your heart isn't breaking, Capricorn. It's simply coming together.

Allow the old wounds to resurface. Consciously work through emotional entanglements in order to find your freedom. You will find that your relationships will evolve in the process.

Tip: Embrace the in-between.

AQUARIUS: What if your experiences have the power to add value to the life of another? Don't shy away from holding space for a circle or sharing your narrative with those who matter. There's a reason storytelling was considered as a form of medicine in ancient cultures.

Tip: Storytelling is a form of medicine, Aquarius.

PISCES: Cosmic truth: everybody experiences emotional pain at some point. Should that keep you from radiating like the sun, or believing that you deserve to be loved in the right way? Anything but. You're at a point in your journey where you are integrating the past lessons and seeing your experiences through the eyes of wisdom.

Tip: A period of deep healing is on the cards.