



**48 HOURS AFTER APOLOGIZING,
PLACIDO DOMINGO RESCINDS
HIS STATEMENT**
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**HOW FAME ABROAD CHANGES AFRICAN
FOOTBALLERS' WAY OF LIFE BACK HOME**

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**MICROSOFT JUST SPOILED
ANOTHER EXCITING FEATURE
COMING TO XBOX SERIES X**

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SummitTIMES

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ON TOP OF THE NEWS

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FIRST GLOBAL CINEMA FESTIVAL SIKKIM KICKS OFF

CM releases Sikkim Film Policy 2020

Bollywood cinematographer Binod Pradhan conferred Lifetime Achievement Award

**SAGAR CHETTRI
GANGTOK, 28 FEB:**

The first-ever Global Cinema Festival Sikkim 2020 was inaugurated by Chief Minister, PS Tamang in a grand function held here at Manan Kendra on Friday. On the occasion, the CM also released Sikkim Film Policy 2020.

The festival also witnessed the presentation of Lifetime Achievement Award to eminent cinematographer, Binod Pradhan for his immense contribution towards Indian cinema.

The three-day festival is being organized

by Film Federation of India [FFI] in collaboration with Sikkim Film Cooperative Society [SFCS] with the support of various departments of Government of Sikkim and various ministries of Government of India. The festival has the presence of eminent personalities from Indian film industry including Bollywood actress, Manisha Koirala and Padmini Kohlapuri among other dignitaries.

In his inaugural address, the CM thanked FFI, SFCS and various ministries of Government of India, different departments of the State government and sponsors for supporting this maiden effort of the State. He also congratulated Bollywood cinematographer, Binod Pradhan for being conferred with the Life Time Achievement Award.

Mr Tamang expressed that Sikkim was well



known for its rich culture of peace, harmony and hospitality. He mentioned that in addition to beautiful locations and landscapes Sikkim also rich with young and talented population who were naturally inclined to creative enterprise. He

added that veteran Bollywood actor, Danny Denzongpa and other artists from Sikkim have already brought glory to the State in the field of cinema.

CM mentioned that young generation of the State have been doing well in different creative

fields and need to be encouraged to take up their field professionally. On the same, he expressed that activities and workshop in the ongoing festival would provide opportunity for young participants to learn from the experts.

"State government is

committed to support the industrial evolution of film making in Sikkim and Sikkim Film Policy 2020 is the first evidence of this commitment," he expressed.

The Sikkim Film Policy includes the establishment of Film Development Council, single

window permit system, setting up of miniplexes, financial incentives, etc.

He urged the National Film Development Corporation to support the effort in getting the right technical guidance and to create the right ecosystem for film making in Sikkim.

While stating that this ecosystem only runs with highly competent human resources, he urged Skill Development and Media Entertainment sector to undertake required skill training in Sikkim. He expressed that Global Cinema Festival 2020 would evolve to become a reputed festival where the participants would come yearly for networking and meaningful engagement.

On the occasion, CM announced and presented a cheque of Rs 5 lakh grant to Sikkim Film Cooperative Society and further assured to provide

turn to pg 02

SKM-BJP alliance "unholy", says AICC's BP Singh

**SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 28 FEB:**

All India Congress Committee secretary, BP Singh, has alleged that the alliance of Bharatiya Janata Party and Sikkim Krantikari Morcha was not framed with any vision for Sikkim and its people. While terming the alliance "unholy" and "immoral", he alleged that the State government is not concerned about the development and progress of the State but just wants to remain in power.

Addressing a press conference here this afternoon, Mr Singh alleged that without having the people's mandate, BJP has forcibly formed the government in different states through horse-trading and using government machin-

eries. On the same, he alleged that BJP has used the same method to enter Sikkim without having the people's mandate.

He further alleged that BJP even used the Election Commission to get into the State.

"BJP used to talk about zero tolerance for corruption but has been doing the exact opposite," he alleged.

Mr Singh stated that the Congress party has always



been fighting for local issues of the State in every situation.

"We will go to the people with the programme and policies of the party and work to strengthen the presence of the party in every corner," he said. He assured that the party would take local issues of the State in the Parliament and even in the court if required.

The press conference was also addressed by SPCC president, Bharat Basnet.

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SDF petitions SHRC alleging violation of Barap Namgyal's human rights by Sikkim Police

**SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 28 FEB:**

Sikkim Democratic Front today petitioned the State Human Rights Commission against the circulation of photographs of the party's general secretary [social media], Barap Namgyal, from judicial custody, photographs which the SDF contends were shared by Sikkim Police personnel with Sikkim Krantikari Morcha social media members who then circulated it widely in "gross violation" of Mr Namgyal's human rights.

A photograph of Mr Namgyal holding a board listing charges under which he has been kept under custody at the Central Jail was leaked, SDF alleges, by police personnel to the SKM social media members



who then posted it on the official Facebook page of SKM.

Mr Namgyal was taken into custody on 15 Feb.

SDF has further alleged that Mr Namgyal has been verbally abused and mentally tortured by the police personnel in jail.

"This points to a gross abuse of power, it signals connivance of Central Jail personnel with

vested political interests and demonstrates grave breaches of the Jail Service Rules," the party maintains.

The petition was submitted to the Chairperson, State Human Rights Commission, by an SDF delegation led by MK Subba and including JB Darnal, Ashit Rai, Tashi Gyatso Bhutia, LM Bhat-tarai, Karma Tenpa, Kalzang Sherpa, and Ranjana Lamichaney.

CM chairs coordination meet with film industry stakeholders Proposes Rs 1 cr for films with 75% shooting days in Sikkim

GANGTOK, 28 FEB (IPR): Chief Minister, P.S. Tamang chaired a coordination meeting with the investors, industrialists, producers, stakeholders and eminent personalities from film industry at the Conference Hall of Tashiling Secretariat, this evening.

The meeting, held on the sideline of Global Cinema Festival 2020 that was inaugurated today, was also attended by Minister, Information and Public Relations, Lok Nath Sharma, Chief Secretary Government of Sikkim, SC Gupta, Additional Chief Secretary, GP Upadhyaya, Secretar-



ies, Heads of the Departments, President of Film Federation of India, and representatives from industrial sector.

The Chief Minister, P.S. Tamang expressed his heartfelt gratitude

to all the participants for making it convenient to attend the meeting and Global Cinema Festival 2020 all the way from various parts of India and abroad.

The CM touched upon

Rural Sports II begins in all GPUs of Sikkim

**SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 28 FEB:**

Rural Sports is being conducted in all 185 GPUs of Sikkim from 25 to 29 Feb 2020 under Rural Development Department in collaboration with Sports & Youth Affairs Department, a press release from the Sports and Youth Affairs Department informs.

This is a unique scheme envisaged by Chief Minister of Sikkim, P.S. Tamang and conduct-



ed under the direction of Minister for Sports & Youth Affairs, Kunga Nima Lepcha, in which all School children from

age 6 years and above, youth and veterans of rural areas will be given platform to participate in sporting activities.

The objective of the programme is to engage all children, youth and elderly persons at villages and rural schools, so that whole rural society of Sikkim will participate in physical activities, sports & games to improve sports culture at grass root level, health consciousness, importance of fitness and to develop fit & healthy society, the release mentions.

During the sporting activities, **turn to pg 02**

Justice AP Subba appointed Law Commission Chairperson

**SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 28 FEB:** Retired Judge, High Court of Sikkim, Justice AP Subba was today appointed Chairperson, Law Commission of Sikkim.

The notification issued by the Law Department informs that Justice Subba, whose appointment is with immediate effect, will hold office for a period of five years from the date he assumes office and will enjoy the same status, salary, allowances, perquisites, and other facilities at par with a sitting judge of the High Court of Sikkim.

HC judgment on COI of pre-1969 Govt employees not in Sikkim's interest: SSC

**SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 28 FEB:**

Sikkim Subject Committee vice-convenor, Nawin Kiran Pradhan has said that the recent judgment of the High Court of Sikkim on the Certificate of Identification issued to descendants of pre-1969 Government employees will open a Pandora's Box. He further added that the judgment is not in favour of Sikkim Subjects and their descendants because it makes this category at par with Sikkim Subjects.

It may be mentioned that the High Court of Sikkim had passed a judgment on 20 Feb quashing various notifications of the State Government that limited the benefits and status of COIs issued to pre-1969 Government employees and their descendants.

While addressing a press conference here today, he urged the State government to appeal against the judgment either to a divisional bench of the High Court or the Supreme Court and secure a stay order in the interest of the people of Sikkim.

He further urged the government to bring an ordinance or executive notification to safeguard the "original people of Sikkim". Mr Pradhan suggested that the State government should bring a legislation immediately in consultation with the Centre and concerned stakeholders to define the "original Sikkimese" and clear its stand on the CoI.

"I am not saying the judgment is wrong but that it is not in favour of the people of Sikkim and it would open a Pandora's Box," he said.

He stated that the Article 371F has given special status and rights to the people of Sikkim so the **turn to pg 02**

BL land for sale. Road site 100ft by 50ft at Lower Syari. Enroute Ranipool to Deorali via Syari. 10 Minutes Drive from Ranipool. Serious Buyer may contact : **83720-77482/ 94341-36989/ 98320-82664**

Palzor Tamang bowls his way to glory

First Sikkimese to take 5 wickets in First-Class Cricket

SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 28 FEB:

Palzor Tamang, the captain of Sikkim Ranji Team has become the first cricketer from Sikkim to claim five wickets haul in first-class cricket, a press release informs. He took 6 wickets in a Ranji Trophy match against Manipur at Vikash Cricket Ground, Bhubaneswar, Odisha. He considers his parents Karma Tshering Tamang and Manu Tamang as his role models, who always stands by him no matter what. A Sub-Inspector by profession from Gangtok, the tall and lanky pacer said that the journey was not that easy.

Looking at the ball with which he took 6 wickets Tamang remembered his childhood days when he had his first brush with cricket.

“We used to play cricket on local grounds on a regular basis,” he reminisces. Remembering his father he added that his



father was his inspiration who always encouraged and motivated him to play cricket.

“I hardly remember any match that I played in and around Gangtok which my father missed. He would always come to the ground and cheer for me. All that I am today is because of the support of my father,” he further added.

Tamang joined the state camp for the first time in 2004 under Coach Sonam Pladen

Bhutia, currently the coach of Sikkim Ranji Team. He made his debut for Sikkim in U15 category against Odisha on 07 Nov 2006 in Polly Ulmigar Trophy at Mining Cricket Ground. But his talent in cricket was noticed a year before that when he got selected for “School Games Federation of India” in 2005 for the Kendriya Vidyalaya school team. He played in U17 state team in the year 2007-08 in Vijay

Merchant Trophy and the very next season he represented Sikkim in Cooch Behar Trophy in the U19 category and it was in this category where he took his first 5 wickets in a match against Kerala at Tata Digwadi Stadium, Jamadoba. The same year he was made the captain of the team and also scored his first half-century against Jammu & Kashmir and scored 89 runs against Odisha also. He had an impressive all-round

performance in the junior nationals against strong teams like Odisha, J&K, Kerala, etc.

In 2009 he was picked for the East Zone camp which was held at Kolkata and from there he was selected for the “Board President’s XI” team and played the zonal matches in Bangalore. He is the only player from Sikkim to get picked for the Board President’s XI, where he played with many renowned cricketers of the present.

During the off-season he was mostly associated with Alpine Cricket Club of Gangtok where he used to play club matches with his seniors - Amosh Rai, Tshewang Lama, Dhiraj Gurung, who use to guide him improve his game and was supported by colleagues Nilesh Lamichaney, Ashish Thapa and Lee Yong Lepcha.

“Being assigned as the captain of the Ranji Team was really exciting and challenging journey for me but I am enjoying it and working hard. It is a big responsibility entrusted upon me by the association and I will give my best to lead the team from the front and do justice to the role assigned to me,” he added.

CM chairs...

Participants wholeheartedly applauded the state of Sikkim and its diversified potential and wide scope for film making and also suggested to create awareness about its beauty across the world to attract filmmakers.

