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# Summit TIMES

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## No alliance for Sikkim's future and supporters' aspirations: SKM

### SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 16 MAR:

Sikkim Krantikari Morcha today said that the party has decided to fight the 2019 elections on its own in keeping with the aspirations of the supporters, the people of Sikkim and for the security of the State's future.

SKM spokesperson, Jacob Khaling, while addressing a press conference today said that the party had been in talks with Bharatiya Janata Party for pre-poll alliance and had received positive response. He further expressed hopes of continued support from BJP in the future.

A week back, BJP's national general secretary and northeast in charge, Ram Madhav had announced the alliance with SKM which was confirmed by the party on 14 Mar. However, on Friday SKM announced that there would be no alliance.

As for the common minimum programme that SKM was proposing as a pre-condition for the alliance, Mr Khaling said that it would be taken up as demands once a government was formed at the centre.

He informed that the decision to go it alone was taken during the party's CEC meeting held on Friday.

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## Chamling begins SDF campaign with car rally to Namchi



SAGAR CHHETRI  
GANGTOK, 16 MAR:

Sikkim Democratic Front president and Chief Minister, Pawan Chamling formally launched the party's 2019 election campaign today with a car rally from Lal Bazaar in the capital to Namchi in South Sikkim. Travelling in a Savari taxi, the CM in-

teracted with people along the way halting at several spots. Also in the taxi with him, was his daughter, Komal Chamling.

At Lal Bazaar, Mr Chamling was given a warm welcome with slogans, placards, party flags and showering of flowers in front of Denzong Cinema Hall.

Addressing the gathering, he said that in order to further develop the State, party workers will visit every house to discuss and prepare programmes and agendas for the State, which will be implemented within 100 days of the formation of the new government.

This election SDF will be fighting to save Sikkim and not just form the government, said Mr Chamling. He urged people to take this election seriously to maintain and give continuity to the people's rule in the State.

On the opposition he alleged that SKM has sold the party. If Sikkim is under such a party then it will sell the State and destroy the future of the



people of Sikkim.

After his address, the SDF party president started the car rally from Lal Bazaar covering Ranipool, Singtam, Rangpo, Mamring, Namthang, Bhanyang finally ending at Namchi. He was accompanied by a huge number of party supporters, especially the youth.

## SIs and MVIs empowered to seize govt vehicles for election duty

### SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 16 MAR:

The State Transport Committee today empowered police officers above the rank of Sub-Inspectors and Motor Vehicle Inspectors to seize government vehicles for election duty.

An Order issued by the Chairperson, State Transport Committee, SD Dhakal, today, informs that his office has come to learn that many government departments have not surrendered their government vehicles for the purpose of General Election 2019.

Given this situation, the STC has invoked powers conferred to it by the Representation of Peoples Act empowering officers to seize government vehicles "which ever are playing on the public roads."

In case of disobedience of the order, the concerned officers/ drivers will be dealt the provisions of Central Motor Vehicles Act and clauses of the RP Act.

Only vehicles used by Secretaries, Heads of Departments, PCEs and equivalent have been exempted.

## EC bars parties from releasing manifestos in last 48 hours before polling

New Delhi, Mar 16 (PTI):

The Election Commission Saturday barred political parties from releasing election manifestos in the last 48 hours before polling. The commission has now made the release of election manifestos a part of the Model Code of Conduct (MCC), which is a set of rules to be followed by parties after elections are announced.

The amended model code now states, "In case of single phase election, manifesto shall not be re-

leased during the prohibitory period, as prescribed under Section 126 of the Representation of the People Act 1951.

"In case of multi-phase elections, manifesto shall not be released during the prohibitory periods, as prescribed under Section 126 of the RP Act of all the phases of those elections."

Section 126 of the act embodies "election silence", which prohibits any form of election campaign in the last 48 hours leading up to voting.

## Chamling arrives in Namchi, announces SDF's campaign pitch



BIKASH CHETTRI

NAMCHI, 16 MAR:

Sikkim Democratic Front party president, Chief Minister Pawan Chamling, was accorded a grand welcome here today by party supporters as he pulled in to complete the first day of SDF's election campaign.

Mr Chamling, it may be recalled, kicked off the party's official election campaign from Gangtok this morning and drove to Namchi, making campaign stops at several places along the way.

Party supporters had gathered in strong numbers at Rangpo, where he

was received by supporters from Namthang-Rat-eypani constituency and then at Bhanyang.

Addressing the gathering at Bhanyang, Mr Chamling pitched the party's rallying call for the upcoming elections - saving Sikkim from those so filled with bitterness that they will ruin all that has been achieved for the State in the past 25 years.

The SDF Government, he stressed, has provided the people with pride, security and peace, all of which would be imperilled if "forces" inimical to people's interest were al-

lowed to distract the people from the real issues of continuity, stability and sustained development.

He also announced that the party will be reaching out through a door-to-door campaign to understand the people's pending demands, aspirations and requirements.

In this regard, he called on party workers to visit at least ten homes every day and thus cover all the houses of Sikkim before voting day.

He himself ten homes around Central Park here today and conferred with the families.

## Masood Azhar is "proven threat", why would China give him "terror pass"? WSJ

YOSHITA SINGH

NEW YORK, MAR 16

(PTI): A leading US

daily has questioned China's blocking of another move at the UN to designate Masood Azhar as a "global terrorist", stating that Pakistan-based terror group Jaish-e-Mohammed's chief is a "proven threat" and Beijing is "loath to upset" its "all-weather" friendship with Islamabad.

The Editorial Board of the Wall Street Journal, in an editorial piece titled "China Shields a Jihadist - Beijing blocks a UN attempt to sanction the Kashmir killer", said without meaningful global action against jihadist enclaves in Pakistan, India may

"understandably conclude it has few options other than a military escalation."

The editorial comes after China for the fourth time blocked a bid in the United Nations (UN) Security Council to designate Azhar as a "global terrorist" by putting a technical hold on the proposal on Wednesday, a move India termed as disappointing.

The proposal to designate Azhar under the 1267 al Qaeda Sanctions Committee of the UN Security Council was moved by France, the UK and the US on February 27, days after the Pulwama terror attack which killed forty Indian soldiers.

"Azhar is a proven threat. Why would China

give him a terror pass?" the Editorial Board asked.

"Beijing is loath to upset what it calls its 'all-weather' friendship with Pakistan, and one reason is strategic. The US cut military aid to Islamabad last year after President (Donald) Trump cited its support of terrorists in Afghanistan, and China wants to fill the gap," it said.

The editorial noted that tensions had de-escalated between India and Pakistan after the February 14 terror attack by Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM) in Kashmir's Pulwama district which killed 40 Central Reserve Police Force personnel.

In the days since (Pulwama attack), "the global

focus now shifts to rooting out terrorists in Pakistan, but China is already easing international pressure on Islamabad to do so," the editorial said.

It said the proposal moved in the UN Security Council's Sanctions Committee against Azhar in the last 10 years would have subjected the JeM chief to a travel ban, an assets freeze and an arms embargo.

A UN blacklisting would pressure Pakistan to comply, the Editorial Board said, adding that the US State Department concluded in 2017 that Islamabad failed to stop the JeM from "openly raising money, recruiting and training" in the country.

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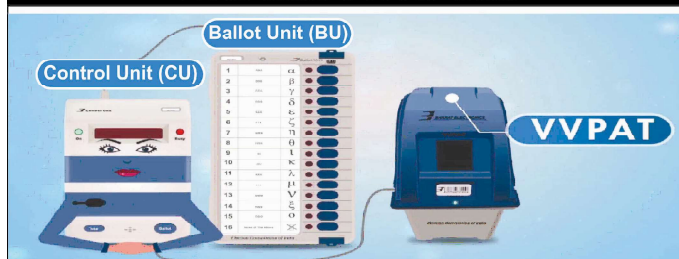
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FAQ

## EVM with VVPAT Unit



## Q5. Who has designed the EVMs?

**Ans.** The EVMs have been devised and designed by the Technical Experts Committee (TEC) of the Election Commission in collaboration with two Public Sector undertakings Viz., Bharat Electronics Ltd. Bangalore and Electronic Corporation of India Ltd., Hyderabad. The EVMs are manufactured by the above two undertakings

## Q6. What is Voter Verifiable Paper Audit Trail (VVPAT)?

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## Change Maker award to Dr. Achyuta Samanta

### SUMMIT REPORT

**NEW DELHI, 16 MAR:** Founder, KITT and KISS, Dr Achyuta Samanta, has been conferred the BusinessLine Changemaker Awards 2019 instituted by The Hindu BusinessLine, a business daily published by The Hindu Group.

Dr Samanta received the award from Dr Manmohan Singh, former Prime Minister of India, at a function held in New Delhi on 15 Mar, 2019.

The award focuses on recognizing and celebrating people and organisations, who through their ideas and actions, have brought about positive change in our society.

Dr Samanta received the award as a change maker for social transformation because of his relentless efforts at improving



the condition of the society and indigenous communities and his years of dedication in reducing the number of people living in hunger,

poverty, illiteracy and unemployment.

Among 600 nominations, he made it to the award through selection by an eminent independent jury af-

ter an elaborate process that began with the seeking of nominations, rigorous process of scrutinizing and short listing them based on select param-

eters, and finally, jury selection.

The Changemaker Awards from BusinessLine have been recognised by industry leaders as the most credible award with an extremely rigorous and independent selection process.

Expressing his pleasure over getting the award, Dr Samanta said, "I accept this honor with a profound sense of gratitude on behalf of all our stakeholders. This recognition has further enthused us to rededicate ourselves in the service of children, the torchbearers of tomorrow. It first started with transformation of my own life and surroundings followed by transforming lives of the deprived, downtrodden and destitute" added Dr Samanta on receiving the award.

## Second round of training for Presiding and Polling Officers concludes



**GYALSHING, 16 MAR (IPR):** The sixth and final day of the second round of training for the final batch of Presiding and Polling Officers-I was successfully conducted at the Conference Hall, Zilla Panchayat Bhanu, Gyalshing, and

Conference Hall, SDM Office Soreng simultaneously.

The Master trainers for the training in Gyalshing were SDM (HQ), Tushar G Nihare, DE Power, KSC Tongden and Senior Welfare Officer,

Santosh Alley.

Similarly, for Soreng, the Master Trainers were SDM Soreng, Himmat Rai and DCSO (West), Dillip Sharma.

A total of 97 trainees were present at Gyalshing while at Soreng there were 36 trainees.

## 14163 new voters in South district



**NAMCHI, 16 MAR (IPR):**

Some significant facts outlining the overall scenario with regards to General Elections 2019 to Lok Sabha and Legislative Assembly in Sikkim, the particular details of South District is that there are a total of eight Assembly Constituencies namely: Barfung, Poklok - Kamrang, Namchi - Singhithang, Melli, Namthang - Rateypani, Temi - Namphing, Rangyang - Yangang, Tumin - Lingi which is located in the South District.

According to the South Election department the total number of voters for male is 58122 and female is 56684 totaling to 114806 as compared to the total number of voters during the General Election in the year 2014 which was 100643. It may be mentioned

here that a cumulative number of 53 polling stations has been identified as critical in the district.

The District Election Officer (DEO), South, Ragul K informed about the activities and development for the ensuing General Elections and said that the Notice of Election will be issued on 18 Mar, 2019. He informed that the nomination papers are to be delivered by a candidate or his proposer to the office of the DEO at District Administrative Centre, Namchi at the given stipulated time and date. He also added that the candidates are to submit Affidavit, Form 26, Oath of Affirmation, SC/ST Certificate in case of candidates belonging to the SC/ST category, certified copy of Electoral Roll (ER) and passport

sized photos for printing

photos in ballot paper.

