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SummitTIMES

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ON TOP OF THE NEWS

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Hours after mobiles restored, SMS services blocked in Kashmir

SRINAGAR, OCT 15 (PTI): SMS services were withdrawn as a "precautionary measure" hours after the government restored post-paid mobile connections in Kashmir, officials said on Tuesday.

Mobile phone services for post-paid subscribers resumed in Kashmir after 72 days on Monday noon, but without any internet facilities. By about 5 pm, SMS services had been suspended too, dulling the euphoria of about 40 lakh subscribers delighted at the prospect of their phones coming back to life, officials said.

"SMS services were stopped last evening as a precautionary measure," said an official without elaborating further.

Two terrorists, including a suspected Pakistani national, shot dead the driver of a Rajasthan truck and assaulted an orchard owner in Jammu and Kashmir's Shopian district around 8 pm on Monday.

Police said the deceased was identified as Sharief Khan and the terrorists carried out the attack in Shirmal village in desperation as fruit transportation was picking up in the Valley.

Phones fell silent on August 5, when the Centre revoked Jammu and Kashmir's special status and reorganised the state into two union territories.

The government kept to its promise of mobile phones working by Monday noon, but the joy was short-lived. Thousands of subscribers found their services disconnected by telecom companies due to non-payment of bills for the period of the suspension of services.

Till late Monday evening and from early Tuesday, serpentine queues formed outside the offices of telecom companies as subscribers rushed to clear their outstanding bills.

It is a cumbersome process with online payments not an option because of internet services being blocked in Kashmir, many subscribers complained. While landline phones were restored last month, internet services on all platforms continue to remain suspended. Over 25 lakh pre-paid mobile phones and other internet services, including WhatsApp, remain deactivated for now, officials said.

Governor Satya Pal Malik on Monday said internet services would resume very soon, but officials in the security establishment maintained the process might take up to two months.

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Chamling demands President's Rule in Sikkim to thwart political terrorism

GANGTOK, OCT 15 (PTI): Alleging that the law and order situation in by-poll-bound Sikkim has broken down, former chief minister Pawan Kumar Chamling on Tuesday demanded that President's Rule be imposed in the border state.

The law and order situation has "broken down" under the Sikkim Krantikari Morcha (SKM) government headed by Chief Minister Prem Singh Tamang [Golay], Chamling told reporters here.

"There have been instances where the ruling party has unleashed political violence against its

rivals, particularly in by-poll-bound Poklok-Kamrang Assembly constituency where the chief minister is a candidate," Chamling, the Sikkim Democratic Front president, said.

The former chief minister said, under the circumstance in which people are fearful of further violence by goons of the ruling party in the run-up to the bypolls, President's Rule be imposed in the state to restore people's faith in democracy.

Chamling accused Tamang of instigating violence against the SDF workers to prevent them from campaigning for

party candidate Moses Rai in the seat.

He added that SKM was foisting "political terrorism" on the people and stressed that the bypolls were not just an election but a referendum on what kind of future the people wanted here.

"This is a referendum to decide on whether people want peace and democracy or fear and violence and whether they want their special status protected or subsumed," he said.

"Sikkim had never earlier witnessed political violence against leaders and workers of opposition parties," he said.



Chamling, who ruled the state for 25 years at a stretch, alleged that the SKM was bringing a culture of political violence which he said could "weaken the political fabric of Sikkim".

Bypolls will be held

in three Assembly constituencies in the state -- Poklok-Kamrang, Martam-Rumtek and Gangtok -- on October 21.

A total of 15 candidates, including Tamang and former India football team captain Bhaichung

Bhutia, are in the fray.

The chief minister is at present not a member of the Sikkim Assembly.

He was barred by law from contesting elections for six years after being convicted for graft.

The Election Commission had last month reduced the chief minister's disqualification period by almost five years, enabling him to contest the bypolls.

The by-elections were necessitated as Chamling, D T Lepcha (earlier with SDF and now in BJP) and Kunga Nima Lepcha (SKM) had vacated Poklok-Kamrang, Martam-Rumtek and Gangtok constituen-

cies respectively after winning from two seats each in the Assembly elections held earlier this year.

Martam-Rumtek and Gangtok Assembly seats are reserved for indigenous tribal communities Bhutia and Lepcha while Poklok Kamrang is a general seat.

The SKM and the BJP have forged an electoral alliance to contest the by-elections.

The saffron party will contest from Gangtok and Martam-Rumtek, while the ruling party will field its candidate from Poklok-Kamrang.

[with additional reporting by our correspondent]

NE Super-6 tournament on 25-26 Oct

SAGAR CHHETRI
GANGTOK, 15 OCT:

The Sikkim leg of 'North East Super-6 Football Tournament', a six-a-side football tournament, will be held on 25 and 26 October here at Paljor Stadium.

The tournament is being held in all major towns of the eight North-Eastern States and promising players will receive the opportunity to undergo a trial with ISL club, North East United FC.

Speaking to media-persons this morning, local organizers, Thupden Rapgyal and Arjun Rai, mentioned that interested teams can collect and submit the registration forms by 19 October.

Mr Rapgyal informed that players should be above 16 years of age and six players of each team will take the field

and four rolling substitutes would be allowed and each match will be of 20 minutes duration.

The winner will receive a cash prize of Rs 50,000 and a trophy.

The winning team will also receive an all-expenses paid chance to travel to Guwahati to play in the finals [with winners from other cities of the North East].

Likewise, Mr Rai mentioned that North East Super 6 football tournament being held in collaboration with ISL club North East United FC and added that players spotted during the main finals at Guwahati will receive the opportunity to train under North East United FC.

Local organisers are expecting around 25 teams to participate in the Sikkim leg of the tournament.

Goswami sworn in as new Chief Justice of Sikkim



GANGTOK, 15 OCT (IPR): Justice, Arup Kumar Goswami sworn in as new Chief Justice of Sikkim. The Governor of Sikkim, Ganga Prasad administered him the oath at the lawn of New Raj Bhawan here today.

The swearing-in ceremony was attended by Chief Minister, PS Tamang, Justice, Meenakshi Madan Rai, Justice, Bhas-

kar Raj Pradhan, Cabinet Ministers, Member of Lok Sabha, Indra Hang Subba, Members of Sikkim Legislative Assembly, Registrar General, Chief Secretary of Sikkim, Additional Chief Secretaries, Additional Registrar General, Senior government officers, Advisors to Government of Sikkim, Law fraternity members of High Court of Sikkim

and Sikkim State Legal Service Authority and host of dignitaries.

After retirement of Justice Vijai Kumar Bist in the month of September, the post of Chief Justice of the High Court of Sikkim had fallen vacant.

Justice Arup Kumar Goswami had earlier served as Acting Chief Justice of Gauhati High Court.

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Justice Arup Kumar Goswami had earlier served as Acting Chief Justice of Gauhati High Court.

Man, who lost job at Jet and money at PMC Bank, dies heartbroken

MUMBAI, OCT 15 (PTI): A 51-year-old city resident whose deposit of over Rs 90 lakh was stuck with the scam-hit PMC Bank died of a heart attack, hours after taking part in a protest by bank customers who are seeking their money back.

Sanjay Gulati, the deceased, had lost his job at Jet Airways when the airline was grounded in April, his family said. He also had a specially-abled child to support.

Gulati and his 80-year-old father C L Gulati participated in the depositors' protest in south Mumbai on Monday morning. Later, while having a late lunch at his house in suburban Oshiwara, Sanjay collapsed, his family said.

He was rushed to a hospital where he was declared brought dead. The cause of death was given as cardiac arrest.

"He had lost his job recently and was extremely stressed for the last few days after the bank crisis. He feared we

will not get any of our money back," wife Bindu Gulati told reporters on Tuesday.

The family was struggling to pay tuition fees for their specially-abled son who needs special education and special medical attention, entailing high expenditure, she said.

Sanjay's father said they had a deposit of over Rs 90 lakh with Punjab & Maharashtra Cooperative Bank, and also a recurring deposit account for the children.

Following the discovery of an over Rs 4,000 crore scam at the bank, which has deposits of over Rs 11,000 crore, the Reserve Bank of India last month appointed an administrator over it, and capped withdrawals at Rs 1,000.

On Monday evening -- the same day Gulati died -- the withdrawal cap was hiked to Rs 40,000, with the RBI saying that it will give relief to 77 per cent of depositors.

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Summit Times in Nepali



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Rights, Resources and Identities: Matrix of Electoral Politics in Sikkim

SUNIL PRADHAN

NEW DELHI, 15 OCT:

Sikkim goes to the much anticipated segment of by-poll election in three assembly seats and the BJP already seems to be on the hot seat.

There is a marked difference in the political parleys of the general elections held in April 2019 contested between regional parties—the SDF and SKM - and the upcoming by-elections. Now, the entry of the BJP as a serious contender in Sikkim's electoral landscape has propelled its unequivocal mobility of its 'idea of India' to be achieved in the name of 'unity of state'. For this reason, numerous states governed under special provisions of the Indian Constitution stand in sharp opposition to BJP's stated commitment to the one nation theory. Article 370 and Article 35 which defined J&K's status (in the pre-abrogation period) with the Indian Union was interpreted and served as a menu for obstructing 'unity of state' by the BJP. Article 35A of the Indian Constitution, which defined "Permanent Residents" of J&K state as a state subject of J&K meant non-recognition of the rights of Indian citizens. This meant that the Fundamental Rights of the Indian Constitution

were not applicable in the territory of J&K and Indian citizens from other parts of the country were constitutionally and legally prohibited from acquiring immovable property, citizenship rights, employment opportunities in J&K government services, those being exclusively reserved for registered J&K state subjects.

This is monitored through distribution of legally inherited State Subject Certificate and may be commonly identified as proof of state domicile outside the territory of J&K. It had a provision of allowing 'other' Indian citizens to vote in parliamentary elections alone and not in J&K Legislative Elections which was limited to state subject electors. Conversely, maintaining this status quo of J&K's status in the Indian Union defined instances of Indian democracy's minority question. This reminds the world of Indian Constitution being much ahead of constitutions of major democracies of the world.

The framers of the Indian Constitution, having realized the mood of numerous cultural communities, envisaged autonomous arrangements under the special provisions of the Indian Constitution to ensure integration in the newly imagined political community i.e. the Indian nation-state. The

western world, having destroyed much of its indigenous culture through colonialism, only recently started constitutionally evoking multiculturalism policies in the 1990s when India had long ago debated this feature in the Constituent Assembly debates (1946-49).

Therefore, multiculturalism in India is not a western import but an intrinsic value pattern of India's diverse social impetus. This is why access to rights and resources in India remains a prerogative of identities - citizenship (national), group (differentiated), community (Sikim Subject and Jammu Kashmir Subject) and regional (special provisions) etc.

In some states, group identities may be the dominant form of citizenship mobilization, in National Capital Territory (NCT) of Delhi every Indian citizen is treated as an equal, in Sikkim it is the Sikkim Subject status which informs the overriding outline of citizenship articulation. But, to achieve this level of citizenship articulation in post colonial Indian setting, the Indian masses first had to negotiate with architecture of colonial subjecthood premised on 'difference' and indirect association with the British Empire.

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Rights, Resources...