Investors, Industrialists and the producers introduced about their impressive spheres of experiences and achievements and expressed their interest to explore Sikkim as shooting destination.

Chief Secretary, SC Gupta assured that the state government has duly noted all suggestions, ideas, information and interventions of all participants and anticipated the inputs would be effective and useful for future perspectives in film making.

HC judgment...

equal status provided to petitioners is not in favour of people of Sikkim.

Mr Pradhan alleged that the judgment is also due to the failure of the State government’s commitment to safeguard the people of Sikkim.

“If the State does not take any immediate step then it would prove the failure of the State government and we would be compelled to take action on the same,” he said.

CM releases...

all possible support in days to come. Responding to the six-point demand of Sikkim Film Cooperative Society, he assured to work on all their demands.

FFI president, Firdausul Hasan assured to provide all possible support to the state for the development of cinema in the region. He congratulated the State Government and the CM for taking a giant step for development of cinema.

He expressed his hope that such initiatives would create many opportunities in the field of cinema. Mr Hasan congratulated Sikkim Film Cooperative Society for their efforts towards the festival.

After receiving the lifetime achievement award, Mr Pradhan expressed that the award was a huge honour for him. He stated that this achievement would not stop him here but inspire him to move ahead towards his journey.

Likewise, Manisha Koirala said that Sikkim has been making the country proud by becoming 100% organic state, pollution free and in the field of education. She stated that with the right guidance of the CM, Sikkim would be a great destination for film shooting. She further expressed her best wishes to the festival.

Earlier, in his welcome address, Sikkim Film Cooperative Society president, Dipen Mohora thanked the CM for his support and guidance for this initiative. He further thanked the FFI for providing this opportunity to promote Sikkim as a most sought after destination for film shooting.

The inaugural function also witnessed the felicitation of the CM by the Film Federation of India along with felicitation of Ambassador of Azerbaijan to India, Dr Ashraf Shikhaliyev by FFI and SFCS and Managing Director of Priya Entertainment, Arijit Dutta by SFCS.

On the occasion, the CM released the festival brochure and screening of a Temi Creative Studio's corporate film, Light Action Sikkim by Arindan Sil and team. The inaugural function concluded with the vote of thanks by Festival Director, Mrinalini Shrivastava.

The inauguration of the festival was followed by the screening of the inaugural film, ‘Every 68 Minute’ directed by Anindita Sarbadhicari, conceptualised by Lal Bhatia and Imran Zaki and produced by David and Goliath Films in association with Adil Hussain.

The festival will screen 40 films and hold a series of technical sessions and workshops in script writing, film marketing, digital marketing, production management, sound management and visit to different potential cine locations in the State and gala fashion show.

HAVE A STORY TO SHARE?

email us: news@summittimes.Com

LOST

NAME : SABITA KUMARI
D/O : JALESHWAR PRASAD
Address : Near ICICI bank Jorethang, South Sikkim.
Lost : BA Degree Certificate while travelling between Jorethang to Namchi on few months ago.
Lost GD Entry NO.115 at Jorethang Police Station on 18.02.2020.

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GENERAL LAND FOR SALE

General land 30X40 (3 Plots) available for sale at Tadong 6th Mile next to Harka Maya College. Flat Land no cutting required. Price 27 Lakhs (negotiable).
Contact: 9800201335

LAND FOR SALE

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

LAND FOR SALE

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

Mapping of Tribal Sports Talents at Soreng

GANGTOK, 28 FEB (IPR): Tribal Research Institute, Social Justice and Welfare Department, in collaboration with Sports and Youth Affairs Department, Government of Sikkim, organised its fourth edition of Mapping of Tribal Sports Talents at various Gram Panchayat Unit level under Soreng subdivisions today. The program is funded by the Ministry of Tribal Affairs, Government of India.

Disciplines of sports viz. Football, Volleyball, Badminton, Karate and Athletics was conducted by the department. The tribal children from age group of 9 to 14 years participated in these events and displayed their skills.

It was disclosed that best two talents from each category will be able to participate in the state level scheduled to be held in Gangtok later. And after due selection, the best 10 talents will be sponsored to visit a Sports Academy outside the state.

Objectives of the program is to provide a platform to identify sports talents among tribal children and hone these talents.

The program at Soreng was attended by SDM, Himmat Rai, Soreng, AD (Sports), Mamta Gurung, Officials of Tribal Research Institute, coaches and the Ward Panchayats.

HAVE A STORY TO SHARE?

email us: news@summittimes.Com

Rural Sports...

talented children will be identified and will participate at Block Level competitions in near future. The talented children will also be further listed out and nurtured by Physical Education Teacher and Coaches for higher level of competitions.

Animal Husbandry Minister chairs meeting with Rashtriya Kamdhenu Ayog chairperson



GANGTOK, 28 FEB [IPR]: Animal Husbandry Minister Lok Nath Sharma chaired a meeting in the special presence of the Chairperson, Rashtriya Kamdhenu Ayog, Dr Vallabhai Kathiria, in a local hotel here this afternoon. The meeting was also attended by the Secretary, Animal Husbandry and Veterinary Services, SB Subba, and Department officials.

During the meeting, Minister Sharma submitted proposals for two projects - establishment of Siri Cow Conservation-cum-Rearing Unit and a Self Sustainable Siri Cattle Gaushala in Sikkim.

Minister Sharma outlined the existing scenario of animal husbandry and veterinary services

in the State and informed about the growing interest of farmers and efforts being taken by the state government under the leadership of Chief Minister PS Golay to double the income of farmers as envisioned by the Prime Minister of India.

He informed that the state government is preparing ground work for the establishment of an Animal Husbandry University in the State and urged for support and cooperation of the Union Government.

He also spoke about the strong commitment made by the state government to set an example in field practices to deliver a paradigm shift in animal husbandry and other sectors in the near future.

Dr Vallabhai Kathiria,

in his address, advised development of an Integrated Farm in the state which would be well equipped with various prime components including a research unit for genetic study of cow breeding and its milk, cow dung and urine, training centre for farmers, a demo unit etc.

He also highlighted the value of the indigenous variety of Siri Cow and suggested development of an Integrated Cow Breeding Unit and a Cow Tourism Centre in the state as well.

The Chairperson of the Ayog also suggested establishment of a Kamdhenu Study Centre in every college and university to conduct sensitization programmes for students.

He also assured to extend all possible support from the Union Govt. and suggested to name the upcoming university as “Sikkim Kamdhenu University”.

Earlier, the Secretary, Animal Husbandry and Veterinary Services presented an overview of the departmental activities.

International workshop begins deliberations on Sowa Rigpa

GANGTOK, 28 FEB [IPR]: A two-day international workshop on “Preservation and Promotion of Sowa Rigpa in Asia,” under the directions of Ministry of AYUSH and organised by Regional Ayurveda Research Institute in association with Namgyal Institute of Tibetology began at Chintan Bhawan here today.

The inaugural session was presided over by Health Minister Dr Mani Kumar Sharma along with Agriculture and Animal Husbandry Minister Lok Nath Sharma.

The chief guest, in his address, focused on his practical experience, information and knowledge in the number of key issues of Sowa-Rigpa, including information on regulation, use of Sowa Rigpa in the national healthcare system and its affordability, accessibility and availability.

He said that there should be standard medication supported by quality and continuous supply of medicine which is possible because Sowa Rigpa and Ayurveda have been organised systems for thousands of years with research, publication, conferences, interaction, workshop and other scientific activities.

He stated that the Government of India has also embarked on this alternative system of medicine.

He further said the whole issue is about scientific research and as a scientific person he suggested that the primary data and documentation be preserved for more usable standard quality medicines.

He added that Sikkim has favourable climatic conditions for growing medicinal

herbal plants which need to be given more impetus and in this regard an expected support from AYUSH Ministry is needed so that the system of Sowa Rigpa can be used to the fullest potential for the benefit of the people not from the commercial side but first for the need and demand side of local people.

The Agriculture Minister, in his short address, welcomed and congratulated the delegates for their participation and mentioned that the Sikkim has been declared an Organic State and that the new government, under the leadership of Chief Minister PS Tamang [Golay], envisioned the concept of Green Economy to promote and preserve the global marketing of abundantly available medicinal raw materials with value addition.

He proposed the establishment of a Medicinal Plant Industry-cum-Pharmacy Unit and AYUSH Research Centre in the State to ensure optimum benefits to the farmers.

Joint Secretary, Ministry of AYUSH, Roshan Jaggi, expressed deep gratitude to the Government of Sikkim for these two-day workshop and said that the presence of two Ministers reflects the Government’s attachment to this system of healthcare.

He said that workshop will focus on the pros and cons and how to strengthen the system in order to bring a strong scientific footing so that it develops as a real science and contributes towards the healthcare framework of the country.

He stated that he expected a good outcome from the two days of deliberations and recommendations which will come back to the

Ministry so that decisions are taken on the basis of these recommendations.

He said that Government of India has decided to patronise and develop Sowa Rigpa and recently the Union Cabinet decided that a national institute will be established to strengthen education, regulate the system and have fundamental research.

He further said that the country needs to propagate and develop Ayurveda including Sowa Rigpa because these systems have the capacity to give the people of this country a solution to the emerging healthcare challenges where people are shifting to natural medicines instead of chemical medicines.

He shared that the Government of India has taken a series of steps in these four to five years including strengthening research through Central Council for Research in Ayurvedic systems, a similar council for homeopathy etc so that medical interventions are supported by facts and figures and a robust mechanism is developed in which standard and quality of drugs can be monitored and ensured.

Earlier, several publications of the Council were released.

The inaugural session was also attended by Prof Anup Thakar, Vice Chancellor, Gujarat Ayurved University & Director IPGTARA; Prof KS Dhiman, Director General, CCRAS, New Delhi; Tashi Densapa Director, Namgyal Institute Tibetology; Dr Shripakash, In-charge, RARI, Gangtok; Amjis, officials, teachers and students of Namgyal Institute Of Tibetology and guests from Nepal and Mongolia.

SICA calls on CM, extends invitation to inaugurate Rangpo cricket ground

SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 28 FEB:

Sikkim Cricket Association [SICA] Executives led by president, Lobzang G Tenzing along with construction committee chairman and architect called on Chief Minister, Prem Singh Tamang (Golay) on 27 Feb.

A SICA release informs that the primary objective of the visit was to invite the Chief Minister as the chief guest for the Rangpo Mining Ground inauguration. The Chief Minister was gracious enough to accept the invitation, the release mentions.

Mr Tenzing apprised the Chief Minister of the works conducted and submitted a progress report of the association from 2016 till date. On examining the report, the CM was pleased to observe the progress made by Sikkim Cricket Association as well as the tangible benefits the youth/people of Sikkim have received such as:

a) Monetary benefits



The player's fee for the 2019-20 season amounting to Rs. 4,28,57,750 and professional fee of the support staff amounting to Rs. 1,90,00,000.

b) Skill Development

c) Exposure in terms of not just the players participating in the national arena (currently, SICA has teams in 7 categories participating in 14 tournaments of

The BCCI) but as well as training and exposure of support staff i.e. Coaches, Managers, Medical and Physio units.

President also submitted that Sikkim Cricket Association has hosted 3 national Tournaments this season at KIIT, Bhubaneswar (Our home ground approved by BCCI), Ravenshaw cricket ground and DRIEMS cricket ground, Cuttack,

VIKASH cricket ground, Bhubaneswar, Therefore SICA would need more grounds in Sikkim to host such tournaments in the future.

Mr Tenzing also requested the Chief Minister to kindly make the public aware of the efforts as well as the benefits so that there would be growth of interest in cricket.

"SICA is extreme-

ly honored by the Chief Minister's intent to extend extensive support to the association, as he stated that such efforts would undoubtedly benefit the people/youth of Sikkim," the release states.

The recent visit to the Chief Minister's office has reinvigorated the body as he not only extended his support but also expressed his intent to work in tandem with SICA. Such an effort would surely ensure effective and efficient performance.