Further the DEO stated that the candidate is required to open one separate Bank Account in his name or jointly with his election agent before filing nominations and this account number has to be intimated in writing to the DEOs Office while filing nomination.

The candidate is required to make a security deposit of Rs 10,000 only in cash or in the form of TDR for contesting in an Assembly Constituency. A candidate belonging to SC/ST category is required to make a security deposit of only half the amount mentioned above. Moreover, he informed that sample forms are being distributed and the same can be collected from DAC, South.

## ICAR-KVK organizes Scientific Advisory Committee meeting



**GANGTOK, 16 MAR (PIB):**

ICAR-Krishi Vigyan Kendra, East Sikkim, Ranipool organized Scientific Advisory Committee Meeting 2018-19 at Conference Hall of KVK East Sikkim, Ranipool on March 15, 2019. The meeting was chaired by the Joint Director, ICAR-NOFRI, Tadong. More than 22 statutory SAC members from different line Departments such as CAEPHT, CAU, Ranipool; PS&ADD, SAMETI, ATMA, Department of AH, LF&VS, Govt. of Sikkim, NABARD, Gangtok, SIMFED, Sr Scientist & Head, KVK North Sikkim and West Sikkim and Scientists from ICAR-NOFRI attended the meeting.

Chairperson of the programme, Dr RK Avasthe, Joint Director, ICAR-NOFRI welcomed all the members of SAC from different line departments. In his welcome address he stressed upon reducing the gap between the research organization, developing new technology and its implementation in the farmers field.

He urged the scientific community to disseminate the successful technology must be assessed at farmers field

to suit the requirements at the different altitudes. He stressed on enhancing cropping intensity through crop diversification, evaluation of available soil moisture conservation measures for climate resilience, assessment of heavy metal and other residues in ginger and turmeric and production of value added products of buckwheat and mushroom.

He also urged the scientists for strengthening the organic seed chain, expansion of kiwifruit in the higher altitudes of East Sikkim and registration of farmer varieties of few selected crops under PPV&FR Act, 2001.

The Sr. Scientist & Head (I/c), Krishi Vigyan Kendra, Dr. Raghavendra Singh presented the Action Taken Report of the previous SAC meeting held in 2018. The Progress Report of 2018-19 and Action Plan for 2019-20 were presented individually by respective Subject Matter Specialists of KVK, East Sikkim.

Dean, Dr PP Dabral, CAEPHT, CAU, Ranipool offered to collaborate for implementation of farm mechanization and improved agricultural

tools. General Manager, R Tshering, NABARD explained about their funding patterns for implementation of different agricultural activities in farmers field, exposure visits, training of farmers etc. She also stated that the NABARD finances action oriented research projects submitted by research organizations, university as well as KVK.

All the members gave constructive suggestions for the development and livelihood security for the farming community in the state. Progressive farmer members from different villages of East Sikkim appreciated the efforts of ICAR and KVK, East Sikkim for their enduring efforts for the farming community of the state.

The Chairperson of the committee appreciated the work done by the KVK, East Sikkim and called for more close linkages with the line departments to reach the farmers' doorstep. In his closing remarks, he strongly advocated upon organic seed production to meet the seed requirement of the state. The meeting ended by offering vote of thanks by Dr PK Pathak, SMS, Animal Science.

## Pak high commissioner offers prayers at Ajmer Sharif

**NEW DELHI, MAR 16 (PTI):**

Pakistan High Commissioner to India Sohail Mahmood offered prayers at the Ajmer Sharif Dargah in Rajasthan on Saturday, where the 807th Urs festival is currently underway.

The Urs is an annual festival held at the dargah to commemorate the death anniversary of Sufi saint Moinuddin Chishti.

Mahmood presented the traditional chadar on behalf of the people and the Pakistan government, a statement by the Pakistan High Commission said.

The high commissioner said Sufi saints like Khwaja Ghareeb Nawaz, Hazrat Baba Farid and Nizamuddin Auliya formed an immutable and eternal bond between the peoples

of Pakistan and India, the statement said.

Mahmood expressed the hope that the message and illustrious example of these Sufi saints would continue to serve as a guiding light in tackling present-day challenges and also help the two countries develop a relationship based on better mutual understanding, it added.

## Training for Micro Observers

**GANGTOK, 16 MAR (IPR):**

In preparation for General Elections 2019, a training programme for Micro Observers appointed for the elections was conducted by the Assistant Collector, Rohan Agawane at the Conference Hall of the District Collectorate, East today.

Conducted in 2 batches with around 50 trainees, the training was conducted to equip them with their roles and responsibilities during the election process under the guidelines of the Election Commission of India.

Mr Agawane briefed the Micro Observers appointed for East District on their job profiles, election process and guidelines, instructions, polling materials like EVM, Electoral Rolls etc.

During the training session, the Micro Observers were given handouts of instructions and guidelines and familiarized with the election process through videos and Power Point Presentations.

They were also imparted with hands-on training for the EVMs and VVPATS.

Further, the District Election Officer/East has informed that all preparations have been made for the Nomination Filing period starting from Monday. Adequate security arrangements are being made by District Police as per the instructions. All requirements for filing nominations have been notified at District Administrative Centre notice board and forms are made available at the chamber of Sub

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## Training cum Demonstration on Mustard Harvesting



**SUMMIT REPORT**

**GANGTOK, 16 MAR:**

Mevedir in collaboration with KVK organized a ward level training, on 13 Mar, 2019. The training program was conducted at 8th mile Budang ward under Budang Malbasey GPU in the presence of JP Dula from KVK, Kavita Thapa (VLW) and Purna Bdr Chettri (FA) along with Mevedir Master Trainer, Binata Tamang and Menuka Tamang, a press release informs.

In the first session, JP Dula from KVK briefed about the harvesting of mustard cultivation.

In the next session, he also distributed the plastic called "Grainpro" to the fifteen progressive farmers. He informed that this plastic costs Rs. 400 and stated that it would help the grains to retain freshness for a longer duration. It also helps to reduce food losses and improve food quality by protecting agricultural commodities against

insect infestation, mold growth, oxidation and rancidity.

Before concluding, Binata Tamang (Mevedir staff) informed farmers about the newly opened Organic Input Store at Jorethang & Gyalshing where farmers can buy organic on-farm and off-farm inputs like vermicompost, bio pesticides etc.

More than twenty-five farmers attended this training cum demonstration program, the release adds.

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## Masood Azhar is "proven threat..."

But Beijing put a hold on the proposal saying they "still need more time" to consider the matter, according to Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Lu Kang.

The editorial noted that the international community should not "expect a change" in this stance given that Beijing has blocked Security Council action against Azhar in 2016 and 2017.

Lu suggested that UN sanctions against Azhar could endanger the region's stability, "but the opposite is true", the write-up noted.

"Without meaningful global action against jihadist enclaves in Pakistan, New Delhi may understandably conclude it has few options other than a military escalation," it added.

The editorial cited the American Enterprise Institute's China Global Investment Tracker, saying China has poured nearly USD 32 billion into Pakistani infrastructure through Beijing's Belt and Road Initiative. From 2008-2017, Pakistan imported USD 6 billion in weapons from China, according to the Center for Strategic and International Studies, making it Beijing's biggest arms customer in Asia.

The editorial also noted that China was "shielding" Azhar even as it uses the threat of terror to sanction its own citizens - the Chinese Uighur Muslims.

It said in its northwestern Xinjiang province, more than one million Chinese Uighur Muslims have been detained in "re-education" centers under the guise of preventing extremism.

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## INTACH-Sikkim organises All India Essay and Painting Competition

**SUMMIT REPORT**  
GANGTOK, 16 MAR:

INTACH - (Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage) - Sikkim Chapter organised All India Essay and Painting Competition in the auditorium of Modern Senior Secondary School, Gangtok today, a press release informs.

The Subject of the Competition was 'My Water Heritage'. The competition had 80 participants between Classes 6 to 9 from 10 Government Senior Secondary Schools and 8 Private Schools situated in and around Gangtok.

The programme had the presence of Convenor,



PK Dong, Sikkim Chapter, Co Convenor-Sikkim, SK Sarda, Rotarian Bina Sharma, Nikhila Bengani, Pramila Sharma, Manisha Tamang, Thamzey Doma, Primula Tamang, Binay Rai and Sandeep Pradhan.

The Essays and Paintings of all 80 students are being forwarded to INTACH, Headquarters at New Delhi to compete their work on All India basis leading to recognition of their work done in

just 2 hours.

INTACH's mission is to conserve heritage and is based on the belief that living in harmony with heritage enhances the quality of life, the release adds.

## KL Chishi is Congress' candidate for Nagaland LS seat

**KOHIMA, MAR 16 (PTI):** The Congress Saturday announced that former chief minister K L Chishi would be its candidate for Nagaland's lone Lok Sabha seat.

Chishi, who served briefly as chief minister of Nagaland in 1990, had quit the Congress to join the BJP.

Chishi contested the 2018 state elections unsuccessfully as BJP candidate from Aizawl A/C under Zunheboto district.

Chishi returned to the Congress' fold recently and said, I have rejoined Congress since my heart and spirit could never be separated from the party that has been the true epitome of secularism and upholding the sanc-



tity of the Indian Constitution".

The Congress also announced that Alemjongshi Longkumer, a former state bureaucrat, would contest the byelection from the 26-Aonglenden Assembly constituency seat in Nagaland.

Announcing the can-

didates for both the elections, Nagaland Pradesh Congress Committee General Secretary G K Zhimomi said that their candidature was approved by the Central Election Committee of the All India Congress Committee.

The announcement was made late last night, he said. Zhimomi said that the ticket distribution would be held on Wednesday in Dimapur.

The only opposition in the state Assembly Naga Peoples Front - is yet to declare its candidates for the two elections but has informed that party tickets would be distributed along with tickets for Manipur Lok Sabha seats on Tuesday

in Kohima.

The ruling People's Democratic Alliance has distributed tickets for both the elections to sitting BJP-Nationalist Democratic Progressive Alliance (NDPP) MP Tokheho Yephthomi for the parliamentary seat and Shiraingain Longkumer for the Assembly seat.

Independent candidate O Tinjungshi Longkumer, brother of late Imtikumzuk Longkumer, who was the NDPP legislator of Assembly segment, has also declared to contest the bypoll as Independent candidate.

Nominations for both the seats will open and conclude on March 18 while the poll will be held on April 11.

## AGP workers clash with protesters in Assam



**GUWAHATI, MAR 16 (PTI):** A scuffle broke out Saturday between Asom Gana Parishad (AGP) workers and protesters belonging to various outfits over the party's alliance with the BJP for the upcoming general elections, police said.

A few people escaped with minor injuries in the incident that happened in front of the AGP headquarters at Ambari, they said.

Several people, who claimed were ordinary citizens, had gathered in front of the AGP office on Saturday. When a group of AGP workers came out of the party office to disperse them, a scuffle followed in which a few women protesters received minor injuries.

Security forces, however, quickly brought the situation under control.

Protests against the AGP entering into fresh alliance with the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has evoked widespread resentment among people, including a section of the AGP's leaders and members, who are opposed to the alliance.

Party members had locked the AGP office in Jorhat on Friday as protests raged on in various districts across Assam.

Former Chief Minister and AGP's founding president Prafulla Kumar Mahanta has opposed the alliance with the BJP over the citizenship bill issue.

The decision to realign with the BJP was made

by a handful of leaders of which he was not a part, Mahanta had claimed.

Mahanta had also said that the saffron party intends to bring in the Citizenship Amendment Bill if they return to power after the polls.

The AGP had snapped ties with the BJP in January this year with three of its ministers tendering their resignation when Union Home Minister Rajnath Singh made it clear that the citizenship bill will be passed in Lok Sabha.