The denial of the status of citizens to a large majority of India's diverse population by the logic of colonial governmentality, the freedom at the stroke of midnight of 15 August 1947 refurbished optimism for India's diverse subject populations to mutate as 'free' citizens of a 'free' country. Thus the liberal citizen project in India inaugurated the 'individual' equality as the unit of citizenship analysis in India. Therefore, Indian Fundamental Rights envisioned an individual as the bearer of rights as citizen-subject of India. But in reality this Indian 'individual' was not to be equal in status and access for rights. The framework of the individual did mark a departure from the notion of community, gender, religion and caste. The Indian Fundamental Rights relocated the position of individual by drawing a boundary between state and society where every individual maintained a direct relationship with the state. This notion of individual as the bearer of rights likened every citizens in India with equality. Additionally, India's context was completely different from the ones in the western hemisphere which had more or less a homogenous blend of people or where 'minorities' were often forced to assimilate with the dominant national culture. In India's case, constitutional culture which has been the dominant culture remain paralyzed toady by 'Flagrant Violations of Parliamentary Procedure' by using brute majority. The Indian Constitution upholds multiple social histories where individual autonomy or liberal conceptions of rights are either seen to be part of the community identity in conflict with ethnic perception on rights. This marked a departure in the widely held policy circle that, individual as the unit of rights analysis or the bearer of rights defined in the Indian Constitution. Undoubtedly, access to rights and resources in India remain mediated by affiliations and attachments to group identities—gender, class, religion and caste. Therefore, the tensions between individual rights and special citizenship rights in India feature as a prominent obstacle for achieving 'unity of state' for right wing forces. Often, right wing forces and political parties mobilized this tension in citizenship conceptualization in its electoral manifestoes for steering vehicular way forward towards an idealistic Hindu Rashtra. This definite colonial antecedent of Hindu largely colonial in definition leaves little space for 'other' Indian religions for peaceful co-existence. Then, the colonial practitioners made little distinctions between Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism Sikhism etc. Therefore, conceptualizing Hindu Rashtra on the basis of this colonial definition runs the risk of establishing homogenous construct of Hindu nation-state. This remains deeply problematic for people belonging to non-Aryan backgrounds in the regions governed under special provisions and customary laws.

Therefore, a border state like Sikkim, which is culturally, geographically, historically and politically distinct bound together by Article 371 F remains a problem for those wishing to achieve 'unity of state' for a simple reason that non-Sikkimese Indian citizens are excluded from accruing benefits from state government entitlements because Indian citizenship practices allows Sikkim to define its permanent residents from the Sikkim Subject Regulation Act, 1961. This is an 'obstacle' for the right wing political parties in constructing a Hindu India. Note worthy to mention that not a single Sikkimese cultural community fits into this logic of Hindu precisely because socially constructed 'race' constitutes a determinant of Hindu Varna system. This consolidates an idea that ethnic groups outside this 'pure' 'racial' distinctiveness in considered 'impure' or in Sikkimese popular parlance a curious case of 'Matwali'. Therefore, any attempt at imposing the logic of Hindu Rashtra in Sikkim is lodged in consolidating a 'Tagadhari' (wearer of the 'sacred' thread) and a 'Matwali' ('impure' or alcohol users) divide which also in-

clude the Tibeto-Burman Bhutia and Lepcha (BL).

This is further exacerbated by Sikkim's location since Sikkim bears no resemblance to India and has more in common with its neighbours—Bhutan, Tibet and Nepal. Despite, this Sikkim maintains its unique quality for several centuries. Therefore, at this juncture Sikkim is under intense pressure to maintain the balance in tension between individual rights and community rights. Under the garb of individual rights anybody who is an Indian can accrue benefits from Sikkim state including acquiring property rights in rural area as a primary agenda allegedly for transforming Sikkim's demographic profile in rural areas. Under community rights—Indian Constitution grants Sikkimese cultural communities recognized as per Sikkim Subject Regulation allows Sikkim state to monitor entitlements to Sikkim subjects alone. Therefore, Fundamental Rights of Indian citizens are subservient to Sikkim's Old Law under Article 371 F. It is important to understand the context of India's special provisions—India as a country is only seven decades old. Therefore, concessions were extended to Sikkim which was not part of India as a bridge to integrate with India by giving due recognition to Sikkimese cultural communities—Bhutia, Lepcha and Nepali (Nepali is a cultural identity and linguistic identity in Sikkim, for political reasons, there are many in Sikkim who wish to misinterpret and misunderstand Nepali as Nepalese—a national identity of the people of Nepal which also includes Madhesi from Terai). It is not very far in history when the Indian state mobilized Sikkim's Nepali subjects in the 1970s to garner pro integration feelings with India in the so called 'referendum'. In the absence of Treaty of accession between the Chogyal and New Delhi, and without the tacit approval and participation of Sikkim Subjects, New Delhi runs the risk of legitimacy crisis in calling Sikkim's association with India a 'merger'. Therefore, calling spade a spade is akin to having many independent candidates contesting by elections in urban constituencies.

India is also a democracy and in democracies there is politics about participation and rights discourse. In Sikkim's case political overtones mobilized by non-Sikkimese resident Indian citizens challenges the matrix of resource mobilization in already resource scarce Sikkim. The Gorkha project in India and demands for rights for communities with origins from India's Gangetic plains settled in Sikkim as per the provisions of Sikkim-India Friendship Treaty, 1950 fundamentally dismember Sikkimese quality, thereby questioning the legal provisions of Sikkim's constitutional status. The entry of the BJP in Sikkim's electoral landscape is explicit intrusion of Sikkim's historical specificity of cultural communities inhabiting the region. The non-Sikkimese communities residing in Sikkim, well integrated with global capital and market economy have hosts of demands including fiscal concessions (Income Tax Exemptions) exclusively granted to the legal category of Sikkim Subjects. Similarly, the North East Region has provisions for fiscal concessions granted to cultural communities recognized as Scheduled Tribes (ST). The non-tribals engaged in commercial ventures are bereft from such concession since their engagement in commerce enable them to interact with global capital forces, thereby emerging as a tax payer of the country. Here, in Sikkim it is being translated as political empowerment especially by those capable of paying taxes are demanding it as matter of human rights. The discourse of human rights with its origin in European enlightenment makes little sense in Sikkim since Sikkim Subject status in Sikkim form the rubrics for identifying communities as targets of post colonial policies.

[The writer is Assistant Professor, Centre for North East Studies and Policy Research, Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi]

SikkimSCAN

'AUTHORITIES ARE FAILING THE PEOPLE AND DEMOCRACY IN SIKKIM'

Vindictive politics led to raid, brazenness led to attack

SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 15 OCT:

Sikkim Democratic Front today demanded that the concerned authorities explain why they carried out a surprise raid at Seven Hills Resort in Namchi late last night. The resort, owned by members of SDF president, former Chief Minister Pawan Chamling's extended family, was raided by Sikkim Police accompanied by some officers of the Election Commission at around 11 AM on the night of 14 Oct.

While no official statement has arrived on what the raid uncovered or why it was carried out, drama did not end with

the raid last night and SDF party-workers from the party's legal and social media team were attacked while returning from the resort.

Police personnel were also part of the returning entourage, and some of them were also injured in the attack, SDF claims.

Three people were reportedly arrested in connection with the attack.

The party insists that the raid reflects the political vindictiveness with which the SKM Government was trying to intimidate the Opposition and of how the administration has been co-opted.

"We have been deliv-

ering on our duty as the opposition but there is need for a democratic environment in the State. The ruling party has been misusing the administration to obstruct the election campaign of SDF party through undemocratic, illegal and unethical attacks," said SDF spokesperson, Krishna Kharel.

Mr Kharel further alleged that the CM has been instigating the people towards violence in his campaign speeches.

An SDF press release alleges that the attack on the returning party was mounted by "persons affiliated to the Sikkim Krantikari Morcha."

"SDF Party demands that these culprits/individuals must be thoroughly interrogated as there is every possibility that they along with others are also involved in similar incidents of stone pelting and violence in South District which have been continuously occurring over the last few days," the party demands.

"Any act or acts which obstruct the excise of these rights violates the basic principles of democracy. It is the Constitutional obligation and duty of the elected government and especially the Election Commission to ensure that these

rights are fully protected and safeguarded in favour of any voter, individual or political party/parties to partake in the election process," the release adds.

SDF party asserted that despite repeated reminders made to the Election Commission and other concerned authorities, EC has failed to take necessary action as per the provisions of law and then the people of Sikkim will soon lose faith in the process of democracy.

Another SDF spokesperson, Amber Rai, urged the people to support SDF in the by-election to reestablish peace and security in the State.

GO visits various polling stations in Poklok Kamrang



NAMCHI, 15 OCT (IPR):

General Observer for By-Elections for 10 Poklok Kamrang Assembly Constituency, Alak Kumar Saharia visited various polling stations today. He was accompanied by Sector Magistrates, Chiran Rizal, Vishu Lama, Liaison Officer, Chewang Bhutia, Booth Level and other election officials.

The Observer inspected the various polling stations namely Sorok Syampani, Gom, Assangthang, Sambung, Mamley and Kamrang. At Kamrang the Observer attended the Systemat-

ic Voter's Education and Electoral Participation (SVEEP) program wherein he informed them about the aim and objective of this program.

He also updated that SVEEP is a flagship program of the Election Commission of India for voter education, spreading voter awareness and promoting voter literacy in India. He also briefly interacted with the participants of this program and encouraged them to enthusiastically take part in the electoral process.

At the polling stations the Observer enquired

of the facilities provided for senior citizens, infirm and physically challenged voters. He also updated that assistance should be provided for inform voters, ramp has also to be set up and it is mandatory for the polling stations to have clean and hygienic washroom for both male and female as well as adequate medical provision.

He also updated the BLOs to print and put up the phone numbers of the Returning Officers and other election agents for the convenience of the general public.

Second round of training for Polling and Presiding Officers I

NAMCHI, 15 OCT (IPR):

The second training for Presiding Officers and Polling Officers I for the ensuing By-Elections for 10 Poklok Kamrang Assembly Constituency was conducted at the Conference hall of Zilla Bhawan, Namchi today.

The training program had the presence of SDM Gyalshing (HQ), Tushar Nihare as the Master Trainer, SDM Yangang, Sangay Gyatso Bhutia as Nodal Officer (Training Management) alongwith SDM Namchi cum Sector Magistrate, Vishu Lama and Under Secretary Election Department, Yogen Syangden.

It may be mentioned here that a total of 52 Presiding Officers and Polling Officers 1 attended the training today.

During the program, Tushar Nihare trained the officials about the various procedures for the smooth conduct of polls as laid down by the Election Commission of India (ECI). He spoke about the roles and responsibilities of Presiding and Polling Officers I as a significant one and directed the officials to follow the processes effectively for the successful conduct of the bye-election.

He further added that

marking the checklists of materials and maintaining of Presiding Officers diary, managing complaints, closing of polls and sealing of Electronic Voting Machines is mandatory and extremely crucial. He also discussed the various measures to be carried out in ensuring the successful conduct of polls on the day of the polling.

In addition, a hands-on training for the Presiding and Polling Officers I was also conducted alongwith mock poll, setting up of Polling Station and connecting of EVM Machines etc as per the instructions of the ECI.

Use your vote wisely, Nawin Kiran appeals

SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 15 OCT:

Sikkim Subject Committee vice-convenor, Nawin Kiran Pradhan, has appealed to the people to use their democratic right to vote wisely in the upcoming bypoll to save the future of Sikkim.

He suggested that people vote for candidates who can give an undertaking that they will switch sides after winning and would adhere to the sentiments of the people of Sikkim and safeguard the special provisions as enshrined under Article 371F of the Constitution of India.

He informed that SSC has prepared a draft affidavit which candidates in the bypoll fray could sign to come on record with their commitments to the people.

Addressing a press

conference here today, Mr Pradhan said that recent political developments show that the bypoll was the litmus-test for the people of Sikkim.

He accused BJP of using unethical means to gain a foothold in Sikkim and remarked that the political environment in the State has sown fear and doubt in the minds of the people regarding safeguards provided by Article 371F.

He is convinced that the BJP-SKM alliance is not healthy for Sikkim and if the people were sincere towards Sikkim, they would reject this alliance.

Mr Pradhan also condemned reports of attacks and violence coming from Poklok-Kamrang constituency. He informed that a team of SSC will visit the constituency soon to understand the ground realities.

Man, who lost...