"The long deliberation with the Chief Minister was most encouraging. We are very fortunate to have a Chief Minister who being former president of SICA and a current voting member, understands the job of a cricket administrator as well as the workings of the BCCI like no other. He also shares a personal rapport with the current BCCI officials," the SICA president has said.

Cyber-crime training for IOs and Police personnel

SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 28 FEB:

Crime Branch/CID Sikkim Police organised a one-day training programme for Police staff and Investigating Officers of Sikkim Police in collaboration with Reserve Bank of India at conference hall, Police headquarter, Gangtok, today, a press release informs.

In this programme, the police officers were trained on the topic of recent trends in cyber-crime and how to stop and investigate the cyber-crimes. This programme was organised for enhancing the skills of the Investigating Officers so that they can investigate cyber-crime and bank frauds and can arrest the culprits and deliver justice to the victim.



Resource persons from Mumbai and Bengaluru were invited and they imparted training on the said subjects.

The programme was inaugurated by DGP Sikkim, A Shankar Rao and attended by ADGP (CB-CID), AK Singh, RBI Gangtok General Manager, Ravindra V. Sangvai, SP (CB/CID), Manish Verma.

SP (CID), Manish Verma said that the CB-CID of Sikkim Police always

tries to enhance the capacity and skills of police officers and investigating officers of the State for better services to the citizens.

For this, the CB-CID keeps organising various trainings and awareness programmes for the police officers and common citizens. This is one such programme, he said and congratulated his team of officers for such a wonderful programme.

Sichey Mavericks beat Phuentsholing team



SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 28 FEB:

Sichey Mavericks of East Sikkim defeated Veteran Phuentsholing from Bhutan today at the 19th Chief Minister's Gold Cup Archery Tournament [Compound] here at the

Archery Shooting Range of Tenzing Namgyal Memorial Ground, Tathangchen.

Sichey Mavericks won 35-13. KRG Ralang will take on Bayul Denzong in the next match of the tournament scheduled for Saturday.

AYUSH Hospital hosts naturopathy camp

SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 28 FEB:

A daylong Mega Naturopathy Camp was held today along with a series of activities here at the AYUSH Hospital in Socheykhang, East Sikkim.

The camp was organized by the National Institute of Naturopathy, Pune, in association of Greenwoods, Darjeeling, on the theme 'Self Reliance through Self Health Reliance'. The camp was organized as part of celebrations being held to mark the 150th birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi.

The camp included the formation of a human chain to mark and pay tribute to the contributions of Mahatma Gandhi in the field of Naturopathy while a Gandhi Vatika exhibition fea-



tured a spinning wheel [Charkha] and a display of Gandhian thoughts in relation to Health.

The camp also included a drawing competition for school students on the theme Gandhi and Nature, a film screening on Gandhi and Nature Cure and a live demonstration of the charkha by Dr Neelam Verma.

Free health food was also distributed to participants in the camp.

A official communication informs that the camp received 673 participants, 446 of whom were from different schools and colleges covered during the outreach programme by the National Institute of Naturopathy.

National Science Day celebrated at ICAFI University



SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 28 FEB:

National Science Day was celebrated at ICAFI University, Sikkim, on 28 Feb, a press release informs. The day is celebrated to commemorate the discovery of the 'Raman Effect' by the great Indian physicist Sir CV Raman on February 28, 1928.

The event was organized as per the direction of Ministry of Human Resource Development. On

the occasion events like essay, painting and quiz competition were organized for the students.

The topic for the competition was "Path breaking innovations and scientific achievements from India for humankind/innovation and entrepreneurship." The aim of the activity was to allow them an opportunity to show their talents and interests, the release mentions.

NABARD to hold State Credit Seminar at Gangtok

GANGTOK, 28 FEB (PIB):

National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD), Gangtok will be organizing a State Credit Seminar at Gangtok, on 03 March, 2020.

NABARD has been preparing the State Focus Paper, every year, by aggregating the district wise Potential Linked Credit Plans (PLPs) for each district of the state to facilitate flow of insti-

tutional credit under Priority Sector.

The objective of the State Credit Seminar is to discuss the potentials for credit flow in the state of Sikkim, identify critical infrastructure gaps and the steps to be taken by various developmental agencies and banks in the desired direction.

Minister for Rural Development, Sonam Lama, will attend the Seminar as chief guest.



GRATITUDE



The family members of the Late Pasang Lhamu Ethenpa wish to sincerely thank, where words cannot express our deep gratitude for the outpouring of support during our period of grieving. To one and all who visited our house, attended the funeral which undoubtedly provided us with huge strength. The cards and the flowers sent were beautiful. Your kindness touched our hearts and lifted us up. Your thoughtfulness will never be forgotten.

Our special thanks goes to most of the retired aged teachers of PN Girls Senior Secondary School who visited us as well as attended funeral of our beloved "Mummy". Our thanks also goes to the Principal, faculty members & the students of PN Girls Senior Secondary School, Gangtok and above all, we thank President & the members of PNGites for their soothing going heavenly abode tribute and singing favorite school songs loved by our Late Mummy. Pasang Guruma always had her heart attached to this beloved school, staff and the students. Our Mummy's 49th Day death ceremony (Kutse Shegu) falls on 1st April 2020 & will be held at Ethenpa Villa, Lower Tadong, Gangtok.

Mr. Menla T. Ethenpa, Dr. Sonam T. Ethenpa (Sons)
Mrs. Tshering Pem Ethenpa, Mrs. Chunki Bhutia (Daughter-in-laws)
Mrs. Diki Y. Ethenpa, Ms. Chopel Ethenpa, Mrs. Sangay Pema Ethenpa (Daughters)
Mr. Karma Chankapa, Mr. Pemba Lama (Son-in-laws)
& host of Grand Children & Great-Grand Children

GOVERNMENT OF SIKKIM BUILDINGS & HOUSING DEPARTMENT

No.41/ETENDER/BHD/2019-20

Dated: 26/02/2020

NOTICE INVITING TENDER

On behalf of the Governor of Sikkim, Chief Engineer, Buildings & Housing Department, Government of Sikkim invites percentage rate tenders from qualified Class I A contractors, within the state of Sikkim, enlisted with the SPWD in the cover system through e-procurement. The bids should be submitted online through the website www.sikkimtender.gov.in for the work as listed below.

Sl. No.	Name of the work	Bid security 2.5.% of the bid value (Rs. In lakhs)	Bid Value (Rs. In lakhs)	Cost of tender/bid form (Rs. In lakhs)	Completion Period.
1	2	3	4	5	6
1.	Construction of Proposed Sikkim Civil Services Officers Institute Near Chintan Bhawan Gangtok East Sikkim.	34.08	1363.066	1.00	36 months.

IMPORTANT EVENT

1.	Publishing of Online Tender in e-procurement portal	26 th February 2020
2.	Uploading of bidding documents in e-procurement portal	26 th February 2020
3.	Document download/Sale start date and time	26 th February 2020 1500 hrs onwards
4.	Last date & Time for seeking clarification regarding bids	4 th March 2020 upto 1500 Hrs.
5.	Last date for online submission of completed bids	16 th March, 2020 up to 1600 Hrs.
6.	Date for Submission of hard Copies (Tender fee and Bid security)	18 th March 2101 up to 1600 Hrs.
7.	Date of opening of Tender bids	19 th March 2020 at 1300 HRS.

For all details on the bid visit www.sikkimtender.gov.in.

R.O No. 383/IPR/Pub/Classi./19-20
Date: 27.2.2020

Sd/-
Chief Engineer
Buildings & Housing Department
Government of Sikkim.



What is Novel Coronavirus - nCoV?

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

Symptoms of nCoV

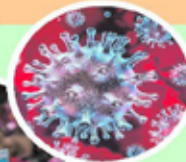
- Fever
- Difficulty in breathing
- Dry Cough
- Severe acute respiratory syndrome
- Pneumonia - like symptoms

Treatment

- Treatment is symptomatic and supportive, based on the patient's clinical condition.
- No vaccinations available as of now.
- Visit Doctor in case symptoms detected.

Precautions to Prevent nCoV

- Wash your hands often with soap.
- Use an alcohol based hand sanitizer
- Observe good personal hygiene.
- Avoid touching your face with unwashed hands.
- Avoid contact with people with possible symptoms.
- Avoid contact with animals and consumption of undercooked meats.
- Avoid travel to nCoV affected places.
- Wear a mask if you have respiratory syndrome.
- and cover your mouth while coughing or sneezing.



If you seek help, you may call :
 -Toll free no. 104
 District surveillance Officer
 EAST : 7029372100
 WEST : 9593297809
 NORTH : 9841957468
 SOUTH : 7407691463
 New STNM
 AMS : 9434711402

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & FAMILY WELFARE
GOVERNMENT OF SIKKIM

Planning Should Precede Training

...followed by funding options and promotion

The Skill Development initiative of the State Government is now a decade old. Started in the year 2007, Sikkim's Skill Development and Capacity Enhancement Directorate was the first in the country. Eventually, the Directorate matured into a full-fledged Department. In its first ten years, the Directorate trained thousands of youngsters, providing skill certification and also guiding them through the process of placements. With the Directorate having grown into a Department, there was greater anticipation on the strides that it would take to skill the human resource of Sikkim and assist them in choosing the right career, locally, nationally as well as internationally. Has that happened?

The skill development initiative was always a good idea, and perhaps because it was a tad ahead of its time, it took some time to find its rhythm – the nation, after all, has only just caught up with the idea. Uncertain central funding appears to have paused the effort a bit, but even without this commitment, training courses and awareness camps were not new to Sikkim, and their intensity, as far as press releases go, continues to be strong. This newspaper reports on one almost every day. Given the number of such initiatives in the State and the more than a decade of skilling, the youth here should have become multifaceted powerhouses enabled to take to any sector, at any time. And yet, one look around and the youth do not appear to be launching into any kind of enterprise with much success; at least not in the scale that the press releases would have one believe. One reason for this is that the trainings and awareness camps are conducted without much planning. Without getting into the course-content, which itself might be in need of overhauling, one can vouch that too many of these camps and courses are held in a vacuum. Synergy, that word that seems to drive all efforts in the globalised world, seems to be lacking. Since most of these courses are either sponsored or conducted by government departments – state and central - the synergy one is speaking of has to be between the departments. Take for example the number of tailoring courses that are held all over the State throughout the year. How many local youth have formed tailoring cooperatives after getting trained? Not too many, if any at all. Does one even go to tailors anymore? The same inference can be drawn for the many organic farming sessions. If a funding agency had been made a part of such trainings, the real possibility of loans to fund a new enterprise might have motivated some youth to put their skills to effective use. Another example is the adventure awareness camp moving from one remote area to another. If it is self-employment avenues that camps are hoping to open up, then, along with funding agencies, travel agents should be made a part of the camps. They can be brought in on the last date to see for themselves the kind of skills local youth in remote areas have acquired so that in future it can promote the availability of locally trained guides in these areas. This will bring business to the local youth and also provide Tourism with more destinations to sell. The start-up funding initiative of the State Government should be dovetailed into the skill-development courses and training sessions so that something of consequence emerges at the end of each course.

The examples can continue, but the lesson remains the same, planning has to accompany training so that the skills are put in perspective and real opportunities opened up.

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

Could coronavirus really trigger a recession?

MICHAEL WALDEN
theconversation.com

Fears are growing that the new coronavirus will infect the U.S. economy.

U.S. stocks are headed for their worst week since the 2008 financial crisis; companies including Apple and Walmart have been warning of potential sales losses from COVID-19 and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention told Americans to prepare for the outbreak to spread to the United States, with unknown but potentially “bad” consequences.

Lately, many people have asked me, as an economist, a question I haven't heard in years: Could a virus really send the global and U.S. economies into recession – or worse? Put more pertinently, will COVID-19 trigger an economic meltdown?

WHAT A VIRUS CAN DO

The worry is understandable; viruses are scary things. I've read my share of medical thrillers based on some new virus spreading throughout the globe killing millions, destroying businesses and almost ending civilization until heroes – super or not – contain it at the last minute.