The Bill was, however, not tabled in the Rajya Sabha.

A protester in front of the party headquarters said that people from all over the state belonging to several movement

groups are opposing the AGP-BJP ties.

"The AGP had earlier cleared their stand over the contentious Bill and snapped ties with BJP but the recent development is quite confusing," he said.

Another woman protester alleged that the AGP leaders have betrayed the party by taking such a decision for personal gains.

The AGP and BJP sealed their alliance again on March 12 with the three ministers from AGP - Atul Bora, Keshab Mahanta and Phanibhusan Choudhury - resuming their duties the next day. Lok Sabha polls in Assam will be held in three phases on April 11, 18 and 23 in 14 Parliamentary constituencies.

## Identifying Ethiopia crash victims may take 6 months: airline

**ADDIS ABABA, MAR 16 (AFP):** Identifying the remains of the 157 people killed in an Ethiopian Airlines plane crash may take up to six months, the airline said in a document on Saturday.

Ethiopian Airlines Flight 302 plummeted into a field minutes after taking off from Addis Ababa bound for Nairobi last Sunday, killing all on board. The disaster led to the worldwide grounding of the Boeing 737 MAX 8 aircraft, the plane that crashed.

Witnesses said the plane nose-dived into remote farmland south-east of the Ethiopian capital, reducing the plane to small pieces of debris buried deep in the earth. People of 35 nationalities were killed in the crash.

In a document dis-

tributed by the airline to family members who lost loved ones in the crash, Ethiopian Airlines laid out a timetable for the return of victims' belongings and the distribution of death certificates.

"DNA result will be announced approximately between 5 to 6 months from the date the sample is collected," read the document. Relatives of the victims could submit DNA samples in Addis Ababa or at Ethiopian Airlines offices worldwide, it added.

The document was shared with AFP by a relative of a victim, who asked not to be named.

The person said that under the victim's Jewish faith, no funeral could be held until his remains were returned, and the six-month delay was stressing

the victim's family.

"They are in immense pressure and remorse as it is, without waiting half a year," the relative said.

The crash of Ethiopian Airlines Flight 302 was the second deadly incidence for the 737 MAX 8 following the October crash of an Indonesian Lion Air jet that killed all 189 passengers and crew.

The Boeing 737 MAX 8 is a brand-new jet. The crash of two of them in the space of just a few months, coupled with similarities in the circumstances, led countries and airlines around the world to ground the plane.

The Ethiopian plane's voice and flight data recorders are in Paris, where French, Ethiopian and American investigators will try to determine what went wrong.

## Pak Army claims to shoot down 'spying' Indian quadcopter along LoC

**SAJJAD HUSSAIN ISLAMABAD, MAR 16 (PTI):** Pakistan Army on Saturday claimed that it shot down a "spying" Indian quadcopter along the Line of Control.

Army spokesman Major General Asif Ghafoor claimed that the quadcopter had intruded some 150 metres inside Pakistan side of the LoC.

"Pakistan Army troops shot down an Indian spying quadcopter in Rakhchikri Sector along Line of Control. The quadcopter had come 150 meters inside Pakistan, he tweeted.

The report came amidst heightened tensions between India and Pakistan following the Pulwama terror attack by a suicide bomber of Pakistan-based Jaish-e-Mohammed on February 14.

Amid mounting outrage in India over the Pulwama terror attack, the Indian Air Force carried out a counter-terror operation, hitting the biggest JeM training camp in Balakot, deep inside Pakistan on February 26.

The next day, Pakistan Air Force retaliated and downed a MiG-21 in an aerial combat and captured Indian pilot, who was handed over to India on March 1.

On March 4, a fighter jet of the Indian Air Force shot down a Pakistani military drone in Bikaner sector of the Indo-Pak border using an air-to-air missile. Another Pakistani drone was shot down by India on February 27 along Indo-Pak border in Kutch in Gujarat.

**MCC IS IN EFFECT**

**WHAT IS MODEL CODE OF CONDUCT?**

Model Code of Conduct is a set of guidelines issued by the Election Commission of India for the conduct of political parties and candidates during elections. The Model Code of Conduct comes into force immediately with the announcement of the election schedule by the Commission for ensuring free and fair elections.

Visit the website: [eci.gov.in](http://eci.gov.in)

## Seer urges SC to replace Ravi Shankar from mediation panel

**MATHURA (UP), MAR 16 (PTI):** Spiritual leader Adhokshajananand Deo Tirtha Maharaj on Saturday called for replacing Sri Ravi Shankar from the panel formed by the Supreme Court to mediate the Ram Janmabhoomi-Babri Masjid land dispute.

"While I appreciate the gesture of the apex court for finding out an amicable settlement by forming a mediation panel, I urge them to replace Sri Ravi Shankar since he had earlier failed in his mission of a compromise formula. And, therefore, he might not be taken seriously by both the sides," Maharaj told reporters here.

The seer clarified

that he did not have any grudge against Ravi Shankar. However, he added, since Ravi Shankar's compromise formula was not acceptable to both the groups, an eminent person, who has patience, might bring fruitful result.

The Supreme Court had on March 8 referred the decades-old politically-sensitive Ayodhya land dispute case for mediation by a panel headed by former apex court judge F M I Kalifulla for exploring the possibility of an amicable settlement.

Spiritual guru and founder of Art of Living foundation Sri Ravi Shankar and senior advocate Sriram Panchu, a re-

nowned mediator, will be the other two members of the panel of mediators.

"Modi should have brought a bill for the construction of a Ram temple because people had given a huge mandate in Uttar Pradesh and at the Centre. The atmosphere was also conducive, but now... the time has passed," the seer said. "Now, the only course left is to get redressal from the top court that would deliver its judgment on the basis of facts and discretion."

Referring to the mediation process, the shankaracharya said the top court had tried to retain the harmony between both the groups.

## PAYING GUEST AVAILABLE

PG available for working women & girls at EPCS Church premises, near Primula Lodge at Churuch Road, Gangtok, Sikkim. Contact: Mob: 9064804782/ Whatsapp No: 9641549764.

## KUTSE SHEGU

The 21 day Shegu of Lt. Sachin Tamang who left for heavenly abode on 25th February 2019 falls on 17th March 2019 (Sunday).

All relatives, family, friends and well wishers are requested to join us in offering prayers for the departed soul at our residence Barbotey, Tamang Gaon, Soreng, West Sikkim. We also express our sincere gratitude to all those who stood by us during our time of bereavement.



**Mrs. Binu Subba (wife) 9647892791**  
**Ms. Jaikala Tamang, Ms. Sujata Tamang, Ms. Sweta Tamang (sisters)**  
**Mr. Rajen Tamang (brother)**  
**6297875142, 9734142686,**  
**8670576733, 9593388722**

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No: 31/SPSC/EXAM/2019

Date: 14/03/2019

## EMPLOYMENT NOTICE

Online Applications are invited from the eligible local candidates for filling up of the following posts through direct recruitment:

1. Filing up of 01(one) post of Digital Project Analyst and 01(one) post of Software Developer under Information & Public Relations Department, Government of Sikkim.

2. Filling up of 20 (twenty) posts of Multi-Purpose Health Worker (male) under Sikkim State Subordinate Allied and Healthcare Service, Human Services and Family Welfare Department, Government of Sikkim.

The candidates are advised to visit the Sikkim Public Service Commission website for details of Advertisement and date of written examination, eligibility conditions, and Scheme of Examination etc. from official Website i.e. [www.spsckm.gov.in](http://www.spsckm.gov.in). Any further instructions /Corrigendum/ Addendum would be uploaded only on Sikkim Public Service Commission website.

Sd/-  
(Bimla Rai. Smt)  
Controller of Examinations,  
Sikkim Public Service Commission.

R.O. No. 781/IPR/Pub/Classi./18-19 Date. 16.3.19

# SummitTIMES

Audit Uncovers, but who cares?

**The Legislature should leverage CAG Reports to make the Executive more accountable**

The Report of the Comptroller and Auditor General of India is tabled every year, and even though the scale of misappropriations and irregularities recorded in this document vary from year to year, it always makes for some interesting reading. The auditors do a remarkable job of combing through accounts and projects of the State Government and put out impressively professional records every year. Of course, a lot of the findings are embarrassing and the occasional one is shocking, but this is clearly an undertaking which is aimed to deliver much more than just entertainment. The Report is the culmination of a yearlong exercise of auditors trawling records and crosschecking claims through site-visits and following up paper trails. What does this achieve in the end? A tabling on the last day of an Assembly session and only the rare, if ever, discussion in the Assembly. There might an occasional report in newspapers of the more "interesting" findings, but that's about it. This is not the fate originally envisaged for these documents. In fact, the CAG Reports would have served their purpose if they delivered shock-therapy to restart the system of accountability within government departments.

Readers, the few who might have read reports drawn from the CAG Report in this newspaper, would have wondered why such shocking episodes - like government departments spending nearly 12% of the State's entire annual budget on the last day of the financial year - do not cause even embarrassed blushes, leave aside suspensions or show-cause notices which even attending picnics can sometimes attract in Sikkim? Well, simply put, because nothing really comes of these audit reports.

There is something known as the Public Accounts Committee made up of MLAs whose job it is to study the CAG Report, deliberate on the deficiencies and irregularities flagged in it, and, acting on the advice of the Accountant General, hold hearing, summon officials and recommend action after fixing responsibility. It does not help that Sikkim does not elect enough MLAs to the Opposition bench in the State because the PAC then ends up being staffed with Treasury bench legislators. It would be a bit too much to expect this committee to come down too heavily on its own government's slip-ups so departments tend to get away with a light rap on the knuckles at worst. Also, like the courts of the country, the PAC too is wading through a huge backlog. The most recent PAC recommendations, it appears, are for CAG findings from the year 2009-10. The immediacy highlighted in the CAG Reports gets dulled because of such delay and corrective measures can even become obsolete if they arrive so late. The Legislative arm of government should step up its game because by doing so, it will wrest back the essence of its watchdog role. The PAC reports and recommendations, after all, are the principal medium by which the Legislature enforces financial accountability of the Executives.

The Finance Department has issued standing orders to all departments to furnish explanatory notes on the paragraphs and performance audits within one month of the issue of Audit Reports. As of September 2016, explanatory notes had not been submitted for 94% of the cases reported for 2014-15. For 2013-14, 92% of the explanatory notes were awaited. And this delay despite Departmental Audit and Accounts Committees, headed by the respective Heads of Departments, having been in place since November 2010. Their specific job was to "monitor the response and corrective action on findings reported in the IRs issued by the Accountant General (audit)". What are IRs? Initial audit observations are usually communicated to the Departments through what are known as Inspection Reports (IRs) with only the more serious irregularities getting included in the CAG Report. There is also a State Audit and Accounts Committee to oversee the working of the DAAC. Neither appears to be doing anything remotely effective towards establishing fiscal prudence or accountability, which is why it is important for the PAC to crack the whip harder because even when it makes specific recommendations, as recorded in the latest CAG Report, the recommendations are at best "partially implemented/ complied with". Left to the CAG office alone, and the embarrassment runs off the back of government departments like water off the proverbial duck.

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

Mail us at: [news@summittimes.com](mailto:news@summittimes.com)

# Automated control system caused Ethiopia crash, flight data suggests

TIMOTHY TAKAHASHI  
theconversation.com

Emerging evidence from the recent crash in Ethiopia suggests that malfunctioning automatic control systems overwhelmed the crew and doomed the flight. Based on my analysis, it appears that the Ethiopian Airlines crew followed the standard procedures found in the Boeing 737 pilots operating handbook and flight crew operations manual.