Real estate firm HDIL allegedly accounted for 70 per cent of the bank's Rs 9,000 crore advances. According to the Mumbai Police's Economic Offences Wing, HDIL's loans turned Non-Performing Assets, but the bank management shielded this huge exposure from the RBI's scrutiny.

The EOW has arrested four persons including HDIL promoters and former top officials of the bank.

Depositors confronted Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman during her visit here last week, seeking assurance that their money was safe.

Manali Narkar, one of the agitating depositors, said Gulati participated in the protest and went home a dejected man.

"What else we can do? We have nowhere to go to get our hard-earned money back, nor do we have any concrete assurances," she said.

The depositors have planned a candlelight march on Tuesday evening in Gulati's memory.

LOST & FOUND

Class X Pass Certificate and Mark sheet
Passed Year: 2009
Name: Ms Binita Subba
School Name: Modern Senior Secondary School
Lost while travelling from Soreng to Gangtok via Jorethang on 27 Sept, 2019
Center No. 3726
School No. 05420
Roll No. 3134519
Date of Birth: 07/02/90
Serial No. 62451
Contact No. 7029599075

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GENERAL LAND FOR SALE

Roadside plots for sale at Adampool, Ranipool-Rumtek highway.

For details contact: 9083826462

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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 30 Lakhs (negotiable).

Contact: 9800201335

West Sikkim gears up for NCPCR camp

GYALSHING, 15 OCT (IPR): A review meeting in relation to the upcoming National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) was held at the Conference Hall, DAC, Rabdentse West Sikkim. The program was chaired by DC West, Karma R Bonpo along with SP West, Tenzing Loden Lepcha; Addl SP West, VG Satish Pasumarthi and SDM (Gyalshing), TT Bhutia.

The NCPCR Camp/Bench will be held on 22 Oct at the Zilla Conference Hall, Gyalshing, West Sikkim at 10am. The NCPCR is a statutory body of the Govt. of India formed under the CPC Act 2007 and the core mandate of the Commis-



sion is to enable all children to enjoy their rights as enshrined in the constitution and provisioned under the Acts/Laws.

During the Bench, anyone can make a written complaint regarding

the violation of any child rights or any grievances related to the children. The Bench invites all public in the District and State to make their submission on 22 Oct, 2019.

The meeting at the

DAC was mainly conducted to ensure and understand the progress made by the Officials associated with the DAC in regards to the upcoming NCPCR Camp/Bench in West

Sikkim. The District Collector mentioned and highlighted the various areas where they have to be prepared on. He also mentioned that wide publicity by the Block Development Officers and others needs to be done to ensure maximum participation. He further advised all the Child Protection Officers to be actively involved to make the program more fruitful for the children and public.

The SP West also urged the NGOs and Child Care Institutions of West Sikkim to participate and ensure that proper representation of children was to be given during the sitting of the Bench.

Training for Presiding Officers and Polling Officers



GANGTOK, 15 Oct (IPR): The second round of training for Presiding Officers and Polling Officers was held today at Zilla, Conference hall Sichey. Returning Officer, East, Raj Yadav briefed the officials about their roles and responsibilities with respect to the conduct of election.

The functioning of

the EVM & VVPAT was also explained to them and a hands-on training session was also conducted to familiarize EVM & VVPAT. He elucidated on the tasks to be meticulously achieved prior to the polling day, during the polling day and certain tasks to be completed after the polling. The trainees were in-

formed about the various DOs and DONTs regarding the polling process in line with the guidelines of the ECI.

The significance of the conduct of mock poll before commencing the actual poll was emphasized and all the necessary procedures pertaining to the polling process were demonstrated.

Second inspection of accounts

GANGTOK, 15 Oct (IPR): The second Inspection of accounts of candidates contesting in By-Election 2019 for 24 Martam-Rumtek and 27 Gangtok Assembly constituencies was conducted at DAC, Conference Hall, Sichey today in the presence of Expenditure Observers, Naresh Kumar Bansal.

In this inspection, accounts of candidates were reconciled with the records maintained by the AEOs. Notices were issued to candidates who failed to produce their accounts themselves or through their agents.

The 3rd inspection of Accounts and re-conciliation is scheduled to be conducted at DAC Conference Hall, Sichey on 19 Oct, 2019 at 11.00am to 01.00pm for 24-Martam-Rumtek and 02.00pm to 04.00pm for 27-Gangtok constituency which is required to be attended by the candidates or expenditure agents.

Bhaichung campaigns at Dev Area



SUMMIT REPORT GANGTOK, 15 OCT: Hamro Sikkim Party working president, Bhaichung Bhutia, who is also the party candidate for Gangtok constituency, interacted with people of Develop-

ment Area on Tuesday. An HSP press release states that Mr Bhutia has been working tirelessly to reach out to voters here and encouraged by the spontaneous outpouring of well-wishers in every area.

SU scholar HK Yadav awarded Rashtriya Gaurav Puraskar



SUMMIT REPORT GANGTOK, 15 OCT: Ph D Scholar, Hemant Kumar Yadav, of the Dept of Peace and Conflict Studies and Management, Sikkim University, was awarded the Rashtriya Gaurav Puraskar 2019 at the International Youth Conference organised by the National Youth Awardee Federation of India at Dr Ambedkar Auditorium, Andhra Bhawan, New Delhi on 13 Oct.

As a Ph D Scholar, Mr Yadav has published and presented research papers in different national and international seminars and conferences.

He receives this award as a recognition of his youth development, nation-building, peace promotion and environment protection activities with NSS, NYKS and other government and non-government organisations.

Sikkim's soccer girls headed for National Games



SUMMIT REPORT GANGTOK, 15 OCT:

The girls football team of Sikkim is taking part in the National School Games being organised by the School Games Federation of India at Ajmer, Rajasthan.

The event is scheduled to be held from 21 to 25 October and the Sikkim team will be leaving for Ajmer on 17 October.

The team consists of 18 players and is accompanied by Coach Pema Lhamu Lepcha and has Dhan Kumari Sharma as manager. The team has been sponsored by the Sports & Youth Affairs Department.

Today, Sports & Youth Affairs Minister, KN Lepcha, visited the State team at Paljor Stadium and extended his best

wishes to them.

"Wish you all the best and go with high spirits," he said in his address to the players.

Sports & Youth Affairs Secretary, Kuber Bhandari and other officials were also present on the occasion.

The Minister handed over tracksuits and jerseys to the players.

Coach Pema Lhamu Lepcha informs that the players were selected after holding district and State level trials.

"We have selected the best players of Sikkim. We are hoping for a good performance as the players are good. Our only concern is that some players could fall sick during the journey otherwise the team is good," she said.

TMC launches third phase of 'Didi ke bolo' campaign

KOLKATA, OCT 15 (PTI): Buoyed by the response to two phases of 'Didi ke Bolo' (Tell Didi) initiative of the West Bengal government, which provides a platform to the people to directly lodge complaints to Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, the ruling TMC Tuesday launched its third phase.

The third phase of the initiative will begin on Wednesday and Trinamool Congress leaders held a meeting with block and town presidents of the party and briefed them about it on Tuesday, party secretary general Partha Chatterjee said.

Over 600 block and town presidents of the party have been asked to visit more than 2000 villages and municipal wards across West Bengal, he said.

"From tomorrow our block and town presidents will inform the citizens about the Didi Ke Bolo platform. The leaders will spend nights at the house of locals and listen to their suggestions and address their problems expeditiously," Chatterjee told reporters.

Banerjee is called 'Didi' or elder sister by

the party cadre.

According to TMC sources, the leaders will visit the pre-identified village or urban habitation as per the list provided by the party and hold informal meeting with party members there.

"We will meet pre-identified influencers, take their feed back on local issues" said a TMC leader.

The TMC leaders will interact with party members and booth-level workers over dinner at the house of a party member and will also spend the night at the home of a party member or party supporter, party sources said.

Banerjee had launched on July 29 a helpline number and a website didikebolo.com as part of the outreach programme on the advice of poll strategist Prashant Kishor, who was appointed by TMC after its Lok Sabha poll reverses.

The outreach programme had received a huge response in its first month with more than 10 lakh people registering their grievances, the party sources said.

Corps Commander calls on Governor



SUMMIT REPORT GANGTOK, 15 OCT:

Lt General Nav K Khanduri, Corps Commander GOC, 33 Corps, today called on Governor, Ganga Prasad at Raj Bhavan, a press release informs.

He was accompanied by Major General, Ram Chander Tiwari, GOC 17 Mtn. Division, Major General, AK Verma, GOC 27 Mtn Division and Major General,

SS Bajaj, GOC 20 Mtn Division on the occasion.

It was a courtesy call by Lt General Khanduri after taking charge as Corps Commander GOC, 33 Corps in September 2019. He is in Sikkim as part of his security review visit to forward posts.

The Governor conveyed his pleasure on meeting Lt General Khanduri and extended

best wishes for his new assignment. Governor expressed that under the guidance of Lt General Khanduri, synergy, co-ordination and relation between Indian Army and civil population in the region and Sikkim in particular, will remain cordial and mutually beneficial for larger interest of the region and the country.

World Students' Day observed at Lingi Payong School

SUMMIT REPORT LINGI PAYONG, 15 OCT:

World Students' Day was observed at Lingi Payong School on Tuesday to commemorate the birth anniversary of the late President of India, Dr APJ Abdul Kalam.

Students and teachers gathered in the assembly ground and participated in the programme coordinated by GTA, Yog Kumar Bhandari.

GTA, Jyoti Gurung highlighted the life and works of Dr Kalam which inspired millions of youth across the globe.

In the second half of the programme, a quiz competition was conducted on the life and works of Dr Kalam by GTA Anusha Subba.



Headmaster Sumsee Primary School, CL Adhikari, who was also present on the occasion also addressed the students and urged them to learn from life

of Dr Kalam.

United Nations declared 15 October as World Students Day on the 79th birth anniversary of APJ Abdul Kalam in 2010.

Will Sabarimala have its impact in the Kerala bypolls?

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, OCT 15 (PTI): As the Lord Ayyappa Temple in Sabarimala gears up for yet another annual pilgrim season next month, major political parties in Kerala are keeping their fingers crossed to know whether the women's entry issue will have any impact on the October 21 bypolls to five assembly constituencies.

The bypolls to be held in Vattiyoorakkavu, Konni, Ernakulam, Aroor and Manjeswaram are seen as a litmus test for the CPI(M)-led ruling LDF and the opposition Congress headed UDF and BJP-NDA ahead of the 2021 assembly elections.

LDF is going all out to ensure that the Sabarimala issue is not discussed in the ongoing campaigns as they had drawn flak from several quarters over the women's entry issue for its alleged hastiness in implementing the Supreme Court order, permitting women of all age groups into the hill shrine.

In the recent Lok Sabha polls, post-Sabarimala agitation, the Left front had suffered a massive drubbing, losing 19 out of the total of 20 seats. The defeat of the Left and the sweep of the opposition Congress-UDF was generally seen as the impact of the Sabarimala issue.

During the ongoing campaign, the ruling front is trying its best to woo voters

by focussing on development issues and listing out the achievements of the Pinarayi Vijayan led government.

Unlike the Lok Sabha polls, even senior Left leaders, including Vijayan, are steering clear of any controversial statements or provocative remarks on Sabarimala in campaigns.

Senior CPI(M) leader and Industries Minister E P Jayarajan had even said the Sabarimala issue would be in LDF's favour in the bypolls and Lord Ayyappa was helping them. The recent victory of LDF candidate Mani C Kappan in Pala assembly segment, a traditional UDF bastion, had reinforced confidence among the Left cadres and leadership.

At the same time, opposition UDF and BJP-NDA are going all out to revive memories of the violent street battles against the entry of menstruating women during the last pilgrim season and that of two young women with the support of police earlier this year.

They try to raise the issue in all five constituencies, especially in Konni in Pathanamthitta district where the Sabarimala temple is located and at Manjeswaram, where a three-cornered fight is expected between LDF, UDF and NDA.