While these are works of fiction, we only have to look back 100 years to find a real example of what an unchecked virus can do.

The 1918-1919 influenza pandemic, also known as the Spanish flu, killed at least 50 million people worldwide, with some estimates putting the number as high as 100 million. In the U.S., almost 1 of every 3 people became infected, and 500,000 died. Even for those who survived, there were numerous cases of long-term physical disability.

Fortunately, the adverse economic impacts were short-lived. With today's more mobile and interconnected world, however, some suggest any large-scale pandemic would be much more severe, with costs in the trillions.

To date, deaths from the coronavirus have been very small, totaling a little over 2,700 worldwide, out of more than 80,000 known cases – or only about 3.4%. Almost all of the deaths have been in China, where the virus was first detected. Rapid actions to quarantine infected individuals have likely limited the spread.

Yet even if the death rates are relatively low, the economy can still suffer. These economic impacts would likely come in four forms: shortages of products from China, reduced sales to China, a drop in consumer spending based on fears about the virus and falling stock prices.

Let me evaluate the potential impact of each, but bear in mind that they are all interconnected, and a drop in just one can affect the others.

PRODUCT SHORTAGES

The U.S. imports over US\$500 billion of products each year from China, everything from smartphones and televisions to clothing and machine parts. Sick people in China can't work, which means they can't make products. Closing off parts of the country from other areas also curtails production.

The reduced availability of Chinese products could slow some segments of the U.S. economy, with the computer and electronics industries be-

ing the most vulnerable. For example, many smartphones sold in the U.S. are assembled in China. Although U.S. retailers have some inventory, shortages will likely appear if the pandemic persists.

Americans are already beginning to see some impacts: for example, in shortages of dozens of drugs and other medical products and longer wait times for a variety of products such as bicycles and board games.

It's too early to say how severe it will get, but the dependency of U.S. supply chains on China is a major concern. It shows how something like the coronavirus could become a huge problem in the modern economy.

SALES MAY TAKE A HIT

On the flip side, U.S. companies sell well over \$100 billion of products to China annually, with the most important being technology like computer chips and agricultural products such as soybeans.

These sectors have already taken a hit from the tariffs imposed by China during the U.S.-China trade war of the last two years. The recent thaw in the conflict – and a limited deal with China – had created optimism for U.S. factories and farms that increased sales were around the corner.

That corner may be harder to reach as a result of the coronavirus outbreak and its significant impact



on the Chinese economy. More U.S. companies are now worrying about their sales to China as a result.

CONSUMERS STILL SPENDING

Ultimately, more than anything, the spending of consumers drives the U.S. economy, accounting for roughly 70% of growth. Economists, policymakers and traders will be closely watching measures of this to help them understand how worried they should be.

Significant declines in spending are usually the most direct cause of a recession and often signal falling incomes and higher unemployment. But consumers also reduce spending as a result of fear – such as when they see traders panicking on Wall Street. That is, nothing actually bad has to happen to reduce spending, and this fear-induced penny pinching can have real-world consequences and even trigger a recession.

We saw this happen with the SARS virus in 2003, which resulted in 700 deaths worldwide. Consumer confidence about the future dipped, and so did spending, especially on durable products like appliances, vehicles and furniture. Fortunately, the dip was short-lived, and no recession resulted.

Although coronavirus-related deaths already exceeded those from SARS, consumer confidence has not yet been affected. The latest data, released on Feb. 25, shows it continued to rise in February, albeit at a slower-than-expected pace and based on a survey taken before the recent stock market swoon. And measures of consumer spending like retail sales are also still growing, if at a subdued rate.

Also, there could be two positive offsets from the virus that will boost consumers. One is a reduction in interest rates that has already occurred and will be welcome news for people borrowing money for a home or vehicle. Second is a drop in oil – and, ultimately, gas – prices that will mean less money to be paid at the pump.

So it appears, for now, that consumers are more focused on jobs, incomes and gas prices than on COVID-19.

A ROCKY ROAD FOR STOCKS

Lastly, let's look at the impact on stocks. One thing traders and investors absolutely do not like is uncertainty. And that's what we have right now: No one, not even me, knows how bad the outbreak will get or what the impact will be on companies, consumers and the economy.

Until we have a good idea of how much the virus will spread and whether containment efforts will be

successful, markets could remain wobbly. The Standard & Poor's 500 stock index has plunged more than 10% since Feb. 21, ending a bull market that lasted 12 years. A falling stock market could affect the real economy in a number of ways, including by sapping consumer confidence and reducing their spending.

But just as a bout of bad news can send markets into a tailspin, a reason for

optimism could cause a rebound just as fast.

BRACE FOR IMPACT – AND UNCERTAINTY

For now, we'll all – traders, companies, consumers – have to just live with uncertainty, not knowing just how bad it will get.

The best all of us can do is monitor the situation and take precautions to prevent its spread – and be ready if it does.

A key measure to watch is the trend in the number of new cases reported worldwide. A reduction is often a sign the virus is running its course. However, a jump in cases could be cause for alarm, especially if the increase is large.

Companies and industries in the U.S. having strong ties to China or other countries with major infections could be in for a rocky road ahead, but with any luck the challenges will last weeks or months – not years. As long as U.S. consumers continue to spend, the economy will continue to expand, and there's little risk of recession. If the stock market tumbles further, however, all bets may be off.

[the writer is Professor and Extension Economist, North Carolina State University]

How fame abroad changes African footballers' way of life back home

ERNEST YEBOAH ACHEAMPONG
theconversation.com

African footballers have long been attracted to careers abroad. This is easy to understand considering that many come from backgrounds of poverty and high unemployment rates in countries with repressive governments that mismanage resources. Rural life also poses challenges to aspiring sports people, such as a lack of playing grounds and other facilities.

These factors tend to hinder football development on the continent.

The European football market offers footballers better conditions and socioeconomic benefits. Foreign leagues provide considerably better earnings than what players earn in their domestic leagues.

The evolution of the European football market picked up in the 1980s, providing a chance for many African players to achieve professional status. Football became a global business product, attracting huge broadcasting rights and corporate sponsorship.

The experience of playing and living abroad in this environment can lead to changes in players' behaviour. Not only do they have far greater wealth than their peers, they may break old social ties and consider themselves “special”.

I set out to explore these changes to understand why achieving professional status abroad should suddenly affect players' behaviour in their home communities.

I interviewed professional footballers from Ghana, Senegal, Nigeria, Zambia, Sierra Leone, Cote d'Ivoire, Kenya, Cameroon and Egypt, aged between 18 and 52, who had played in the leagues of countries like England,

Germany, Spain, Italy and France. They were asked to describe their football career path from their country of origin to moving abroad and beginning their professional activity. The study captured both current players and those who had left Africa in the 1980s, 1990s and 2000s.

The study found that upward social mobility often led to extreme behavioural and attitude switches. Some of the notable traits from the players studied were arrogance and conspicuous consumption. Some even spoke ill of fellow professionals in lower or developing leagues.

This is important because their home communities expect them to maintain a relationship with the people who supported them during their formative periods. It leads to social disconnection when some are perceived as “ungrateful” and reluctant to give back to society.

All interviewees admitted that fame and wealth, if not properly managed, could have a negative effect on society. On the other hand, they could use their higher social status to change lives in their home countries.

In contrast to professional footballers who migrate, other kinds of migrant workers often maintain strong connections with people at home. Sometimes they send resources to support projects for the public benefit, such as building schools.

AFRICAN BEGINNINGS

Many African players began their professional journey by playing in street football and inter-street competitions within their communities or nearby communities. Social practice of the sport supported individual players' social integration and made

them visible to football enthusiasts. All the players I interviewed said they had received a lot of support from their communities.

When they left their communities to play abroad, they gained social status and national recognition. Most moved to cities and adopted new attitudes. A player recalled that the “job of football has a way of changing you if you're not careful without you knowing, unconsciously, you'll turn out to be a different human being”.

An example is Abedi Pele, a former captain of Ghana and one of the most globally recognised footballers to emerge from Africa. Speaking at a G8 Summit he said:

“We were enjoying football and having fun but to see that such a thing can turn to the most lucrative business in the world is what amazes me, something I started like a joke became the most unique, powerful, influential business in the world that when you speak people listen, when you talk, you inspire millions of people... And you have to also learn to maintain the fame and not to abuse it”.

Apart from fame, my study found that there are other variables that can drive changes in players' behaviour. Some do not recognise the changes personally. They include belief in one's own abilities and the likelihood of one's behaviour leading to a specific outcome. Other variables include self-control and learning from observation. The influence of these variables on behaviour is not unexpected when a person comes from a background of moderate education.

Players in the study said they had to guard against behaviour such as ignoring their former team colleagues,

senior players, coaches, friends and the community that supported their professional activities abroad. They said the community saw such behaviour as undesirable since it did not represent their cultural norms and social values. These values include reciprocal behaviour and an attitude of humility, obedience, gratitude and submissiveness.

Abedi Pele noted that “When you are rich, famous and influential, if you don't take your time you will think that the world belongs to you or you control it”.

A few players in the study identified fame and wealth as an opportunity to support a worthy cause in African communities. One was Stephen Appiah, a school dropout who grew up in Chorkor, a poor fishing community in Accra, Ghana. He built a health-care centre and library and created an annual sports day event for Chorkor. He no longer lives there but his social projects represent his presence there after his success.

Communities expect successful players to be guided by social norms that shaped their early lives – not just by wealth and fame achieved later. But sudden situational changes tend to influence people's social networks. Many footballers no longer mix with their former friends.

The study suggests that if professional African players maintain their bond with their home communities, they can create opportunities to support local development. They can also serve as role models for young talent keen to have a career abroad.

[the writer is Lecturer, Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Sport (HPERS), University of Education]

East Bengal face Churchill Brothers



KOLKATA, FEB 28 (PTI): East Bengal will return to the iconic Yuba Bharati Krirangan for the first time this I-League season as they cross swords with Churchill Brothers here on Saturday.

After having succumbed to five defeats since the turn of the year, the Red and Golds got their campaign back on track with two successive wins, helping them out of relegation zone.

The Kolkata giants

have an opportunity to extend their winning run but the possibility of moving up from the fourth to second place will depend on the outcome of the day's third and final fixture involving Gokulam Kerala and Punjab.

"Team is getting used to new methods, but we are still on the way," said East Bengal coach Mario Rivera.

Weighing in on their next opponents, he add-

ed, "Churchill are always a difficult team with good foreigners. They are very competitive. Last season, we couldn't win against them in the first leg but we will try to get it this time."

Churchill Brothers FC Goa, currently third on the table, had their winning run thwarted by the Red and Gold's arch-rivals Mohun Bagan.

However, the Red Machines' last trip to the city of joy was one

to remember, running out 4-2 winners against the league leaders and till date, remain the only side to have inflicted defeat on Mohun Bagan this season.

Churchill Brothers coach Bernardo Tavares said, "East Bengal will always be a challenge to any team, no matter what. We were on a good run and we had the chance to cut Mohun Bagan's lead at the top and unfortunately, it wasn't

to be." "Defeats are always disappointing but we have learnt from the mistakes we made, and hopefully, against East Bengal, we can make it count and come home with a result."

Churchill Brothers were also the first team to stop East Bengal's unbeaten run earlier in the season, courtesy a last-minute Willis Plaza header, the result leading to a downward spiral for the Red & Golds.

Markets shut, vehicles off roads in Itanagar bandh

ITANAGAR, FEB 28 (PTI): The dawn-to-dusk shutdown called by the All Nyishi Youth Association (ANYA) passed off peacefully on Friday amid tight security, police said.

The shutdown was total as all business establishments, markets, banks and educational institutions remained closed, while attendance in government office was thin.

Private vehicles were off roads but a few state transport buses were seen plying with escorts.

A few vehicles were, however, damaged by the protesters, said Kamdam Sikhom, the sub-divisional police officer of Itanagar.

The ANYA gave the shutdown call, demand-

ing scrapping of the Arunachal Pradesh Staff Selection Board, withdrawal of the government e-market-place procurement system, early resolution of the boundary dispute with Assam and immediate construction of the Trans-Arunachal Highway, among others.