A typical flight starts with manual control of the plane. The pilot and co-pilot will personally steer the aircraft onto the taxiway, configure the flaps for takeoff, actively control the aircraft as it accelerates down the runway, and smoothly pull back on the control yoke to lift the plane off the ground and into flight. The flight's altitude and speed data, transmitted from the plane in real time and made available to the public by FlightRadar24.com, shows that happened normally as Ethiopian Airlines Flight 302 left the runway.

Everything appears to have gone as usual on the initial climb away from the takeoff, too. Normally, the pilot will retract the landing gear and maintain a relatively steady speed as the aircraft climbs. The plane might accelerate slightly until it's going fast enough that the flaps - extended to increase lift at lower speeds - can be safely retracted, letting the wings themselves generate the necessary lift. This process usually takes place in the first minute after takeoff. Once the aircraft has climbed to 1,000 feet above the ground, the pilot will engage the autopilot system.

That's the point at which the computer takes over - and where, my analysis of the data suggests, things went wrong for Ethiopian Airlines Flight 302. A modern autopilot system gives the computer command of the engine throttles, rudder, elevators and ailerons - basically full control over the aircraft.

## SIMULATING THE EXPECTED FLIGHT

Using modeling tools developed by my research team, I recreated a



hypothetical flight profile to simulate the Ethiopian Airlines 737 departure based on the handbook procedure for an identical plane carrying a similar amount of weight. The simulation timing, key speeds and altitudes all follow my best estimate of the procedure that a trained pilot would be expected to follow.

Comparing this data to the actual flight data, I was able to see where the ideal predicted performance differs from the actual motions of the lost flight. My simulation closely matches the actual speeds of the aircraft on its takeoff roll, and recreates its first few miles of airborne flight. The pilot let the aircraft accelerate gently during initial climb, which isn't specifically called for or prohibited in the official manual.

The flight paths between a typical flight and the actual course sharply diverge only after the aircraft reached an altitude of 1,000 feet above the runway.

Immediately after flap retraction, the pilot should have engaged the autopilot, leaving the computer to command a climb at constant airspeed. Instead, the ill-fated flight began to dive and accelerate, losing altitude

and gaining speed until it struck the ground a few miles away from the airport.

There are several possible reasons a plane could crash like this. One is that an engine could malfunction. But the telemetry data doesn't indicate the loss of acceleration that an engine failure would cause. Another reason could be that some part of the fuselage, wings or tail broke or collapsed. The data doesn't show the sort of change in speed or climb rate that would result from such a loss of stability.

The crash does not appear to be due to pilot error, either. I've studied pilot over-reactions during developing emergencies, and see no evidence of that before the initial dive; the pilots seem to fly an otherwise typical takeoff. If there was some other mechanical failure, the pilots didn't report it to the control tower. There is no indication that they overreacted or overcompensated to some emergency. The radar track shows no evidence of a condition called "wallowing," characterized by periodic fluctuations in speed and altitude, nor any accidental stall, where airspeed drops sharply before the plane loses altitude.

Therefore, it appears that the

various automatic control systems conspired to prevent the pilots from asserting direct control over the ailerons, elevators and rudder that keep the aircraft aloft and on course.

## HOW LONG ON THE GROUND?

More than 300 Boeing 737 Max aircraft have been flying since 2017, with thousands of safe takeoffs and landings. That suggests the problem for Ethiopian Airlines - and possibly the 2018 Lion Air crash too - is one of the difficult sort of engineering troubles that happen intermittently, or even seemingly randomly, in very complex systems.

Boeing has already said it will update the aircraft's software. Any fixes will have to be checked not only to ensure that they handle whatever the exact problem is that's identified by crash investigators, but also to make sure they don't cause other unexpected errors. That will take its own amount of time. In the meantime, all the Boeing 737 Max aircraft in the world are on the ground, waiting.

[The writer is Professor of Practice for Aerospace Engineering, Arizona State University]

## Here's what happens to your brain when you give up sugar for Lent

JORDAN GAINES LEWIS  
theconversation.com

Anyone who knows me also knows that I have a huge sweet tooth. I always have. My friend and fellow graduate student Andrew is equally afflicted, and living in Hershey, Pennsylvania - the "Chocolate Capital of the World" - doesn't help either of us.

But Andrew is braver than I am. Last year, he gave up sweets for Lent. I can't say that I'm following in his footsteps this year, but if you are abstaining from sweets for Lent this year, here's what you can expect over the next 40 days.

### SUGAR: NATURAL REWARD, UNNATURAL FIX

In neuroscience, food is something we call a "natural reward." In order for us to survive as a species, things like eating, having sex and nurturing others must be pleasurable to the brain so that these behaviours are reinforced and repeated.

Evolution has resulted in the mesolimbic pathway, a brain system that deciphers these natural rewards for us. When we do something pleasurable, a bundle of neurons called the ventral tegmental area uses the neurotransmitter dopamine to signal to a part of the brain called the nucleus accumbens. The connection between the nucleus accumbens and our prefrontal cortex dictates our motor movement, such as deciding whether or not to taking another bite of that delicious chocolate cake. The prefrontal cortex also activates hormones that tell our body: "Hey, this cake is really good. And I'm going to remember that for the future."

Not all foods are equally rewarding, of course. Most of us prefer sweets over sour and bitter foods because, evolutionarily, our mesolimbic pathway reinforces that sweet things provide a healthy source of carbohydrates for our bodies. When our ancestors went scavenging for berries, for example, sour meant "not yet ripe," while bitter meant "alert - poison!"

Fruit is one thing, but modern diets have taken on a life of their own. A decade ago, it was estimated that the average American consumed 22 teaspoons of added sugar per day, amounting to an extra 350 calories; it may well have risen since then. A few months ago, one expert suggested that the average Briton consumes 238 teaspoons of sugar each week.

Times, with convenience more important than ever in our food selections, it's almost impossible to come across processed and prepared foods that don't have added sugars for flavour, preservation, or both.

These added sugars are sneaky - and unbeknownst to many of us, we've become hooked. In ways that drugs of abuse - such as nicotine, cocaine and heroin - hijack the brain's reward pathway and make users dependent, increasing neuro-chemical and behavioural evidence suggests that sugar is addictive in the same way, too.

### SUGAR ADDICTION IS REAL

"The first few days are a little rough," Andrew told me about his sugar-free adventure last year. "It almost feels like you're detoxing from drugs. I found myself eating a lot of carbs to compensate for the lack of sugar."

There are four major components of addiction: bingeing, withdrawal, craving, and cross-sensitisation (the notion that one addictive substance predisposes someone to becoming addicted to another). All of these components have been observed in animal models of addiction - for sugar, as well as drugs of abuse.

A typical experiment goes like this: rats are deprived of food for 12 hours each day, then given 12 hours of access to a sugary solution and regular chow. After a month of following this daily pattern, rats display behaviours similar to those on drugs of abuse. They'll binge on the sugar solution in a short period of time, much more than their regular food. They also show signs of anxiety and depression during the food deprivation period. Many sugar-treated rats who are later exposed to drugs, such as cocaine and opiates, demonstrate dependent behaviours towards the drugs compared to rats who did not consume sugar beforehand.

Like drugs, sugar spikes dopamine release in the nucleus accumbens. Over the long term, regular sugar consumption actually changes the gene expression and availability of dopamine receptors in both the midbrain and frontal cortex. Specifically, sugar increases the concentration of a type of excitatory receptor called D1, but decreases another receptor type called D2, which is inhibitory. Regular sugar consumption also inhibits the action of the dopamine transporter, a protein which pumps dopamine out of the synapse and back into the neuron after firing.

In short, this means that repeated access to sugar over time leads to prolonged dopamine signalling, greater excitation of the brain's reward pathways and a need for even more sugar to activate all of the mid-brain dopamine receptors like before. The brain becomes tolerant to sugar - and more is needed to attain the same "sugar high."

### SUGAR WITHDRAWAL IS ALSO REAL

Although these studies were conducted in rodents, it's not far-fetched to say that the same primitive processes are occurring in the human brain, too. "The cravings never stopped, [but that was] probably psychological," Andrew told me. "But it got easier after the first week or so."

In a 2002 study by Carlo Colantuoni and colleagues of Princeton University, rats who had undergone a typical sugar dependence protocol then underwent "sugar withdrawal." This was facilitated by either food deprivation or treatment with naloxone,

a drug used for treating opiate addiction which binds to receptors in the brain's reward system. Both withdrawal methods led to physical problems, including teeth chattering, paw tremors, and head shaking. Naloxone treatment also appeared to make the rats more anxious, as they spent less time on an elevated apparatus that lacked walls on either side.

Similar withdrawal experiments by others also report behaviour similar to depression in tasks such as the forced swim test. Rats in sugar withdrawal are more likely to show passive behaviours (like floating) than active behaviours (like trying to escape) when placed in water, suggesting feelings of helplessness.

A new study published by Victor Mangabeira and colleagues in this month's *Physiology & Behavior* reports that sugar withdrawal is also linked to impulsive behaviour. Initially, rats were trained to receive water by pushing a lever. After training, the animals returned to their home cages and had access to a sugar solution and water, or just water alone. After 30 days, when rats were again given the opportunity to press a lever for water, those who had become dependent on sugar pressed the lever significantly more times than control animals, suggesting impulsive behaviour.

These are extreme experiments, of course. We humans aren't depriving ourselves of food for 12 hours and then allowing ourselves to binge on soda and doughnuts at the end of the day. But these rodent studies certainly give us insight into the neuro-chemical underpinnings of sugar dependence, withdrawal, and behaviour.

Through decades of diet programmes and best-selling books, we've toyed with the notion of "sugar addiction" for a long time. There are accounts of those in "sugar withdrawal" describing food cravings, which can trigger relapse and impulsive eating. There are also countless articles and books about the boundless energy and new-found happiness in those who have sworn off sugar for good. But despite the ubiquity of sugar in our diets, the notion of sugar addiction is still a rather taboo topic.

Are you still motivated to give up sugar for Lent? You might wonder how long it will take until you're free of cravings and side-effects, but there's no answer - everyone is different and no human studies have been done on this. But after 40 days, it's clear that Andrew had overcome the worst, likely even reversing some of his altered dopamine signalling. "I remember eating my first sweet and thinking it was too sweet," he said. "I had to rebuild my tolerance."

And as regulars of a local bakery in Hershey - I can assure you, readers, that he has done just that.

[The writer is Neuroscience Doctoral Candidate, Pennsylvania State University]

## Visiting the forgotten tomb of the last Mughal Emperor

CK LEPCHA

We recently watched the trailer of Kesari—the story of 21 Sikhs who fought against 10,000 Afghans in 1897. It is highly impressive but a forgotten piece of Indian history that is not taught in schools as we indulged in that age old conversation about how history is told from the eyes of the rulers, the colonizers and the winners hence there is no room for the subjects, the colonized and the losers.

Our visit to Yangon was to unravel a bit of Indian history that has long been forgotten as we made way to the tomb of Bahadur Shah Zafar—the last Mughal emperor of India. After the failed uprising in 1857 popularly known as Sepoy Mutiny, Zafar was charged with 'treason' and exiled to Rangoon where he died four years later ending the glorious Mughal era of India.

Located within one kilometer radius from the famous Shwedagon Pagoda of Yangon, the dargah of Bahadur Shah Zafar has less tourists and has garnered fewer attention to an ordinary visitor in Yangon. But someone who knows the history of colonial India would definitely remember their history lessons and make way to the mausoleum of an unceremonious emperor as we did the same.

When we walked inside the gate, there was no sign of anyone. We looked around and found two men involved with what sounded like construction hammering. We were told we could go in as we took our shoes off and made way inside the hall that was dedicated to the memory of emperor Bahadur Shah Zafar and was inaugurated in December 1994.