UDF is confident that Hindu voters, especially devotees and women, who were "hurt" due to

the adamant stand taken by the LDF government in the Sabarimala issue, would favour them.

The BJP-NDA, however, is facing flak for not fulfilling its promise of bringing out a legislation by the Centre for protecting the customs and traditions of Sabarimala.

The Nair Service Society (NSS), an influential outfit of the forward Nair community, had recently called on its members to maintain the "right distance" in the bypolls, which is seen as a deviation from its long-held stand of maintaining "equi-distance" from all political parties and fronts.

In his Vijayadashami message, its general secretary G Sukumaran Nair had said it had become necessary to adopt a "right distance" in the upcoming bypolls to protect democracy, secularism, social justice, customs and traditions.

He had also criticised the LDF and BJP over the issue, which is being seen by UDF as a favourable move for them.

Kerala had witnessed high drama during the nearly three month long annual pilgrim season last year with around a dozen women in the 10-50 age group being prevented from entering the Sabarimala temple by protesting devotees after the doors were opened for all women following the apex court verdict.

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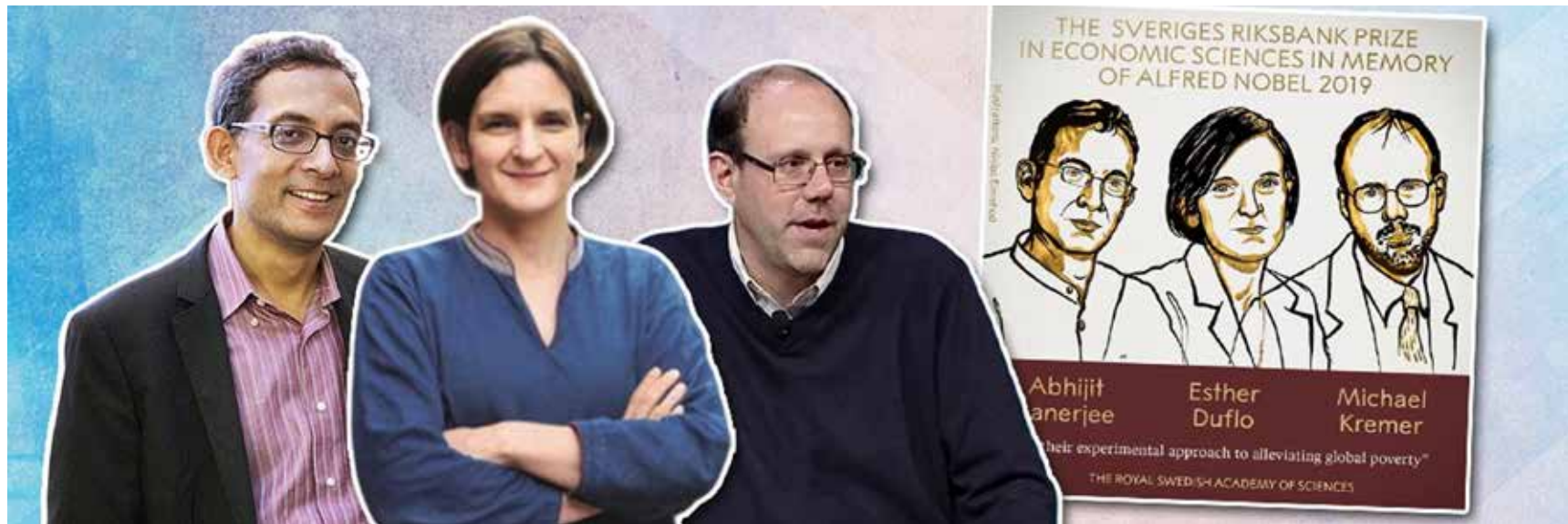
The minors need to be kept safe and allowed their childhood

It is not easy to grow inured to issues that demand our involvement. We ease into such somnolence after years of consciously looking the other way until we reach a stage where most people prefer to remain silent spectators even when they are witness to obvious maltreatment. We deflect guilt by pretending sympathy at discussions around the dinner table and convincing ourselves that it is not 'proper' to get involved in what transpires beyond our private spaces. Soon, with this distancing sets in indifference, and with that everything that a society stands for starts falling apart. The collapse is already happening all around us and this is because the society is not striving to make things better for the underprivileged and the marginalised. It is in societal impassivity as this that the government has to step in and make specific laws protecting the ignored, marginalized, underprivileged and even children; sections for whom the society should be looking out, but does not. Had the society remained involved, these sections would not have suffered so much that legislations had to be brought in to ensure humanity.

And with that setting up, we segue again into a problem that refuses to get contained. And no, "catching" the culprit, although necessary, is not the same as keeping the children safe. One of the most difficult demands of putting together a newspaper is filing reports about abuse against minors. Apart from the disturbing chore of piecing together details to highlight the level of depravity that made a victim out of a child who has not even begun understanding the life around her/ him, there is the fear of over-sensationalizing the incident in a way that might force the incident and the reaction to it on a tangent that is not necessarily what the situation demands. There is also the worry of underplaying it so much that it trivializes the issue. But that is an uncertainty that challenges journalists; what is that befuddles the society at large so completely that it remains insensate to the trauma of the young victims? It is one of those moments in the process of putting out a newspaper when we regret being the bearers of news [since we have to confront all the gory details] and not receivers [readers do have the benefit of not reading beyond the headline and a sanitized retelling of the incident]. What is even more disturbing is to realize that we continue to fail in keeping our children safe. And make no mistake, this is a societal failing, not a failure of the law and order machinery.

Crimes against minors continue to occur [a few get reported, many get swept under the carpet and too many remain secrets with victims and traumatize them throughout their lives] because Sikkim, as a society, blindsides its children. Secure years while growing up are the least that can be guaranteed to the young, and despite its small size, the society here continues to come up wanting in this regard. The solution is not in lynch mobs to punish the accused, nor even in over-protective cushions created by paranoia. As a society we need to start realizing that children here are in harm's way, as parents and hopefully because we are also responsible citizens, we need to educate the young and ourselves on the ways and means that the young can be kept safe. Child abuse is no longer rare in Sikkim and minors suffer sexual abuse in numbers which are distressing. Still more are denied their basic rights and continue to work as domestic servants in homes across the state, invariably working in conditions which are deplorable.

As per the 2011 Census, there were 64,111 children aged 0-6 in Sikkim. This is also the most vulnerable age-group when it comes to abuse. Given that Sikkim has a population of 6.11 lakh, this means that there are more than 9 people above the age of six to look out for the minors. Pedophiles form a tiny, very tiny, sliver of this remaining population. And no, it is not being suggested that we form nine-abreast wall of bodyguards around the children, but ensure that these nine are adequately informed about warning signs and wrong behavior and are effectively reassured that when they spy a predator, he will be taken one and taken away.



Economics Nobel 2019: why Banerjee, Duflo and Kremer won

ARNAB BHATTACHARJEE & MARK SCHAFER
theconversation.com

The Sveriges Riksbank Prize in Economic Sciences in Memory of Alfred Nobel 2019 (commonly known as the Nobel Prize for Economics) has been awarded to Abhijit Banerjee, Esther Duflo and Michael Kremer "for their experimental approach to alleviating global poverty". Through the award, the Nobel committee recognised both the significance of development economics in the world today and the innovative approaches developed by these three economists.

Global poverty continues to be a massive challenge. The award follows Angus Deaton, who received it in 2015 for his contributions to development economics – the field that studies the causes of global poverty and how best to combat it – particularly, his emphasis on people's consumption choices and the measurement of well-being, especially the well-being of the poor.

Well-developed theory can highlight what causes poverty and, based on this, suggest policies to combat it. But it cannot tell us exactly how powerful specific policy measures will be in practice. This is precisely where the contributions of Banerjee, Duflo and Kremer lie. The Nobel citation gives several examples of their impact, including how their research has helped education, health and access to credit for many in the developing world, most famously in India and Kenya.

Consider, for example, child mortality and health – issues of immense significance in the developing world. Theory can tell us that women's empowerment is important for child health and mortality outcomes, but cannot tell us which policy will be most effective in combating this. It could be a focus on educating mothers, or access to healthcare, or electoral representation, or marital age legislation.

Perhaps, more importantly, theory cannot tell us how large and significant the impact will be of these various policies. And this is where the signif-

icance of the Nobel Prize this year comes in.

A NEW, EXPERIMENTAL APPROACH

The fundamental contribution of Banerjee, Duflo and Kremer was to develop an experimental approach to development economics. They built a scientific framework and used hard data to identify causes of poverty, estimate the effects of different policies and then evaluate their cost effectiveness. Specifically, they developed randomised control trials (RCTs) to do this. They used these to study different policies in action and to promote those that were most effective.

Starting in the mid-1990s, Kremer and co-authors started a series of RCTs on schooling in Kenya, designing field experiments to evaluate the impact of specific policies on improving outcomes. This approach was revolutionary. The experiments showed that neither more textbooks nor free school meals made any real difference to learning outcomes. Instead, it was the way that teaching was carried out that was the biggest factor.

Studies by Banerjee and Duflo, often together with Kremer and others, followed. They initially focused on education, and then expanded into other areas, including health, credit and agriculture.

Banerjee and Duflo were able to use these studies to explain why some businesses and people in less developed countries do not take advantage of the best available technologies. They highlighted the significance of market imperfections and government failures. By devising policies to specifically address the root of problems, they have helped make possible real contributions to alleviating poverty in these countries.

Banerjee, Duflo and Kremer also took significant steps towards applying specific findings to different contexts. This brought economic theories of incentives closer to direct application, fundamentally transforming the practice of development economics, by using practical, verifiable and quantitative knowledge to isolate causes of poverty and to devise adequate policy based on behavioural responses.

The impact of these developments upon real

world development outcomes are immensely significant. Their work, and substantial amounts of research that followed it, established evidence on fighting poverty in many developing countries. And they are continuously expanding their horizon of contributions, which now also includes climate and environmental policy, social networks and cognitive science.

DIVERSITY ISSUES

The 2019 Nobel Prize for Economics is also significant for reasons of inclusivity. The impact generated by Banerjee, Duflo and Kremer's approach has come about very quickly – actually, in less than two decades. This explains why, at the age of 47, Duflo is the youngest-ever recipient of the economics Nobel. She is also only the second woman to be awarded the prize (after Elinor Ostrom in 2009). Banerjee, who is also her husband, is the third ever non-white recipient (after Arthur Lewis in 1979 and Amartya Sen in 1998).

In a recent issue of the journal *Nature*, Göran Hansson, head of the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences that awards the Nobel, highlighted measures to address the imbalance in gender and ethnicity among winners. He said "we are making sure to elect women to the academy" from which the prize-awarding committees for the chemistry, physics and economics Nobels are drawn.

The pipeline to this achievement is important. The first woman to win the John Bates Clark Medal for top economists under 40, an important indicator of who will be awarded the economics Nobel in the future, Susan Athey, only did so in 2007. Esther Duflo was the second winner in 2010. Since then, women winners of the Clark medal have been more frequent. Of course, award decisions are made strictly on significance of contributions. But, based on this evidence, perhaps Athey, Amy Finkelstein (who won the medal in 2012) and Emi Nakamura (who won it in 2019) will not be far behind.

[Arbab Bhattacharjee is Professor of Economics, Heriot-Watt University; Mark Schaffer is Professor of Economics, Heriot-Watt University]

Why more places are abandoning Columbus Day in favor of Indigenous Peoples Day

MALINDA MAYNOR LOWERY
theconversation.com

Increasingly, Columbus Day is giving people pause.

More and more towns and cities across the country are electing to celebrate Indigenous Peoples Day as an alternative to – or in addition to – the day intended to honor Columbus' voyages.

Critics of the change see it as just another example of political correctness run amok – another flash point of the culture wars.