The bandh was largely peaceful as no untoward incidents were reported from any part of the state capital, Sikhom said, adding that the protesters were cooperative with the police and magistrates on duty.

Elaborate security arrangements were made in the entire state capital, which was divided into four zones, said JK Lego, superin-

tendent of police (capital). The state government had declared the shutdown "illegal".

ANYA general secretary Bengia Tada said that the shutdown was not to harass the public but for the interest of the people of the state.

"We have put forward a series of genuine grievances but none has been taken up seriously. This left us with no choice but to go ahead with the shutdown," Tada said.

Home Minister Bamang Felix had said that the ANYA had declined his invitation for a meeting.

Felix at a press conference on Monday said the state government has already met many of their demands.

WB Guv condemns violence in Delhi



KOLKATA, FEB 28 (PTI): West Bengal Governor Jagdeep Dhankhar on Friday condemned the recent incidents of violence in the national capital which has claimed 39 lives so far and criticised the role of those who see prospects of growth in it.

Describing hatred as another form of violence, Dhankhar said observing silence on it is also a "crime against humanity".

Thirty-nine people have

"Those who see in violence prospects of growth or opportunity are just not civil. Violence in thought/action calls for unqualified condemnation," Dhankhar tweeted on Friday.

"To hate (is) one form of violence and to ignore or observe silence on the other is a crime against humanity. Such selective approach (is) inhuman," the governor added.

Thirty-nine people have

been killed and more than 250 injured in the communal clashes that broke out in northeast Delhi in areas like Jaffrabad, Maujpur, Chand Bagh, Khureji Khas and Bhajanpura.

Nearly 7,000 paramilitary forces have been deployed in the affected areas since Monday. Hundreds of Delhi Police personnel are also on the ground to maintain peace.

Migrant labourer from West Bengal among 2 killed in wall collapse in Karnataka

MANGALURU, FEB 28 (PTI): At least two labourers, including a 20-year old man from West Bengal, were killed and another was seriously injured when a compound wall collapsed on them in the city on Friday, police said.

Two other workers have been trapped under the debris and Fire and Rescue service personnel from Kadri and Padeshwar are continuing operations to pull them out.

The construction work was going on at a

site when the compound wall of the nearby property collapsed at Karan-galpady junction in the afternoon.

The deceased have been identified as Masrigul from West Bengal and Bhimesh (25) belonging to Bagalkot in Karnataka.

Hanikul (23), taken out of the debris and shifted to hospital, is in a critical condition, police said.

MLA Vedavyas Kamath and top police officials visited the spot.

Coronavirus: 106 quarantined in Maha since Jan this year

MUMBAI, FEB 28 (PTI): A total of 106 persons, who arrived in Maharashtra from coronavirus-affected countries, were quarantined in the state since January 18 this year, of whom 104 have been found negative for the infection, while the test results of two others are awaited. The state health department gave this information in a statement issued on Friday.

Of these 106 persons, only four are presently in the isolation wards- two each at Naidu Hospital in Pune and Kasturba Hospital in Mumbai and reports of the swab samples of two of them are awaited from the National Institute of Virology (NIV), it said.

"Out of these 106 samples sent by the state, 104 have been found negative as per the reports of the NIV," a senior health department official said.

All the passengers arriving from 12 Covid-19 affected countries/regions- China, Hong Kong, Thailand, Singapore, South Korea, Japan, Nepal, Indonesia, Vietnam, Italy, Iran, and Malaysia- are being screened at the Mumbai airport.

So far, as many as 57,592 travellers, who arrived at the Mumbai International Airport in

475 flights, have been screened for possible infection, it said.

Apart from Mumbai, Pune and Thane, travellers are also monitored in Nanded, Buldhana, Nagpur, Wardha, Sangli, Ahmednagar, Amravati, Palghar, Jalgaon, Chandrapur and Satara districts, it added.

"Field surveillance is also actively going on all across the state in search of people coming from the coronavirus-affected areas," the official said.

Those who are suspected to have contracted the deadly infection are sent to isolation facilities for treatment.

However, no case of coronavirus infection has come to light in the state so far, the statement said.

All travellers from Wuhan city of China - the epicentre of the outbreak of epidemic - are being isolated and tested, irrespective of whether they show any symptoms are not, it added.

Follow-up at home is conducted for travellers from Covid-19-affected countries, who do not show any symptoms during the screening at the airport.

"Travellers coming from other affected parts are being followed for 14 days.

Voting rights: Kerala NRIs demand changes to People Act

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, FEB 28 (PTI): The Kerala Non-Resident Indians (NRI) Commission on Friday demanded the right to vote from their workplace and passed a unanimous resolution seeking amendment to the Representation of the People Act in this regard.

The commission is a statutory body constituted under the Non-Resident Indian (Keralites) Commissions Act, 2016, for the welfare of non-resident Keralites working outside India.

The resolution, moved by commission member and NRI entrepreneur Shamsheer Vayalil, demanded the amendment to the Representation of the People Act without any further delay "enabling millions of NRIs to exercise their voting rights from their workplace" outside the country.

The resolution said the commission resolves to request the Central government and Election Commission of India to make appropriate amendment to the Representation of Peo-

ple Act, 1951, to ensure voting rights for the non-resident Indians working abroad.

The Centre had introduced a bill for this purpose and was passed by the Lok Sabha in 2018, but the same has since lapsed.

The NRI commission requested that the central government may consider introducing the bill in the next session of Parliament.

"The Central government may consider introducing the bill in the next session of the Parliament considering the interest of the NRI community at large, the resolution read.

The approved resolution would be sent to the Ministry of Law, Election Commission of India and the Central government, the commission said.

According to the estimate of the Ministry of External Affairs, there are about 3.10 crore NRIs living in different countries across the world.

Meanwhile, an unofficial data of the Election Commission shows a small fraction of the

NRIs was now casting their votes.

Commission chairman Justice PD Rajan said, "This is the time for us to step up pressure on the agencies concerned to implement this. Voting from the workplace would be a different experience for them. It would be a decisive step."

Vayalil is also the petitioner in the writ filed in the matter in the Supreme Court.

"We would also approach the NRI commission in other states and request them to raise the same demand. All of the agencies must come together for this. NRIs have been longing for this decision," Vayalil said.

The Lok Sabha had passed a bill enabling NRI proxy voting rights in August 2018.

This was done after an expert committee of the Election Commission forwarded the legal framework to the law ministry to amend the electoral laws.

However, the bill lapsed following the dissolution of the 16th Lok Sabha.

Mizoram to get its third flight service on Saturday



AIZAWL, FEB 28 (PTI): Mizoram is set to get its third flight with low-cost carrier IndiGo starting a service on the Guwahati-Aizawl-Agartala sector on Saturday from the Lengpui airport, a senior official said.

Chief Minister Zoramthanga will flag off the IndiGo flight at 12.30 pm, principal consultant

for civil aviation Wing Commander J Lalhminglana said on Friday.

Several officials of the state government and those of the budget carrier will be present at the airport during the flag off, he said.

The airline is also planning to introduce an Airbus A320 on the Aizawl-Delhi sector soon, Lalhminglana said. Mizoram

currently doesn't have a direct airlink with Delhi, following the withdrawal of services by Jet Airways in February 2019.

Presently, the state is served by Air India which operates on the Aizawl-Kolkata-Imphal route and Go Air that runs a service on the Aizawl-Culcutta-Guwahati sector.

Myanmar president arrives on two-day tour of Bodh Gaya

GAYA (BIHAR), FEB 28 (PTI): Myanmar president Win Myint arrived here on Friday on a two-day tour of Bodh Gaya, the holy town where Buddha is said to have attained enlightenment more than two millennia ago.

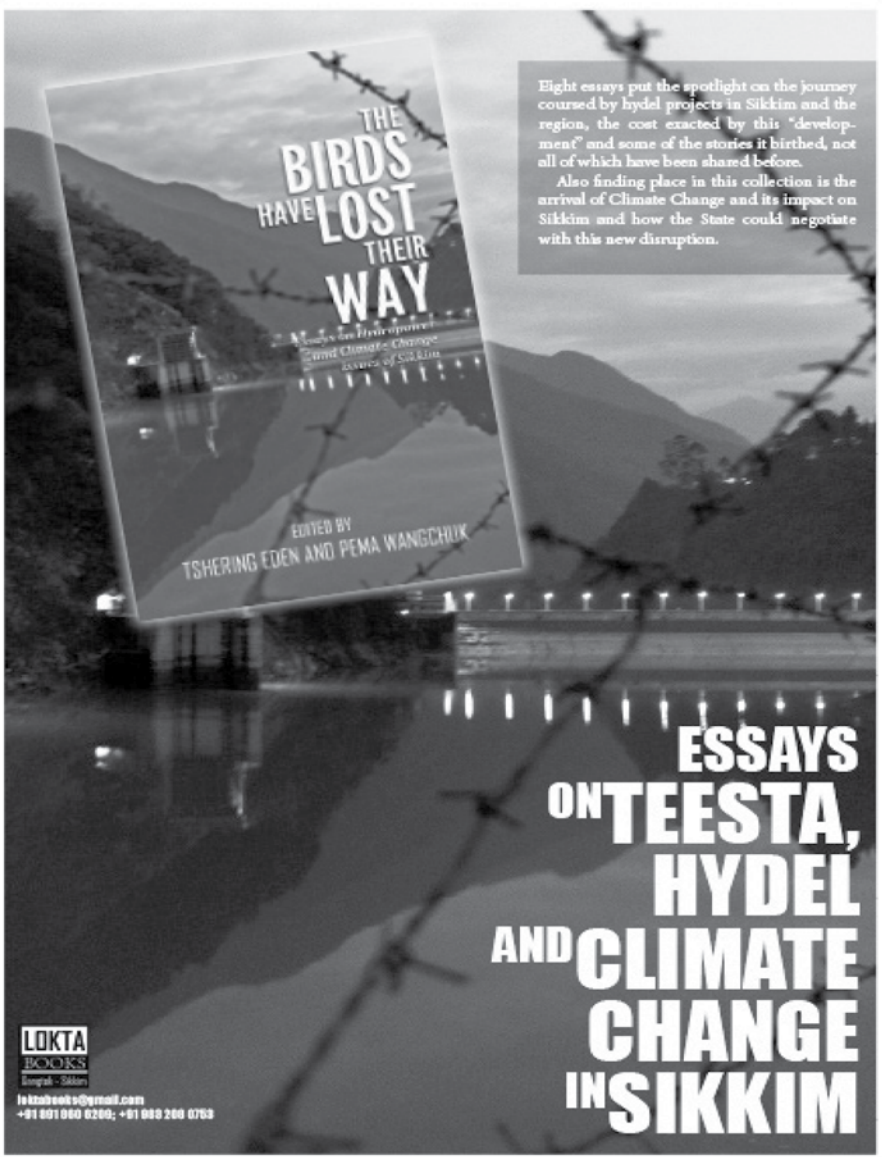
Accompanied by wife Cho Cho and a 28-member delegation of top Myanmar officials, Myint landed

at the international airport in Gaya where he was received by Bihar minister Ashok Choudhary and officials of the civil and police administration.

On way to the hotel in Bodh Gaya where Myint and the delegates will be staying, they were accorded a warm welcome by schoolchildren who stood on both sides of

road waving the Indian tricolor and the national flag of Myanmar.

The Myanmar first couple later offered prayers at the Maha Bodhi temple, a UNESCO world heritage site, which also has within its premises the "Bodhi tree" under which Buddha is said to have attained enlightenment.



'It hurts': Arteta admits pain of Arsenal's Europa League exit against Olympiakos

NICK AMES

LONDON, 28 FEB [THEGUARDIAN]: Youssef El Arabi's goal, a minute from the end of extra time, put the Greek Super League leaders through and it came just moments after Arsenal thought they had won the game themselves. Arteta and his staff had celebrated wildly when Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang put them ahead in the tie with an overhead kick but the subsequent sting in the tail was visibly devastating.