It seemed rather recent for an emperor who died so long ago I thought as we entered a room with three 'tombs' covered with satin and velvet sheets decorated with flowers and incense smell. The caretaker of the mausoleum soon joined us and explained how one tomb belonged to Zeenat Mahal—the emperor's wife, the second one was the grand daughter's and the third was the symbolic tomb of the emperor himself.



It was symbolic because nobody knew where Bahadur Shah Zafar was buried until about two decades ago. After his unceremonious death in exile, the emperor was hurriedly buried by the British so his remains would never be discovered. But in 1991, local workmen chanced upon a grave with an intact skeleton of the emperor. It was excavated and the grave of the emperor had finally been found.

Between these stories, the caretaker also pointed out the attention to the different photographs on the wall of his wife, his two sons and his own picture when he was under the custody of the British. But the more impressive ones were of his own portrait and poetry that was framed and displayed.

Bahadur Shah Zafar wrote beautiful poems and was known to be an excellent calligrapher. He was interested in Sufism and is known for his religious tolerance. Historian William Dalrymple wrote, 'Zafar was a remarkable man—a calligrapher, notable poet, Sufi pir (spiritual guide), and a man who valued the importance of Hindu-Muslim unity'.

Indeed, he was the son of a Muslim father Akbar Shah II, and a Hindu mother Lal Bai as he is also considered to be a symbol of religious tolerance and pluralism.

It was interesting when the caretaker took us downstairs to the actual grave of the emperor and we saw his poetry on the wall and his grave covered with fresh petals. It

looked like a regular routine for the caretaker to tell the story and maintain the flowers as he told us to take lots of pictures.

My attention was soon drawn to a gallery of photographs on display that he showed next. It was the photographs of different heads of state from Myanmar, India and Pakistan who had visited the mausoleum at different times.

There were images of Narendra Modi, Manmohan Singh, Pervez Musharraf, Nawaz Sharif, Ram Nath Kovind, and even Abdul Kalam who had all paid a visit to the dargah. Perhaps it wasn't a forgotten history after all, as these personalities had shown their respect by visiting the tomb of the last Mughal emperor. But what we forget is our shared history of colonial rule between Myanmar, India, and Pakistan.

There have been times when India wanted to bring back the body of Bahadur Shah Zafar but the Burmese would not allow. The caretaker was a Burmese man of Hyderabad origin as he kept saying 'aapka India' when he would refer to India in his conversation. He may have looked 'Indian' but he was Burmese.

I did not expect to find Mughal history in Myanmar, more so in the grave of a dead man. But Bahadur Shah Zafar's story served some form of poetic justice in bringing together people from different walks of life with shared history in his forgotten tomb.

## EC official holds review meetings on WB's poll preparedness

**KOLKATA, MAR 16 (PTI):** Deputy Election Commissioner Sudeep Jain Saturday held a series of meetings with leaders of political parties, election and state officials to review poll preparedness and take stock of the ground situation in West Bengal ahead of the general elections.

Jain was in the city after a BJP delegation comprising senior leaders Nirmala Sitharaman, Ravi Shankar Prasad and J P Nadda on Wednesday urged the Election Commission to declare West Bengal a "super-sensitive" state to ensure free and fair polls.

After meeting Jain, Secretary General of the ruling Trinamool Congress, Partha Chatterjee, told reporters that the BJP had taken recourse to "dishonest tactics" to suggest to the EC that peace was hampered in West Bengal.

Chatterjee said that his party had apprised the EC that the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) adopted the "ploy" to shield its own weakness and the saffron party's demand was nothing short of an insult to the state.

Beginning April 11, West Bengal will see polling in seven phases - its highest-ever - along with Bihar and Uttar Pradesh. BJP leader Mukul



Roy, accompanied by senior leaders Shishir Bajoria and Jaiprakash Majumdar, said that he had given evidence to the EC official about TMC chief Mamata Banerjee's demand of declaring all booths in West Bengal as "sensitive" in Assembly elections of 2006 and 2011, besides Lok Sabha polls in 2009.

Roy said that he has told Jain that West Bengal Police should not be deployed during the elections for the sake of free and fair polls.

Congress leader Pradip Bhattacharya said his party had demanded that all booths in the state should be treated as "sensitive" and sufficient police should be deployed during the counting process on May 23.

Bhattacharya added that the EC should act impartially and not get influenced either by the central or state government.

Communist Party of India (Marxist) leaders Rabin Deb and Sukhend Panigrahi also placed their suggestions and demands in the meeting.

Apart from the political parties, Jain also held a meeting with district election officers (DEOs), superintendents of police and police commissioners, besides top officials of the state government to review poll preparedness.

Jain is also scheduled to meet other central government officials during the day.

Meanwhile, 10 companies of the Border Security Force (BSF) have begun route marches in vulnerable pockets in a number of districts including Kolkata, North and South 24 Parganas, to instill confidence among the voters.

Chief Electoral Officer Aariz Aftab and other EC officials here were also present in the meeting.

## To each culture its own

RONGNYOO LEPCHA

During the spring of last year, I teamed up with a fellow researcher in the field area although we were working on different topics. It is usually better with a companion sometimes rather than going alone. Despite building good rapport, some days and nights the thoughts wear you down if not discussed and analysed systematically, so a dialogue is always better than conversing with a diary.

We had gone to Gangyap in West Sikkim near Tashiding. As we were both travelling to the village for the first time, we did not know the details of how to access it so unintentionally we took the longer route via Jorethang, and the usual mountain roads welcomed us with dust all over.

Despite the world moving towards development, some parts of the world seem to be developing at a much slower pace due to the lack of the availability of resources. The only hope for these villages is to hope for the governing bodies to turn their eyes towards them once in a while, as all the beautification works seem to happen only in the capital city. This is not the ignorance of just one state, but every state has failed somehow to fulfil promises made to the people made during the raging elections. And, as it is said, it is not possible to please everyone and there are flaws in every body. But this should not be the excuses each time one fails, efforts are better than just idle words.

There were signs of connectivity coming up in the area as roads were being constructed



but had caused a turmoil of their own due to the large amount of mud dug up by the huge yellow claws mixed with rain that left a muddy mess where, if you get stuck, it would be a struggle to get out. It was one such situation when I saw a fly in a cup of muddy soup struggling to get out and getting its wings stuck deeper in the process. I and a fellow researcher have numerous memorable moments in the village but nothing can beat the uphill trek which pushed our willpower nearly to breaking point. We would walk and cover large areas as the village was scattered over a huge range. One such tour proved to be a very intriguing and a memorable one.

The path to the ICDS centre of the village vanished and we emerged through the woods to some settlements. At one crossroad there was the setting of an altar. From far, it looked like an ordinary one that we had seen many times during festivals but upon closer observation it was totally different. The altar was

a huge 'Y' shape brands branch a rope drawn in the middle from which numerous wooden carved phalluses hung along with offerings. It was an intriguing sight, where else would we see wooden phalluses hanging out in the open? The lower part of the 'Y' had a diamond shape card carved and by the looks of it it's not wrong to guess that it represented the vagina.

The ritual takes place every year and is known as Pituk Thick. Each household contributed fifty rupees for this ritual. Eggs, chi, the first harvest of the season fruits, crops are offered at the altar and is practiced in spring.

This ritual started in earlier days when there was an epidemic people used to die vomiting blood or due to excessive blood flow with their excreta, the local term is 'masi' and Vee-laot-duluk maa in Lepcha. So the ceremony of Pituk Thick came into practice due to the need of the people during a certain time and caused by the environmental

factors. For an outsider like me the first instinct after seeing all there would be that it was set for the worship of fertility. But the original meaning behind it is something a little more different than what meets the eye.

So, after they started observing this ritual every year, it is believed that the epidemic receded and it has not affected any of the village members as they continue to observe Pituk Thick. It was somewhat similar to the phallus paintings and monuments of Bhutan but the stories related to each are totally different and has their own unique essence. But if there is any connection between the two, it is yet to be deciphered.

But despite the deeper meaning yet to emerge of this certain ritual how it originated it is amazing to see how people of a culture in different residing in different areas have different factors influencing them and how it leads to the rise of different features that make up some variations within the culture as Pituk Thick is not seen among the Lepchas of other districts of Sikkim, or in Kalimpong or Darjeeling. It is the same as how some practices cease to exist with time and new aspects are born. It was the need of the people of Gangyap at a given time so it emerged and has stayed with them and will continue to be a part of their culture for many years to come until there is the need for another aspect adding as part of their culture and society.

[the writer is PhD Scholar, Department of Anthropology, Sikkim University]

## Elections: Arunachal Pradesh asks for 60 companies of CPMF

**ITANAGAR, MAR 16 (PTI):** Arunachal Pradesh has requisitioned for 60 companies of Central Para Military Forces (CPMF) for the smooth conduct of the Lok Sabha and the state Assembly elections to be held in the state on April 11, officials said.

The security personnel will be deployed in 2,202 polling stations spread across 60 assembly constituencies and two Lok Sabha seats in the state.

The state has 281 vulnerable polling booths and 662 critical polling stations.

According to election



office sources here, the state authorities have already placed demand for 60 companies of central para military forces in addition to the existing state police and central forces already deployed in the state.

As many as seven se-

curity personnel including local police and central paramilitary personnel, would be deployed in each critical booths, besides deployment of micro observers and video recordings of the polling process wherever necessary, they said.

## CBI starts probe into Srinagar Cantonment land grab case

**NEW DELHI, MAR 16 (PTI):** The CBI has registered a case of alleged encroachment of defence land worth crores of rupees by hotel owners in the sensitive Badami Bagh cantonment area in Srinagar, officials said on Saturday.

The agency has booked then Chief Executive Officers of the Cantonment Ajay Ku-

mar Choudhary and B K Kaul, Junior Engineer Tariq Ahmad Khanday, Tramboo Joinery Mills owner Muzaffar Rashid Wani, owner of an under construction hotel Tariq Ahmad Wani and owner of Solomon Heights hotel Muneer Ahmad Bakshi, they said.

The agency had registered a preliminary in-

quiry in the case on November 27, 2018 which revealed that officials of the cantonment board allegedly facilitated the hotel and mill owners in grabbing defence land.

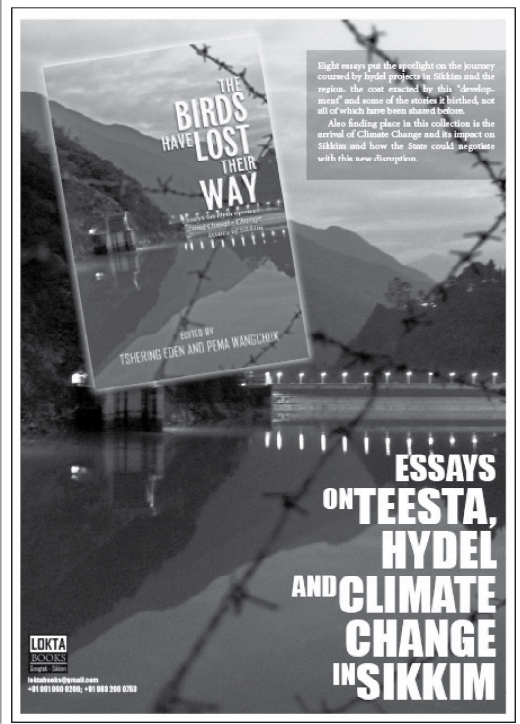
The inquiry established that Hotel Solomon Heights, under-construction hotel of Tariq Ahmad Wani and Tramboo Joinery Mills were standing on

defence land, the officials said. Their lease deed had expired and further lease deed was executed without permission of defence authorities, which was illegal and unauthorised, the officials said.