As a scholar of Native American history – and a member of the Lumbee Tribe of North Carolina – I know the story is more complex than that.

The growing recognition and celebration of Indigenous Peoples Day actually represents the fruits of a concerted, decades-long effort to recognize the role of indigenous people in the nation's history.

WHY COLUMBUS?

Columbus Day is a relatively new federal holiday.

In 1892, a joint congressional resolution prompted President Benjamin Harrison to mark the "discovery of America by Columbus," in part because of "the devout faith of the discoverer and for the divine care and guidance which has directed our history and so abundantly blessed our people."

Europeans invoked God's will to impose their will on indigenous people. So it seemed logical to call on God when establishing a holiday celebrating that conquest, too.

Of course, not all Americans con-

sidered themselves blessed in 1892. That same year, a lynching forced black journalist Ida B. Wells to flee her home town of Memphis. And while Ellis Island had opened in January of that year, welcoming European immigrants, Congress had already banned Chinese immigration a decade prior, subjecting Chinese people living in the U.S. to widespread persecution.

And then there was the government's philosophy towards the country's Native Americans, which Army Colonel Richard Henry Pratt so unforgettably articulated in 1892: "All the Indian there is in the race should be dead. Kill the Indian in him, and save the man."

It took another 42 years for Columbus Day to formally become a federal holiday, thanks to a 1934 decree by President Franklin D. Roosevelt.

He was responding, in part, to a campaign by the Knights of Columbus, a national Catholic charity founded to provide services to Catholic immigrants. Over time, its agenda expanded to include advocacy for Catholic social values and education.

When Italians first arrived in the United States, they were targets of marginalization and discrimination. Officially celebrating Christopher Columbus – an Italian Catholic – became one way to affirm the new racial order that would emerge in the U.S. in the 20th century, one in which the descendants of diverse ethnic European immigrants became "white" Americans.

INDIGENOUS PEOPLE POWER

But some Americans started to

question why Indigenous people – who'd been in the country all along – didn't have their own holiday.

In the 1980s, Colorado's American Indian Movement chapter began protesting the celebration of Columbus Day. In 1989, activists in South Dakota persuaded the state to replace Columbus Day with Native American Day. Both states have large Native populations that played active roles in the Red Power Movement in the 1960s and 1970s, which sought to make American Indian people more politically visible.

Then, in 1992, at the 500th anniversary of Columbus' first voyage, American Indians in Berkeley, California, organized the first "Indigenous Peoples' Day," a holiday the city council soon formally adopted. Berkeley has since replaced its commemoration of Columbus with a celebration of indigenous people.

The holiday can also trace its origins to the United Nations. In 1977, indigenous leaders from around the world organized a United Nations conference in Geneva to promote indigenous sovereignty and self-determination. Their first recommendation was "to observe October 12, the day of so-called 'discovery' of America, as an International Day of Solidarity with the Indigenous Peoples of the Americas." It took another 30 years for their work to be formally recognized in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, which was adopted in September 2007.

UNEXPECTED ALLIES

Today, cities with significant na-

tive populations, like Seattle, Portland and Los Angeles, now celebrate either Native American Day or Indigenous Peoples Day. And states like Hawaii, Nevada, Minnesota, Alaska and Maine have also formally recognized their Native populations with similar holidays. Many Native governments, like the Cherokee and Osage in Oklahoma, either don't observe Columbus Day or have replaced it with their own holiday.

But you'll also find commemorations in less likely places. Alabama celebrates Native American Day alongside Columbus Day, as does North Carolina, which, with a population of over 120,000 Native Americans, has the largest number of Native Americans of any state east of the Mississippi River.

Just last year, the town of Carrboro, North Carolina, issued a resolution to celebrate Indigenous Peoples Day. The resolution noted the fact that the town of 21,000 had been built on indigenous land and that it was committed to "protect, respect and fulfill the full range of inherent human rights," including those of indigenous people.

While Columbus Day affirms the story of a nation created by Europeans for Europeans, Indigenous Peoples Day emphasizes Native histories and Native people – an important addition to the country's ever-evolving understanding of what it means to be American.

[The writer is Professor of History and Director, Center for the Study of the American South, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill]

Banerjee's achievement much bigger: Ganguly



KOLKATA, OCT 15 (PTI): The Indian Cricket Board president-elect Sourav Ganguly on Tuesday said the achievement of Nobel prize winner and fellow Bangali Abhijit Banerjee was much bigger than his.

"It's (Nobel prize) a much bigger and terrific achievement. I have not met him (Banerjee) ever. I was reading about him in the flight and what he did ... It's on economics related to poverty. He's a special person. Hopefully I will meet him someday," Ganguly said returning to his home town to a rousing reception after being elected as the BCCI president.

"From all of us, heartiest congratulations (to Banerjee)," he added.

Banerjee, who is a

teacher at Massachusetts Institute of Technology on Monday became the eighth Indian to get the award and was jointly chosen the 2019 Nobel Economics Prize winner along with Esther Duflo, also MIT professor and Harvard University's Michael Kremer for their experimental approach to alleviating global poverty.

Duflo, who is Banerjee's wife, is the second woman to win the Nobel Prize for economics and its youngest recipient.

On the same day, Ganguly, the former Indian cricket captain emerged as the lone contender in the race to be the BCCI president. He was the only one to have filed the nomination for world cricket's most-coveted post.

Guwahati-Aizawl direct daily flight resumes



GUWAHATI/AIZAWL, OCT 15 (PTI): Direct daily flight between Guwahati and Aizawl resumed on Tuesday after a gap of eight months.

The direct air connectivity between the two cities was snapped after Jet Airways withdrew its services from the northeast on February 10 this year.

Airport Authority of India sources said the flight of private airlines GoAir will depart from Lokopriyo Gopinath Bordoloi International Airport in Guwahati daily at 6.30 a.m and reach Lengpui Airport at Aizawl at 7.50 a.m.

On the return trip the flight from Aizawl has been scheduled at 8.40 am and will reach here at 9.50 am, the sources said.

The daily flight will provide relief for professionals, visitors, patients, students of Mizoram and the north east region and also provide a boost to the tourism sector, a release issued by AAI-NER

said. The direct flight was inaugurated at the Gopinath Bordoloi International Airport by Airport Authority Of India North East Region's (AAI-NER) Regional Executive Director Sanjeev Jindal.

Mizoram Chief Minister Zoramthanga inaugurating the Aizawl to Guwahati flight at Lengpui Airport said the state government would upgrade the infrastructure of the airport so that more airliners introduce flights to the landlocked state.

Air link is the lifeline for the people of the state, he said adding people of Mizoram, particularly those seeking medical treatment outside the state, have faced severe hardships after the direct flight between Aizawl and Guwahati was discontinued.

GoAir is also planning to commence daily flights between Aizawl and Kolkata from October 27, sources in the airlines said.

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FIELDWORK REFLECTION

En Route to the Sky and Beyond

RONGNYOO LEPCHA

Looking up on clear nights one can trace the Milky Way swirling across and millions of lights scattering into the dark void. The mysteries of space have always intrigued the minds of those living on earth and as a result humans built satellites and spaceships to explore what lay beyond the blue planet. The craving for knowledge has always been embedded in humans; even long before modern technologies that we know of today. Various philosophers and astronomers have been studying the motions of space since ancient times. This inquisitiveness was not limited to just scholars and philosophers, but communities across the globe have their own interpretations and understanding of the space beyond their own.

The famous "Stairway to Heaven," an ongoing project at Daramdin, West Sikkim, is being developed to commemorate the famous folkstory of the community when the Lepchas tried to build an earthen tower to reach the heavens. Many have called it stupidity, like Stocks who mentions the tower in his Sikkim Customs and Folklore (1975) and states that it was the result of stupidity

"when the world was full once more, some of the Rong-folk, a tribe called the Na-ong or Ignorant persons prepared to ascend to the Rum Country, and began building a tower of earthen pots..." (Stocks 1975:35).

The story goes that the Lepchas wanted to go to the heaven so they started building an earthen tower made out of pots to reach the heavens. To build this tower they first needed to find a flat piece of land where this earthen structure could be fashioned. And as they searched for a perfect piece of land they came across Daramdin

where there was a huge flat land with a lake. They named this land Talom Partam. One of the reasons they chose this tract, as some Lepchas believe, was that the sky appeared closer from Talom Partam so they thought they could reach the heavens faster from there. They emptied the lake, and out of its wet mud fashioned thousands of pots and stacked them one on top of the other to build a tower. In fact, the name Daramdin comes from the act of emptying the lake in order to get to the smooth and wet mud at the bottom.

The pots were light and hence could be carried to the top easily. When they reached high, the ones on top seeing



that they were very close to the sky called to the men working down to pass a hooked stick "kok vim yang ta" so that they could use it to pull the sky, but due to the distance, there was a miscommunication and the ones at the bottom heard "chyek ta" - smash it. So the people at the bottom started smashing the pots resulting in the tower to crumble to the ground.

This is not just a folktale as shards of pottery still found at Daramdin hold evidence to the story. Even if the stories were to be considered myths, it is very clear that the Lepchas practiced pot-



tery making. And this is not a sign of a community who can be called 'fools' or Na-Ongs.

This story has been told many a times passing from generation to generation, and has also earned the Lepchas the title of what Stocks mentions

search as they fail to see the communities from the community's point of view. The other problem comes with misinterpretation and sometimes it's the stories itself with time being molded and remolded into actually believing for being the Na-Ongs.

In rong aring, the Lepcha language, rum is mostly translated to a god, or a deity but the word a-rum means far-away place. Now, the concept of heaven and hell infiltrated the Lepcha community with the coming of Buddhism. Being animists prior to that, Lepchas have always worshipped nature as the supreme source of power. Looking back at the story and putting the pieces together it is possible that the Lepchas were not trying to go to Rum Lyang that is the heavens but A-Rum Lyang a faraway place. What if the Lepchas were

trying to look for what lies beyond the normal? What if the Lepchas were trying to find more knowledge? At that time, all people living on the ground would have looked up at the skies and wondered about the mysteries that laid beyond... their imaginations leading to origin of many theories about aliens, gods, mythologies, etc. but the one who actually attempted to go up and look for themselves were ultimately labeled as the 'foolish' ones.

[The writer is a Research Scholar, Deptt of Anthropology, Sikkim University]

Felt insulted at Durga Puja carnival: WB governor



KOLKATA, OCT 15 (PTI): West Bengal Governor Jagdeep Dhankhar on Tuesday said he felt insulted at the Durga Puja carnival in the city, while also asserting that nothing would deter him from performing his constitutional duties.

He, however, did not mention the reason for feeling humiliated at the event.

According to sources, Dhankhar was not happy with the seating arrangement at Friday's carnival, organized by the TMC government to showcase some of the big-ticket pujas.

The governor was given a seat at a corner dais and couldn't watch the programme properly, they said.

"I felt insulted at the carnival. I am deeply hurt and disturbed. The

insult was not to me but to every people of West Bengal. They will never digest such as insult.

"I am a servant of the people of West Bengal. Nothing can deter me from performing my constitutional duties," Dhankhar said on the sidelines of a programme here.

Over 70 prominent community pujas put up a dazzling show on Friday at Red Road, projecting an array of themes and artwork on colourful tableaux during the annual carnival.

The fourth edition of the event, the brainchild of West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, was attended by her ministerial colleagues, Governor Jagdeep Dhankhar, members of different consulates among other dignitaries and tourists.

Nitish holds high-level meeting on water-logging; errant officials face music

PATNA, OCT 15 (PTI): The Nitish Kumar government in Bihar has taken action against errant officials found wanting in discharge of their duties during the recent water-logging in Patna by placing them under suspension, withholding payment of salaries and issuing show-cause notices to them.

The accountability of officials was fixed, remedial measures discussed and instructions were issued for strict implementation at a review meeting held by the chief minister with members of his cabinet and top government officials on Monday.