"It hurts, big time," Arteta said. "We had a lot of hope in this competition. It was a great way for us to be able to go to Europe and it is a very beautiful competition to try to win. I think we did a lot of positive things in the game; I think we created enough chances to win, but if you concede two set-pieces again in a tie like this you put yourself in big trouble."

In truth Arsenal were sluggish throughout, but the outcome comes as a major shock after their first-leg win in Piraeus. Arteta now faces a challenge to lift his players for Monday's FA Cup tie with Portsmouth and, perhaps more importantly, the final 11 games of a Premier League campaign. They are seven points behind the top four.

"I've seen all the boys and I know how much they wanted this competition," he said. "I've seen today the way they fight and the way we try to play, and it's a difficult one to digest as a team and as a club."

"This is football and sometimes it is very cruel when the emotions are right here [raises hand high], then in another moment they're somewhere else [lowers hand]. You have to be able to handle that if you want to be in this industry so now it's up to us, and up to me, to bring this place back in and move forward."

The scale of that task is not beyond him but Arteta retains hope Arsenal can gather themselves to bridge that domestic gap.

"[It will be] very hard because we're still far from the objectives that we all have, but we've been far all season from it and we have to keep fighting," he said. "The most important thing now is that the dressing room has to be strong and we have to keep going and react."

Looking forward to Rahul's quality on field: Nair

KOLKATA, FEB 28 (PTI): Karnataka skipper Karun Nair on Friday said K L Rahul's inclusion is a big boost for his team and he will look to get valuable inputs from the India opener during their semifinal clash against Bengal beginning here on Saturday.

Rahul has been in sparkling form in the limited overs series in New Zealand. He was adjudged man-of-the-series in their 5-0 whitewash in the T20I series.

"Everyone's really happy that he (Rahul) is back. It's a positive sign and a big boost for Karnataka to have him back. For me also, to go to him and talk to him about strategies or any inputs that he will have ... We are really looking forward to his inputs and quality on the field," Nair said.

This is Karnataka's third straight entry into the semifinals but their campaign so far has not been smooth.

Karnataka narrowly edged past Jammu and Kashmir in the quarterfinals.

After two rain-interrupted days, Karnataka were bundled out for 206 on day three and it looked like a first in-



nings shoot out when Jammu and Kashmir was well-placed at 107 for 2. But J Suchith triggered the collapse and Prasidh Krishna wiped the tail as Karnataka bundled out J&K for 192 for a crucial first innings lead. Eventually, Karnataka went on to win the match by 167 runs.

Karnataka have Manish Pandey and Nair in a

star-studded line-up, which also has 19-year-old opener Devdutt Padikkal but the team is yet to click collectively.

Nair said: "As long as you're winning games it's okay for me. If you're finding ways to win the games then that's the most important thing. Those are the signs of a champion team. This is a big game. There's no better time

to come and score your highest scores of the season."

"It's about finding ways to come out of difficult situations and you find people to step up. We have found those individuals. Really happy with the way we have been playing. We made the semis three years in a row. Now it's time to go one step further and reach the finals," Nair said of Kar-

nataka, who last won the title two years in a row in 2014-15.

In 2017, Karnataka had lost by a narrow five-run margin to eventual champions Vidarbha in the semifinals and Nair hoped they would make amend for the heart-break this time.

"Personally I will have good memories. But you don't get that much person-

al satisfaction if the team doesn't win. I will be looking forward to score some runs and try and win the game for the team," said Nair, who had scored 153 in that match.

The out-of-favour India batsman, who boasts of an unbeaten triple century in Tests, has only 357 runs from eight matches and is yet to score a century this season.

"Personally I'm getting a lot of starts but not been able to convert them. Now it's a good time to make sure that I get a big one. The pressure situation brings out the best in team. I'm looking forward to contribute so that the team goes through."

Nair hoped he will be back in the reckoning after scoring big runs.

Asked whether it's hurting to be not in the selectors' radar, he said: "Not really. At the moment, I'm focusing on playing one game at a time and scoring big runs for Karnataka."

"When I start scoring big runs every door will open up. It's the same for everyone. You need to score big runs to get into the next level," he signed off.

Finnish FA drops 'women's' prefix for league in push for equality

MARCUS CHRISTENSON

HELSINKI, 28 FEB

[THEGUARDIAN]: The Finnish FA last year be-

came one of only a few organisations in world football who have equal pay for their men's and women's national teams, and on Thursday it revealed the latest step in its three-year plan.

"Last summer's Women's World Cup proved that people do not base

their interest in football on the gender of the players," said Ari Lahti, president of the Finnish FA. "People come to the games to see top athletes play quality football. That is why women's football should be treated equally with men's football."

He added: "Reaching full equality in sports still demands a lot of hard work. Our sincere wish is that other leagues both

in Finland and globally will follow our lead. We aspire to be a pioneer of equality in the eyes of the whole sports community." The divisions below the National League will be called First Division, Second Division and so on.

In England the top tier is called Women's Super League, in Germany it is Frauen Bundesliga and, in France, Division 1 Féminine.

Punjab lock horns with Gokulam Kerala in I-League

KOZHIKODE, FEB 28 (PTI):

Former champions Punjab FC will lock horns with Gokulam Kerala in the I-League here on Saturday, looking to do a double after winning the first leg.

Gokulam are coming on the back of a loss against Neroca in a match they started as favourites.

After leading 2-1 at the half time, the Malabarians couldn't hold on to their lead and ended up being on the losing side.

In the first leg, the Punjab outfit snatched three points from Gokulam's grasp to continue its enviable run at its for-

treas. After equalising in the 52nd minute, Gokulam's defence was torn apart by Punjab's marquee striker, Asier Pierick Dipanda Dicka, who scored once from open play and converted a free-kick to register a 3-1 win for the northerners.

Punjab FC have been one of the strongest contenders this season. Despite being 11 points adrift of the leaders Mohun Bagan, Punjab is the only team in the league who are still undefeated at home.

Dicka, just two goals shy of reaching 50-goal-mark in Hero I-League, sounded excited on being reminded about his

personal achievement in India.

Having scored nine goals already, he's sharing the pole with Mariners' midfielder Fran Gonzalez.

The Cameroonian striker said, "I am very excited about reaching the 50-goal mark. Rather than pressure, it makes me hungrier to cross this level and then aim the next."

He added, "I always feel very motivated to play against all the big teams and Gokulam is certainly one of them. I would be really happy if I achieve this feat against them and aid in my team's win."

Real Madrid's reputation for dramatic comebacks is more myth than reality



SID LOWE

LONDON, 28 FEB [THEGUARDIAN]:

"If there is a team anywhere that can turn this around, it's them," Pep Guardiola said. And so, it seemed, did almost everyone else. Down on the touchline at full time Casemiro said it. Up in the commentary box the former Real Madrid player and manager Jorge Valdano said it, too. He knows: Valdano was a member of the team who constructed an identity around the remontada, making dramatic comebacks part of Real's mythology. It was a belief system, an act of faith.

But faith is blind and the reality is different. Real may indeed turn their Champions League last-16 tie around after the 2-1 defeat to Manchester City at the Bernabéu on Wednesday. They have the players to do so even if they don't have that player any more. Cristiano Ronaldo is gone but no one would be daft enough to say it's done. No one from City did so, that's for sure.

In recent years, as Real won three Champions Leagues in a row, it has often felt inevitable they would find a way. Going further back it was their thing, or so it goes. But the story doesn't always stand up and history is not always repeated – especially if it didn't happen in the first place, at least not the way it was told.

They used to call it the Spirit of Juanito after the forward who died in a car crash in 1992. Juanito had warned Internazionale that "90 minutes at the Bernabéu are very long" after they had won a European Cup first leg 3-1 in 1986. Real won the second leg 4-1. It was becoming a habit: they had turned around a 3-0 defeat against Anderlecht the year before, winning 6-0 at home. That season they also overcame a 5-1 first-leg defeat by Borussia Mönchengladbach with a 4-0 home victory. In 1976 they had done the same to Derby, winning

the second leg 5-1, having lost 4-1 in the first.

When those opponents got to the Bernabéu they suffered what Valdano described as "stage fright". Real applied what they called "Code Red": it was noisy and it was nasty and it worked. Sometimes it did, anyway. Epic was what they did, or what they said they did. It was a mental state in part, the midfielder Michel saying: "The history of Real Madrid is full of games won in the last minute and the opposition knows that. History matters, history plays. No one knows why but you pull on that Real Madrid shirt and you become a mini Incredible Hulk."

Only history says something different, especially now. Before the quarter-final second leg against Wolfsburg in 2016, Juanito's son Roberto pleaded with people to leave his dad's memory alone. It was not surprising considering one newspaper had carried out a ouija board session to call on his spirit to beat Atlético Madrid in the cup having lost the first leg. Even less surprising considering they had lost. "Every time you mention him for a comeback, we lose," Roberto said.

That time, as it turned out, they didn't: Real came back to beat Wolfsburg 3-0 having lost the first leg 2-0. But that wasn't epic – it just underlined how bad Wolfsburg were and how odd it was that Real had got themselves into that mess in the first place. And Roberto was right. Juanito had been evoked when Real had to overcome a 4-1 first-leg deficit against Borussia Dortmund in the Champions League semi-final in 2013. They failed to turn it round – just as they had done the last 14 times they had sought to overcome a first-leg deficit going back 27 years.

The Champions League era makes the point powerfully. Since

1992, they have had wins overturned more than they have produced remontadas: Juventus in 2003, Monaco in 2004, Juventus in 2005, Bayern in 2007, Ajax last year. Against Arsenal, Liverpool, Dortmund, Juventus, Barcelona and Bayern, the talk was of a comeback, overturning an adverse result but they didn't succeed in any of them.

This time the second leg isn't even at home, although that may not be such an advantage considering Real have won only one of their past six games at the Bernabéu, that stage fright felt more by them perhaps than their visitors now. Sergio Ramos had implied as much in the buildup to the City game, talking of anxiety and expectation, a certain tension at a ground where they have shown vulnerability.

And so, to England they go again. Arsenal won 1-0 at the Bernabéu and held on at Highbury in 2006. When Liverpool won 1-0 in Madrid in 2009, Real's president claimed it didn't matter: they would "piss on" them at Anfield. Real lost 4-0.

Turning a 2-1 defeat around against City is a tough task: Guardiola's team were the better side for most part in Madrid, even if Real lamented that late collapse that allowed their lead to slip away. Real have limitations, which were exposed.

Rodri noted Real are a "flatter" team now without Ronaldo and they go to Manchester without their captain, Ramos, too. "It isn't over but we have a lot of work ahead of us," Casemiro said. History is not on their side, either. Only once have Real overcome a home first-leg defeat in Europe – against FC Wacker in the Cup Winners' Cup in 1970, losing the other four – but then history is there to be rewritten, too.

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BTS cancel concerts as S. Korea virus cases rise faster than China



K-pop megastars BTS cancelled Friday four Seoul concerts due in April as South Korea's novel coronavirus cases jumped by nearly 600 -- a larger rise than the daily increase reported in China, where the disease first emerged.

The seven-piece boy-band -- currently one of the biggest acts in the world -- had scheduled four gigs at the capital's Olympic Stadium to promote their new album "Map of the Soul: 7".

More than 200,000 fans were expected to attend, their agency Big Hit Entertainment said in a statement, with "a number of global production companies and a large group of expert international crew" also involved.

It was "impossible at this time to predict the scale of the outbreak", it

said, creating so much uncertainty it was "unavoidable" the shows were cancelled "without further delay".

"We must take into consideration the health and safety of hundreds of thousands of guests as well as our artists," it added.

The BTS concerts are the latest events to be cancelled or postponed as the outbreak has spread in the world's 12th-largest economy, including the K-league football season and the World Team Table Tennis Championships.

The new school term has been delayed by one week and the US and South Korean militaries have postponed forthcoming joint exercises.

Hyundai Motor also suspended operations at one of its Ulsan plants after an employee tested

positive for the coronavirus. The auto manufacturer had temporarily stopped all domestic production earlier this month because of a lack of parts due to the outbreak in China.