"The concerned JE and CEOs submitted false report being fully aware about the status of land and facilitated the accused pri-

vate persons to obtain permission from the board on the defence land by putting the status of land as private in 'Tramboo Joinery Mills,' the CBI alleged.

The FIR accused Kaul (now retired), Chaudhary and Khanday of entering into criminal conspiracy to facilitate illegal occupants, causing huge loss to the defence ministry.



# Federer, Nadal set up semi-final showdown at Indian Wells

Indian Wells (USA), Mar 16 (AFP): Rafael Nadal withstood the challenge of Russian Karen Khachanov to set up a blockbuster semi-final with Roger Federer at the ATP Indian Wells Masters Friday despite a flare-up of right knee trouble that required mid-match treatment.

World number two Nadal, the highest seed left in the draw after the early ouster of No. 1 Novak Djokovic, dominated both tiebreakers to beat the towering Russian 7-6 (7/2), 7-6 (7/2).

He booked a 39th career meeting with Federer, a five-time champion at Indian Wells who breezed past 67th-ranked Hubert Hurkacz of Poland 6-4, 6-4.

"Hopefully I will be ready for it," said Nadal, who recovered an early break in the opening set and powered through the tiebreaker, but called for the trainer to have supportive tape applied below his right knee three games into the second.

"Of course my goal and my idea is to be ready for tomorrow," he said.

Although he wasn't moving as well, Nadal



gained the first break of the second set to lead 3-2, but was immediately broken himself.

He saved a set point in a fierce 10th game that went to deuce three times before Nadal held to make it 5-5. He couldn't convert a break chance in the 11th game as they went to another tiebreaker which the Spaniard again controlled.

"Well, I am used to play with some issues, so I just tried to be focused and to keep hold of the situation," said Nadal who has battled knee tendinitis and other injuries throughout his

career. "It's one of these victories today that I'm really proud of."

Khachanov, who peppered Nadal with 17 aces in the two-hour, 17-minute match, has now lost all six of his career meetings with the Spaniard.

He'll be gunning for a chance to claim a fourth Indian Wells title while Federer is seeking to break out of a tie with Djokovic with a record sixth.

Nadal leads the head-to-head rivalry with Federer 23-15, but Federer has won 11 of their 20 hard-court meetings, including their last five.

However, they hav-

en't met since October of 2017, when Federer triumphed in straight sets in the final of the Shanghai Masters.

**- EXTRA ENERGY -**

Federer said he might not feel quite the same tingle of anticipation as fans at the prospect of facing Nadal, but he acknowledged that their clashes always raise the stakes.

"If I play Rafa there's extra energy in the building -- there's always a lot on the line," said Federer, who added that so much time has passed since their last meeting that his own current five-match

winning streak is of little significance.

"I don't think those five matches matter that much, to be honest," he said. "A lot of time has gone by."

Federer, a 20-time Grand Slam champion who captured his 100th career title at Dubai last month, overcame breezy conditions on stadium court and a hungry Hurkacz -- a 22-year-old ranked 67th in the world who was playing in his first Masters 1000 quarter-final and just the second quarter-final of his career.

Hurkacz settled his early nerves to produce some entertaining rallies, but he couldn't make a dent in Federer's serve.

One breaker in each set was all Federer needed to seal the win after an hour and 14 minutes.

"Overall I'm very pleased with that performance," said Federer, who has reached the final four without dropping a set, winning 38 of his 39 service games.

"I feel good," he said.

"I'm holding my serve comfortably, I'm in a good place mentally when I go into my service games. I think it showed this week thus far, so I hope I can keep that up."

## Bhullar lying fourth in Kenya Open, Shubhankar misses cut



**NAIROBI, MAR 16 (PTI):** Gaganjeet Bhullar was the best-placed Indian at fourth, adding a one-under 70 to get to seven-under 135, in the Magical Kenya Open here.

Winner of the Fiji International last year, Bhullar trailed the leader, South African Louis de Jager, who opened up a commanding four-shot lead at the halfway stage.

De Jager carded a second round of 66.

Other Indians making the cut were S Chikaranga (70-69) in

tied 15th and Khalin Joshi (72-69) in tied 33rd place, while Shubhankar Sharma's lean patch continued with a missed cut after rounds of 74 and 71.

The South African shared the overnight lead with England's Jack Singh Brar going into day two, but after seven birdies in the second round he opened up a big lead.

Four shots off the pace in a share of second place were Brar and Spaniard Adri Arnaus, both of whom are Eu-

ropean Challenge Tour graduates.

Also, in contention again was South African Justin Harding, who was five behind his countryman de Jager. The world number 52, who triumphed in Qatar last week, is looking to become the first player to win back-to-back European Tour events since Justin Rose, who achieved the feat in 2017.

A good finish would also bring him inside Top-50 and earn him a place at the Masters.

## India to host U-17 Women's World Cup in 2020

New Delhi, Mar 16 (PTI): India will host the U-17 Women's World Cup in 2020, International Football Federation (FIFA) President Gianni Infantino announced.

"We are delighted to announce that India has been confirmed as the host of the FIFA U-17 Women's World Cup in 2020," Infantino said after the FIFA Council meeting in Miami, USA on Friday.

This will be the second FIFA tournament India will be hosting, after the U-17 Men's World Cup in 2017.

Confirming the development, All India Football Federation General Secretary Kunal Das told PTI: "We are thankful to FIFA for giving the right to host the U-17 Women's World Cup. This will raise the profile of women's football in the country."

"We have been giving a lot of emphasis on the development of women's football in the country. So we bid for the U-17 Women's World Cup and now we have got it."



The bidding process for the tournament started last year. France had also expressed interest to host the tournament.

Das said the venues to host the mega event will be decided soon.

"We have four-five venues in mind and we will finalise them soon."

As host country, India automatically qualifies for the 16-team showpiece event. The six continental qualifying tournaments are yet to begin.

Besides the U-17 Women's WC, India had also expressed interest in hosting the U-20 Women's World Cup.

The U-17 women's tournament began in 2008, when New Zealand hosted it. Spain are the current champions and they had beaten Mexico 2-1 in the final in Uruguay last year. The tournament in India will be the seventh edition.

Asian teams are the most successful teams in the tournament, with North Korea (2008 and 2016) having won it twice while Japan (2014) and South Korea (2010) had won it once each.

France (2012) and Spain (2018) are the only non-Asian teams to have won the tournament.

## Teenaged Diksha Dagar creates history, wins South African Women's Open

**CAPETOWN (SOUTH AFRICA), MAR 16 (PTI):** Diksha Dagar became only the second Indian woman golfer to win on Ladies European Tour after clinching the South African Open, eking out a one-shot victory with a bogey-free final round, here Saturday.

Dagar, 18, was trailing by two shots, but piped the much-experienced Lee Anne Pace with a three-under final round.

Dagar follows Aditi Ashok, who in 2016 became the first Indian to win on the LET.

Aditi added two more LET wins and now plays on the LPGA.

Diksha also has ambitions of getting to the LPGA, which on current form looks a strong possibility.

Dagar played at the Women's Hero Indian Open as an amateur and made the cut.

Her father, Narinder

Dagar, who served in the Army, was on the bag for Diksha.

Narinder helped her cope with the trauma of having hearing problems. She has been wearing hearing aids since the age of six.

A left-hander, Diksha is well-known for brand of aggressive and fearless golf. Her brother, Yogesh, who is also deaf, also plays golf and has been playing in age-group events.

Dagar, who came in off a long flight from Australia, where was Tied-5th at the NSW Open last week, began the week with double bogeys in first three holes.

She had one more bogey on the 12th hole and ended the first day with a 76 but scoring was tough on a windy day and she was still inside Top-20.

Thereafter she played the next 42 holes without a blemish and finished

at five-under 211, while Lee-Anne (72) ended at four-under 212. She rose to second by the end of the second day and finally won the title on the final day.

Dagar trailed till late into the back nine. She started one behind and Lee-Anne pulled to two clear with a birdie on 11th but bogeyed the 13th to fall back to five-under.

Dagar birdied 15th and 16th and that helped her catch up leader Lee-Anne at five-under. The South African dropped another shot on 17th and Dagar stayed steady and one ahead. As both parred the final hole the Indian won the title.

Esther Henseleit (70) of South Africa and Michele Thompson (68) of Australia were tied for third at three-under 212, and Carly Booth (69) of England was fifth at 2-under 214.

## Hamilton snatches pole position for Australian Grand Prix

Melbourne, Mar 16 (AFP): Mercedes' world champion Lewis Hamilton picked up where he left off last year to reassert his authority and snatch a record-extending eighth pole position at the season-opening Australian Grand Prix on Saturday.

The Briton clocked a fastest lap of one minute 20.486 to narrowly pip team-mate Valtteri Bottas, with Ferrari's Sebastian Vettel third, but well off the pace on 1:21.190.

Red Bull's Max Verstappen was fourth and Ferrari newcomer Charles Leclerc fifth.

The 34-year-old is the pole master in Melbourne, claiming it eight times and every year since 2014, although he has only twice, in 2008 and 2015, won a race at Albert Park.

He knocked out his rivals with a blistering lap at the death to claim an 84th career grid-leading time in his 230th race.

"I'm shaking, it was so close out there," said Hamilton.

"Coming from testing we had no idea where we would be, but the guys in the factory have been working so hard towards this weekend."

"Valtteri did an ex-



ceptional job, it was so close."

Hamilton, bidding for a sixth world title to move within one of Michael Schumacher's record seven, topped all three free practice sessions before making it four-out-of-four during qualifying.

His dominance in qualifying in Melbourne is unsurpassed with Ayrton Senna, on six poles, the next in line.

Hamilton complained after pre-season testing in Barcelona that Ferrari was much quicker, but it appears to have been minor games with business as usual resumed this week.

Mercedes and Hamilton have been dominant in Formula One in recent years, winning

the drivers' and constructors' titles five years in a row and Ferrari -- and Vettel -- are desperate to catch up.

While the German won in Melbourne last year and backed it up with victory at the next race in Bahrain, Hamilton roared back to sweep 11 of the remaining 19 Grand Prix to comfortably be crowned champion.

All Vettel's world titles came at Red Bull, from 2010-2013, while Ferrari haven't won a constructors crown since 2008 and no driver at the Italian outfit has tasted championship success since Kimi Raikkonen in 2007.

Hamilton topped Q2 in 1:21:014 from Bottas and Verstappen, with Vettel running into the gravel at Turn 12, kick-

ing up dirt and dust and telling his team on the radio that the "floor, front wing" would need to be checked.

Daniel Ricciardo was a big casualty in Q2, finishing 12th in his first outing for new team Renault after moving from Red Bull. His team-mate Nico Hulkenberg also missed the cut, as did Toro Rosso pair Daniel Kvyat and Alexander Albon.

Leclerc topped Q1 with 1:22:017 ahead of Hamilton and Bottas.

Red Bull newcomer Pierre Gasly was among those who failed to get out of Q1 along with McLaren's Carlos Sainz and Racing Point's Lance Stroll.

Robert Kubica, who clipped the wall and sustained a puncture in his Williams, was last.

I wanted to get used to the T20 format and then go to the IPL. That's how I had planned my two months of rehab. Trainers and physio were very committed."

He has been a specialist opener but Prithvi has no issues if he required to bat in the middle order for India in the limited overs.

"For India, it is all about whatever number they want me to bat and not the other way round," he said.

However he did speak about how the mindset changes.

## These are rumours and I will let it go: Prithvi on 'indiscipline' speculations

**NEW DELHI, MAR 16 (PTI):** Young batsman Prithvi Shaw dismissed speculations that indiscipline forced his premature return from the Australia tour and insisted that it was only because of slow recovery from an ankle injury.