Briefing journalists, Chief Secretary Deepak Kumar said, many officials posted in the Patna Municipal Corporation and Bihar Urban Infrastructure Development Corporation (BUIDCO) were taken to task, while the project manager of the private company L&T, which has been carrying out the Namami Gange project, has been issued a show-cause notice.

"The government took serious note of the fact that many pumps at pump houses across the city did not function when the need arose and drains were not cleared of garbage which prevented discharge of water once the showers ceased," the chief secretary said.

He said show-cause notices have been issued to a number of BUIDCO officials, including a chief engineer, two superintending engineers, six executive engineers and executive engineer (mechanical) and an assistant engineer (mechanical).

A BUIDCO executive engineer has been transferred, he said.

Among the municipal corporation officials who have been held accountable, six sanitary inspec-



tors of Kankarbagh and Pataliputra have been placed under suspension.

Executive officer, city manager and chief sanitary officer of Kankarbagh have also been issued show-cause notices and payment of their salaries has been put on hold, the officer said.

"In addition, executive officer, chief sanitary inspector and all sanitary inspectors of Bankipur have been suspended. A total of 22 personnel working with the drainage pump system have been suspended and their salaries have been withheld," the chief secretary said, adding that all those served with show-cause notices have been directed to reply at the earliest.

Project Manager of L&T, which has been entrusted with carrying out the Namami Gange project, has also been issued a show-cause notice," he said.

To prevent a repeat of wa-

ter-logging, a four-member committee headed by the state's development commissioner has been formed, he said.

The committee has been asked to submit its findings to the government within a month.

The principal secretaries of road construction, urban development and housing and disaster management departments will be other members of the committee.

"The chief minister said the committee shall identify any other officials whose lapse might have been responsible for the recent flooding of the city. The government would take action against them.

"The chief minister also laid stress on speedy removal of encroachments over the drains and the cleansing of these for free discharge of waste water. New drainage pumping systems will be installed at 14 places across the city," he said.

Indian cricket will continue to prosper under Ganguly undoubtedly: Laxman

NEW DELHI, OCT 15 (PTI): Batting legend VVS Laxman on Tuesday said Indian cricket will undoubtedly continue to prosper under former skipper Sourav Ganguly, who is set to take over the reins of the BCCI.

Ganguly, a veteran 113 Tests and 311 ODIs, on Monday filed his nominations papers for the post of BCCI president in Mumbai.

The former Indian skipper is expected to be elected unopposed at the board's Annual General Meeting on October 23.

"Congrats @SGanguly99 on becoming the President of @BCCI. I have got no doubt that under your leadership Indian Cricket will continue to prosper. Wishing you lots of success in your new role Dada," Laxman tweeted.

Ganguly thanked his former teammate for the congratulatory message. "Thank u Vvs „your contributions will be very important," Ganguly tweeted.

The 47-year-old, one of the finest Indian captains, will hold the post of the BCCI President for a mere nine months. He will have to demit office in July, due to compulsory cooling off period.

Ukraine reach Euro 2020 as racism blights England win in Bulgaria

PARIS, OCT 15 (AFP): Ukraine booked their place in Euro 2020 after squeezing past Portugal as Cristiano Ronaldo scored his 700th career goal on a night stained by Bulgaria fans racially abusing England players while their side were hit for six in Sofia.

Andriy Shevchenko's unbeaten team are through to next summer's finals with a match to spare as Group B winners thanks to first-half goals from Roman Yaremchuk and Andriy Yarmolenko, which meant that Ronaldo's 72nd-minute penalty wasn't enough for Portugal.

Ukraine join Poland, Russia, Italy and Belgium in the multi-host tournament which kicks off in Rome on June 12, with Shevchenko -- who scored 48 times for Ukraine in 111 matches -- proving a similar success on the bench as he was on the pitch.

Second-placed Portugal's fate is still in the balance, with Serbia just a point behind them with two matches remaining after they beat Lithuania 2-1.

Portugal dominated the second half and pulled one back when



Ronaldo blasted home the spot-kick to make it 700 goals for club and country, but they couldn't find an equaliser despite some good chances.

"There are days like these, when the ball just doesn't want to go in," said Portuguese midfielder Danilo.

"No need to do the maths now: we just need to win the next two games to reach Euro 2020."

Group A leaders England still have to wait for their place at the Euros despite hammering hapless Bulgaria 6-0, but the focus of atten-

tion was again on the stands as the home fans caused mayhem with racist chanting that twice caused the match to be halted.

It was another England match blighted by racism from opposition fans after England's black players were targeted with monkey chants during their 5-1 win at Montenegro in March.

- RACISM MARS ENGLAND WIN -

The level of abuse from a section of the Bulgarian support led the English Football Association to demand an investigation from UEFA,

asking European football's governing body to open a probe "as a matter of urgency".

Tyrone Mings was one of those targeted on his England debut, and he said that stopping the game did have the desired effect of reducing racist abuse in the second half.

"We made the decision at half-time to come out and play the game which we thought was the right decision," said Mings.

"If anything else happened, we would have taken appropriate action."

England led 2-0 through early goals from Marcus Rashford and Ross Barkley when play was first stopped and an announcement made to supporters that the game could be suspended the abuse continued.

Once restarted, England quickly made it 3-0 through Barkley before a second stoppage, with Croatian referee Ivan Bebek holding discussions with players and coaching staff from both sides.

Raheem Sterling then netted twice either side of half-time before Harry Kane rounded off the scoring to take

England to the brink of qualification.

Gareth Southgate's men have now scored 26 goals in 6 qualifying matches and are four points ahead of third-placed Kosovo with two matches to play.

However Kosovo's 2-0 win over Montenegro means England need a win from one of their remaining two matches to ensure qualification.

- AYHAN DENIES FRANCE -

France also missed a spot in the Euros when Kaan Ayhan's leveller snatched a point for Turkey in a match played

against a backdrop of diplomatic tensions after Paris condemned Ankara for its military offensive against Kurdish forces in Syria.

Substitute Olivier Giroud headed France in front on 76 minutes at the Stade de France. Ayhan nodded home six minutes later -- and celebrated with a military salute in front of the Turkish supporters -- to leave Didier Deschamps side waiting.

"We did what we needed to win the match based on the play and number of chances. They didn't have many but put away a set-piece," said Deschamps, whose team lost 2-0 to Turkey in June.

"We should have been more clinical even if it's still a good point. We're still on track and need to finish to job in November."

Turkey remain top of Group H above the world champions on the head-to-head rule. Although France can qualify for the finals with a win at home to Moldova next month, Turkey would clinch their place by avoiding defeat against third-placed Iceland, who are four points back after beating Andorra 2-0.

Gareth Southgate praises England players for making 'major statement'

DAVID HYTNER
theGuardian

Sofia, 15 Oct: Gareth Southgate felt his England players made a "major statement" in getting their Euro 2020 qualifier against Bulgaria in Sofia halted twice as he reflected on what Greg Clarke, the Football Association chairman, called "one of the most appalling nights I've seen in football".

England's three starting black players -- Tyrone Mings, Raheem Sterling and Marcus Rashford -- were subjected to monkey chants with Mings, the debutant, saying he had first heard them during the warm-up. In line with Uefa's three-step protocol, England reported the abuse to the referee, Ivan Bebek, who passed on a message to be broadcast over the PA system for it to stop.

Gareth Southgate felt his England players made a "major statement" in getting their Euro 2020 qualifier against Bulgaria in Sofia halted twice as he reflected on what Greg Clarke, the Football Association chairman, called "one of the most appalling nights I've seen in football".

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In the 41st minute, following further abuse and more complaints from England, Bebek temporarily stopped the game and asked Southgate whether he wanted to take his players off to the dressing room. The manager said they wanted to make it to half-time. There were further talks during the interval but England were determined to play on in the second-half -- to show the racists they would not win, to quote Clarke. There remained the threat that they would walk off if there was more abuse and the game, which finished in a 6-0 England win, would be abandoned.



"I know that whatever we do might be perceived as not being enough but I think we've made a major statement," Southgate said. "We've made a major statement with the way we played, through such difficult circumstances. I don't think a game of this magnitude has ever been stopped twice. So, I'm incredibly proud of all of the players and all of the staff."

"We could be criticised for not going far enough but I think we've made a huge statement and, frankly, we were in an impossible situation to get it right to the satisfaction of everybody."

"The players were all absolutely adamant they wanted to keep playing but also we knew, if there was anything in the second half, we'd be reporting it and coming off."

Southgate gave an insight into how steeled his players now were to racist abuse. "Sadly, because of their experiences in our own country, they are hardened to racism," he said.

"I don't know what that says about our society but that's the reality. It actually saddens me. So they actually are in the dressing room smiling because they've played so well."

"We will recognise there's been an opportunity tonight to raise awareness of this issue and I think that has happened. But Raheem Sterling has got the hump with me for taking him off when he's on a hat-trick. Sometimes you have to smile through adversity. We all knew we were in a pretty impossible situation so we've tried to navigate it in the best way we could."

Sterling later retweeted a news story in which the Bulgaria coach, Krasimir Balakov, accused England of having a bigger racism problem than his own country. "Mmmh, not sure about this one chief," Sterling wrote. "Feeling sorry for Bulgaria to be represented by such idiots in their stadium. Anyway, 6-0 and we go back home. At least we did our job. Safe travel to our fans, you guys did well."

Mings said: "I heard [the chants] before I even got to the other side of the pitch for the warm-up. Just before half-time we were contemplating coming off because that was the next step after a stadium announcement. There were a couple of minutes to go to half-time, so we thought we'd play the couple of minutes, go in and talk about it then, which we did and we made a collective decision."

"It didn't affect my feelings. I think I'm quite lucky in that way because I don't feel like it is a personal assault. I feel sorry for the people who have those views. But I also have a duty to represent people that don't have a voice, so it didn't hurt or harm my feelings one bit. It was obviously bigger than me and bigger than what I felt."

The Bulgaria captain, Ivelin Popov, was seen in a heated debate with a section of home supporters near to the tunnel as the teams departed for half-time. "I've been told what the Bulgaria captain did at half-time," Rashford said. "To stand alone and do the right thing takes courage and acts like that shouldn't go unnoticed."

I believe in Neville, he has a plan for England: Duggan

MADRID, OCT 15 (AFP): Atletico Madrid forward Toni Duggan says England's players are still behind Phil Neville as coach and has warned against complacency and the need to improve standards in the women's game. In an exclusive interview with AFP, Duggan also talked about her burgeoning friendship with Kieran Trippier and the upcoming reunion with Manchester City on Wednesday in the last 16 of the women's Champions League.

Duggan and Barcelona lost to all-conquering Lyon in the final in May and the 28-year-old admits she would still be hurting had she not left the Catalans for a fresh start at Atletico in the summer.

Yet in between there was further heartache at the World Cup, where England were beaten in the semi-finals by eventual winners the United States and Neville has come under scrutiny since, during a run of one victory in six games.

"It's been a lot to take in after the World Cup, maybe this is a transition period," Duggan tells AFP from the training ground of Atletico Madrid's women's team in Madrid on Monday.

"I believe in Phil, he's the coach and it can't get like the men's game where you sack the coach after three or four defeats. We have a plan and all the players are buying into it."

Neville, though, has become prickly in the face of recent pressure from the media.

"Phil has a bigger profile so perhaps he gets



more applause when we do well and more criticism when he does badly," Duggan continued.

"That's because he's Phil Neville but our ambitions are the same and we're all pulling in the right direction," Duggan is still regaining fitness following the thigh injury that disrupted her World Cup but has settled in fast at Atletico, with a friendly face nearby too in Trippier, who joined the club from Tottenham in July.

"One of us messaged the other when we signed and we've stayed in touch," Duggan said. "We send each other messages when the other one has a good game, to say good luck, well played or whatever. It's nice to have that."