- More infections - South Korea reported 571 new cases on Friday, taking its total -- the highest in the world outside China -- to 2,337, the Korea Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (KCDC) said.

That was a larger increase than the 327 reported by China, where nearly 2,800 people have died.

The World Health Organization has warned that all countries should ensure their health systems were prepared for an outbreak.

The epidemic was at a "decisive point" globally, its chief Tedros Adhanom

Ghebreyesus said Thursday and countries could still contain the epidemic if they "act aggressively now".

The South has an advanced health system and a free media, factors observers say improve the reliability of its statistics, and its numbers are expected to rise further as it carries out checks on more than 260,000 people associated with the Shincheonji Church of Jesus.

The secretive entity is linked to around half of the nation's cases.

A 61-year-old female member developed a fever on February 10, but attended at least four church services in Daegu -- the country's fourth-largest city with a population of 2.5 million -- before being diagnosed. More than 85 percent of South Ko-

rea's coronavirus cases are in Daegu and the neighbouring province of North Gyeongsang, according to the KCDC. The country's death toll remains at 13.

- Bulletproof Boy Scouts -

One BTS fan said on the band's Facebook page that the decision on the concerts was a "regrettable but inevitable call", although others lamented that the shows had been cancelled, rather than postponed.

BTS -- or Bangtan Sonyeondan, which translates as Bulletproof Boy Scouts -- are the first K-pop group to top charts in the US and Britain.

Their latest effort was given a simultaneous worldwide release online last Friday, becoming the most pre-ordered South Korean album of all time, with more than four million copies sold before its release.

The coronavirus outbreak already forced them to livestream a press conference earlier this week, the seven members waving and bowing to a virtually empty hall, and urging fans to take care of themselves.

On Friday they appeared on KBS television's Music Bank show, which dispensed with its usual studio audience.

"Many people are concerned about coronavirus," said member Jin. "I hope we overcome this challenge."

Fears of escalation after 33 Turkish troops killed in Syria's Idlib

Turkey warned on Friday it was opening the gates for refugees to flee to Europe after an air strike blamed on Damascus killed 33 Turkish soldiers in Syria.

The international community voiced fears of a rapidly-rising risk of escalation after the attack by Russian-backed Syrian forces in the province of Idlib, where President Bashar al-Assad is waging a bloody campaign to oust rebels from their last holdout.

The deadly bombardment has added to weeks of growing tensions between rebel supporter and NATO member Ankara and Damascus ally Moscow. Adding to the tensions, Moscow announced that two of its warships were transiting Friday through the Bosphorus Strait in Istanbul in plain sight of the city.

The UN has repeatedly warned that the fighting in Idlib could potentially create the most serious humanitarian crisis since the start of the civil war start in 2011.

But Russian vetoes, often backed by China, have chronically crippled UN action in Syria.

Turkey retaliated to Thursday's strike by hitting Damascus regime targets "from the air and ground," President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's communications director Fahrettin Altun said.

The United States condemned the Syrian action, and NATO said it would hold urgent talks on the crisis on Friday.

In a move that could have major repercussions for Turkey's neighbours to the west, Ankara said it would open the way for refugees to go to Europe. "We will no longer keep the doors closed for refugees who want to go to Europe," an official told AFP on condition of anonymity.

- Risk of 'bloodbath' -

Turkey also called on the international community to establish a no-fly zone over Idlib, where regime forces have since December clawed back chunks of the region, forcing close to one million people to flee their homes and shelters amid bitter cold.

The United Nations said Monday that the latest fighting was coming "dangerously close" to encampments of the displaced, risking an im-

nent "bloodbath". Turkey, which is already home to around 3.6 million Syrian refugees, fears more people arriving in the country where there is growing popular discontent against their presence.

In a series of tweets, Altun accused Assad of "conducting ethnic cleansing" and seeking to drive millions of Syrians out of Idlib.

"These people will try to escape to Turkey and Europe. Already hosting close to 4 million refugees, we do not have the capacity and resources to allow entry to another million," he wrote.

Groups of migrants have already moved towards western Turkey seeking to reach Greece, Turkey's private DHA news agency reported.

- 'Dangerous situation' -

The international community voiced alarm over the latest violence in Idlib. "Without urgent action, the risk of even greater escalation grows by the hour," UN spokesman Stephane Dujarric said in a statement, reiterating Secretary General Antonio Guterres's call for an immediate ceasefire.

NATO chief Jens Stoltenberg urged de-escalation by all parties of "this dangerous situation" and condemned the "indiscriminate air strikes", in a phone call with Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu.

A US State Department spokesperson said Washington stood by its NATO ally and continues to call "for an immediate end to this despicable offensive by the Assad regime, Russia and Iranian-backed forces".

Under a 2018 deal with Russia meant to bring calm to Idlib, Turkey has 12 observation posts in the Idlib region -- but several have come under fire from Assad's forces.

In its first response to the Turkish deaths, Russia's defence ministry said the troops were among "terrorist groups" and that they had not communicated their presence in the area.

Thursday's attack brings to 53 the number of Turkish security personnel killed in Idlib so far this month.

- More civilians killed -

Elsewhere, jihadists and Turkish-backed rebels on Thursday re-en-

tered Saraqeb, a key Idlib crossroads town they had lost earlier in February, reversing one of the main gains of the government's devastating offensive.

The counter-offensive could, however, be short-lived as Russian-backed Syrian troops continued to chip away at other parts of the rebel bastion, capturing 20 localities.

Seven civilians, including three children, were killed in regime and Russian bombardment of Idlib, according to the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, adding to more than 400 such deaths since December.

State news agency SANA acknowledged there were "fierce clashes" between the army and "terrorist groups on the Saraqeb front".

An AFP correspondent accompanied the rebels into Saraqeb, where he found a ghost town of bombed out buildings.

The counter-attack temporarily reverses one of the key gains of the government since its offensive against the country's last rebel enclave in December. The cash-strapped government had been keen to fully secure the M5, a highway that connects Syria's four main cities and passes through Saraqeb.

The Syrian Observatory said the air strikes were carried out by Russia, heavily criticised by the West for the high civilian death toll from its bombing campaign.

State media accused the "terrorists" of launching car bombings and other suicide attacks against government forces attempting to retake the town.

It said the army had inflicted heavy losses on the attackers, despite the military support it said they had received from Turkey.

Some 950,000 civilians have fled the government offensive, raising fears in Ankara of a new influx of refugees.

More than half a million of those displaced since December are children, tens of thousands of whom are sleeping rough in northern Syria's harsh winter. Erdogan had vowed on Wednesday that Ankara would not take the "smallest step back" in the standoff with Damascus and Moscow over Idlib.

Saurav and Veer win ASF awards

CHENNAI, FEB 28 (PTI): Saurav Ghosal and Veer Chotrani are the only two Indians to be nominated in the Asian Squash Federation Performance Award for their stellar performance in 2019.

World number 13 Ghosal has been nominated for the Dato Alex Award for the Outstanding Performance of the Year in the senior category (men), while Veer has been picked for the Hassan Musa Award for the Outstanding Performance of the Year in the junior category (boys).

Ghosal, a 13-time national champion, had won the Asian individual championships gold medal and also reached a career-high world ranking of World No. 10 in April last year.

Veer, on the other hand, had won the 2019 Asian Junior U19 Championship and also reached the quarter-finals of World Junior Squash Championships last year.

The awards would be presented at the Asian Team Championships to be held next month in Kuala Lumpur.

In all, 15 nominations had come from four countries for the seven categories in the ASF Performance awards.

In addition, 19 nominations were submitted from six countries for the four ASF Coaches Award.

Nigeria braces as coronavirus hits megacity Lagos

Residents of Nigeria's economic hub Lagos scrambled for hygiene products Friday, after the chaotic megacity of 20 million announced the first confirmed case of new coronavirus in sub-Saharan Africa.

Health Minister Osagie Ehanire said in a statement overnight that the infected person was an Italian citizen who flew in from Milan, at the heart of Europe's largest outbreak, earlier this week.

"The patient is clinically stable, with no serious symptoms," Ehanire said, adding that he was being treated at a hospital for infectious diseases in Lagos.

The low number of cases so far across Africa, which has close economic ties with China, the epicentre of the deadly outbreak, has puzzled health specialists.

Prior to the case in Nigeria, there had been just two cases on the continent -- in Egypt and Algeria.

Nigeria, Africa's most populous country with some 190 million people, is viewed as one of the world's most vulnerable to the spread of the virus given its weak health system and high population density.

Worried inhabitants of Lagos, a city that was hit by the West African Ebola epidemic in 2014, were already flocking to pharmacies Friday morning in search of hand sanitiser and masks.

"We are sold out for now, people came massively this morning," a worker at a pharmacy on Lagos Island told AFP.

"Masks are scarce in town, we tried to order some and we couldn't get them so people should use a handkerchief instead."

One customer refused to shake hands as he said he was struggling to buy hygiene products.

"I've been trying to find hand sanitiser everywhere, they don't have it anymore in the supermarket, they don't have it at the phar-

macy, I'm upset," John said, giving only his first name.

"This epidemic is so scary, we should be very careful."

- 'Biggest concern' -

The delay in the first confirmed case in sub-Saharan Africa appears to have given the region a chance to get better prepared -- with more than half of the countries establishing laboratories to diagnose the virus.

But the World Health Organization (WHO) has still called for the continent "to come together to be more aggressive in attacking" the issue and said the "biggest concern" is outbreaks in countries with fragile health systems.

The West Africa region already has the bitter experience of dealing with the devastating Ebola outbreak that killed some 11,000 people from 2013 to 2016.

The disease's arrival in Lagos in 2014 set off alarm bells across the globe and unleashed a wave of panic among residents.

In the end Lagos escaped relatively lightly and only seven people died from a total of 19 infected, with the WHO praising the fast response to curb Ebola.

Nigerian officials moved quickly Friday to reassure the population that the country was prepared to contain the spread of the new coronavirus.

"We have continued to beef our own security. The level of preparedness continues to improve of Nigeria every day," the health minister, Ehanire, told a press conference in the capital Abuja.

Lagos state health commissioner Akin Abayomi said the infected person flew to Lagos via Istanbul on Turkish Airlines on Monday and spent a night in a hotel before heading to company offices outside the city.

"We have a very aggressive public health awareness campaign going on. We have engaged in ex-

tensive training," he said.

The authorities have set up quarantine centres in Lagos and Abuja and there are three laboratories in the country with the capacity to diagnose the virus.

- 'Lessons from Ebola' -

The director general of the West African Health Organisation Stanley Okolo insisted this month that the region had "learnt from the lessons of Ebola".

He said members of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) bloc agreed recently to come up with a "regional cost plan" and estimated that up to \$50 million was required.

"The devastation of an epidemic affects everybody," he said.

Situated in a tropical regional not far from the equator, Nigeria has had to face the threat of multiple contagious diseases.

An outbreak of Lassa fever, which is spread mainly through rat faeces and urine, has killed over 100 people across the country since the start of the year.

Experts say the oil-rich economic powerhouse is better prepared to deal with any disease epidemics than some of its poorer neighbours in the region.

But the government is criticised for not spending enough on health and crumbling infrastructure, corruption and the departure of doctors to better paying jobs abroad have eaten away at the sector.

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VIDEO NEWS SECTION





FAN FAVORITE! The actress, Amanda Stenberg signs autographs as she arrives at the premiere of her new movie *The Eddy* during the Berlin Film Festival in Germany.

Jordan Peele Flipped Destiny Child's "Say My Name" for 'Candyman' Trailer and People Are Losing It

Jordan Peele seems to have an affinity for creepy remixes. After totally reinventing the song "I Got 5 On It," for the *Us* trailer and the ensuing movie, Peele employed similar scare tactics in the new *Candyman* trailer.

The first real look at the Peele-produced remake features a completely warped version of the iconic chorus from Destiny's Child "Say My Name." While some may think it's blasphemous to use Beyoncé in the name of evil, the song's chorus is a perfect match for the film's titular villain, who appears when you, well, say his name.