Prithvi had sustained the injury while fielding in a practice game and initially it was said that he would be available from the third Test onwards.

However the 19-year-old was sent back and it was widely believed

that it was because the youngster was losing focus.

"These are rumours, so I will better let it go," Prithvi said during an open media session of Delhi Capitals on Saturday.

When he was probed about him not working hard enough during his rehabilitation, Prithvi's answer was curt.

"No one told me anything about not working hard. I wanted to play but got injured. I thought I could play the third Test (in Melbourne) but then progress of recovery was

slow," said the Mumbai opener, who hit a hundred on his Test debut.

"If you have had a look at my ankle, you would have known that it was really painful. Ankle wasn't healing quickly and I had to return."

The NCA over the years has gained reputation for not being the best centre for rehabilitation but Prithvi thinks otherwise.

"I mean everything was perfect over there (NCA). I did a lot of sessions there. I was working to get fit before Mushtaq Ali T20 as

# New Zealand PM vows gun law reform after mosque massacre

CHRISTCHURCH, MAR 16 (AFP): New Zealand's prime minister vowed Saturday to toughen the country's gun laws after revealing the alleged shooter behind Christchurch's mosque attacks had legally bought the five weapons, including two semi-automatic rifles, used in the massacre.

The nation's firearms laws are lax compared to neighbouring Australia, which enacted a strict gun control regime in the wake of a similar massacre in 1996.

Jacinda Ardern said 28-year-old Australian Brenton Tarrant obtained a "Category A" gun licence in November 2017 which allowed him to purchase the weapons used to mow down worshippers in two Christchurch mosques.

Some of the guns appear to have been modified to make them more deadly, she said, adding that a ban on semi-automatic weapons would be considered.

"The mere fact... that this individual had acquired a gun licence and acquired weapons of that range, then obviously I think people will be seeking change, and I'm committing that," she told a press conference.

"I can tell you one thing right now -- our gun laws will change."



Ardern confirmed that the suspected gunman and two associates who were also arrested had not been on the radar of any intelligence agencies for extremism.

"I have asked our agencies this morning to work swiftly on assessing whether there was any activity on social media or otherwise, that should have triggered a response. That work is already underway," she said.

The head of the New Zealand Police Association, Chris Cahill, welcomed Ardern's comments and said previous attempts to introduce gun controls had failed partly because of diehard opponents to reform.

"I believe many New

Zealanders will be aghast that in our country someone can amass a cache of weapons like that discovered in this Christchurch tragedy," he said in a statement.

"There is no place in the upcoming debate for the radical gun lobby which has made its presence felt in previous attempts to make our country safer."

He highlighted the "bitter irony" that the alleged Australian shooter would not have been able to buy the same weapons in his home country.

At least one of the weapons used by Tarrant was reportedly an AR-15 -- the same semi-automatic rifle used in a number of mass shootings in the United States, includ-

ing the 2012 Sandy Hook school killings in Connecticut.

Families of the Sandy Hook victims were recently given the green light to sue US gunmaker Remington for knowingly marketing a military grade weapon that is "grossly unsuited" for civilian use and has become the gun of choice for mass killings.

But despite the horror of the Christchurch shootings, some local residents who AFP spoke with Saturday warned against any drastic moves on gun control.

"Let's hope there are no knee-jerk reactions," said Matthew Simmonds.

"Just because a lot of people are killed on the roads we don't ban cars.

There needs to be a proper investigation."

New Zealand tightened its gun laws to restrict access to semi-automatic rifles in 1992, two years after a mentally ill man shot dead 13 people in the southern town of Aramoana.

But subsequent efforts to tighten the laws, including a ban on semi-automatic weapons, have stalled in parliament.

Anyone over 16 can apply for a New Zealand firearms licence, valid for 10 years after completing a safety course and a police background check.

Most guns do not require registration under New Zealand's Arms Act and police do not know "how many legally or illegally owned firearms there are in New Zealand," police said last year.

In 2014, police estimated there were up to 1.2 million legal firearms in civilian ownership, or around one for every four members of the public -- twice the per capita number of guns in Australia.

Separate "endorsements" are required to own semi-automatic weapons, as well as pistols and other restricted weapons but police and firearms experts have pointed to several loopholes.

## At least 24 dead, dozens missing in Zimbabwe after cyclone



HARARE, MAR 16 (AFP):

At least 24 people have been killed and dozens are missing in parts of eastern Zimbabwe hit by the peripheral effects of tropical cyclone Idai which lashed neighbouring Mozambique, government said Saturday.

Zimbabwe's ministry of information announced on Twitter that so far the "number of deaths is confirmed at 24 mainly from Chimanimani East," including two students, while at least 40 other people have been injured.

Many houses have been damaged and bridges washed away in parts of the Manicaland province which borders Mozambique.

A group of people who fled their homes were "marooned" on top of a mountain waiting to be rescued, but strong winds were hampering helicopter flights, the ministry said.

Earlier a lawmaker told AFP that thousands of people have been affected, power cut off and major bridges flooded.

"The information we have so far is that over 100 people are missing

and some of them" may have died, Joshua Sacco, a member of parliament in Chimanimani district, told AFP.

"At least 25 houses were swept away following a mudslide at Ngangu township in Chimanimani urban. There were people inside. They are part of the missing," he said.

Tropical cyclone Idai battered central Mozambique on Friday killing at least 19 people there and cutting off more than half a million in Beira, one of the country's largest cities.

Local officials in Mozambique said that heavy rains earlier in the week, before the cyclone struck, had already claimed another 66 lives, injured scores and displaced 17,000 people.

Heavy downpours in neighbouring Malawi this week have affected almost a million people and claimed 56 lives there, according to the latest government toll.

Zimbabwe's opposition Movement for Democratic Change spokesman Jacob Mafume tweeted that a "serious

humanitarian crisis (is) unfolding" in eastern Zimbabwe districts.

"We need state intervention on a massive scale to avoid biblical disaster," he said.

The ministry of information said the Zimbabwean national army was leading the rescue efforts.

One school has been shut in the area and students were waiting to be airlifted to safety.

When the cyclone hit Mozambique, authorities there were forced to close the international airport in the port city of Beira after the air traffic control tower, the navigation systems and the runways were damaged by the storm.

An official at the National Institute of Disaster Management (NIDM) of Mozambique told AFP on Friday "there is extreme havoc".

"Some runway lights were damaged, the navigation system is damaged, the control tower antennas and the control tower itself are all damaged."

"The runway is full of obstacles and parked aircrafts are damaged."

## Maduro creates military unit to protect public service installations



CARACAS, MAR 16 (AFP): Venezuela President Nicolas Maduro created a military unit on Friday charged with protecting basic installations and services such as electricity and water just over a week after the country was hit with a massive blackout.

Maduro blamed that on a cyber attack directed by the United States but critics say the government was at fault for failing to maintain infrastructure.

Speaking on television and radio, Maduro said the "Command for the Defence of Basic Strategic Services" would be tasked with ensuring "security, operability and maintenance."

Its officers would be responsible for guaranteeing both "physical and

cybernetic" security of infrastructure and maintenance of equipment.

Maduro repeated his claim that the blackout, which lasted almost a week, was due to "successive attacks" against the country's major hydro-electric facility at Guri in Bolivar state, "directed" by US President Donald Trump's national security advisor John Bolton.

The blackout hit on March 7 and paralyzed the entire country.

The government announced on Tuesday that power was back on in practically the whole country but western regions still reported cuts.

The socialist leader accused the opposition of concocting a plan "to accompany the blackout with general violence," claiming it was neutral-

ized.

Opposition leader Juan Guaido launched a challenge to Maduro's leadership in January by declaring himself acting president.

He has since been recognized by more than 50 countries, led by the US.

He said the blackout was caused by burning vegetation that damaged equipment.

Maduro accused him of "sabotage," although experts doubt that version of events.

Venezuela has been in recession for more than four years and is suffering from an economic crisis.

An estimated 2.7 million people have left the country as poverty soared leaving shortages of food and medicines.

US, France & UK in intense discussions with China on Azhar listing at UN

LAUIT K JHA

WASHINGTON, MAR 16

(PTI): The US, France

and the UK are believed to be in intense "good faith" discussions with China to arrive at a "compromise", including on the language on the UN designation of Pakistan-based Jaish-e-Mohammed chief Masood Azhar as a global terrorist, according to people familiar with the matter.

On Wednesday, China blocked for the fourth consecutive time a resolution at the UN Security Council Committee on designating Azhar, head of the JeM terror group, as a global terrorist.

The proposal to designate Azhar under the 1267 Al Qaeda Sanctions Committee of the UN Security Council was moved by France, the UK and the US on February 27, days after a suicide bomber of the JeM killed 44 CRPF soldiers in Jammu and Kashmir's Pulwama, leading to a flare-up in tensions between India and Pakistan.

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## Stand united against anti-Muslim hatred, urges UN chief after NZ terror attack

YOSHITA SINGH

UNITED NATIONS, MAR 16 (PTI): UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres on Friday urged the international community to "stand united against anti-Muslim hatred" and all forms of bigotry and terror following the shootings at two mosques in New Zealand that left at least 49 dead and many others wounded.

"I'm saddened & strongly condemn the shooting of innocent people as they prayed peacefully in mosques in New Zealand. I express

my deepest condolences to the victims' families. Today and every day, we must stand united against anti-Muslim hatred, & all forms of bigotry & terror," the UN Chief tweeted.

In a statement issued by his spokesman, the Secretary-General said he is "shocked and appalled" at the terrorist attack at the two mosques in Christchurch. He extended his deepest condolences to the families of the victims and to the Government and people of New Zealand.

"The Secretary General recalls the sanctity of

mosques and all places of worship. He calls upon all people on this holy day for Muslims to show signs of solidarity with the bereaved Islamic community," his spokesman said.

Guterres reiterated the urgency of working better together globally to counter Islamophobia and eliminate intolerance and violent extremism in all its forms.

The gunman, who police have described as being in his late 20s, has been arrested and charged with murder. According to news reports, he live-streamed him-

self via a head-mounted camera online, firing at worshippers inside the Al Noor mosque in the largest city on the South Island of New Zealand, Christchurch. A second attack also took place at the city's Linwood Mosque.

Police have asked the public not to share the "extremely distressing" footage posted by the gunman online.

Meanwhile, Facebook has reportedly taken down the gunman's Facebook and Instagram accounts, which allegedly contained racist and anti-immigrant views.





**PUPPY PAL! Actress Jennifer Lawrence steps out with her adorable pup, Pippi, in New York City.**

## Don't think I'm successful: Radhika Apte



**MUMBAI, MAR 16 (PTI):** Radhika Apte, who became a known face in Bollywood post Sriram Raghavan's 2014 film "Badlapur", says she is still writing her success story.

The 32-year-old actor made her debut back in 2005 with Shahid Kapoor and Amrita Rao-starrer "Vaah! Life Ho Toh Aisi!" and over the years she has featured in critically-acclaimed and commercially successful films such as "Parched", "Phobia", "Padman", "Lust Stories" and "Aandhadhun".

"I would love to work with the top stars, women and men. What is success to me is different to other people. I don't think I'm successful because I don't think I've achieved what I want to achieve," Radhika told PTI.

She has interesting range of films in

pipeline including "The Wedding Guest" a British-American movie with Dev Patel and filmmaker Lydia Dean's untitled World War II spy drama with Stana Katic and Sarah Megan Thomas.

"My film 'The Wedding Guest' just released in America and is due to release elsewhere. I'm reading scripts and waiting to sign a new one," Radhika said.

She is quite excited about teaming up with Nawazuddin Siddiqui for "Raat Akeli Hai" which will be directed by Honey Trehan.