"I was asking him about Spanish the other day and saying my teacher sometimes tells me things I don't need to know. He was saying it's difficult because (Diego) Simeone speaks so fast."

- 'GET IT RIGHT' -
Women's football in Spain enjoyed a re-

cord-breaking year last season, most notably when a crowd of 60,739 turned out to watch Duggan score for Barcelona against Atletico at the Wanda Metropolitano in March. But when the two sides met again a month ago, Barca's victory was not even shown on television.

"It was disappointing. Last season there were 60,000 people in the stadium and they can't even televise the game the next year," Duggan says.

"If it's like that, how you do build? How do you progress?" "People talk about equality but it's not about money, no way. Get the pitches and the facilities right," Duggan said.

"There's a danger people think it will just happen but if we want to bring people and sponsors in, how can you do that if you're playing on a pitch kids wouldn't play on in the park?"

Atletico have been rocked by coach Jose Luis Sanchez Vera resigning for personal reasons last week, with Pablo Lopez

replacing him. "It was a blow I'm not going to lie," Duggan admits. "I knew the way the team played and that was what brought me here initially."

Duggan believes the squad's togetherness can carry them through against City, who are top of the Women's Super League but lost to Atletico last year in the Champions League.

"They're always a contender, I think they've had stronger squads but they've been consistent," said Duggan, who played for City between 2014 and 2017 and won the league with them in 2016.

"I won trophies there and if we had kept the group together I believe we would have won the Champions League. It wasn't to be for reasons I don't want to go into but it was a shame."

Duggan is adamant she will play again in England. Could she envisage a return to City? "No, I don't think so," she said. "But I'm looking forward to facing them."

EU keeps hopes of Brexit deal alive, for now

A Brexit deal could yet be reached this week, the chief EU negotiator said Tuesday, but member states warned they will not allow Britain to open a back door to their single market. British and EU officials are scrambling to draft a deal on Britain's exit terms before the European summit on Thursday, as Prime Minister Boris Johnson seeks to fulfil his vow to take Britain out on October 31.

European diplomats said Britain has already given ground on customs rules for Northern Ireland, but must go further quickly if a deal is to be done this month.

As he arrived in Luxembourg to brief the other 27 EU states on the progress of the closed-door talks, chief EU negotiator Michel Barnier struck a cautiously upbeat note.

"This work has been intense all along the weekend and yesterday because even if the agreement will be difficult -- more and more difficult to be frank -- it's still possible this week," Barnier told reporters. "Obviously any agreement must work for everyone -- the whole of the United Kingdom and the whole of the European Union. Let me add also that it is high time to turn good intentions into legal text."

A European diplomat told AFP that the "goal" was to get a draft text of a deal ready later in the evening Tuesday, but warned: "Time is running out, but the window for agreement is still narrowly open."



Another diplomat explained that if Britain wants a deal agreed at the summit this week, then a text would need to be ready "today or tomorrow morning" to allow EU and member state parliamentary procedures to be completed.

- Glimmer of hope -

British Brexit Minister Stephen Barclay joined Barnier in Luxembourg in what was seen as a positive sign for progress in the talks -- which have been shrouded in secrecy since the weekend as the two sides seek to avoid potentially damaging leaks.

"The talks are ongoing. We need to give them space to proceed but detailed conversations are under way and a deal is still very possible," Barclay said as he arrived.

After weeks of gloom and growing fears Britain would crash out of the bloc with no divorce

arrangements in place, the last few days have given a glimmer of hope that an agreement can be reached -- though there has so far been no decisive breakthrough.

More than three years after Britain's 2016 referendum vote to leave, talks remain stuck on how to avoid customs checks on the border between British-ruled Northern Ireland and EU-member Ireland.

The EU has reservations about London's proposed customs arrangements and the role for Northern Ireland's Stormont assembly in giving consent to the plans.

"It's not done yet but we're trying. The British want a deal and they have moved on customs and Stormont," a senior European diplomat told AFP, referring to the role of the Northern Irish provincial assembly.

"We'll have to see if it's enough to be turned into a legal text. We must be cautious."

Talks on Monday went on to 11pm, according to a British spokesman, who said there had been "back and forth and new texts... shared by both sides".

With no majority in parliament, Johnson is reliant on support from other parties, particularly his coalition partner, the small Northern Irish Democratic Unionist Party (DUP).

The prime minister held talks with the DUP leadership on Monday in a bid to win them round.

- No NI backdoor -

Johnson on Monday repeated that Britain would come out on October 31 and not seek another delay to Brexit, but this hangs on the outcome of the ongoing talks. If he cannot get reach a deal by Saturday,

Johnson will fall foul of a British law demanding he ask the EU to postpone Brexit for a third time rather than risk a potentially disastrous "no deal" departure.

European ministers arriving to hear from Barnier insisted Britain still had to give more ground on its customs plans to protect the integrity of the EU single market from potential smuggling.

"For the Netherlands it is extremely important that there is no unfair competition from outside the EU using the Irish-Northern Irish border," Dutch Foreign Minister Stef Blok said.

"The UK proposal contained some steps forward, but not enough that the internal market will be protected."

Germany's junior Europe minister Michael Roth echoed this, saying any deal must protect the single market and honour the Good Friday peace agreement that ended decades of sectarian conflict in Northern Ireland.

While London insists it will brook no more delays to Brexit, Finnish Prime Minister Antti Rinne suggested late on Monday that talks could continue after this week's EU summit.

"In my opinion, it is virtually impossible for us to reach agreement before the meeting. We need to have more time and negotiate after the meeting," Rinne, whose country currently holds the EU presidency, told reporters in Helsinki, quoted by news agency STT.

Mass raids target Russian opposition chief



Russian investigators raided opposition offices across the country on Tuesday, in the latest move to increase pressure on top Kremlin critic Alexei Navalny and his allies.

The early morning raids targeted more than 100 offices and homes in 30 cities, the opposition said, including the headquarters of Navalny's Anti-Corruption Foundation (FBK) in Moscow.

An AFP journalist saw several armed interior ministry officers in black balaclavas entering the business centre hosting his offices, where agents reportedly broke through the doors to enter the premises.

Navalny, an anti-corruption campaigner who has emerged as President Vladimir Putin's most prominent critic, denounced the raids as an attempt to intimidate the opposition after a summer of protests and significant losses suffered by Kremlin allies in local elections in September.

"This will not stop us," he said in a post on his blog shortly after the raids began. "We are doing the right thing. And those who are against us are enemies of Russia."

The raids followed similar mass searches last month and came less than a week after Navalny's foundation was declared "a foreign agent".

Russia's Investigative Committee said in a statement that searches were underway at FBK offices in 30 regions, as well as at residences of the group's regional employees.

- Accounts frozen -

Investigators have repeatedly accused Navalny's foundation of financial crimes, including

money laundering and accepting illegal donations, and frozen its accounts.

The 43-year-old lawyer said he had lost track of the number of times his foundation has been raided in the past two months. He said 112 investigators have been put on his case.

Last week's move to declare his foundation a "foreign agent" stems from accusations that it is receiving funding from abroad.

The tag carries a connotation of Cold War espionage and means Navalny's group will be subject to even more state scrutiny.

Navalny claimed it was done on direct orders from Putin, calling him a "deceitful swindler". The Kremlin denied he had anything to do with the decision.

Putin signed the law on "foreign agents" in 2012, after huge opposition protests, and described the legislation as "self-defence" against the financing of political activities in the country from abroad.

The Investigative Committee said Tuesday that accounts of Navalny's foundation had been frozen under a court order and that "funds have been transferred to these accounts from foreign sources".

Navalny organised some of the biggest protests against Putin in recent years.

His anti-corruption rhetoric has grown increasingly popular. Putin's approval rating has been falling amid anger over unchecked corruption and declining living standards following the 2014 annexation of Crimea and Western sanctions.

While barred from mainstream politics, Navalny has worked to expose the wealth of Russia's elite, broadcasting the findings of investigations to millions on social media.

- 'Seeking revenge' -

In August, Russian investigators launched a money-laundering probe into FBK, accusing it of taking money that was procured illegally.

Last month, investigators raided dozens of Navalny's regional offices, as well as the homes of his supporters, following mass opposition protests in Moscow this summer.

Navalny blamed the raids on Kremlin "hysteria" sparked by the ruling party's losses in local elections last month. He said police searched more than 200 addresses in over 40 cities.

He had instructed supporters to vote strategically to block pro-Kremlin candidates in local elections in Moscow and regions.

Navalny and his allies organised the protests after opposition politicians were barred from standing in the Moscow parliament election.

Lyubov Sobol, one of Navalny's allies barred from the vote, described the latest raids as a "shameless" attempt at payback by the authorities.

The Kremlin, she said on Twitter, was "seeking revenge for 'Smart Voting' and trying to destroy a network of our offices".

A few thousand people were detained during the protests and several jailed for between two and five years over alleged attacks on police -- sentences that critics described as unprecedented in their harshness.

Three hurt as asylum-seekers clash on Greek island

ATHENS, OCT 15 (AFP): At least three people were hurt in a clash between asylum-seekers in a town on the Greek island of Samos, police sources said Tuesday.

They said the violence, apparently between groups of Syrians and Afghans, erupted in the town of Vathy late on Monday.

A fire later broke out outside the camp that authorities managed to place under control early on Tuesday morning.

"Half of the 6,000 people who are stuck in Vathy camp on Samos are women and children," medical charity MSF said in a tweet.

"This nightmare must end! Children and other vulnerable people must be evacuated from the

Greek islands to safe accommodation."

There are over 32,000 migrants and refugees in camps on Aegean islands near Turkey, most of them vastly overcrowded, unhygienic and violence-prone.

In September, a woman died and over a dozen people were injured in the camp of Moria on the island of Lesbos, the country's most overpopulated migrant facility.

There are over 13,000 people in Moria for under 3,000 places. Many sleep in tents outside the camp.

Greece is hosting some 70,000 asylum-seekers, mainly Syrians and Afghans. There are fears that Turkey's ongoing offensive in Syria will spark a new migration wave to Europe.

Syria offensive to continue until 'objectives achieved': Erdogan

ISTANBUL, OCT 15 (AFP): President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said Tuesday that Turkey's operation against Kurdish militants in northern Syria would not stop until "our objectives have been achieved".

Turkey is in the seventh day of its assault against the Syrian Kurdish People's Protection Units (YPG), which it sees as a "terrorist" offshoot of Kurdish insurgents in its own territory.

"God willing, we will

quickly secure the region stretching from Manbij to our border with Iraq and ensure that, in the first stage, one million, and then two million Syrian refugees return to their homes of their own free will," Erdogan said in a televised speech in Baku, where he was attending a regional conference.

He said 1,000 square-kilometres of Syrian territory had so far been "liberated from the separatist terrorist organisation".

More victims, more damage found in Japan typhoon aftermath



NAGANO (JAPAN), OCT 15 (AP): The toll of death and destruction from a massive typhoon that tore through central and northern Japan continued to climb Tuesday, as the government said it was considering approving a special budget for the ongoing disaster response and eventual reconstruction.

Prime Minister Shinzo Abe told a parliamentary session that the number of deaths tied to Typhoon Hagibis had climbed to 53 and was expected to rise, as at least another nine people are presumed dead. Lawmakers prayed in silence for the victims before starting the session.

Abe pledged to do the utmost for the safety and rescue of those missing or those who had to evacuate.

"We put the people's live first," he said.

Hagibis hit Japan's main island on Saturday, unleashing strong winds and dumping historic rainfall that caused more than 200 rivers in central and northern Japan to overflow, leaving thousands of homes flooded, damaged or without power. Rescue crews on Tuesday were still searching for those missing, thought to number about 20.

Some 34,000 homes remained without power and 110,000 others were without running water. More than 30,000 people were still at shelters as of late Monday, according to the Cabinet Office's latest tally.