After the trailer swept the internet on Thursday morning, people seemed to be both pleased and disturbed with the eerie "Say My Name" flip.

In the original *Candyman* trailer from 1992, the serial killer was the son of a slave and a renowned artist who was lynched in 1890 for loving a white woman. *Candyman* roamed Chicago's Cabrini-Green public housing projects, killing any person who said his name five times when staring in the mirror.

Peele's remake—dubbed a "spiritual sequel"—features *Watchmen*'s Yahya Abdul-Mateen II and is directed by Nia DaCosta. It hits theaters June 12, 2020.

48 Hours After Apologizing, Plácido Domingo Rescinds His Statement

"My apology was sincere and wholehearted, but I know what I haven't done, and I will deny it again," he said

Two days after apologizing for sexual harassment allegations, opera star Plácido Domingo has walked back his statement. "My apology was sincere and wholehearted," he said. "But I know what I haven't done, and I will deny it again."

The reversal occurred as European opera houses were questioning whether Domingo should still appear at performances he has scheduled through summer, according to the *New York Times*. "I have never behaved aggressively toward anybody, nor have I ever done anything to obstruct or hurt the career of anybody," he added. "On the contrary, I have dedicated a large part of my half-century in the world of opera to helping the industry and to promoting the career of innumerable singers."

He released the new statement just before the executive committee of Teatro Real, an opera house in Madrid, was planning to meet about the Spanish singer and conductor's upcoming performances in *La Traviata* in May. Domingo withdrew from the role, claiming it was: "To prevent my situation from affecting, harming or causing any additional inconvenience."

It was originally reported by the Associated Press in August 2019 that nine women had come forward accusing Domingo of sexual harassment that dated back to the Eighties, including flirtatious comments, late-night phone calls and unwanted advances. By September, 11 more women came forward, and Domingo—who made his opera debut in 1961—withdrawn from upcoming performances at the Metropolitan Opera in New York City.

Six months after the American Guild of Musical Artists opened an investigation on

Domingo, the union reported on Tuesday that Domingo had indeed "engaged in inappropriate activity," and that "many of the witnesses expressed fear of retaliation in the industry as their reason for not coming forward sooner. The AGMA Board of Governors has accepted the findings of the report and will take appropriate action."

Although Domingo initially described the accusations as "not only inaccurate but unethical," his apology acknowledged that he



had taken time over the last six months to reflect. "I respect that these women finally felt comfortable enough to speak out, and I want them to know that I am truly sorry for the hurt that I caused them. I accept full responsibility for my actions, and I have grown from this experience."

"I understand now that some women may have feared expressing themselves honestly because of a concern that their careers would be adversely affected if they did so," he added. "While that was never my intention, no one should ever be made to feel that way. I am committed to affecting positive change in the opera industry so that no one else has to have that same experience. It is my fervent wish that the result will be a safer place to work for all in the opera industry, and I hope that my example moving forward will encourage others to follow."

Microsoft just spoiled another exciting feature coming to Xbox Series X

When Microsoft shared new details about the Xbox Series X earlier this week, the focus was understandably on the specifications and the hardware. With a 12 teraflop GPU, the new Xbox will be twice as powerful as the Xbox One X, and that's to say nothing of the custom CPU, the lightning-fast SSD, the Variable Rate Shading (VRS) to improve the quality of each scene, and hardware-accelerated DirectX Raytracing.

But I was just as intrigued by the new features as I was the upgraded hardware, which is why I wrote an entire article about Smart Delivery. It turns out that Microsoft had one last feature to reveal, though. Speaking with Jason Ronald, Partner Director of Program Management, Xbox Live's "Major Nelson" (Larry Hyrb) explained just how much more powerful the quick resume feature will be on Xbox Series X than it was on Xbox One.

First, here's Ronald with a longer explanation of the feature that Phil Spencer talked about in Monday's blog post:

So we actually incubated some of this technology with the existing Xbox One. Today, [on Xbox One] you can actually quick resume the last game that you were playing, but with Xbox Series X, we are actually able to do that for multiple titles, and we've basically taken this to the next level of capability, and this is really powered by our custom-built SSD that's a part of the Xbox Series X, which actually allows us to have multiple games saved at any one time. And then I can instantly jump between them and resume where I was when I left off.

But then Hyrb chimed in, apologizing



had a system update, and I went back to the game [and was able to pick up where I left off]. So it survives a reboot."

I can't actually remember the last time I turned my Xbox One or PlayStation 4 completely off rather than just putting them to sleep, but the fact that I could have multiple games suspended on my Xbox Series X at once and never have to worry about losing progress in any of them, even if I have to update my console or want to turn the power off when I'm going out of town for a week, is an awesome addition I will take advantage of.

There is still much to be revealed when it comes to the Xbox Series X (we still haven't even seen a game running on the console yet), but here's hoping details continue to trickle out in the lead up to E3 2020.

Want to stop drinking alcohol? Here are 6 scientist-approved strategies

It's February and many people are starting to put into place their New Year's resolution to drink less alcohol.

It's February and many people are starting to put into place their New Year's resolution to drink less alcohol.

Events like FebFast can encourage and support these good intentions. But around 30 percent of people who start FebFast don't get through the whole month alcohol-free.

Relying on intention and willpower to stop drinking, even for a short period, is not usually enough. Resisting temptation takes up a lot of brain power and eventually your brain gets tired and gives in.

So what are the best strategies to take a break from drinking?

MONITOR YOUR DRINKING

Before your planned break from alcohol, spend a week or two monitoring the amount you drink and when.

You might be surprised at how much or how often you're drinking, and in what contexts. There may be certain people, places or emotions that increase or decrease your alcohol consumption. Understanding this can be a helpful motivator to make changes. It can also help you plan for situations where you'd usually be drinking.

GET CLEAR ON YOUR GOALS AND YOUR MOTIVATION

Will you cut back or quit? If cutting back, will you drink less frequently or a lower quantity? For how long? What happens afterwards? It's easier to stick to your goals if they're clear and achievable.

Think about why you are making changes to your drinking – to lose weight, feel healthier, save money, sleep better, or prevent that Sunday morning hangover.

Try to keep these reasons in mind when you have the inevitable periods of doubt!

SET A QUIT DATE

Setting a quit date is linked to success in

sticking to your plan. It helps you prepare and reflect on the reasons making a change is worthwhile, which can improve your commitment to change.

It also gives you time to get everything you need in place – preparing how you will tell others, thinking about how to decline a drink when offered, and working out which situations you might need to avoid or be cautious about, at least initially.

GET A SUPPORT NETWORK

Having a friend also take up the challenge can make it a little easier. People trying to quit who have social support are more likely to reduce their drinking.

If you're taking part in an event like FebFast, encourage your friends and family to sponsor you. Not only will it be good for the charity you are supporting, but it can make you more accountable.

It's also a good way to communicate with your friends your choice to quit drinking, so they can better support you.

Hello Sunday Morning has a large online support community of more than 100,000 people and offers a range of resources to help people who want to cut down or quit drinking. It's a free service, funded by the Australian government and a range of philanthropic organizations.

Recent evaluations of their Daybreak program – which includes one-on-one chats with health coaches – shows it leads to significant reductions in drinking, and improvements in physical and mental health.

BE KIND TO YOURSELF

You might hear psychologists refer to something called the "rule violation effect". This is when you're working hard to not drink, but one day give in and have a glass of wine or two, then give up on your goals altogether.

Changing any behaviour is difficult. Don't give up at the first mistake or slip up: get back on the horse and keep going.

ARIES: Travel for work or travel for pleasure? Either way, make it count, Aries. Make a kick-ass presentation, charm the room, get them to put a million dollars on the idea you have in mind and then go dance until the wee hours. Work must be followed by play. Now isn't that the divine art of balance! Don't have the option to jet set this weekend? Plan ahead.
Tip: Balance work with play in true Aries style.

TAURUS: Yes, they made a mistake. So did you, Taurus. But how long are you going to hold onto the old story? This day calls for forgiveness and healing. Two words: clean slate. Often we're so caught up with the version in our heads that we forget to take a look at the other side. Hold space for an open and honest conversation.
Tip: Forgiveness is the need of the hour.

GEMINI: Take a good look at what you are putting on your plate. It's not about consuming three meals a day. It's about tuning into the needs of your body and giving it exactly what

it deserves. Practice listening to what your sacred vessel is telling you. The body has its own intuition. Remember, we are in between seasons right now. Go easy on the fats and spices as you transition. Getting a sense of the local produce will help you update your diet.
Tip: Eat mindfully.

CANCER: Keep the faith, Cancer. Just because it hasn't manifested yet doesn't mean it won't. The secret: believing like you have already arrived at the given destination. Feel the joy in the bones. Visualise your progress. The Universe works in mysterious ways and right now it is clearing the blocks that are standing in your way. On the interpersonal front, you are being asked to be yourself because you're unique and special and there's only one of you in this whole wide world.
Tip: The Universe is showing up for you.

LEO: Get ready to see the first signs of life, especially if you have been nurturing a project for a while. Spring is upon us, Leo! But that is not an excuse

for you to slack or take things easy. Keep the manifestation game strong. Continue to put in the work. Leo season is when the real magic will unfold. Speaking of which, what are your grand birthday plans? Spontaneous is not the name of your game in the coming year. Whether you're thinking about indulging your wanderlust or buying a house, you want to start getting things in order now.
Tip: Get ready to see the first signs of life.

VIRGO: The thing about anger and resentment is that they block the flow of love. How and where are you unwilling to let go, Virgo? Is dwelling on the past helping your cause? Reality check: the present moment is the only thing you have dominion over. So, accept the things you cannot change. Make a conscious effort to make peace with your past.
Tip: Tap into the power visualisation to clear the blocks.

LIBRA: Staying cooped up in that cubicle all week is not doing any favours

to your chi. Recognise the need for balance in your life. The outdoors have been calling out to you for a while, Libra. Things to do this weekend: connecting with Mother Earth. Take a moment to admire the beauty that nature has to offer—unfurling flowers, birds creating their nests, leaves sashaying their way to the ground.
Tip: Step outside and soak in the sun.

SCORPIO: "Exercises are like prose, whereas yoga is the poetry of movements. Once you understand the grammar of yoga; you can write your poetry of movements." An Amit Ray quote to inspire you to connect with your body temple. Make this a dynamic practice, Scorpio. Take the mat outdoors or to your favourite garden. Twist and turn like nobody's watching or simply practice breathwork. The body has its own intuition. Learning to listen to what it's telling you will prove to be a game changer on your journey towards the light.
Tip: Find a practice that works for your body.

SAGITTARIUS: You can't get a summer bod with ingredients from your winter pantry. It's time for a dietary update, Sagittarius. Think less fats (not because we're shaming but because your body needs to generate less heat). While you're at it, tone down the spices as well but don't eliminate them completely.
Tip: Adapt your diet according to the changing seasons.

CAPRICORN: Spring is upon us, Capricorn, and it is bringing with itself infinite possibilities! Where are you at in your journey? What are the things that you want to bring to life? Meditate upon this at the start of the day so you can consciously start planting the seeds. The other thing you wanted to focus on doing your research. Get the facts and figures in hand as you begin.
Tip: Welcome to the land of infinite possibilities.

AQUARIUS: If change is the only constant, then where is your resistance stemming from? Let go, Aquar-

ius. Let go of the last shred of hope you that's keeping you bound to your past. If things are not turning it the way you imagined, it's because they are meant to be better. Trust the turn of the wheel. Allow things to unfold at their own pace. PS: Heaven's got a plan that will blow your mind.
Tip: Hold space for transformation.

PISCES: "The spiritual journey is individual, highly personal. It can't be organised or regulated. It isn't true that everyone should follow one path. Listen to your own truth." A Ram Dass quote to awaken you, Pisces. You may or may not resonate with the faith you have grown up with, and that's okay. This is your time to go into the world and explore. You'll be surprised at what you find. The cards are also urging you to connect with your body temple on a deeper level. Consider movement meditation or mindful practices like yoga or Tai Chi.
Tip: Consider movement meditation or mindful practices like yoga or Tai Chi.