"I'm really enjoying working on this, and Nawaz really fits the role. He's such a brilliant actor. So, there are some great scenes that I'm getting to play in this film. The script is really good and I'm enjoying it."

to analytical Mercury retrograde in your future-oriented tenth house raises some legit concerns.

**CANCER:** There are only so many hours in the day. Cancer. And today's clash between boundary-challenged Jupiter and methodical Mercury (who's currently retrograde) is a reminder that even YOU can't magically change that. This might not be a matter of time management; it may be more about managing your FOMO. Of course you want to do, see and experience it all! That's the beautiful thing about you—but by trying to be everywhere, you can't enjoy the present moment.

**LEO:** You may not be getting a clear read on someone under today's confusing star-map, so take that as a sign to proceed with extreme caution. Zealous Jupiter in your romance zone is squaring off against analytical Mercury (retrograde) in your intensely emotional eighth house. Are you letting your rational left brain override your more feelings-oriented right brain? Drop it down into your heart and react from there. That's your

# Will stop acting moment I turn full-fledged director, says Aamir Khan

Superstar Aamir Khan says filmmaking does excite him, but currently he wants to focus on acting. The 54-year-old actor, who made directorial debut with "Taare Zameen Par", said he will quit acting once he decides to turn full-fledged filmmaker.

"I am inclined towards filmmaking and I co-incidentally directed 'Taare Zameen Par'. I have been in love with filmmaking and acting and I can't alienate the two but what I can say right now is that I began my career as an actor and it excites me.

"The moment I become a full-fledged filmmaker I will stop acting. Right now, I don't want to stop acting, that's why I am holding back the director inside me," Aamir told reporters here on Thursday.

As a producer, Aamir has backed films like "Lagaan", "Taare Zameen Par", "Jaane Tu Ya Jaane Na", "Peepli Live", "Dhobi Ghat", "Delhi Belly", "Talaash", "Dangal" and "Secret Superstar". The actor said his aim is to support good scripts and making money is not his agenda.

"I had not thought at what pace I will make films. Usually,

people make films with their production houses for business. That is not our first agenda. Creativity is our agenda. Till the time we don't get a good script, we don't make it into a film."

When asked if as an actor does he have any Hollywood aspirations, Aamir said he would work in any part of the world if he gets a good opportunity.

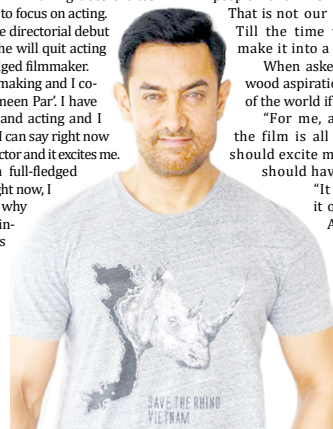
"For me, as an actor, what is important is what the film is all about and what it is trying to say. It should excite me as an actor. It is not important that it should have a social message.

"It does not matter which part of the world it originates from. If someone from Japan or Africa offers me something and if I get excited, I will do it. But I don't have a fascination for Hollywood," Aamir added.

The actor has announced his next project, "Lal Singh Chaddha", an official adaptation of Tom Hanks' 1994 film "Forrest Gump".

He was also in talks for Netflix series on spiritual leader Rajneesh, popularly known among his followers as Osho, but he said the script has not been finalised yet.

"Nothing is happening on Osho at the moment. I am not aware. The script is not ready," he said.



## Netflix to remove controversial real-life accident footage from 'Bird Box'

Netflix has said that it will be removing footage of a real-life Canadian rail disaster from its film "Bird Box".

The Sandra Bullock-starring film, directed by Susanne Bier, featured a stock footage from 2013 Lac-Mégantic tragedy that claimed lives of over 40 people. It was used to depict a fictional news story about an apocalyptic scenario.

In a brief statement to The Wrap, the streaming giant confirmed that it has decided to replace the clip.

"Netflix and the filmmakers of 'Bird Box' have decided to replace the clip. We're sorry for any pain caused to the Lac-Mégantic community," the statement said.

Netflix had earlier refused to remove the footage from the film after the controversy happened in January.

The Canadian Parliament had also voted unanimously, criticising Netflix and demanding removal of the images from "its fiction catalogue". The country's lawmakers also asked for compensation for the citizens of Lac-Mégantic, Quebec.



The footage from the tragedy appeared in an episode of another Netflix show called "Travelers", but the production company behind that show swiftly removed and replaced the video.

## YouTube star Lilly Singh to replace Carson Daly in NBC late-night slot

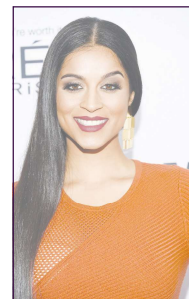
**LOS ANGELES, MAR 15 (PTI):** Indian-origin YouTube star Lilly Singh will host a show on NBC that will replace Carson Daly's "Last Call".

Daly, who hosted the show for the past 17 years, had announced his exit last month. He said he will "concentrate on his duties as host of the 'Orange Room' on Today, as host and producer on 'The Voice' and to spend more time with family".

Singh's new show, "A Little Late With Lilly Singh", will debut in September on the 1:30 am spot which is currently occupied by "Last Call With Carson Daly", NBC announced Thursday.

Her appointment is a historic feat as it makes her the first woman to lead a late-night show on a broadcast network.

Singh's show will be a half-hour program and she will be conducting in-studio interviews with a variety of guests. She will also create and star in pre-taped comedy sketches and signature segments, according to Entertainment Tonight.



Born to Indian parents in Canada, Singh is known as Superwoman among her fans. She has over 14 million followers on YouTube.

On Thursday, during her appearance on Jimmy Fallon's "Tonight Show", the YouTube star talked about her new gig.

"I'm so excited because I truly get to create a show from scratch. I get to make it inclusive... and create something I really believe in," Singh said.

## Sam Smith on gender identity: I identify as non-binary

**LOS ANGELES, MAR 16 (PTI):** Singer Sam Smith has opened up about his gender identity, saying that he identifies as a "non-binary".

In an interview with Jameela Jamil for her new series, "I Weigh Interviews", the 26-year-old Grammy winner said he came to realisation about his identity when he read the stories of other people.

"I've sometimes sat and questioned, do I want a sex change? It's something I still think about: 'Do I want to?' I don't think it is," Smith said.

"When I saw the nonbinary, genderqueer, and I read into it, and I heard these people speaking, I was like, 'F\*\*\*, that is me,' he added.

The "Stay with Me" singer also explained what "non-binary, genderqueer" identity means to him.

"Non-binary/genderqueer is that you do not identify in a gender. You are a mixture of all different things. You are your own special creation. That's how I take it. I am not male or female. I think I float somewhere in between. It's all on the spectrum," he said.

During the interview, Smith also shed a light on his struggles with body image.

"When I was a kid, I was chubby... and then it would get worse and worse and worse and I was holding a lot of weight in my chest. When I hit 11 years old, I went to the doctor's. I was so self-conscious that it was affecting my mood every day," he said.

He revealed that he had liposuction when he was 12-years-old.

"At the time I think I was very happy about it. It didn't really change anything. I think I put the weight back on in two weeks because I hadn't figured out my relationship with food, so it didn't really change anything. But being 12 years old and having liposuction on your chest is quite a big deal," he added.

**ARIES:** Daydream interruption alert! New information or opportunities may unfold that require 100 percent of your focus. Of course, with distractible Jupiter in your worldly and visionary ninth house smashed up with mental Mercury retrograde in your dreamy twelfth, it could easily to confuse so-called reality with fantasy.

**TAURUS:** In your quest for balance between being transparent and protecting secrets, you might veer too far to one side or the other today. A challenging clash between loose-lipped Mercury retrograde and #NoFilters Jupiter could make it hard to keep things under wraps. You know that confidences need to be carefully guarded, yet you may have a burning desire to share an irresistible piece of gossip or a questionable photo.

**GEMINI:** A percolating partnership could merit a closer look today. Even if things have been humming along beautifully, it's always smart to think ahead. How's your prognosis as a team? Supersizer Jupiter has been spurring things, but a square

to analytical Mercury retrograde in your future-oriented tenth house raises some legit concerns.

**CANCER:** There are only so many hours in the day. Cancer. And today's clash between boundary-challenged Jupiter and methodical Mercury (who's currently retrograde) is a reminder that even YOU can't magically change that. This might not be a matter of time management; it may be more about managing your FOMO. Of course you want to do, see and experience it all! That's the beautiful thing about you—but by trying to be everywhere, you can't enjoy the present moment.

**LEO:** You may not be getting a clear read on someone under today's confusing star-map, so take that as a sign to proceed with extreme caution. Zealous Jupiter in your romance zone is squaring off against analytical Mercury (retrograde) in your intensely emotional eighth house. Are you letting your rational left brain override your more feelings-oriented right brain? Drop it down into your heart and react from there. That's your

superpower, Leo! That said, you COULD always come out and ask someone how they feel. Better than agonizing over an assumption that may be wildly off-base.

**VIRGO:** You hate to disappoint a friend in need—or to miss a happening after-work event. But some days, you just have to resist the pressure to come out and play. You may be feeling depleted, and if you don't get some "me time," like, now, you could totally crash (not to mention make yourself susceptible for those nasty winter bugs going around).

**LIBRA:** No need to lower the blinds if you want a little shade. Thanks to today's agitating Sun-Jupiter square, you'll be throwing some of it yourself. Under this magnifying transit, people's annoying "quirks" will really get under your skin. Breathe, Libra, breathe. Let this be your signal to deploy some immediate self-care. Book the 90-minute massage or spend the whole day at the spa.

**SCORPIO:** All the glitter may not be gold—but that won't stop you from pulling out your wallet. With a decadent Sun-Jupiter mashup overhead, you'd be wise to carry

a set amount of cash and leave your debit cards locked up at home. If you're trying to save up, don't meet friends for "window shopping." The odds of you heading home empty-handed are basically zero.

**SAGITTARIUS:** Familiarity can breed contempt today, as your ruler, Jupiter, in Sagittarius catches some shade from the moody Pisces Sun. Yesterday, it was all love with your soul squad and favorite relatives. Today, even their most endearing traits will grate on your nerves. At moments like this, your best course of action is to just take some space. Better that than to lash out at them for an innocent "mistake" or, worse, for simply being in your space!

**CAPRICORN:** Peel off that power suit and kick off those pinchy stilettos. Your heart—and the rest of you—wants to hunker down in your home sweet home. Can you swing a remote workday or head home early? Grab that sheepskin throw and make yourself a pillow fort as your "office." No can do? Do everything in your power to make your cubicle feel cozier. Maybe it's time to invest in a French press for brewing up loose-leaf

tea or a pair of noise-canceling headphones for playing meditative music...and drowning out your coworker's ultra-annoying voice.

**AQUARIUS:** Tighten your grasp on your wallet. Aquarius, especially if you're part of any decadent Friday night celebrations. Things could spin out of control without much warning, as rounds of drinks escalate into the double digits or someone wants to dine at that \$\$\$\$ resto. Definitely don't be the one to reach for the (paycheck-sized) bill. You may wind up spending a bit more than you planned to, but you don't HAVE to break the bank. And if there's a part deux to the partying and you're already exhausted, don't be shy about calling it a night.

**PISCES:** Overwhelmed by work? If you can filter out the disruptions and concentrate on each task, you CAN pull this off, Pisces. Today, visionary Jupiter in your career corner is squaring off with distracted Mercury retrograde in your sign. The temptation to multitask is strong, but you are stronger! Focus on your goals and the reasons you set them in the first place. Keep your phone on silent and close all social media sites.