Business appeared nearly back to normal in central Tokyo, and residents in areas where floodwater subsided started cleaning their houses. Lives, however, remained paralyzed in

Nagano, Fukushima and other hard-hit areas that were still inundated.

West Japan Railway Co. said its Hokuriku Shinkansen bullet train services connecting Tokyo and Kanazawa in the central north were reduced because of flooding of six trains at its railyard in Nagano.

The trains sat in a pool of muddy water that was up to their windows.

Questions have been raised about the site of the railyard, which sits in an area noted on a prefectural hazard map as a flood area.

Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshihide Suga said the operator's preparedness should be investigated later but the priority is to get the trains out of the water. Some water has been pumped out, but more than half of the railyard is still underwater.

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VIDEO NEWS SECTION

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Don't ever want to get into a familiar groove: Hollywood star Clive Owen

BY BEDIKA

LOS ANGELES, OCT 15 (PTI): Hollywood star Clive Owen says it is futile to carry the burden of past performances, no matter how good they are, as there is no "safe space" for a working actor.

Owen says it is a blessing that his name does not conjure up a particular image in audiences' mind and that has largely to do with his varied filmography that includes critically-acclaimed titles such as "Croupier", "Closer", "Sin City" to "Children of Men".

"I'm just a working actor and I go from part to part, doing the best I can. Sometimes actors, they have a big breakthrough in a particular kind of movie and they want to protect that. They think that's where I'm safe and good.

"But I've never wanted to do that. I don't mind turning everything on its head. I think for an actor it's good for people not to feel that they know exactly what you do. It gives you more freedom to change and do something else," Owen told PTI in an interview.

The actor says being unpredictable in his film choices has given him enough room to do a project with an Italian filmmaker, be a part of a West End play and then star in a big production like "Gemini Man", in which he is paired opposite Will Smith.

Owen credits his training in the British theatre for teaching him the value of variety.

"I never go 'That's clever. That's the kind of actor Clive Owen is and I want to keep a hold of that'. My career has always been like that... I don't know what kind of actor I'm. I don't ever want to get into a groove where I feel like that's the kind of actor I am. Because I don't know what kind of actor I'm," he says.

"Gemini Man", about a retired assassin

being hunted down by his younger clone, has Owen playing a morally duplicitous scientist who has a misguided love for his adopted son.

The actor liked the fact that he was not playing "this mustache twirling sort of evil guy" but someone who "believes in what he's doing".

"There is great love for his son, however misplaced it all really is," he says about his role in the Ang Lee-directed movie. Smith, in a press conference ear-

helm a film of this complex nature as he is "very light touch" in his approach.

"Ang is a powerhouse and he has this terribly nice, gentle demeanour. He's very light touch. But he can give you a note that sort of crushes you to the core. He is very incisive when he needs to be."

There is a different rhythm to sci-fi films and "Gemini Man", which boasts of the first digitally-created human and has been shot in the high frame rate, was no different but Owen says it did



GORGEOUS IN BLUE! The *Riverdale* star, Camila Mendes looks electrifying in a wrap dress paired with lime green heels while out in New York City.

Looking forward to working with Mani Ratnam: Aishwarya Rai Bachchan

MUMBAI, OCT 14 (PTI): Aishwarya Rai Bachchan will be soon teaming up with frequent collaborator, filmmaker Mani Ratnam, and the actor says it's always a joy to work with the director.

Aishwarya and Ratnam have teamed up for a film which will reportedly feature the actor in a double role.

Aishwarya, who has previously worked with Ratnam in films like "Iruvar", "Guru" and "Raavan", said she doesn't have to think much before saying yes to the filmmaker.

"It is definitely an experience I'm looking forward to for multiple reasons. Mani is my guru and he is one of the most amazing and brilliant directors of our country.

"I've had the honour, privilege and joy of working with him right in the beginning of my career and several times later. It's an easy yes to work with that kind of cinematic brilliance," the actor told reporters here.

She was speaking at a special event of Disney's "Maleficent: Mistress of Evil". The actor has given her voice for Angelina Jolie's character, Maleficent, in the Hindi dubbed version of the film.

Aishwarya said for the first time she was dubbing for a character she hadn't played on screen and it was a learning experience.



"When you're the actor, you work with the director on sets and know where and how you want to play a character. When you go to do dubbing, you decide the way you want to essay a particular scene because you had enacted it. "But this time I was going to do voice-over for a role enacted by another actor and then we were changing the language..."

It was a collaborative effort on arriving at how to say those lines."

The 45-year-old actor said Jolie has played the title character in a slightly theatrical manner. "There is a theatrical manner in which she says her lines, because of her physicality, the way she's created the character, that makes her speak in a certain way. First day, we did it like a match, almost the way she had done it and then we revisited some scenes to tweak and change it.

"So the entire exercise was very interesting and new... It's a classic story and has classic emotions which are addressed in the drama of it. So the lines can be written that way and you can play it out in the typical way Indians emote and yet you've to find the balance between the way you say lines the way Maleficent would in a scenario. It was creatively enriching," she added.

The film is scheduled to release on October 18.

Jeremy Renner's wife says he once threatened to kill her, actor hits back

LOS ANGELES, OCT 15 (PTI): Amidst a bitter custody battle, Jeremy Renner's ex-wife Sonni Pacheco has claimed that the actor once threatened to kill her and himself. According to documents filed in a court, Pacheco, who married and divorced Renner in 2014, claimed that the actor once put a gun in his mouth and threatened to shoot himself, TMZ reported. The 28-year-old Canadian model said Renner ultimately fired a shot in the ceiling, while their daughter, Ava, was asleep in her bedroom.

Pacheco also accuses Renner of alleged drug use as well as emotional and verbal abuse. The ex-couple currently have the joint custody of Ava but Pacheco has petitioned for sole custody at the Superior Court of California, County of Los Angeles. Meanwhile, Renner has also filed court documents, claiming that Pacheco is suffering from mental health problems.

He said Pacheco is bitter about their marriage being a failure and is now looking for "cash grab".

Renner also claimed that his former spouse once bragged to her friends that she had "bagged an Avenger", referring to the actor's turn as Hawkeye in Marvel Cinematic Universe (MCU). A representative of Renner has also released a statement, where the actor denied the "one-sided" claims levelled by Pacheco. "The well-being of his daughter Ava has always been and continues to be the primary focus for Jeremy. "This is a matter for the court to decide. It's important to note the dramatisations made in Sonni's declaration are a one-sided account made with a specific goal in mind," his spokesperson said.



Jason Sudeikis to headline 'Ted Lasso' comedy series at Apple

LOS ANGELES, OCT 15 (PTI): Actor Jason Sudeikis is set to star in "Ted Lasso" comedy series, which has been green lit by Apple for its upcoming streaming service.

The 44-year-old actor will portray the eponymous character, an idealistic all-American football coach, who, despite having no soccer coaching experience at all, is hired to manage an English football club. Sudeikis will also write the pilot episode, in collaboration with Bill Lawrence, as

well as executive produce the series, reported Deadline.

Brendan Hunt, who co-starred Sudeikis in films such as "We're the Millers" and "Horrible Bosses 2", will also feature in the series as Coach Beard.

Lawrence and Jeff Ingold will also executive produce, while Liza Katzer will serve as co-executive producer.

Doozer Productions will produce the project in association with Warner Bros. Television.

Keep the love flowing: Shah Rukh on clocking 39mn followers on Twitter

MUMBAI, OCT 15 (PTI): Superstar Shah Rukh Khan thanked his fans for their love and positivity after he crossed 39 million followers on Twitter.

The 53-year-old actor expressed gratitude toward his tribe on the microblogging site.

"Keep the love flowing. Keep the positivity multiplying. Keep yourself happy... always. Everything is as beauti-

ful as you want to see it. Love you all," Shah Rukh wrote, alongside a selfie.

He was recently in Riyadh to participate in Saudi Arabia film industry event Joy Forum, where he met action legends Jackie Chan and Jean-Claude Van Damme, and "Aquaman" star Jason Momoa.

Shah Rukh is one of the most followed Indian personalities on Twitter.

ARIES: Our perception colours our reality, Aries. If your world is rife with disappointment, there's a good chance you're choosing to look at the cup as half empty. What the cards are encouraging you to go: weigh the blessings instead. This will help you realise you are living a charmed life. As for your personal relationships, remember that there's little you can do to change people or influence their thought patterns.

Tip: Count your blessings.

TAURUS: What happens when something falls apart? Do you try to piece things together or accept what fate is pointing towards? There's no harm in mending relationships, provided both parties are interested in the outcome. However, if you're the only one putting in the work, resentment is bound to catch up. The need of the hour is to work on these deep seated issues, which are keeping you from letting go and moving on.

Tip: Know when it is time to forgive and let go.

GEMINI: All this texting isn't going to get you anywhere. If you want things to move forward, take charge of the situation. Tell

them you'd like to meet for dinner or drinks. Alternatively, you can propose something casual like a walk in the park. Spending time in nature will help you ground your energy and be more present to the other. Gemini, you're also being asked to watch your triggers, which are likely to resurface.

Tip: Be patient with yourself and the other.

CANCER: If you're feeling the feels for somebody, you've only got the stars to blame. Don't wait for them to make a move, Cancer. Take things in your hand. What you need to keep in mind before you take the first step: they may or may not be in the space for a committed relationship. Stay in the present.

Tip: Get ready to experience that first rush of love.

LEO: It takes two people to make or break a relationship. This is the moment of truth, Leo. Moving past your current set of challenges will help you realise how invested you are in growing collectively and as individuals. Trust that you have the resources required to build a safe and secure future

together. For some, this day could herald a turning point in their finances.

Tip: You have the resources required to build a stable future together.

VIRGO: The insecurities that were lying dormant are likely to come to the fore. But don't let denial become your preferred choice of drug. Facing your fears is the secret to transforming them for the better. Remember, a lot of the paranoia you are facing could be a by-product of overthinking. An Albus Dumbledore quote to put a smile where it belongs:

Tip: Face your fears.

LIBRA: Luck favours those who favour themselves, Libra. A change is coming, and what you make of it is entirely in your hands. Work with the Universe to create your best life. The clearer your intentions are, the easier it will be to manifest them.

Tip: Create the change you want to see in your life.

SCORPIO: While some of you are feeling a spark with a certain someone, others are thinking about taking your relationship to

the next step. An air of positivity surrounds you, indicating that everything is happening according to the divine plan. Don't be afraid to let your true desires be known, Scorpio. What you will discover: they're just as invested as you are. Remember, it's not just about love letters and stolen kisses.

Tip: Ready for the adventure of a lifetime?

SAGITTARIUS: Ready to be courted the right way? Expect nothing less than chocolates and flowers, Sagittarius. Allow yourself to receive what the Universe is offering you at this moment. Your commitment-phobic side is likely to kick in, especially if you're not as invested as them.

Tip: Allow yourself to be wooed.

CAPRICORN: We all need a companion, Capricorn. Someone who's willing to stand by us through thick and thin and share our burdens. If you feel like you're doing everything by yourself, don't be afraid to reach out for help. For some, today will bring with itself the realisation that their past baggage is the reason they're not able to move on. What can you do to move physically move

the pain out of your body? Seek a physical outlet, wild one.

Tip: Release the burden that's been weighing you down.

AQUARIUS: Look at you moving past the challenges and redefining couple goals. Nothing can stand in your way when you're this invested in making things work. Continue to be a source of strength, courage and inspiration for each other. For some of you, the troubles may be more external than internal. You do you, Aquarius. Don't let the world tell you who you should or shouldn't love.

Tip: Redefine couple goals.

PISCES: The inner world is where the magic is at, Pisces. You're more in tune with your spiritual and intuitive side than you've been in a long time. Continue to be a conduit of ancient wisdom. Be cognisant of what's coming to and through you. The messages you channel now could illuminate the path for those around you. The only trouble is, your need for solitude could be posing as a challenge in your relationships.

Tip: The guidance you channel could illuminate the path for others.